Parents' awareness and monitoring of teenage children's use of social media in Delta State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study examined parents' awareness of their teenage children use of social media in Delta State, Nigeria. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study using a self-constructed questionnaire as instrument of data collection. The questionnaire was constructed after extensive consultation of related literature in order to ensure that relevant items were included in it. The population of the study comprised of all parents in Delta State, Nigeria but the study adopted a purposive sampling technique to select respondents for the study. Data were collected through the use of a self-constructed questionnaire entitled "Parents' awareness of their teenage children use of the social media (PATCUSM)". The data collected were analysed using frequencies and simple percentages. The study has revealed that all parents' were aware that their teenage children used social media; a majority of them indicated that their teens used their mothers' device to access social media; teenagers use of Facebook attracted the highest responses followed by WhatsApp; a majority of the parents indicated that their teenage children access social media during the day, though most of them were not aware of the length of time their teens spent per visit to social media site; a majority of the respondents were aware that their teens used social media for academic matters and they monitored their teenage children. The study recommended that parents should ensure that they guide the children on fruitful use of social media to enhance their academic achievement and advancement; efforts should be made by parents to regularly monitor and supervise their teens children on social media in order to mitigate their use for antisocial purposes; parents should provide their teenage children with smart phones, but should monitor their use to ensure the teens use them for productive purposes.

Keywords: Parents' awareness, social media, teenage children' social media use, Delta State, Nigeria

Introduction

In the present era, the proliferations of information and communication technologies have made it easy for various categories of people, including teenagers, to have easy access to as well as use social media. Social media is a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Kaplan & Haelein, 2010). According to Willett (2015), the use of social media among teenage children has been on the increase. Kanthawongsa and Kanthawongs (2013) asserted that there is increasing evidence that the amount of time teenage children are spending on social media at home and in school has raised concerns on the impact of these activities on their development. In order for teenagers to use

social media effectively, parents' awareness and guidance is essential. Wang, Bianchi and Raley (2005) asserted that parental awareness of and involvement in their teenage children's internet use is paramount and given the risks, teens derive many benefits and gratifications from social media use.

Social media is an extension of their offline and face-to-face interactions of teenagers and it is a very important aspect of their social and creative lives. Social media is used by them to have fun, connect and maintain friendships, share interests, explore identities and cultivate relationships with family; connect them to online global communities based on shared interests (Raising Children Network (Australia) Limited, 2020). Haythornthwaite (2005) stated that teenage children usually use social media without

guidance or effective control, and this in turn reflects the challenges that have negative effects on their stability. Without protection under law for the consequence of teenage children's online activities, the responsibility of monitoring largely falls on parents (Costello & Ramo, 2017). Henderson(2011) asserted that many parents buy computers and subscribe to get internet access in order to provide their teenage children with educational resources. Similarly, El Khouli (2013) stressed that the necessity of the participation of parents in monitoring of the negative aspects of social media to teenage children is paramount. The participation of parents monitoring their teenage children's activities on social media is vital and parents' in Delta State should not be excluded.

Awareness of teenage children use of the social media by parents is necessary for our society of today. Badr, Alnuaimi, Rashedi, Yang and Temsah (2017) examined school children's use of digital devices, social media and parental knowledge and involvement in Abu Dhabi. Their finding revealed that about 82.2 % of the respondents agreed that their parents were aware of their online social activities, followed by 12% of the respondents who were not sure of the parents awareness of their online social activities while 5.8 % of the respondents said No. Liao, Khoo and Ang (2008) asserted that many parents are not aware of the full extent of their teenage children's online activities; mothers were found to be more aware of their adolescents' social media use than fathers. On the other hand, parents are ambivalent to the social media, as they are aware of the potential risks it carries by exposing users to negative content such as pornography, violence, commercialism, cyber bullying, unsupervised social relations, and privacy and security issues (Ceyhan, 2011).

Johansson and Gotestam (2004) noted that since the launching of Facebook in 2004, social media use has increased,

especially among teenage children and adolescents. Lenhart, Purcell, Smith and Zickuhr (2010) stated that about 73% of American teenagers use social media and this rate is growing consistently over the last years.

In recent times, teenage children spent most of their time on social media. Researchers are now turning their attention to the large number of teenage children who have free access to the social media, and to the long hours they spend on it (Cho & Cheon, 2005; Livingstone & Bober, 2005). According to Lenhart and Madden (2007), about 93% of the teenagers in United States use the social media, more than three-quarters (76%) have internet access at home, and about 63% go online every day. Similarly, Liao et al. (2008) stated that teenage children spend longer hours daily on social media than their parents, which parents are aware of, that they are exposed to some kind of online harassment.

Dorand Weimann-Saks (2013) asserted that the social media affords many opportunities for learning, entertainment; enrichment, and personal growth. Parents seem to be aware of such activities when the teenage child first engages in it. According to Liao et al. (2008), most parents whose teenagers have access to the internet claim that they share and/or support their teenage children on the social media, a claim not embraced by their teenage children. They further observed that most parents do not exercise significant supervision over their children's activity on the Web. Dor and Weimann-Saks (2013) stated that parents should instruct their kids on safe conduct on the internet (e.g., "Don't give personal information to strangers"), and they assume that their children follow their instructions. However, surveys of Lenhart and Madden (2007) revealed that this is rare because teenage children often divulge personal information. In Abu Dhabi, the necessity of participation of families in the monitoring of these

negative aspects of social networking for families is vital (El Khouli, 2013). Generally, parents are concerned about their teenage children's social, cognitive, and psychological development, and worry about possible effects such as increased aggression, antisocial behaviour, addiction problems, poor school performance, low self-esteem, and identity confusion (Cho & Cheon, 2005; Fleming & Rickwood, 2001; Lăzărescu, 2010; Wartella et al., 2002). Teenagers are those who are most likely to be guided by parents on the use of social media (Mesch, 2003). Teenage children seem to be much less concerned and anxious than their parents about possible future risks relating to social media (Livingstone, 2003).

Teenagers tend to feel more comfortable contacting strangers online, while parents are more concerned about the risks that might accompany it (Lim et al., 2003). According to American National School Boards Association (2007), teenagers lack key skills to evaluate properly online content and internet risks. Livingstone and Bober (2005) examined online activities of United Kingdom (UK) children. Their finding revealed that 18% of UK parents feel they lack the ability to help their child use the internet safely, and about 80% of them wish for stricter regulation of online services, and better information and advice for parents. It has been observed by Cho and Cheon (2005) that about 30% of the parents do not discuss the potential dangers of social media with their young ones. However, Dor and Weimann-Saks (2013) asserted that parents lack the necessary skills and knowledge, resulting in what can be interpreted as permissive behaviour. Wilson, Martins, and Marske (2005) examined children and parents' fright reactions to kidnapping stories in the news. Their finding revealed that teenage children's susceptibility to social media influence can vary according to their gender and age, and they conclude with guidelines to help parents enhance the

positive effects of the social media while minimizing the risks associated with certain types of content.

Media plays a great role in shaping the ideas and beliefs of teenagers. Continuous access to and use of media has proven to influence a teenager's social, physical, and mental development. It can influence their mode of entertainment and self-expression, can be a source of inspiration, help to develop social skills, develop social and political awareness, assist to cultivate health habits, develop identity; associated with poor academic performance, sleep deprivation, reduced physical activity, and face-to-face social interaction which impact negatively on their health, etc. (Green & Patwal, 2020). There are several influences attached to the use of social media by teenage children it could be positive or negative and such include; commercialism, sexting, cyberbullying, violence, harassment, entertainment, outing, impersonation, breaking into computers among others. Livingston and Bober (2004) investigated United Kingdom children who go online. Their finding revealed that the discrepancy between the large numbers of children who admit to being exposed to pornography, and a significantly smaller number of parents who are aware of their children's exposure to it. According to Ceyhan (2011), parents are ambivalent to the social media, as they are aware of the potential risks it carries by exposing uses to negative content such as pornography, violence, commercialism, cyber bullying, unsupervised social relations and privacy and security issues. Although, Kim (2007) and Lenhart (2005) opinion that negative effects of social media may impact the adult population as well but teenage children may be more susceptible.

Teenage children are the hope of future generation. It our duties to protect, nurture, guide and develop them to get a better society. In light of the foregoing, this study focused on parents' awareness of their teenage children use of social

media Delta State, Nigeria. There have been several studies that focused on teenage children. However, none has explored parents' awareness and monitoring of their teenage children's use of social media use in Delta State, Nigeria. This study is intended to fill this research gap.

Objectives of the study

The study was intended to explore parents' awareness and monitoring of their teenage children's use of social media in Delta State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study set out to:

1. identify parents' awareness of their teenage children's use of social media;
2. find out parents' awareness of the social media the teenagers use;
3. reveal parents' awareness of the time of the day teenage children use social media;
4. unravel the parents' awareness of the reasons their teenage children's use social media;
5. find out the various ways parents monitor/supervise their teenage children's use of social media; and
6. explore the parents' awareness of the influence of social media on their teenagers.

Methods

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study while a self-

constructed questionnaire was used as instrument data collection. The population of the study consisted of all parents in Delta State, Nigeria. However, purposive sampling technique was used to draw respondents for the study from six out of the twenty five local government areas of the state. This was because of COVID-19 movement restriction in the in 2019. (See Table 1 for the population and sample of the study). The questionnaire was administered face-to-face to parents in Delta State with the support of five research assistants who were trained on how to distribute the questionnaires to the respondents. Out of the 265 copies of the questionnaire distributed, 250 usable copies (94.3 %) were retrieved and used for the study. According to Richardson (2005), a response rate of 60% or more is desirable and adequate for survey research. Therefore, the response rate of 94.3 % was considered very adequate for the study. The data collected were analysed using frequencies and percentages while the results are presented in tables.

Results and discussion

Table 1 reveals that the number of respondents by local governments. Uvwie Local Government Area had the highest number of respondents - 70(28%). This was followed by Warri-South Local Government Area - 46(18.4 %).

Table 1: Number of respondents by Local Government Areas

Local Government Area	Freq.	Percentage
Okpe	44	17.6
Sapele	40	16
Udu	30	12
Ughelli-South	20	8.0
Uvwie	70	28
Warri-South	46	18.4
Total	250	100

Table 2 reveals the occupations of the parents used in this study. Civil servant attracted the highest occupational group

with 110(44%) respondents, followed by traders/ business man/ businesswoman-

89(35.6%). The table clearly reveals that the parents belong to various occupations.

Table 2: Occupations of the respondents

Occupations	Freq.	Percentage
Civil servants	110	44
Traders	89	35.6
Company workers	25	10
Clergy	11	4.4
Technicians	13	5.2
Applicants	2	0.8
Total	250	100

Table 3: Marital status of respondents

Marital status	Freq.	Percentage
Married	220	88
Divorced	30	12

Table 3 shows the demographic information of the parents in Delta State by marital status. The table reveals that a majority of them -220 (88%) -were married followed by 30(12%) who were divorced.

Table 4: Sex of respondents

Sex of respondents	Freq.	Percentage
Male	104	41.6
Female	146	58.4

Table 4 reveals the sex of the respondents. 104(41.6%) are female followed by The table reveals that a majority of them - 146(58.4%) were males.

Table 5: Number of teenage children owned by the respondents

Number of children	Freq.	Percentage
One	57	22.8
Two	94	37.6
Three	49	19.6
Four	35	14
Five	15	6
Total	250	100

Table 5 shows number of teenage children owned by the respondents. A majority of the respondents had two children - 94(37.6%) - followed by those with one child -57(22.8%).

Table 6: Parents' awareness of the use of social media by their teenage children

Awareness	Freq,	Percentage
Yes	250	100%
No	-	-

An item in the questionnaire required the parents to indicate whether or not they were aware of their teens' use of social media. Table 6 reveals that all the

respondents were aware that their teenage children used social media. This implies that they had the experience that

would enable them to respond to the questionnaire designed for the study.

Table 7: Ownership of devices teenage children use to access/use social media

Ownership of device	Freq.	Percentage
Owned by mother	120	48
Owned by brothers/sisters	72	28.8
Owned by father	62	24.8
Owned by my teenage child(ren)	49	19.6
Owned by relatives	41	16.4
Owned by friends/classmates	38	15.2

Table 7 reveals ownership of devices teenage children use to access/use social media. The gadget owned by mothers attracted highest responses of 120(48%) while owned by fathers came third with 62 (24.8%). Teens tend to be closer to and most likely share their problems with their mothers than fathers as revealed in a study by Yu and Baxter (2018). This must have accounted for why the teens in this current study used their mothers' smart phones more than their fathers' to access social media.

A total of 49(19.6%) of the teens used their personal smart phones.

Smartphone ownership has expanded and dramatically increased among teenagers over the past six years (McClellan, 2018). Uzuegbunam (2020) found in his survey that an increasing number of Nigerian teenagers have access to digital technologies, especially mobile phones and the mobile internet; that two-thirds (63.7%) of mostly 14 to 18 year olds in semi-urban and urban settings owned mobile phones of their own, while others had access to a shared smartphone or a simple feature phone through their siblings and friends.

Table 8: Awareness of the social media used by teenage children

Awareness of social media used	Freq.	Percentage
Facebook	120	48
WhatsApp	90	36
Instagram	80	32
YouTube	45	18
Twitter	37	14.8
Snapchat	10	4.0

Table 8 focuses on parents' awareness of the social media used by their teenage children. Facebook attracted the highest responses -120(48%) followed by WhatsApp 90(36%) and Instagram 80(32%). This is in accordance with Johansson and Gotestam(2004) who reported that since the launching of Facebook in 2004, internet use has increased, especially among teenage children and adolescents. The result

reported in Table 8 are at variance with that by Clement (2020) who reported in his study that the most important social network recorded 44 percent of United States teenagers during the fall 2019 survey was Snapchat while fast-growing social video app TikTok was ranked third with 4% of teenagers in the United States stating it to be their favorite, ahead of legacy social network platforms Facebook and Twitter.

Table 9: Time of the day teenage children use social media

Time of the day	Freq.	Percentage
During the day	160	64
At night	55	22
Early morning	35	14

Table 9 shows time of the day spent on social media by their teenage children. During the day attracted the highest responses of 160(64%) followed by 55(22%) while early morning attracted the lowest response rate - 35(14%). It has been

reported by Hutchinson (2018) that parents underrate how much their teens are checking their phones in the morning. That could mean that they do not even know exactly how active their teens are accessing social media.

Table 10: Awareness of duration/length of time teenage children spend per visit to social media sites

Duration/length of time	Freq.	%
I don't know how long	109	43.6
1-2hours	81	32.4
Less than 30 minutes	35	14
2hours and above	25	10

Table 10 reveals awareness of the duration/length of time teenage children spend per visit to social media site. The majority 109(43.6%) do not know the length of time they spent on social media.

This could be due to the fact that teenagers are not with their parents most of the time – parents spend most of their time at work and the teenagers are at school most of the

day time in school. Also, most teenagers do not share the living room with their parents. These factors would therefore make it difficult for the parents to be aware of the length of time their teenage children spend using social media. This finding corroborates the report by Hutchinson (2018) that parents in United States do not even know exactly how active their teens are online.

Table 11: Awareness of the reasons the teenage children use social media

Reasons the teenage children use social media	Freq.	Percentage
Academic purpose	120	48
Interaction with friends	98	39.2
Plan events	73	29.2
To keep in touch with friends	68	27.2
Communicate with class mates	61	24.4
Share photos	58	23.2
Scholarship opportunities	50	20
Career information	48	19.2
Browse current news	38	15.2
Food varieties/nutrition	35	14
Communicate with teachers	25	10
Clothing style/fashion	24	9.6
Hairstyles	13	5.2

Table 11 focuses on reasons teenage children use social media. Though it has been noted that it could be difficult for a parent to understand the reasons his/her teenager uses social media so much (Reach Out Australia, 2020), the parents in this study are aware why their teenage children use it. Academic purposes attracted the highest number of respondents-120(48%). Teenage Students learn in various new

ways using social media (Tartari, 2015). They can obtain information that will enrich what they have been taught in school from social media. It could be seen from the table that a majority of the teenagers use the social media for academic matters. Weimann-Saks (2013) have accordingly noted that social media affords many opportunities for learning, entertainment, enrichment and personal growth.

Table 12: Ways parents monitor/supervise teenage children's use of social media

Ways parents monitor/supervise teens' use of social media	Freq.	Percentage
I monitor my teenager chats	109	43.6
I advise my teenager not to give out personal information on social media	88	35.2
Prohibit/restrict site	64	25.6
I monitor my teenager's social media account by logging into it.	58	23.2
Prescribe the use time/time to use the social media	41	16.4
Recommend social media/platform to use	29	11.6
I monitor the number of friends/contacts my teenager have on social media.	25	10
I regularly watch what my teenager does on social media	23	9.2
I add my teenagers as friend on social media	20	8.0
I teach my teenager how to act properly online	19	7.6
Co-use /use with them	18	7.2

Table 12 reveals ways the parents monitor and supervise their teens' use of social media. Parents are generally the primary gatekeepers and managers of their teens' social media experience. They give advice and influence their teens' understanding of proper and improper digital behavior as well as keep them safe online and offline by employing various control measures (Lenhart, Madden, Smith, Purcell & Zicku

hr, 2011). Monitoring of teenager chat has the highest number of respondents -109 (43.6%). This is to ensure online safety of the child. Advising the teenager not to give out personal information on social media ranked second with 88(35.2%) respondents. This corroborates Dor and Weimann-Saks (2013) advice that parents should instruct their kids on safe conduct on social media.

Table 13: Awareness of influence of social media on teenage children

Awareness of influence of social media on teenage children use of social media	Freq.	Percentage
Assist them to access academic information.	183	73.2
Keep them abreast recent/ current development	102	40.8
Enable teenager to be sociable	66	26.4
Eradicate loneliness	43	17.2
Ease of connections with friends/relatives.	35	14
Cyberbullying	30	12
Exposure to pornography	23	9.2
Poor/low school performance	18	7.2
Addiction to social media	15	6.0
Arouses crises /confusion	13	5.2
Emotional /mental problems	12	4.8
Violence	10	4.0
Divulgence/leakages of personal information	09	3.6

Table 13 focuses on awareness of the influences of social media on teenage children. Parents have been reported to be concerned about the influence of social media on teenage children's healthy habits and pursuits (Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago, 2020). Assist them to access academic information attracted the highest responses - 183(73.2%) followed by to keep them abreast of recent/current development - 102(40.8%) while violence, emotional/mental problems and divulgence/leakage of personal information has the lowest response rate. It could be seen that a majority of the teenagers use social media for academic information. Exposure to pornography attached 23(9.2%). Livingston and Bober (2004) had earlier reported that a large number of teenage children admitted to being exposed to pornography on social media but a smaller number of parents are aware of their teenage children's exposure to it.

Conclusion

The study focused on parental awareness and control of their teenage children's use of social media in Delta State, Nigeria. The study has revealed that all parents' were aware that their teenage children used social media; a majority of them indicated

that their teenagers used their mothers' device to access social media; teenagers use of Facebook attracted the highest responses followed by WhatsApp; a majority of the parents indicated that their teenage children access social media during the day, though most of them were not aware of the length of time their teens spend per visit to social media site; a majority of the respondents were aware that their teens used social media for academic matters and they monitored their.

Based on the findings, the following are recommended:

1. Parents should ensure that they guide the children on fruitful use of social especially to enhance their academic achievement and advancement.
2. Efforts should be made by parents to regularly monitor and supervise their teens on social media in order to mitigate their use for antisocial purposes.
3. The Parent should provide their teenage children with smart phones, but should monitor their use should be to ensure their online safety and productive use.

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