Influence of Social Media on Reading Culture among Nigerian Polytechnic Students

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Author's contribution

The sole author designed, analysed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

Original Research Article

ABSTRACT

This original research paper investigated the influence of social media on reading culture among polytechnic students in Nigeria. The study was aimed at examining the reading habits of polytechnic students in order to discover the benefits of reading, hinderances to reading, social media habits and extent of social media influence on reading culture. The study is a descriptive survey research which investigated polytechnic students at the National Diploma and the Higher National Diploma levels in all Federal and State Government owned Polytechnics in Edo and Delta States namely, Auchi Polytechnic (350) National Institute of Construction Technology and Management Uromi (50), Edo State Polytechnic Usen (250), Delta State Polytechnic Ogwashi-Uku (300), Delta State Polytechnic Otefe-Oghara (300), Delta State Polytechnic Ozoro (250). The structured questionnaire was used for data collection. Research assistants were recruited to assist in the administration of questionnaires on respondents and retrieval of same from them. 1460 completed questionnaires were returned representing 97.3%. Data analysis was done using graphical charts. The findings indicate that majority of the students don't frequently read as it takes them between 2-6 days before they read at all and the students spend an hour or less each time

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they read. The greatest benefit they derive from reading is confidence in examinations and improved academic performance. The social media is the major hindrance to reading, as majority of the students use the social media daily and some of them to as much as 7 hours every day. Majority of the students prefer using social media to reading. It was therefore recommended that social media should be integrated into lecture delivery platforms, while the education and ICT policies should be reviewed. While Librarians and Civil Societies to engage in advocacy campaigns, Librarians need to develop their skills sets for improved service delivery.

Keywords: Nigeria; polytechnic; reading culture; social media; students.

1. INTRODUCTION

"Reading is the ability to recognize and attach meaning to what is written. It is an indispensable component of every human language and a necessary ability without which one will be classified as an illiterate. Reading is a form of communication hence, a reader is able to decode what a writer has written down. Everyone, regardless of age or status, deserves to be able to make sense of the written word. Readers who go on to develop a life-long love of reading not only decode, segment, and blend with ease, they also have a genuine adoration for the power of the printed words" [1]. It is through reading that humans have the tools to transmit knowledge from one generation to another generation.

"Without reading, knowledge is dead. This is because, without reading ability, it is impossible to understand any subject in existence. Whether sciences, technology, languages and literature, mathematics, biology etc., without reading, how can one understand what is written? To this end, reading is as important as education and civilization. This is partly the reason why in the developed countries of the world, it is generally believed that readers are leaders. Reading, whether for therapeutic purposes, whether for aesthetics, for personal self-development, to up-date knowledge or keep abreast of developments or for academic purpose, is therefore an essential habit that forms the bedrock of greatness in everyone, regardless of age, gender or status" [2]. People cannot be active or informed citizens unless they can read.

Reading is a prerequisite for almost all academic, cultural and social activities. When reading becomes a way of life, it is termed "reading culture" or "habitual reading". Reading culture thus refers to habitual and regular reading of books and other information bearing materials as a way of life and not necessarily for passing examinations. The love to read books for leisure and for other purposes as part of daily life best defines reading culture. In a study commissioned by the National Literacy Trust, Clark & Rumbold [3], observed that "if reading is to become a lifelong habit, then people must see themselves as participants in a community that views reading as a significant and enjoyable activity. Libraries, Parents and the home environment are essential agents responsible for fostering love of reading in the society".

"In other words, where a reading culture exists, people naturally read of their own free will, on a regular basis. Students select their own reading material, and read them. The working class read to improve their job performance and self-development. The sick read to improve their health through therapeutic reading. Fun-seekers read for aesthetics and enjoyment. All members of society are willing and active participants, who anticipate the satisfaction they will get from picking up a book" [1]. A reading culture is an environment where reading is championed, valued, respected, and encouraged. It is of the upmost importance to a child's personal, social, and academic success, as well as their general wellbeing. Reading culture is not a gift from God. It is an attitude and lifestyle cultivated and nurtured overtime. It takes dedication, perseverance, and effort to thrive.

"In the past, Nigeria's literacy level was rated high due to blossoming reading culture. In those days, the country had the best set of scholars in Africa. Then, reading was an innate affection for both young and old. Students spend their days in the library. Students observe vigil reading. This was called "Awoko" coined from "Awake" because students have to remain awake all through the night reading. This reading inclination reflected so much on the quality of research output, leadership and civil discipline that brought pride to Nigerians anywhere in the world" [2].

However, this is no longer the case. There is widespread poor reading culture in Nigeria at the moment. Stakeholders in education sector have attributed the drop in reading culture in Nigeria to the lack of adequate awareness on the importance of habitual reading, inadequate library resources, high cost of books and other reading materials, and growth in television viewership culture. Also, the introduction of the Global System of Mobile Communication (GSM) in Nigeria has been viewed as one progress that has come with certain negative tendencies that are detrimental to the culture of reading in the country. As if these weren't enough, the social media, which are accessible via numerous devices including the mobile phone, have brought another dimension to the already bad situation. In short, Ahmed (2019) argued that "social media have contributed to the decline of reading culture among students because instead of using it positively, they use it to chat and spend most of their time doing that. Many students no longer have control over their use of these applications". A recent study reported that "addiction to social media has worsened reading culture in Nigeria" [2].

Regrettably, adolescents entering adulthood in the 21st century are expected to read and write more than their peers at any other time in human history [4]. This is because in the digital age which characterizes this era, advanced levels of literacy would be required to perform jobs, run households, act as citizens, and conduct personal lives. Citizens will need reading ability to cope with the myriads of "information available everywhere", a term librarians describe as "information overload". With too many information in circulation across the social media, conventional media and the likes, students' ability to read have become crucial and compulsory.

A fervent reading culture not only breeds capable and committed readers, it boosts wellbeing, community connectedness, and student outcomes. Not only is reading required for success in in school, it is also required for future purposes such as employment, keeping healthy relationships, running a household, communicating with others and keeping up-to-date with trends and current developments in their areas of needs. In short, only competent readers among students will be able to access the wonders of curriculum, and thus improve their life chances [1]. The need to cut-down

students' use of social media will pave way to improving reading culture once again in Nigeria.

1.1 Problem Statement/Justification

"In the past, Nigeria almost achieved mass literacy and this reflected so much on the quality of research output, leadership and civil discipline that brought pride to Nigerians anywhere in the world. However, this is no longer the case as there is widespread poor reading culture in Nigeria at the moment" [2]. "It is common knowledge nowadays that a good number of students in Nigerian higher institutions have completely lost interest in reading. Lecturers across departments oftentimes lament the outbreak of poor reading habits among their students. Many of these students do not copy notes in class as they are not interested in reading them later. That flair for reading among students is fast fading in an alarming rate. The consequences of poor reading culture include poor academic performance, examination malpractice, mass failure, anti-social behaviours, poor understanding, fear and anxiety towards examinations and tests, poor execution of research projects and assignments, fall in the standard of education among others. It is worrisome to note that Nigeria has been rated by the World Culture Score Index as one of the countries in the world with the lowest reading culture. Available statistics from National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education show that 38 per cent of Nigerians are non-literate as four in ten primary school children cannot read. Regrettably, this adverse development is an ominous challenge the country seems not to be paying the needed attention" [5]. "Stakeholders in education sector have attributed the drop in reading culture in Nigeria to the lack of adequate awareness of the importance of reading, inadequate library facilities, poor access to books and other reading materials, and growth in television viewership culture among others. This problem is further compounded by insufficient reading materials in most public schools in Nigeria and lack of well-stocked libraries to give students a chance to embrace the reading culture" [6]. This study therefore seeks to examine the influence of social media addiction on reading culture among Nigerian polytechnic students. This study will therefore, create the necessary awareness on the importance of reading and recommend strategies to curb addiction and promote reading culture among

students thereby provoking research and innovations in the polytechnic sector for national development.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of the study is to examine the influence of social media on reading culture among polytechnic students in Nigeria. The Specific objectives are:

1. To examine polytechnic students reading habits (in terms of frequency and duration)
2. To assess the benefits students derive from reading
3. To investigate the factors that hinder reading among students
4. To examine social media habits among polytechnic students (in terms of frequency and duration)
5. To assess the benefits students derive from social media
6. To identify students preference between Books and social media; and
7. To explore the extent in which social media reduce students' reading habits.

1.3 Significance of the Study

The findings of the study would be of immense significance to critical stakeholders in the polytechnic system. These include students, lecturers/instructors, polytechnic management, regulatory agencies such as NBTE, government, prospective researchers etc, as the study will help to enhance their awareness of the influence the social media is having on the students and possible solutions in order to improve students' reading habits.

Librarians and other promoters of reading culture would also benefit from the findings as it will reveal the current status of reading culture thereby providing them information that is relevant in promoting effective reading culture.

The study will benefit the students as it will guide them on how to improve their reading habits and thereby enhance their academic performance.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

"The concepts of reading and reading culture have been variously reviewed in scholarly literature. Reading is making meaning from print which requires the identification of written words (a process called word recognition), construction of an understanding from the written words (a process called comprehension), and coordinating words and making meaning so that reading is automatic and accurate (an achievement called fluency)" [7]. According to Essberger [8], "reading is the process of looking at a series of written symbols and getting meaning from them. When we read, we use our eyes to receive written symbols (letters, punctuation marks and spaces) and we use our brain to convert them into words, sentences and paragraphs that communicate something to us. Reading is the third of the four language skills, which are listening, speaking, reading and writing" [8]. "Furthermore, reading can also be seen as a number of interactive processes between the reader and the text, in which readers use their knowledge to build, to create, and to construct meaning" [9]. "There are other dimensions of reading. For example, reading can be seen as a cultural event. All reading takes place in a given culture; culture shapes what, how, where, and when people read. Indeed, culture even determines whether people engage in reading. Some cultures are what may be called nonreading cultures. In a nonreading culture, in general, people tend not to read. For example, in a nonreading culture, people generally are not seen reading on buses or trains. By contrast, in a reading culture, people read at every opportunity" [9].3 "Reading contributes to the development of full intellectual and emotional person, capable to self-development and self-realization" [10,11].

Increasingly, Arogundade [6] stated that "a reading culture can be best explained as a learned practice of seeking knowledge, information or entertainment through written words. Such practice can be acquired by reading books, magazines, journals, newspapers etc. According to recent developments, it has been revealed that the reading culture among Nigerians, particularly the youth and students, has waned significantly. In fact, to state that the reading zeal amongst Nigerian students is fast declining is basically just stating the obvious. This unhealthy trend is glaring at everyone in the face. Questions on what might have gone wrong have been asked by educationists, but there seem to be no adequate response to the puzzle" [6]. Studies carried out indicated that "about 40% of Nigerian adults have never finished reading a fiction book after formal education. While another study

carried out shows that about 30 million Nigerians graduated secondary schools with poor reading abilities, contributing to the poor habit cultivated during their stay in school" [6]. "Little wonder why a scholar noted that the development of media culture, the rapid growth of Internet technologies has altered the traditional structure of reading for both the masses and the elites" [12].

"The problem of poor reading habit among students and young people is one of the urgent problems of our time" [13]. Kamalova & Koletvinova [14] observed that "nowadays reading of students is in a state of ambiguous transformation both positive and negative. According to a report, reading people differ from non-reading to the fact that:1) they are able to think in terms of problems, to grasp the whole and to identify conflicting relations of phenomena; more adequately assess the situation and quickly find the correct decision; 2) have a large amount of memory and active imagination; 3)speak better, their speech is more expressive and more strict on the thoughts and richer in vocabulary; 4) formulate more precisely and write better; 5) more sociable; 6) have a greater need for independence and inner freedom, more critical, independent in judgments and behavior" [15].

According to Adesanya [16] "experience and available research works had shown that Nigerian students have poor attitudes toward reading. Adesanya who is a lecturer reported that the poor reading culture can be linked to the environment students find themselves and the impact of the social media on them. To him, social media has taken over the reading of relevant learning materials in most schools, as students now spend more of their time on informal activities on the social media than on books. He further mentioned lack of well graded relevant reading materials and poorly equipped libraries as some of the factors inhibiting the promotion of the reading culture among students. Again, Adesanya stated that poor teaching methodology and lack of commitment from the teachers and parents were some of the collaborative factors aiding the negative habit". Moreover, Ogboko (2018) described "the attitude of students toward reading as lukewarm, lazy and not encouraging. He added that social media has diverted the interests of students from reading because instead of them to use the medium for research purposes that will enhance their academic performance, they now use it for social purpose".

It is necessary to sustain a reading culture through awareness creation and advocacy. Those reasons inform the several readership promotion campaigns embarked upon by different organizations and individuals in Nigeria. For instance, Akinfenwa [5] noted that "the National Library of Nigeria had at various times embarked on the readership promotion campaign because it was committed to fostering the growth of development of knowledge and also deepen the experience and the enhancement of skills in the country by making the recorded knowledge freely available to readers". "Also, the Lagos State government has been making huge attempts to revitalize reading culture, especially among the younger ones. The state government made the annual World Literacy Day one of the most celebrated in the state's official calendar. Also, through the Lagos State Parks and Gardens Agency (LASPARK) the state government has established libraries in almost all the state owned parks, availing users the immense opportunity to read while having fun. To further improve reading culture and empower children through books, government introduced a reading club in its parks where students meet with Nigerian authors on a regular basis to read to them and improve their reading skills" [5]. Furthermore, Akinfenwa [5] emphasized that "the interest expressed by private institutions in trying to keep reading and literacy alive is commendable. Over the last decade, a number of literary prizes have helped in supporting Nigeria's literary circles".

Similarly, "The 9Mobile Prize for Literature, backed by the telecommunication company, the Nigeria Prize for Literature, sponsored by the NLNG Gas Company and the Miles Morland Grant, which supports authors working on a novel for a year are among some of the clear-cut interventions aimed at improving reading culture in the country" [5].

3. METHODOLOGY

This study is a descriptive survey research. The population of the study comprised of polytechnic students at the National Diploma and the Higher National Diploma levels. The area of study include all Federal and State Government owned Polytechnics in Edo and Delta States. The

polytechnics in Edo State include Auchi Polytechnic, National Institute of Construction Technology and Management Uromi, Edo State Polytechnic Usen. Those to be covered in Delta State include Delta State Polytechnic Ogwashi-Uku, Delta State Polytechnic Otefe-Oghara, Delta State Polytechnic Ozoro. The Judgmental sampling method was used to select 1500 students of these polytechnics for the study. The major instrument for data collection is the structured questionnaire. Research assistants were recruited to assist in the administration of questionnaires on respondents and retrieval of same from them. The questionnaires were administered on respondents as follows: Auchi Polytechnic (350) National Institute of Construction Technology and Management Uromi (50), Edo State Polytechnic Usen (250). Those to be covered in Delta State include Delta State Polytechnic Ogwashi-Uku (300), Delta State Polytechnic Otefe-Oghara (300), Delta State Polytechnic Ozoro (250). Data analysis was done using graphical charts. I500 questionnaires were administered on the respondents across the various polytechnics in Delta and Edo States with the help of research assistance. 1460 completed questionnaires were returned representing 97.3% [17-22].

3.1 Data Analysis

Chart 1 indicate the frequency of reading among polytechnic students. Details show that 800 (55%) of the respondents read once between 2-6 days; 400 (27.3%) among them read daily; 230 (16%) read weekly, and 30 (2%) said that they rarely read.

Chart 2 The duration the students spend each time they read. The data indicate the duration to include 1 hour or less by 1020 (70%) of the respondents; 2-3 hours by 350 (24%) of them; 4-6 hours by 32 (2%) of the respondents; and 7 hours and above by 58 (4%) of them.

Chart 3 shows the benefits students derive from reading. They include: Improved academic performance 682 (47%); confidence in examinations 706 (48.3%); retentive memory 70 (5%); others 2 (0.1%); making more friends 0 (0%).

Chart 4 shows the factors that hinder reading among students. They include: Social Media 940 (64.3%; Television 320 (22%); Lack of Books 160 (11%); Noise 20 (1.3%); Visitors 20 (1.3%); Others 30 (2%).

Chart 5 above indicates the frequency of social media use among polytechnic students. From the chart, 1344 (92%) of the students said that they use it daily; 48 (3.2%) of them use it once between 2-6 days; 18 (1.2%) of them use it weekly; and 50 (3.4%) use it rarely.
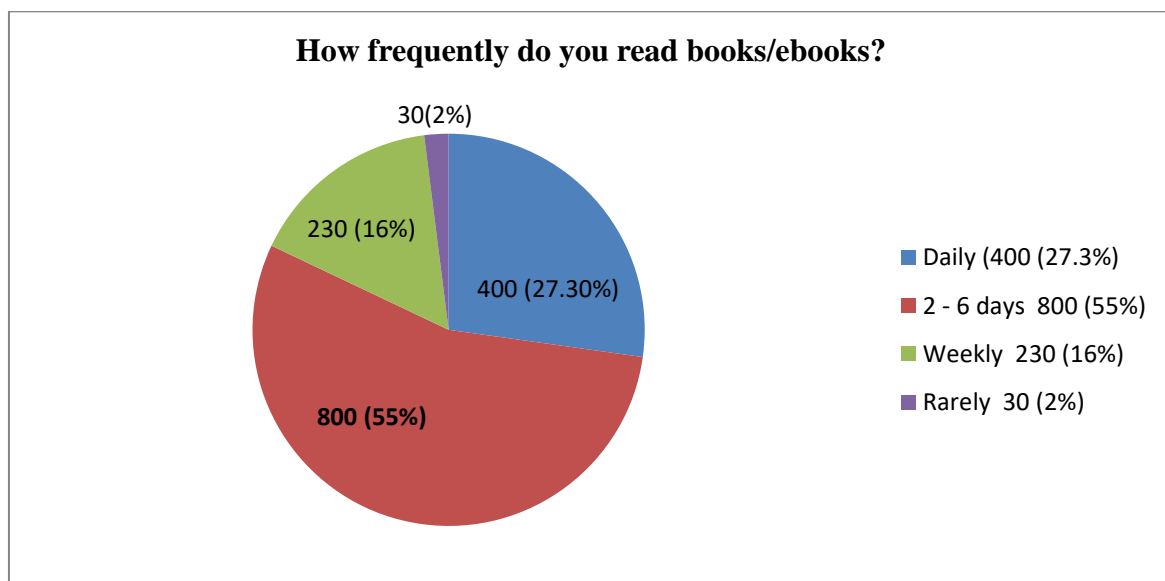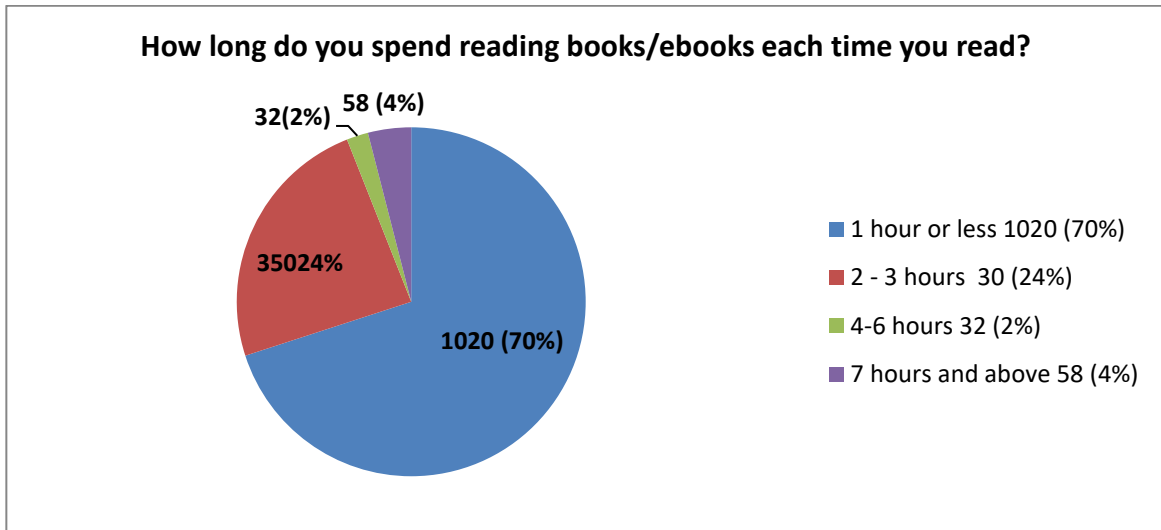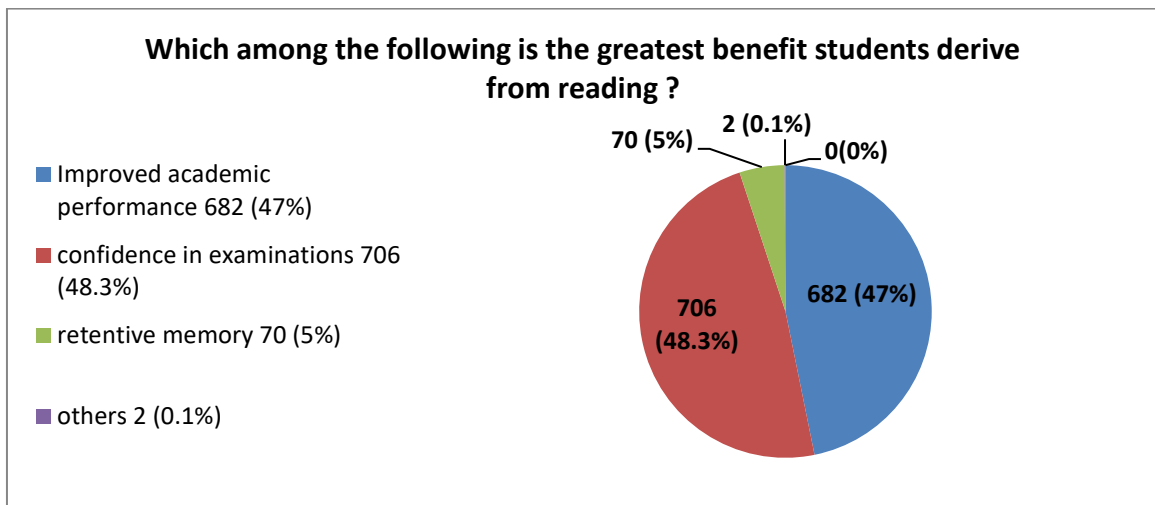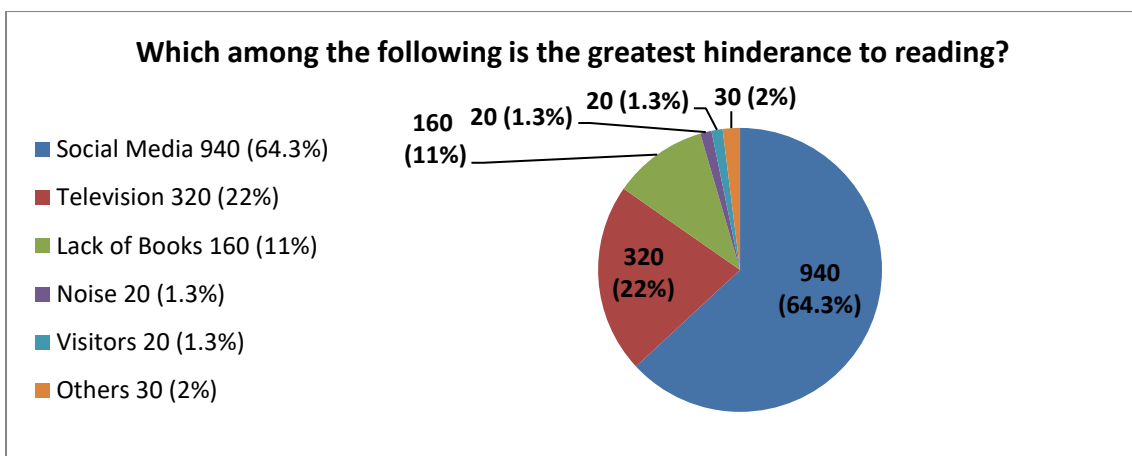

Chart 1. Frequency of reading among polytechnic students

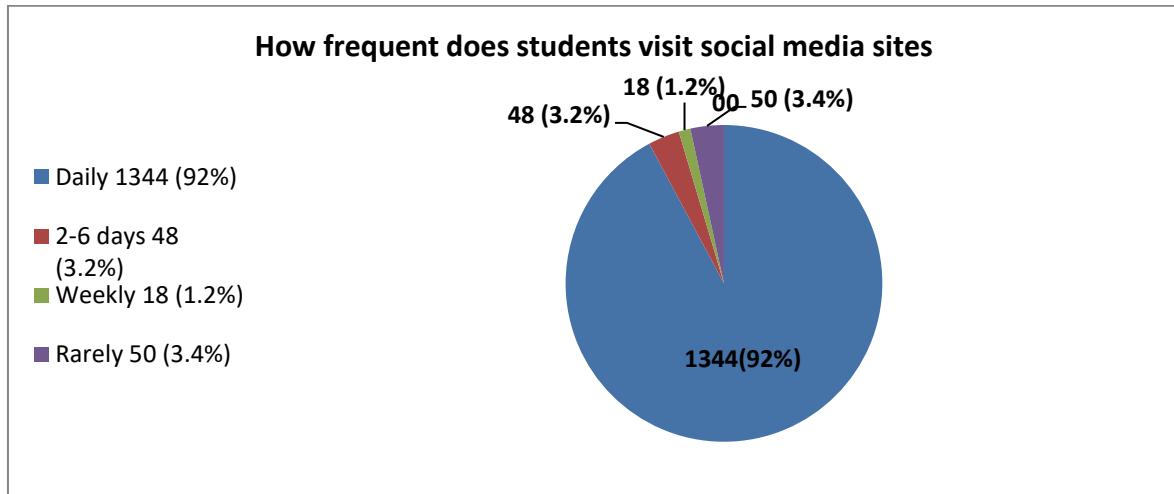**How long do you spend reading books/ebooks each time you read?**

Chart 2. Duration the students spend each time they read

Which among the following is the greatest benefit students derive from reading ?

Chart 3. Benefits students derive from reading

Which among the following is the greatest hinderance to reading?

Chart 4. Hinderances to reading among students

How frequent does students visit social media sites

18 (1.2%)

48 (3.2%)

0 0 50 (3.4%)

- Daily 1344 (92%)
- 2-6 days 48 (3.2%)
- Weekly 18 (1.2%)
- Rarely 50 (3.4%)

1344(92%)

Chart 5. Frequency of social media use among polytechnic students

How long do you spend each time you visit social media Sites?

- 1 hour or less 308 (21%)
- 2-3 hours 290 (20%)
- 4-6 hours 378 (26%)
- 7 hours and above 484 (33%)

308 (21%)
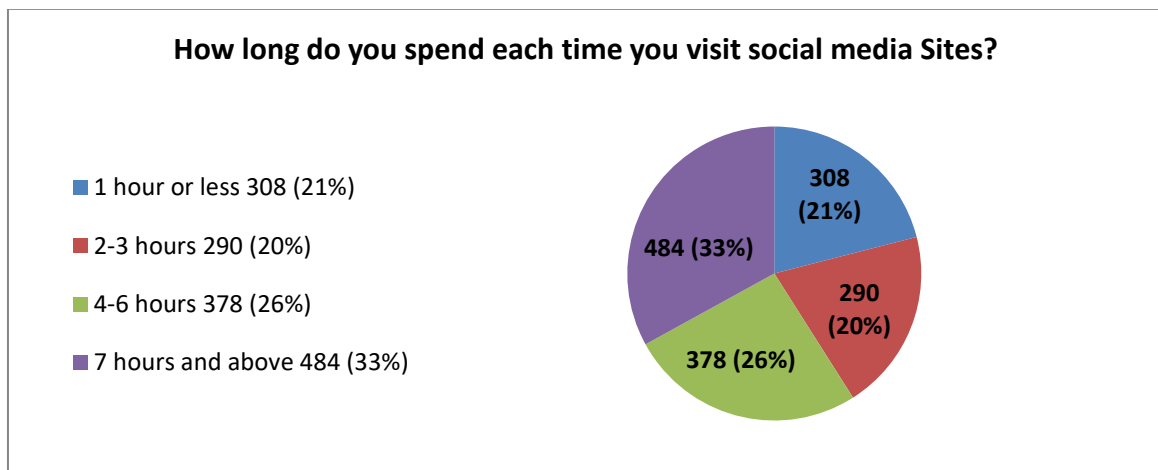
290 (20%)

378 (26%)

484 (33%)

Chart 6. Time spent on social media sites per visit

Chart 6 indicates the time spent on social media sites per visit. Respondents that indicated 1 hour or less are 308 (21%); 2-3 hours are 290 (20%); 4-6 hours are 378 (26%); and 7 hours and above are 484 (33%).

Chart 7 shows that 1022 (70%) of the respondents said that the greatest benefit they derive from social media is making friends; 94 (6.4%) indicate improved academic performance; 17 (1.1%) said retentive memory; 47 (3.2%) said confidence in examinations; 280 (19.1%) said others.
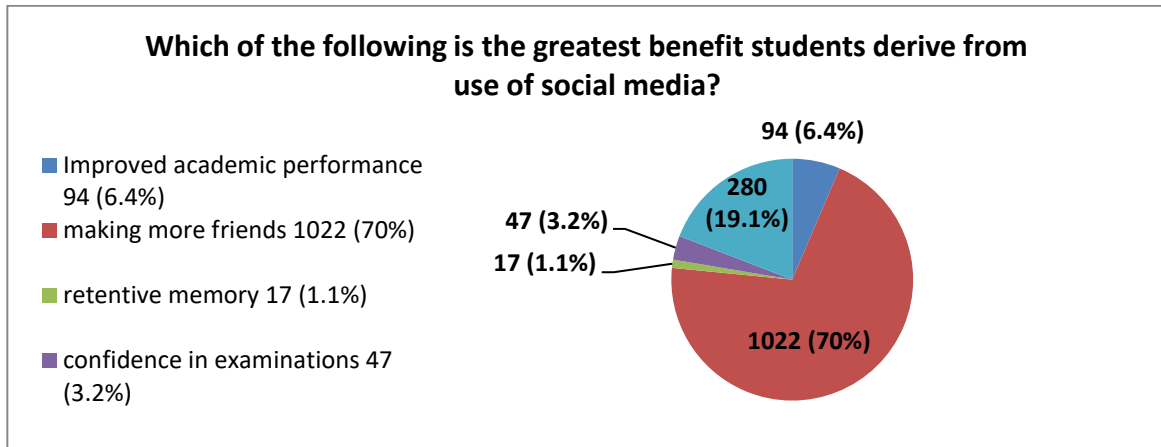
Chart 8 shows factors that mostly hinder students from social media. They include Lack of access to social media 858 (59%);

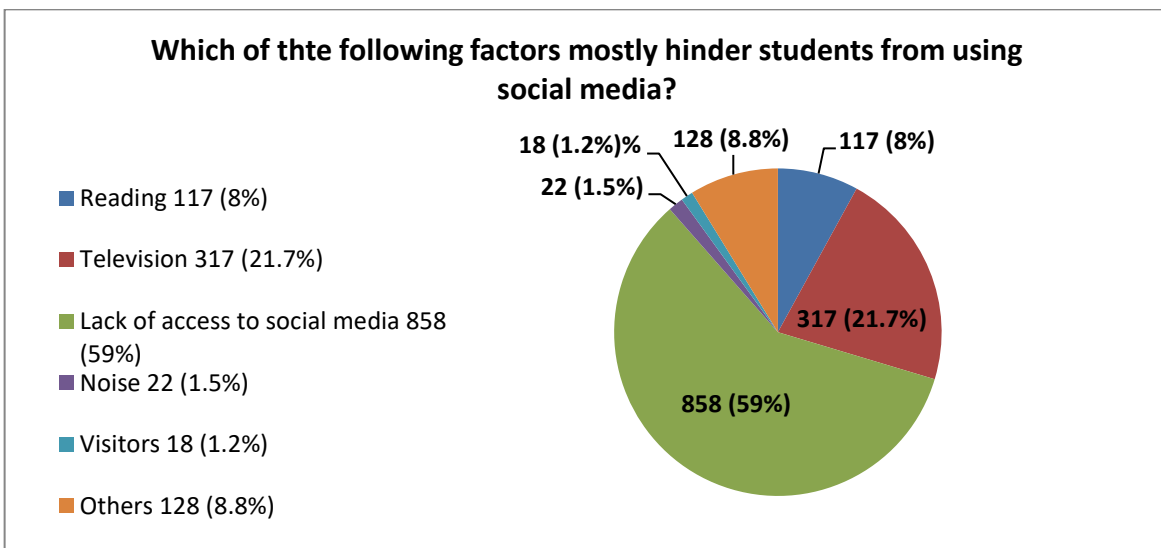Television 317 (21.7%); reading 117 (8%); noise 22 (1.5%); visitors 18 (1.2%); and others 128 (8.8%).

Chart 9 displays students' preference between Books and social media. The analysis shows that 898 (61.5%) of the respondents prefer social media to books; while 350 (24%) opted for books ahead of social media. However, 212 (14.5%) of them are undecided.

Chart 10 shows the extent in which social media negatively affects reading culture. Among the respondents 1210 (83%) of them said to great extent; 172 (12%) said to a certain extent; and 78 (5%) indicate to a very small extent.
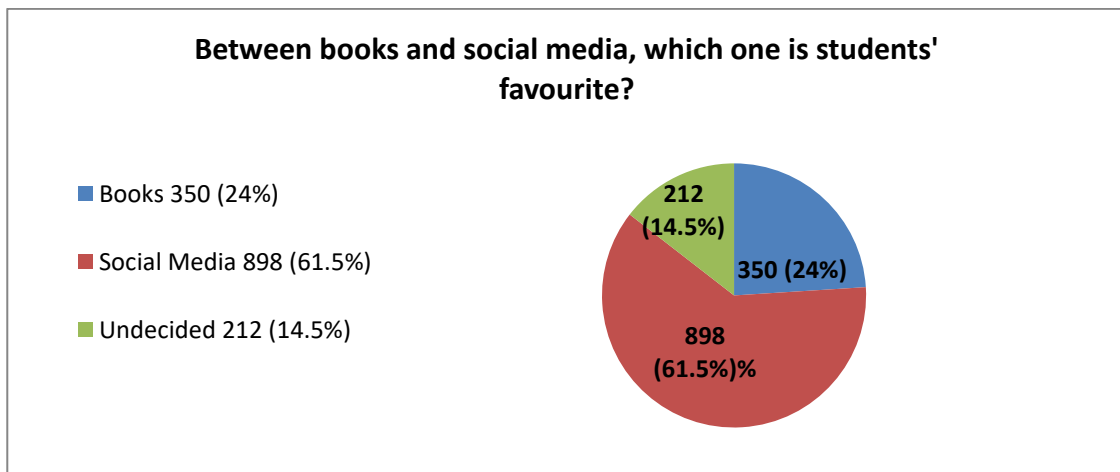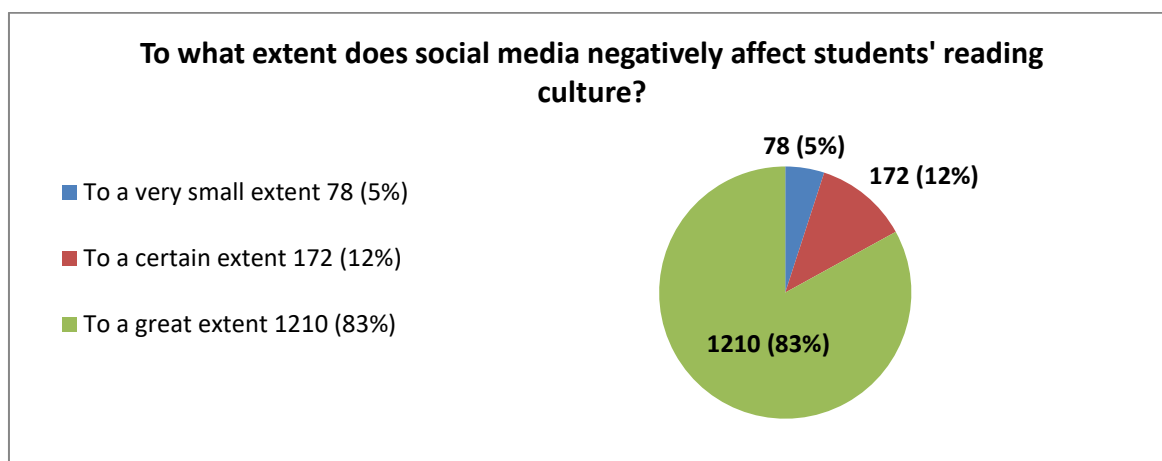
Which of the following is the greatest benefit students derive from use of social media?

- Improved academic performance 94 (6.4%)
- making more friends 1022 (70%)
- retentive memory 17 (1.1%)
- confidence in examinations 47 (3.2%)

94 (6.4%)

280 (19.1%)

47 (3.2%)

17 (1.1%)

1022 (70%)

Chart 7. Benefits students derive from use of social media

Which of thte following factors mostly hinder students from using social media?

- Reading 117 (8%)
- Television 317 (21.7%)
- Lack of access to social media 858 (59%)
- Noise 22 (1.5%)
- Visitors 18 (1.2%)
- Others 128 (8.8%)

18 (1.2%)%   128 (8.8%)   117 (8%)

22 (1.5%)

317 (21.7%)

858 (59%)

Chart 8. Factors that hinder use of social media

Between books and social media, which one is students' favourite?

- Books 350 (24%)
- Social Media 898 (61.5%)
- Undecided 212 (14.5%)

212 (14.5%)

350 (24%)

898 (61.5%)%

Chart 9. Students' preference between Books and social media

Chart 10. Extent of social media effect on reading culture

4. SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS

It was found that the frequency of reading among majority of polytechnic students is once in 2-6 days (55%), followed by 27.3% that read daily. Similarly, majority of the students (70%) spend an hour or less each time they read. The greatest benefit the students derive from reading is confidence in examinations (48.3%) and improved academic performance (47%). The findings however revealed that social media (64.3%) and television (22%) are the major hindrances to reading culture. It was further discovered that majority (92%) of the students use social media daily. While (33%) of the students use it 7 hours and above every time they visit social media sites, (21%) use it for 1 hour or less every visit, (26%) 4-6 hours. The greatest benefit students derive from social media (70%) is to make friends. But, lack of access to social media sites (59%) is the major factor that hinders students from using them. Meanwhile, majority of the students prefer social media (61.5%) to books (24%). Majority of the students therefore, (83%) noted that social media negatively affects reading culture to a great extent.

5. CONCLUSION

The drop in the frequency of reading among majority of polytechnic students, and the rapid growth in the frequency of social media use as the study revealed, calls for action from stakeholders. The benefits of reading which include confidence in examinations, improved academic performance among others are at the mercy of this development. The preference of social media to reading calls for serious concern. The goals of the polytechnic education which include learning, research and development through creativity and knowledge cannot be achieved in an atmosphere were reading does not thrive. Drastic actions must be taken to address the situation and potentially reverse the trend.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

To improve reading culture among Nigerian polytechnic students, the following were recommended:

1. Social media should be integrated into lecture delivery platforms. As such, Youtube, WhatsApp and other social media platforms should be effectively utilized to teach, upload academic contents, give assignments etc, and create reading groups and other academic activities.
2. There is the need to review the education policy and the national information and communication technology policy to reflect current technological realities especially educational technology.
3. There is the urgent need for librarians and information workers to develop relevant skill sets, adopt innovations and improve library services to meet the individual needs of library users in online and on-site environments.
4. There is also the need for Librarians and Civil Societies to engage in advocacy campaigns, seminars, workshops, talk shows etc aimed at promoting reading culture among students.
5. Book clubs, debate societies, library week, readership awards etc should be

introduced in the polytechnic system to encourage readership.

6. Parents should introduce their children to reading early in life and register them in the public libraries. Family outing to libraries rather than movies or shopping should be encouraged.

7. Reading should also be encouraged and taught in schools as an essential part of language and communication.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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