

EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS: A STUDY OF DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS.

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Abstract

This study examines the effects of Social media on personal relationships of the Delta State University students. The study adopted the survey method, using the questionnaire instrument to elicit the responses of students concerning the effects of Social media on personal relationships. The population of the study was the entire registered undergraduate students of the Abraka campus given as 18768 in the 2015/2016 session by Delta State University ICT Unit. A multi stage sampling approach was used to administer the study instrument to three hundred and eighty four respondents on a person-to-person basis with a return rate of 94%. The Technological Determinism and Uses and Gratifications theories were the theoretical anchors of the study. Data collected were analyzed using frequency tables, percentages and explanation. Findings included students of the Delta State University used the Social media in their personal relationships almost to the point of addiction; technology affects cultural and social change among Nigerian students and the possession and ability to use Social media network sites is the beginning of being a bona-fide member of the elite group of students. One recommendation of the study was that it was imperative for students to understand the need to invest and utilize their time in school well in order to avoid falling prey to 'evil geniuses' who often take advantage of unwary and impressionable students.

Keywords: Social media. Personal Relationships, Social Effects, Delta State, Nigeria

Introduction

Modern technology in communication has no doubt turned the entire world into McLuhan's global village. This is particularly evident in the emergence and widespread use of the internet. The internet, according to Rand Corporation (1994, p.47) is a massive 'network of network' a networking infrastructure which connects million of computer's together globally forming a network in which any computer can communicate with another as long as they are both

connected by the internet. Internet allows information to travel over the internet through a variety of language known as protocols. Andrew (2005, p.284). The term internet is in fact a short term for internet networks which implies that the internet is a network of computer networks. Computer accept data, process data, store data and give data out when required. This has made it possible for people to chat from computer terminals what is what has led to networking. A line is the part along which resources flow. A node is the point where lines intersect, transferring

resources to new lines. In other words, the emergence of the internet has changed the world through the popularity of social networking sites. Social media such as face book, has affected how we interact with one another. This change includes how we communicate with our romantic partners. Personal relationship has gone from initiating the counting process through bravely asking a person out to dinner to simple instant messaging the person or even liking their profile or display picture on face book or WhatsApp or other such social networking sites.

Social media has variously been defined in so many ways. The Wikipedia defines social media as "media for social interaction, using highly accessible and scalable techniques. Social media is the use of web-based and mobile technologies to turn communication into interactive dialogue. Michelle Chemiclewski says social media is not about what each one of us does or says but about what we do or say together worldwide, to communicate in all directions at any time by any possible digital means. Social media are the platforms that enable the interactive web by engaging user to participate in, on and create content as means of communicating with their social graph, other users and the public. Sam Decker says social media is digital content and interaction that is created by and between people. Chrisg.com says social media are the tools, services and communication facilitating connection between peers with common interests.

Definitions about the essence of the social media is that social media allow people to exchange photos and videos, share new stories, post their thoughts on blogs, visit chat rooms and participate in online discussions, make new friends, interact with large number of people. The core interest of this long essay is that with the increase in online activity there are concerns about the ways in which the personal information shared by social media users affect the personal relationship of students.

Statement of the Problem

People around the world are rapidly integrating virtual form of communication in their everyday lives. The rapid growth of online network is transforming interpersonal relationship with a shift to the digital world. The digital realm is cultivating and maintaining online social connections that befits face-to-face relationship, especially among the youths, students in particular. Roberts and Dunbar (2010, p.440) say however social media networking sites affect social, emotional and cognitive development of youth accounting for a large portion of their time. Sending public and private online messages as well as sharing photos online while communicating with other users exposes their personal information to unknown users. The level of interaction and relationships between online users is determined by the level of students socialites. Therefore, the problem is since information provided online is not properly monitored what are the effects of social media on social-personal relationship.

The following are the objectives of the study

1. To examine the extent of usage of social media among Delta State University students.
2. To find out whether there is a relationship between the extent of usage of social media and communication with family and friends.
3. To determine if there is a relationship between self image of DELSU students and their usage of social media.
4. To ascertain the perception of DELSU students in relation to social media and personal relationship.

Based on the objectives of the study listed above, the following research questions were posed to realize the aims of the research efforts.

Research Questions

1. What is the extent of usage of the social media among Delta State University students?
2. Is there a significant relationship between the extent of usage of social media and communication with family and friends of DELSU students?
3. Is there a significant relationship between self-image of DELSU students and their usage of social media?
4. What is the perception of DELSU students in relation to social media and personal relationships?

The findings of this article will contribute to research and existing literature in the area of mass

communication, particularly in the area of social media usage. The findings will also be beneficial to students and school management in providing insights on how students use the social media now how this usage contribute to their emotional and mental stability during their academic pursuits. They will enlighten students and the youths in the gainful abusive benefits of the social media in relationships. The findings of this study will add to the exploration of the patterns of the social media usage among students of the Delta State University.

This study covered the registered students of the Delta State University, Abraka campus as well as the relationships which exist among the students. The total number of registered students as at 2015/2016 session was eighteen thousand seven hundred and sixty eight (18768) . The figure was gotten from the Information and Communication Technology Unit of the Delta State University. In this study, the relationship has to do with the students perception and usage of the social media. This research effort focused on the Delta State University students because they are based in an information and communication technology compliant (ICT) environment. The perimeter of this study is premised on the 2015/2016 academic session students.

The scope of this study was confined to only 180 students, consisting of 90 male students and 90 female students to strike gender balance.

It is the academic tradition to define some terms used peculiarly in this study for easier and better understanding.

Social media - social media in this study is as given by Boyd and Ellison (2007, p.2), which who define social media networks as "web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi- public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection , and (1) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. It is akin to a "social network...website that allows those who have an account to communicate with a selected group of friends. Social media is the use of web-based and mobile technologies to turn communication into an interactivity dialogue. In other words, social media are a group of internet-based applications that build on the technological and ideological foundations of web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content. (Kaplan & Heinlein, 2010, p.2). Jackie and Scott (2011,p.5), say social media are the set of web- based broadcast technologies that enable the democratization of content, giving people the ability to emerge from consumers of content to publishers of content. Examples of social media are Facebook, Twitter, Myspace, WhatsApp, e- buddy, YouTube and Smiggle.

Literature review

This chapter contains review of concepts, review of related studies and theoretical framework of this study.

Social Media

Wikipedia defines new media as an on-demand access to content anytime,

anywhere on any digital device, as well as interactive user feedback, creative participation which includes real time generation of new, unregulated content. Social media often called new media are most technologies having characteristics of being manipulated, compressible, networkable and interactive. Social media are classified as social network sites (SNS) such as WHATSAPP, MySpace , FACEBOOK and TWITTER. Boyd & Ellison (2007, p.2) opines that social network sites are often online services for users to create a public or semi public profile, build a network with other users with whom they share common links and navigate other users profile networks. With social network sites (SNS) there are virtual communities and groups of people (students) with shared interests who often stay more connected.

This reminds one of Mesch (2010, p.53) who asserts that "youth operating within an online community may be geographically dispersed, experiencing different hours of the day in different locales but they share an identical interest, virtual space and rules shared activities and a sense of belonging. Mesch (2010, p.53) suggests that social media should be viewed as cultural artefacts..... considering how the technology is incorporated in the everyday lives of individuals and how it is used as a means of communication, expression and content production within an offline social world. Social media includes the various online technology tools that enable people to communicate easily through the internet, to share information and resources. It includes text, audio, video, images, podcasts and other different forms of

social media technologies include interest forums, weblogs, social blogs, micro-blogging, wikis, photographs or pictures, video rating and social book marking. Examples of social media are Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, WhatsApp, e-buddy, YouTube, BB messenger, Eskimi, Smiggle and others. The essence of the social media is that we are witnessing the evolution of a universal interconnected network of audio, video and electronic communication that will blur the distinction between interpersonal and mass communication; between public and private communication.

Earlier, Manovic (2003, p.53), in an introduction to the New Media Reader classified social media with eight propositions. These are;

1. New media versus cyber culture
2. New media as computer technology as distribution platform.
3. New media as digital data controlled by software.
4. New media as the mix between existing cultural convention and the convention of software.
5. New media as the Aesthetic that accompanies the early stage of every new modern media and communication technology.
6. New media as faster execution of Algorithms previously executed manually or through other technologies.
7. New media as the encoding of modernist Avante-Garde, new media as meta media and
8. New media as parallel articulation of similar ideas in post WW11 Art and modern computing.

The above propositions are in agreement with Pice (1984, p.54) who had defined new media as communication technologies that enable or facilitate user-to-user interactivity between user and information. This suggests appropriately that social media integrates technological, social interaction and content creation to collaboratively, connect online information.

Characteristics of the Social Media

According to Boyd & Ellison (2007, p.2) social media allow users to; Articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection; Construct a public or semi public profile within a bounded system; View and traverse list of connection and those made by others within the system.

According to (Cohen 2011, p.1) the social media has the following characteristics namely;

- Social media encompasses wide variety of content formats including text, video, photographs, audio, PDF and Power point. It is a by product of creating content with your community.
- Allows interactions to cross one or more platforms through social sharing, email and feeds.
- Involves different levels of engagement by participants who create, comment on social media networks.
- Facilitates enhanced speed and breadth of information dissemination.
- Provides for one-to-one, one-to-many and many to many communication.

- Social media is device in different. It can take place via a computer (including laptops and net books), tablets (including IPods, Itouch and others) and mobile phones (particularly smart phones).
- Enables communication to take place in real time or a synchronously overtime.
- Extends engagements by creating real time online events, extending online interactions offline or augmenting live events online.
- Social media transforms organizations and requires them to be transparent.
- Social media allows participants to connect and interact in "Social relationship".
- Social media require listening.

She adds that social media are the platforms and technologies that enables a public conversation while creating a wide variety of user generated content. At the core of those communications in the ability to build social relationships by listening and actively participating. Kang et al (2007, p.63) Opine that participation of users and user generated content is the basic characteristics of the social media since a desire to be part of a group is a fundamental characteristics of human beings and communication tends to strengthen the adherence to a group, the use of social media for creating and nourishing a community is common. The above characteristics refers to conformity and belongingness that enhances community, collective gathering. Another critical characteristics of the social media

is the creation of valuable user guaranteed content inherent in peer groups. In addition, social media are comparatively inexpensive and accessible to enable anyone to publish or access information. There are no gate keepers in the realm of the internet. In other words, social media enable individuals to connect with one another without anyone editing or retting the user guaranteed content. Social media via social networking sites are publics that support sociability like unmediated publics.

Social Media and Interpersonal Relationship

Social media have become popular among students due to the great potential they have in facilitation, collaboration, communication and sharing among the students and social media have been found to have the potential to determine how students perceive themselves, students use social media for social interaction, passing time, entertainment, companionship and communication. This agrees with Jones' (2009,p.3) definition of social media as a "category of online media where people are talking, participating, sharing, networking and bookmarking online of recent, social media have become a way for people to communicate in society and build relationships with others. Akanbi & Theophilus (2014, p.60) support this view when they said 'students make friends and rediscover old friend via social media.' Edegoh, Asemah and Ekanem (2013) opine that "no doubt, social networks have become a large part of students lives in today's world; be it secondary or tertiary education. Social networks are instant presence in the lives

of students and have become a way to check on friends, play games and events. They also provide an outlet for self expression and sharing".

The above view is in agreement with the opinion of Smith, Salaway and Caruso (2008, p.117) who say "students can use social networks to express themselves and also they have the ability to meet other students from all over the world" Some social network sites also bring people together based on common language or shared interest, racial, sexual, religious or national based identities (Scolbe, 2006). University students from a large proportion of users on social media networks. Lenhart, Purcell, Smith and Zickuhr (2010, p.28) found that seventy two percent of all college in the United States of America have a social media profile with 45% of college student using a social media site at least once a day. Lenhart et al (2010) add that many of these young adults use social media networks to communicate with family, friends and even strangers. Social media affects communication with others and even self concept or self image. Social media use effects user's psychological well-being, the formation and maintenance of personal relationships, group membership and social identity. The commonest means used to communicate with friends and family is the email. It has been opined in some quarters that social media online relationships are highly similar to those developed in person, in terms of breadth, depth and quality. Attridge et al (1995) found that many online relationship had become engaged to or were living with someone they initially met via the social

media. In some cases, these close relationship were just as stable over time as were traditional relationships. Bargh, Mckenna and Fitzsimons (2002) outline the underlying reasons for the formation of close relationships on the internet; namely;

- a. People were better able to express their true selves (those aspects they felt were important but which they were usually unable to present in public) to their partner over the internet than when face to face.
- b. When internet partners liked each other, they tended to project qualities of their ideal friends onto each other.

Stafford & Reske (1990) found that tendencies to idealise one's often absent partner causes long distance couples to report higher relationship satisfaction compared with geographically close relationships. This is attributed to the fact that the relative anonymity of the social media can also contribute to close relationship formation through a reduction of the risks inherent in self disclosure. The social media make self-disclosure easier and this in turn facilitate close relationship formation. This agrees with Kang (2000,p.116) who notes that "cyberspace makes talking with strangers easier" This is in contrast to real life settings which more often than not discourage walking up to strangers and start chatting.

The other aspect of social media is that it has been alleged to cause quarrels,

break ups, misunderstanding, loneliness and isolation including depression and addiction. In particular, Turnbull (2010), opines that tone of voice, postures, gestures or facial expressions are the keys of the richness of interpersonal communication. These keys are cues in non-verbal communication. Put differently social media have positive and negative implications that cannot be wished away or embraced hook line and sinker.

This is probably why research by Statistics Canada suggests that one expects neither a dysfunctional society of losers nor a blissful society of happy networkers. Rather a society that is differently cohesive from the one we have known. They do not appear to be any significant differences in the number of social ties or in the amount of social interaction between internet (social media) users and non-users" This long essay intends to prove or disprove this among students of the Delta State University, Abraka.

Theoretical Framework

There are several theories that can be used to anchor this study. These include uses and gratification, technological determinism and social penetration theories. However, this study is anchored on the Technological Determinism theory and Uses and Gratifications theories.

First, the Technological Determinism theory

- A. Technological Determinism theory is traced to Thorstein Veblen (1857-1929) who believed that technology determines social and

cultural changes. He believed that technology was the major governing force in society the "medium is the message".

According to Khruचित (2013), the Technological Determinism theory has five postulations namely: A. Technology causes social changes, past, present and future. B. Technology is autonomous self controlled and independent. It has its own momentum while it s blindly shapes the society. C. The impact of technology is inevitable, new technology transforms society at every level, institution, society interaction and individuals .D. Technology is non-neutral, and. E .Effect of technology is universal.

According to Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopaedia. Technological

determinism is a reductionist theory that presumes that a society's technology drives the development of its social structure and cultural values. Wikipedia explains that most interpretations of technological determinism share two general ideas;

1. That the development of technology itself follows a predictable, traceable path largely beyond cultural or political influence and
2. That technology in turn has "effects" on societies that are inherent rather than society conditioned or produced because that society or gauges itself to support and further develop a technology once it has been introduced.

The essence of this theory is that users of the social media are now social media dependent and since they can use social media, they might as well use it in

their personal relationships with family and friends. This theory is applicable in the sense that students who use the social media interpersonal relationships, interpersonal problems can be solved by the use of the social media. With this theory in mind, student users of social media can make new friends, rediscover old friends and school mates, post personal information on their profiles in electronic bulletin boards, propose marriage, many in virtual communities, watch the marriage ceremony via Instagram or Skype and solve marital problems online.

The second theoretical anchor of this study is the Uses and gratifications theory. McQuail, Blumler and Brown (1972) say there are four categories of needs that the mass media seek to gratify. These are diversion; personal relationships; personal identity - personal reference, reality exploration; value reinforcement and surveillance- need for information in a complex world. The Uses and Gratifications theory, according to Watson (2003), "explores life...we use the media to gain information, to keep an eye on the world and to clarify what we think about it". This theory, in agreement with Liebes and Katz (1993), believe in an active reader, (audience), selecting, negotiating, interpreting discussing or, in short, being involved. The Uses and Gratifications theory is in alliance with the grand process of analysing human motivation. In other words, motivation for mass media use includes the search for cognitive consistency by reading, listening, and watching newspapers, radio and television respectively. The basic assumptions of the uses and gratifications theory include:

1. That the mass media and content choice is generally rational and directed towards certain specific goals and satisfaction (thus audience is active).
2. These audience members are conscious of the mass media- related needs which arise in personal and social circumstances and can voice these in terms of motivations.

Students of the Delta State University are rational conscious of the gratifications derivable from the Social media and because of cognitive consistency voice these benefits in terms of motivations. Baran and Davies (2006) cite Palmgreen, Werner and Rosengren (1985, p.31) as stating that "studies have shown that a variety of audience gratifications (both sought and obtained) are related to a wide spectrum of media effects, including knowledge dependency, attitudes, perception of social reality, agenda setting, and various political effects variables".

Methodology

This study used primary and secondary sources of data. The survey research method is the primary source while reference to a published article where the frequency of visits and the types of social network sites most visited were questions posed for the respondents in that study. This method involves drawing up a set of questions on an aspect of a subject to which selected members of the population of study are expected/requested to react to if its best suited to finding out the opinions of

students of the Delta state University in relation to the effect of social media on personal relationships. The population of this study was the total number of registered undergraduate students of the Delta State university, Abraka. Wikipedia estimated that there were about 36,000 in the 2007/2008 academic session. Since the estimated number of students were more than ten thousand as at then, the study adopted Meyers' (1979) sampling formula which advises that when a study population is more than ten thousand, it is appropriate statistically to use three hundred and eighty four (384) The study used a purposive sample of one hundred and twenty male up of 60 male and 60 female students to strike a gender balance. This study used the convenient/purposive sampling technique. This means that the sample for the study was arbitrarily selected to fulfil the objective of the study. One other reason for this decision was that almost all students use the social media. Possession of smart phones, ipads, tablets and other gadgets that provides access to the internet platform is widespread if not ubiquitous amongst students of Nigerian tertiary institutions. The questionnaire instrument was used to elicit responses from student respondents on a person-to-person and accidental basis in shuttle buses, lecture halls, hostels and canteens.

Discussion

The discussion of findings of this study was premised on using responses of respondents to the questionnaire questions to provide answers to the research questions posed for the

fulfilment of the objectives of the study.

Research question one: What is the extent of usage of social media among the students of Delta State University?

The answer to this question is available in tables 4 and 5

In table 4, 285 (79%) respondents returned that students of the Delta State University used the Social media. This is in agreement with the Technological determination theory that technology determines social and cultural changes in society. This finding also tally with the views of Edegoh, Asemah and Ekanem (2013), that no doubt social networks are a constant presence in the lives of students . Table 5 corroborates this finding where 257(71%) respondents felt that students of Delta State University used the Social media to a very large extent and a large extent .

Research question two: Is there a significant relationship between the extent of usage of social media and communication with family and friends?

Tables 6 and 7 provided the answer to research question two. In table 6, 195 (54%) respondents opined that social media contributed to communication of users with friends and family members.. This was further buttressed by 285(79%) respondents in table 7. These findings support the view that social media bring closer relationships of users and their families and friends. This support the view of Attridge et al (1995) who found that many persons involved in online relationships had become engaged to or were living with someone they initially met via the social media" In some cases these

close relationships were traditional relationships. The effect of technology is universal, data in table 10 affirmed. Research question three: Is there a significant relationship between self image of students of DELSU and their usage of Social media?

Findings of this study confirm that there is a significant relationship between usage of Social media and self image of students of Delta State University. 293 (81%) respondents submitted that the usage of social media had a significant relationship with the self image of students. This was further supported by data analysed in table 12 where 148 (41%) respondents opined that the social media contributed positively to students' academic performance. This agrees with the findings of Lenhart et al (2010) that 72% of all college students in the United States of America have a social media profile with 45% of college students using a social media site at least once a day. The finding also corroborates Stafford & Reske's (1990) opinion that tendencies to idealize one's often absent partner causes long distance couples to report higher relationship satisfaction compared with geographically close relationships. This finding proves the Uses and Gratifications theory, and, thus agrees with Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1974), who had postulated that with the uses and Gratifications theory, audience members put messages to use, are gratified and that such usages are intervening variables in the effects process.

Research Question Four: What is the perception of Delta State University students in relation to Social media and personal relationships?

There was no doubt that students of Delta state University agreed and perceived that the effects of social media were both positive and encouraging. This finding is contained in Table 11, where 217(60%) respondents asserted that the social media usage had positive and encouraging effects on students.

This was further supported by data analysed in Table 12 where 148(41%) respondents opined that the social media contributed positively to students' academic performance. This agrees with the findings of Lenhart et al (2010) that 72% of all college students in the United States of America have a social media profile with 45% of college students using a social media site at least once a day. This finding also corroborates Stafford & Reske's (1990) finding that tendencies to idealize one's often absent partner causes long distance couples to report higher relationship satisfaction compared with geographically close relationships. This confirms the theoretical anchor of the Uses and Gratifications theory which postulates that audience members (students) seek out the social media channels to establish and sustain personal relationships. Students make new friends, reconnect with old friends and even establish and sustain lasting relationships that many times engender a higher relationship satisfaction compared with geographically close relationships.

Summary.

The study set out to find out the effects of the social media on personal relationships of Delta State University. Students as well as determine whether the

usage of the social media contributes to the self-image of students. The study also examined the relationship between usage of the social media and how it affects interaction of users with friends and families. In order to realise the objectives of the study, the survey research method was adopted. The population of the study was the entire registered undergraduate students of the Abraka campus in the 2015/2016 session estimated at over ten thousand. The purposive sampling technique was used to select the three hundred and eighty four (384) respondents who were administered the questionnaire instrument on a person-to-person basis with a return rate of 94%. The three hundred and sixty two (362) questionnaire copies retrieved were found usable and duly used. Data collected and analysed show that the social media was extensively used by students of the Delta State University, Abraka. Findings show that users of the social media used the social channels to communicate with family and friends. The usage of the social media also drew users closer. Findings indicate that the usage of the social media contributed to the self image of the users. This is a reminder of Ojoboh (2015, p.45), who found in a study, that the possession and usage of social media network sites has become a constant presence in the lives of students to the extent that they visit one social networking site at least once a day. In that study, one hundred and twenty four (70%) respondents stated Facebook was the most patronized Social Networking sites by the Delta State University students. This is in agreement with Alabi (2013) who says the use of social

network sites is an ever growing phenomenon among university students in Nigeria.

Conclusion

From data collated and analysed, it can be stated without fear of contradiction that the emergence of the social media has changed the way the youth see the world, relate with friends and family. As a matter of fact, social media usage has become a way of life with the youth, especially with students of the Delta State University. It can therefore be concluded from findings of the study that technology has taken over the world. The world is now a global village as predicted by the Canadian Marshal McLuhan. His the 'medium is the message' is now a fait accompli. Media convergence is now the vogue in media content production and feedback for all forms of communication. This is particularly so in interpersonal communication with the user generated content and interactive characteristics of the social media. It is now more than ever faster and easier to establish and maintain personal relationships. Simply put it is hereby concluded that technological determinism is here to stay. Technology does affect our social and cultural lives. This is more so in the lives of students, youths. Some youths, students are even addicted to the social media as they spend more than necessary time online.

Recommendations

From findings of this study, due to the almost scary rapid rise of the social media, the following recommendations are proffered.

Students should imbibe effective time management ethics. This means that that students should learn to manage their time well. This is because the excessive use of the social media has disastrous consequences on good health and can engender anti-social behaviour. Negative effects such as loneliness, depression and illusions of grandeur often last longer than can be envisaged by the unenlightened and unwary social media user.

Students should be mindful of the kind of information they disclose on the social media networking sites. This is because there are 'evil geniuses'- evil minded persons always ready to prey on the innocence of the unwary and impressionable students, all in the guise of establishing and maintaining social-personal relationships.

Parents and guardians should caution their children and wards on the time spent on the social networking sites. This is essential for the proper upbringing of academic- focused children and wards. The Internet can equally be used effectively for enhancing academic performance if students are properly guided.

The Delta State University management should evolve a policy that limits the usage of the social media to the confines of students' hostels. This will drastically reduce the usage of the social media. In line with this intention, the use of phones should be complete outlawed in classes and lectures.

The management of the Delta State University must as a matter of urgency initiate the orientation of students on the dire consequences of social media abuse

and the significance of investing time on the social media instead of spending time online. Investing time in this context means using the internet- social media majorly for academic purposes.

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