

## RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN UTILISATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND RISKY SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS EKPOMA, EDO STATE, NIGERIA

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### Abstract

The study assessed the correlation between utilisation of social media and risky sexual behaviour among adolescents in public secondary schools in Ekpoma, Edo State, Nigeria. The study employed a descriptive correlational study design and simple random sampling method was used to select 336 adolescents for the study. A self - developed questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. Data collected were analysed in consonant with research objectives. The result was presented using descriptive statistics. Research hypotheses were tested using Chi-square test for association, independent samples t-test, and multiple linear regressions. Findings from the study showed that there was low utilization of social media and more than half (53.9%) of the respondents learned about sex through social media. There was no statistically significant relationship between utilization of social media and risky sexual behaviour. It was therefore recommended that schools should come up with a well-articulated curriculum on sex education.

**Keywords:** Social Media, Risky Sexual Behaviour, Adolescents.

### Introduction

Adolescence is a period of transition that marks the onset of sexual maturity. This can be considered a period of experimentation, adventure and a time of vulnerability (Ofole & Agokei, 2014). They further said that adolescents could be said to possess some characteristics that differentiate them from other developmental stages. Such characteristics include the desire for curiosity, independence, radicalism, zealousness, rebellion, and these may result in indulgence in risky sexual behaviours. Also, at this developmental stage, adolescents' behaviours and thoughts may be influenced by outside factors. Such influences that may have proven to have certain effect on adolescent are peer pressure and social media (O'Keeffe, & Clarke-Pearson, 2011).

Social media is an aspect of the electronic media used to connect socially with peers. This form of media is found often within the adolescents' group. The use of social media can be beneficial to adolescents in different aspects of their lives. The internet offers the adolescents opportunity for social connectivity. It gives them the chance to associate with friends and to enlarge their circle of conversancy, enhance socialization, and stimulate innovativeness (American College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologist, 2016).

Globally, adolescents' access and utilisation of the internet and other applications is on the increase. Report shows that there is an increase from 74% in 2000 to 93% in 2009 among

adolescents in American aged 12-17. Adolescents' frequency of utilisation of the internet and diversification of online activities have unimaginably skyrocketed (Lenhart *et al.*, 2010). Studies from various regions of the country have reported increased sexual activity among adolescents both in-school and out of school.

There is also a progressive reduction in the age of sexual initiation, indulging in practices that are risky such as unprotected sex with multiple sexual partners (Okonta, 2007). The consequences of early and risky sexual activity which may result in unwanted pregnancies are borne by female adolescents (Okpani & Opani, 2008). According to Duru *et al.*, (2010) sexually transmitted infections including Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) affect both male and female adolescents and when not treated appropriately may result in chronic infections of the reproductive tract and this may result in infertility (Aji *et al.*, 2013). Studies have revealed that every year about 16 million middle age adolescents give birth, about 3 million carry out unsafe abortions. (World Health Organisation (WHO), 2008) National Demographic Health Survey, (2008) reports that data from the Federal Ministry of Education (2009) discovered that secondary school students in their study indicated early sexual initiation which was 21% while 40.6% was found to have had sexual intercourse with more than one sexual partner and very few reported using a condom during their last sexual intercourse in the last 12 months. The survey also indicated that 2.9%

adolescents within age 15-19 years were infected with the HIV (Federal Ministry of Health (Nigeria), 2013).

With the escalating rate in mobile phone usage in recent years within the developing countries, adolescents are more exposed than before to explicit sexual contents on the social media and this may have immense consequences on the adolescents' health such as unwanted pregnancy, unsafe abortion, school dropout, sexually transmitted infections and death (Amoo, 2013). Exposure to sexually explicit content on the media by the adolescent can result in practices such as homosexuality, lesbianism, unprotected sex, lack of contraceptive use, multiple sexual partners, cyber bullying, and other cybercrimes, given that pieces of information adolescents are exposed to through the social media are uncensored, which may be due to westernization and urbanization (Olugbenga-Bello *et al.*, 2009).

Reviewed literature revealed that there is a dearth of studies in the area of the relationship between social media utilization, and adolescents' risky sexual behaviour in Nigeria. hence the need to examine the utilisation of social media and its relationship with risky sexual behaviour among adolescents in public secondary schools in Ekpoma, Edo State.

### Objectives of The Study

1. To determine the level of social media utilisation among adolescents in public secondary schools in Ekpoma, Edo State.
2. To examine the relationship between social media utilisation and risky sexual behaviour among adolescents in public secondary schools in Ekpoma, Edo State.

### Materials and Methods

A descriptive correlational research design was utilised for this study. This study was conducted in Ekpoma, the administrative headquarters of Esan West Local Government Area (EWLGA), Edo State. EWLGA lies between latitude  $6^{\circ} 43'$  and  $6^{\circ} 45'$  North of the equator and longitude  $6^{\circ} 6'$  and  $6^{\circ} 8'$  East of the Greenwich Meridian (Aziegbe, 2006). Ekpoma receives immigrants from the entire state, the country and beyond. The high influx of youths and other immigrants has been on the account of the presence of Ambrose Alli University in Ekpoma. Ekpoma

has 9 public secondary schools (Ministry of Education, Ekpoma, 2017).

The study population consist of senior secondary students in the public secondary schools in Ekpoma, Edo state. The total population of the students in SS I to III in the 9 public secondary schools in Ekpoma was 2734. The sample size for the study was determined using Cochran equation (Cochran, 1977). Simple random sampling technique was used to select a sample of 336 participants from each school after proportionately determining the number of participants from each school based on the percentages.

The research instrument used for this study was a questionnaire developed by the researchers. The questionnaire contained 18 items and made up of two parts, I and II. Part I dealt with demographic items and part II contained 3 sections. Part I: This contained the background characteristics of the respondents. Part II: contained 2 sections. Section A: measured variables on the utilisation of social media by the respondents; it is six (6) item close and open-ended questions. Three of the items had two responses, 'Yes' or 'No' measures level of utilisation of the social media while the other 3 open ended questions emphasized the site, frequency and what they viewed when online and Section B: assessed risky sexual behaviour. All the items in sections B had two responses, 'Yes' or 'No'.

To ensure the validity, the instrument was scrutinized by experts in the field of nursing research to ensure the face, content and construct validity. The reliability of the instruments was determined using the split half technique. Forty (40) copies of the instrument were administered to students in a public secondary school, in a neighbouring town which share similar characteristics with the study population. A split half reliability procedure was used and yielded a coefficient of 0.74.

Data collected were cleaned and sorted for errors and completeness. Analysis was done using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.0. Descriptive statistics of frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation presented in tables were used to analyse and present the data. Level of utilization of the social media: A response of 'Yes' was 1 while 'No' was 0 giving a maximum

point of three and a minimum of zero was used to measure the level of utilization. This was classified as no utilisation with a mean score of less than 1.0, low utilisation with a mean score of 1.1-2.0 and high utilisation with a mean score of 2.1-3.0. Risky sexual behaviour: A response of ‘Yes’ was 0 while ‘No’ was 1 given a maximum point of three and a minimum of zero. A mean score of less than 1.0 was ‘No risky sexual behaviour, a mean score of 1.1-2.0 was low risky sexual behaviour, and a mean score of 2.1-3.0 was high risky sexual behaviour

Ethical approval was obtained from the Health Research Ethics Committee, Ambrose Alli University Ekpoma. Permission was obtained from the Ministry of Education in Ekpoma. Permission was also obtained from the principals of the various schools. Consent was obtained from the respondents’ parents and the respondents who were 18 years and above.

**Results**

**Research Question 1:** What is the level of utilisation of social media among adolescents in public secondary schools in Ekpoma, Edo State?

The result in table 1 helped to provide answers to the research question of this study. Many respondents 249 (75.7%) owned a phone. 80 (100.0%) did not own a phone but had access to another person’s phone. Majority 241 (73.3%) of the respondents have access to the internet. Some respondents 193 (59%) visit chat rooms (Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Twitter etc) more often, and 57 (17.3%) of the respondents visit other social media sites not listed in the questionnaire. 132 (40.1%) of the respondents use the internet less than 1 hour per day, and 72 (21.9%) of the respondents use the internet more than 3 hours a day. In responding to what respondents do online, 229 (69.6%) of them reported they chatted, 30 (9.1%) watched movies, while 11 (3.3%) of them said they watch pornography. On how respondents learnt about sex, 83 (40.7%) stated that they learnt about sex through social media, and 56 (27.5%) of the respondents learnt about sex through their parents.

**Table 1: Utilisation of Social Media Among Adolescents in Public Secondary Schools**

Variables	Response	N	%
Do you own a phone that can access the Internet?	No	80	24.3
	Yes	249	75.7
If your answer is NO, do you have access to another person’s phone?	No	0	0.0
	Yes	80	100.0
	No	88	26.7
	Yes	241	73.3
Do you have daily Internet access available with any phone?	Dating sites	35	10.6
	Updating sites	43	13.1
	Chat rooms	193	59.0
	Others	57	17.3
	Almost never	34	10.3
	< 1 hour per day	132	40.1
On average, how frequently do you use the Internet on your mobile phone?	1-2 hours each day	52	15.8
	2-3 hours each day	39	11.9
	> 3 hours each day	72	21.9
	Chatting	229	69.6
What do you do while online?	Watching movie	30	9.1
	Viewing other people’s profile	39	11.9
	Watching pornography	31	9.4

**Research Question 2:** What is the relationship between social media utilisation and risky sexual behaviour among adolescents in public secondary schools in Ekpoma, Edo State?

Table 2 showed that 195 (59%) of the adolescents with a mean score of 1.1 - 2.0 had low level of utilisation of social media, the remaining 134 (41%) with a mean score of 0 - 1.0 did not use social media i.e. no utilisation of social media. This implies that there was low

level of utilisation of social media among the adolescents in public secondary schools in Ekpoma.

**Table 2: Level of Utilisation of Social Media**

Utilisation of social media	Mean score	N	%
No utilization	0 - 1.0	134	40.7
Low Utilisation	1.1 - 2.0	195	59.3
High utilization	2.1 - 3.0	0	0

The result of table 3 above showed that majority 241 (73.3%) of the respondents had never had sex, while 88 (26.87%) of the respondents have had sex. 59 (67.0%) of the respondents used protection, 54 (61.4%) of the respondents did not have multiple sexual partners, the remaining 34 (38.6%) had multiple sexual partners.

**Table 3: Risky Sexual Behaviour of Students**

Risky sexual behaviour	Attributes	N	%
Have you ever had sex?	No	241	73.3
	Yes	88	26.7
If yes, do you use protection (condoms and/contraceptives)?	Yes	59	67.0
	No	29	33.0
Do you have more than one sexual partner?	No	54	61.4
	Yes	34	38.6

Table 4 showed that 12(3.6%) of the respondents with a mean score of 1.1 - 2.0 engaged in risky sexual behaviour i.e. low risky sexual behaviour, while majority 317(96.4%) with a mean score of 0 - 1.0 did not indulge in risky sexual behaviour.

**Table 4: Level of Risky Sexual Behaviour**

Risky sexual behaviour	Mean score	Frequency	Percentage
No risky sexual behaviour	0 - 1.0	317	96.4
Low risky sexual behaviour	1.1-2.0	12	3.6
High risky sexual behaviour	2.1- 3.0	0	0

Table 5 shows that the proportion of those who have no utilisation of social media 6(1.8%) is the same as those who have low utilisation 6(1.8%) and high utilisation had no score. This shows that utilisation of social media is not associated with risky sexual behaviour. This association is also not statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 0.443$ ;  $p = 0.505$ ).

**Table 5: Association Between Social Media Utilisation and Risky Sexual Behaviour**

	Not risky	Risky	$\chi^2$	P
No utilisation	128 (39)	6(1.8)	0.443	0.505
Low Utilisation	189 (57.4)	6(1.8)		
High Utilisation	0	0		

**Discussion of Findings**

This study found that more than half (59%) of the adolescents in the study have low utilisation of social media. The study found that a majority (75.5%) of the adolescents have phones with internet access. This finding of a high proportion of students with mobile phone is indicative of the fact that these adolescents are prone to uncensored sexual contents on the internet, especially when there is no parental control on their devices. This finding is in line with that of Lenhart *et al.*, (2010) in a survey on Social media and mobile Internet use among teens and young adults in America they reported a higher proportion of about 93%. This finding also agrees with that of Selkie, *et al.*, (2011) in their study on adolescents’ views on utilisation of social networking sites. They reported ownership of phones among adolescents to be about 93.1%. The finding of this large number of ownerships is surprising. The possible reason for this finding is probably because the study setting is a rural area and the parents residing here may have children outside the state and the country who may have given them mobile phones to ease communication between them. However, because most of these parents may not know how to operate the phones, the phones end up in the hands of these adolescents. It is also possible that these phones were given to the adolescents to convince them to stay back in the village with their parents.

This study also found that, the most commonly visited site on their devices is chat room (Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Twitter) (59%). This finding agrees with that of Selkie, *et al.*, (2011) in their study on adolescents’ views on utilisation of social networking sites. They found that a higher proportion which is (96.1%) visited Facebook and 41.4% used other social networking sites such as WhatsApp or Instagram among others. This finding from this study is also in line with the findings of Ali & Aliyu, (2015) in their study on the use of social networking among senior secondary schools in Abuja, Nigeria. They found that, majority of the students used social networking in high magnitude especially Facebook. The possible reason for this finding is probably because, Facebook and other social networking sites bring them closer to their peers and offer them the opportunity to make friend request. It also allows them to post their pictures and view people’s profile. More so, the period of adolescence is a characterised by increased curiosity.

This study found about three-quarter (73.3%) of the adolescents reported to have daily internet access available with any phone. It also found that majority of the adolescents spend less than 1 hour per day on the internet. This finding agrees with those of Pfeiffer *et al.*, (2014) and Lenhart, *et al.*, (2010) they reported that adolescents in the study had internet services and they went online daily; 36% went online several times a day. The possible reason for this finding may probably be due to lack of free WIFI services in the environment as compared to the developed world where there is free WIFI services.

Findings from this study revealed that in assessing the adolescents' activities while online shows that, majority of them spend their time chatting on social media sites (69.6%). This finding corroborates the report of Akinfaderin-Agarau, *et al.*, (2012) among six states in Nigeria and reported that the adolescents mainly use their phones to chat on social media sites. This is in contrast with the findings of Asekun-olarinmoye *et al.*, (2014) where majority of the respondents (83.3%) used the internet for school assignment. The possible reason for my findings is probably because adolescents have increased curiosity. They also find the social media as a handy companion. This difference in the finding between this study and that of Asekun-olarinmoye *et al.*, (2014) is probably because the respondents in their study are undergraduates and they are faced with more academic challenges.

The study found that 67.0% of the respondents 26.7% who have had sex, use protection during sexual intercourse. This finding is in line with that of Asekun-Olarinmoye, *et al.*, (2014) who reported that 56.5% that have had sexual exposure, 54.0% always used protection during sexual intercourse. This is in discordant with that reported by Rice *et al.*, (2012) in the study on sexually explicit cell phone messaging associated with risky sexual behaviour who reported a very high proportion (95%) having unprotected sexual intercourse. The difference between the researcher's findings and that of Rice *et al.*, (2012) may be as a result of the level of the cultural norms. In Nigeria, the extended family tie is practiced where everyone is involved in the upbringing of the child. Also, there is restriction of the child's movement. About one third (39.0%) of the respondents of 26.8% who have had sex, have more than one

sexual partner. This finding corroborates the findings of Azuike *et al.*, (2015) who reported that most of the respondents had multiple sexual partners. The study found that there is no significant relationship between utilisation of social media and risky sexual behaviour among adolescents with  $p > 0.05$ . This finding correlates with the findings of Gorkemeli, (2017) in the study on internet and social media which shows no statistically significant relationship between sex and internet usage. It however, disagrees with the findings of Lenhart, *et al.*, (2011) and Rice *et al.*, (2012) which reports that exposure to explicit contents is related to sexual outcomes. Also, it is in contrast with the findings of Oladeji & Anyagunna, (2017) and Adaugo *et al.*, (2015). They established that a significant relationship existed between utilisation of social media and risky sexual behaviours.

#### **Implication for Nursing Practice**

The nurse has a stake in the education of adolescents on the negative influence of social media especially in the area of reproductive health which includes risky sexual behaviour and its consequences. The nurses will assist the adolescents to build their knowledge and understanding of the dangers associated with risky sexual behaviours. Serving as a working tool for school health nurses to educate adolescents on sexuality thus, helping the adolescents to make decisions that will modify their orientation toward media use.

#### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The study reveals low utilisation of social media, and low risky sexual behaviour among the adolescent students. There was no statistically significant relationship between social media utilisation and risky sexual behaviour among adolescents. There is need to educate the adolescents on what to do with their mobile phones and the sites they can visit on the internet. This will help to put a check on what the children are exposed to especially uncensored sources of information about sexuality which might lead to risky sexual behaviours and most times end in unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions, school drop outs and a host of other menace.

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