

Categories and Dangers of Social Networking among Nigerian In-school Adolescents

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Abstract

The advent of different Information and Communication Technological (ICT) software has attracted global argument regarding associated consequences. It is due to the perceived effects that this descriptive study ascertained categories and dangers of social media networking among adolescents. A sample size of 607 in-school adolescents was randomly selected. Questionnaire was used as an instrument for data collection. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics (Mean, Standard deviation and t-test). The major findings revealed that adolescent students are exposed to various categories of social networks such as facebook, twitter, eskimi, myspace, 2go, blogs, email, WhatsApp and youtube. It was revealed that poor study habits, identity theft, sexual solicitation are some of the dangers associated with the use of social media networking among the study sample. Based on these findings, some counselling implications were highlighted and recommendations made.

Keywords: Dangers; Social Networking; Adolescents

INTRODUCTION

Electronic communication appears to be an integral part of our global society. Presently, information is at the doormat of everybody because the world is in the era of information technology. This cannot be compared to a few decades back when it takes weeks for one to communicate through letter writing to a beloved one within in or outside the country. In this technological era, information is no longer left for only a few privileged people who can afford the use of landline telephone in offices and homes. Even the people in the remotest village in Nigeria and elsewhere can access information through the cell phone, available internet and social networking sites.

Social networking is a means of communication through which tools like wall posts, status updates, activity feeds, thumbs ups and profiles are used and perhaps characterized online communications namely Facebook, Myspace Metlog, flicker and twitter (Akaneme, Ibenegbu & Nwosu, 2013).

In this context, social networking is a platform through which individuals' interest, profiles, pictures, activities, events or news and academic issues are shared and communicated so as to maintain and adopt a substantial balance between their academic requirement and individual interest.

Recently, social networking as a new development has been described as a stage for facilitation and development of adolescents' social adaptation (Subrahmanyam & Green-Field, 2008; Zhao, Grasmuck & Martin, 2008). Also, people use social networking to share their feeling and disposition to individuals of their networking (Young, 2011). It is a platform through which people communicate and disclose their personal thoughts, feelings and life events (Zhao, Grasmuck & Martin, 2008). Operationally, social networking, therefore, imply platform or online media where individual privately unleash their identities, problems and views to life for others in the same network to comment. Among social network, platforms are 2go, Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, Google, to mention a few.

The outbreak of social networking has both negative and positive implications. In recent times, young people seem to be addictive in their social networking communicative skills. Regarding this, Ojo and Omoyemiju (2008) found out that students spend a larger percentage of their time on social networking sites like e-mail, facebook and 2go while they spend less time on the internet for academic proposes. Boyd (2009) maintained that social networking has impacted negatively on the adolescents and this has caused anxiety on families and friends. The involvement of students in social networking has deprived them the opportunity to read their books and other necessary things (Kuss & Griffiths, 2011). Invariably, Idakwo (2011) lamented that school work and social interaction have been affected by the advent of these social media. In essence, students have lost control due to their unrestricted commitment and engagement in social networking, making them vulnerable to academic problems such as poor result, poor study habits, truancy, examination malpractice, disrespecting school rules and regulation and other inappropriate behaviours.

Furthermore, excessive mental preoccupation with social networking, repetitive thoughts about limiting or controlling the use, failure to prevent the desire for access, craving for using the internet when access is not available are the remarkable problems with social networking addiction (Adedeji, 2011). In the same vein, Itodo (2011) decried that there seem to be an alarming role of social networking obsession among adolescents today; a trend that could affect their academic, social and spiritual lives negatively if not properly controlled. The pathetic position social networking is taking towards falling standard of Nigerian educational system has become dangerous because it is left unchecked (Bello, 2012).

It is through social networking that students chat and share issues pertaining sex, communicate embarrassingly or hostile information about others, engage in interaction that would arouse their desire to indulge in smoking, witch-hunting each other and exposing them to raping strategies (Collins, Martino & Shaw, 2011; Ogbevoen, 2012; Yharra, Espelage, & Mitchell, 2007). Due to addiction to social networking, the individuals suffer complications and disturbances which affect them negatively in their academics. It, therefore, implies that adolescents have made social networking part and parcel of their lives and as such, cannot imagine life without that. This has made many students feel passive during family gatherings and school activities. In the class where students' attention is highly needed in order to adjust and make maximum use of the time, some students appear not to be paying attention to anything and to anybody even in the thick traffic roads, simply because of earphones.

Notwithstanding, literature has shown that social networking has positive implications. Social networking sites could enough capacity for a good official education matching the social context of exposure and enhancing problem-solving skills in learners. It also has the capacity to change educational system radically, motivating students for better learning rather than being passive attendees of a classroom (Ziegler, 2007). Social networking is very interesting because of its innovation and solutions to long-lasting human problems. Ekponimo (2013) opined that social networking can help to solve the problem of hunger and reduction of waste in the country. This is because social networking adds value to the economy of the nation. Supporting the contribution of social media and internet to the national economy, Juwah (2014) stated that the telecoms sector contributed over 8.53 percent increase to Nigeria Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the year 2013. The importance of social networking sites cannot be glossed over especially Nigerians because it explores their communicative skills and exposes them to current trends in society. Social networking can speed up communication and make conversation more interesting and acceptable to people. Digitalization and globalization have offered in-school adolescents the opportunity of communicating with their peers at the other side of the globe and to model whoever that captivates interest whether the model is good or bad.

In-school adolescents are sensitive to self-identity in-school necessary for academic adjustment when their peers provide expected support, intimacy, belongingness and advice they need (Brody, 2004). Emphasizing on how in-school adolescent become social and recognized among peers, Itodo (2011) asserted that social networking sites have facilitated adolescents to develop important and amazing connections. In-school adolescents are adolescents who are in secondary schools (Idankwo, 2011). Contextually, in-school adolescents are young boys and girls ages (11-18) who are pursuing intellectual education in secondary schools.

Social networking becomes useful to introverted in-school adolescents to socialize behind the safety of various screens ranging from a 2-inch smartphone to a 17-inch Laptop (Rosen, 2011). For instance, social networking kills ineptitudes, inferiority. In-school adolescents use of social

networking has shown to be very large for instance, a national survey in 2009 found that 73 percent of adolescents use social media indicating an increase from 55% three years earlier (Lenhart, Purcell, Smiths & Zickuhr, 2010). Meanwhile, students nowadays spend so much time chatting online rather than their academic pursuit Decrying on this ugly situation, Aren (2010) found that the more time University students browse on the net the more their grade decreased in examinations. Aren further posited that in-school adolescents who use facebook usually have low academic achievement. In essence, social media is a challenge to the academic performance of in-school adolescents because it is energy sapping and time-consuming.

In-school adolescents tend to channel energy, time and whole being in social networking because of the unlimited satisfaction and pleasure which it offers to these young people. In-school adolescents are the most users of social networks. Mueller (2005) posited that millions of adolescents are online whether in the school, at home, in a friend's house with their cell phone and almost everywhere. Ogba (2014) has this to say:

The social networking and Nigerian youth, no doubt, the phenomenon of the social media has no small measure impacted positively on the Nigerian youths and indeed, Nigerians at large, for one it has made the youths to become better informed and educated by being abreast of global news and information (p.24).

Though, the social networking offers all possible information to the in-school adolescents. However, this information is not censored. In-school adolescents try to explore all environment, they tend to neglect the positive and important aspect of the social networking which is helping to access information for academic adjustment. In-school adolescence may pursue pleasure and enjoyment at the detriment of academic pursuit. Akaneme, Ibenegbu and Nwosu (2013) reported that 31 percent of in-school adolescents who are social network users interviewed agreed to have flirted with someone online that would not have been done in person.

However, Itodo (2011) highlighted on those in-school adolescents for whom social networking has facilitated important (connections) and amazing connections. So, looking at social-networking as a coin of two sides, one can use it positively when this is channelled towards success and it can also lead one to doom when it is not utilized properly. One can rightly conclude that the problem is not on social networking par-say but what one makes out of it. Social networking can make or destroy depending on the usage irrespective of gender and location of the students.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Evidence abounds that in-school adolescents spend so much time in social networks such as Facebook, 2go, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, Google and others. This seems to have led to a decline in the performance of students in both internal and external examination Senior Secondary Certificate SSCE, Junior Secondary School Certificate Examination (JSSCE) and National Examination Council (NECO) in Nigeria. The

addiction of in-school adolescents to social networking makes them lack concentration while studying and consequently lead to poor academic performance. It seems also that the in-school adolescents who are always on the net lack necessary skills that are required for academic adjustment in schools. Consequently, some of the in-school adolescents fail in both internal examinations repeat the examination. The in-school adolescents' academic maladjustment leads to other antisocial behaviours such as examination malpractice, truancy and dropping out of school. It is in view of the foregone issues that the researchers poised to ask, what are the categories and dangers associated with social networking on the academic adjustment of in-school adolescents?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the various categories of social networking in-school adolescents are exposed to in Enugu Education Zone?
2. What are the dangers associated with social networking?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 probability level.

- H₀₁: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female in-school adolescents on the various categories social networking adolescents are exposed to.
- H₀₂: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female in-school adolescents on the dangers associated with social networking.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Design of the Study

The descriptive research design was adopted for this study.

Area of the Study

This study was carried out in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu state.

Population of the Study

The population of this study comprised all the 32396 students in public secondary schools in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State. The sample for this study was 607 students drawn from public secondary school which are coeducational in Enugu Education Zone of Enugu State. The choice of this class (SS2) is based on the fact that the students in this class are not registered candidates for external examination like West Africa Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) and as such, they were willing to complete the questionnaire.

Multi-stage sampling technique was adopted in this study.

Firstly; purposive sampling technique was adopted to select six secondary schools each from Enugu-East, Enugu-North and Isi-Uzo Local Government Area respectively. These gave a total of 18 secondary schools. In stage two, a proportionate sampling technique (20% of each SSII class) was also employed to select 273 male and 334 females' SSII students. The reason for this is to enable the researcher to select male and female students. The third stage was simple random sampling balloting without replacement. This helped to select 6 rural and 6 urban schools from each of the Local government areas for this study. The reason for this is based on the fact that it ensures proper representative of the population.

Measures

A structured questionnaire developed by the researcher was used for the study. The instrument is titled: Questionnaire for Adolescents Social Networking (QASN). The instrument contains two sections, A and B. Section one focuses on demographic information like gender and location of residence. Section two contains 22 items put into two subscales. The first subscale elicited information on various categories of social networks adolescents are exposed to whereas the other subscale focused on information on dangers associated with social networking. The instrument has four response ratings such as Strongly Agree (SA) - 4 points, Agree (A) - 3 points, Disagree (D) - 2 points, and Strongly Disagree (SD) -1 point respectively. The four-point rating scale was weighted as 4 3 2 and 1 and for a positive response, while negative responses were weighted as 1, 2, 3 and 4 respectively. After the development of the instrument, three copies were given to three test experts (Ph.D holders) for face validation. To determine the internal consistency of the instrument, statistical analysis was conducted using Cronbach Alpha Statistic and the result gave alpha coefficient values of 0.91 which shows that the instrument is reliable.

Method of Data Collection

Before the commencement of the data collection, a written informed consent was obtained from the parents, school principals and the students. Those that reply were recruited for the study. A total of 476 copies of the questionnaire was administered to the respondents by the researchers with the help of two trained research assistants who were briefed on the distribution and retrieval the questionnaire. The two research assistants covered Enugu -East and Isi-Uzo Local government areas, while the researchers covered Enugu-North Local government area respectively. This lasted for five months. They were instructed to administer the instrument meticulously to ensure a high return.

Method of Data Analysis

Data collected was analyzed using mean and standard deviation and in line with the posed research questions. Also, t-test statistic was used to analyze the null hypotheses which were tested at 0.05 probability level. A mean value of 2.50 was used as a benchmark. This implies that any value that is 2.50 and above was accepted and any mean value that is below 2.50 was rejected.

RESULT

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation analysis of various categories of social networks, in-school adolescents are exposed to.

S/N	Various categories of social networks adolescents are exposed to	\bar{X}	SD	Remark
1.	I am exposed to Facebook social network	3.45	0.70	A
2.	I have good exposure to twitter	3.23	0.78	A
3.	I use Eskimi to chat with my friends	3.29	0.80	A
4.	My space is my social network site	3.26	0.81	A
5.	2go site has been exposed to me for a very long long time	3.19	0.85	A
6.	I am aware of Blogs	3.27	0.82	A
7.	Electronic mails (e-mail) is one of the social networks I have been exposed to	3.19	0.81	A
8.	I am not a Whatsapp user	3.18	0.85	A
9.	My social networking site is youtube	3.09	0.88	A
Cluster mean and standard deviation		3.24	0.51	A

Criterion Mean (\bar{X}) = 2.50; \bar{X} = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; A= Agree

Date analysis in Table I shows the mean and standard deviation of various categories of social networks adolescents are exposed to. The analysis reveals that items 1 to 9 are within the range of 3.09 to 3.45 which are above the 2.50 benchmark mean score. The cluster mean of 3.24 indicates that in-school adolescents are exposed to various categories of items 1 to 9. In addition, the high mean score of item 1 (I am exposed to Facebook social network) indicates that Facebook is the most popular social network which in-school adolescents are exposed to. Consequently, this shows that in-school adolescents are exposed to various categories of social networks adolescents such as Facebook, Twitter, eskimi, myspace, 2go, blogs, email, WhatsApp and youtube.

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation analysis of dangers associated with the use of social networking.

S/N	Dangers Associated with Social Networking	\bar{X}	SD	Remark
1	Chatting through social network sites deprive me the opportunities to read my books	3.12	0.93	A
2	I usually lose control over my academics due to influence of social networking	3.33	0.81	A
3	I have poor study habits because of deep interest in on social network sites	3.28	0.78	A
4	I have excessive mental preoccupation with social networking	3.30	0.80	A
5	I am not interested anytime my teacher is teaching in the class because I am already addicted to social network chatting	3.26	0.85	A
6	Sexual solicitation is associated with social networking	3.25	0.82	A
7	My spiritual life is affected by social networking	1.86	0.89	D
8	Social networking causes physical discomfort	2.03	0.99	D
9	I usually ignore my family responsibilities because of social networking	1.85	1.02	D
10	High academic performance is associated with social networking	1.82	0.98	D
11	I derive more satisfaction on the social network at the expense of my academic work	3.13	0.89	A
12	I have lost career opportunities because of internet use	3.16	0.79	A
13	Social networks lead to identity theft	2.66	0.10	A
Cluster Mean and Standard Deviation		2.77	0.40	A

Criterion Mean (\bar{X}) = 2.50; \bar{X} = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; A = Agree; D = Disagree

Data analysis in Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation of dangers associated with the use of social networking. The analysis reveals that the dangers associated with the use of social networking to items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 11, 12, and 13 are more than 2.50 criterion mean. In addition, it reveals that the respondents disagree on items 7, 8, 9 and 10

as dangers associated with the use of social networking. Hence, the overall cluster mean of 2.77 indicates that the items are dangers associated with the use of social networking. This implies that items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 11, 12 and 13 are the dangers associated with the use of social networking. Consequently, the in-school adolescents agree that the dangers associated with the use of social networking include depriving students the opportunities to read books, loose of control over academics, poor study habits, identity theft, sexual solicitation among others.

Table 3: t-test analysis of the mean score ratings of male and female in-school adolescents on the various categories of social networking in-school adolescents are exposed to.

S/N	Gender	\bar{x}	SD	n	df	Sig.(2-tailed)	t-cal	Decision
1	Male	3.24	0.52	267	605	0.99	0.01	Ho ₁
2	Female	3.24	0.49					Accepted

Data analysis in Table 3 indicates that the probability associated with the calculated value of t (0.01) is 0.99. Since the probability value of 0.99 is higher than 0.05 set probability level, the null hypothesis was accepted. This implies that there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female in-school adolescents in the various categories of social networking adolescents are exposed to.

Table 4: t-test analysis of the mean ratings of male and female in-school adolescents on the dangers associated with the use of social networking

S/N	Gender	n	\bar{x}	SD	df	t	Sig.(2-tailed)	Decision
1	Male	267	2.79	0.38	605	0.79	0.43	Ho ₂
2	Female	340	2.76	0.40				Accepted

The data analysis in Table 4 reveals that t-calculated value of 0.79 is significant at a probability level of 0.43. Since set probability level of 0.05 is less than the associated probability level of 0.43, the finding is not significant. The mean scores difference of male and female reveal that male in-school adolescents are more engaged with dangers associated with the use social networking than female counterparts. Implicitly, the null hypothesis is accepted that there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female in-school adolescents on the dangers associated with the use social networking.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study investigated categories and dangers associated with in-school adolescents' academic adjustment. The finding of the study revealed that in-school adolescents are exposed to various categories of social networks such as facebook, twitter, eskimi myspace, 2go, blogs, email, WhatsApp and youtube. Further result showed that there is no significant

difference between the mean ratings of male and female in-school adolescents on the various categories of social networks adolescents are exposed to. This finding is not surprising as many in-school adolescents usually engage in internet surfing and ping. No wonder those adolescents prefer internet chatting to their academic careers. In most cases, they do this without considering the inverse or negative influence of the social networking on their careers. However, this finding collaborates with Ojo and omoyemiju (2008) who found that the students spend a larger percentage of their time on social networking sites like e-mail, facebook and 2go while spending less time on the internet for academic purposes. This result is quite discouraging since those in-school adolescents have chosen to opt out from their studies. This could be attributed to the significant influence of their peers and negative media contents they are exposed to. This agrees with the finding of Eren (2012) on students' attitudes towards using social networking. This finding is also supported by Akaneme, Ibenegbu and Nwosu (2013) who found that adolescents use of social networking has a negative influence on their academic achievement behaviour. This is in line with Ojo and Omoyemiju (2008) who found that a significant positive relationship exists between internet addition and adolescents. By implication, the adolescents are likely to be exposed to inappropriate behaviours such as sexual solicitation, bullying, examination malpractice among others. This also implies that parents and teachers seem not to be giving them attention especially in a time of difficulties in order gain their trust. This finding is not encouraging because it seems that both male and female students are being exposed to social networking. Therefore the negative impact of social networking may affect both male and female gender.

The descriptive analysis showed that the dangers associated with the use of social networking include depriving students the opportunities to read their books, loose of control over academics, poor study habits, identity theft, sexual solicitation, excessive mental preoccupation, and derivation of satisfaction at expense of academic adjustment. In addition, the finding revealed that the in-school adolescents disagreed that spiritual life is affected by social networking, neglecting family responsibility and high academic performance is associated with social networking. This finding disagrees with Idankwo (2011) who found that the students use social networking to get in touch with some of their friends, to discover and established new friendships and at the same time to achieve their social networks and youths. This finding also disagrees with Lewis (2013) who revealed that students are utilizing Facebook to develop friendships with individuals that share the same ethnicity and with peers from different ethnicities. It is not encouraging that despite the dangers associated with internet surfing students still engage in it. This could lead them to have poor study habit towards their academics. It could be due to this internet activity that seems to have been luring contemporary youths into unguided and risky sexual behaviours.

The hypothesis tested revealed that there is no significant difference between the mean rating of male and female in-school adolescents on the dangers associated the use of social networking. This shows that both male and female in-school

adolescents could be affected with regards to their academic adjustment. No wonder, most of Nigeria in-school adolescents engage in indecent dressing, internet theft and other inappropriate behaviours. This implies that if social networking is depriving in-school adolescents the opportunities to read their books, they may become school dropout. As social networking is associated identity theft and sexual solicitation, it implies that the students may engage in sex work and anti-social behaviours.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings and discussions, these conclusions were drawn:

It was concluded that in-school adolescents are exposed to various categories of social networks adolescents such as facebook, twitter, eskimi myspace, 2go, blogs, email, WhatsApp and youtube. It was also concluded that the dangers associated with the use of social networking include depriving students the opportunities to read books, loose of control over academics, poor study habits, identity theft, sexual solicitation among others. We recommended government should organize intervention programmes such as seminar, and symposium to enlighten the in-school adolescents on proper ways of making use of social networking. This would help the in-school adolescents to imbibe the quality knowledge and awareness on the use of social networking. Stakeholders in education should organize workshops to educate the in-school adolescents on appropriate ways of using social networking. Parents should explain to the in-school adolescents why they should not waste time using social networking negatively. Counsellors should encourage gender quality in schools.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

In the course of this, some limitations were experienced. The use of sample rather than using the entire population for the study could limit generalizing the current findings to other population. This approach has therefore limited the generalization of the research findings. Another limitation is the use of questionnaire only as a tool for data collection. The fact that questionnaire is a subjective source of data collection; the researcher suspects that the respondents may not have provided very objective responses to the items in the questionnaire. This, therefore, tends to limit the validity of the research findings.

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