

The Influence of Social Media Usage On Some Anti-Social Behaviours (Cultism and Bullying) Among Secondary School Students in Eleme Local Government Area of Rivers State, Southern Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: *The study investigated social media usage and antisocial behaviours (cultism and bullying) among secondary school students in Eleme Local Government Area of Rivers State, Southern Nigeria. A sample of 400 students from a population of 5233 was used for the study. Taro Yamen's formula and simple random sampling were used to compose the sample. Three research questions were answered while three corresponding null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. Two instruments titled Anti-social Behaviour Scale (ABS) and Social Media questionnaire (SMQ) were used for data collection. The instruments were validated by experts in Measurement and Evaluation. The reliability of the instruments was estimated using Cronbach alpha reliability method of internal consistency. Data were analyzed using multiple regression, analysis of variance (ANOVA), simple regression and t-test associated with regression. Findings revealed among others that social media usage (Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram independently accounts for 63.5% variation in tendency to cultism activities among secondary school students of Eleme Local Government Area of Rivers State, Southern Nigeria. It was also revealed that social media usage (Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram) accounts for 44.65% variation in tendency towards bullying among these students. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that students should be taught on how to make more constructive and fruitful use of their phones. The implication of the results was highlighted in line with the findings. The study successfully contributed to knowledge as it has established empirically that students can learn the acts of cultism from their use of social media.*

KEY WORDS: media, cultism, bullying, behaviour

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the emergence of social media and information technology has contributed immensely to the growth of the global economy and general way of life of millions of people around the world. Apart from making the acquisition of information and knowledge readily available at the fingertips of many, the phenomenon has equally helped societies move closer to achieving individual and collective aspirations. However, in Nigeria, the social media aided by the presence of cheap smart phones and data, has been the creator of new bizarre trends, especially among adolescents. While like in other climes it has allowed dozens of Nigerians to showcase their innate abilities and make good money in the process, the technology through various networking platforms has equally driven several others into embracing all sorts of controversial trends.

Social media has risen remarkably in recent years to the point where it affects every aspect of our lives positively and negatively (Hennig-Thurau et al, 2010). In fact, one could be the focus of ridicule and derision if he or she does not regularly participate in social networking. With the increasing rate of cell phone usage and the extended options of social media applications, commonly referred to as apps, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, etc. it is rare for an adolescent or young adult not to regularly participate in at least one of these online activities. Research indicates that 92% of teens report going online daily and 56% of online users participate in more than one of five social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, LinkedIn, and Instagram (Greenwood, Perrin, and Duggan, 2016) Social media are applications that enable people to interact with each other and build social networks that increase social capital (Barnes, 2008). This definition implies that social media are a means by which people are able to interact and build inter relationships that benefit all. Social media has also been defined as a group of internet – based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user – generated content (Kaplan and Heinlein, 2010). This implies that social media enable people generate their personal profile, which include personal information such as location, gender, age, activities and interests, beliefs, affiliations and other multimedia content about users' personal and professional lives.

In every society, children are socialized in accordance with its religious, social, and political beliefs. As less developed society begins to modernize, the rate and nature of its anti-social behavior are influenced by its rate of development. All over the world, a lot of behavior that lack consideration for others and cause damage to the society are found among youths. This behaviour could persist into adulthood and have a long term negative consequence not only to the individual or family but to the community at large. Such behaviors vary from society to society. Thus behavior considered anti-social in one community may be considered normal in another. Even what could pass as a mere clash of lifestyles to one person may become a great distress to another.

According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2001), anti-social behavior is defined as harmful or hostile acts to organized society or behavior that deviate sharply from the social norm. It is a repeated violation of socially normative behavior, usually involving aggression, vandalism, rule infraction, defiance of adult authority and violation of the norms and mores of society. One popular definition of social media is that of McCay-Peet and Quan-Haase (2017) who see social media as web-based services that allow individuals, communities and organizations to collaborate, connect, and build community by enabling them to create, co-create, modify, interact, share, and engage with user-generated content that is easily accessible. A major concept in this definition is the fact that social media enhances collaboration which is a necessary tool for successful outcome in any endeavour today.

The role of social media in education, entertainment and information cannot be over-emphasized. Media is a communication channel through which news, entertainment, education, data or promotional messages are disseminated. Media include every broadcasting and narrowcasting medium such as newspapers, magazines, television, radio, bill boards, direct mail, telephones, fax and internet. Media creates awareness to the entire youth thereby enabling them to plan on their development strategies. The media has both negative and positive effect on adolescents' mental and physical health. For example, television has the potential to generate both positive and negative effects on society, especially children and youths. Some research findings proved that excessive television viewing has a deleterious effect on learning and academic performance, encourage irresponsible sexual behavior, violence, murder, rape, kidnapping etc. to mention a few. In the same vein, the television is a powerful teacher, where valuable lessons are taught, for example, racial harmony, co-operation, kindness, arithmetic and alphabets. Furthermore, educational videos can certainly serve as powerful pro – social teaching devices.

In every society, the socialization children experience leaves very lasting impact on them since they are usually based on the society's religious, social and political beliefs. As less developed society begins to modernize, the rate and nature of its antisocial behaviors are influenced by its rate of development. All over the world, a lot of behavior lacking consideration for others and causing damage to the society are found among its children and youths. This behavior could persist into adulthood and leave long term negative consequences not only on the individual or family but to the community at large. However, behavior considered anti-social in one community may be considered normal in another community as this cut across context, cultural, social norms and values of different communities.

A proper understanding of what constitutes anti-social behavior is determined by series of factors that include the context, location, community tolerance and quality of life expectations (Nixon et al 2003). Due to this, what may be regarded as antisocial in one setting may not be seen as such in another. Because of the relativity arising from the subjective nature of the concept of anti-social

behaviour, it is a bit complex defining it. From the approach of Crime and Disorder Act (1998), anti-social behavior refers to acting in a manner that caused or was likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more persons not of the household. This definition is broad and allows for a range of activities to be included within it. This is appropriate given that, people's understanding of anti-social behavior is based on individual perception and can encompass a range of behaviours. It recognizes the need for local definitions to reflect local problems. However, by describing the consequences of the behavior rather than defining the behavior itself the definition lacks specificity and measurability (Armitage, 2002). Anti-social behavior in literature generally relates to serious and dangerous crimes such as serious violence, weapon carrying, and contact with justice services. Other definitions are broader and refer to rule breaking in the widest sense as well as a plethora of non-aggressive and non-criminal behaviours (Sijtsema and Lindenberg, 2018).

The increase in anti-social behaviours during adolescence followed by rapid decrease as individuals develop into adulthood has been named the age crime curve (Blonigen, 2010). Many explanations for this phenomenon have been presented: from biological perspective such as the rise of testosterone levels and neurological maturation; to sociological perspective, such as the increase in the environment's role and the peers' influence on the individual's conduct (Blonigen, 2010). No doubt there is increase in the level of anti-social behaviours of adolescents and the reasons behind the menace cannot be tied to a specific or particular reason. Two forms of these anti-social behaviours which are very prevalent in Nigeria today, and in the area of this study and which are the main subjects of this paper are cultism and bullying.

Cultism is the deadly engagement in ritual practices. Subscribing to this opinion, Ajakaiye (2002) stated that cultism may be viewed as a system of beliefs binding together people of the same interest for the purpose of promoting and defending the common pursuit. The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in Section 318(4), bans a secret society defined as a society or an association not being solely a cultural or religious body that uses secret signs, oaths, rites or symbols:

1. Whose meeting or other activities are held in secret; and
2. Whose members are under oath, obligation or other threat to promote the interest of its members or to aid one another under all circumstances without due regard to merit, fair play or justice, to the detriment of the legitimate expectation of those who are not members.

Most of these teenagers involved in cultism might have learnt about activities of these cultists online through their websites or other social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, etc. Some of these cultists through their cult activities indulge in bullying their fellow students in most cases in a bid to show their superiority over them.

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Bullying according to Baron and Bryne (2005) is a form of low intensity violence which occurs in schools and which may be labelled as a subtype of aggression aimed at proving that the victim is weaker than the aggressor; furthermore, the act of aggression is intentional and takes place at regular intervals over time. Bullying occurs when a person willfully or repeatedly exercises power over another with hostile or malicious intent. A wide range of physical or verbal behaviours of an aggressive or anti-social nature are encompassed by the term bullying. These include insulting, teasing, abusing verbally and physically, threatening, humiliating, harassing and mobbing (Smith and Brain, 2000). Bullying may also assume a less direct form (sometimes known as “psychological bullying”) such as gossiping, spreading rumours and shunning or exclusion (Pellegrini & Long, 2002). These two forms of anti-social behavior which are on the increase seem to be associated with increase in social media usage hence, the need for this study.

Statement of the Problem

There has been an observed increase in the occurrence of violence, crime, lawlessness, cultism, ritualism, drug abuse etc. in Nigeria and Eleme Local Government Area of Rivers State is not an exception as it could be observed by the researchers that most of the crimes are committed by young persons with majority of them being adolescents. Though there may be other factors that may explain this trend, social media is a very important suspect as they are mostly used by these youths to promote their brands. It could be recalled by the researchers that before the advent of mobile phones, some parents were able to control their children at home with the nature of movies being viewed on television, but today social media has brought the world to every person and most students now have mobile phones which they watch all sorts of movies with little or no parental guidance. It could be observed that most of these students could be learning a lot from these social media sites as no one could monitor their usage. It is against this backdrop that the researchers wonder and ponder if these teenagers could be learning most of these anti-social behaviours they perpetrate daily in the society from social media sites. This forms the crux of the problem of this study.

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered in this study:

1. To what extent do social media usage (Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram) independently influence cultism among secondary schools in Eleme Local Government Area of Rivers state?
2. To what extent do social media usage (Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram) jointly influence cultism among secondary school students in Eleme Local Government Area of Rivers state?
3. To what extent do social media usage have tendency to bullying among secondary school students in Eleme Local Government Area of Rivers state.

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant independent influence of social media usage (Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram) on cultism among secondary school students in Eleme Local Government Area of Rivers State.
2. There is no significant joint influence of social media usage (Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram) on cultism among secondary school students in Eleme Local Government Area of Rivers State.
3. Social media does not significantly have tendency to bullying among secondary school students in Eleme Local Government Area of Rivers State.

METHOD

The study investigated social media usage and anti-social behaviours (cultism and bullying) among secondary school students of Eleme Local Government Area of Rivers State, Southern Nigeria. The correlational research design was adopted. A sample of 400 students was used for the study. Three research questions and three corresponding hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. Two instruments titled Anti-social Behaviour Scale (ABS) and Social Media Questionnaire (SMO) were used for data collection. The instruments were validated by experts in Educational psychology and Measurement and Evaluation. The reliability of the instruments was estimated, using Cronbach alpha reliability method of internal consistency. Data were analyzed using multiple regression, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), simple regression and t-test associated with regression.

Research Question 1: To what extent do social media usage (Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram) independently influence cultism among secondary school students in Eleme Local Government Area of Rivers state?

Table 1: Regression analysis of the independent influence of social media usage (Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram) on cultism among secondary school students in Eleme Local Government Area of Rivers state.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.834	.638	.635		.43723

The Table 1. shows that social media usage (Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram) and cultism obtained a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.83$ indicating a high tendency. In answer to the research question, an R Square of 0.638 was obtained and an adjusted R^2 value of 0.635. With adjusted R^2 value of 0.635, it shows that 63.5% (0.635×100) variations in the cultism activities of the students

is predicted by their social media usage (Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram) independently while the remaining 36.5% are beyond its : prediction.

Research Question 2: To what extent do social media usage (Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram) jointly influence cultism among secondary school students in Eleme Local Government Area of Rivers state?

Table 2. Regression analysis of the joint influence of social media usage (Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram) on cultism among secondary school students in Eleme Local Government Area of Rivers state.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
	.783	.613	.610	.36468

The Table 4.2 shows that joint social media usage (Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram) and cultism obtained a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.78$ indicating a high tendency. In answer to the research question, an R Square of 0.613 was obtained and an adjusted R^2 value of 0.610. Based on the adjusted R^2 value of 0.610, it shows that 61.0% (0.610×100) variations in the cultism activities of the students is predicted by their joint social media usage (Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram), while the remaining 39% are beyond its prediction.

Research Question 3: To what extent do social media usage have tendency to bullying among secondary school students in Eleme Local Government Area of Rivers state?

Table 3. Regression analysis of social media usage on tendency to bullying among secondary school students in Eleme Local Government Area of Rivers state.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.684	.451	.446		.62717

The Table 3. shows that social media usage and bullying obtained a correlation coefficient of $r=0.68$ indicating a moderate tendency. In answer to the research question, an R Square of 0.451 was obtained and an adjusted R^2 value of 0.446. Based on the adjusted R^2 value of 0.446, it shows that 44.6% (0.446×100) variations in the students' bullying behaviour is predicted by their social media usage while the remaining 55.4% are beyond its prediction.

Hypotheses Testing

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant influence of social media usage (Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram) independently on cultism among secondary school students in Eleme Local Government Area of Rivers state.

Table 4. Analysis of variance of the influence of social media usage (Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram) independently on cultism among secondary school students in Eleme Local Government Area of Rivers state.

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	1208.647	3			
Regression	402.882				
Residual	269.251	396		592.538	.000
	.680				
Total	1477.897	399			

Table 5. Regression analysis of the influence of social media usage (Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram) independently on cultism among secondary school students in Eleme Local Government Area of Rivers state.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
(Constant)	-.080	.178		-.450	.653	-.430	.270
Facebook	.576	.033	.585	17.523	.000	.511	.640
WhatsApp	.297	.137	.269	2.167	.031	.027	.566
Instagram	.118	.139	.106	.851	.396	-.155	.391

Table 5. above has shown that the correlation has an F ratio of 592.538 that is significant ($p \leq .05$). This implies that social media usage (Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram) independently significantly influence cultism among secondary school students in Eleme Local Government Area of Rivers state. Table 5 shows unstandardized multiple regression of .576 for Facebook, .297 for WhatsApp and .118 for Instagram respectively. The table has also shown that Facebook with value of 17.523 is significant at .000, WhatsApp with t-value of 2.167 is significant at .031, and Instagram with t-value of .851 is significant at .396. Therefore, each of the social media sites has significant influence on cultism among secondary school students in Eleme Local Government Area of Rivers

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant influence of social media usage (Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram) jointly on cultism among secondary school students in Eleme Local Government Area of Rivers state.

Table 6. Analysis of variance of the influence of social media usage (Facebook, WhatsApp Instagram) jointly on cultism among secondary school students in Eleme Local Government Area of Rivers state.

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	1153.328	3	384.443	439.958	.000
Residual	346.032	396	.874		
Total	1499.360	399			

From table 6 above, it could be seen that the correlation has an F ratio of 439.958 that is significant ($p \leq .05$). This implies that social media usage (Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram) jointly influence cultism among secondary school students in Eleme Local Government Area of Rivers state.

Hypothesis 3: Social media usage does not significantly have tendency to bullying among secondary school students in Eleme Local Government Area of Rivers state.

Table 7. t-test analysis of the significant tendency of social media usage on bullying among secondary school students in Eleme Local Government Area of Rivers state.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.493	.155	**	9.627	.000
Bullying	.435	.044	.712	12.350	.000

L Dependent Variable: Social media usage

From table 7 above, it could be seen that $B = 0.435$, with a standard error value of 0.44. The t test value of $t = 12.350$ with a Significance of .000 was obtained. The Sig. of .000 is significant at 0.05 alpha level ($t = 12.350, p > \text{Sig. } .000$) therefore, the null hypothesis which states that social media usage does not significantly have tendency to bullying among secondary school students in Eleme Local Government Area of Rivers state is rejected and the alternative accepted.

DISCUSSION

Findings showed that social media usage (Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram) independently accounts for 63.5% variation in tendency to cultism activities among secondary school students in Eleme Local Government of Rivers State. This indicates that social media could influence students to indulge in cultism. Therefore, secondary school students who do not have access to either of the social media sites are less likely to indulge in cultism.

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This finding was not surprising to the researchers as it could be seen that cult groups or individuals usually post their cult activities online and when these students come across these contents, they might be attracted to it. This finding agreed with that of Olayinka (2014) in which he revealed that social media has a very high influence on cultism by adolescents of Esan west Local Government Area of Edo state. Furthermore, this finding also agreed with that of Okonkwo, Aina, & Onajole (2011), whose study revealed that social media to a high extent influences most adolescents into cultism and other forms of deviant behaviors of juveniles in Enugu State.

Social media usage (Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram) jointly accounts for 61.0% variation in tendency to cultism activities among secondary school students in Eleme Local Government Area of Rivers state. This indicates that the use of social media could lead or influence students into cultism. Therefore, secondary school students who do not have access to all the social media sites have the likelihood of not indulging into cultism. This finding was also envisaged by the researchers as it could be seen that several cultism activities are posted online for the public view and students and students who have access to all these sites are bound to view and probably get attracted to them. This finding agreed with that of Omoyibo (2014), in which he revealed that there is significant influence of social media on the cult activities of youths in Udu.

Finally, social media accounted for 44.6% variation in tendency to bullying among secondary school students in Eleme Local Government Area of Rivers State. This implies that incidences of bullying in secondary schools may not result from the influence of social media. This finding was also not surprising to the researchers as even before the advent of social media sites, bullying had been rampant in secondary schools. This finding is dissimilar to that of Martins, Umeh and Ndubuaka (2003), whose study revealed that students are only moderately influenced by social media with regard to bullying. This dissimilarity in findings may have resulted from differences in study areas or other factors not revealed. However, this finding agreed with that of Olowo and Omotosho (2012) whose study result showed among others that there is a significant relationship between social media and bullying behavior of adolescents.

CONCLUSION

From the findings of the study, it was concluded that social media usage (Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram) significantly influences cultism among secondary school students in Eleme Local Government Area of Rivers State, Southern Nigeria. However, social media does not significantly influence tendency to bullying among the students.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

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1. Well prepared guidance programs should be organized by the counselling units in secondary schools during when the students are taught more profitable and constructive use of social media.
2. Guidance programs should also include the relationship between social media and tendency toward anti-social behaviours such as, bullying and cultism.
3. Students should be taught also the negative consequences of bullying other students and cultism.

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