

Secondary School Students' Perceived Influence of WhatsApp Social Media on Academic Performance in the English Language in Osun State

Ola Tokunbo Odekeye 1*
Jubril Busuyi Fakokunde 2**
Adebola Oludiji Alaba 3***
Rukayat Oyebola Iwintolu 4****

Abstract

This study examined the perceived influence of WhatsApp social media on students' learning outcomes in the English Language in Osun State. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population for the study comprised all senior secondary school students in Osun State. A simple random sampling technique was used to select 200 students as the respondents. A Self-developed questionnaire with a reliability coefficient of 0.8 was used for data collection. Data were analyzed using frequency count, percentage, standard deviation, and t-test. The study revealed that students for both academic and non-academic purposes use the WhatsApp social media platform. It further showed that WhatsApp usage does not affect negatively students' academic performance in the English Language except in the case of addiction. The findings further revealed that there is no significant difference in the perceived influence of WhatsApp social media on students' academic performance in the English Language based on gender. It was recommended that Students should be advised to utilize WhatsApp social media to promote their academic performance and school counselors should organize seminars for students on the dangers of using WhatsApp for non-academic purposes based on its effect on academic performance.

Keywords: Academic performance, English language, perceived influence, WhatsApp Social Media.

1. Introduction

Integration of technological tools in the 21st century has brought a unified focus on how to improve student learning outcome and their attitude to learning because the learning method has changed from the traditional method to the digital communication method (Pate, 2019). Technologies and their uses have made significant changes in 21st-century education. Advancement in technology has led to a paradigm shift from a teacher-centered classroom to a student-centered classroom where the teacher moves from a knowledge holder to a learning mentor to manage diverse discourses, improve students' learning outcomes as well as stimulate their intellectual capacities.

Social media has become one of the most commonly and widely used teaching and learning platforms around the world. Technology has immensely influenced human lives, and the use of WhatsApp platforms creates a huge response to learning development in education (Izyani & Mohammed, 2016). WhatsApp is one of the social media platforms easily accessible by many students because of its low internet data subscriptions. WhatsApp is a cross-platform designed for instant messages application

* Osun State University, Osogbo, Osun State; e-mail: ola.odekeye@uniosun.edu.ng

** Osun State University, Osogbo, Osun State; e-mail: jubril.fakokunde@uniosun.edu.ng

*** Osun State University, Osogbo, Osun State; email: adebola.alaba@uniosun.edu.ng

**** Osun State University, Osogbo, Osun State; email: rukayat.iwintolu@uniosun.edu.ng

from smartphones. Calls are made with the internet (audio and video calls), text messages, documents, files, images, videos, and audio can be sent through WhatsApp to individual or group platforms (Church & De Oliveira, 2013). It has become so popular that it handled over 10 billion messages per day coupled with the availability of broadband internet connectivity across the world. WhatsApp application has become a popular learning tool and the choice of most students all over the world because it allows students to send unlimited messages to their friends, classmates, family members, and others (Jisha & Jebakumar, 2014).

Relevant Information, education, news, and other data are easily accessible through WhatsApp status, which is the most popular feature, used among students. Although, there are many other social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Blogs, Twitter, Myspace or LinkedIn (Lusk, 2010). WhatsApp remains the most effective teaching and learning tool because it is affordable due to its cost (Church & De Oliveira, 2013). A study conducted by Telenor (2016) as cited by (Izyani & Mohammed, 2016) revealed that apart from WhatsApp, there are other applications for instant messaging such as Telegram, WeChat, Viber, LINE, and email. The study further showed that about 97% of students are using WhatsApp almost every day. Another study conducted in India by Kumar and Sharma, (2017) asserted that students spend a considerable amount of time on the WhatsApp platform and remain online for almost 16 hours per day. The result reveals that students use WhatsApp for communicating with their friends in exchanging images, audio, and video files thereby attesting to student's commitment to the use of the WhatsApp platform.

Oyero (2021) complemented the above assertion based on his finding that the most used social media platform in Nigeria as of 2020 is WhatsApp ranking at 93% above others. Nuuyoma, Mhlope, and Chihururu (2020) also affirmed the popularity of WhatsApp platform usage among university students for general purposes as well as communication, collaborative, and transactional tools in the teaching and learning process. One of the benefits of using WhatsApp is to facilitate blended learning among teachers and students because it encourages online and offline collaboration and cooperation; WhatsApp is a free application that allows two or more people to be connected easily online to share knowledge through comments, texting, audio and video (Oyero, 2021).

The English Language is a compulsory subject offered at all higher education and secondary school levels. The English Language is used for admission into any tertiary institution in Nigeria and all over the world. In today's modern world, the English language plays a key role in shaping how individuals deal with various spheres of life because it has become part of every existing field.

According to Njoku (2017), the English language remains invaluable in Nigeria's education system since it plays a prominent role in institutional delivery upon which human development is anchored. According to the author, it is a language of communication in the teaching-learning process from upper primary education up to tertiary education; thereby making it germane in the political, and socio-economic development of the country.

Despite the importance of the English Language in our society, students' performance in both internal and external examinations remains very poor and this has been a major concern to all education stakeholders. In spite of introducing in-service training, workshops, and seminars for English Language teachers, and the provision of all necessary teaching-learning materials, students learning outcome still remains very poor. This implies that there are many other factors at play that need to be further investigated (Karspinski, 2009).

There is this notion that people around the globe have been addicted to the internet (Kuss & Lopez- Fernandez, 2016) which has given rise to more students using WhatsApp social media more often than before. Students prefer to spend their time chatting, watching videos online, and doing online shopping instead of studying or reading their books, which may have a negative influence on their academic performance. According to Karspinski (2012), social media has a negative effect on students'

achievement in the English Language as students tend to use the short form of words instead of spelling out the actual word which may get them used to and hinder their English-speaking and writing skills. Many students have, however, lost their writing abilities due to their level of WhatsApp social media usage (Kolhar, 2021). According to Ndaku (2013), the use of social media among secondary school students has reached high levels and has affected their study time, usage of grammar, word spelling, and academic performance. In addition, Yeboah and Ewur (2014) claimed that WhatsApp has an effect on students' academic performance.

Students' perception of the influence of WhatsApp social media on academic performance can also be examined through gender perceptions. According to Volkovich, Kappler, and Kaltenbrunner (2014), gender has been discovered to play a unique role in understanding people's perception in the adoption and usage of technologies. Bujala (2012) found out that males are more likely to have more time for social networking due to gender expectations and roles.

2. Problem Statement

For decades it has become customary for educational researchers everywhere in the world to attribute the causes of students' academic performance to factors that are mainly contextual in nature, such as instructional materials, teaching methods, parental support, teachers' competence level, and learning environments but hardly does it occur to many that the recent students' exposure to social media could also be a major factor that can affect their academic performance.

Among others, one of the factors that have been associated with the steady decline in the quality of students' academic performance and attitudes to learning in recent times is the excessive time spent on social media by students, especially on WhatsApp social media being the most commonly used among others. It is a general belief that most secondary school students not only have WhatsApp social media accounts but are also addicted to using them.

Many secondary school students are also tempted to abandon or ignore their homework and other school activities in preference for chatting online with friends on the WhatsApp platform, which may affect their academic performance in the English language. Thus, this drew the interest to conduct this study by asking the students why they use WhatsApp social media and their perceptions of the influence of WhatsApp social media on their academic performance in the English Language.

2.1 Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to be answered in the paper:

1. What are the purposes of using WhatsApp social media by senior secondary school students?
2. What are the perceived impacts of WhatsApp social media on senior secondary school students' academic performance in the English Language?

2.2 Hypothesis

HO1: There is no significant difference in the perceived influence of WhatsApp social media on students' academic performance in the English Language based on gender.

3. Methodology

A descriptive survey method was employed for the study. The population for the study comprised all senior secondary school students in Oshogbo Local Government Area of Osun State, Nigeria. The local government is the largest local government in the state with over 120 public and private senior secondary schools. Five public and five private senior secondary schools located in different educational zones with relatively similar characteristics in terms of location, school population, and school facilities were randomly selected for the study. 200 students in year two senior secondary school (SS2) were randomly selected for the study. 53% of the participants were selected from public schools while 47% were from private schools. An instrument titled "Perceived Influence of WhatsApp Social Media on Students' Academic Performance in the English Language" (PIWSSAPE) was developed and used for data collection. The questionnaire comprised two sections (A&B). Section "A" was used to elicit the respondent's demographic information. Section "B" captured information based on the research questions. The items were measured on a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly Disagree" scored (1) to "Strongly Agree" scored (4) for positively scored items; while a reverse in the scoring was done for the negatively scored items. The instrument was pilot-tested by administering the instrument to twenty-five students from one selected secondary school in Osogbo Local Government Area of Osun State that was not part of the schools that eventually participated in the study. PIWSSAPE was subjected to measures of internal consistency. Cronbach Alpha, Split-half and Spearman-Brown were used to test the degree of internal consistency of the (PIWSSAPE). From the result, the reliability coefficients obtained from Cronbach, Alpha, Split-half, and Spearman-Brown are 0.87, 0.72 and 0.83. Copies of the questionnaire were distributed by the researchers to the respondents and retrieved immediately. The data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics in finding the mean and standard deviation.

3.1. Procedure

The participants were given anonymity and made to understand that the result generated from the questionnaires would be made confidential and would not term affect them in any way. They were also informed that the primary objective of the study was to help improve the quality of education through the use of social media. The researchers sought permission to conduct the study from the school authorities, the team then created a friendly atmosphere which made the respondents feel relaxed and participated (this was done with the assistance of the English Language teachers and the school vice principal). Another important phase of the study was that all the respondents were made to sign an attestation report on the questionnaire during the quantitative data-gathering exercise that conveyed permission of participation to do so under the school authority.

3.2. Results

Table 1. Analysis of the Purpose of Using WhatsApp Social Media by Secondary School Students in Osun State

S/N	ITEMS	RESPONSE							
		Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1.	Students use WhatsApp social media for assignments and group discussions towards the better achievements.	86	43.0%	49	24.5%	23	11.5%	42	21.0%
2.	Most students spend their reading time chatting on WhatsApp social media.	73	36.5%	67	33.5%	42	21.0%	18	9.0%
3.	WhatsApp social media is used by students to improve their reading culture.	62	31.0%	66	33.0%	44	22.0%	28	14.0%

4.	WhatsApp social media is used by students to promote their retention of academic work.	118 59.0%	44 22.0%	28 14.0%	10 5.0%
5.	WhatsApp social media is used to promote spelling ability in English Language.	96 48.0%	71 35.5%	22 11.0%	11 5.5%
6.	WhatsApp social media is use for educative purposes by students.	101 50.5%	78 39.0%	13 6.5%	8 4.0%
7.	WhatsApp social media is used by students to develop themselves intellectually.	71 35.5%	86 43.0%	28 14.0%	15 7.5%
8.	WhatsApp social media is used to boost students' confidence and enthusiasm towards school work.	99 49.5%	66 33.0%	24 12.0%	11 5.5%
9.	WhatsApp social media is mainly used for information dissemination by students.	106 53.0%	67 33.5%	18 9.0%	9 4.5%
10.	WhatsApp social media is used to encourage skimming by students.	85 42.5%	76 38.0%	21 10.5%	18 9.0%

Table 1 shows that 67.5% of the respondents agreed that they use WhatsApp social media for assignments and group discussions towards better achievement while 32.5% disagreed. 70.0% of the respondents also agreed that most students spend their reading time chatting on WhatsApp social media while 30.0% disagreed. 64.0% of the respondents agreed that most students spend their reading time chatting on WhatsApp social media while 36% of the respondents did not agree. 81.0% of the respondents agreed that students promote their retention of academic work while 19% of the respondents did not agree on the use of WhatsApp social media. 83.5% of the respondents agreed that WhatsApp social media is used to promote spelling ability in English Language students while 16.5% did not agree. 89.5% of the respondents agreed that WhatsApp social media are used for educative purposes while 10.5% of the respondents did not agree. 78.5% of the respondents agreed that WhatsApp social media is used for intellectual development while 11.5% of the respondents did not agree. 82.5% of the respondents agreed that WhatsApp social media is used to boost students' confidence and enthusiasm towards schoolwork while 17.5% did not agree. 86.5% of the respondents agreed that students mainly use WhatsApp social media for information dissemination while 13.5% did not agree. 20.0% of the respondents did not agree that WhatsApp social media is used to encourage skimming by students while 80.0% of the respondents agreed. It can be deduced from the table that students use WhatsApp social media for both educational and non-educational purposes.

Table 2. Impacts of WhatsApp Social Media on Secondary School Students' Academic Performance in the English Language in Osun State

S/N	ITEMS	RESPONSE							
		Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	The use of WhatsApp social media assists students in acquiring relevant knowledge of the English Language.	109	54.5%	78	39.0%	4	2.0%	9	4.5%
2	Addition to the use of WhatsApp social media reduces students' attention in English Language class	87	43.5%	71	35.5%	32	16.0%	10	5.0%
3	Students with good reading culture always perform better than students spending time on WhatsApp social media	56	28.0%	59	29.5%	49	24.5%	36	18.0%
4	WhatsApp social media usage by students does not affect their study time in English Language	64	32.0%	57	28.5%	48	24.0%	31	15.5%
5	WhatsApp social media encourage rote learning in English Language	126	63.0%	50	25.0%	8	4.0%	16	8.0%

6	Sometimes the uses of WhatsApp social media among students contribute to wrong spellings of words and poor grammar.	108 54.0%	33 16.5%	20 10.0%	39 19.5%
7	Students prefer to read the information on WhatsApp social media than their book	112 56.0%	42 21.0%	12 6.0%	34 17.0%
8	WhatsApp social media provide an avenue for new discovery	73 36.5%	100 50.0%	13 6.5%	14 7.0%
9	WhatsApp social media help to read additional materials outside the classroom.	121 60.5%	59 29.5%	12 6.0%	8 4.0%
10	Students make use of WhatsApp social media to disseminate knowledge to their classmate	82 41.0%	84 42.0%	17 8.5%	17 8.5%
11	Students who spend more time on WhatsApp social media are more likely to perform poorly in English Language than those who do not	21 10.5%	23 11.5%	103 51.5%	53 26.5%

Table 2 shows that 93.5% of the respondents agreed that the use of WhatsApp social media assist students in acquiring relevant knowledge while 6.5% of the respondents did not agree. 79% of the respondents agreed that addiction to the use of WhatsApp social media reduces students’ attention in English Language class while 21% disagreed. 57.5% agreed that students with good reading culture always perform better than students spending time on WhatsApp social media while 42.5% disagreed. 60% of the respondents agreed that WhatsApp social media usage by students does not affect their study time in English Language while 40% is of the opposite view. 88.0% of the respondents agreed that WhatsApp social media encourages rote learning while 22.0% did not agree. The result also shows that 70.5% of the respondents agreed that the use of WhatsApp social media among students sometimes contributes to wrong spellings of words and poor grammar while others did not agree. 77.0% of the respondents agreed that students prefer to read the information on WhatsApp social media than their books while 23% of the respondents did not agree. 86.5% agreed that WhatsApp social media provides an avenue for new discovery while others did not agree. 90.0% of the respondents agreed that WhatsApp social media helps to read additional materials outside the classroom while 10.0% did not agree. 83.0% agreed that students make use of WhatsApp social media to disseminate knowledge to their classmates while 17.0% did not agree. 22.0% of the respondents agreed that students who spend more time on WhatsApp social media are more likely to perform poorly in their academic activities than those who do not while 88.0% did not agree. It can be inferred from the table that the use of WhatsApp social media by students has both negative and positive impacts on their academic performance in the English Language.

Table 3. T-Test Statistics of Gender Difference on the Perceived Influence of WhatsApp Social Media on Secondary School Students’ Academic Performance in the English Language

	N	Mean	S. D	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Remark
Male	112	23.16	3.93	2.06	198	0.71	Not significant
Female	88	23.51	5.07				

Table 3 presents the t-test statistics of gender differences in the perceived influence of WhatsApp social media on students’ academic performance in the English language. It revealed that 112 respondents were males with a mean score of 23.16 and a standard deviation of 3.93 while 88 of them were females with a mean score of 23.51 and standard deviation of 5.07 and a t-value of 2.06. The result of the independent t-test shows that there is no significant difference in the perceived influence of WhatsApp social media on students’ academic performance in the English language based on their gender.

3.3. Discussion

The present study investigated the perceived influence of WhatsApp social media usage on the academic performance of secondary school students and their perception based on gender. This study was performed amongst 200 students, of whom 56% were male, and 44% were female. The study reveals that the only application that the youth uses when they are spending time on their smartphone is WhatsApp. This finding agrees with Akomolafe (2019) which shows that most of the students are always engaged in social media. The result from Table 1 showed that most students use WhatsApp social media for assignments and group discussions towards better academic achievement. The results further indicated that the students agreed that they were more engaged with assignments that had WhatsApp embedded. This also agrees with Dangana's research (2016) which concluded that social media is a special platform that influences students' academic performance.

Findings on the impact of WhatsApp social media on secondary school students' academic achievement in the English Language revealed that there are more positive impacts than negative impacts on their studies. The findings, therefore, agree with the result of Petrović et al. (2012). This finding is a clue that secondary school students should be encouraged in their use of WhatsApp social media for academic purposes to acquire relevant knowledge of the English Language. The findings also showed that WhatsApp social media can be used positively to improve the students' reading culture. These results buttressed the study by Alhabbash (2012).

Findings on the gender difference in the perceived influence of WhatsApp social media by the students revealed that there was no significant difference in the perception of male and female students. These findings contradicted that of Rungta (2015) who indicated that gender influences the usage of WhatsApp social media.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

WhatsApp social media platform has an intense reaction and this can assist in facilitating the students learning. The study showed social media platform is used by students for both academic and non-academic purposes and does not influence negatively students' academic performance in the English Language except in the case of addiction. The study, therefore, recommended conducting research in the same field to understand the teachers' perceptions about the usage of WhatsApp for academic purposes and students should be advised to utilize WhatsApp social media to promote their academic performance. The study also recommended that school counselors should organize seminars and workshops for students on the dangers of using WhatsApp platforms for non-academic purposes based on their effect on academic performance.

5. Limitations of the Study

The current study had some limitations. This study was conducted among 200 English Language students from ten secondary schools in Osogbo Local Government area of Osun state so the result cannot be generalized for all the secondary school students in Nigeria.

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