

## **INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN UTURU, ISUIKWUATO L.G.A OF ABIA STATE, NIGERIA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*There has been over the years academic interest in the evolution of social media and its influence in the society. Since internet access and mobile phones have become ubiquitous in our country, social media now represent the deepest and fastest means of propagating crime which has influenced secondary school students in Uturu as well as their performance in external Examinations. This paper analyzes the issues surrounding social media and argues that despite the usefulness of the social media some information in the social media serve no moral or cultural purpose, other than ignite ethnicity disintegration, promote nude pictures and videos, encourage networking in cultism etc. In the light of these observations, the article recommends the strengthening of social media regulations in Nigeria so as to curtail pervasive influence of social media channels that promote prurient and voyeuristic interest.*

**Keywords:** Social Media, Secondary School Students

## **INTRODUCTION**

Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, Google, Instagram and Whatsapp as genres of social media have been widely used in Nigeria and beyond for national sensitization of the citizenry. It has remained a veritable tool for disseminating information across the country on COVID-19 update as well as vaccination, children immunization, wash your hand campaign during the outbreak of Ebola in the year 2014, Fight against Cultism in Nigeria educational institutions etc. The aim of this work is to critically examine both the positive and negative influence of the social media on Secondary School Students in Uturu.

The social media have provided a new paradigm for communication and helped millions of people interact beyond the confines of geographical proximity. With the social media, social networking has moved from niche phenomenon to mass adoption (Wang, 2009). Social media comprise various methods such as social networking, multimedia sites, podcast etc. Today's social media tools have brought rapid change to Organizational Communication and Public relations.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Social media is one of the modes of communication in Nigeria which has enhanced national sensitization of students. The presence of social media and online information has not helped the situation either, despite the constant attempts to ensure proper usage of the social media for educational advancement. There are still frequent reports of crimes and juvenile delinquency among the secondary school students in Uturu which are associated to the social media. This study, therefore, evaluates the negative influence of the social media among secondary school students and teachers/parents guide towards ensuring effective usage of the social media.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The objectives of the study are to assess the influence of the social media on Secondary School Students while the specific objectives of the study are:

1. To assess the extent to which social media have influenced Secondary School Students in Uturu negatively.
2. To examine how parents and Teachers can effect positive usage of the social media among Secondary School Students in Uturu.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. How has the social media influenced the secondary school students in Uturu?
2. To what extent can parents and teachers guide the secondary school students in Uturu for a positive usage of the social media?

**RQ1:** How has the social media influenced the Secondary School Students in Uturu?

The social media has influenced the secondary school students in Uturu both positively and negatively, though the negative influence seems to surpass the positive.

## **Positive influence of social media**

### **A. ENHANCES ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

Social media keeps students informed. It exposes them to essential issues not only in their community but all over the world as well.

**B. ENCOURAGE ONLINE LEARNING**

Social media can be beneficial to students when it comes to information. For instance, when group chats occur and students form study groups online to share information and assist one another. This also helps when students are absent from school because they can get information from friends who were in school that day, a good friend can simply take a picture of those notes and send it across to the friend who was absent via facebook or Whatsapp. Impressively, the social media really helped during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, while students where at home the social media was used for online teaching.

**C. AN OUTLET FOR CREATIVITY**

The social media provides students with the platform to share their creativity and ideas as well as get honest response from audience. The response becomes a guide for them to better shape their skills professionally. E.g. A photographer or videographer may start by posting their shots on Whatsapp or a writer sharing samples of their poetry and essays on facebook. Many student are already making a career out of such ideas as well as using the money gotten from it to support their studies.

**Negative Influence of Social Media**

**A. CAUSES DISTRACTION**

Social media major factor is that it leads secondary schools students to distraction and loss of focus from studying their books. The social media leads to wastage of time and most at times secondary school students are incapable of submitting their assignments in specified time frame because they are more focused on using social media platforms.

**B. REDUCES LEARNING AND RESEARCH CAPABILITY**

With extensive use of social media, Secondary School Students these days are depending more on such platforms to gain information and knowledge rather than looking out for the same information in books, Journals or notes. As it is easy to extract information online, reading habits of students along with their learning and research capabilities are reducing.

**C. ABDUCTION AND RAPE**

In Nigeria there have been reported cases of abducted and raped Secondary School girls. The news had it that some of these girls are lured into visiting their abductors or the person who raped them (rapist) through the social media conversation (chats). Example, facebook, Whatsapp, twitter, youtube, E-mail, instagram etc.

**D. CYBERSTALKING**

Cyberstalking simply mean the act of monitoring someone through the use of social media. If you are always sharing your location then social media friends know where you are. Secondary School Students are used to updating their status, share what they are watching and where they check-in.

**E. IMPACT ON HEALTH**

Constant use of social media sites can have mental as well as physical effects on one's health. Secondary school students do not take their meals on time, do not take proper rest and by continuously being on phone or laptop can also have adverse effects on their eyes.

**F. INTERNET ADDICTION**

Uncontrolled social media usage among Secondary School Students can lead to internet addiction. The more time students spend on social media, the more they become exposed to new stories and ideas they want to explore. This habit eventually

turns into addiction if not handled early, can affect their school performance, mental health and even personal development. Do you feel sad if you do not get likes on your social media uploaded posts? How do you feel when you do not open your social media account for a day? What is the real feeling when the number of your followers begins to reduce? These are some check-points to examine your level of addiction.

**G. SUICIDE AND SELF HARM UPLOADS**

Secondary School Students on the social media can do anything to receive attention. Studies have shown that suicide is contagious and can spread through social networks. When a person notices the suicide attempt or death, it stimulates that person's risk of suicidal thoughts and attempts, especially among secondary school students.

**RQ2:** To what extent can parents and teachers guide the secondary school students for a positive usage of the social media?

If a Secondary School Student is addicted to the negative usage of the social media, it is the responsibility of the parents and teachers to talk to the student about social media detox. Social media detox is necessary for getting rid of social media addiction and improve students mental health. A friendly and caring parents and teachers would encourage students behavioral change from negative usage of the social media.

Parental monitoring and control of Secondary School Students browsing behaviour is important. This could help identify internet addiction at an earlier stage. Parents must consider installing software that can track browsing history. This could help spy into every activity of the students in the social media, the parents and teachers doesn't need to encroach on their privacy but it is important to monitor which websites are being visited by the students. Teachers should guide students not to share their personal information on unknown websites and friends on social media, late night phone usage should be discouraged by parents in the early stage of the student's childhood. Teachers should instill the habit of visiting school libraries for reading and encourage students to play at least one sport.

It is the responsibility of parents and teacher to educate the secondary school students that the information on the social media can be used to enhance knowledge that can up skill their talent.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This research employed the survey method. The population for this study was male and female students of Marist Comprehensive Academy Uturu (MCA) and Abia State University Staff School Uturu (ABSUSSU). The data obtained from the schools' administrative departments put the entire student population at 3,282: Marist Comprehensive Academy having a student population of 1,757 while Abia State University Staff School had a student population of 1,525.

The Taro Yamane (1967) formula was used to determine the sample size. For a population of 3,282 the sample was 375. The random sampling technique was used in accessing the respondents.

The questionnaire was the instrument for data collection for this study because it provided one of the best means for collecting the varied views of the respondents. The Likert type Scale of strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagreed (SD) as well as undecided (U) were used.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

The data collected using the quantitative approach was coded using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software. It was accompanied by the interpretation and graphical illustration of data in frequency table for better understanding. Out of the 375 copies of the questionnaire administered, 340 were completed and returned by the respondents from both schools: 185 from Marist Comprehensive Academy (MCA) and 155 from Abia State University Staff School (ABSUSSU). This represented a response rate of 91%.

### Respondents' response to the influence of social media on secondary school students

INDEX	SA	A	U	D	SD
Social media promotes acts of violence among secondary school students	105 (30.9)	85 (25.0)	54 (15.9)	34 (10.0)	62 (18.2)
Social media promotes aggressive behaviour among secondary school students	71 (20.9)	85 (25.0)	59 (17.3)	64 (18.8)	61 (17.9)
Social media promotes nudity among secondary school students	67 (19.7)	88 (25.9)	82 (24.1)	43 (12.6)	60 (17.6)
Social media can lead to poor academic performance among secondary school students	113 (32.2)	87 (25.6)	55 (16.1)	48 (14.1)	37 (10.9)
Social media encourages bad sexual behavior among secondary school students	92 (27.1)	95 (27.9)	36 (10.5)	49 (14.4)	68 (20.0)
Social media encourages smoking/ drug abuse among secondary school students	89 (26.2)	72 (21.2)	64 (18.8)	48 (14.1)	67 (19.7)

**NB:** Figures in parentheses are percentages from the above distribution, it is observed that 30.9% of the respondents strongly agreed that social media promotes acts of violence among secondary school students, 25.0% agreed, 15.9% undecided, 10.0% disagreed and 18.2% strongly disagreed. The implication of the above result is that there is a link between manifested acts of violence through social media among secondary school students.

The distribution from the above table also shows that social media promotes act of nudity among secondary school students in Uturu. It is observed that 32.2% of the respondents strongly agreed that social media can lead to poor academic performance of secondary school students, 25.6% agreed, 16.1% undecided, 14.1% disagreed and 10.9%, strongly disagreed. The findings also shows that social media affect the academic performance of the majority of the students; encourages bad sexual behavior and drug abuse among secondary school students.

## DISUCSSION OF FINDINGS

The data gathered and analyzed in this study are discussed here in relation to the objective of the study. The inference drawn from the table above is that social media promotes acts of violence among secondary school students in Uturu. This finding is in line with the position of Ineji (2003) who observes that there is a causal link between viewing violent social media content and anti social behavior. From same table, it is observed that social media promotes aggressive behavior among secondary school students. This is corroborated by Bandura (2001) social learning Theory which states that people learn aggressive behavior from

watching videos in social media and then go out and reproduce them (practice what they watched).

The research discovered that social media encourage drug abuse among secondary school students in Uturu. In support of this finding, Kariungi (2011) posits that indiscipline amongst students includes abuse of language, rudeness to teachers, absenteeism from schools and drug abuse. This implies that secondary school students who are familiar with watching movie stars smoking and engaging in other drug-related activities on the social media are likely to experiment with such habits.

## **CONCLUSION**

From the findings of this study, it is concluded that some of the posted contents on social media seems to influence the habit formation of secondary school students in Uturu negatively. This is why some negative behaviors have persisted in students, especially vices such as violence, aggression, nudity, poor academic performance, bad sexual behaviour and drug abuse.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- i. National film and video censor's Board should ensure strict rules and regulation on social media videos that contain violence, nudity, illicit acts and drug abuse. Penalties should be strictly imposed on any social media platform that breaches the rules and regulations.
- ii. Parents and guardians should endeavor to control or minimize student's unrestricted access to social media.
- iii. Parents and Teachers should be active in monitoring and scrutinizing the type of social media platforms and online videos viewed by students especially foreign videos from unknown foreign friends.

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