# Learners' and social media engagement: an investigation into sandwich students' social media behaviour

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## Abstract

The study examined the engagement behaviour in social media of the Ekiti State University Sandwich students studying at Kwara State College of Education florin study Centre. It examined students 'prevalent engaged activity on social media. It also determined students ' engagement status on social media. It further examined the relationship between age and students' social media engagement status, and between gender and students ' social media engagement status with a view to re-directing students' social media engagement to learning oriented activities. A cross-sectional descriptive survey design was adopted. The sample size comprised 320 students selected across different contacts using simple random sampling technique. A validated questionnaire tagged Social Media Users' Behaviour Assessment Questionnaire (SMUBAQ) was used as data collection instrument for the study. Results revealed that nearly fifty percent of the sandwich students used social media for socializing. Also, most of the Sandwich students were active users of social media platforms. Age, gender was significantly related to students ' social media engagement status. The study concludes that sandwich students engaged in socializing activities than other activities such as academic and learning, entertaining and information seeking while majority of the students were active social media users. It is therefore, recommended that students should be taught on how social media platforms can be adapted for academic engagement and learning purposes.

Keywords: Social-media, behaviour, engagement, sandwich student

## Introduction

The wave of digital revolution, as witnessed in the last two decades, is completely changing the landscape of human communication and social interactions. Day in day out, advancement and breakthrough in technological knowledge and discoveries has removed both the real and the perceived barriers towards creating a global community in the time past. As a result, information can now be made available at individuals' fingertips like never before. Human communication and interactions have been made possible through the introduction of social media applications into telecommunication arrangement.

As observed by Kaplan and Haenlein (2020), social media is described as group of internet-based applications built on the ideological and technological foundations of web 2.0 that permit users to create and exchange contents generated. Activities on social media are facilitated through various Social Networking Sites (SNS). These sites are applications that allow users connect and engage with others in any preferred online activities such as creating personal information profiles, inviting as well as sharing information with friends and colleagues, etc. The number of social media users across the globe keeps increasing and as observed by Trifiro and Gerson (2019), this phenomenon has spurred researchers' interest towards gaining more understanding about the experience of adolescents and adult alike in the usage of these networking sites. Research has shown that out of 4.388 billion internet users globally, 3.484 billion used social media (Chaffrey, 2019). Also, in Nigeria, about 98.39 million Nigerian use the internet out of which 24 million people representing 12 percent are actively participating in the utilization of social media.

In the view of Edelmann (2016), participation in online activities is not evenly distributed because; individuals share information and interact at varying levels of involvement with others. On the level of individual's participation

on online, Nielsen (2006) illustrated online participation with the 90:9:1 rule such that 90 percent of the users only read and watch the trends without making contribution, 9 percent contributes once in a while and one percent of the users actively involve and are responsible for significant contributions. Therefore, figure on percentage of participation alone cannot be used as adequate and reliable yardstick for measuring social media engagement and behaviour.

Individuals engaging in social media and other online interactions are divided into: active and passive users. Since most of the behaviours on social networking sites require activities, such as viewing and posting opinions, questions, answers, photos, videos, personal information and knowledge, Verduyn, Ybarra, Résibois, Jonides and Kross (2017) described active social media utilization as online behaviours that encourage one to one exchange of interactions among users. In other words, active social media users engaging in online interactions such as liking, commenting, sending messages, creating contents and uploading and actively engage with other users. Passive social media users are those monitoring others' activities without direct engagement. Also, in the literature, other term as 'lurking or lurker' is being used to describe passive use of online interaction (Osatuyi, 2015). Lurkers are the users that do not actively and visibly make contributions in online-related activities and interactions (Nielsen, 2006). Nevertheless, as opined by Pagani, Hofacter, and Goldsmith (2011) both viewing (passive) and posting (active) contribute to a balanced on-going life of any virtual social network as posting encourages viewing and viewing motivates posting.

Irrespective of online behaviour pattern put on by different social media users, experience has shown that individual differences exist in all facets of human life and this differences influence human motivational and participation level. As a result, social media research should focus more on how optimal user interface design can be created for more social media participation. However, as opined by McCayPeet and Quan-Haase, (2016), users' experience, the interface design and unique features of a social media is determined by viability of social network to create more interactive contents. Online experiences of individuals can also influence their online behaviour and engagement. Defining online engagement from experience perspective, it simply implies collective experiences of the audience with a media brand (Mersey, Malthouse & Calder, 2010). Engagement in terms of audience collective experiences has also been examined as related to engagement that takes place at a given time and that that occurs at a period of time (O'Brien & Toms, 2008; Peters, Castellano & de Freitas, 2009). Although previous studies (Wang, 2006; Busselle & Bilandzic, 2008) have emphasized the conceptualization of engagement along psychological line such that users become more absorbed through cognitively involving in processing content; however, evolvement in new media with their attendant interactive characteristics has necessitated for definition along behavioural line. As a result, Oh, Bellur, and Sundar (2015) conceptualized engagement in terms of actual manner users involve in the real interaction with an interface which ranges from tapping interface menu to involving in sharing social media contents. The approach to measuring engagement permits users to be identified along active and passive users depending on their actual online activities as well as frequency of performance of such activities.

In recent times, the utilization of social media or its networking sites transcends traditional use at the name connotes. Social networking sites have now become a veritable tool being used in different aspects of human endeavors including the academic settings. In the school system, stakeholders are now leveraging on opportunities provided by social medial networks to boost teaching/ learning interactions. The advantages of incorporating social networking sites into educational system are enormous (Gupta & Bashir, 2018). These, according to George and Dellasega (2011), include improved student's learning opportunities, creation of opportunity for real time communication beyond the four walls of classrooms, fostering of cooperative learning opportunities as well as enhancing creativity. Unlike before, educational videos are now available and accessible for learners on You

Tube that provide adequate information that can be learned and shared among the learners as a supplement to teacher classroom efforts.

While one would have expected that the prime motive for integrating social media into learning is to enhance learning, study reveals that students placed more emphasis on interaction aspect. It was reported by Neier and Zayer (2015) that students rated interaction motive higher and that students felt that social media mediated learning can become more efficient through keeping students interactive. This outcome further corroborates the earlier findings of Hung and Yen (2010) in which Taiwanese students reported connectedness-oriented feelings and favorability when social networks are integrated into learning resources.

Due to its link to new technology that requires certain skills which may be possessed at varying levels and capacities, certain demographic variables such as age and gender might be important predictors of online behaviour. Previous studies (Ahn, 2011; Neelamalar, & Chitra, 2009) suggest that usage of social media among youths and adolescents is more rampant when compared with individuals in other age categories. Study (Hughes, Rowe, Batey, & Lee, 2012) suggests that younger users tend to prefer the use of social media for interaction purposes while searching for needed and relevant information dominates reasons why people engage with social media. In Poelhuber and Anderson's (2011) study, male and younger individuals were found to be positively inclined towards technology and with a greater experience with social media while considering the application of social media and other social collaboration tools in the context of distance learning.

Also, the inclusion of gender variable is also tenable when examining human behaviour, actions or activities where individual differences hold sway. Evidence in literature has shown that differences exist between how male and female adopt and use technology (Sanchez-Franco, Francisco, Ramos, & Velicia, 2009; Chun, 2013). In a study carried out by Chun, (2013) to investigate the influence of gender on the application of social networking

in a defense firm dominated with high-technology, the outcomes suggest that averagely, women tend to delay adoption of the social networking and knowledge management tools for about three to six months after their counterpart males did. Women tend to consider the usefulness and easiness before adoption. Gender difference in relation to the depth and frequency of social networking and knowledge management tools was also reported in the study. Recent studies, Petrovic, and Pavlovic (2016) examined gender difference internet content preferences among 2,153 students in Balkans, it was found that male students showed preference for contents related to education, learning and entertainment than their female counterparts who preferred online video games and contents related to ecommerce activities.

Despite the numerous learning advantages offered by various social media networks, students are yet to fully tap or maximize the available opportunities in the use of social media for learning activities. Research has shown that Facebook use has no significant influence on academic achievement of the students (Oyetunde, 2017) while others emphasized that students use social media for interaction purposes (Neier & Zayer, 2015; Nwazor, & Godwin-Maduike, 2017). However, little is known about social media engagement behaviour of students in unconventional educational system such as Sandwich programme. Since the majority of students taking Sandwich programme are usually adults, exploring their social media engagement behaviour will definitely add to the available knowledge in this respect, hence this study. The specific objectives of the study are: 1. to examine sandwich students' prevalent engaged activity on social media;

2. to determine sandwich students' engagement status on social media;
3. to examine the relationship between age and students' social media engagement status; and
4. to examine the relationship between gender and students' social media engagement status. Research Questions
   Two research questions that were raised and answered in the study are: 1: What is

the sandwich students' prevalent engaged activity on social media? 2: What is the sandwich students' engagement status of social media?

## Research Hypotheses

Two hypotheses that were formulated and tested are:

HOI: Age and sandwich students' social media engagement status are not significantly related.

HOG Gender and sandwich students' social media engagement status are not significantly related.

## Method
### Design

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design. Cross-sectional survey design involves obtaining information from a representative sample of a particular population at one time. Cross-sectional survey is found appropriate for a study where the intention of the researcher is to gather the data on certain phenomenon of interest at one point in time (Ary, Jacob, Razavieh & Sorensen, 2010).

### Participants

The population of the study comprises all Ekiti State University Sandwich students at Kwara State College of Education Ilorin study center. The sample size comprised 320 students selected across different contacts (levels or years on the programme) using stratified and simple random sampling techniques. Contact level or year on the programme was used as a stratum while simple random sampling technique was used to select the participants from each contact. Sandwich students were selected for this study because of the unconventional nature of the programme. Also, both youths and aged adults can also be found among these students and the findings on their social media online behaviour can also provide a unique information from the online behaviour of unconventional students since most of the previous similar studies usually focused on conventional students in the university system. However, out of 320 copies of questionnaire administered on the students in the study, data analysis and results were based on 286 students with social media account.

## Instruments

An adapted questionnaire tagged Social Media Users' Behaviour Assessment Questionnaire (SMUBAQ) was used to collect data in the study. Items on SMUBAQ were adapted from Gerson, Plagnol and Corr's (2017) passive and active Facebook use measures (PAUM) and social networking usage questionnaire developed by Gupta and Bashir (2018). Passive and active use measures comprised 13 items with a Five-point Likert Scale response patterns ranging from Never through Very frequently. Items on PAUM measured Facebook use along three forms of engagement of Active social with five items; Active non-social with four items and Passive with four items. The constituting items for each of behaviour are summed up to determine individual status. Gerson, Plagnol, and Corr (2017) reported that these items yielded sufficient reliability with .80, .78, and .70 reliability coefficients respectively for Active social; Active non-social and Passive items respectively. Items on PAUM were then reframed to reflect social media instead of Facebook only and were used to measure students' engagement status on social media. These items were pilot-tested on 40 Sandwich students selected from University of Ilorin, Kwara State, before its use and the reliability coefficients obtained while Cronbach's internal consistency approach was used were .86, .82 and .69 for active social; active non-social and passive items. Similarly, the original version of Social Networking Usage Questionnaire developed by Gupta and Bashir (2018) comprised 19 items that measured social networking usage along academic, so c i al ization, entertainment, and informativeness dimensions. Items on this questionnaire took on a five point Likert response patterns ranging from Always (5) through Never (l). The reliability for the total scale was .83 while academic (7-items); socialization (5-items); entertainment (4items), and informativeness (3-items) yielded respective reliability coefficients of .89; .78; .73, and .59. However, the adapted version that

was used in this study comprised 18 items as one of the two similar items on socialization dimension was deleted. Also, social networking site as contained in the wordings of the original version was changed to 'social media platform' to suit the purpose of the current use. The

internal consistency approach based on Cronbach's Alpha were .86 for items on academic, .57 for items on socialization, .67 for items on entertainment and .57 for items on informativeness dimensions of Social Networking Usage Questionnaire. Percentages

and Chi-Square statistical techniques were used to analyse the data.

## Results

Research Question 1: What is the students' prevalent engaged activity on social media?

Table 1: Students' Prevalent Engaged Activity on Social-Media

| Activities on Social Media | Frequency (f) | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Academic and learning activities | 42 | 14.7 |
| Socializing | 117 | 40.9 |
| Entertaining | 52 | 18.2 |
| Information seeking (such as job related, etc.) | 75 | 26.2 |
| Total | 286 | 100.0 |

Results in Table I shows that out of media for academic and learning activities, 286(100.0%) of the sandwich students that 40.9% used it for socializing, 18.2% used it for participated in this study, 14.7% used social entertaining while 26.2% used it for information seeking purposes.

Table 2: Students' Engagement Status on Social-Media

| Status on Social Media Engagement | Frequency (f) | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Active | 167 | 58.4 |
| Active Non-Social | 46 | 16.1 |
| Passive | 73 | 25.5 |
| Total | 286 | 100.0 |

reliability coefficients obtained with the use of Results in Table 2 shows that out of 286(100.0%) of sandwich students that participated in this study, 58.4% were active social media users, 16.1% were active nonsocial users while 25.5% were passive social media users. This outcome suggests that most of the sandwich students in the study area are active social media users.

Table 3: Chi-square Test of Relationship between Age and Students' Social Media Engagement Status

| Age | Engagement Status | | | Total | | | |
| | Active | Active Non-Social | Passive | Total | | | |
| Below 18yrs | 29 (17.4%) | 9 (19 6%) | 13 (17.8%) | 51 (17.8%) | | | |
| 18-25yrs | 40 (24.0%) | 12 (26 1%) | 16 (21 9%) | 68 (23 8%) | | | |
| 26-33yrs | 58 (34.7%) | 12 (26.1%) | 17 (23.3%) | 87 (30.4%) | 22.022 | 8 | .005 |
| 34-41 yrs | 35 (21.0%) | 9 (19.6%) | 12 (16.4%) | 56 (19 6%) | | | |
| 42yrs & Above | 5 | 4 (8.7%) | 15 (20 5%) | (8.4% | | | |
| Total | 167 (100 0%) | 46 (100 0%) | 73 (100 0%) | 286 (100 0% | | | |

Results in Table 3 shows that age and sandwich students' social media engagement status are significantly related, $X'^2$ (n = 286) = 22.022, df= 8, p = .005. The results show that majority of active social media users were students between the age range of 18-41 years.

Table 4: Chi-square Test of Relationship between Gender and Students' Social Media Engagement Status

| Gender | Engagement Status | | | Total | | | P |
| | Active | Active Non-Social | Passive | Total | | | |
| Male | 91(54.5%) | 25(54.3%) | 27 (37.0%) | 143(50.0%) | | | |
| Female | 76(45.5%) | 21(45.7%) | 46(63.0%) | 143(50.0%) | 6.640 | 2 | .036 |
| Total | 167(100.0%) | 46(100.0%) | 73(100.0% | 286(100.0% | | | |

Results in Table 4 shows that gender and sandwich students' social media engagement status are significantly related, (n = 286) = 6.640, df 2, p .036. The results show that majority of active, and active non-social users were male students while 63 percent of female students were passive social media users.

Discussions

The finding of the study revealed that nearly fifty percent of the sandwich students used social media for socializing. This finding suggests that activities of students whether conventional or non-conventional like sandwich programmes are the same. This finding further corroborates previous findings (Hung & Yuen, 2010; Neier & Zayer, 2015) that students reported connectedness-oriented feelings and favorability when social networks are integrated into learning resources. Neier and Zayer (2015) reported that students rated interaction motive higher in the utilization of social media. Interactions seem to form an important element in the process of socializing using different available social media platforms.

Another finding of the study revealed that most of the sandwich students actively involved in the use of social media. In other words, these students were not just lurking online but actively participating and account for most contribution as described by Nielsen (2006) in his 90-9-1 illustration of social media engagement. It therefore shows that these students engaged in online interactions such as liking, commenting, sending messages, creating contents and uploading and actively engage with other users via social media.

Also, in the finding, age and sandwich students' social media engagement are found to be significantly related. Majority of active social media users were those between the age of 18 and 41. In other words, active social media users were mostly youths and young adults. This finding supports the findings of Ahn (2011) and Neelamalar and Chitra (2009) that the use of social media is more rampant among the youth and adolescents when compared with individuals in other age categories.

Finding of the study further revealed that gender and sandwich students' social media engagement status are significantly related. In this study, the majority of active, and active nonsocial users were male students while most of female students were passive social media users. This finding does not suggest that female students do not engage in the use of social media, but their activities suggest just

monitoring others' activities without direct engagement. Osatuyi (2015) describes this form of engagement as 'lurking. In other words, lurkers are individual users who do not actively and visibly involve in online-related activities and interactions (Nielsen, 2006). This finding supports the findings of Chun (2013) that averagely, women tend to delay adoption of the social networking and knowledge management tools for about three to six months after their counterpart males did as they usually consider the usefulness and easiness before adoption.

## Conclusions

This study concludes that social media behaviour of the sandwich students is characterized by socialization motive while the majority of the students were active social media users. Age and gender were significant determinants of social media engagement.

## Recommendations

On the basis of this study, it is therefore recommended that:

1. Students should be taught how social media platforms can be adapted for academic engagement and learning purposes rather than just socializing on them.

2. Being active on social media provides an opportunity for online academic discussions. Therefore, students should be encouraged to deploy this advantage to facilitate interactions capable of adding value to them academically.

3. School authority should organize seminar or workshop on the best practices in utilizing various social media to educational advantage of the students most especially the youths and young adults as they constitute the largest percentage of active social media users.

4. Each school instructor should facilitate creation of online learning platform where issues related to specific subject or topic can be discussed without necessarily having classroom physical contact. Through this learning platform, both male and female students alike

might be mandated to participate in any issue table for discussion in the platform.

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APPENDIX 1

Socio-demographic data of the Respondents

| Variable | Level | Frequency (f) | Percentage (%) |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |

| Category | Subcategory | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | | 50.0 |
| | Female | 143 | 50.0 |
| | Total | 286 | 1 00.o |
| Marital Status | Single | 124 | 43.4 |
| | Married | | 51.4 |
| | Divorcee | 3 | 1.0 |
| | Single Parenthood | 12 | 4.2 |
| | Total | 286 | 100.0 |
| Age | Below 18yrs | 51 | 17.8 |
| | 18-25yrs | 68 | 23.8 |
| | 26-33yrs | 87 | 30.4 |
| | 34-41yrs | 56 | 19.6 |
| | 42yrs and above | 24 | 8.4 |
| | Total | 286 | 100.0 |
| Previous Level of Education | Complete Secondary School | 44 | 15.4 |
| | OND/NCE | 167 | 58.4 |
| | | 75 | 26.2 |
| | Total | 286 | 100.0 |
| Contact | Contact two | 92 | 32.2 |
| | Contact three | 96 | 33.6 |
| | Contact Four | 98 | 34.3 |
| | Total | 286 | 100.0 |