

Adolescents' Behaviours and Social Media Issues: Counselling for Effective Social Media Culture

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Abstract

The growing concern on undesirable behaviours and social misconducts among adolescents has been observed to be as a result of many factors, including social media influence. This study examined some of these undesirable behaviours, the overall consequences on the adolescent's psychosocial well-being and how social media platforms can be used as a counselling tool for behaviour modification. Social media, in this study, are internet-based social websites or social network sites on handles, including Facebook, Telegram, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, that serve as instruments for communication and social interactions among individuals, group and corporate bodies. Effects of the use and misuse of online social activities comprised the propagation of indecent dressing, premarital sex, sexual abuse, suicidal ideation and untimely death. In order to lessen the adverse consequences of this social challenge on adolescents. The study exemplifies the advantages of adopting the various social media handles by experts in counselling psychology to connect with adolescents from various spheres of life as behavioural change agents to improve on how adolescents can enhance the quality of life and use the different social media platforms for worthwhile social engagement, educational learning, chance for individualized knowledge and skills acquisition. The study recommended, among others, that stakeholders and significant others mentoring adolescents should make conscious commitment to nurture and mentor adolescents in the appropriate social media culture. Furthermore, psycho-educational programmes on social media culture and positive use should be incorporated into the curriculum from basic education to tertiary institutions of learning.

Keywords: - Social Media Issues, Adolescents' behaviours, Counselling, Social Media Culture

Introduction

Over the years, research efforts have focused on improving the means of communication between human and his environments. The Technological advancement made so far in the aspect of information and communication technology (ICT) has made the world a global village. A vital achievement recorded concerning information and communication technology (ICT) in modern times is the advent of a contemporary media which improves the advancement of various social avenues of interaction through the media (Adaja and Ayodele, 2013 Killian and Odeleye (2020).;). It is palpable that in current world social media assumes a major position as far as ICT world is concerned (Nche, 2012). This is undoubtedly owing to the fact that social media gives no blockade with respect to communication between persons, transmission of information, upholding several relationships, and transactions (Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, 2010; Killian & Effiong (2022).

Social media denotes to a set of connected programmes of the internet setup in connection with web protocols and technological innovations which authorizes the input and interchange of information of the person using it. Another definition of social media considers it as a computer based technical invention that inspires the improvement and broadcast of messages, businesses, opinions, words and individual endeavors through visible interaction connections (Obar and Wildman, 2015; Killian (2020).

In this paper, social media as those internet-based social web pages or social network sites which allows the translation of communication into discussion among people, business entities and communities. These social media platforms include WhatsApp, Tiktok, Facebook, Twitter, Baidu, Tieba, and Pinterest (Pavlik and Macintosh, 2015). Others include Snapchat, Weibo, Viber, Flicker, Google+, 2go, Instagram, You Tube, Tumblr LinkedIn, Gab, and WeChat. These social connections usually give opportunity for people using it to communicate with friends, share pictures, views, audio-visuals, meet themselves and remain connected.

It was exposed that there has been an unwavering increase in the popularity of social media in all regions of the world since they came into operation. It was also stated that social media in modern times has occupied a major position in ICT and, therefore, has become the prime basis of internet

communication and collaborative efforts among individuals (Verster, 2010). The standing of social media usage amongst adolescents in Nigeria, specifies high application degree particularly with regard to Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, Pinterest, 2go, Instagram and Twitter.

Initially, before the advent of these social networks, it was seemingly very challenging to connect with people living abroad but nowadays the experience has changed. It has become very easy to interact with individuals no matter where they stay without much hassle and cost. Just with the stroke of a key a message can be sent to many individuals in diverse places of the world instantaneously (Umekachikelu, 2018). This, of course, is one of the great benefits of social media over other avenues of communication. It has made social life, business, politics, education and sports easy and effortless.

Apart from making life events effortless, social media aids to bring individuals together as one and emboldens high social life. Those who use these means of communication have the privilege of connecting with friends and relations, making new and reconciling with old and longtime friends. It aids people to uphold interaction with friends and families even when they are staying abroad. Again these social connections nurtures inter person communication, aid persons remain connected through sharing life experiences, self-pictures, audio-visuals and all forms of information virtually (Nnamonu, 2018).

Nevertheless, within all social advantages, social media or social network site have unfortunately added to social and psychological issues among adolescents in many nations, including Nigeria. As cited in a report that even though social media upholds human relationship and socialization developments, it is hitherto to satisfy all the social needs of man. (Nnamonu, 2018). This author therefore suggested that regardless of the fact that social media assists individuals to uphold interaction with one another when they are physically apart, it can astonishingly put individuals who are living together apart. The fact that technological inventions could offer remarkable life benefits to the adolescent is not argumentative; nevertheless, the misuse of such could also prove to be very destructive since it can abuse or employed to harm others.

For example social media apps' like Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, Pinterest, You Tube, 2go, and their web sites, Email, chat rooms plus devices like mobile phones and mobile phone

cameras have been found to serve as intimidation weapons particularly amongst age group. The use of social media as a weapon of intimidation has become a grave social health challenge all over the globe with many incidences recorded in USA, Canada, Australia, Japan, United Kingdom and New Zealand (Awake, 2012).

Researchers have obviously described an upsurge in the incidence of sex conversations and displays of sexual contents via social media, and the connection between pinging, charting, sexting, texting, and other sexual connected actions like sending nude images, sexual chats, videos and self-pictures among young people (Kamaku and Mberi, 2014). This unquestionably originates from adolescents deep craving to use these social networking websites.

Therefore, this paper aims to judiciously observe the sexual consequences of social media use among adolescents. Adolescence is the stage of life between childhood and adulthood (Larson and Simons, 2004). This is a time when an individual experiences dramatic changes physically, emotionally, and even socially.

Adolescents at this period exhibit objection to general instructions and reject local heads just to be free (Carmona and Stewart, 2001). These researchers added that a huge of adolescents who reject traditional rules end up being entangled in behaviours that could hurt them which comprise the exploration of sexual contents through the social media.

Adolescents are likely to become acquainted with the usage of sexual contents in social networks during the period of physical development when their sexual activities, behaviours and attitudes are yet to be formed. As a result, slight involvement in the usage of sexual images through the media connections could cause the adolescent to set aside both family and religious principles in addition to ethical teachings from major adults and get enticed by all these sexual content through chatting, texting, sexting, pinging, porn watching and other sexual actions. All these online sexual contents have unconsciously led to sexual implications, particularly among adolescents in Nigeria.

II. Effects of Social Media Use Among Adolescents

The effect that offshoot from social media usage and misuse among adolescents comprises: Sexual Harassment, Indecent Dressing, Premarital sex, HIV/AIDs and other sexual transmitted infections,

pornography, hookup, Sexual solicitation, Sexting, Sexual Promiscuity, cyber bullying, Victims to Ritualists. These shall be addressed in the subsequent sub-headings:

A. Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment could be defined as unaccepted sexual act (MacKinnon, 1979). Within the institution, sexual harassment may be defined as unaccepted sexual vices which could frustrate education procedures. Practical instances of this sexual harassment comprise vocally making sexual advances, body movements, displaying sexual body skimpy pictures, and using force to have sex with an individual. Sexual harassment is widespread and takes place in numerous contexts, including workplaces, schools, and in the streets (Doughty, 2019). Sexual harassment could happen physically by meeting the individual, and or through the media by sharing paintings of sex images, nude images and videos, advancing sexual illicit jokes and making a public of one's sexual skills. Others are bullying sex or gender-based bullying, spreading false news of sex in the media (MacKinnon, 1979). The most severe social effect of sexual assaults on the adolescent is its unwarranted impact on the right of a student to attain free education like others.

Utmost degrees of sexual harassment include forcible sex, forceful dating and forceful sexual action complemented with fierceness. These methods of sexual harassments have very severed health effects and consequently draw the attention of the law enforcement agents. Sexual harassment as an unsolicited sexual behaviour impedes with a student's right to get quality education (Kowalski, 2011). The physical and social health concerns caused by sexual harassment have become a great encumbrance for adolescents to struggle with.

B. Indecent Dressing

Dressing is an action of putting on clothes as a way of covering our nakedness as human being. A dress is therefore said to be indecent when it has provocative or stimulating influence on almost all those that happen to view it on the user (Okafor and Uwalaka, 2020). The challenge of indecent dressing among adolescents with regard to higher institutions has increased as a consequence of indecent usage and misuse of the same on the social media. As said, it is possible to circulate and send messages, personal pictures and information through most of the social media connections. This very act of uploading and sending information by handlers is frequently misused.

Some handlers exploit on this to send nude images of self or that of a well-known celebrities. Through the social media it is common to see sudden images of females putting on body revealing

dressess, or pant alone, or youths with trousers almost falling out of their waist besides “sagging” (Beatley, 2019). Social connections like facebook, pinterest, Flicker, permits individuals to showcase their businesses through which adolescents exploit on to advertise images of themselves or other females wearing fashionable apparels that exposes almost the sexual parts of their body. Showcasing the nakedness of females and males through the social media has really funded the poor dressing attitude of adolescents in Nigeria and this influence the motive for the occurrence of sexual assaults, sexual harassment and rape amidst the youth in the nation (Onah. and Nche, 2014).

C. Premarital sex

Worldwide the prevalence of risky sexual practice was elevated at higher level and young people’s experiences related to sex vary across the world because of various socio-cultural factors. Africa remains the region most severely affected by the HIV epidemic while risky sexual behaviour is superficially increase among students in the higher education institutions. (Manale, 2019). Social media afford unique environment for adolescents to be entangled in a type of courtship that emboldens premarital sex (Omotere, 2013). Many studies which were carried out to find out elements that determine preferred type of courtship in the higher institutions revealed that adolescent boys and girls often have unpremeditated sex which at times is denoted to as campus couple, or ‘hooking up (Bogle, 2008; Glenn and Marquardt 2001; the Independent Women’s Forum, 2017). These literatures also specified that premarital sexual act among adolescents are generally developed via social media sites like, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Flicker, WhatsApp, and 2go as well as blogs, videos, games, mobile telephones and Global Positioning System (GPS) devices (Paxson, 2010). These web apps currently help as a very simple, quick, and trusted means of messages for online dating and other sexual acts. The social medial platforms help most adolescents to interrelate, decide and choose on where and when to meet for sexual purposes. Premarital sex upsurges the risk of accidental pregnancy, school dropout, poverty, sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDs, and death.

D. Pornography

The present upsurge in internet connected apps has significantly changed the way in which adolescent’s engage and upload sexually obvious contents. Pornography is understood as pieces of media which meet at least two of: a sexually explicit [content] and aimed at/intended for sexually arousing viewers (Rosa, 2019). It was reported that through simple technology of connecting a phone line on a laptop, the internet becomes available on laptops, mobile phones, video game

consoles, and other electronic devices (Owens, Behun, Manning, and Reid, 2012). This suggests that development in internet technology has made access to pornographic activities and appearances through the media more possible and easier. Pornographic acts especially through the internet for many years now have progressively impacted negatively on adolescent development and social activities in unusual and diverse manners (Lofgren-Martenson, and Mansson, 2010; McNair, 2002).

E. Sexual promiscuity

This is simply known as being entangled in sexual activity with many persons. Sexual Promiscuity is defined as any behaviour of sex comprising many casual friends (Okafor and Duru, 2010). Sexual promiscuity can be said to be an act of indulging or having sexual relations with a number of unrelated people (Owan, Ekpe, and Eneje, 2020). It was postulated that sexual promiscuity infers the sexual utilization of self just for the sole reason of making money or any other life benefits (Misi, 2008). Again, it was stated that sexual immorality is now so common in the country that young people measure the greatness of an individual by the number of people she or he has sex with. Therefore, vices like premarital sex, lesbianism, bestiality, and homosexuality are no longer perceived as an immoral act. The state of social media has detrimentally made the subject of illicit sex worse since an individual can without stress meet anonymous person of opposite sex, establish relationships and make invitations through media sites (Ani, 2002). This suggests that social vices that were unacceptable and anemic to traditional moral values and norms are today getting popular in the country. For example, in an interview session organized by a News Agency in Lagos, the reporter, made reference to a court case that happened due to interaction through the Facebook. The complaint reported that he met a friend on Facebook who invited him to his house. Getting to his friend's house, the offender observed that his friend was a homosexual who invited him just to get him involved in homosexual act (Onah and Nche, 2014).

Beside this scenario, social media sites serve as a means of distributing risqué, nude and sexual images, by adolescents which has contributed to the increase in sexual immorality and promiscuity in Nigeria.

G. Victims to ritualists and death

A woman who engages in sex for money is referred to in Proverbs 2:16-22 as a forbidden woman or a prostitute. Anyone who engages in sex for wealth or advancement is shown as a loose and confused person (Uroko, 2022). Social networking connections have special apps like badoo, chat

rooms for flirting and adult-hook ups which adolescents often explore and enjoy. These special sites enjoy heavy patronage from adolescent for unusual interactions involving so many adolescents participating in the chat with unfamiliar people (Paul, 2005). As soon as members sign up, they can talk and share messages, send pictures and videos to people they are not conversant with. This act makes adolescents vulnerable to ritual killers. Handlers may notice and connect others who stay around them with the 'People Nearby' feature or in a separate town using the 'Search' feature. Through this means adolescents continue to make friends with people they know nothing about and consequently expose them more often to ritual killers. According to a study, sex deviant act may lead adolescents to be victim of ritualists (Abdullahi and Umar, 2013). Majority of the discussants in the entire Focused Group Discussion "FGD" agreed that those who involve in pre-marital sex become easy targets for ritual activities. Most individuals who were looking for human parts for ritual purposes give huge amounts of money to greedy and materialistic adolescents, who possibly would end up with missing part or parts of his/her body or even his life. There were recounted cases (as revealed by security documents) involving adolescents and this has been a matter of serious concern to the security division of various tertiary institutions.

E. Cyber Bullying

In the contemporary world, cyberbullying has become popular. This type of bullying makes use of different forms of highly sophisticated scientific inventions. Cyberbullying has become a critical social issue, which severely threatens children and adolescents' social and psychological health (Ogunkuade and Kenku, 2023). 'Cyberbullying' was formulated by Canadian Bill Belsey. It is a practice that adolescents progressively assume when they propose to harm others (National Children's Home, 2002).

Cyber bullying could be executed through mobile phones, email, text, mobile phone cameras, chat rooms, and mobile apps. Cyber bullying comprises sending assaultive texts, on mobile phones, and then circulating the text information to others after which it is finally sent to the real individual for which the text was meant for. It also comprises giving terrifying mails as well as distributing a secret mail of an individual to all other contacts therefore embarrassing and tarnishing the image of original sender of the mail. Others contrive against a student and saturate the student with too many dangerous mails (Snider and Borel, 2004). Some individuals involve in bullying by producing an insulting website set aside just for some group of students, and sending others the web address as well as soliciting their observations.

Summary

Thus far the paper has reviewed effects of social media issues among adolescents, these are indicated as follows: Sexual Harassment, Indecent Dressing, Premarital Sex, pornography, hookup, Sexting, Sexual solicitation, cyber bullying, Sexual Promiscuity and Victims to Ritualists. The paper also emphasized social media site or Social networking tools as Telegram, 2go, Tumblr, Facebook, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, Flickr, Instagram, Baidu Tieba, Pinterest, Gab, Google+, YouTube, Viber, Snapchat, Weibo, Twitter and WeChat.

These social media apps are possibilities of converting communication into conversations between two or more individuals, communities and corporate bodies. It permits those that use it to come in contact with friends, share opinions, pictures, audio-visuals and stay in touch with people.

As a podium for communication, it leaves adolescents with numerous choices to exhibit their instinctive emotional desires beyond the confines of their physical location. Through the exchange of pornographic images, nude, and chats that go with it, the hunger for a sexual activity is activated; and in desperate need to satisfy them, give rise to protected or unprotected sexual intercourse.

Social media as we reviewed above can intensify sexual vulnerabilities among adolescents. Researchers have reported the increase in the occurrence of sexual discussions and demonstrations of sexual act in the media, and relationships between charting, texting, sexting, pinging and other sexual activities including sending sexual messages, videos and photos of one among adolescents Killian and Odeleye(2020). Young children generally could become vulnerable to social media exposure during the stage of development which is the time when sex roles, behaviours and attitudes are yet to form. Children in their developmental season may be at higher for social media exposure because the intellectual ability that should help them to carefully consider information and to make meaningful decisions based on potential future occurrence has not been developed. This implies that little involvement in social media sexual activities will cause them abandon important virtues and messages passed unto them by families, religion, teachers and significant seniors and get lewd by all these sexual content through charting, texting, sexting, pinging, and watching. All these online sexual activities have inadvertently given rise to sexual implications, especially among adolescents in Nigeria.

Conclusion

This paper discussed the effects of social media issues among adolescents in Nigeria, and society at large. The advantages of these social networking sites, which comprised the development of work performance, improvement of friendship, offering means of gaining information and fostering academic researches. However higher focus was given to the sexual concerns of the abuse of these social media sites particularly among adolescents in the country. These included Indecent Dressing, Sexual Harassment, Premarital sex, pornography, hookup, Sexting, Sexual solicitation, cyber bullying, Sexual Promiscuity and Victims to Ritualists. Notwithstanding these sexual effects of the state of social media in the country, one can no longer imagine a world with it. Therefore, all hands must be ready particularly that of parents and adolescents themselves, to reduce the social media-induced sexual degeneration among adolescents that is currently been witnessed in the country.

Recommendations

To actually control or curb the sexual consequences of social media phenomenon among adolescents in Nigeria, the following recommendations were made:

1. The Ministry of Education must, as a matter of urgency, add social media education to their curriculum for both primary and secondary schools.
2. Head teachers and principal of various schools to organize lectures, rallies, seminars and film shows to their pupils and student on sexual consequences of social media use.
3. Also parent and guardian through this avenue should be educated on the use of “V chip” and screening software to reduce inappropriate access, and help their children to critique what they see in the media.
4. Parents should guide against social media obsession among their children, by ensuring that they are not allowed much time to surf the internet or their phones especially at home. This can be done by engaging the children in religious activities, domestic work and other positive activities capable of making them not to have access to their phone or computer all the time.
5. Adolescent should be guided on the use of traditional media like the television, radio broadcast as well as newspapers. These traditional media, through their routine activities can discourage the use of their phone or computers to access the entire aforementioned social network site that are capable of ruining them. This can be done through the adolescent’s parent and guardian, and through the organization of a discourse on the phenomenon of social media, or through advertisements and publication of write-ups of this nature

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