SOCIAL NETWORKING PLATFORMS AND SITES AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ONDO WEST LOCAL GOVERNMENT, ONDO STATE.

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ABSTRACT.

The study investigated social networking platforms and sites among senior secondary school students: strategies for safeguarding patronage. A descriptive survey was used for the study. The population consisted of all undergraduates' students and all households in Ondo West local government. Three hundred and ninety-nine (399) undergraduates and two hundred and fifty-five (255) parents were randomly selected as respondents. A self-developed structured and validated questionnaire was used for data collection. Data were analyzed using mean. Among others, findings revealed Facebook (4.00), Google (4.00), WhatsApp (4.00), you-tube (3.97) and *Instagram (3.89) were social networking platforms and sites patronized among senior secondary* school students. They used platforms and sites positively for educational aid e.g. in writing assignments (4.00), communicating with friends and family (4.00), access health and safety information (3.42), academic competition (3.45) and acquisition of vocational and technical skills (3.06). However, the negative effects of unguarded use of the platforms and sites include; internet addiction (3.88), sexting i.e. online sexual solicitation (3.16), distraction from academic activities like reading (3.14), falling victim to internet scam (3.38) and sharing excessive information about self and family (3.56). If at all Facebook will be allowed for them, be their friend and friend to their friends (3.22), if at all twitter and Instagram will be allowed for them, be their followers so as to checkmate what they do (3.63); the time they can spend online should not only be limited but also within a specific period (3.46) and going online to watch video should be prohibited at this stage (3.66) are possible ways to safeguard their use of the platforms and sites. Therefore, parents should be involved in what their adolescent children do online and give them specific time frame to go online.

Keywords: Social networking; Adolescents; Parents; Academics; Internet and Sites

INTRODUCTION

Social networking as the name implies, means socializing/connecting with people both already known (family and friends) or new ones. This interconnection is however done through some medium called sites using "App". The connection can be done by sharing events, information, interest and perhaps, or just get more acquainted irrespective of whether he is already known persons or new ones. According to Umar and Idris (2018), social media refers to the means of interaction among individuals young and old where they create, share, exchange, and comment

within themselves using different networks at their disposal. Kenton (2022), opined that, the term social networking refers to the use of internet-based social media sites to stay connected with friends, family, colleagues, or customers.

There are various Apps that has been designed for social networking and site patronage, among which are WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and TikTok. People, however, patronized each of these Apps based on how they enjoyed its usage. According to Subrahmanyam and Greenfield (2015), social media may include social networking sites such as Facebook; photo/video sharing sites like Pinterest, Instagram and YouTube; blogging sites including Tumblr; interactive video gaming sites such as World of Warcraft or Teen Second Life; instant messaging; chat rooms; bulletin boards; discussion forums; and email. Kenton (2022), is of the view that, social networking can have a social purpose, a business purpose, or both, through sites like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest.

Access to social networking and sites is available for all in Ondo West Local Government, in as much as one has any of the media (android phone, laptop etc.) or means (internet access). This is to say, social networking and site is available for everybody, irrespective of the status. The "available for all" nature of social networking and sites makes it possible for any senior secondary school (SSS) students who has computer and internet access to also be able to use. Wordu, Dan-Jumbo and Mina (2021) observed that many secondary school students now own devices with internet accesses (such as iPads, Smartphones and Video game consoles) which enable them to go online from anywhere and at any time. According to Ali and Aliyu (2015), today's children are the first generation defined by computers, mobile device and the internet, they are called 'digital natives' while their parents, older siblings'; teachers and relatives are called 'digital migrants'

As Senior Secondary School (SSS) students, amidst other people, connect using social networking and sites, the relationship or usage can produce both pleasant and unpleasant outcome. Umar and Idris (2018), there are positive aspects of social media use among students, and also there are equally as many negative effects concerning the use of such gadgets. Among the unpleasant outcomes includes but not limited to, the observation of Nyongesa, Kiprop and Chumba (2019) in a research that, students on many occasions were being forced to attend church services while in schools as demanded by schools' administration and sponsors was being attributed to social media influence. So also pleasant outcomes include but not limited to the observation of, Nwanosike, Offor, Nwankwo and Uwaoma (2021), 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 among others. It is less expensive as compared to the normal phone messaging (Ikezam & Eremie, 2021)

As much as there are several benefits from the use of social networking and sites, it has been misused severally by many people where there is no cautioning or self-discipline. Shalini, Das and Murugan (2020) opined that, although social media is extremely appreciated in a few different things in enhancing knowledge and broad area of study, it has a ill effect on psychological well-being. Nyongesa, Kiprop and Chumba (2019) similarly observed in a

research that social media services, particularly social networking sites such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube, have generated vast arrays of weak ties between students. According to Symons, Vanwesenbeeck, Walrave, Ouytsel and Ponnet (2019) although Internet use can provide children and adolescents with unparalleled benefits and opportunities, Internet and social media use can also be associated with certain risks

It is however, important to note that social networking and site are not the exact issue but how they are being used, especially when it comes to children. According to Willard (2015), many problems are associated with social networking sites, but the sites themselves generally are not the problem. Senior Secondary School (SSS) students are children who are supposed to be under tutelage both at home and at school, being adolescents, many of them might want to feel they are old enough to decide for themselves. One cannot also dispute the fact that we are in computer age, but it is important for all parents and guardians to always checkmate any trace of excess they immediately notice on how any children, especially SSS students because of the age stage, in their care patronize any social networking and site. Ali and Aliyu (2015), the prevalence and excessive use of Social Networking Sites (SNS) among senior secondary school students is on the high rise and which calls for concerns by many because of its implications and effect. Orisa and Usoroh (2017) conclude in a research that, day to day engagement of youth in social networking has become part of their life and this can lead to some side effects on the family, so its usage must be controlled.

Rationale

Characters and attitudes are influenced or acquired based on what individual comes across from time to time. It is a reality to say that, not only has the use of social media come to stay but it is also playing a very significant role in the manner and ways many of our youths are living their life. To say that, many of the adolescents, especially at SSS level know far more than their parents in term of social networking and available sites on the internet is never an exaggeration. Advancing in knowledge is never a problem anyway, but some of these sites can build as well as be hazardous to the adolescents' moral. Apart from this, there are cases of internet fraud or "yahoo yahoo" businesses all over the place, some persons are networking for the sole purpose of getting who they can prey on. In addition, level of commitment of students to their academic work is drastically falling because; they are committing more of their time and energy to social networking and sites use.

It is true that according to Ntibi and Ibok (2020), students are living in a technological age, that is, a period where information and communication technology is the basic tool for academic progress and daily life. Likewise, if the right attitude on social networking and use of social site are not imbibe in children at the basic stage of adolescence, while they are still with their parents, when they get to tertiary institution, which is the period they are almost at liberty to use their time as it pleases them, it is going to tell not only on their academic, but on their career as well as their personality, hence the research.

Objective of the Study

The study investigated social networking platforms and sites among secondary school students in Ondo West Local Government, Ondo State. Specifically, the study has;

- i. identified forms of social networking platforms and sites commonly patronized by senior secondary school students in Ondo West Local Government.
- ii. examined the positive use of social networking platforms and sites among senior secondary school student in Ondo West Local Government.
- iii. identified the negative effect of unguarded patronage of social networking platforms and sites by senior secondary school students in Ondo West Local Government.
- iv. suggested ways to safeguard the use of social networking platforms and sites for senior secondary school students in Ondo West Local Government.

Research Questions

- i. What are the forms of social networking platforms and sites commonly patronized by SSS students in Ondo West Local Government?
- ii. What are the positive use of social networking platforms and sites among SSS students in Ondo West Local Government?
- iii. What are the negative effect of unguarded patronage of social networking platforms and sites by SSS students in Ondo West Local Government?
- iv. What are the ways to safeguard the use of social networking platforms and sites for SSS students in Ondo West Local Government?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design: The design of the study was a descriptive survey design. The design was adopted because it makes no attempt to manipulate variables and it is concerned with describing the behaviour of a subject without influencing it in any way. According to McCombes (2019), descriptive research aims to accurately and systematically describe a population, situation or phenomenon.

Area of the study

The study was carried out in Ondo West Local Government Area of Ondo State. Ondo West Local Government is one of the eighteen (18) Local Government areas in Ondo State. It has an area of 970 km² and population of 283, 672 (National Population Commission, 2006). Most parents in the local government are educated, this therefore led to the majority of children in the local government attending school. Ondo state as a whole is classified as one of the most educationally advanced state in Nigeria because of her crop of educated elite.

Population of the study

The population of the study consisted of all undergraduate students and all parents in Ondo west local government. There are three Tertiary Institution in Ondo West local government, these are: Adeyemi College of Education, Westley University of Science and Technology and University of Medical Sciences. The study examined the internet experience of all undergraduates in these three tertiary institutions while in senior secondary school (SSS), so as to make the parents understand what steps to take to safeguard the current SSS students in the local government on the use of social networking platforms and sites.

Sample and Sampling Technique

Simple random sampling technique was used to select respondents that were used for the study. Three hundred and ninety-nine (399) undergraduates and two hundred and fifty-five parents were randomly selected from the total population.

Instrument for Data Collection

A structured questionnaire was used to carry out the study based on the research questions. The response categories for all the sections of the questionnaire were; Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree. The instrument was face validated by three experts, one from the department of computer science and the other two from the department of Home Economics, all in Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach's Alpha procedure as it dealt with multiple scored items; it yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.91.

Data Collection Technique

Three hundred and ninety nine (399) copies of the questionnaire were produced and administered to the first category of the respondents (students), all were returned giving 100% return rate. While 255 copies were produced and administered to the second category of the respondents (parents) all were also returned, giving 100% return rate. Explanation on how to fill the questionnaire was provided to both categories of the respondents. All the copies of the questionnaire were correctly filled and used for the analysis.

Data Analysis Technique

The responses to the questionnaire items were collated and was analyzed using Mean (x). The mean of the questionnaire items was interpreted based on the statistical real limits of the numbers as follows. Strongly Agreed (SA) =4, Agreed (A)=3, Disagreed (D)=2, Strongly Disagreed (SD) =1. A cut-off point (COP) was used to determine accepted or rejected items. The cut-off point was obtained by adding all the items. The formula for attaining the cut-off point is totaling the nominal values divided by the number of nominal values.

That is
$$COP = 4 + 3 + 2 + 1 = 10 = 2.50$$

Decision rule: Any mean of 2.50 and above was considered as agreed while any mean below 2.50 was considered as disagreed.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Research Question 1: What are the forms of social networking platforms and sites patronized by SSS students in Ondo West Local Government?

Table I: Mean responses of the respondents on the forms of social networking platforms and sites patronized by SSS students in Ondo West local Government.

S/N	All SSS students do patronize the following		N =399	C = 2.50
	social networking platforms and sites	X	Decision	
1	Facebook	4.00	Agreed	
2	WhatsApp	4.00	Agreed	
3	BBM and Pinging	3.35	Agreed	
4	Twitter	3.24	Agreed	
5	Instagram	3.89	Agreed	
6	Google	3.07	Agreed	
7	MySpace	2.70	Agreed	
8	Messenger	2.83	Agreed	
9	2go	3.60	Agreed	
10	Viper	3.13	Agreed	
11	Tik Tok	3.77	Agreed	
12	You tube	3.97	Agreed	

KEY: N = Total number of the undergraduates, C = cut off point, X = mean responses of the undergraduates.

Table I revealed that the mean responses of all the items ranges from 2.70 to 4.00. This indicates that the respondents agreed with all the items as part of the various forms of social networking platforms and sites patronized by SSS students in Ondo west local government because their means were above the cut-off point of 2.50.

Research Question 2: What are the positive use of social networking platforms and sites by SSS students in Ondo West Local Government?

Table II: Mean responses of the respondents on the positive use of social networking platforms and sites by SSS students in Ondo West Local Government.

			N=399 C = 2.50
S/N	Positive use of social networking and sites by SSS students	\overline{X}	Decision
1	Educational aid e.g. in writing assignments	4.00	Agreed
2	Communicating with friends and families	4.00	Agreed
3	Access health and safety information	3.42	Agreed
4	Academic competition.	3.45	Agreed
5	News updates	2.92	Agreed
6	Acquisition of skills	3.32	Agreed

KEY: N= total number of the undergraduates, C= cut off point, $\overline{x}=$ mean responses of the undergraduates.

Table II revealed that the mean responses of all the items ranges from 2.92 to 4.00. This indicates that the respondents agreed with all the items as the positive uses of social networking platforms and sites by SSS students in Ondo West Local Government because their means were above the cut-off point of 2.50.

Research Question 3: What are the negative effects of unguarded patronage of social networking platforms and sites by SSS students in Ondo West Local Government?

Table III: Mean and Standard Deviation of responses of the respondents on the negative effects of unguarded patronage of social networking platforms and site by SSS students in Ondo west Local Government.

		N= 399	C = 2.50
S/N	Negative effects of unguarded patronage of social networking platforms and sites by SSS students	\overline{X}	Decision
1	Internet addiction	3.88	Agreed
2	Sexting i.e. online sexual solicitation	3.16	Agreed
3	Distraction from academic activities like reading	3.14	Agreed
4	Exposure to online risk.	3.38	Agreed

5	Less bonding with physically present people, e.g. family and friends	3.33	Agreed
6	Health issue resulting from reduced physical activities or too much screen use		C
		3.06	Agreed
7	Early exposure to unhealthy adult life style e.g. unhealthy	3.57	Agreed
	dressing style, drug use etc.	3.12	Agreed
8	Sharing excessive information about self and family	3.56	Agreed

KEY: N= total number of the undergraduates, C= cut off point, $\overline{x}=$ mean responses of the undergraduates.

Table III revealed that the mean responses of all the items ranges from 3.06 to 3.88. This indicates that the respondents agreed with all the items as the negative effects of unguarded use of social networking platforms and sites among SSS in Ondo West local government because their means were above the cut-off point of 2.50.

Research Question 4: What are the ways to safeguard the use of social networking platforms and sites for SSS students in Ondo West Local Government?

Table IV: Mean responses of the parents on ways to safeguard the use of social networking platforms and sites for SSS students in Ondo West Local Government.

S/N	Possible ways to safeguard the use of social	N=255,	C = 2.50 Decision
1	networking platform and site for SSS students If at all FB will be allowed for them, be their friend and friend to their friends.	3.22	Agreed
2	If at all twitter and Instagram will be allowed for them, be their follower so as to checkmate what they do	3.63	Agreed
3	The time they can spend online should not only be limited, but also be within a specific period.	3.46	Agreed
4	Going online to watch video should be prohibited at this stage	3.66	Agreed
5	Restrict the number of App they can have, probably only the ones for communicating with family members and for academics	3 55	A greed
	and for academics	3.55	Agreed

KEY: N = Total number of parents, C = cut off point, X = mean response of the parents

Table IV revealed that the mean responses of all the items ranges from 3.22 to 3.66. This indicates that the respondents agreed with all the items as the possible ways to safeguard the use of social networking platforms and sites SSS students in Ondo west local government because their means were above the cut-off point of 2.50.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Senior secondary school students in Ondo West local government do patronize all the following social networking platforms and sites: Facebook, WhatsApp, BBM and pinging, twitter, Instagram, google, Myspace, messenger, 2go, viper, Tik-Tok and you-tube. However, the most patronized are Facebook (4.00) and WhatsApp (4.00), followed by You tube (3.97). Oberiri and Greg (2017) observed that most utilized social networking site was Facebook; Umar and Idris (2018), social media networking sites like WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube are more and commonly in use by students across Nigeria. Ali and Aliyu (2015), Facebook, Youtube, Linkedin and Myspace are the most visited sites by senior secondary school students in Abuja; Asare-Donkoh (2018), in a research in Ghana, Facebook Messenger, Tango, Viber and WhatsApp are prime social media platforms among high school students. All these are confirmation that SSS across the globe are patronizing social networking platform and sites.

Among the positive purposes for which SSS students patronize social networking platform and sites in Ondo West local government are for: Educational aids e.g. in writing assignment; communicating with friends and families; access health and safety information; academic competition; news updates and acquisition of skills. These are in line with: Raj, Bhattacherjee and Mukherjee (2018), adolescents and young adults have embraced these sites much more than the older generations, to connect with their peers, share information, reinvent their personality, and showcase their social lives; Umar and Idris (2018), teenagers across Nigeria are with the habit of creating and chatting with associates using the social networking platforms; Wordu, Dan-Jumbo and Mina (2021) social media have become one of the main forms of communication among secondary school students and it now plays an integral role in their lives. According to Nwanosike, Offor, Nwankwo and Uwaoma (2021), social media have provided a new paradigm for communication and helped millions of people interact beyond the confines of geographical proximity. The evolution of internet technology has led to use as the best medium for communication (Ikezam & Eremie, 2021); Umar and Idris (2018), people access all types of information with ease through the use of mobile phones and computers.

When SSS students are allowed to patronize social networking platforms and sites at will, the following are bound to happen: Internet addiction; sexting i.e. online sexual solicitation; distraction from academic activities like reading; exposure to online risk; health issues resulting from reduced physical activities or too much screen use; early exposure to unhealthy adult life style e.g. unhealthy dressing style and drug use and sharing excessive information about self and family. According to Wordu, Dan-Jumbo and mina (2021), the use of social media during adolescence would negatively impact health and development. According to Shalimi, Das and Murugan (2020), frequent online users are prone to media addiction and it is said to be more dangerous than addiction to alcohol and cigarettes. Asare-Donkoh (2018) observed in a research that social media addiction was very predominant in senior high school students in Ghana

According to Nyongesa, Kiprop and Chumba (2019), the subjective nature of social media impairs with students' attitudes towards learning and makes them pessimists who develop negative attitudes toward learning. So also Wordu, Dan-Jumbo and Mina (2021), instead of students reading their books, they spend their time chatting and making friends via the social media and this has negatively influenced their academic performance.

The parents in Ondo west local government agreed that they should be taking the following steps in safeguarding SSS students on the use of social networking platforms and sites: If at all Facebook will be allowed for them, be their friend and friend to their friends; If at all twitter and Instagram will be allowed for them, be their follower so as to checkmate what they do; The time they can spend online should not only be limited, but also be within a specific period; Going online to watch video should be prohibited at this stage; Restrict the number of App they can have, probably only the ones for communicating with family members and for academics; Monitor what Application they have on their phone from time to time. Raj, Bhattacherjee and Mukherjee (2018), conclude in a research that, there is a need to educate students about the ways of using social network sites and the perils associated with it, to help them understand that though very much in trend, they should be used cautiously. Symon et al (2019) setting rules and restrictions regarding the child's behavior on social networking sites (SNSs) has become a popular parental mediation strategy

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings, it is established that senior secondary school students are patronizing many social networking platforms and sites. The research is not however condemning these sites and social networking as it has been discovered that some are useful for the senior secondary school students. It is however, worthy of note that some can also influence them negatively if not guided. As a result, parents and guardians need to be involved on how their adolescents make use of the various available social networking and sites.

Based on the findings and conclusion made, the following recommendations are made

- 1. Parents should connect with their adolescents on the social networking and sites, such as be their followers and friends so as to be conversant with what they are doing on these sites and caution where necessary.
- 2. Parents should be conversant with the trending social networking and sites and most importantly, know what each is all about, this is to enable them know how to guide their children from the ones that are not healthy for their age.
- 3. Parent should always check on their adolescent children's phone to know which Application they download. Anyone that is not required for their academics and communication with family should, perhaps, be deleted.
- 4. Adolescents should not be allowed to be going online to watch videos, especially on their own as this might likely expose them to unhealthy video not appropriate for their age.
- 5. The time they can spend online for whatever reason should be limited and within the time specified by parent/guardian so that they don't get distracted from doing their academic works

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