

OVER-VALUING UNSTRUCTURED AND SOCIAL NETWORKING TIME: A CORRELATE OF STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN TVET

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Abstract

Youth nowadays spend precious amount of their break time involving in unplanned activities at the expense of programmed activities and self-study needed for success and early completion of school programme. This study examines the effects of valuing unstructured time and social skills by students of tertiary level on their academic performances. The study was carried out in tertiary institutions in Niger state. Purposive sampling technique was used to select two institutions that run TVET programmes. the population of 1250 TVET students were targeted. The institutions comprise one university with 950 students and one college of education with 300 students and were all used for the study. Self-assessment Questionnaire titled "Academic Performance and Utilisation of Unstructured Time of Students" (APUUTS) was used to collected data through WhatsApp social media network. The Questionnaire had reliability coefficient of .86 estimated using split-half method and Cronbach's Alpha reliability Statistics. 609 students responded to the Questionnaire and were used for the study. Data collected were subjected to percentages, mean and chi-square test of independence. Percentages and the mean were used to answer the research questions while the chi-square test was used to test one null hypotheses at .05 level of significance. Results revealed 39.90% of students' population surf on the internet for less than three hours per day, while, 60.10% surf the internet for more than three hours per day. High achievers utilised their break time for academic work. Lack of proper management of unstructured time and social networking negatively impacted academic performance of TVET students. Gender does not influence the academic performance of students. The study recommended that teachers should subject students to assignments that will make them to explore the internet in order to change their mind sets to a more purposeful and desirable social skill as modern approach to education for security, economy and education for national development in Nigeria.

Keywords: Academic performance, TVET, Over-valuing, Unstructured time, Social Networking.

Introduction

What is unstructured?

Unstructured is a popular phrase currently associated with the phrase unstructured time (Vocabulary.com, 2022), which is another way of saying "there is nothing on the schedule." A time during which participants are left to their own devices with little or no staff interaction (Brooker & Duce, 2010). Lunch break time are usually considered as unstructured time because break times are intended for taking time off from work.

Often times students utilize such time to eat, drink, refresh by taking a walk, shake-up the stress, sharing with colleagues and friends (socialising) one to one, in group or via social network, getting along with others or being yourself taking fresh air and relaxing. Some organized students utilize what remain of the time to get organized, that is, becoming engaged in self-study, tutorial assignments and practice. Taking breaks that are not organized does not have the needed effects as they do not provide you with the right amount of time to properly recover from the pressure you have exerted onto your nervous system. Effective break-time relates to taking breaks that manage to maximize one's productivity. According to Autonomous (2021), effective breaks can result in improved performance, makes one feel better and also have more cognitive capacity while unstructured time might encourage daydreaming, creativity, or stress management or getting involved in some form of social skills (Brooker & Duce, 2010). But for people that are organized, like to follow schedules and have everything in order, unstructured anything can make them feel lazy or crazy.

Lunch Break time is usually considered to be an enjoyable time of the day for students, but due to the lack of structure, the unpredictable nature of lunch break times and the increased social demands at these times of day, students are likely over-value such break time by placing higher priority on achieving social demands. over-valuing can create challenging times for students' academic pursuit. Students may also be unsure of what to do and can feel overwhelmed in the social and sensory rich environment of the playground and this can then lead to emotional outbursts. Such outbursts may result in sudden irritation, uncontrollable crying and weeping, laughter or rage, which when experienced for a long time may lead to depression or severe anxiety (Healthline,2022)

During free times, there is often an expectation for students to interact with others (Social demands), when eating in the dining hall and participating in group activities in the playground. However, responsible students that often value free times do the needful in utilizing what remains of such free time for solving problems that relates to their study, or to prepare for the upcoming structured activities. Smartphone is an indispensable everyday tool for students' learning Mohammed (2018). Liu, et al. (2022) reported relationship between Smartphone Addiction among college students. Liu, et al., also asserted that excessive usage of smartphones may lead to negative outcomes, such as academic procrastination. The question is, does utilization of unstructured time leads to better academic performances of students in Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET)? TVET is a training programme that require students, in school and in their own time to acquire hands-on practical experience. TVET students that are organized are more likely to structure their academic pursuits, such as tutorials, assignments, practicing a scheme or experiment during their unstructured time (Anthrodesk, 2023). Other less serious learners spend the entire time on social network as a way of coping with social demands. Where students fail to cope with social demands this can increase anxiety (Kubey, 1986). It has been observed that people with ASD have different ways of learning, moving, or paying attention (Healthline,2022). These appear to be two sides of a coin; therefore, this study sort to determine whether satisfying social demands and lack of inclusion of academic activities by TVET students in their utilization of unstructured time can affect academic performance of TVET students.

Academic performance refers to the measure of student achievement across various academic subjects (Wikipedia, 2023). The academic performance or achievement being the outcome of students' effort in examinations (Ballotpedia, 2022 & Eze, *et al*, 2016), is determined by a number of attributes that could be cognitive and non-cognitive (Tan, [2019](#), Liem & McInerney, [2018](#)). The determining factors of students' performance have been and will continue to be of interest to researchers. Researchers have continued to find which variables (interest, gender, family, parents social or financial status, etc) impact students' performance in both positive and negative directions (Kaya, 2024; Elphinstone, Whitehead, Tinker, &

Bates, 2019; Sugahara & Boland, 2014; Tailab, 2013; Garkaza, et al, 2011; Streenkamp & Baard, 2009). Both time management and learning strategic approach were negatively linked to academic procrastination. Students' academic performance is reflected in their ability to demonstrate the knowledge they have learned. In their various research endeavour, scholars at varying times (Elphinstone, Whitehead, Tinker, & Bates, 2019; Sugahara & Boland, 2014; Tailab, 2013; Garkaza, et al, 2011; Streenkamp & Baard, 2009) have reported in favour or against the influence of gender on academic performance of students. Therefore, the study examined the effects of none utilization of unstructured time by students of tertiary level institutions, by over-valuing social networking over issues that bother on their academic pursuits. The question is, will there be any significant deference between the students that are organized and those that are unorganized and prefer meeting their social demands in their academic performance?

Objectives

The study sort to determine the effect of lack of structured time and the over concentration on social skills by TVET students on their academic performance. Specifically, the study determined:

1. Students concept of lunch break.
2. What TVET students do at lunch break time.
3. The performance of TVET students
4. Whether time spend surfing on social media influence academic performance of TVET students.
5. The influence of gender on the academic performances TVET students.

Research Questions

1. What is students' concept of lunch break time?
2. What activities are most valued and often carried out by TVET students at lunch break time?
3. What is the correlation between time spent surfing and performance of TVET students?
4. What is the amount of time spent by TVET students on social network?

Hypotheses

Ho1: Social networking does not influence academic performance of TVET students

Ho2: Gender does not have influence on academic performance of TVET students.

Methodology

Survey research design was used to carry out the study. The study was carried out in tertiary institutions in Niger state. Purposive sampling technique was used to select two institutions that run TVET programmes with a population of 1250 TVET students. The institutions comprised Federal university of Technology, Minna (FUTM) with 950 and Niger state college of education Minna (COEM) with 300 TVET students. No sampling was done, the entire population was used for the study. Since data were collected over the social media, tertiary institutions were used for the study because of location of tertiary schools and the availability of wi-fi; secondly, students of tertiary institutions carry GSM android phones, while O' level school students are prohibited from carrying GSM phones. A researcher-designed self-assessment instrument titled "Questionnaire on Academic Performance and the Utilisation of Unstructured and Social Networking Time of Students" (QAPUUSNTS) was used to collect data for the study.

The 49 item QAPUUSNTS was validated by three experts, one from COE Minna and two from FUT Minna and a reliability index of .86 was produced using split-half method and Cronbach's Alpha Statistics. Data was collected through google scholar via WhatsApp social media network using QAPUUSNTS. Students were presented with a list of items carefully selected to enable the researcher to collect data that was computed to answer the research questions and analysed to test the null hypotheses. Five research questions were answered and two null hypotheses were tested at .05 significance. The percentages and rank were used to answer research questions one and three, the mean was used to answer research question two, while Chi-Squire (X^2) statistics for the test of independence was used to determine the relationship between academic performance of TVET students and time spent surfing and also to compare the behaviour and performance of male and female students at .05 level of significance.

Results

The concept of students on lunch break time

Table 1: Ranking on students' concepts of lunch break time.

SN	ACTIVITY	\bar{x}_1	\bar{x}_2	\bar{x}_T	%	Rank
4	Take breakfast/lunch, read news flash, watch You Tube, Netflix, TikTok, etc., and browse shopping sites,	30	91	121	19.9	1
1	Take breakfast/lunch, spend time checking social media and hangout with classmates	35	58	93	15.3	2
5	Take breakfast/lunch, engage in self-study, read newspapers, spend time doing assignments, reassess and keep an overview, spend time reviewing notes and join group tutorial.	23	59	82	13.5	3
7	Take breakfast/lunch, spend time sorting lecturers, hang out with classmates, spend time checking social media	32	28	60	9.84	4
2	Take breakfast/lunch, exercising, breathing exercise, meditate, stand up and stretch or take a short walk, and spend time with my boy/girlfriend.	18	14	32	5.23	5
6	Take breakfast/lunch, tidy up a part of your room, take a shower, make phone calls and take a nap	12	20	32	5.23	5
3	Take breakfast/lunch, spend time checking social media, spend time with my peer group, chat with roommate(s) or colleague(s) and spend time with my boy/girlfriend	83	106	189	31	7
Cumulative Total		233	376	609	100	

Source: Field survey

\bar{x}_1 = Frequency of COE students; \bar{x}_2 = Frequency of University students

\bar{x}_T = Total frequencies % = Percentages of COE and University students

Result in table 1 indicates two activities that represents TVET students' concepts of break time. They are items one and four. Item four: breakfast/lunch, spend time checking social media and hangout with classmates ranked first, (19.9%); and item 1: breakfast/lunch, read news flash, watch You Tube, Netflix, TikTok, and browse shopping sites ranked second,

(15.3%). Ranking third is breakfast/lunch, Engage in self-study, read newspapers, spend time doing assignments, reassess and keep an overview, spend time reviewing notes and join group tutorial. This also shows students value social demands over engaging on activities that centre on their academic pursuits which came third. Further analysis showed 65.2% of students that engage in academic pursuits during their break-time made good grades (CGPA ≥ 3.0) while only 34.9% of students that spend long hours on social media network made CGPA ≤ 3.0

Activities most valued and carried out by students at lunch break time

Table 2: Mean ratings of activities carried out by students at lunch break time

$N_1=197$; $N_2=412$

SN	ACTIVITY	\bar{x}_1	\bar{x}_2	\bar{x}_A	Rem
8	Meet the academic advisor to discuss class schedule, graduation path and career goals	2.03	2.18	2.10	NO
9	Prepare study plan	1.18	1.98	1.56	RO
10	Private tutoring	2.11	2.09	2.10	NO
11	Go for counselling	0.99	1.90	1.52	RO
12	Visit career centre	0.49	1.97	1.20	RO
13	Prepare schedule planner	2.03	2.90	2.41	NO
14	Use a daily planner	2.03	2.91	2.41	NO
15	Input due dates of assignments, projects, events, quizzes and exams as soon as received	3.12	4.3	3.87	O
16	Communicate with instructors ahead of time in event where you have to miss class	2.3	2.10	2.16	NO
17	Ask questions when you don't understand the materials or assignments	2.98	3.42	3.38	O
18	Set daily screen time limits on the use of phone for social media IG, Twitter, FB, etc.	1.12	2.31	1.41	RO
19	Meet the academic advisor to discuss class schedule, graduation path and career goals	1.81	1.87	1.34	RO
20	Use research-based study technique to learn new concepts	3.28	2.79	3.03	O
21	Develop pre-tests,	2.96	1.76	2.33	RO
22	Develop self quizzes	2.53	1.96	2.25	RO
23	Test yourself using the test feature or the learning feature	1.49	2.43	1.46	RO
24	Connect with classmates to share challenges and concerns and overcome them together	3.67	4.56	4.11	MO
25	Create a peer support system	4.61	4.42	4.54	MO
26	Do your assignments yourself	2.68	3.89	3.23	O
27	Sometimes copy assignments from classmates	3.51	2.90	3.20	O
28	Help friends do their assignments	3.06	3.02	3.62	O
29	Get involved in more than one extra-curricular activity	2.59	2.66	2.56	NO
30	Get assistance from a good source when one is required	3.38	4.27	3.62	O
31	Play sports	3.45	2.49	2.83	NO

Source: Field survey

\bar{x}_1 = Mean of COE students; \bar{x}_2 = Mean of University students \bar{x}_A = Average mean

Remark: MO = Most Often; O = Often; NO = Not Often; RO = Rarely Often

Table 2 shows two activities are most valued and often carried out by students at lunch break time. They include to connect with classmates to share challenges and concerns and overcome them together; to create a peer support system. Seven activities also produce moderately high mean that ranged from 3.3 to 3.87, Seven items are rated as often while eight are rarely often carried out by students.

Influence of social networking on the performance of TVET students.

Table 4: Result of Chi-Square test on the influence of social networking on academic performance of TVET students

SN	Time spent surfing	≤ 1.49	1.50 to 2.39	2.40 to 3.49	3.50 to 4.49	4.50 to 5.00	TOT	%
1	Less than three hours	4	95	100	42	2	243	39.90
2	More than three hours	12	68	188	96	2	366	60.10
	Total	16	163	288	138	4	609	100

16 (2.63%) 163 (27.77%) 288 (47.29%) 138 (22.66%) 4 (0.66%)

Source: Field survey

df = 4; Critical $X^2 = 9.49$; $\alpha = .05$;

Computed $X^2 = 32.18$

***Decision: H_0 is rejected;** therefore, time spent surfing on social network have influence on the performance of TVET students.

Chi-Square (table 4) result indicates that 16 students representing 2.63% (13 male; 3 female) have CGPA ≤ 1.49 ; 163 students (27.77%) comprising 150 male and 13 female had CGPA of 1.50 to 2.39; 288 or 47.29% that comprised 272 male and 16 female students had CGPA between 2.40 and 3.49; 138 representing 22.66% (136 male; 2 female) had CGPA from 3.50 to 4.49 and four students (3 male and 1 female) had CGPA between 4.50 to 5.0. The Chi-Square value of 0.904 produced is less than the critical value of 9.49 required for significance at $\alpha = .05$; gender does not influence the academic performance of TVET students.

Influence of gender on academic performance of TVET students:

Table 3: Chi-square test on academic performance of TVET students (CGPA)

	≤ 1.49	1.50 - 2.39	2.40 - 3.49	3.50 - 4.49	4.50 - 5.00	Totals
Male	13	150	272	136	3	574
Female	3	13	16	2	1	35

df = 4; Critical $X^2 = 9.49$; $\alpha = .05$; Computed $X^2 = 0.904$

***Decision: H_0 is accepted;** gender does not influence the academic performance of TVET students.

Chi-Square results on Influence of social networking on the performance of TVET students (Table 5) showed that 39.90% of students' population surf on the internet for less than three hours per day, while, 60.10% of them surf the internet for more than three hours per day. Of the students that spend less time surfing, 44 students recorded high grades 3.50 to 5.0; 100 students reported average grades (2.40 – 3.49), while 99 had lower grades, 2.39 and below. The Chi-Square value of 32.18 produced is more than the critical value of 9.49 required for significance at $\alpha = .05$, consequently, H_0 is rejected: social networking influences academic performances of TVET students.

Findings

1. Most students understand the concept of lunch break as time to eat, certify social demands and interact with friends and classmates.
2. Activities most valued and often carried out by students include connecting with classmates to share challenges and concerns and overcome them together; and to create a peer support system.
3. More than half (54%) of students spend between three to four hours daily surfing on social media; 23% spend as much as five to six hours surfing, while 3.45% of students spend the list hours on social media. High achievement students utilize part of their break time for academic work.
4. Over valuing unstructured time and social networking influence the academic performances of TVET students.
5. Gender does not influence the academic performances of male and female students

Discussion

The concept of lunch break to TVET students means time to eat, certify social demands and interact with friends and classmates. This is a clear indication that students value social demands over engaging on activities that centre on their academic pursuits which came third. The finding is in line with Brooker & Duce (2010) who described lunch break as unstructured time because such times are intended for taking time off from work to eat, relax, get refreshed and socialising. Ranking third is breakfast/lunch, engage in self-study, read newspapers, spend time doing assignments, reassess and keep an overview, spend time reviewing notes and Join group tutorial. Autonomous (2021) purported that some organized students utilize what remain of the time to get organized, that is, becoming engaged in self-study, tutorial assignments and practice.

Activities most valued and often carried out by students include connecting with classmates to share challenges and concerns and overcome them together; and to create a peer support system. Result showed that students that utilize what remain of the break time to get organized, that is, becoming engaged in self-study, tutorial assignments and practice performed creditably well in their academic pursuits. This support Autonomous (2021) and Brooker & Duce (2010) that effective break-time relates to taking breaks that manage to maximize one's productivity. Less serious learners spend the entire time on social network as a way of coping with social demands (Kaya, 2024 and Anthrodesk, 2023).

It was found out that over valuing unstructured time and social networking influence the academic performances of TVET students. 39.90% of students' surf the internet for less than three hours per day, 60.10% of them surf for more than three hours per day. Among the students that use less time surfing, 44 students reported high grades, 3.50 to 5.0; 100 students reported average grades (2.40 – 3.49), while 99 had lower grades of 2.39 and below. Liu, et al. (2022) found relationship between Smartphone Addiction and Academic Procrastination. Similarly, Anthrodesk, (2023) reported that students that are organized are more likely to structure their academic pursuits, such as tutorials, assignments, practicing a scheme or experiment during their unstructured time. Attributes that determines academic performance could be cognitive and non-cognitive (Liem & Tan, [2019](#), Liem & McInerney, [2018](#)).

Result also indicated that gender does not influence the academic performances of students. Elphinstone, Whitehead, Tinker, & Bates, ([2019](#)), Tailab, (2013); Garkaza, et al, (2011) and Streenkamp & Baard, 2009) reported the influence of gender on the academic performance of students which does not support the findings of this study. However, Liem & Tan, ([2019](#)); Liem & McInerney ([2018](#)); Sugahara & Boland, (2014) reported influence of gender on students' academic performance.

The findings of this study have provided grey areas that researchers and curriculum designers could explore with a view to improve learning outcome of students through utilization of unstructured time for computer games that has to do with students' learning.

Recommendations

1. Teachers should subject students to assignments that will make them to explore the internet in order to change their mind sets to a more creative, desirable social skill as modern approach to education.
2. Virtual classrooms and laboratories should be provided by school administrators for use by students and teachers.
3. Teachers should assign students to self-study in areas that relates to their academic pursuits.
4. Provide internet facilities in classrooms and workshops so that learners can be involved in teaching and learning of skills during instruction.
5. Teachers should use simulations and games that will engage TVET students in skill activities during the unstructured time.

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