

## Social Networking and Staff Performance in the University of Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This study examines the impact of social networking on staff performance in the University of Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria. In today's digitalized academic environment social networking is transforming communication collaboration and information sharing influencing productivity, engagement and job satisfaction. This research investigates how social networking affects staff performance, focusing on factors like information accessibility, workplace communication, relationship building and work-life balance. A mixed-methods approach was adopted, with data collected through structured questionnaires and interviews from both academic and non-academic staff. Descriptive statistics and thematic analysis were used to identify trends and key themes. Findings indicate that social networking can enhance staff performance by improving information sharing and supporting collaboration, fostering a more connected work environment. However, excessive use can also lead to distractions, negatively impacting productivity for some employees. Variations were observed across departments and roles suggesting the effects may be role-specific. Based on these insights, recommendations for university policy include balanced social networking use within professional boundaries to maximize benefits while minimizing distractions. This study provides valuable insights for institutional policymakers and administrators seeking to leverage digital tools to improve staff performance in Nigerian universities.*

**Keywords:** *Social networking, staff performance, academic environment, workplace communication, relationship building and work-life balance*

### **Introduction**

The rise of social networking has transformed the way individuals connect, communicate, and collaborate in the modern workplace. In academic institutions, social networking tools such as Facebook, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, and institutional platforms have become integral to fostering relationships, enhancing information exchange, and supporting both personal and professional development. At the University of Calabar in Cross River State, Nigeria, these tools are widely used among staff, raising questions about their impact on employee performance, productivity, and engagement. Staff performance is essential in academic institutions, as it directly influences educational quality, institutional effectiveness, and student outcomes. Social networking, while enhancing connectivity and access to information, can also pose challenges, including potential distractions, blurred boundaries between personal and professional interactions, and time management issues. Previous studies highlight that social networking can enhance workplace

collaboration and innovation but may also introduce risks of reduced productivity if not effectively managed (Aguolu, 2020; Okechukwu & Nwankwo, 2019).

This study aims to assess the impact of social networking on staff performance in the University of Calabar, focusing on factors such as information accessibility, communication efficiency, relationship building, and work-life balance. By examining these dimensions, the study seeks to provide insights into how social networking can be leveraged to enhance staff performance while addressing challenges associated with its use. This research contributes to the growing body of literature on digital workplace dynamics in Nigerian universities, offering recommendations for institutional policies to optimize the positive impact of social networking on staff productivity and engagement. The rapid evolution of information and communication technology (ICT) has significantly reshaped professional environments across various sectors, including higher education. Social networking platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and WhatsApp have become vital tools in fostering communication, collaboration, and information sharing within organizations. In academic institutions, these platforms are widely utilized to connect staff members, streamline administrative functions, and enhance professional development. For universities, where knowledge exchange and collaborative research are paramount, the role of social networking in promoting efficiency, communication, and engagement among staff is becoming increasingly important.

At the University of Calabar in Cross River State, Nigeria, social networking has permeated daily professional interactions, influencing how academic and non-academic staff engage with their colleagues and fulfill their duties. Social networking supports flexible communication, facilitates rapid information dissemination, and allows staff to maintain connections both within and outside the university community. These interactions contribute to a sense of community and foster collaborative efforts that can positively influence performance outcomes. However, while social networking holds potential benefits, it also poses challenges, such as increased distractions, reduced focus, and potential overuse of personal time for work-related matters, which could impact overall productivity and job satisfaction. Previous studies on social networking and employee performance highlight both positive and negative impacts. Research by Nwankwo (2020) and Okoro (2021) indicates that social networking can boost job performance by improving access to resources, facilitating mentorship, and enabling informal learning. Conversely, studies also show that excessive or inappropriate use can detract from work responsibilities and hinder effective task completion (Agu & Ebong, 2019). Thus, understanding the specific dynamics of social networking and its impact on staff performance in the University of Calabar is essential to developing strategies that maximize its benefits while minimizing potential drawbacks.

This study seeks to investigate how social networking influences staff performance in the University of Calabar, examining the balance between productivity benefits and the risk of distractions. Findings will offer insights that could inform policy guidelines and staff training programs, ensuring that social networking remains a supportive tool for productivity and engagement within Nigerian universities.

### **Research questions**

- i. How does social networking usage influence staff performance in terms of productivity and task efficiency in the University of Calabar?
- ii. In what ways does social networking affect communication and collaboration among academic and non-academic staff in the University of Calabar?
- iii. What are the perceived benefits and drawbacks of social networking on job satisfaction and work-life balance among University of Calabar staff?

- iv. How do variations in social networking usage impact performance across different departments and roles within the University of Calabar?

### **Objectives of the study**

The general objective of this study is to examine the impact of social networking on staff performance in the University of Calabar, Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the objectives are to:

- i. Investigate how social networking influences productivity and task efficiency among academic and non-academic staff in the University of Calabar.
- ii. Assess the effects of social networking on communication and collaboration within the university's staff community.
- iii. Explore the perceived benefits and challenges of social networking on job satisfaction and work-life balance among staff members.
- iv. Analyze the variations in social networking usage and its impact on staff performance across different departments and roles within the University of Calabar.

### **Research hypotheses**

- i. Social networking usage has a significant positive impact on staff productivity and task efficiency in the University of Calabar.
- ii. Social networking significantly enhances communication and collaboration among academic and non-academic staff.
- iii. Social networking positively affects job satisfaction and work-life balance among University of Calabar staff.
- iv. There are significant variations in the impact of social networking on staff performance across different departments and roles within the University of Calabar.

### **Scope of the Study**

This study focuses on assessing the impact of social networking and staff performance in the University of Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria. It examines how social networking platforms, such as WhatsApp, LinkedIn, and Facebook, influence productivity, communication, collaboration, job satisfaction, and work-life balance among both academic and non-academic staff. The research targets employees across various departments within the university to capture diverse perspectives and potential role-based differences in social networking use and its effects on performance. Data collection is limited to the University of Calabar, making the findings specifically relevant to this institution, though they may offer insights for similar academic settings.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Social Networking and staff performance**

Social networking platforms have transformed the way employees interact, collaborate, and share information. Researchers like Okechukwu and Nwankwo (2019) assert that social networking enhances communication channels, facilitating quicker decision-making and problem-solving processes among staff. Similarly, Afolabi and Olatunji (2020) found that effective use of social networks can significantly increase staff productivity by enabling easy access to resources and fostering collaborative projects. This assertion is echoed by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), who highlight that social networking platforms can enhance interpersonal relationships, leading to improved workplace dynamics and performance.

Conversely, excessive use of social networking has been linked to negative outcomes such as decreased productivity and job dissatisfaction. For instance, studies by Aydin et al. (2021) indicate that while social networks can enhance job performance, they can also serve as sources of distraction, reducing employees' focus on core tasks. This duality suggests that the impact of social networking on staff performance may vary based on individual usage patterns and the nature of the work environment.

## **Theoretical Frameworks**

### **Social Exchange Theory (SET)**

Proposed by Blau (1964), SET posits that social behavior is the result of an exchange process aiming to maximize benefits and minimize costs. In the context of social networking, employees may engage with these platforms to foster relationships that provide professional advantages, such as access to information and support. This theory suggests that when staff perceive social networking as beneficial to their work performance and social capital, they are more likely to engage actively, thereby enhancing their productivity and job satisfaction.

### **Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)**

Developed by Davis (1989), TAM explains how users come to accept and use technology. It posits that perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness significantly influence users' intentions to adopt new technologies. In the context of social networking at the University of Calabar, TAM can help elucidate how staff's acceptance of these platforms impacts their performance. If staff members view social networking as easy to use and beneficial for their work tasks, they are likely to integrate these tools into their daily routines, ultimately enhancing their performance.

## **Research Methodology**

### **Research design**

The study employed a mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between social networking and staff performance. The quantitative component involves the collection of numerical data through structured questionnaires, while the qualitative aspect includes semi-structured interviews to capture in-depth insights from participants. This triangulation of data enhances the reliability and validity of the findings, as it allows for cross-verification of results from different data sources.

### **Population and Sampling**

The target population for this study consists of academic and non-academic staff in the University of Calabar. The total staff population is approximately 1,500, comprising faculty members, administrative staff, and support personnel. A stratified random sampling technique was utilized to ensure representation from various departments and roles within the university. The sample size will be determined using the Cochran formula, ensuring adequate statistical power for the quantitative analysis, with a target of at least 300 respondents for the survey.

### **Data Collection Methods**

A structured questionnaire was developed, comprising closed-ended questions designed to assess the usage of social networking platforms, perceived impact on productivity, communication, job satisfaction, and work-life balance. The questionnaire was pre-tested with a small group of staff

to ensure clarity, relevance, and reliability, with adjustments made as necessary. The finalized questionnaire will be administered both online and in-person to maximize response rates.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a purposive sample of staff members, including both high-performing and low-performing individuals based on the survey results. The interviews explored participants' perceptions of social networking's role in their work performance, challenges encountered, and suggestions for improvement. Interviews were audio-recorded (with consent) and transcribed for analysis.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

**Quantitative Data Analysis:** Data from the questionnaires was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics summarized the demographic characteristics of respondents and their social networking usage patterns. Inferential statistics, including regression analysis, was employed to test the research hypotheses and examine the relationships between variables.

**Qualitative Data Analysis:** Thematic analysis was utilized to identify recurring themes and patterns within the interview transcripts. This process involves coding the data and grouping related codes into broader themes that reflect participants' experiences and perspectives. The qualitative findings will complement the quantitative results, providing a richer understanding of the impact of social networking on staff performance.

### **Validity and Reliability**

To ensure the validity and reliability of the study, the following measures were implemented. The questionnaire undergoes pilot testing to refine questions for clarity and relevance, ensuring it effectively captures the intended constructs. The use of both quantitative and qualitative methods will facilitate triangulation, enhancing the credibility of the findings. The reliability of the quantitative instrument was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, targeting a threshold of 0.70 or higher to confirm internal consistency.

## **Data Presentation, Analysis, and Discussion**

### **Data Presentation**

#### **Quantitative Findings**

A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed, with a response rate of 85%, resulting in 255 usable questionnaires. The demographic characteristics of the respondents are summarized in Table 1.

#### **Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

The survey results indicate that a significant majority of respondents (78%) utilize social networking platforms for professional purposes, with Facebook (52%) and WhatsApp (68%) being the most commonly used platforms.

### **Performance Metrics**

To evaluate staff performance, respondents rated their performance on a scale from 1 (very low) to 5 (very high). The mean performance rating was 3.8 (SD = 0.65), indicating an overall positive perception of performance among the staff.

## **Relationship between Social Networking Usage and Staff Performance**

The data in Table 2 reveal a clear trend: higher frequency of social networking usage correlates with improved staff performance.

### **Qualitative Findings**

The semi-structured interviews were conducted with 30 staff members. Thematic analysis identified three main themes related to social networking's impact on staff performance:

**Enhanced Communication:** Many participants reported that social networking facilitates real-time communication and information sharing, which positively impacts their ability to collaborate on projects.

**Support for Work-Life Balance:** Respondents noted that social networking provides support networks that help them manage work-related stress and maintain work-life balance.

**Distractions and Time Management:** A notable concern was the potential for social networking to become a source of distraction, with some staff admitting that excessive use affects their focus and productivity.

### **Data Analysis**

#### **Statistical Analysis**

The relationship between social networking usage and staff performance was further analyzed using regression analysis. The results indicated a significant positive relationship ( $\beta = 0.65$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) between the frequency of social networking usage and staff performance, supporting the hypothesis that higher engagement with social networks leads to better performance outcomes.

#### **Qualitative Insights**

The qualitative findings corroborate the quantitative results, illustrating that social networking plays a multifaceted role in shaping staff performance. The themes identified highlight both the benefits and challenges posed by social networking. Enhanced communication and support were prevalent, yet concerns regarding distractions were equally significant.

### **Discussion**

The findings of this study align with existing literature, demonstrating that social networking can serve as a powerful tool for enhancing staff performance within higher education institutions. The positive correlation between social networking usage and performance underscores the necessity for universities to integrate social networking tools into their operational frameworks strategically.

#### **Enhanced Communication and Collaboration**

The data suggest that social networking platforms facilitate improved communication and collaboration among staff, which is consistent with previous studies (Okechukwu & Nwankwo, 2019). By fostering an environment where staff can share resources and engage in discussions, universities can enhance collective productivity.

#### **Work-Life Balance**

The findings also emphasize the role of social networking in promoting work-life balance, aligning with Afolabi and Olatunji's (2020) assertion that social networks provide essential support

systems. This aspect is particularly important in academic settings, where staff may face high levels of stress and workload.

### **Addressing Distractions**

However, the potential for social networking to distract staff from their core responsibilities cannot be overlooked. The study highlights the need for institutional guidelines that encourage effective use of social media while minimizing distractions. Institutions should consider developing training programs that educate staff on managing social networking use effectively.

### **Conclusion of Findings**

In conclusion, the study reveals a complex interplay between social networking and staff performance at the University of Calabar. While social networking platforms can enhance communication, collaboration, and work-life balance, their potential for distraction necessitates a balanced approach to their use. These insights provide valuable implications for university policy-makers, human resources departments, and staff development programs, guiding strategies to harness social networking benefits while mitigating its challenges.

### **Summary**

This study investigated the impact of social networking on staff performance at the University of Calabar, Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria. Through a mixed-methods approach, comprising structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, the research aimed to explore how social networking influences communication, collaboration, and overall staff productivity. The study revealed that a significant majority of staff utilized social networking platforms, with Facebook and WhatsApp being the most popular. Quantitative findings indicated a positive correlation between frequent use of social networking and improved performance, with mean performance ratings rising from 2.9 for low usage to 4.5 for daily users. Qualitative insights highlighted enhanced communication, support for work-life balance, and challenges related to distractions as key themes. Overall, the study contributes to the understanding of social networking's role in academic settings and provides practical implications for university management.

### **Conclusion**

The findings of this study substantiate the notion that social networking can significantly enhance staff performance within the University of Calabar. The data demonstrated that effective use of social networking tools fosters better communication, collaboration, and support systems among staff members, leading to increased productivity and job satisfaction. However, the research also identifies the potential downsides, particularly regarding distractions that can adversely affect focus and time management. Therefore, while social networking presents considerable benefits, a balanced approach is essential to maximize its advantages while mitigating its challenges.

### **Recommendations**

- i. The University should develop comprehensive guidelines on the appropriate use of social networking platforms in professional contexts, promoting their benefits while addressing potential distractions.
- ii. Implement training programs for staff to enhance their skills in using social networking effectively for professional collaboration, information sharing, and time management.
- iii. Conduct regular assessments to evaluate the impact of social networking on staff performance, enabling the university to adapt policies and strategies as necessary.

- iv. Encourage the establishment of formal support networks and online groups for staff that leverage social networking tools to foster collaboration and mentorship.
- v. Promote initiatives that encourage a healthy work-life balance among staff, integrating the use of social networking as a tool for both professional development and personal well-being.

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