

Awareness and Use of Social Media for Research Activities among Library and Information Science Postgraduate Students in Public and Private Universities in Southwest Nigeria

Oluseun Mobolanle SODIPE (FAIMP, CLN)

Gbenga Daniel Library
Tai Solarin University of Education
Ijagun, Ijebu-Ode.
Ogun – State, Nigeria.
sodipeom@tasued.edu.ng
ORCID: 00000-0003-2471-8618

Fauziyah Olayinka, ABDULLAH

Gbenga Daniel Library
Tai Solarin University of Education
Ijagun, Ijebu-Ode.
Ogun- State.
Nigeria.
abdullah@tasued.edu.ng

John Echesirim IBEACHUSIM (CLN)

Fatiu Akesode Library,
Lagos State University, Ojo
Lagos State.
johnibeachusim@lasu.edu.ng

Rashidat Adepeju ADELEYE

Gbenga Daniel Library
Tai Solarin University of Education,
Ijagun. Ijebu-Ode.
Ogun State.
Nigeria.
adeleyera@tasued.edu.ng

Abstract

This study examined the awareness and use of social media for research activities among library and information science postgraduate students in public and private universities, in South-West, Nigeria. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. A total enumeration sampling technique was adopted to select 175 respondents. The instrument for data collection was a self-constructed questionnaire. The data analysis was subjected to descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation). Findings revealed that there is a high level of awareness of social media for research; there is a high level of utilization of Social Media for research activities among LIS postgraduate students and the result is favorable to Google+,

Facebook, YouTube, Wikis, ResearchGate, Academia, ScienceStage, LinkedIn, Twitter and Blog. The major reasons for the preference of using social media for research activities among LIS postgraduate students are to provide them with links to other sites/resources they can use for research; sharing research information is more convenient on social media. The major challenges faced by the LIS postgraduate students in using social media for research activities are lack of institutional support, low quality of shared content, and security issues. Based on the findings, it was therefore recommended that institutional support be provided for using social media for academic/research purposes. Social media conferences and workshops should be organized for LIS postgraduate students at all levels especially those in the university on how to integrate social media tools, platforms, and other internet tools into their academic/research lives

Keywords: Awareness, Social Media, Use, Research Activities

Introduction

Research publication encourages hard work to fill in the gaps of previous research and create avenues for future investigations. The number of published articles in refereed journals and conference proceedings of repute determines research attainment. The importance of research cannot be overlooked in any academic environment. Research publication in higher learning institutions is a major or most significant indicator of productivity. It may be pointed out that, research publication in any field of specialization provides current information for growth, progress, development, and an improved society. The importance of quality research cannot therefore be overlooked. Quality research exposes postgraduate students to new information and sharing of socio-cultural ideas with others. During the process of research, postgraduate students has the opportunity to travel outside their environment to seek information and collect relevant data. Quality research by postgraduate students contributes to genuine indigenous and sustainable development (Chukwu & Chiemeka, 2019).

The usage of the internet in Nigeria and other nations is expanding and significantly growing. However, students today are coping with current and complex technology, and, they misuse the utilization. Internets are designed for knowledge exchange and interactions of information. Nonetheless, some students, communicate even what is of tremendous inappropriateness. Many individuals cannot even begin to comprehend the future without electrical gadgets and the internet to be particular. This might explain for the reason why some individuals in Nigeria can climb ‘mountains’ to acquire coverage when they go to remote places all in a bid to stay connected (Haddock, Ward, Yu & O’Dea, 2022). “Social” as the word concerns how individuals will

communicate with the public, through which people join together and mix with other people. The network connects individuals of various sections to exchange their ideas or opinions. Social media is the joining of friends and family under one roof. Social media platforms consist of a circular network of friends, in which people may make communication or share information or fresh opinions with each other (Kabiru & Alabi, 2024). Aghadiuno, Amidu and Zaccheaus (2021) defines social media platforms as web-enabled services that permits persons to build a community or restricted profile within a delimited system, to express ideas, feelings or thoughts with a group to share a connection, and helps to see and propagate their group connections, which are built by others with in the same group.

Oguguo, Ajuonuma, Azubuike, Ene, Atta and Oko (2020) had the same vision of social media. To them, social media is the usage of Whatsapp, Facebook, Blogs, Twitter, My Space and LinkedIn for the purpose of communication, exchanging images as well as videos. However for the purpose of this study social media is caught within the usage of internet through Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter, Skype, MySpace as well as Yahoo Messenger for communication sharing of ideas, sharing of photographs and videos by users. The rising usage of social media platforms has become an international phenomena in the past several years. What began out as a hobby for certain computer competent people has become a social norm and way of life for people from all over the world. Postgraduates have notably embraced these sites as a method to communicate with their friends, share information, reinvent their identities, and exhibit their social life. The knowledge of social media among students has reached high levels and has harmed their study time, bad grammar and improper spellings when chatting on social media as well as diverting their focus from their academics. The enhanced and improved utilization of social media platforms such as Facebook has been a worldwide phenomenon for quite some time. Though it all begun has been a passion for numerous computer literates individual has transformed to become a social standard and existence-style for kids across the world (Adesina & Olaoye, 2024).

According to Aftab & Ahmad (2023), postgraduate students have specifically recognized these social media platforms to be able to connect their colleagues, share information, reinvent their selves and demonstrate their social live. Social media has actually become a vital element of individuals in everyday life. Agbasi & Bebenimibo (2023) mentioned that students have a social media account based on varied causes (making new friends, following famous people, sharing personal information, commenting the events, etc.). These persons addicted to social media are

termed as “heavy users”. As such, it is vital to gather the perspectives on social media influence on research activities of postgraduate students; as they use the social media platforms for several objectives such as access to knowledge, group discussion, resource sharing and amusement (Ausat, 2023). This has produced conjecture about their usage and related good and negative ramifications, in both the short and long timeframes. Hence, it is therefore imperative to examine the awareness and use of social media for research activities among Library and Information Science Postgraduate students in public and private universities, South-West, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Modernization and globalization, attributable to technical improvements, have been considerably effective in turning the world into a global village. The advent of social media has revolutionized communication and access to information, yet its potential for academic and research purposes remains underutilized among postgraduate students (Braun, Clarke, Boulton, Davey & McEvoy, 2021). Despite the increasing integration of technology in education, the inconsistent and often limited use of social media for academic purposes among postgraduate students has been observed across institutions. This phenomenon raises concerns about missed opportunities to optimize research processes, improve academic visibility, and build professional networks. Consequently, postgraduate students who fail to harness social media for research may face challenges in accessing diverse and timely academic resources, miss opportunities for global collaboration, and lag in disseminating their research outputs effectively. This could ultimately affect the quality of research produced, delay career progression, and reduce their contribution to knowledge advancement. Previous studies have explored the use of social media in education broadly but often focus on students, teaching strategies, or general usage trends rather than the nuanced needs of postgraduate students in research contexts. Few studies delve into the challenges postgraduate students face in using social media for research, creating a gap in understanding its potential and limitations in academic pursuits. There is a need to examine the awareness and use of social media for research activities among library and information science Postgraduate students in public and private universities, in South-West, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective is to examine the awareness and use of social media for research activities among library and information science postgraduate students in public and private universities, in South-West, Nigeria. However, this study focused on the following specific objectives:

1. find out the level of awareness of social media for research among LIS postgraduate students in public and private universities, in South-West, Nigeria;
2. ascertain the level of utilization of social media for research activities among LIS postgraduate students in public and private universities, South-West, Nigeria;
3. determine reasons for the preference for the use of social media for research activities among LIS postgraduate students in public and private universities, South-West, Nigeria;
4. investigate challenges faced by the LIS postgraduate students in public and private universities, South-West, Nigeria in using social media for research activities.

Research Questions

The following research questions were carefully formulated to guide the study:

- (i) What is the level of awareness of social media for research among LIS postgraduate students in public and private universities, in South-West, Nigeria?
- (ii) What is the level of utilization of social media for research activities among LIS postgraduate students in public and private universities, in South-West, Nigeria?
- (iii) What are the reasons for the preference for the use of social media for research activities among LIS postgraduate students in public and private universities, in South-West, Nigeria?
- (iv) What are the challenges faced by the LIS postgraduate students in public and private universities, in South-West, Nigeria in using social media for research activities?

Literature Review

Adekonojo, Ajiboye and Adekonojo (2019) studied students' understanding and utilization of social media. The results indicated that the respondents were aware of practically all social media sites, with WhatsApp (99%) rating highest, followed by email (97.9%) and Twitter (95.3%). The most commonly employed social media platforms were WhatsApp ($x'' = 2.72$), Email ($x'' = 2.61$) and Facebook ($x'' = 2.50$). Social media channels were largely utilized for group discussions and tutorials with course mates ($x'' = 3.22$); finding current resources ($x'' = 3.21$), and monitoring

updates on current research ($x'' = 3.18$). The survey indicated that social media is not new to most postgraduates and that they utilize social media for academic objectives, self-expression and in order to create connections with other students around the globe.

Siddhartha, Abdul Habeeb, Mushir, Munaz, Fazlur, Kunwar, Suchismita, Sowmya and Sumaiya (2020) studied the utilization of social media among university students. The survey suggests that most of university students utilize different sorts of social media sites. And bigger proportion of students feel that there are equal positives and downsides of utilizing social media networks and felt that it had influence in their education. This study reveals that during this current period it's not feasible to restrict an individual on utilizing social media networks, since it helps to grow them in all areas to thrive in their life.

Moustapha (2022) studied students' understanding and usage of social media: a study of ICT students at Kwara State University, Nigeria. This study employed a survey research approach. The respondents were students' faculty of information and communication technology, and the results show that the majority of respondents (91.4%) are familiar with social media, have access to the Internet, and routinely use mobile phones for social media. Less than half (8.6%) of them speak and share information on social media. While results also suggest that individuals purposefully utilize social media for academic goals, self-expression, and to develop worldwide friendships. The preference for social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter and YouTube over the others also indicates the functionality, the benefits and flexibility that users have in choosing and utilizing the social media available to them.

Nannim, Njoku, Onuoha, Orji and Njoku (2023) studied the regulatory policy solutions to effectively govern students' usage of social media/networks in Nigerian colleges. The study employed a mixed-method strategy for the collection of suitable data to satisfy the objectives. The population of the study comprises all the students in Nigerian institutions and seven senior administrative professionals of the universities who often become involved in policy discourse, policy development and policy implementation. Findings from examined data highlight the key issues confronting students in the use of social media, and abuses of social media, and was also determined that no current rules or policies are limiting the use of social media/networks in Nigerian institutions. The report advocated the establishment of social media regulating regulations in Nigerian institutions.

Methodology

Research Design

The research design for this study was a descriptive survey research design.

Population of the Study

The target population comprised 175 LIS postgraduate students in the Department of Library and Information Science in public and private universities, in South-West, Nigeria.

Table 1: Distribution of Population of the Study

S/N	Universities	Sampe
1	University of Ibadan	96
2	Babcock University	29
3	Lead City University	20
4	Tai Solarin University of Education	30
	Sampe Size	175

Source: Directorate of Academic Planning, Quality Assurance and Research (DAPQAR) and Administrative Records Units.

Sample and Sampling Technique

A total enumeration sampling technique was used to capture LIS postgraduate students in the selected universities because the population was relatively small.

Research Instrument

The instrument for data collection was a self-constructed questionnaire. The questionnaire consist of two broad parts; Part A and part B. part A is on background and characteristic of the respondents while part B comprised relevant questions about the study under investigation.

Procedure for Data Collection

One hundred and seventy-five (175) copies of questionnaires were distributed in the selected universities, within the period of 2 weeks. The completed questionnaire was retrieved on the spot, after giving respondents enough time to fill the questionnaires.

Method of Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 26) was used to arrange and illustrate the data using mean and standard deviation.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the level of awareness of social media for research among LIS postgraduate students in public and private universities, in South-West, Nigeria?

Table 2: Level of awareness of social media for research

<i>Level of awareness</i>	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
Facebook	2.98	1.551	Significant
Google+	2.97	.381	Significant
ResearchGate	2.86	1.572	Significant
Academia	2.74	.761	Significant
Youtube	2.70	.667	Significant
ScienceStage	2.67	.539	Significant
Academia	2.64	.549	Significant
Twitter	2.60	.251	Significant
Blog	2.49	.504	Significant
RSS feeds	2.48	.648	Significant
Flicker	2.47	.021	Significant
School	2.46	.223	Significant
Wikis	2.43	.496	Significant
Online professional group	2.41	.784	Significant
Forum news group	2.41	.364	Significant
Linked in	2.38	.555	Significant
Myspace	2.37	.477	Significant
Epernicus	2.33	.366	Significant
Friendster	2.28	.452	Significant
ResearchID	2.00	.000	Significant
Zotero	1.74	.728	Non-Significant
Delicious	1.70	.367	Non-Significant
Hi5	1.69	.298	Non-Significant
Bebo	1.65	.209	Non-Significant
Dig	1.61	.556	Non-Significant
Methodspace	1.54	.743	Non-Significant
Mendeley	1.53	.504	Non-Significant
Moodle	1.52	.534	Non-Significant
LinkedIn	1.36	.484	Non-Significant
Average Mean	2.15		Significant

Decision: It has been adjudged that means score of $X=2.0$ and above is significant.

Table 2 shows that the average mean of 2.15 is greater than the accepted mean of 2.00 indicating that all the items of measuring the level of awareness of social media for research; the total of 20 items were significant while 9 items were non-significant. The results show a mean and standard deviation score of ($\chi = 2.98$) indicated Facebook, ($\chi = 2.97$) indicated Google+, ($\chi = 2.86$) indicated ResearchGate, ($\chi = 2.74$) indicated Academia, ($\chi = 2.70$) indicated Youtube, ($\chi = 2.67$) indicated ScienceStage, ($\chi = 2.64$) indicated Academia, ($\chi = 2.60$) indicated Twitter, ($\chi = 2.49$) indicated Blog. Thus, it could be inferred that there is high level of awareness of social media for research among LIS postgraduate students and the result is favourable to Facebook, Google+, ResearchGate, Academia, Youtube, ScienceStage, Twitter and Blog.

Research Question 2: What is the level of utilization of social media for research activities among LIS postgraduate students in public and private universities, South-West, Nigeria?

Table 3: Level of utilization of social media for research activities

<i>Level of utilization</i>	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
Google+	3.12	1.166	Significant
Facebook	3.12	.925	Significant
Youtube	3.10	.978	Significant
Wikis	3.06	1.067	Significant
ResearchGate	3.05	1.046	Significant
Academia	3.00	.923	Significant
ScienceStage	2.96	1.009	Significant
LinkedIn	2.86	1.226	Significant
Twitter	2.81	1.153	Significant
Blog	2.76	1.267	Significant
RSS feeds	2.73	1.277	Significant
Flicker	2.69	1.094	Significant
School	2.69	.920	Significant
ResearchID	2.68	1.218	Significant
Forum news group	2.66	1.025	Significant
Linked in	2.64	1.186	Significant
Myspace	2.63	1.281	Significant
Epernicus	2.63	.951	Significant
Mendeley	2.54	.601	Significant
Friendster	2.50	.852	Significant
Online professional group	2.49	.620	Non-Significant
Zotero	2.48	.602	Non-Significant
Delicious	2.46	.563	Non-Significant
Hi5	2.43	.716	Non-Significant
Bebo	2.43	.582	Non-Significant
Academia	2.38	1.155	Non-Significant
Dig	2.37	1.315	Non-Significant
Methodspace	2.37	1.148	Non-Significant
Moodle	2.30	1.074	Non-Significant
Average Mean	2.71		Significant

Decision: it has been adjudged that means score of $X=2.50$ and above is significant.

Table 3 shows that the average mean of 2.71 is greater than the accepted mean of 2.50 indicating that all the items of measuring the level of utilization of social media for research activities; the total of 20 items were significant while 9 items were non-significant. The results show a mean and standard deviation score of ($\chi = 3.12$) indicated Google+, ($\chi = 3.12$) indicated Facebook, ($\chi = 3.10$) indicated Youtube, ($\chi = 3.06$) indicated Wikis, ($\chi = 3.05$) indicated ResearchGate, ($\chi = 3.00$) indicated Academia, ($\chi = 2.96$) indicated ScienceStage, ($\chi = 2.86$) indicated LinkedIn, ($\chi = 2.81$) indicated Twitter, ($\chi = 2.76$) indicated Blog.

Thus, it could be inferred that there is high level of level of utilization of Social Media for research activities among LIS postgraduate students and the result is favourable to Google+, Facebook, Youtube, Wikis, ResearchGate, Academia, ScienceStage, LinkedIn, Twitter and Blog.

Research Question 3: What are the reasons for the preference of the use of social media for research activities among LIS postgraduate students in public and private universities, South-West, Nigeria?

Table 4: Reasons for the preference of the use of social media for research activities

ITEMS	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
Social media complements research as they provide me with links to other sites/resources that I can use for my research	3.74	.728	Significant
Sharing of research information is more convenient on social media	2.69	.556	Significant
I can easily get research assistance from other scholars/ colleagues on social media	2.64	.743	Significant
Sharing of research information is more convenient on social media	2.63	.504	Significant
Social media give my research more visibility as they are accessible to all others researchers in any part of the globe	2.61	.621	Significant
Cost of collaboration with other colleagues in doing research is relatively cheap	2.56	.670	Significant
I prefer using Social media as I get feedback/ responses from colleagues without delay on research related issues	2.53	.559	Significant
I prefer using Social media as contributions to knowledge can be shared through the micro-publishing opportunities that Social media sites offers	2.51	.484	Significant
Social media also make collaborative research activities easier than before as is not limited by space and is highly interactive	2.50	.527	Significant
Ideas received from comments to research postings assist me in conceptualising new research problems more quickly	2.23	.424	Non-Significant
Post-publishing comments of my enhances my subsequent research works	2.21	.487	Non-Significant
I prefer using social medias as it can give me opportunity to create research communities of my interest	2.18	.388	Non-Significant

It also give me opportunity to create communities of users for my research work	2.00	.000	Non-Significant
Average Mean	2.54		Significant

Decision: it has been adjudged that means score of $X=2.50$ and above is significant.

Table 4 shows that the average mean of 2.54 is greater than the accepted mean of 2.50 indicating that all the items of measuring reasons for the preference of the use of social media for research activities among LIS postgraduate students; the total of 9 items were significant while 4 items were non-significant. Hence, the major reasons for the preference of the use of social media for research activities among LIS postgraduate students are to provide them with links to other sites/resources that they can use for research; sharing of research information is more convenient on social media.

Research Question 4: What are the challenges faced by the LIS postgraduate students in public and private universities, in South-West, Nigeria in using social media for research activities?

Table 5: Challenges faced while using social media for research activities

Items	Frequency	Percentage(%)
Lack of institutional support	160	91.4
Low quality of shared content	158	90.3
Security issues	141	80.6
Threat of spam/ phishing attacks	135	77.1
They sometimes contain frivolous issues (banality)	131	74.9
Stealing of people's identity	129	73.7
Identification stealing	119	68.0
Copyright and intellectual property issues	114	65.1
Ownership of media content is not clear	108	61.7
It leads to information overload	96	54.9
Overabundance of information (information overload)	90	51.4
Trustworthiness and reliability of information presented	85	48.6
Lack of expertise on how to use for research	80	45.7
Cyber bullying	71	40.6
It wastes time	67	38.3
Time consuming	56	32.0
Privacy of research is undermined	50	28.6

Table 5 shows the challenges faced by the LIS postgraduate students in using social media for research activities and result shows that the most prevalent issue, reported by 91.4% of respondents, is a lack of institutional support, followed closely by concerns over the low quality of shared content (90.3%). Security issues (80.6%) and the threat of spam/phishing attacks (77.1%) are also substantial barriers. The major challenges faced by the LIS postgraduate students in using

social media for research activities are lack of institutional support, low quality of shared content, security issues, and threat of spam/phishing attacks.

Discussion of Findings

The findings showed that there is high level of awareness of social media for research among LIS postgraduate students and the results is favorable to Facebook, Google+, ResearchGate, Academia, Youtube, ScienceStage, Twitter, and Blog. This finding aligns with the study of Adekonojo, Ajiboye, and Adekonojo (2019), who found that postgraduate students are highly aware of various social media platforms, including WhatsApp, Email, and Twitter, and use them to engage in academic activities. Similarly, Moustapha (2022) reported that the majority of students are familiar with social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, and YouTube and often use them for academic purposes such as research, self-expression, and interaction with global peers.

The findings showed that there is a high level of utilization of social media for research activities among LIS postgraduate students and the result is favourable to Google+, Facebook, YouTube, Wikis, ResearchGate, Academia, Science Stage, LinkedIn, Twitter and Blog. This finding aligns with the study of Siddhartha et al. (2020), which suggested that a significant proportion of university students utilize social media for academic purposes, including research and educational growth. The study also highlighted the balanced perspective of students, acknowledging both the positive and negative aspects of social media use. In a similar vein, Moustapha (2022) emphasized the utility of social media platforms like Facebook and YouTube for academic purposes, particularly for information sharing and collaboration among students.

The findings showed that the major reasons for the preference of the use of social media for research activities among LIS postgraduate students are to provide them with links to other sites/resources that they can use for research; sharing of research information is more convenient on social media; research assistance is easily gotten from other scholars/colleagues on social media; social media gives research more visibility as they are accessible to all others researchers in any part of the globe; cost of collaboration with other colleagues in doing research is relatively cheap. This finding aligns with the study of Adekonojo, Ajiboye, and Adekonojo (2019), which identified that postgraduate students utilize social media for various academic activities, including

group discussions, resource sharing, and networking. The study noted that social media platforms are preferred for their ability to easily connect students with others, facilitating access to current resources and research assistance. Similarly, Aghadiuno, Amidu, and Zaccheaus (2021) emphasized the role of social media in promoting collaboration among researchers, providing visibility to academic work, and reducing the cost of collaboration.

The findings showed that the major challenges faced by the LIS postgraduate students in using social media for research activities are lack of institutional support, low quality of shared content and security issues. This finding aligns with the study of Nannim et al. (2023), which highlighted the challenges faced by students in using social media, including concerns over the quality of shared content and the absence of institutional policies regulating its use. Similarly, Moustapha (2022) noted that while social media is popular among students, challenges such as security concerns and the low quality of information shared on these platforms hinder their full utilization for academic purposes.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It is concluded that there is high level of awareness and utilization of social media for research among LIS postgraduate students, which is favourable to Facebook, Google+, ResearchGate, Academia, Youtube, ScienceStage, Twitter, Blog, RSS feeds, Flickr, Schools and Wikis. Moreover, the reasons for the preference of the use of social media for research activities are to provide them with links to other sites/resources that they can use for research; sharing of research information is more convenient on social media; research assistance is easily gotten from other scholars/colleagues on social media. In line with this, the major purpose which LIS postgraduate students use social media for in research activities are to download research works on internet, contribute to ongoing research / academic debate; share photos, video and slide on research, communicate research output and upload research papers on internet. The major social media mostly used for research activities among the LIS postgraduate students are Google+, Facebook, YouTube, Wikis, and ResearchGate.

The following recommendations were made:

1. The level of awareness and utilization of LIS postgraduate students on various social media that could enhance their research productivity should be raised
2. There should be institutional support for the use of social media for academic/research purposes. There should be a clear policy in place about the use of social media for academic/research purposes as against the current situation where the LIS postgraduate students are using based on self-initiative
3. Social media conferences and workshops should be organized for LIS postgraduate students at all levels especially those in the university on how to integrate social media tools, platforms, and other internet tools into their academic/research lives
4. LIS postgraduate students should change their orientation about the social media and use them more for research as this can give them more visibility, help them to connect with other researchers across the globe, communicate research output, upload and download research works on the internet, and contribute to the ongoing research/academic debate

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