



Research Article

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Influence of Social Media on Reading Culture of Students in Select Secondary Schools in Oron

Ifeanyi Martins Nwokeocha¹, Uwem Asuquo Akpan², George Nathan Brown²

¹Department of Journalism and Media Studies, Federal University Otuoke, Bayelsa State Nigeria

²Department of Mass Communication, Heritage Polytechnic, Eket, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to examine how social media influences the reading culture of secondary school students in some schools in Oron, Nigeria. The objective was to identify whether social media has a profound effect on students' reading culture, the extent to which the impact is felt, and the nature of the impact. The study utilized Uses and Gratifications Theory and Technological Determinism Theory as theoretical frameworks to inform the understanding of media selection and its social influence. Survey research design was utilized where questionnaires were distributed to 370 students, and 321 usable responses were collected for analysis. The findings further showed that the overwhelming majority (70%) acknowledged that social media significantly influences their reading culture and 73% affirmed that social media is highly influential or moderately influential in shaping their reading culture. However, the study also referred to overwhelmingly adverse impact as a significant number of respondents admitted distraction from books (31%) and shrinking attention spans (36%) due to social media. The study concluded that, while social media is a powerful information tool, it negatively affects the traditional reading culture of students. The study recommended that there is need to promote media literacy programmes as means to mitigate adverse effects, encouraging balanced usage of social media for learning, and developing an environment that supports reading above academic requirements to enhance understanding and participation.

Keywords: Social media, Reading culture, Secondary school students, Influence, Media Literacy

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INTRODUCTION

Reading is a cornerstone of personal and societal growth, facilitating knowledge acquisition and self-awareness. As elaborated by Bana (2020), reading opens one's mind, making them more aware of themselves, others, and the world in general. In learning, reading is indispensable; all learning activities demand proficient reading capacity, significantly affecting learners' academic achievement (Palani, 2012). Not only do good reading habits result in higher performance in various tests, but they also enrich people's lives and grant access to cultural heritage (Igwe, 2011). Active engagement with texts allows individuals to achieve intellectual and emotional maturity, and also open-mindedness. A very apt analogy given by Sir Richard Steele highlights that "Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body" (Suhana & Haryudin, 2017). Nonetheless, a revolution in reading culture like never before has been brought about by the rise of technology, and more so the Internet. The field of reading now goes beyond conventional print texts to include a host of electronic media like emails, blogs, discussion forums, and other multimedia documents (Umeh, 2016). Certainly, the Internet's advent has, without a doubt, changed students' reading environments in that it has opened up for them an unprecedented exposure to an amount of information and family of linked sources.

As identified by Kazazoğlu (2021), hypertext and hypermedia technologies on the internet allow one to

browse through large loads of information, basically reconceptualising the reading experience. Previously, students would rely largely on printed texts like newspapers to get information, which helped significantly in building reading habits and aiding knowledge acquisition (Bala & Verma, 2018). Today, widening access to internet-based content has allowed students to engage freely with a broad spectrum of information, accentuating their participatory role in information consumption beyond traditional boundaries. This shift foretells the future of cultural and educational practice, particularly in relation to how young people today and, more particularly, secondary school students engage with text, which has the potential to influence their learning experience and comprehension skills. The rapid development of Internet technology not only enriches the information environment but also serves as social sites that shape contemporary communication modes.

As Hine (2017) observes, the Internet enables new forms of interaction, enabling users, especially the youth, to project and express their personal identities through a virtual prism. This trend is emblematic of the so-called "Net-Generation" that is primarily comprised of individuals who are well-versed in digital media and well-practiced at navigating the big information highway (Kraus, 2018). These young people, unlike their forebears, feel more at ease and more familiar with digital technology, and it has precipitated heated debates on what the implications of social media usage are on

traditional reading cultures. While computers and the Internet provide students with powerful learning opportunities, they also challenge conventional notions of reading and learning. For instance, Mirra and Garcia (2021) assert that pervasive online culture can reshape young people's conceptualization of self-identity and group interaction, foreshadowing a possible reconceptualization of academic engagement and intellectual pursuit. Despite the pervasive influence of social media and its natural place in the daily life of individuals, a tangible decline in the reading culture among students persists, a phenomenon attested to in several studies (Ifedili, 2009; Ayanbimpe, 2012).

Reading, according to Fabunmi and Folorunso (2010), is pivotal to personal growth and societal advancement. Unfortunately, most young Nigerians demonstrate an unsettling trend of minimal engagement with the written word. Students are reported to read primarily for academic purposes and barely read outside their syllabuses (Ifedili, 2009). Also, with the average Nigerian reading less than a single book for pleasure in a year, and an overwhelming majority of adults beyond high school never having read a nonfiction book to its conclusion, it is apparent that there is a crisis as it concerns the reading culture (Aina, 2011). Critiques by the likes of Ayanbimpe (2012) argue that extraneous circumstances, including greater exposure to other forms of entertainment facilitated by digital media, have further undermined the urge to read for information seeking and personal enjoyment. It is in this context that two contrary perceptions of the role of social media in the culture of reading have emerged, with opinions polarised between skeptics and believers in the learning potential of social media. This study aims to discover the dynamics of the impact of social media on the reading culture of students in some Oron secondary schools with a vision of adding to a multidimensional explanation of this contentious cultural issue

Statement of the Problem

The proliferation of information and communication technology in Nigeria has brought about a welcome development, with its potential to enhance educational pursuits being a notable benefit. Ideally, the widespread adoption of the Internet should positively influence the reading habits and comprehension of students. However, a paradoxical trend has emerged, wherein the reading culture among secondary school students is alarmingly declining, despite the ubiquity of technology. Studies have shown that secondary school students, who are prolific users of social media, are spending more time browsing, gaming, and socialising online, rather than engaging in meaningful reading activities. This development has sparked concern among stakeholders, with some researchers positing that social media is having an adverse effect on the reading culture of young people. The crux of the problem lies in determining the extent to which social media influences the reading culture of secondary school students, and it

is this knowledge gap that this study seeks to address, focusing on select secondary schools in Oron.

Objectives of the Study

The following objectives of the study were to:

- ascertain whether social media significantly influence the reading culture of students in select secondary schools in Oron;
- find out the extent to which social media influence the reading culture of students in select secondary schools in Oron;
- find out the exact influence of social media on the reading culture of students in select secondary schools in Oron;

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study.

- Does social media significantly influence the reading culture of students in select secondary schools in Oron?
- To what extent does social media influence the reading culture of students in select secondary schools in Oron?
- What is the exact influence of social media on the reading culture of students in select secondary schools in Oron?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Media and Reading Culture of Students

Social media has become a fundamental aspect of modern life, transforming the way people interact, communicate, and exchange information. Social media is an offspring of the social software movement and can be described as a collection of Internet sites, services, and practices that facilitate collaboration, community, participation, and sharing (Junco, 2010). Such technologies facilitate social interaction, make cooperation possible, and provide for deliberation among stakeholders, like blogs, wikis, media sharing websites, networking websites, and virtual worlds (Bryer & Zavatarro, 2001). There has been a gigantic growth in the usage of social media in the past couple of years, with platforms like LinkedIn, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter expanding manifold in terms of users and activity. As of July 2011, LinkedIn had over 100 million members, Facebook had 750 million users, YouTube received 3 billion views daily, and Twitter stored over 177 million tweets per day (Chen & Bryer, 2012). Such exponential rise testifies to the significance of social media in current communication, suggestive of its ability to inform individual and collective actions.

The social media is marked by its interactive and dynamic nature, which separates it from the conventional means of communication. Social media sites are programmed in such a way so as to promote user-generated content, which makes people and communities allowed to share, produce, discuss, and

change content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). This interactive ambiance of social media bestows unmatched popularity upon them, as audiences are able to interact from any corner of the globe. McQuail (2010) separates social media from mass media and asserts that the older mass communication was mostly one-way, while today's methods of communication are essentially interactive. The ability of social media to educate, inform, entertain, and provoke its audience has made it an intrinsic part of modern life, with a spreading and expansive magnetism that does not exist in older forms of media (Ezeah et al., 2013). The significance of social media is that it fosters social interaction, cooperation, and consideration among stakeholders, and it has grown to be an essential tool for individuals, organisations, and communities.

Social media is a common medium of public communication and interpersonal interaction and allows people to connect with each other, share ideas, experiences, images, messages, and common interest information (Ezeah et al., 2013). The old way of greeting each other is left in the past, and nowadays the world welcomes each other at social media websites (Daluba & Maxwell, 2013). Social media websites are an integral part of one's daily life today, which enables individuals to communicate, write their experiences, and become connected with others. Anjugu (2013) explains that social media is a set of Internet-based applications that allows for the creation and exchange of end-user generated content. This user-generated material has become a characteristic of social media, enabling individuals to participate in the development and sharing of information. The consequences of social media on modern-day communication cannot be denied, and the contribution of social media will only grow as technology improves.

The influence of social media on society is intricate and pervasive, with far-reaching ramifications on individual and group behaviors. Social media has transformed the way information is being consumed, the way individuals engage with each other, and the way one perceives the world. With its ability to reach a mass audience and offer immediate communication, social media has become a powerful tool for information dissemination, learning, and entertainment. Social media is by Mozee (2012) described as an informal expression that represents different modes of communication platforms and electronic media for engaging. The influence of social media on society will continue to grow, and its implications on the behavior of the individual and the group, on reading culture, and academic achievement, should be understood. As social media continue to shape modern-day communication, it is essential to study its effect on society in education, culture, and relationships.

Influence of Social Media on Academic Performance and Study Habits of Secondary School Students

Social media impact on study habits and performance at secondary school level is a multifaceted issue that has generated a lot of research attention in recent years. Research has shown that excessive use of social media has negative implications for academic performance, particularly when study time is devoted to non-study activities. Abuzar and Hussain (2024) found that moderate usage of social media in academic work can lead to student involvement and enhanced academic achievement. However, excessive use may lead to distractions and poor performance. This is supported by Valdez (2025), whose research revealed a weak to moderate positive correlation between social media usage and academic achievement, which implies that social media can positively influence student performance if utilized well.

The relationship between study habits and social media use is complex, with varied results in other studies. Study habits, rather than academic performance, are forecasted by study habits, as suggested by Valdez (2025). The same thing was affirmed by Mangacop and Guillena (2024) through their study that students' study habits are not forecasted by use of social media but will be forecasted by use of social media on academic performance. Conversely, Castillas (2023) reported a positive association between exposure to social media and academic performance, with implications that digital media can learn indirectly or directly. Gadzama (2022) and Zhao (2023) revealed a negative impact of social media on academic performance, however. These opposing findings emphasize the need for empirical studies to further understand the influence of social media on academic performance and study habits.

To optimize the benefits of social media while minimizing its drawbacks, students should learn effective techniques for organizing their social media behaviors. Setting boundaries, for instance, through setting specific times for the use of social media, can help students attain a balanced life between online experiences and studies. Furthermore, promoting positive usage, including abiding by educational influencers and scholarly discourse, has the potential to transform social media into a learning instrument. Digital detox recesses can also be beneficial, allowing students to restart their minds and focus on scholarly study without distractions. Students with high social media usage, based on Alshwiah and Alaulamie (2023), typically reported a favorable attitude toward the use of social media for scholarly purposes. It is therefore imperative that the policymakers and teachers come together to devise rules and policies that ensure responsible use of the social media for the secondary students, with the end result being enhanced academic achievement and learning practices.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Two theories were applied in this study to explain the influence of social media on secondary

school students' reading culture in Oron. They include the Uses and Gratifications Theory and the Technological Determinism Theory. The Uses and Gratifications Theory, which was postulated by Elihu Katz in 1959, says that audiences are not passive when they choose and use their media but they instead go to their media with some needs and gratifications. According to Potter (2012), the basic assumptions of the theory include five assertions: communication behavior is purposive and goal-directed; individuals initiate choosing and utilizing communication medium; communication behavior is mediated and guided by social and psychological factors; media contend with other forms of communication in satisfying needs; and individuals are inherently more powerful than the media in the effects process. This theory can be applied in this study as it accounts for why students opt to use and pick social media and what gratifications or advantages they achieve through it. However, critics note that there is a lack of theoretical coherence and overreliance on the functional use of media, but it is still a helpful model to account for media choice among the audience.

The Theory of Technological Determinism, which was developed by Marshall McLuhan in 1962, believes that people's thoughts, feelings, and actions are determined by media technology, and the way society works changes as it transitions from one age of technology to another. The theory can be applied to the study because it explains how social media has influenced the culture of reading among secondary school students. The development of web technology has led to a redefinition of audience drift towards new from old media, and with social media users not being receivers but participants. The theory provides a theoretical mechanism for describing the influence of social media on reading culture among students and how it might impact their learning performance. The application of this theory is its capacity to illustrate how technology development influences societal norms and individual behavior, including the manner in which students use and receive information.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilised a survey research design, which is seen as suitable for the investigation of the thoughts, sentiments, and feelings of individuals. 12, 322 Senior secondary school Three (SS3) students from select secondary schools in Oron, including Mary Hanney Secondary School, Methodist Boys High School, Maritime Academy of Nigeria, and Noble International Schools, formed the population of the study. A sample size of 370 students were selected using the Krejcie and Morgan's 1970 table of sample size determination. Proportionate stratified random sampling and availability methods of sampling were used in dispersing questionnaire copies among respondents. The instrument used in the investigation was a structured questionnaire. Data collection involved the dispersal of questionnaire copies, where only 321 copies were

recovered. Finally, data analysis involved frequency counts and simple percentages, presented in tables for ease of understanding.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1: RQ1. Does social media significantly influence the reading culture of students in select secondary schools in Oron?

Variables	Frequency	Percentage %
Strongly Agree	97	30
Agree	129	40
Neutral	82	26
Disagree	4	1
Strongly Disagree	9	3
Total	321	100

According to Table 1, a significant majority of respondents (70%) either strongly agree (30%) or agree (40%) that social media significantly influences the reading culture of students in select secondary schools in Oron.

Table 2: RQ2. To what extent does social media influence the reading culture of students in select secondary schools in Oron?

Variable	Frequency	Percentage %
Very influential	104	32
Somewhat influential	133	41
Not very influential	50	16
Not at all influential	34	11
Total	321	100

According to Table 2, a substantial proportion of respondents (73%) reported that social media is either very influential (32%) or somewhat influential (41%) in shaping the reading culture of students in select secondary schools in Oron.

Table 3: RQ3. What is the exact influence of social media on the reading culture of students in select secondary schools in Oron?

Variables	Frequency	%
Social media distracts me from reading books	101	31
Social media encourages me to read more online articles and blogs	41	13
Social media has no impact on my reading habits	16	5
Social media helps me discover new books and authors	48	15
Social media reduces my attention span for reading long texts	115	36
Total	321	100

According to Table 3, the majority of respondents reported that social media either distracts them from reading books (31%) or reduces their attention span for reading long texts (36%), indicating a predominantly negative influence of social media on the reading culture of students in select secondary schools in Oron.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The influence of social media on the reading culture of students in some chosen secondary schools in Oron is very evident, as indicated in Table 1. With 70% of the respondents strongly agreeing or agreeing that social media greatly affects their reading culture, the findings agree with existing literature that highlights the extensive outreach of digital media in creating the learning culture of young people (Hine, 2020; Mirra & Garcia, 2021). Using the Uses and Gratifications Theory, it is clear that students actively use social media to satisfy diverse needs such as information-seeking and social communication. This is supported by Katz et al. (1973), who postulate that people use media if they believe it will be useful in their pursuit. Results show students to be attuned to the dual role of social media: as a source of information and also transforming how reading has been done traditionally, leading to a reliance on digitally produced content that might lack the scope and richness of what one expects traditional literature to provide. The extensive interaction with social media platforms promises its role in altering reading culture among students and thus in altering how they approach and perceive reading as an activity.

Considering data presented in Table 2, the magnitude of the effect of social media on reading culture reveals that 73% of respondents were of the opinion that social media is very influential or somewhat influential. This finding points towards an overall consciousness on the part of students concerning the ability of social media to have a significant impact on their reading patterns. Researchers have discussed how new media enables cognitive transformations; for instance, Zhao (2021) discusses how continuous exposure towards social media may result in altered attention spans as well as information processing tendencies. These findings are consistent with Technological Determinism Theory, which holds that technological change determines the character of society and the behaviors of people (McLuhan, 1964). The findings suggest that increased use of social media is spurring students to react more to bite-sized, non-linear forms of information rather than the linear text. This change is of concern to the proficiency in sustained attention conditioned from the reading of longer texts, a skill that is essential to academic achievement and intellectual growth.

Focusing on the exact influence of social media on the reading habits of students, based on the findings in Table 3, the majority of the respondents mentioned

that social media steals their attention away from reading books and decreases their attention span towards lengthy texts. With 36% of them acknowledging that social media has reduced their focus on longer texts, these findings pinpoint a significant criticism of the type of engagement supported by online spaces. Research has underlined ways in which distractions due to social media can lead to divided attention, thus undermining the quality of reading experiences (Alshwiah & Alaulamie, 2023; Castillas, 2023). Here, the implications regarding the Theory of Technological Determinism are evident as students swim through their learning environments under the pressure of social media, where speed often precedes substance. The implications within this research align with comments by Ayanbimpe (2012), who reinforces the need to address this deficiency in reading culture amidst rising social media influence. By promoting critical consumption and inculcate a balanced approach to media usage, policymakers and educators can make an effort to enhance the reading experience of students in today's digitally intensive environment.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that social media plays a major role in influencing secondary school students' reading culture in select secondary schools in Oron, with the majority of the findings indicating adverse effects such as distraction and decreased attention span that ultimately hamper traditional reading patterns and interest in academic texts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Educational authorities have to design certain programs that can guide students on balancing social media reading with traditional reading styles in a way that promotes a healthier reading culture.
2. Schools should encourage social media as a learning platform, adopting sites that offer readers access to quality reading material and academic discussions to enhance scholarship participation.
3. Parents and guardians must keep an eye on their children's use of social media to reduce distractions and create a more positive learning atmosphere for reading and study.
4. Additional empirical research should be conducted to examine new ways of integrating social media into students' reading culture and hence realizing its potentials while mitigating its constraints.
5. Educators ought to integrate reading promotion activities that involve social media sites to interact with students in a creative manner and encourage them to engage with reading materials outside their assigned syllabuses.

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