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Impact of Social Media on Teenagers: Nigerian Experience

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ABSTRACT

The paper investigated impact of social media on teenagers, using Abuja as the study area. Specifically, the study: find out the various social media platforms mostly used by the teenagers in Nigeria; ascertain the means that teenagers use in accessing the social media; ascertain the motivating interests to social media exposure; find out the specific areas of their use of the social media; and find out the impact of the social media on the lifestyles of the teenagers. Structured questionnaires were used to collect data from secondary school teenagers who were between age 13 and 19 years. The data obtained were subjected to descriptive statistics and inferential statistical analysis, and were and presented in tables that contain frequencies and percentages, while the research hypothesis was tested with Chi-square statistic (χ^2). The result of the hypothesis testing revealed that the use of social media has a significant impact on teenagers' lifestyle. ($\alpha=0.05, \chi^2=0.344, p\text{-value}=0.002$). This study viewed the impacts of social media and how the social media influence teenagers in their lifestyle and learning behavior. Even though it creates negative impacts on teenagers, we cannot think of a world without social media today. The paper recommended the use of corrective and preventive measures towards the negative effects and teenagers should be well educated and must have proper awareness regarding such problems of Social media.

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Introduction

Every human being has needs which range from basic to higher. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, man, among his basic needs has the need to belong to a group, love and beloved [1]. This made communication a basic human need and for that reason; man has always found a means of meeting this need either through interpersonal or mass communication. Unlike in the past, the people of the world are today living in a global village because of various breakthroughs in information technology. According to a Canadian Professor of English Marshall McLuhan, "the world is now a global village where the whole world is now compressed into a single electronic chat room".

Katz states that information that used to take many days or weeks to disseminate now takes seconds or minutes. It is now possible for people to make interpersonal communication with others to get desired information as quickly as possible from one part of the country or from other countries through the use of social media without leaving their immediate environment. The growth of technology towards the end of the 20th century propelled by the emergence of the internet, satellite, etc led to what is called Social Media. The term refers to the communication system encompassing the emergence of digital, computerized or networked interactive information channels.

The evolution of Information and Communication Technology

(ICT) has thrown young people and teenagers into the visual space mercilessly. Today's teenagers and youths spend hours surfing the net, engaging themselves in chatting and socializing on different social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, YouTube, Pinterest, Google+, Tumblr and Instagram etc. This has become a prominent part of their lives as they are more concerned with Facebook friends, videos on YouTube, posts, twits and other online communication than they are with face-to-face friends. Singh, state that "today, youths are defining users of social media. Social media made available the platform for youth to build social networks or social relations among people" [2].

Teenagers and youths have become addicted to online interactions; they claimed that social media help them to stay connected with their friends they do not see often, they also claim that social media allow them to make new friends online, find jobs, business opportunities through LinkedIn, self-fulfillment, importance, expectation, fame, health-related issues and social wellbeing. Brady, Holcomb and Smith, Lusk cited in Ali, Igbal and Igbal state that social media provides efficient ways for education; students used social media for E-learning, develop communication skill and raise their learning skills [3].

In spite of what appears to be the positive aspects of social media, studies have also shown that there are a lot of negative aspects of social media particularly on teenagers and youths. It has been discovered that, access to social media by teenagers and youth create a great distraction, affect learning and comprehension of teaching in class, and aid in cheating during examinations. Studies

have also shown that teenagers and youths are affected negatively on social media because of unrestricted information available on the social media. Ali, in a review of related literature cited the works of Berson and Berson which stated that high exposure to the Internet by youth carries with it a risk [2]. He also cited Jacobsen and Forste whose research findings show that two-third population of the students have lower grade in examination because of the use of social media during class hour. Other negative impacts of social media on teenagers and youths include hacking, identity theft, phishing scams, and exposure to pornographic materials.

It is therefore against this background that this study is undertaken to examine the effect of the use of social media among the teenagers in Nigeria with a focus on some selected secondary school students in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja-Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Advancement in technology in this era has reshaped all human activities on earth to include communication. The world has become a global village as postulated by Prof. Marshal McLuhan where the use of computer and internet facilities is indispensable. Social media is among the numerous means which the people interact and communicate online. Today, millions of people are now on social media such as Facebook, 2go, twitter and others, exchanging views, ideas and other related matters with a good number of them being the teenagers.

The rapid adoption of social media by teenagers in different countries of the world including Nigeria has raised some important questions. Why do teenagers flock to these sites? What are they expressing on them? How do these sites fit into their lives, what are they learning from their participation? Are these online friendship activities different or complementary to face-to-face friendship? This study seeks to unravel the impact of the social media exposure on the teenagers in Nigeria, with specific focus on some selected senior secondary schools in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to ascertain the effect of the social media on the Nigerian teenagers and youths. The specific objectives for the realization of the broad objective are itemized as follows:

1. To find out the various social media platforms mostly used by the teenagers in Nigeria.
2. To ascertain the means the teenagers use in accessing the social media,
3. To ascertain the motivating interests to social media exposure.
4. To find out the specific areas of their use of the social media
5. To find out the impact of the social media on the lifestyles of the teenagers.

Research Questions

The following research questions shall guide the focus of the study in order to achieve the set objectives:

1. Do teenagers in Nigeria make use of social media sites?
2. What are their preferred social media platforms?
3. What means do they use in accessing the social media?
4. What are the motivating interests in the use of social media by the teenagers?
5. What are the specific areas of social media usually used by the Nigerian teenagers?
6. How has the use of the social media affected their lifestyles?

Overview of Social Media Definitions and Features

According to Wikipedia, Social media are interactive digitally-mediated technologies that facilitate the creation or sharing/exchange of information, ideas, career interests, and other forms of expression via virtual communities and networks. Social media has emerged as a term frequently used and variously defined as different types of communication platforms and electronic ways of interacting.

According to Bryer and Zavattaro, social media is “the technologies that facilitate social interaction, make possible collaboration, and enable deliberations across stakeholders” [4]. Going by this definition, social media includes such tools as electronic blogs, audio/video tools like YouTube, internet and chat rooms, cellular and computer texting, and social networking sites (SNSs). Rosen in his study in 2011 found out that in terms of daily use of all social media collectively, those born between 1965 and 1979 (Generation X) consumes approximately 13 hours of social media per day; those born between 1980 and 1989 (Net Generation) consumes approximately 19 hours of social media per day; and those born between 1990 and 1999 (iGeneration) consumes approximately 20 hours of social media per day.

Just as the term social media has obtained a fairly broad meaning, the term social networking sites (SNSs) generally refers to internet-based locations that allow individuals and groups to interact. Social networking Sites (SNSs) specifically refer to those internet-based services that promote online social interaction between two or more persons within a bounded system for the purpose of friendship, meeting other persons and/or exchanging information; contains a functionality that lets users create public or semi-public personal profile pages that contain information of their own choice; serves as a mechanism to communicate with other users; and contains mechanisms that allow users to search for other users according to some specific criteria [5]. Sites such as facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, and Tweeter are good examples of Social Network Sites (SNSs) that meet the previously stated criteria.

While challenges to the definition of social media arise due to the broad variety of stand-alone and built-in social-media services currently available, there are some common features:

1. Social media are interactive Internet-based applications.
2. User-generated content—such as text posts or comments, digital photos or videos, and data generated through all online interactions—is the lifeblood of social media.
3. Users create service-specific profiles for the website or app that are designed and maintained by the social-media organization.
4. Social media facilitate the development of online social networks by connecting a user’s profile with those of other individuals or groups.

Users usually access social media services via web-based apps on desktops and laptops, or download services that offer social media functionality to their mobile devices (e.g., smartphones and tablets). As users engage with these electronic services, they create highly interactive platforms through which individuals, communities, and organizations can share, co-create, discuss, participate, and modify user-generated content or self-curated content posted online. Additionally, social media are used to document memories; learn about and explore things; advertise oneself; and form friendships along with the growth of ideas from the creation of blogs, podcasts, videos, and gaming sites.

Some of the most popular social media websites, with over 100 million registered users, include Facebook (and its associated Facebook Messenger), TikTok, WeChat, Instagram, QZone, Weibo, Twitter, Tumblr, BaiduTieba, and LinkedIn. Depending on interpretation, other popular platforms that are sometimes referred to as social media services include YouTube, QQ, Quora, Telegram, WhatsApp, LINE, Snapchat, Pinterest, Viber, Reddit, Discord, VK, Microsoft Teams, and more. Wikis are examples of collaborative content creation.

Social media outlets differ from traditional media (e.g., print magazines and newspapers, and TV and radio broadcasting) in many ways, including quality, reach, frequency, usability, immediacy, and permanence. Additionally, social media outlets operate in a dialogic transmission system (i.e., many sources to many receivers), while traditional media outlets operate under a monologic transmission model (one source to many receivers). For example, a newspaper is delivered to many subscribers and a radio station broadcasts the same programs to an entire city.

History and Development of Social Media

The development of social media started off with simple platforms. GeoCities was one of the earliest social networking services, launched in November 1994, followed by Classmates.com in December 1995 and SixDegrees.com in May 1997. SixDegrees, launched in 1997, is often regarded as the first social media site.

Unlike instant-messaging clients (e.g., ICQ and AOL's AIM) or chat clients (e.g., IRC, iChat, or Chat Television), Six Degrees was the first online business that was created for real people, using their real names. As such, according to CBS News, Six Degrees is "widely considered to be the very first social networking site," as it included "profiles, friends lists and school affiliations" that could be used by registered users.

Thereafter, Open Diary was launched in October 1998; LiveJournal in April 1999; Ryze in October 2001; Friendster in March 2003; the corporate and job-oriented site LinkedIn in May 2003; hi5 in June 2003; MySpace in August 2003; Orkut in January 2004; Facebook in February 2004; YouTube in February 2005; Yahoo! 360° in March 2005; Bebo in July 2005; the text-based service Twitter, in which posts (called tweets) were limited to 140 characters, in July 2006; Tumblr in February 2007; Instagram in July 2010; and Google+ in July 2011.

Research from 2015 shows that the world spent 22% of their online time on social networks, thus suggesting the popularity of social media platforms. It is speculated that the increase in social media's popularity is due to the widespread daily use of smartphones.

Social Media Use and Applications

Social media or social networking websites developed to specifically help people share their views and stay in touch with their friends, relatives, well wishes and other groups in the society. Both the Internet and the social media have become veritable tools in Nigeria. In almost all sector of the economy these new technologies are used.

World Development Indicators 2013 cited in Anyanwu and Agwu state that, "social media users in Nigeria are officially put at 53.5% of the population, in 2012 higher than the national average for 2008 which was projected in 2016 over 80% of those who live in the urban areas in Nigeria use social media".

Both the Internet and social networking sites have played a crucial role in the day-to-day learning environment. Odoh, et al. in their study of the use of social media and the Nigerian academic/learning environment, studied Madonna University, Okija and National Open University, Enugu Campus, sampled 420 students within the age bracket of 20-45 years, found that Nigerian students use more of Facebook and Twitter social media platforms.

Their findings also showed that these social media tools enable Nigerian undergraduates and teachers to freely send direct communication to friends and colleagues around the world for academic and other reasons. The findings also revealed that students have access to social media daily on their desktop computer, laptop, e-readers, tablets, and cell phones to actively engage in social networking, text messaging, blogging, and content sharing. Odoh and Ajah in their study entitled, "bridging rural-urban information gap for development: the social media imperative" used a survey research method to study undergraduates and secondary school teachers in Igbo-Etiti Local Government Area of Enugu State, a rural setting.

The age bracket of the respondent was 17-30 for students and 25-45 for teachers, the study population stood at 9700 and a sample size of 400 was drawn using Taro Yamani. The findings showed that the rural Igbo-Etiti have access to telecommunication services as well as the use of social media. The findings also confirmed that often times the telecommunication networks are epileptic. The findings also confirmed that, the rural dwellers in Igbo-Etiti use social media to support their development and amongst the preferred are Twitter and Facebook.

As it is observed the use of Social networking sites have equally become very popular during the past few years. According to Downes, social networks are the conjunction of personal ties which are combined by a set of relations. Daily thoughts can be expressed and discussions can take place about these thoughts and new ideas come up with on these sites. Photographs and videos can be shared, tagged and updated in addition to personal details, job search and other real world activities can be experienced within the virtual environment of a social network.

According to Boyd, the first social networking site –SixDegrees.com was launched in 1997, which allows its users to create profiles, list their friends and surf the friends' lists [6]. From 1997 to 2010, there are 1.5bn users of social networking sites. Facebook tops the list with over 901 million users. Majority of users of these sites fall within 16–44 age brackets. At first, face book was solely for college and high school students but Mark opened it to everyone and like MySpace, it encourages all types of member postings.

Theoretical Framework

This study relies on the Uses and Gratification Theory. The theory's main idea is that people are more likely to subscribe to information that offers them the highest level of utility and benefits; while information that may not hold adequate and tangible benefits to a certain audience may not be entertained by them.

According to McQuail and Nwafor uses and gratification is an idea that media use depends on the perceived satisfactions, needs, wishes, or motives of the prospective audience member, which are derived from psychological instincts (needs) such as information, relaxation, companionship, diversion and escape. Furthermore, Ndolo states that uses and gratification has "social and psychological origins of needs which generate expectations of the mass media or sources which lead to differential patterns

of media exposure or engagement in other activities resulting in needs gratifications”.

However, the adult needs satisfied by the media according to Ndolo include surveillance, excitement, guidance, relaxation, tension reduction, social integration, entertainment, escape, self and personal identity, social contact, and information acquisition.

Hence, as regards the study of the use of social media by the teenagers, the theory offers useful explanations on the underlying motivation for their excessive interests and exposure to social media. It is observed that Social media has become a very important part of life for many young generations in today's world. Hence, the theory maintains that social media has the potentials of addressing the various needs of the target teenage audiences.

For instance teenagers claim that social media help them to stay connected with their friends they do not see often; they also claim that social media allow them to make new friends online, find jobs, business opportunities through LinkedIn, self-fulfillment, importance, expectation, fame, health-related issues and social wellbeing.

Methodology

Study Population and Sampling Method

The study population comprised students from the three (3) selected Government Secondary Schools in the Federal capital territory, Abuja. The schools have an estimated population of 1,850 students based on the information from the FCT Education Secretariat. The Selected Schools were: Government Secondary school Gwarinpa (560 students); Tudun Wada Secondary School Zone 4, Wuse (640 students); and Model Secondary School, Maitama (650 students).

Quota sampling method was used to obtain the sample size for the study; this method allows the researcher to study a reasonable portion of the population, hence, the researcher studied 10 % of the population, giving a sample size of 185 students. This implies that 185 respondents were drawn from the three Government Secondary Schools randomly selected.

Method of Data Collection

The study made use of both secondary and primary sources of data collection. The secondary sources included information gathered from text books, publications, reports and online sources. Primary source of data collection involved the use of questionnaire to gather responses from students from the selected schools. The researcher made use of three student assistants to help in distributing and retrieving the questionnaire. The questionnaire contained questions which focus on the research questions raised in order to meet the objectives of the study.

Method of Data Analysis

The study made use of both qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis. While the qualitative method focus on detailed discussion of the issues and views of the respondents, the quantitative methods involved the use of tables, frequency and percentages computation. These methods made it easy to indices changes in responses from the various questions put forward.

The findings so realized enabled the researcher to make in-depth analysis and draw relevant conclusion.

Data Presentation and Discussion of Findings

Data Presentation

Table 1: Age Brackets of Respondents

Age Brackets	Number	Percentage
11 – 15 Years	55	29.7
16 – 20 Years	87	47.0
21 and Years Above	43	23.2
Total	185	100 %

Table-1: Above shows the age distribution of the respondents. It indicates that age bracket 11-15 years were 55 representing 29.7% of the respondents; while age bracket 16-20 years were 87 representing 47.0% of the respondents; and then age bracket 21 years and above were 43 representing 23.2% of the respondents. It thus shows that majority of the respondents fall within the ages of 16-20 years.

Table 2: Awareness of the Existence of Social Media

Responses	Number	Percentage
Strongly Aware	96	51.8
Aware	61	32.9
Not Aware	28	15.1
Total	185	100%

Table-2: Shows the responses regarding awareness about the existence of social media among the respondents. Consequently 96 of them representing 51% said they are strongly aware, 61 representing 32.9% said they are aware; and 28 representing 15.1% said they are not aware. This table shows that most of the teenagers surveyed have adequate awareness about the existence of social media.

Table 3: Have you ever made use of Social Media?

Responses	Number	Percentage
Yes	148	80
Never	37	20
Total	185	100%

Table-3: Indicates responses on whether they have ever made use of social media. It shows that 148 representing 80% of them answered 'Yes' that they have made use of social media; and 37 of them representing 20% said 'No' that they have not made use of social media. It is clear from the table that most of the teenagers are active users of social media.

Table 4: Which is your Preferred Social Media Platforms?

Responses	Number	Percentage
Facebook	71	38.3
Instagram	46	24.9
WhatsApp	56	30.2
Twitter	12	6.5
Total	185	100%

Table 4 shows the social media platform most preferred by the respondents. It indicates that 71 of them representing 38.3 % pick Facebook as their most preferred social media; 46 of them representing 24% go far Instagram as their preferred social media; 56 of the teenagers representing 30% pick WhatsApp; while 12 of

them representing 6.5 % indicate twitter as being their preferred social media. The table indicates that most of the respondents are conversant with several social media platforms; however Facebook and WhatsApp are very popular with most of them.

Table 5: What means do you use in Accessing the Social Media?

Responses	Number	Percentage
Personal Laptop	54	29.2
Mobile Phones	93	50.3
Cafe	38	20.5
Total	185	100%

Table-5: Identifies the means whereby the teenagers access the social media. It shows that 54 of them representing 29.2% indicate personal laptop as the means of accessing the social media; 93 of them representing 50.3% indicate mobile phones as their means of accessing the social media; and then 38 of them representing 20% indicate Café as their avenue of using social media. The results indicate that mobile phones are the most means used by the respondents in accessing the social media.

Table 6: What Motivates your Interests in the use of Social Media?

Responses	Number	Percentage
News	33	17.9
Friendship	94	50.8
Business	40	21.6
Politics	18	19.2
Total	185	100%

Table-6: Shows what motivates the teenagers' interests in the use of social media. Hence, it shows that 33 of them representing 17.9% say the quest for News is their interest in the use of social media; 94 of them representing 50.8 % indicate desire for friendship as the motivating factor; 40 of them representing 21.6% and 18 of them representing 19.2% indicate business and politics as their motivating factors respectively.

Table 7: What Specific Areas of Social Media do you Usually Spend More Time on?

Responses	Number	Percentage
News	32	17.3
Video/Photograph	65	35.1
Academic Research	45	24.3
Games	43	23.3
Total	185	100%

Table-7 shows the various areas of the social media that the respondents spend time on mostly. Consequently, 32 of them representing 17.3% say they spend most time on News; 65 of them representing 35.1% say they spend time watching video and photography; 45 of them representing 24.3% claim they spend time on academic research; and 43 of them representing 23.3 claim they spend most of their social media time on games. The table indicates that majority of them spend time on videos and some academic work.

Table 8: Would you say that the use of social media has assisted you in your studies?

Responses	Number	Percentage
Yes	136	73.5
No	29	15.7
Indifferent	20	10.8
Total	185	100%

Table 8 shows the responses on whether the use of social media has assisted them in their studies. Hence, 136 of them representing 73.5 % say "Yes" that social media have assisted them in their studies; 29 of them representing 15.7% say "No" that social media have not assisted them in their studies; while 20 of them representing 10.8% were indifferent to the question. The result however indicates that most of them claim social media have been of assistance to their studies.

Table 9: How would you describe the impact of social media on your life?

Responses	Number	Percentage
Positive	96	51.9
Negative	51	27.6
Indifferent	38	20.5
Total	185	100%

Table 9 shows whether social media have had positive or negative impact on the lifestyles of the respondents. Hence, 96 of them representing 51% claim the impact has been positive; 51 of them representing 27.6% claim the impact has been negative; and then 38 of them representing 20% were indifferent to the question.

Discussion of Findings

From the study it has been seen that teenagers and youths in Nigeria secondary schools are aware of the existence of the social media; they have access to social media through personal laptops, mobile phones, while some make use of café to connect to the internet. The study reveals the various social media platforms that teenagers usually make use of such as Face book, Instagram, WhatsApp and Twitter. It however indicates that Face book is their most preferred social media channel. This result also agrees with Ahaotu and Amadi, Ngonso and Egielewa studies which attest that youth most preferred social media is the Facebook [7].

The findings also showed that respondents expose themselves to social media information to enhance their lives in different ways such as for news, friendship, business and academic purposes. This finding also agrees with Odoh, et al. who studied the use of social media in Nigerian academic/learning environment, and found out that social media tools enable Nigerian undergraduates and teachers to freely communicate with friends and colleagues around the world not only for social reasons but also for academic purposes.

The study also reveals that the respondents admitted that social media have had positive and negative impact on their lives. Singh, in their study of positive and negative effects of social media on Indian youth also found similar result [2]. Ogonso summarized the positive and the negative impact of the social media on the teenagers [8].

Positive Impact of Social Media Include

- Social media help the teenagers to get connected to their friends when they are not able to see each other always when they want to.
- Social media give them updates about the important things that are going on across the globe currently or maybe in their locality. It is a great benefit to know about everything just by the simple click of your finger.
- The teenagers and the youths have the perfect place to express themselves in such a way in which they won't be allowed to do in public. This is something which makes the youth feel better about themselves especially as some of them have become popular through their social media influence in the society.
- Social media help them in developing social skills and the best part is that a number of friendships can begin from the social website. Youths generally like to make new friends and know about others as much as they can. All of this is possible with the social media platforms.
- One more interesting impact of social media on youth is that it feels fun to interact with peers rather than talking to them face to face.

Negative Impact of Social Media on Youth

- Youths and teenagers of today's generation give so much importance to social media that it has become their priority. They love being in the social media sites and forget about all the things that should come first for them like family, sports and schools.
- In the platforms of social media, we can only see the virtual side of the person. This means we can only see the side which they want to show us. Many people try to portray themselves to others which they are not at all. This means that most teenagers have been lured into crimes and other forms of social vices through the social media, both as victims or perpetrators.
- Young people have this habit of bullying their peers which is ok to some extent. But when it comes to cyberbullying, it affects a lot to the other peer as this can be on the newsfeed of any person and can go viral easily. Sometimes such things can lead to depression as well as suicidal thoughts.
- There are some young people who are very easy to get influenced. They may feel the need to change their appearance physically and compare themselves to every next person they see in the social media.
- There is a very strong temptation in social media. It can become an addiction for the youth and teenagers who feel they cannot do without surfing the net or chatting with their friends.

Conclusion

This study therefore concludes that with the increasing advancement in information and communication technology (ICT) and social media dominating most aspects of our social lives including education and commerce, the role and impact of these technologies have come to stay. The youths and teenagers shall continue to acquire and use these facilities with the attendant consequences. Access to these devices are becoming increasingly available, cheap and simply to use. Hence, as revealed in the study, youths and teenagers are gaining more and more access to use them [9-22].

Recommendations

The study would like to make the following recommendations to ensure proper use of the social media by the teenagers.

- a. Parents and teachers should monitor what teenagers and youth of school age are doing with their mobile phones.
- b. Parents, guidance/teachers should ensure that teenagers and youth exposure to social media is for basically academic purpose.
- c. Awareness programmes relating to social media use should be organized in schools for students.
- d. The harmful effects of over-utilization of social media on academic performance should be explained to them.
- e. The school management should come up with a policy that checks teachers often referring students to the use of social media for class work and assignments.

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