

SOCIAL MEDIA AND SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS OF IMO STATE POLYTECHNIC, OMUMA

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Abstract

The study was on influence of social media on sexual behaviour of students of Imo state polytechnic, Omuma. The objectives of this study were to find out the level of exposure to social media among students' of Imo State Polytechnic; examine the perception of Imo State Polytechnic students' on their use of social media in their daily activities and find out the influence of social media on the sexual behaviour of Imo State Polytechnic students. The survey research approach was used to sample the opinion of 361 valid students from the selected departments in Imo State Polytechnic Omuma. It was the opinion expressed by these students that gave rise to the results and findings, on the influence of social media on the sexual behaviour of students in Imo State Polytechnic Omuma. Findings revealed that: There is a high level exposure to social media among students' in Imo State Polytechnic Omuma; the extent to which students use social media in their daily activities is between 2 and 3 hours; the respondents' perceived social media as being capable to engrossed them into sexual issues, lure them into sexual relationship as well as improve their knowledge on sex education; the use of social media influenced sexual behaviour of students' in Imo State Polytechnic Omuma. This is because, the respondents agreed that social content aroused their sexual urge, make them into sexual activities and helped them adopt sex education practices. Therefore, it was recommended that ; Social media should be used to convey sex education messages among the youths considering the fact that our youths today depend on them for information and sharing of ideas, sex education should be incorporated into secondary school curriculum, since social networking media content are dominated by sex content; parents, guardians and teachers should monitor the messages students share with one another on the social media to be able to guide and advise them properly.

Keywords: Exposure, Social Media, Sexual behaviour, influence.

Introduction

The advent of modern technology has brought in-depth changes in the way we communicate. Communication has been made easier as people not only communicate face to face but digitally through different social networks. Individuals make friends by joining these social networking that connect them together. These technologies allow different people from all over the country to interact globally, social ties and also form virtual relationships online. This has made it possible for individuals to send messages to

their friends through social networks (Oyero & Jegede, 2011).

Social media technologies have drastically altered the pattern of human communication. The resultant online platforms have bridged the gap between the communication content creators and the content consumers, turning communication into an interactive, participatory and democratic dialogue. This innovation in communication was facilitated by the social media (Odi, 2013). According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) social media is a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological

and technological foundations of web and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content. The emergence of the social media have increased communication between people all over the globe, people now have quick access to any information that they desire anytime, anywhere on any digital device as well as interactive user feedback, creative participation and community formation around the media content. The social media have brought about the democratization of the creation, publishing, distribution and consumption of media content. Odii (2013, p.549) notes that "social media are simply internet-based interactive platforms through which people can create and exchange information in a participatory manner on a real-time basis. They are online democratic and participatory communication channels that allow uninhibited exchange of information and documents among connected persons".

Social media came into existence in 1979 with the intervention of the Bulletin Board System (BBS); an online meeting point that allowed users to download relevant files, games and post comments to one another. Some of the social media that emanated from the new media are Facebook, 2go, Twitter, Myspace, Whatsapp, Google, Friendster, Youtube, Blackberry Messenger, Baadoo, Gmail and a host of others (Akpoveta, 2013). The social media enable adolescents to create, modify and share contents of different kinds with other people as quickly as possible. This explains why the study is interested in establishing how social media is influencing sexual behaviour among students of Imo State Polytechnic. The question is: Does exposure to social media influence students' sexual behaviour? And what is

the students' perception of these sexual behaviours?

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What is the level of exposure to social media among Imo State Polytechnic students?
2. What is the perception of Imo State Polytechnic students on their use of social media in their daily activities?
3. What influence has the social media on the sexual behaviour of Imo State Polytechnic students'?

Review of Related Literature

Conceptual Review

The Concept of Sexual Behaviour

Sexual behaviour refers to the manner in which humans experience and express their sexuality. People engage in a variety of sexual acts from time to time for a wide variety of reasons. Sexual activity normally results in sexual arousal and physiological changes in the aroused person, some of which are pronounced while others are more subtle. Sexual activity also includes conduct and activities which are intended to arouse the sexual interest of another, such as strategies to find or attract partners (mating and display behaviour) and personal interactions between individuals (*The Nation*, 2019).

There is solitary behaviour involving only one individual and there is socio-sexual behaviour which is generally divided into heterosexual behaviour (male and female) and homosexual behaviour (male with male or female with female). If there are more individuals involved, there is a possibility to have heterosexual and homosexual activity simultaneously.

The Concept of Social Media

Rebecca and Authur (2011) explain that social media refers to new generation of internet applications emphasize the importance of user participation, openness and network effects. Social media aims to use the collective and self-organizing intelligence present in a social network- a network which is open to new participants, and their specific experiences, knowledge, and ideals communication within these networks has an instant and many-to-many character, due to the use of instant messaging devices (for example, Facebook, twitter, etc.). Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social media as “a group of internet based applications that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated contents”. In other words, social media is the interaction among people which they create, share or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks.

History of Social Media

The social media concept refers to a 21st century phenomenon brought about by the advent of the Internet and World Wide Web. The social media are interactive, web-based; which engage key players in a communication channel in defining and determining the message content. They are media that lay emphasis on dialogue or two-way contribution by both sender and receiver in message development (Nwabueze, 2011). The turn of the 21st century ushered in great changes in the information communication technology field. The term “social media” was coined in 2007 by Dana Boyd of the School of Information at the University of California, and Nicole (Ijwo & Ikani, 2011, p.226). Social media use internet and web-based technologies to transform broadcast media monologues into social media dialogues. It

supports the democratization of knowledge and information, transforming people from content consumers into content producers. The social media that have emerged according to Ijwo and Ikani (2011, p.227) include: Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.

Social Media and Adolescents Sexual Behaviour

Sexual explicit messages have become so prominent and ubiquitous in mainstream media offerings that they appear almost unavailable in day to day encounters. These popular forms of entertainment on novels, home video, soap opera, television sitcoms and social media can potentially impact adolescents beliefs, self-perceptions attitudes and behaviours (Tukachinsky, 2011, cited in Alawode & Fatonji, 2013, p.599). There is no doubt that the internet especially the social media and its networking capability has provided a medium for unhindered freedom of expression and communication. Omenugha (2010, p.44) notes: we create long distance relationship even communities, as if we were physically present to one another”. One of the principle advantages of computer mediated communication (CMC) is the ease and freedom of communicating with unseen others” (Omenugha, 2010).

Negative trends in internet and use of its facilities, thus; the internet offers direct exposure to some of the reprehensible facts of the west such as pornography, criminal networks, racist networks, religious sects, prostitution rings, sex tourism and services offering young African the chance to find Swiss or German spouse (Omenugha, 2010).

Empirical Studies

Odi (2013) did a study which seeks to ascertain whether Nigerian youth use

social media more than other age groups in the country; to find out the most used social media site among Nigeria youths; examine what Nigerian youths use social media for; ascertain whether social media satisfy the gratification sought by Nigerian youths; determine whether social media have negative effects on the Nigerian youths. The study adopted the survey research design. A sample size of 1803 was drawn from the population of this study. Findings revealed that Nigerian youths use social media more than any other age group in the country; Nigerian youths use social media to satisfy various needs such as getting and sharing information, to keep in touch with old friends and make new friends; for education purposes; for business purpose, among others; The Nigerian youths use Facebook most; social media satisfy the gratification sought by Nigerian youths and Social media have some negative effects on the Nigerian youths, such as adverse consequences are sexual perversion, time wasting, low academic performance and criminal tendencies.

Also, Udejinta (2013) did a study which ascertain the popularity and level of exposure to social media among secondary school students; find out the dominant message content shared and benefits derivable from it; determine the most common mode of accessing social media and ascertain the impact of social media on the youths. Survey research design was adopted for this study. A sample size of 200 secondary school students in SS2 and SS3 were sampled from selected secondary schools in Oyo Town and four students both male and female were selected in each of the four schools and organized into discussion teams' questionnaire in-

depth/interview and focus group discussion. Finding revealed that the most popular mode of accessing the social media by the students is the GSM handset; the youths received and sent sex eliciting messages on the social networking sites; and the social networking content has negatively impacts on their academic and over all social development. Indulging in pre-marital sex is no longer considered immoral among the youths.

Theoretical Framework

Uses and gratifications theory was propounded by Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler and Michael Gurevitach in 1974. The basic tenets of this theory are that people exposed themselves to media contents based on the needs and satisfaction they derive from such contents. It implies that there are things that drive people to listen to a particular radio programme. Certain gains or factors motivates people's exposure to specific media and contents (Nwabueze, 2014).

With regard to this study, female undergraduate students make conscious efforts to seek, use the new information and communication technologies such as the mobile phone, internet the social media, because they derive certain benefits from them, these derived benefits from the social media in turn impact positively or negatively on the students sexual behaviours.

Research Methodology

Survey research method was adopted in this study. The estimated population of this study is 10,000. A sample size of 385 was arrived at through Taro Yamane statistical tool. This study adopted purposive sampling technique because only students with phones that can browse were

selected in each of the selected departments.

Results

Research Question One: What is the extent of exposure to social media among students’ in Imo State Polytechnic Omuma?

Table 1: Respondents Ownership to Media Gadget

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Phones	296	82
Ipad	7	2
Laptop	16	4
Palmtop	4	1
None	38	11
Total	361	100

Source: *Field Survey, 2023.*

Finding from table above revealed that 82% of the respondents own a phone. This implies that majority of students in Imo State Polytechnic Omuma own cell phones

as their media gadget. This result shows that phones have become the commonly used media gadget among students.

Table 2: Respondents Access to Internet

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	299	83
No	62	17
Total	361	100

Source: *Field Survey, 2023.*

The table above shows that 83% representing majority of the respondents’ had access to internet facilities. It implies that most of the media gadget, especially

phone that were used by students of Imo State Polytechnic Omuma are connected to the internet.

Table 3: Respondents’ Social Media Account

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	285	79
No	76	21
Total	361	100

Source: *Field Survey, 2023.*

Results obtained from the table indicate that 285 (79%) of the respondents had social media account. This means that

majority of the students of Imo State Polytechnic Omuma has social media account.

Table 4: Respondents’ Extent of Exposure to social media sites

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Large extent	125	35

Moderate	103	28
Low extent	57	16
Can't say	76	21
Total	361	100

Source: *Field Survey, 2023.*

Data in table above revealed that 125 (35%) of the respondents browsed social media sites to a large extent. This

means that students of Imo State Polytechnic Omuma to a large extent browse social media sites.

Researching Question Two: What is the perception of students on their use of social media in their daily activities?

Table 5: Respondents' Perception of Social Media Content and Students' Engross in Sexual Activities

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	198	55
No	66	18
Can't say	99	27
Total	361	100

Source: *Field Survey, 2023.*

The table above revealed that 198 (55%) of the respondents were of the view that social media content makes them engross in sexual activities. This implies that

students of Imo State Polytechnic Omuma affirm that social media content makes them engross in sexual activities.

Table 6: Respondents' Perception on whether Social Media Lure Female Students into Sexual Relationship

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	187	52
No	81	22
Not sure	93	26
Total	361	100

Source: *Field Survey, 2023.*

Data in table above revealed that 187 (52%) of the respondents' representing majority of the respondents believed that social media can lure students' into sexual

relationship. This implies that social media can lure students of Imo State Polytechnic Omuma into sexual relationship.

Table 7: Respondents' perception on Social Media and Sex Education

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	178	49.3
No	73	20.2
No idea	110	30.5

Total	361	100
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Source: Field Survey, 2023.

The table indicated that 178 (49.3%) of the respondents agreed that social media can improve students' knowledge on sex education. This means that students of Imo

State Polytechnic Omuma affirm that social media can improve students' knowledge on sex education.

Research Question Four: What influence has the social media on the sexual behaviour of students' in Imo State Polytechnic Omuma?

Table 8: Respondents Responses on Influence of Social Media on the their Sexual Urge

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	196	54
No	94	26
Not sure	71	20
Total	361	100

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

Data from table revealed that 196 (54%) of the respondents agreed that social media influence their sexual urge. This

means that students of Imo State Polytechnic Omuma believed that social media influence their sexual urge.

Table 9: Respondents Responses on Social Media Influence on their Sexual Relationship

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	173	48
No	55	15
Can't say	133	37
Total	361	100

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

Table 9 indicates that 173 (48%) of the respondents believed that social media influenced students' sexual behaviour. This implies that students of Imo State

Polytechnic affirmed that social media make them feel like indulging into sexual activities

Table 10: Respondents Responses on Adoption of Sex Education on Social Media

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	187	52
No	57	16
Not sure	117	34
Total	361	100

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

From the table above, 187 (52%) of the respondents accounting for the majority believed that they adopt some of the sex

education practices from social media. This means that social media influenced

students of Imo State Polytechnic adoption of sex education practices.

Discussion of Findings

Extent of exposure to social media among Imo State Polytechnic students

Findings revealed that Imo State Polytechnic students are to a large extent exposed to the social media. This was revealed in table 2, 3, 4 and 5. These tables points out to the fact that students of Imo State Polytechnic Omuma to a large extent browse these social media sites. This is in line with the uses and gratification theory. The uses and gratifications posit that members of the audience actively utilizing media contents, rather than being passively acted upon by the media. Thus, it does not assume a direct relationship between messages and effects, but postulates instead that members of the audience put messages to use and that such usages act as intervening variables in the process of effect. Similarly, Oyero & Jegede (2011) opined that Facebook has become part of most young people's lifestyle especially on their quest for socialization and young people log on to Facebook to a very high extent.

Perception of Imo State Polytechnic students on their use of social media in their daily activities

Findings revealed that Imo State Polytechnic students are of the perception that social media can engross students' in sexual activities, lure them into sexual relationship as well as improve their knowledge of sex education. The social media are identified as one of the major sources of sexual information for adolescents. Important relationship existed between individual's perception of media portrayals of sex, and their actual sexual

satisfaction. The mass media are powerful agents in the acquisition of sexual information by the young (Baran 1976; Courtwright & Baran, 1979 cited in Iwokwagh, Agbana & Agbana, 2014, p.191).

Influence social media have on the sexual behaviour of Imo State Polytechnic Students

Findings revealed that social media influence the sexual behaviour of Imo State Polytechnic students. In collaboration to this Udejinta (2014) asserts that, this may occur when a child's/person's expectations about the outcome of certain behaviours are altered through identification with the character portraying the stimuli, by raising or lowering behavioural inhibitions, or modifying the potential for environmental cues to foster certain behaviours, or by linking specific meanings to a behaviour. Upon the foregoing, it is evidently clear that sexual behaviour of students could be influenced positively or negatively by cultivating behaviours exposure to them through the social media.

Conclusion

Adolescents most often use the social media because they portray sexual images. The influence of social media on adolescent sexual knowledge, attitude has contributed to value acquisition among the adolescents. Social media thus, arouse adolescents' strong emotional aspirations in sexual urge, sexual relationship and practice of sex education practices. It is clear that female students after seeing a particular sexual image on social media might go out to perform similar actions. The adolescent are living to learn risen sexual behaviours from the social media. Students enjoyed these and have made exposure to social media part and parcel of their daily

activities. They spent more of their times browsing, uploading and downloading sexual images. This sexual images interest them about sexual issues. One the area of sex education, social media played a significant role in educating, informing and teaching students.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made:

1. Social media should be used to convey sex education messages among the youths considering the fact that our youths today depend on them for information and sharing of ideas.
2. Parents, guardians and teachers should monitor the messages students share with one another on the social media to be able to guide and advise them properly.
3. Mothers should also play a vital role in sensitizing and educating their daughters beginning from puberty age to adolescent on sex education, this would help to reduce influence from the peers.

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