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Influence of Social Media on In-school Adolescents' Morals: Implication for School Counsellors

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Abstract: Exposure to wrong content on social media could negatively influence adolescents' moral development. This study, therefore, investigated the influence of Social Media on in-school adolescents' morals in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The descriptive survey design was employed in this study. The population comprised all secondary school students in Ekiti State Nigeria. A multi-stage sampling technique was used to select 420 respondents for the study. Data were collected using a self-designed instrument tagged Social Media and Adolescents' Morals Questionnaire (SMAMQ). Content validity of the instrument was ascertained and the reliability coefficient of 0.87 was obtained to ensure consistency of the instrument. Data analysis was done using percentages, t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The findings of the study revealed that exposure of students to explicit sexual images or messages on social media influenced in-school adolescents' morals in Ekiti State. Thus, the majority of the respondents indicated that social media influenced adolescents' morals. The results further showed no significant difference in the influence of social media on in-school adolescents' morals based on gender, school system, school type and location. This shows most adolescents use social media negatively. Thus, it was recommended that school counsellors should properly guide and mentor in-school adolescents to take good advantage of social media for moral development.

Keywords: Influence, Social Media, In-School Adolescents, Moral Development, Implication.

Introduction

The word adolescence which means 'to grow into maturity was coined from the Latin word (Adeusi, 2013). Adolescence is a period of physical and psychological growth and this constitutes the foundation for emotional, social and intellectual maturity. The increased activities of the pituitary, thyroid glands, adrenal glands and gonads culminate in the rapid growth of the skeleton and muscles during this period of life (Ogunsanmi, 2008). It is also a period where the various organs of the body grow at different rates. Adolescence stage is also typified by the development of some certain sexual characteristics. In boys, adolescence is a period in which testes, scrotum and penis become enlarged, facial hair begins to appear, voice breaks and ejaculation occurs as a result sperm production, while girls experience growth in breasts, nipples become more prominent, pelvis become enlarged, fats become deposited around the hip and buttocks giving her a rounded appearance, and menstruation starts (Ogunsanmi, 2008).

The general changes that occurs in the adolescent, influences their adjustment to life. However, adolescents as a result of the changes become more conscious of sex and consequently develop and express interest toward members of the opposite sex. An adolescent, according to Ogunsanmi enjoin discussions and debates on social reforms, political affairs, and cognitive behaviours because the brain is considerably fully developed.

Literature Review

Psychologists conceptualized adolescence as the transitional period of life which spans between childhood and adulthood and its marked by changes in the body, mind and social relationships (Adegoke, 2004). By implication, the transition that serves as the hallmark of adolescence is as much social as it is biological. Adeusi (2013) viewed this period as a time of development during which an adolescent becomes adult-like in behaviour. This starts with the onset of physically normal puberty and ends when an adult identity and behaviour are accepted. There appears to be discrepancies on a universally acceptable age of adolescents. For instance, World Health Organization (2013) accepted 10-19 years as adolescent age range. Ndati (2011) cited in Iwokwagh and Ayia (2014) posited that academically, people between the ages of 13 and 17 years are recognized as adolescents. Within the Nigeria context, the Nigeria 1999 constitution recognizes a person under the age of 18 years as a child. This disparity could be responsible for Iwokwagh and Ayia (2014) assertion that age limit may not offer a generally acceptable definition of adolescents. Nevertheless, adolescent refers to a young person who is no longer considered as a child, and at the same time not yet an adult.

Among the various developments, that take place at this stage is moral development which is influenced by many factors among which is the social media (Ebenuwa&Ugoji, 2014). The origin of the word moral can be traced to the Latin word *mores* which means conduct or custom. Coetzee, Louw and Jooste (2005) defined morality as the process whereby children learn how to differentiate between right and wrong, which in turn direct their behaviours and actions. Inferable from this is the fact that morality codes are one of the most effective guides that controls human behaviours. Moral ideas are embodied in moral code which acts as powerful means of social control.

Moral principles, ideas, and notions are crystallized in the form of an institution called morality. Moral principles are the socially acceptable principles of right and wrong. Orlu and Nsereka (2014) opined that since moral ideas are inculcated in the personalities of children from the inception of life, people become habituated to honour and obey them. Morality is primarily concerned with the distinction between good and wrong with reference to one's response to socially and ethically viable values. A society that fails to teach its young generations what is right and wrong will have problem of social cohesiveness and much conflicts. Thus the Nigeria voice (2011) noted that morality is the border between human life and animal life; it is what gives the former a sense of humanity and spirituality. The perception of what is morally right or wrong by the in-school adolescents is very essential to their development.

The benefits of the social media to the Nigerians adolescents cannot be underestimated because it serves as channels of information dissemination without the limitations of time, space or distance that characterized other means. The amalgam of the microprocessors offers communication channels that is increasingly efficient, reliable, accurate, cheap, portable and with speed compared to no other means. Apart from removing geographical barriers to communication, social media serve as easy, quick, and reliable sources of information. Through the social media, adolescents can keep themselves updated on issues and events on a minute interval because social websites are interactively accessible with mobile phones. In the same vein, it can serve as a veritable and easy source of information for academic purposes and works.

Majority of people believe that social media harms adolescents moral development. Despite the positive use of internet, many adolescents has learnt some violent behaviours through the social media. Parents are complaining about the drastic changes in children behaviour as a result of exposure to pornography videos and images that corrupts morals. Adolescents are constantly found on the social media and as such they tend to imitate everything they see on the social media. The performance of some unacceptable practices such as prostitution, drug use, sexting, cyber bullying has increased the incidence of moral decadence among adolescents (Igba, Ofem, &Isu, 2016). Therefore, when adolescents' behaviour conform with the code of conduct of the society, they are morally upright but any behaviour that deviates from the codes constitutes immoral behaviours. However, in spite of all the benefits that social media offer, it unfortunately failed to meet all the social needs of man as a social animal. This position is in agreement with Tapscott as cited in Awake (2012) that one of the ironies of the internet is that while it makes staying in touch easier when family members are physically apart, it can also keep them apart when they are at home.

However, morality according to Coetzee, Louw and Joostee (2014) is not merely a static and theoretical concept isolated from everyday life but is influenced and affected by many variables to a greater or lesser degree. Akanle and Odu (2004) expressed that present day adolescent spends more time interacting on the social media more than adults and this stem from the time available to them and explorative, freedom and inquisitive tendencies that characterised the developmental stage.

Social media can be viewed as web and mobile-based technology that supports interactive dialogue and introduces substantial and pervasive changes to communication. In practical terms, users share and generate content within their established network. Also, mobile and web-based technologies are used by people to create an interactive forum where individuals and groups share information for the benefit of all. Onah and Nche (2014) explain social media as referring to the internet based social websites like the Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, Blackberry Messenger, WhatsApp, Skype, and so on which allows users to interactively communicate with one another. Such media allows users to meet friends, exchange ideas, images, audios, videos and essentially stay connected with the outside world. It is not a fallacy, that we presently live in an age of increasingly sophisticated breakthrough in communication across the globe. Social media are becoming the household means of interaction, communication and collaboration throughout the world.

The pervasiveness of social media is not unconnected with the numerous advantages it has over previous means of communication. Before the emergence of the social media revolution, communication over a distance was comparatively faced with a lots of challenges. The advent, however has made the impossible become possible as the problem of geographical barriers and distance were almost invincible. Umekachikelu (2013) cited in Onah and Nche (2014) captured this better when he expressed that it is amazing that with a click one passes information to thousands of people in a second. This is the power of social media.

It is apt to note that the world of social media is an interesting one for Nigerian adolescents because they are used to social communication and technological gadgets. Onah and Nche (2014) observed that; in the manner of a wildfire in harmattan, the phenomenon of social media (networking) has spread to all nooks and crannies of Nigeria, engulfing a large number of her youths. Social media usage has become so common among the youths, that it is unfashionable not to engage oneself at least in one of the social networking sites. Going by this observation, it is crystal clear that many Nigerian adolescents now enjoy the services of the social media in the present digital age (Undiyaundeye, 2014).

The uses and gratification theoretical framework of Blumler and Katz originated in the year 1974. This approach could also be referred to as functional theory. It explains how and why people keenly seek for specific media to satisfy specific needs. The theory explains how people deliberately choose media that will satisfy given needs. The uses and gratification are determined by the needs of members of the audience. It is clear that everywhere people selectively expose themselves to mass media content, they are likely to choose media messages that would serve the function of gratifying their needs (Rosengren, 1985). People's needs are generated by individual differences. Adolescents who use the social media to gratify their negative desires are likely to be morally deficient

In recent times, the moral essentials of modesty, decency, chastity, integrity, obedience, self-control, and respect appeared to have lost its place in the society. This view was well supported by Akanle and Odu (2004) who reported that there is high rate of moral decadence among adolescents in Ekiti and this could be traced to the involvement of youths in social media,. A survey of girl child problems in the state revealed that sexual debut mainly occurred around age 15-16years. A larger percentage of girls studied were already exposed to sexual activities and a good number of them had been pregnant before. This is a pointer to the fact that morals are going down the drain (Akanle & Odu, 2004). A lot of studies have been carried out on adolescents such as Adegoke (2004) who worked on adolescence and adolescent problems in schools, Undiyaundeye (2014) looked at the impact of social media on children, adolescents, and families while Akanle and Odu (2004) carried out a study on physical characteristics as determinants of Adolescents' moral behaviours. To the best knowledge of the researchers, none has combined all these variables, hence the need to carry out this study. Therefore, the primary purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of social media on in-school adolescent morals. The research question state that : Does the use of social media influence in-school adolescents' morals? The research hypotheses include: There is no significant difference in the

influence of social media on in-school adolescents' morals on the basis of gender, school system, school type and school location.

Methodology

The research design adopted was the descriptive survey in which the use of questionnaire as a tool to determine the social media influence on in-school adolescent morals was adopted. The population of this study consist of all the 55,677 in-school adolescents in Senior secondary schools in Ekiti State, Nigeria (Ekiti State Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2016). The sample selection was done using multi-stage sampling technique. Multi-stage sampling technique divides large population into stages to make the sampling process more practical (Donald & Theresa, 2014). Thus, purposive, proportional and stratified random sampling procedure were adopted. Based on Research Advisor (2016), 420 respondents were selected for the study. This sample size was determined at 95% confidence interval and 5.0% margin of error.

At first stage, proportional sampling technique was used to select seven Local Government Areas (L.G.A) from the three senatorial Districts of Ekiti State. Two L.G.As was selected from Ekiti South and Ekiti North respectively, while 3 L.G.As were picked from Ekiti Central. At the second stage, the schools were stratified into private and public secondary schools. At stage three, simple random sampling technique was used in selecting 20 students among senior secondary school students in Ekiti. Thus, a total of 420 respondents who consented to participate in the study were served with the questionnaire.

A self-designed questionnaire instrument title 'Social Media and Adolescents' Morals' Questionnaire' (SMAMQ) was used for the study. The questionnaire had two sections. Section 'A' elicited biographical data of the respondents while section 'B' consists of questions on Social Media influence. Yes and No responses were used for respondent to indicate their level of agreement and disagreement to each item in the response column. The data were analysed using percentages, t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistical tools. All the null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

The Findings

Table 1. Distribution of respondents by Gender, School system, School type and Location

Variables	Frequency	Percentage %
Gender		
Male	209	49.8
Female	211	50.2
Total	420	100
School System		
Day	257	61.2
Boarding	69	16.4
Both Day & Boarding	94	21.9
Total	420	100
School Type		
Coeducational	263	62.6
Boys Only	65	15.5
Girls Only	92	21.9
Total	420	100
School Location		
Rural	253	60.2
Urban	167	39.8
Total	420	100

Table 1 presents the distribution of the respondents by Gender, School system, School Type and School Location. The table shows that 209 (49.8%) of the respondents who participated in the study were males, while 211 (51.2%) were females. Results on the school system shows that 257 (61.2%) attend Day Schools,

69 (16.4%) attend Boarding Schools, while 94 (22.4%) attend school with both Day and Boarding. The results further reveals that 263 (62.3%) attend coeducational schools, 65 (15.5%) attend Boys Only Schools while 92 (21.9%) attend Girls Only schools. While the results on School Location indicates that 253 (60.2%) were in rural areas while 167 (39.8%) were in Urban areas.

Research Questions 1: *Does social media influence in-school adolescents' morals in Ekiti State Secondary Schools?*

Table 2. Frequency and Percentage of the Influence of social media on In-School Adolescents' Morals in Ekiti State Secondary Schools

S/No	As far as I am concerned Social Media;	YES		NO	
		Freq	%	Freq	%
1.	Does not allow students to participate in school activities that promote morality and effective learning habit	195	46.5	225	53.5
2.	Interfere with study time	289	68.8	131	31.2
3.	Does not provide opportunity for group work among students	148	35.2	272	64.8
4.	Does not expose students to positive academic behaviour	204	48.6	216	51.4
5.	Does not encourage originality in behavioural pattern	189	45.0	231	55.0
6.	Exposes students to explicit sexual images or messages	318	75.7	102	24.3
7.	Exposes students to multiple sexual partners	253	60.2	167	39.8
8.	Exposes students to prostitution	249	59.3	171	39.7
9.	Provides opportunity for sexual communication among students	293	69.8	127	29.2
10.	Exposes students to unsafe sexual practices	251	59.8	169	40.2
11.	Does not help students to participate in community services	177	42.1	243	57.9
12.	Does not promote student's sense of social creativity	186	44.3	234	55.7
13.	Does not increase student's sense of tolerance and respect for one another	171	40.7	249	59.3
14.	Does not provide opportunity to assess shared values and principles	166	39.5	254	61.5
15.	Does not provide opportunity to learn about one's environment	140	33.3	280	66.7
16.	Aids students to deviate from school rules	206	49.0	214	51.0
17.	Promotes poor attitude toward learning	248	59.0	172	40.0
18.	Brings distractions during lesson	293	69.8	127	30.2
19.	Allows students to relate beyond the level allowed by the school	294	70.0	126	30.0
20.	Leads to students' inability to meet up with assignment deadlines	275	65.5	145	34.5
21.	Exposes students to different methods of examination malpractices	268	63.8	152	36.2
22.	Promotes stealing, lies and other deviant behaviours among students	218	51.9	202	48.1
23.	Gives students opportunity to bully and harass other students	193	46.0	227	54.0
24.	Exposes students to gambling	278	66.2	142	33.8

25	Exposes students to electronic crimes	264	62.9	156	37.1
26	Does not allow students to feel shameful about acts of indiscipline	281	66.9	139	33.1
27	Exposes students to vices in foreign ways of life	269	64.0	151	36.0
28	Does not allow students to align with dominant values.	276	65.7	144	34.3
29	Promotes indifferent attitudes toward societal values among students.	281	66.9	139	33.1
30	Presents students with content that oppose shared values.	231	55.0	189	45.0

Table 2 showed the frequency score and percentage of each item on the influence of social media on in-school adolescents’ morals in Ekiti State secondary schools. The table indicated that 195(46.5%) affirmed that social media does not allow students to participate in school activities that promote effective learning habits. Also, 225(53.5%) disagreed. 289(68.8%) said social media interfered with their study time while 131(31.2%) disagreed with such assertion. 281(66.9%) said social media promotes indifferent attitudes toward societal values among students while 139(33.1%) disagreed. 231(55.0%) of the respondents agreed that social media presents students with contents that oppose shared values while 189(45.0%).

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in the influence of social media on in-school adolescent’s morals on the basis of gender.

Table 3. Mean, Standard Deviation and t-value on the Respondent’s view based on Gender

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Dev	df	Cal. t-value	Crit. t-value	p.-value
Male	209	79.32	17.86	418	0.53	1.96	.598
Female	211	80.19	15.99				

Table 3 presents the calculated t-value of 0.53, which is less than the critical t-value of 1.96 with a corresponding P-value of .598, which is greater at 0.05 alpha level. This indicated that there was no significant difference. Hence, the hypothesis was accepted. Therefore, there was no significant difference in the influence of social media on in-school adolescents’ morals on the basis of gender.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in the influence of social media on adolescents’ moral on the basis on school system (day, boarding, both day and boarding school systems).

Table 4. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on the Respondent’s view based on school system

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	Calc. F-ratio	Crit. F-ratio	p-value
Between Group	492.45	2	246.23	0.86	3.02	.425
Within Group	119703.3	417	287.06			
Total	120195.8	419				

Table 4 presents the calculated F-ratio of .86, which is less than the critical F-ratio of 3.02 with a corresponding P-value of .425, which is greater at 0.05 alpha level. This implies that there was no significant difference. Hence, the hypothesis was accepted. Thus, there was no significant difference in the influence of social media on in-school adolescents’ morals on the basis of school system.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant difference in the influence of social media on in school adolescent's morals on the basis of school type (coeducational, male or female schools)

Table 5: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on the Respondent's view based on school type

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	Calc. F-ratio	Crit. F-ratio	p-value
Between Group	492.45	2	238.0	0.83	3.02	.437
Within Group	119703.3	417	287.1			
Total	120195.8	419				

Table 5 presents the calculated F-ratio of .83, which is less than the critical F-ratio of 3.02 with a corresponding P-value of .437, which is greater at 0.05 alpha level. This implies that there was no significant difference. Hence, the hypothesis was accepted. Thus, there was no significant difference in the influence of social media on in-school adolescents' morals in Ekiti State on the basis of school type.

Hypothesis Four: There is no significant difference in the influence of social media on in-school adolescents' morals on the basis of school location (urban or Rural schools).

Table 6: Mean, Standard Deviation and t-value on the Respondent's view based on school location

Location	N	Mean	Std. Dev	df	Cal. t-value	Crit. t-value	p-value
Rural	253	78.96	17.54				
Urban	167	80.96	15.96	418	1.18	1.96	.237

Table 6 presents the calculated t-value of 1.18, which is less than the critical t-value of 1.96 with a corresponding p-value of .237, which is greater at 0.05 alpha level. This indicated that there was no significant difference. Hence, the hypothesis was accepted. Therefore, there was no significant difference in the influence of social media on in-school adolescents' morals in Ekiti state on the basis of school location.

Discussion

The finding of this study revealed that social media does not allow in-school adolescents to participate in school activities that promote morality and effective learning habit. Blumler and Katz (1974) propounded the Uses and Gratifications theory. The theory emphasized that people choose some forms of media over others because of the desire for gratification. Most selections of media are done to satisfy social and psychological needs. Users of social media have access to varieties of platforms that suit their needs. For example, if a user is more image-driven, he/she would pick platforms like Pinterest or Instagram, on the other hand, text-driven individuals would opt for Reddit or Facebook to fulfil their needs. Social media users create interactions on the platforms to achieve a beneficial experience that is rewarding to them. When the users achieve gratifications from the choice of content on the net, they visit the platform repeatedly. Constant use of social media can create a situation in which the user is compelled to visit such sites thereby neglecting other important life activities. According to West and Turner (2013), the attainment of gratification explains the threat of addiction to one form of media or the other. When adolescents derive gratification, from negative social media content, it affects their moral life. Also, it exposes them to explicit sexual images and messages, giving them the freedom to relate beyond the level permitted by the school authority. This implies that when adolescents use social media without necessary regulations, there is likely going to be an abuse which can impair their moral values and academic life. This finding was in tandem with Undiyaundeye (2014) who noted that social media activities such as 'sexting' which is the sending, recording, or forwarding of sexually explicit

messages, photographs or images via cell phones, computers or other digital devices are the source of moral problems that impaired the academic pursuit of adolescents.

Both male and female respondents did not differ in their perception on the influence of social media on in-school adolescents' morals in Ekiti state. This finding affirmed the report of Archana and Jyosta (2015) that there was no significant difference between male and female use of social media as both use the media to interact with their friends, parents and teachers. The apparent lack of difference may be due to the fact that both male and female students are going through the same developmental stage. The researcher is of the view that environmental forces such as social media and related ones are capable of influencing moral development of an adolescent irrespective of gender.

Irrespective of the school system of the respondents, they all have the same opinion on the influence of social media on in-school adolescents' morals in Ekiti state. This study confirmed the report of John and Diana (2015) that adolescents at the secondary school level are increasingly accessing and using these social networks in their daily lives and that the impacts of their access on their sexual behaviours remains underreported. Adolescents are often sent to boarding school so that their activities could be monitored and controlled, but the study revealed that the social media influenced the morals of adolescents in both day and boarding schools equally. The failure of boarding schools to make a difference in the area of social media influence on students' moral could be ascribed to lack of adequate knowledge on the harms embedded in its uncontrolled use.

There was no significant difference in the influence of social media on in-school adolescents' morals in Ekiti state on the basis of school type and school location. This finding agrees with Bankole and Ogunsakin (2015) who reported that peer gender has no significant influence on the performance of secondary school students. This result may have been because both boys and girls are equally exposed to the social media.

This study indicates that respondents in rural and urban areas do not differ on the influence of social media on in-school adolescents' morals in Ekiti State. This finding confirmed the observation made by Onah and Nche (2014) that; in the manner of a wildfire in harmattan, the phenomenon of social media (networking) has spread to all nooks and crannies of Nigeria, engulfing a large number of her youths. Social media usage has become so common among the youths, that it has become unfashionable not to engage oneself at least in one of the social networking sites.

Implications for Counselling Practices

The school counsellors can assist in-school adolescents to understand the dangers that are associated with the social media and peer group pressure through enlightenment, orientation, and sensitization programmes. Awareness must be created in a professional manner by school counsellors on the dangers that wrong use of the social media could have on adolescents' morals. In the same vein, counsellors must make efforts to teach and guide adolescents on how to make good use of the internet and social media in order to gain maximally from its educational, informative, relational and moral benefits. Counsellors should go the extra mile to enlighten parents, guardians and all the stakeholders involved in adolescents' development on the need to monitor the activities of their children/wards on the social media. Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that 1. School counsellors should focus more attention on guiding in-school adolescents on how best to use the social media without doing harm to their sense of morality, especially in the area of academics and sexuality as revealed in this study. 2. School counsellors should guide in-school adolescents on the use of social media without gender bias since their morals are equally influenced by the social media. 3. Adolescents in both public and private schools should be provided with counsel on the benefits and dangers of the social media. 4. School counsellors in both day and boarding schools should intensify efforts at enlightening the students on how best the social media could be used to enhance their moral development.

Conclusion

The responses of in-school adolescents in the research question revealed that social media does not allow students to participate in school activities that promote morality and learning activities. The findings of the study further showed that there was no significant difference in the influence of social media on in-school

adolescents' morals based on gender, school system, school type, and location. In other words, all the respondents perceived the influence of social media on in-school adolescents' morals the same way.

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Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all our respondents.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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