



UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' AWARENESS AND UTILISATION OF LINKEDIN SOCIAL NETWORKING TOOL FOR LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT IN ONDO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examines university students' awareness and utilization of LinkedIn social networking tool for learning and engagement in Ondo State Nigeria. The sample population consisted of 270 students randomly selected from three public universities in Ondo State. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The instrument used in the study was a self-developed questionnaire titled Students' Awareness and Utilisation of LinkedIn Networking Tool Questionnaire (SAULNTQ). The instrument was validated and a reliability coefficient of 0.78 was obtained. Two research questions and one research hypothesis were generated for the study. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while Pearson product-moment correlation was used to test the research hypothesis. The findings revealed that University students' awareness of LinkedIn social networking tool was very high with a mean rating of 3.13, using 2.45 as the decision rule. It was also revealed in the study that university students' level of utilization of LinkedIn social networking tools was very high. The study also revealed that there was no significant relationship between university students' level of awareness and utilization of LinkedIn social networking tools ($N = 100$; $r = .020$; $p > 0.05$). The study therefore recommends that university authorities should further organize training and development programs to enhance students' skills and knowledge on utilizing LinkedIn effectively, especially for learning and engagement in Nigerian universities. It was also recommended that university authorities should encourage collaboration among students to share best practices and innovative approaches for using LinkedIn in teaching.

Keywords: awareness, LinkedIn. Utilization, university students

Introduction

Modern technology in communication has no doubt assisted in serving as a means of connecting people and as a medium of interaction in the social world and educational arena. Consequently, higher education has been exploring the exciting opportunities that technologies have brought to institutions, educators, and students. As a result, there has been rapid growth in the availability and uptake of online teaching and learning by many colleges and universities. Technology has changed the way people interact and has brought about the emergence of an open social platform in the form of social media. This allows people to easily connect, thereby making the world a global village. The advent of social media has impacted significantly students both in their academic and social lives as a means of making connections for various purposes. LinkedIn is one of the professional social media network sites that is thriving and



attracting students, educators, and professionals from around the world today. Keenan and Shiri, (2009) define LinkedIn as a business networking site that focuses on professional users creating and building a network of colleagues and other business connections. LinkedIn was created in 2003 as a networking site for professionals to connect virtually, without having to be in the same physical location. Since going public in May 2011, LinkedIn has incorporated many new features, such as a newsfeed, user content, and the ability to follow professionals, improving user engagement and time spent on the site. LinkedIn has many capabilities that facilitate the type of networking that students must engage in to find internships, jobs and make professional connections. The website uses statistical techniques to connect or link users with potential contacts and relevant groups (Albrecht, 2011).

LinkedIn as a social networking tool has become increasingly popular in recent years, and educators are discovering many benefits it offers. One of the most significant benefits of LinkedIn in education especially in learning and engagement is that it helps the students to post and share relevant information about their courses (Cooper & Naatus (2014)). Burke & Kraut (2016) also state that LinkedIn allows students to monitor how people are engaging with the content posted and shared. The use of LinkedIn social networking helps to give professional orientation with millions of expert conversations and shared insights being exchanged every day (Lucero-Romero & Arias-Bolzmann 2020). McCorkle & McCorkle (2012) also avers that LinkedIn can offer some advantages of an open social network environment, such as the availability of extensive and qualitative business-oriented content which could be used as a source of inspiration and a possibility to openly publish a post via LinkedIn Publishing Platform. Basak & Calisir (2014) further claimed that LinkedIn and other social networking tools can be used to increase student engagement and collaboration during class and beyond. It is clear from the competitive job market that LinkedIn helps business-oriented students to work on their brand and how they market themselves to potential employers (Vitelar 2019). In addition, LinkedIn helps students form and strengthen their brand and allows them to shape the message they are sending in any way they wish. LinkedIn allows students to highlight key areas of education or experience to potential employers in the field they wish to work. Hood, Robles & Hopkins (2014) claimed that LinkedIn social networking allows learners to share their documents and digital materials positively, influence discussion, and peer review learners. Learner's posts, updates, and comments on learning topics allow peer-reviewing to be easier.

Awareness is one of the key factors affecting the effective utilization of technology especially LinkedIn in education. Awareness according to Akpojotor (2016), is the individual's knowledge or perception of a situation, facts, consciousness, recognition, realization, grasp and acknowledgment, concern about, and well-informed interest. Guha (2019) also describes awareness as the state of consciousness of a thing. Awareness to a large extent can determine whether an individual will accept or reject such a thing. For students in tertiary education institutions to utilize LinkedIn platforms for instructional delivery, they must be aware of it, and understand its characteristics, advantages, and use processes.

However, the relationship between awareness and the use of technology for learning and engagement has been an issue of debate among experts. This study therefore examines university students' awareness and utilization of LinkedIn social networking tool for learning and engagement in Ondo State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised and answered in the study:

- i. What is the university students' level of awareness of LinkedIn social networking tool for learning and engagement in Ondo State?



- ii. What is the university students’ level of utilization of LinkedIn social networking tool for learning and engagement in Ondo State?

Research Hypothesis

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between university students’ level of awareness and utilization of LinkedIn social networking tool in Ondo State.

Methodology

A descriptive survey research design was adopted in this study. The sample population consisted of 270 university students randomly selected from three public universities in Ondo State. Ondo State was divided into three senatorial districts (Ondo South, North, and Central). One public University was randomly selected in each of the senatorial districts. Ninety students were randomly selected in each of the sampled schools, making a total of 270 participants for the study. The instrument for this study was the researcher’s self-developed questionnaire titled ‘Students’ Awareness and Utilisation of LinkedIn Networking Tool Questionnaire (SAULNTQ). The instrument was divided into three sections A-D. Section A focuses on demographic information covering the participants’ gender, school, and location. Section B consisted of ten question items eliciting information on students’ awareness of LinkedIn social networking tool for learning and engagement. Section C focuses on students’ utilization of LinkedIn Social networking tool for learning and engagement. A 4-point Likert Scale response modes: Strongly Agree (SA = 4), Agree (A = 3), Disagree (D = 2) and Strongly Disagree (SD = 1) was used. Face and content validation of the instrument was carried out by an expert in test measurement and evaluation from the Department of Educational Foundation and Counselling Ekiti State University Ado Ekiti. To ensure that the instrument has the accuracy, appropriateness, and completeness for the study. The Cronbach Alpha technique was used to determine the level of reliability of the instrument. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.78 and this was considered to be high enough to justify the use of the instrument. The researcher subjected the data generated for this study to mean score and standard deviation for answering the research questions while Pearson product-moment correlation was used in testing the hypothesis. The significance test was done at 0.05 alpha levels.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the university students’ level of awareness of LinkedIn social networking tool for learning and engagement in Ondo State?

Table 1: Students' Awareness of LinkedIn as a social networking tool for engagement and collaboration

| Item | SA | A | D | SD | Mean | Std. D |
|--|----|----|----|----|------|--------|
| I know the potential benefits of LinkedIn for learning and engagement purposes. | 59 | 15 | 16 | 10 | 3.23 | 1.05 |
| I am familiar with the features and tools available on LinkedIn that can be utilized for learning and engagement purposes. | 37 | 25 | 21 | 17 | 2.82 | 1.11 |
| I believe that platforms like LinkedIn can enhance student’s learning and engagement. | 66 | 5 | 26 | 3 | 3.34 | .96 |
| I am likely to incorporate LinkedIn or similar | 61 | 27 | 3 | 9 | 3.40 | .92 |



| | | | | | | |
|--|----|----|----|----|------|-------------|
| platforms for learning and engagement purposes. | | | | | | |
| Platforms like LinkedIn are effective in facilitating networking and engagement among students. | 47 | 25 | 9 | 19 | 3.00 | 1.15 |
| I often used LinkedIn to share and post insightful information. | 44 | 34 | 19 | 3 | 3.19 | .85 |
| University students are well-informed about the benefits of LinkedIn for online learning and engagement opportunities. | 27 | 43 | 25 | 5 | 2.92 | .85 |
| I have attended training or workshops related to the use of the LinkedIn online learning tool. | 53 | 25 | 5 | 17 | 3.14 | 1.12 |
| I frequently explore the available business-oriented courses on the LinkedIn online learning platform. | 33 | 50 | 13 | 4 | 3.12 | .78 |
| I actively sought information about the LinkedIn online learning tool on my own. | 37 | 40 | 18 | 5 | 3.09 | .86 |
| Weighted Average | | | | | | 3.13 |

decision value for remark: *low*=0.00-2.44, *high* = 2.45-4.00

Table 1, shows the extent to which university students in Ondo State are aware of the educational potential and benefits offered by platforms like LinkedIn for learning and engagement purposes. the table shows that the students agreed to all the items as follows: know the potential benefits of linkedin for learning and engagement purposes ($\bar{x} = 3.23$), they familiar with the features and tools available on linkedin that can be utilized for learning and engagement purposes ($\bar{x} = 2.82$), believe that platforms like linkedin can enhance the students' learning and engagement ($\bar{x} = 3.34$), they are likely to incorporate linkedin or similar platforms for learning and engagement purposes ($\bar{x} = 3.40$), platforms like linkedin are effective in facilitating networking and engagements among students ($\bar{x} = 3.00$), they often used linkedin to share and post insightful information ($\bar{x} = 3.19$), university students are well-informed about the existence of linkedin as online learning tool ($\bar{x} = 2.92$), they have attended training or workshops related to the use of the linkedin online learning tool ($\bar{x} = 3.14$), they frequently explore the available courses on the linkedin online learning platform ($\bar{x} = 3.18$), and actively sought information about the linkedin online learning tool on their own ($\bar{x} = 2.15$). meanwhile, based on the value of the weighted average (3.13 out of 4.00 maximum value obtainable) which falls, within the decision value for high, it can be inferred that the extent to which university students in ondo state aware of LinkedIn social networking tool for engagement and collaboration purposes is high.

Research Question 2: What is the university students’ level of utilization of LinkedIn social networking tools for learning and engagement in Ondo state?

Table 2: Lecturers’ Level of Utilization of LinkedIn social Networking tool

| Item | SA | A | D | SD | Mean | Std. D | |
|--|-----|-----|-----|----|------|-------------|--|
| I often use LinkedIn to engage with other professionals online. | 84 | 114 | 27 | 45 | 2.87 | 1.04 | |
| I often use LinkedIn social networking to share my profile. | 173 | 27 | 43 | 27 | 3.28 | 1.06 | |
| I often use LinkedIn to participate in business discussions or forums. | 140 | 59 | 45 | 26 | 3.15 | 1.02 | |
| I often post and share important information about my course on LinkedIn. | 109 | 35 | 50 | 76 | 2.66 | 1.26 | |
| I always explore LinkedIn Learning resources for learning my courses. | 120 | 73 | 34 | 43 | 3.00 | 1.10 | |
| I regularly update my course materials based on the latest content available on LinkedIn Learning. | 109 | 128 | 33 | 0 | 3.28 | .67 | |
| I have fully integrated the features of the LinkedIn social networking tool for learning and engagement purposes online. | 163 | 42 | 49 | 16 | 3.31 | .97 | |
| I effectively integrate LinkedIn to share information about my academic work and future career. | 150 | 58 | 62 | 0 | 3.33 | .83 | |
| I often used LinkedIn to update and monitor the performance of my networking page. | 72 | 48 | 122 | 28 | 2.61 | .99 | |
| I often use LinkedIn to monitor how people are engaging with the content shared and posted. | 89 | 59 | 92 | 30 | 2.77 | 1.03 | |
| Weighted Average | | | | | | 3.03 | |

Decision Value for Remark: *Low*=0.00-2.44, *High* = 2.45-4.00

Table 2, shows university students’ level of utilization of LinkedIn social networking tool for learning and engagement. The table shows that the students agreed to all the items on the table. " I have fully integrated the features of the LinkedIn social networking tool for learning and engagement online (\bar{x} = 3.31), while " I often use LinkedIn to update and monitor the performances of my networking page had the lowest mean score (\bar{x} = 2.61). Meanwhile, based on the value of the weighted average (3.04 out of 4.00 maximum value obtainable) which falls, within the decision value for high, it can be inferred that the university students’ level of utilization of LinkedIn social networking tool for learning and engagement in Ondo State is high.



Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between university students’ level of awareness and utilization of LinkedIn social networking tool in Ondo State.

Table 3: Summary of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Showing Relationship between Awareness and Utilization of LinkedIn by Students

| Variable | Mean | Std. D | N | R | Sig(p) | Remark |
|-------------|-------|--------|-----|------|--------|-----------------|
| Awareness | 31.25 | 4.73 | 100 | .020 | .845 | Not Significant |
| Utilization | 30.34 | 3.17 | | | | |

Table 3 shows the relationship between university students’ awareness and utilization of LinkedIn social networking tool in Ondo State. The table shows that there was no significant relationship between university students’ level of awareness and utilization of LinkedIn social networking tool (N = 100; r = .020; p>0.05). Hence, hypothesis 1 is accepted.

Discussion

From research question one, the results show that university students’ level of awareness of LinkedIn social networking tool for learning and engagement is very high in Ondo State. This is evident as almost all the respondents claimed that they know the potential benefits of LinkedIn for learning and engagement, they are familiar with the features and tools available on LinkedIn that can be utilized for learning and engagement, and they believe that platforms like LinkedIn can enhance the students’ learning and engagement, they likely to incorporate LinkedIn or similar platforms for learning and engagement in the future, they often engage in business collaboration with other colleagues through social networking platforms such as LinkedIn, they frequently explore the available business oriented courses on the LinkedIn online learning platform and the actively sought information about the LinkedIn online learning tool on their own. This finding is in line with the claim of Vitelar (2019) who found that a high level of students’ awareness of social media such as LinkedIn increased students’ use of such platforms for instructional delivery, engagement, and effective learning in tertiary institutions.

From research question two, the results show that university students’ level of utilization of LinkedIn social networking tool in Ondo State was high. The majority of the students agreed to all the items as follows: they often use LinkedIn for engaging with others for professional development online, they often use LinkedIn social networking to share their profile, they use LinkedIn to post and share relevant information about their courses, they frequently incorporate digital tools, including social media platforms like LinkedIn, in their courses and assignments, they always explore LinkedIn Learning resources for learning of their courses and they often use LinkedIn to monitor how people are engaging with the contents shared and posted This study is in agreement with the findings of Lucero-Romero & Arias-Bolzmann (2020) who in their investigation find out low level of utilization of web-based learning in tertiary institutions in Ondo State.

In research hypothesis one, the study revealed that there was no significant relationship between students’ awareness and utilization of LinkedIn social networking tool in Ondo State. This implies that awareness has no significant effect on students’ level of utilization of LinkedIn social networking tool in Ondo State. This result is not in agreement with Tarazi & Ruiz-Cecilia (2023) who reported that awareness has a



significant relationship with students' level of utilization of social media for engagement and instructional delivery in higher education.

Conclusion

Based on the reviewed relevant literature and the findings of this study, it was concluded that the University students' awareness of LinkedIn social networking tools in Ondo State was high. While their level of utilization of LinkedIn social networking tool was also very high. Therefore, the teaching and learning process in universities should embrace various innovative and online learning technologies such as LinkedIn social networking tools, especially in this digital age.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and implications of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Institutions should organize training and development programs to enhance students' skills and knowledge on utilizing LinkedIn social networking tools effectively.
2. Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of LinkedIn integration in teaching practices through feedback mechanisms and assessment of learning outcomes. This will help identify areas for improvement and inform future strategies.

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