

# SOCIAL NETWORKING AND STUDENTS' ACADEMIC CREATIVITY: IMPLICATION ON YOUTH EMPLOYABILITY IN SOUTH WEST, NIGERIA

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## **Abstract**

*This study investigated effects of social networking on academic creativity and employability among university graduates' in Southwest, Nigeria. The study seeks to determine the stance of social networking on youth employability; and the effect of academic creativity on youth employability. The variables of interest are social networking, students' academic creativity; and its implication on youth employability. A descriptive design was adopted with a multi-stage sampling technique in selecting a sample size of 761 'Batch B stream2' Corp members from public universities in Southwest, Nigeria. A simple linear regression inferential statistic was applied in data analysis. The findings established that social networking has significant positive effect on youth employability.*

*However, in Nigeria, other findings revealed that academic creativity has significant positive effect on youth employability. It is therefore obvious that social networking can create employment if strategically positioned.*

**Keywords:** Academic, Creativity, Employability, Social networking.

## **1. Introduction**

The issue of youths' employability should naturally be the focus of any serious minded and sincere nations and government, given that the youth of every nation is the future of such nation. Tracing the history of the youth back to creation, it is a well-known fact that the glory of young man is said to be their strength (Proverb 20:29). The use of

strength in this part of God's word could be seen as the invested value in youths, and it is the value that seems to be capable of making any youth employable or otherwise. A little wonder why every nation always considers extra attention to the growth and development of youths as an inevitable task.

Evidence from past literature have shown that the flow and growth of youth employability across the globe is generally not impressive, however, findings from the research works of some scholars on youths' unemployment growth in some other nations of the world like USA, Afghanistan, Germany, Israel, Japan among others have equally revealed single digit percentage rate (Benson, Filippaios & Morgan, 2014; World Bank, 2018). The statistical values evidenced by the world bank showed that Afghanistan unemployment rate is 2.6, Germany is 6%, Iceland 7.3%, Japan 3.7%, Israel 6.9%, Leo PDR 1.6%, USA 8.2% (World Bank, 2018). However, when aggregated with other nations across the globe, the average world youth unemployment rates as at 2015 was 12.7% and 24% as at 2019 (World Bank, 2019).

Research evidence from studies in Africa on youth unemployment/employability is evidently clear given the unstable statistics of unemployment rates on Africa youth that are not unemployed after academic sojourn in tertiary institutions. Past studies in Africa on the employability and unemployment of Africa youth showed a continuous rise in statistics of unemployed youth between 2014 and 2018. Between the period of 2014 and 2019, the unemployment rates in Africa ranges between 12.7% and 31% with countries like Lesotho standing at 27.25%,

Mozambique 25.04%, Swaziland 22.48% (Africa Development Bank, 2016; Greg, Chika, Edogor, 2013; I.L.O., 2019; Olasina, 2012; Omekwu & Odoh 2014).

Considering the Nigeria experience in the previous twenty (20) years, research evidence has equally revealed continuous decline in the statistics of employable youths when compared with the available data on the proportion of Nigeria youths. The Federal Bureau of statistics bulletin (2017) revealed that less than 25% of Nigeria youths are employable. The youth unemployment rate in Nigeria between 2014 and 2018 showed a flow from 12.6%, 16.3%, 20.67%, 19.96%, 19.68% respectively (Africa Development Bank, 2019; Trading Economics Bulletin, 2019). Apparently, attention on youth employability and employment is urgently required; hence the need to embark on this study to determine the contribution of social networking and academic creativity on youth employability.

Human beings have evolved over the years. From the Stone age, to the Iron age man, through the Industrial age to the Computer age and now the Information age. Things have changed and keep changing. A wise saying of over 100 years ago posited that "every important invention had already been made" but he was very wrong (Baruah, 2012). This stem out of the fact that the steam engine was not yet invented likewise the airplane, the radio was not yet invented and of course the personal computer and the internet were not yet invented. All these inventions have transformed the way we live. Social networking is built on the idea of how people know, should know and

interact with each other. It gives people the power to share, making the world more open and connected. Nowadays, social networking has influenced lives and helped fields such as politics, economics and especially educational field. One most important advantage is the online sharing of knowledge and information among the different groups of people. This online sharing of information also promotes the increase in the communication skills among the people especially among the learners/students of educational institutions (Baruah, 2012).

However, evidence from the works of Social theorist have established that better connected people do better in life, but an individual's social networking may be limited by factors such as area where we live, ethnic background and income (Benson, Filippaios & Morgan, 2014). Other scholars have equally claimed that the emerging online social networks have also proven effective and helped individuals to get in touch with recruiters, gather information about the companies they want to work for, and build a network of influence before they even get the chance to gain work experience, they also posited that companies that understand the importance of a good online presence for their business seems to be benefiting from the use of social networks. Many companies are linking their social media strategy with finding new talent. Throughout the world, increase usage of social networks have been generally witnessed (Benson, Filippaios & Morgan, 2014). In spite of the simile significance of social networking to youth development, numerous associated problems remain unresolved while new ones are created daily

by the use of social media. These problems include youths' inability to use social networks for their professional benefit, and to keep track of employment opportunities.

The trending nature of social networking through social media is no doubt an entity that deserves both social and economic attention for building and reflecting societal social relations (Eke, Omekwu & Odoh, 2014). The natural expectation of all employers at the point of investments and recruitments would have been that graduates and youths would have the orientation, creativity and skills necessary for business potential success, but the important question in this study centers around the possibility of significant relationship between social networking, students' academic creativity and youth employability in the context of the southwest, Nigeria.

It is in the light of the above that this study seeks to investigate the effect of social networking and students' academic creativity on youth employability in southwest, Nigeria. The specific intent of the study includes finding out the effect of social networking on youth employability; and examining the effect of academic creativity on youth employability.

In order to affirm the intent of the study, the following hypotheses were formulated and tested at .005 level of significance:

*H<sub>01</sub>: Social networking has no effect on youth employability.*

*H<sub>02</sub>: Academic creativity has no effect on youth employability.*

## **2. Review of Literature**

Social networking has been described by Eke, Omekwu and Odoh (2014) as online service, platform or sites that focus on building and reflecting social relations among people, who, for example, share interest and or activities. Awake (2011) described social networking sites as websites that allow those who have account with them to communicate with selected group of friends. Social networks comprise representation of each user (often a profile), his or her social links, and variety of additional service (en.wikipedia.com, 2011). Most of the social networks are web-based and provide means for their users to interact via the internet, such as e-mail and instant messaging. Social networks also allow activities, events and internet within their individual. The potential for computer networking to facilitate newly improved forms of computer-mediated social interaction was suggested early on. Measure and effort to support social networks via computer-mediated communication (CMC) were made in many early online services including Usenet, Bulletin Board service like America online, prodigy, and CompuServe. Early social networking on the World Wide Web began in the form of generalized online communities such as Theglobe.com(1995), Geocities (1994) and Tripod.com (1995) (en.wikipedia.org, 2011). Characteristically, many of these early communities focus on bringing people together to interact with one another through chat rooms and encouraged users to share personal information and ideas via personal web pages by providing easy-to-use publishing tools and free or inexpensive web space. Some networking methods were developed at the end of the 1990's and many sites began to design more advanced

features for users to find and manage friends. This newer generation of social networks began to blossom emergence of sixdegrees.com in 1997, followed by make out club in 2002 and My Space in 2003. Social networking sites become a new means through which individuals can interact and communicate with friends in distance places. As at September 2011 facebook had total number of 800 millions of active users (en.wikipedia.org,2011). Today, it is estimated that are now over 200 active social networks using a wide variety of social networking models. In Nigeria, the number of social network users is on the increase. According to social bakers, a facebook statistics site, Nigeria ranked 35<sup>th</sup> in the world in the number of facebook users. According to the site, facebook has an estimate of over 4million users in Nigeria, with male having 65% while female dominates with 33% on the average.

The popularity of social networks grows rapidly by the day. The social sites have become effective means of communicating ideas and feelings among users. Thus, they are beginning to get more attention from educational institutions. Gross (2004) opines that institutions are taking drastic steps to educate students on the use of websites, especially in the areas of privacy, legal issue and potential socio-economic and psychological dangers. In addition, social networking enhances students' sense of community, sharing and collaboration brings an additional responsibility and workload, which some students find inflexible and rather "forced" (Minocha & Tacchi, 2009). This technology uses webcams or voice-only software to hold virtual seminars online. This is extremely

useful for collaborations where; the partners live in different parts of the globe. Through the use of social networking sites students are able to express themselves, communicate and collect profile that highlight their talent and experience. It is therefore hopeful that as part of the purpose of using social networking sites, students would be able to harness this medium for academic and creative thinking.

### **Nexus between Creative Thinking and Social Networking**

Creative thinking is the process of coming up with something new and different. That something may be a product or service, a work of art, a solution to some problem. Research studies have shown that creativity training significantly improves individual creativity and problem solving.

The need to foster creative talents, a creative economy and workforce; application to the processes of how people think in business productivity and educational system shifting from knowledge transfer to knowledge application in constructing new ideas is posited (Hacket, 2005; Martin, 2006; Pink, 2005; Robinson, 1998). University graduates will be operating in the world less focused on new discipline and social relationship, novel challenges and the ability to deal with 'big picture' scenarios. Cunningham (2006), Florida (2004), Pink (2005) established that imagination, creativity and innovation will be the qualities needed to supplement traditional knowledge in performing work, that is, finding a broad consensus among employers about the qualities they are seeking in graduates where creativity has become core business for those who seek to develop

employability capacity through formal education. As educators this was having significant implications for our teaching and learning practice and whilst there has been much progress in the provision of information and technology systems in higher education; understandings of what new collaborations and approaches this might create lags behind and has become the basis of our current practice in creative education (McWilliams and Dawson, 2008). Our research indicated that most universities acknowledged creativity as a valuable graduate quality/attribute but often this does not translate this into teaching practice with a distinct lack of any methodology and specific practice apart from basic descriptive knowledge. As a result, creativity is not well understood in the university environment, and is often received as difficult to teach, supporting McWilliam and Dawson findings that 75% of Australian universities have an expressed commitment to 'creative' learning outcomes but there is a conspicuous absence of definitional clarity in the policy documentation and in our view specific structure to facilitate its teaching and learning. Jackson, Oliver and Wisdom (2006) states that while teaching practice has implications and expectation of creative outcome it is "rarely an explicit objective of the learning and assessment process.

### **Creative Teaching and Learning**

McWilliam and Dawson (2008) opine that academician and students perceive creativity as a learning outcome to be closely related to creative learning activities, and creative approaches in thinking and assessment. Stenberg and Davidson (eds) suggested that an effective way to teach creativity is to model creative practice for students. Taking

a creative approach to teaching which may encompass collaboration activity, incorporating fun and developing responsibility for learning is likely to be challenging to most educators who have not themselves had such creative models. Creative dispositional qualities already mentioned such as risk-taking and collaboration, as well as a creative approach to design a learning environment and activities which support creativity, must be incorporated into teaching.

Empirical studies have shown that students prefer social networking through the use of dedicated websites and applications to interact with other users and find people who share similar interests. Youth representation in social issues is one the main advantages of using social networking. One example is issue relating to security of women and anti-corruption movement currently happening across Nigeria in which youth has been deciding factor in popularizing and advertising their views. Idakwo (2010) examine the use of social networking among Nigerian Youths. He found that most students' use Facebook as an alternative to other conventional social media platform. The study emphasized the fact that the use of social media as a means of communication is a growing phenomenon among Nigerian youths. Associating creative thinking and learning with social networking, Evgenia and Avraam (2015) adopted "6 thinking hats" as a creativity strategy and established that process was beneficial to students' creativity and that social network tools can be utilized successfully to create employment with such focus.

Parvathy and Suchithra (2015) conducted a study on the impact of usage of social networking sites on youth and found that social networking platform has provided the youth a golden opportunity in exchanging knowledge, finding employment and social quotient among them. They also established through their findings that increased participation in issues of social importance, providing quick help for the needy are other positive effects of social networking among youth population in Bangalore, India.

Bowers-Campbell (2008) also verify that social networking has positive effects on students' self-efficacy and self-regulation. One year later, Sturgeon and Walker (2009) note that social networking make students feel more comfortable as there is an environment of open discussion and some years later, Walker (2010) and Reid (2011) concluded that social networking contribute positively to students' cognitive development.

On the other hand, there are researchers that think differently about the usage of social networking on youth employability. Biswajit and Jyoti (2011) opine that over-usage of social networking has created severe health risk due to lack of physical activities. The study finding emphasized that on an average, a person spends average about 9 to 10 hours (40% of time) on using social networking sites. Due to this young population is at risk of getting cancer, strokes, heart attacks and sleep disorders. On the other side the cases of mental psychiatric also increased because of social isolation. Due to addiction of social networking; Biswaji and Jyoti (2011) findings further show that university

students are getting affected in their mental and knowledge concentration. Constant usage of social networking has resulted in lower grades for students in university and competitive exams. Also, youth being considered as future productive citizens wastes time unnecessary chit-chats and commenting on non-productive things like posts and pictures.

### **METHODOLOGY**

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The design was used to gather detailed information that describes existing phenomena, identify problems or justify current conditions practices, make comparisons, evaluations, and determine the opinions, attitudes, preferences and perceptions of persons of interest to the researcher. This study was conducted during NYSC Orientation Camp for 'Batch B Stream2' held from August 28<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> 2018 in Ogun State. Ogun State Orientation Camp was chosen because it is one of the camps that received highest number of prospective Corp members covering different geo-political zones in the country. A population of four thousand seven hundred and forty-six (4746) Corp members in Nigeria was used for this study. The list of all the graduates from public Universities in Southwest Nigeria was made available by the mobilization officer eight hundred and two (802) Corp members excluding those that were exempted from camp activities as a result of medical imbalance form the sample size for this study. During the compulsory lecture on Skill Acquisition and Entrepreneurship Development (SAED), papers were passed to Corp members to indicate their name and educational status.

They were told of the importance of the research and the need for cooperation. All the names in the list was collected and collated. A total of 802 questionnaires were sent out to Corp members who graduated from public Universities in the Southwest, Nigeria. This was carried out with the concerted effort of two research assistants. A well-structured questionnaire was adapted to collect relevant information from the study. Key constructs of social networking, youth employability, academic creativity and youth employability were effectively measured using six points Likert scale (ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree). The scales were tested on Cronbach alpha reliability test and the result indicated that all the scales were highly reliable with Cronbach's alpha of 0.809. This shows high degree of reliability of the measuring instrument relatively to the recommended reliability value of .70. Data collected from the field through questionnaire administration was analyzed using simple linear regression to test the relationship between (social networking and youth employability) and (academic creativity and youth employability). Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS Inc. 21) was used as analytical tool.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

A survey was conducted across university graduates in Southwest, Nigeria. Out 802 questionnaires distributed, a total of 761 questionnaires were completely filled and returned, representing 94.9% response rate. The rate of response was considered extremely high to provide reliable and adequate data for analysis.

**Table 1: Respondents General Information**

Respondent's Sub-sector	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
<b>Respondent's Sex</b>			
Male	463	60.8	60.8
Female	298	39.2	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>761</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
<b>Respondent's Age</b>			
20-24	126	16.6	16.6
25-27	362	47.6	64.2
28-30	273	35.8	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>761</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Source: Fieldwork, 2018

Table 1 presents that out of seven hundred and sixty-one (761) respondents sampled, majority 60.8% were male Corp members while the remaining 39.2% represents the female. Forty sevenpercent were between the age brackets of 25-27 years, 35.8%

represent the age category of 28-30 years while 16.6% was in their early twenties. The result in the table above shows that the respondents were well represented. This increases the authenticity of the information supplied.

**Table 2: Result of Analysis of the Hypothesis**

HYPOTHESES	TOOLS	R	Df	P value	N	Decision
Ho <sub>1</sub> : Social networking has no effect on youth employability	Correlation Analysis	.905 <sup>**</sup>	1	.000	761	Ho <sub>1</sub> Rejected
Ho <sub>3</sub> : Academic creativity has no effect on youth employability	Correlation Analysis	.987 <sup>**</sup>	1	.000	761	Ho <sub>2</sub> Rejected

Source: SPSS Output for data analysis (2018)

**Discussion**

The result of the first hypothesis established that social networking has significant positive effect on youth employability. Social networking sites like LinkedIn, Naukri.com etc., have been acknowledged to save the effort of doing the whole employment process by traditional methods. It gives opportunities to candidates who are seeking for particular job profile.

Employees as well as employers can search for jobs or people of their choice to engage them. Through many years, social media has helped people stay in contact with their distant friends, relatives and other influential people in their lives, which would have otherwise been impossible. Hence social media proves to be an excellent platform to promote and facilitate innumerable things.

The second hypothesis further revealed that academic creativity has significant positive effect on youth employability. This finding corroborates the works of (Bowers Campbell, 2008; Walker, 2010; Reid, 2011) that academic creativity through social media contributes significantly to youth employability. For a company, social networks provide an effective communication platform at low costs. Many users connect with companies and popular profiles of the industry as a means to follow trends, stay in touch with the industry and keep trace of opportunities that might improve their employability. The ways of searching for a job have been evolving quickly over the recent years; individuals no longer rely on job vacancy announcements in newspapers or published announcements in traditional media outlets. A single resume is almost the only point of reference when we are looking for employment, whether as an employee or employer. Recruiters now adopt social networking platforms in the process making connections more efficient and cost free thus increasing youth employability through social networking.

## **5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The world has become a global village revolving around social networking. So an important element of any course should be supporting students to develop their employability skills through social networking. Technology supports students and staff to better engage with employers, and help students develop and showcase their employability skills. Based on the findings of this study, the study concludes that there exists a positive significant relationship between social networking,

youth employability, and academic creativity. Social networking provides simple, inexpensive ways for students to acquire more skills. The demand for employees to be digitally literate in business environment is rising. Therefore, social networking becomes crucial in teaching methodologies. This will provide students with digital and social media skills needed for employment opportunities. Therefore, it is recommended that government efforts should be geared towards developing students' digital literacy especially in our tertiary institutions of learning. This can be achieved by incorporating social networking system that will awaken young graduates' media skills for job creation and self-employment.

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