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**THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN ENHANCING ENTREPRENEURSHIP SKILLS AMONG NIGERIAN YOUTHS: COVID-19 TOTAL LOCKDOWN AND POST ERA****Obiajulu Joel Nwolu**

Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

**Chukwunonso C. Nnabuife**

Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

&amp;

**Chika Onyinye Nnabuife**

Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

**Abstract**

*The study explored the roles of social media in enhancing the acquisition of entrepreneurship skills among Nigerian youths, retrospectively during the COVID-19 lockdown of 2020 and now, its post era. The study was guided by the uses and gratification theory as well as the social category theory. Using the triangulation method, a total of 10 social media influencers were interviewed while 2000 copies of questionnaire were administered to respondents within Anambra State. Findings revealed that 71.4% of respondents acquired skills on social media during the lockdown with YouTube, Facebook and Instagram as the main media for these acquisitions. While further research is recommended in this area, however, there is a need for Government to provide appropriate infrastructure for better internet connectivity and also subsidize data costs by reducing the taxation of internet service providers. Furthermore, since it has been found that youths are the most active users of social media in Nigeria, in addition to the provision of grants and low-interest loans, Government should use these same social media for sensitization and orientation all geared towards effective youth productivity.*

**Keywords:** Mass Media, Entrepreneurship, Covid-19, Teenagers.**Introduction**

Times and things have changed as well as the normal, accepted and traditional way of doing business. Covid-19 struck at a time the world wasn't ready including businesses both large and small scale were not left out in this struggle. The complete lockdown which the country experienced for a period of 2 months from March to April 2020 left a level of hardship on business owners as offices and shops were shut down to the entire public except for essential goods and services. This took its toll on the economy of the nation and most employers cut down on their workforce to reduce losses and cost of expenditure. Due to the upsurge in unemployment in Nigeria, it is safe to say the majority of the Nigerian youths are currently entrepreneurs venturing into different backgrounds from food, agriculture, skin care, solar energy, fashion and a lot of other small-scale businesses.

As defined by Garner et al (2004) an entrepreneur is one who commences a commercial enterprise. It is however undeniable that entrepreneurship plays a crucial role in sustainable development and poverty reduction through the creation of job opportunities and providing support for lesser privileged groups (UNDP, 2014). This paper, therefore, aims to identify the role of social media in enhancing entrepreneurship skills among Nigerian youths, in the face of the covid-19 lockdown and Post era.

This study is carried out with the expectation that it would contribute academically and practically to a better understanding of how much of a smart way of doing business and remaining in the business space through social media. However, some negative turns have been highlighted which would help entrepreneurs to analyse all the positive and negative aspects when deciding to use social media platforms to enhance their businesses.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Social media is perceived as a negative influence on the Nigerian youth, according to the likes of Desmond Eliot a member of the Lagos state house of assembly who called for the regulation of social media because kids have taken over the platform completely ignoring the positive benefits Nigerian youths derive from social media. As a result of the lockdown, a lot of small-scale businesses almost lost their businesses to the pandemic as production and delivery of goods and services was almost impossible, which gave rise to the search for more sustainable and apt ways of doing business with technology. This study, therefore, seeks to ascertain the role of social media in enhancing entrepreneurship skills among Nigerian youths in covid-19 lockdown and post era. The study is driven by three main objectives: to (i) determine the role of social media in the enhancement of entrepreneurship skills; (ii) identify the impact of the covid-19 total lockdown on entrepreneurship skill development in Nigerian youths; and (iii) find out the dominant entrepreneurship skills youths acquired on social media during the covid-19 lockdown.

### **Literature Review**

#### ***Social Media Engagements and Relevance in Modern Day Opinion Moulding***

Social media engagement refers to the measurements of the public shares, likes and comments for an online business' social media efforts. The engagement has historically been a common metric for evaluating social media performance. Social media engagement is a measure of how people are interacting with your social media accounts and content (Eckstein, 2021). The term can cover a broad range of actions across all social platforms. For example, engagement might include: Likes and Favourites, Comments, DMs, Replies, Shares and Retweets, Saves, Clicks and Mentions. In essence, social media engagements constitute veritable data for measuring social media interactivity and traffic.

Social media has been a powerful tool used by marketers in particular, as well as image-makers and public opinion moulders as the trend in the recent past has shown significant change in consumer behaviour with respect to online shopping and buying decisions (McGregor, 2019). Similarly, politicians have been using various social media sites to connect with their followers and other common people to propagate their views, disseminate information and engage with political discussion, among other topics (Dutta and Bhat, 2017). The development of social media has led to the public being better informed (and sometimes manipulated) about key political and economic issues of public concern. Comments of Facebook users have been found to positively influence the attitude of the viewers of the comments (Dutta and Bhat, 2017).

Dubois, Gruzd and Jacobson (2018) note that journalists are increasingly using social media data (social engagements) to infer and report public opinion by quoting social media posts, identifying trending topics, and reporting general sentiment. The authors argue further that this in turn guides future reporting, prioritizes policy development, and helps citizens to conceptualize and feel part of their community. The reporting of public opinion, they contend, may also influence citizens' opinions, which consequently shifts public opinion in a recursive loop. In contrast to traditional approaches of inferring public opinion, citizens are often

unaware of how their publicly available social media data is being used and how public opinion is constructed using social media analytics.

Contrarily, Anstead and O'Loughlin (2015) contend that the reliance on social media data to infer public opinion affords an expeditious understanding of the "public's" opinions; however, the opinions are highly contextual and limited to specific publics - such as those on Twitter or those watching a political debate. They posit further that with traditional representations of public opinion, respondents are typically aware of why they are asked their opinion and by whom. Conversely, the authors continue, social media posts are largely not intended for journalistic use and consent is likely not requested. This distinction is particularly relevant for the journalistic practice of quoting social media posts as this practice often identifies the individual being quoted (e.g., publishing the username), which could be perceived as an invasion of privacy. The foregoing position implies that while social engagements have become very important tools in the hands of public opinion moulders for directing and measuring public opinion, the data generated therefrom cannot be said to be truly representative of the aggregate opinion of the public.

These contending positions notwithstanding, the relevance of social media engagement to public opinion cannot be overemphasized in modern society. This is because social media currently represent the largest and busiest convergence space for social interactions in modern society. Social Media plays a crucial role in connecting people and developing relationships, not only with key influencers but also provides a great opportunity to establish public opinion by gathering input, answering questions and listening to perceptions and views on almost every important issue.

### ***Entrepreneurship Skill Acquisition***

Entrepreneurial skill acquisition may be defined as not just about acquiring skill but acquiring knowledge and driving towards enterprise in skills that enhance personal livelihood through enduring business start-ups, enhancing employment opportunities, and promoting economic development and growth (Efe-Imafidon, et al., 2017). According to Odia and Odia (2013), "entrepreneurial skills acquisition can be obtained through various avenues such as: attending entrepreneurial training classes, development programmes, seminars, workshops, etc. universities, job rotation, special (intensive) training, article ship or apprenticeship, organizational learning, research and development Institutions, consultants, national and international agencies and bodies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and professional bodies." Alarape (2008:56), states that the reasons for the global interests in entrepreneurship education were:

The growing rate of unemployment and poverty that became obvious after the economic depression of the 1990s; the recession in the agricultural market; and the realization of the ability of small and medium size enterprises to create widespread employment opportunities, thereby militating against unemployment and poverty.

### ***Theoretical Framework: Uses and Gratification Theory***

According to Orhan & Lorham, (2016) uses and gratification theory is a media use paradigm from mass communication research that guides the assessment of consumer motivation for media use and access. Also, this theory is an approach to understanding why and how people actively seek out specific media to satisfy specific needs. Ten uses and gratification for using

social media and include: social interaction, information seeking, pass time, entertainment, relaxation, communicatory, utility, convenience, expression of opinion, information sharing and surveillance. In line with the study, this theory further explains the uses and gratification of using social media to enhance entrepreneurial skills among Nigerian youths and these benefits include social interaction, entertainment, convenience, seeking information, communicatory, information sharing and surveillance.

### ***Social Category Theory***

This is a theory of mass communication that argues that individuals within broad sub-groups such as (age, class, social or educational class) react similarly to the mass media, (the oxford dictionary of sports and medicine). In line with the study, this explains why we have an influx of Nigerian youths who use social media to do business.

### ***Technology Determinism Theory***

This theory was postulated by Canadian scholar Marshal McLuhan. The foundation of this theory is that technology is at the centre of communication and it shapes the direction of events in the society. McLuhan posited that a change in modes of communication shapes human existence and inventions in technology, invariably cause cultural changes (Griffin, 2000 cited in Nwabueze. 2014 p.56). In line with this study, this theory further explains why and how social media, became our alternate, accepted new media during the covid-19 lockdown and post era as we become more technologically advanced and accepting.

### **Methodology**

This study is set to determine the role of social media in enhancing entrepreneurship skills among Nigerian youths: COVID-19 total lockdown and post era. This research is descriptive and explanatory as it attempts to ascertain the role of social media not just during the COVID-19 total lockdown but also after the lockdown in building entrepreneurship skills among youths. The mixed method of research comprising Survey and In-depth Interview methods. This agrees with Wimmer and Dominick's view of triangulation as the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods to fully understand the nature of a research problem (Wimmer and Dominick, 2011). This is because of survey methods suitability for gathering data from a large number of people in an area of study. This method involves the use of questionnaires and interviews to ascertain people's views about the subject matter. It takes a sample in order to understand and make descriptive assertions about a large population. For survey designers, the task involves making a large set of decisions about thousands of individual features of a survey in order to improve it (Groves et al, 2009).

Asemah et al (2012) defines survey as an empirical study that uses questionnaires or interviews to discover descriptive characteristics of a phenomenon. Wimmer and Dominick (2011) identifies the ability to collect a large amount of data with relative ease from a variety of people as the advantage of this method over other research methods. On the other hand, the In-depth Interview approach according to Asemah et al (2012) involves face to face approach conversation with an interviewee or carrying out the conversation through telephone. It was used as a complimentary tool to elicit data from respondents in areas where the researchers felt more explanation was required on the way and manner respondents utilised social media for beneficial entrepreneurship skill acquisition, using Simple Random technique. The instruments chosen for data collection were the questionnaire which was generated electronically using Google form and interview schedule for the in-depth interviews. The researchers did not have

need for research assistants as the use of electronic questionnaire simplified data gathering and analysis, thereby hastening the process.

The target population for this study comprised all residents in urban and rural Anambra State. Although the National Population Commission of Nigeria put the population of Anambra at 5,527,809 (National Population Commission, 2016), the Anambra State Government puts it at 10,800,000. The multistage, stratified random, cluster sampling and simple random techniques will be used to select the samples for this study. The decision to utilise the multistage cluster technique was informed by its effectiveness for national and state studies. The sample for the survey consisted of 2,000 residents selected from 4 out of the 21 Local Government Areas in Anambra State. Similarly, 6 communities were selected from 33 communities which make up the selected 4 Local Government Areas. Furthermore, 110 streets were drawn from the streets in the communities. The use of the multistage cluster technique for the selection of respondents involved three stages.

At the first stage, 4 LGAs were selected using the simple random sampling technique. The 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the website of the Anambra State Government were used as sampling frames for picking the 4 Local Government Areas in Anambra State. At the second stage, 6 communities were selected from the 33 communities in the 4 Local Government Areas also using the simple random sampling technique. In the third stage, the Purposive sampling technique was used to select the streets from the selected communities. Part of the reason for this was the inability of the researchers to obtain a comprehensive list of streets in Anambra State. Thus, the researchers randomly selected respondents from each community in the chosen Local Government Areas. A total of 2,000 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the selected residents. Of these, 1,875 respondents correctly filled out the research instrument, giving a 93.75% return rate.

This research was conducted in Anambra State given its dense population and proximity to researchers. Anambra is the tenth most populous state in Nigeria and the second-most densely populated state in Nigeria after Lagos State. The unit of analysis was the individual resident, which constituted a unit of the 2,000 samples drawn from the population of 5,527,809 (National Population Commission, 2016). However, the Anambra State Government puts the population of the state at 10,800,000.

### **Analysis of Findings**

A total of 2,000 copies of the questionnaire were distributed of which 1875 were returned giving a response rate of 93.75 percent. From the data collected, answers to the research questions which guided the study are presented below:

*RQ1: what is the role of social media in enhancement of entrepreneurship skills?*

Data from Table 1 indicate that almost all the respondents utilise social media (98.7) while a paltry 1.3% do not make use of social media platforms. Data from Table 2 show that Facebook (58.8) was most used by the respondents for skill acquisition, followed by Instagram 19 percent and YouTube 7.9%. These are followed by Twitter, 6.3%, WhatsApp, 4.8%, and LinkedIn, 3.2%. These are pointers that Facebook, Instagram and YouTube are the most used social media platforms used by Nigerian youths to acquire skills online.

**Table 1: Respondents' use of Social Media**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	1850	98.7%
No	25	1.3 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,875</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 2: Social Media platform used by respondents.**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Facebook	1103	58.8%
Instagram	356	19%
YouTube	148	7.9%
Twitter	118	6.3%
WhatsApp	90	4.8 %
LinkedIn	60	3.2 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,875</b>	<b>100</b>

An analysis of Table 3 indicates that majority of the respondents (51.6) use social media regularly while 40.9 percent of the respondents use them sometimes.

**Table 3: Frequency of exposure to entrepreneurship skill on social media?**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Regularly	968	51.6
Sometimes	767	40.9
Not interested	140	7.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,875</b>	<b>100</b>

Only 7.5 percent of the respondents said they are not interested in the use of social media. This shows that there is high social media usage among the respondents. Data from table 4 show that majority of the respondents use social media mostly for business/trading.

**Table 4: What informs your social media usage?**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Business/Trading	733.1	39.1
Entertainment	499	26.6%
News	439	23.4
Keeping up with friends and family	204.3	10.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,875</b>	<b>100</b>

This is followed by Entertainment, 26.6%, News, 23.4, and keeping up with friends and family, 10.9%. This shows that business/trading informs the major purpose of social media usage which is primary what the researchers set out to determine.

To adequately address this research question and proffer answers, the researchers interviewed ten (10) social media influencers in Anambra State to find out their description of the role of social media in enhancing entrepreneurship skills among Nigeria youths. Analyses of their responses shows that the respondents believe social media have wide coverage and makes dissemination of information seamless. They equally posit that social media create awareness,

makes acquisition of varied skills possible online with ease, as well as make learning easier and seamless.

Among the majority of their views harvested are they make one have ideas of new business, served as an alternative for those that were hindered to acquire skills physically due to movement restrictions. A large population of the respondents also use social media as guide and they persuade one to pick up a skill through the persuasive informative posts, using YouTube as example, people post videos to showcase their work and skill learnt, thereby making it easy for other people interested in that particular skill to watch and learn.

Table 5 indicates that social media posts (58.7%) motivated youths the most to acquire entrepreneurship skills, with 21.7 percent of the respondents motivated by friends while 17.4 percent were influenced by parents. The least motivator was school mates at a distant 2.2 percent. This shows that social media played a key role towards motivating Nigerian youths to acquire skills during the total COVID-19 Lockdown. Table 6 shows respondents' skill acquisition during total COVID-19 lockdown. 71 percent of the respondents which represents vast majority of the study sample acquired entrepreneurship skills during the lockdown while a distant 28.6 percent did not.

**Table 5: Respondents' Source of motivation**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Social media posts	1101	58.7
Friends	407	21.7
Parents	326	17.4
School mates	41	2.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,875</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 6: Did you acquire any skill during the Covid-19 total lockdown?**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	1338	71.4
No	537	28.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,875</b>	<b>100</b>

*RQ2: What is the impact of COVID-19 total lockdown on entrepreneurship skill development in Nigerian youths.*

Table 7 shows that more than half of the respondents are entrepreneurs (56.3%) while 43.7% do not own businesses. Majority of the respondents 98.4% are of the view that social media are effective in promoting the acquisition of entrepreneurship skills while a distant 1.6 percent disagree on its effectiveness. This is an indication that social media are an important force behind promoting entrepreneurship among the youth. Table 9 shows that majority 27% of the respondents rated social media 7 on a scale of 10 in terms of its effectiveness to promote acquisition of entrepreneurship skill. None of the respondents rated it between 2-4. Combined majority of 95.2 percent of the respondents that rated its effectiveness between 5-10 shows that social media played a crucial role in affecting skill acquisition among contemporary youths.

**Table 7: Number of Entrepreneurs**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	1056	56.3%
No	819	43.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,875</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 8: Social Media effectiveness in promoting the acquisition of entrepreneurship skills.**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	1845	98.4%
No	30	1.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,875</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 9: Level of social media effectiveness in promoting the acquisition of entrepreneurship skills.**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
7	506	27%
8	387	20.6%
10	356	19%
9	328	17.5%
5	118	6.3%
1	90	4.8%
6	90	4.8%
2	0	0%
3	0	0%
4	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,875</b>	<b>100%</b>

*RQ3: What are the dominant entrepreneurship skills youths acquired on social media during the COVID-19 total lockdown?*

Table 10 shows that fashion design (52.5) was the predominant skill acquired by youths lockdown while 29.1 percent learnt graphic design. These are followed by makeover – 7.8%, bakery – 5%, digital marketing- 3.8%, hair dressing – 1.6% and phone repair, 0.2%. Table 11 shows respondents’ social media influence after the total COVID-19 lockdown. Majority of the respondents (63.3%) were influenced to acquire entrepreneurship skills after the lockdown while only 36.7 percent were not influenced to acquire a skill. This implies that social media had a strong influence on acquisition of entrepreneurship skills during the post lockdown era. According to Table 12, tailoring was the major skill respondents acquired after the lockdown. This was followed by graphic design, 26.5 percent, online marketing, 12 percent, forex trade, 4 percent, baking, 3 percent, hair styling, 1 percent while web design (0.5%) ranks as the least acquired skill. This shows that the respondents acquired similar skills during and after the lockdown. Fashion design and graphic design dominated the skillset acquired by respondents during and post COVID-19 lockdown.

**Table 10: Skills acquired during lockdown.**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Fashion design	984	52.5
Graphic design	545	29.1
Makeover	146	7.8
Bakery	94	5
Digital marketing	72	3.8
Hair dressing	30	1.6
Phone repair	4	0.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,875</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 11: Respondents' Social media influence after lockdown**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	1187	63.3%
No	688	36.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,875</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 12: Skills acquired after COVID-19 lockdown.**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Tailoring	994	53
Graphic design	497	26.5
Online Marketing	225	12
Forex trade	75	4
Baking	56	3
Hair styling	19	1
Web Design	9	0.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,875</b>	<b>100</b>

### Discussion and Conclusions

The study set out to examine how social media has impacted entrepreneurship skill acquisition among youths during the total COVID-19 lockdown and post era in Nigeria. The researchers narrowed the study to Anambra State as representative of the Nigerian youth. The study is important as social media have become a core companion of several Nigerian youths today. Findings show that 1.3 percent of the respondents do not use social media and majority of them use Facebook, Instagram and YouTube to acquire entrepreneurship skills. This in tandem with the study of Akinfeleye et al (2018) which found that Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are among the most used social media platforms by Nigerians. It also aligns with the findings of the Internet Goes Mobile Country 2015 study conducted by the Ericsson Consumer Lab which shows that 94 percent of consumers are using social network sites, with Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and WhatsApp as the most popular. The utilisation of social media for acquisition of entrepreneurship skills was also established as 71.4 percent of the respondents acquired skills on social media during the total COVID-19 lockdown era.

Despite the constraints faced by respondents during the total lockdown era and the accompanying difficulty in the buying data to access the internet, majority of the respondents found it imperative to acquire skills through social media during the COVID lockdown period and beyond. Data gathered showed that most of the respondents learnt fashion design (52.5) and graphic design (29.1). While some of the youths were motivated by their parents and peers,

58.7 percent of the respondents were influenced by social media posts to acquire entrepreneurship skills.

Other findings show that while varied contents saturate the social media space, majority 39.1 of the respondents use social media for business/trading rather than for news, entertainment and other purposes. The study proves that aside from the period of the total lockdown, Nigerian youths have continued to rely on social media as a source of skill acquisition even in the post COVID-19 lockdown era. The researchers conclude that the findings of this study show that majority of Nigerian youths use social media to acquire entrepreneurship skills and it is effective in mastering the skills. Among the most skills acquired were fashion design, graphics design, makeover, bakery and digital marketing.

There is need for government at all levels to boost internet connectivity through subsidy of data cost by reducing taxation of internet service providers. Government should take advantage of the online presence of the youths by carrying out national orientations on social media. The Nigerian government should encourage youth productivity by making loans accessible for SMEs at low interest rates. The youth should take advantage of the far-reaching nature of social media to showcase, attract and expand the reach of their businesses beyond the shores of Nigeria.

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