



# COVID-19 and Social Media Usage Among Undergraduate Students in Nigeria

## Content and Discontent

Odirin Omiegbe, Caroline Ochuko Alordiah, Isabella Ezinwa Okokoyo, Mercy Afe Osagiede, Violet Asua Ikpeba, and Israel Oberedjemurho Ugoma

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### Abstract

The emergence of COVID-19 and its resultant alarming rate of hospitalization and overwhelming death caused the Nigerian government, like other countries, to place restrictions on the movement of people to prevent its spread. During this period of restriction, schools were closed, which made teaching and learning move online through WhatsApp, Google Classroom, Zoom, radio, and television broadcasts to prevent students from missing out on schooling. However, this chapter succinctly looked at COVID-19 pandemic restrictions and the role of social media in learning among undergraduate students in Nigeria during the lockdown period. The mode of deriving information and arriving at meaningful conclusion is through a primary source (observed experience) and a secondary source (journals, books, and newspapers). The chapter observed that: during COVID-19 restrictions, few students participated and benefited from online learning, students experienced poor electricity supply, they lacked money to purchase data, the home was not conducive for learning, and students had

O. Omiegbe (✉) · C. O. Alordiah · I. E. Okokoyo · M. A. Osagiede · V. A. Ikpeba · I. O. Ugoma  
Faculty of Education, University of Delta, Agbor, Nigeria  
e-mail: [odirin.omiegbe@unidel.edu.ng](mailto:odirin.omiegbe@unidel.edu.ng); [caroline.alordiah@unidel.edu.ng](mailto:caroline.alordiah@unidel.edu.ng);  
[ezinwa.okokoyo@unidel.edu.ng](mailto:ezinwa.okokoyo@unidel.edu.ng); [mercy.osagiede@unidel.edu.ng](mailto:mercy.osagiede@unidel.edu.ng); [violet.ikpeba@unidel.edu.ng](mailto:violet.ikpeba@unidel.edu.ng);  
[ugoma.obedjemurho@unidel.edu.ng](mailto:ugoma.obedjemurho@unidel.edu.ng)

difficulties in operating their phones, tablets, and computers for online learning due to inexperience. Finally, the chapter concluded that for learning to be effective, students should be taught how to operate their electronic devices, a stipend should be provided to buy data as well as the provision of regular supply of electricity, blended learning should be introduced when the pandemic is over, restrictions are lifted, and students are back to school among others.

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**Keywords**

COVID-19 · Social media · Online learning · Lockdown · Undergraduate students · Nigeria

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**Introduction**

Nigeria is a country with 195.9 million people in West Africa. It is comprised of 36 autonomous states (Thompson, 2020). The World Health Organization (WHO, 2020a) declared the coronavirus' sudden eruption a global widespread in March 2020. By August 2021, there were more than 209 million confirmed COVID-19 cases around the globe, including more than 4 million deaths (WHO, 2021a). Four genetic variants of COVID-19 have been classified as posing an increased risk to public health (WHO, 2021b). The pandemic outbreak forced national authorities, in conjunction with the World Health Organization (WHO), to develop an immediate response strategy to stop further transmission of COVID-19 and to collaborate with the international scientific community to identify preventative and remediating measures (WHO, 2020b). Efforts were concentrated on monitoring and controlling virus transmissions through testing and screening, imposing social measures (e.g., physical distancing, local or regional lockdowns, mask-wearing, travel restrictions, work-from-home programs, online instruction), introducing vaccination activities which cut across the country against COVID-19, and building vaccine confidence and overcoming hesitancy (Figueroa, 2021; WHO, 2021c).

Furthermore, in a bid to curb the spread of COVID-19, the Federal Ministry of Education, Nigeria (FMOE) announced the temporary close-down of all schools in Nigeria, effective from March 23rd, 2020 (WLF, 2020). With the restrictions on movement in place, a large number of schoolchildren and university students were restricted to their homes. The school system and the typical face-to-face medium of instruction through which most schools in the developing countries of the world, Nigeria included, teach their students were disrupted. It then became very important for schools to explore other methods of teaching and learning. The handiest alternative to traditional the face-to-face instructional platform is found to be the online learning platform (Ikwuka et al., 2021). Therefore, the coronavirus outbreak obliged universities to rapidly offer traditional courses online (Logan et al., 2021; Meleo-Erwin et al., 2021). However, with the introduction of online learning, teachers and students were caught up in a novel method of learning which usually comes with some challenges. It is therefore imperative to examine how these students were able

to learn during this period from the comfort of their homes. This chapter focuses on social media during the pandemic in Nigerian tertiary institutions, causes of students' satisfaction and discontent, recommended learning modalities during the pandemic and similar crises, and blended learning in post-pandemic Nigerian tertiary institutions.

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## **Social Media During Pandemic in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions**

During COVID-19 lockdown, when schools were closed in Nigeria, universities adopted online learning to prevent students from missing school through text notes and voice notes, animated videos, WhatsApp, Facebook, Interactive White Board, Moodle, voice over PowerPoint, YouTube, Google Classroom, Google Hangouts, Google Meet, Skype, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, radio, and television broadcasts. Studies reported that undergraduate students in Nigerian universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education took part in online learning during this period (Adewale & Tahir, 2022; Ebohon et al., 2021; Egielewa et al., 2021; Ikwuka et al., 2021). However, studies indicated that Google Classroom, WhatsApp, Microsoft Teams, and Facebook were utilized, while Google Hangouts, Google Meet, Skype, Zoom, Interactive White Board, Moodle, voice over PowerPoint, and YouTube were not utilized. Similarly, Ogolodom et al.'s (2022) study reveals that out of 540 respondents, 336 (62.2%) used the online method of learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, while 204 (37.8%) did not use the online method of learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the majority (351, 65%) of the respondents used a smart phone for the online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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## **Causes of Students' Satisfaction**

The use of online learning during COVID-19 by students of tertiary institutions in Nigeria was a novel educational program as most tertiary institutions do not have it in their curriculum and do not have facilities for it. When it was introduced, undergraduate students were eager and curious to participate in it. Some students who were opportune to use this method of learning affirm that it was beneficial, which was corroborated in some studies (Ebohon et al., 2021; Ikwuka et al., 2021; Ogolodom et al., 2022). Some students expressed satisfaction with the learning environment, learning materials, course contents, class attendance, quality of teachers' communication skills, and online technology used.

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## **Causes of Students' Discontent**

However, despite the fact that some forms of learning among Nigerian undergraduate students during COVID-19 lockdown took place online with some beneficial results for students' satisfaction, some significant challenges were also observed,

which made some of the students affirm not being satisfied as corroborated by some studies (Adewale & Tahir, 2022; Ebohon et al., 2021; Ikwuka et al., 2021; Ogolodom et al., 2022; Olasunkanmi, 2020). They were not satisfied with the level of students' engagement during class sessions, timing of lectures, adequacy of relevant learning activities, level of discipline among isolated learners, or provision of links to learning resources for further research. The environment was not conducive as there were distractions from the neighborhood, friends, and relatives; there were absence of power supply, erratic power supply where available and internet network fluctuations, poor internet services in remote areas resulting in poor signals and lack of signals, higher data consumption and high cost of data for internet subscription, and lack of smart devices (phone, tablet, and laptop) due to high cost, which affected their effective participation in online learning. Most of the teachers had limited experience in virtual teaching and had difficulty in explaining complex scientific ideas or concepts to students as more time was required, which led to poor quality of lecture delivery. Also laboratory course work, which requires more time and access to laboratory facilities, was missing, and as such, essential knowledge and skills were not gained in practical courses. Assignments given during the lockdown were too many, and limited time was allocated for each assignment. It was difficult to assess students' abilities and performance with online assessment tools, and there was a tendency for examination malpractice when assessments were conducted virtually and the grades were not a true reflection of students' academic abilities.

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## **Recommended Learning Modalities During and Similar Cases**

It is pertinent to state that the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted learning in Nigerian tertiary institutions when total lockdown and closure of schools across the country were made. The online learning that was introduced by some educational institutions was indeed a welcome development to bridge the gap and engage students in meaningful learning so as not to miss out on their educational pursuit. However, most institutions were not prepared for the compulsory closure of educational institutions and the use of online teaching. This therefore accounted for the problems encountered by teachers and students who opted for online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions and closure of educational institutions in Nigeria, as shown in this chapter. However, to prevent the challenges encountered by teachers and learners in online learning during the COVID-19 restriction when schools were closed, it is necessary to make some suggestions. In light of this, the following are recommended teaching and learning modalities during similar cases of pandemic or crisis situations:

- Teachers and students should be trained on the effective use of virtual learning, which should be included in the school curriculum.
- Teachers should introduce online teaching methods to students during the holiday period to enable them to get used to online learning from the comfort of their homes.

- Schools should create an online learning department to provide teachers and students with online training and online learning facilities.
- Free internet services and facilities for online learning should be provided to the students by the government during emergency periods when schools are closed abruptly to prevent them from missing school.
- Students should be educated on how to make their online learning environment conducive to learning.
- Government should ensure that provision is made for enough power supply and internet services in both urban and rural areas.
- Teachers should allocate more time to explain complex scientific ideas or concepts to students as more time would be required for online teaching and learning than the traditional face-to-face teaching method.
- Teachers should allocate more time to laboratory course work and practical which require more time.
- Teachers should reduce the number of assignments given to students and give them enough guidelines and time to do their assignments.
- Teachers and students should be given orientation on how to use online assessment tools for effective evaluation of students learning to take place.

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## **Blended Learning in the Post-Pandemic Nigerian Tertiary Institutions**

Online learning in tertiary institutions in Nigeria was beneficial to learners and teachers despite some short comings. Learning did take place in the pandemic period. However, it is imperative for tertiary institutions to build on the gains of online learning by teaching side by side with the traditional face-to-face teaching and through blended learning. This will make the students to be efficient at online learning and expose them to two methods of teaching (the traditional face-to-face teaching and online learning) instead of the traditional face-to-face teaching they are used to which would thus enhance their learning. Blended learning is a teaching and learning process which involves the traditional teaching and online learning with modified pedagogy, instructional materials and environment. “It combines multiple delivery of media, such as audio, video, graphics, text, animation etc., that are designed to complement each other and promote learning” (Orji et al., 2021). It also involves combining Internet and digital media with an established classroom that requires the physical co-presence of the teacher and students (Friesen, 2012) Hence, it is a hybrid learning that combines e-learning and traditional face-to-face learning or instructor-led training with coaching, assignments and projects provided as a support and reinforcement tool when necessary (Jen & Sandhu, 2006).

Oweis (2018) remarked that blended learning has become the most popular educational model that universities apply as a new educational approach to substitute e-learning. However, in developing countries like Nigeria, the adoption of blended learning is very low, while abandonment and even failure of some blended learning projects is on the increase (Kintu, Zhu, & Kagambe). Moreover, effective teaching in a blended course requires the instructor to design from the onset the aspects and

activities in the course that would be face- to- face and online. Several others can be used effectively in a blended classroom. Among these are mobile devices (phone, tablet, and laptop) which the students already have. When chosen and implemented thoughtfully mobile devices and Apps can foster student engagement and offer unique learning and assessment opportunities. Social media platforms like twitter, Instagram and You Tube can also be integrated in the blended classroom. They not only create a social presence but also foster student engagement and interest and improve communication (Linder, 2017). The following comprise the essential components of an effective blended learning environment:

1. Instructors choose technologies that support the course learning objectives.
2. Instructors align face-o-face online components for effective student learning.
3. Instructors embed active learning techniques and methodologies in the blended course (Picciano, 2017, and Glaza, 2012 cited in Linder, 2017).

Similarly, blended learning in tertiary institutions when used as a means of online learning in combination with the traditional face-to-face method of teaching can be enhanced through:

#### 1. Learning Management Systems (LMS)

A Learning Management System is a software application for the administration documentation, tracking, reporting and delivery of educational courses, training programs or learning and development programs (E-Learning Industry, 2020). Learning Management Systems learning tools that can be effective in teaching students are Moodle, Instructional board, Schoology, Canvas and Desire2Learn.

#### 2. Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT)

Emergency Remote Teaching is a means in which learning is delivered to learners in the rural areas online at the comfort of their homes. Yesuf (2020) recommends to teachers the following modalities that should be considered for effective implementation of remote delivery:

- Get professional advice and help before starting
- Prepare and master the technology
- Move what you have online (lecture notes discussions, assignments)
- Use introductory video to show your face and introduce your topic and content
- Record lectures, don't stream
- Try to mix media-videos, PPT, Textual, Podcast, etc.

Similarly, Oyenira et al. (2020) stipulate that for Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) to be effective;

- Institutions should structure the remote learning by setting up an e- Learning zone where lecturers upload course ware and lecture notes and interact with students.

- while students in turn access the e-Learning zone to attend classes as scheduled by lecturers or as directed by the school management.
- lecturers and students can then use free open resource platforms for the delivery, such as Google classroom, Zoom, WhatsApp, Facebook, Blog, and email.

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## Conclusion

COVID-19 pandemic has come and gone with some consequences which include disruption of the educational system, modification of the traditional face-to-face method of teaching to online learning and alteration of the educational calendar considered expensive, in terms of time, manpower and financial resources. There were gains and loss. Lessons were also learnt. It is hoped that the suggestions made in this chapter would be implemented so that teachers and students would learn unhindered with ease in the event of another pandemic, human or natural disaster that would warrant lockdown and closure of schools for a long duration and when pandemic is over, restrictions lifted and students are back to school.

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