



Social Media Network and the Moral Decadence of the African Child; Consequences and Control.

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Abstract

Social media network is a good innovation as it aids communication, especially when it comes to the transfer of multimedia files from source to destination. However, there are negativisms cropping up on its unchecked use by African Children. This position paper highlights the activities of African children on social media platforms and unveiled disadvantageous contributions of the activities to their moral decadence. It observed that the level of misguide of African parents on their children has culminated into malpractices and immoral inculcations which have eroded expected applausive behaviors and moral development of a typical African child. The study posited that social media networks have been misused by underage people who go online to engage in extra-juvenile activities which have affected their moral vastly above decadence in African Culture. The rising rate of pornography and lesbianism which are immoral activities were pointed out in the study as propellant of social media network. The approach of the study was classifying and relevant research materials were consulted via secondary means of both online and offline qualitative collections which helped to identify a research gap on the use of Social Media by children. The study vehemently unveiled the consequences of not controlling the way underage children access social media network platforms and uncensored materials therein. While trying to close the gap by employing nonfiction qualitative method which allowed for research interactions with 4 parents and 2 teenagers, the study advocated for proper

guidance and total management of the time spent online and the consumption of audio-visual materials on the side of both the African child and parent.

Keywords: *Moral, Children, Underage, Social Media Network, Consequences*

Introduction

The innovations of mobile android devices have contributed highly to the ubiquitous nature of all kinds of hand-held systems in all works of life. Even an underage child is seen wielding a beautiful but cheap-to-procure Android phone through which he/she gets connected to the internet as to watch movies, download songs, read news, gets educational materials or get hooked with friends in the Social Media Network.

Social Media Network is any interactive forum where people are gathered to share multimedia elements or information (texts, audio, animation, video and graphics). The classes of information shared on social media networks can be educative, cultural, social, cognitive, entertaining, economical, morally advantageous or disadvantageous. It can be violently insightful or peacefully attractive. Whichever one; children have gotten uncontrolled, undue and unguided access into the harvest of these aforementioned

classes of information in social media platform. These Social media network ranges from Multi-chat windows like Yahoo messenger, Facebook, Twitter etc to Single-chat windows Whatsapp, Instagram etc.

Surprisingly, a child of less than 15 years old is as free as exposed to all forms of negative information shared on these Social media network platforms.

Information Technology which its advantages can't be overemphasized has become the best friend of man because of the relentless IT innovations in all spheres of life. Therefore, man's difficulties have been ameliorated by the use of hardware and software architectures of Computer and its Artificial Intelligence hence; the friendship status between ICT and Man.

However, Man is trying so hard to make Information Technology his enemy by using its architectures against moral expectations of the society. In other words, Man now uses

ICT gadgets negatively to indulge in hacking, financial frauds, identity theft and juvenile anti-social behaviour. In medieval times in African early Education history, when an African Child comes back from school, he is expected to take his lunch, observe house chores and face his assignments or studies in his quite time. But presently, African Children hardly keep any quite time without getting busy with their devices. An average African teenager picks up his cell phone, puts it on and engages himself with friends in social media platforms at the slightest chance or opportunity even in the school environment. When you go through the contents of those devices, you see anti-academic activities going on between them and their online engagements. This study is therefore targeted at annihilating the cankerworm of misuse of Social Media platforms as to regain the initial moral standard of the African Child.

CONSEQUENCES OF UNCONTROLLED ACCESS OF TEENAGERS TO SOCIAL MEDIA

The negative effects of Social media on African children and adolescents are numerous. Below are some pointed consequences of Social media to unguided teenagers.

BRAIN STRESS:

Social media can affect the brain of teenagers. One who stays often on social media platforms has the tendency of trying to access all kinds of information, since he is steadily online, thereby overstressing his brain. When you are talking to a child who gets so close to his phone, he will be busy typing and not even looking at you or understanding your gestures. Teenagers who use Facebook tend to be more narcissistic, antisocial, and aggressive (Rosen, 2011).

REDUCTION OF WRITTEN-ENGLISH CONSISTENCY:

Children and even adults discuss or chat online with shortcut words. This is seriously eating deep into our grammatical formation, especially to teenagers who are yet to get fully known to the rudiments of written-English. People type the letter “U” instead of “You”. People type “hv” instead of “Have”. Consequently, Children no longer spell some words correctly even when writing in an examination hall. This alone if not curbed or monitored by parents may make the global village a village of Written-English illiterates.

CYBER-BULLYING:

Cyber-bullying is a process of intimidating a person by use of offensive words or hurtful comments on the person in a social media platform. Cyber-bullying can be in form of audio, video, text or picture. However, the visual and pictorial forms are more insightful because they are not only heard or read but seen. For example, a friend who wants to bully you on Facebook can easily pick a person's picture and "photoshop" it to nakedness. On seeing such naked picture of one and not knowing how to defend oneself, one can commit suicide if not counseled. Many forms of cyber-bullying are problems and can lead to the victims experiencing depression and anxiety.

SPENDING HABITS:

On social media platforms, Human Computer Interface experts are paid to design products and packages to entice Social media network users. These products range from costly wrist watches, clothes to jewelries. When a teen sees such good looking designs, he subscribes to buying it without a means of checking if these designs are exact in real life. So they become victims of influence by the powerful advertorials they see on social media sites, which in turn influence their buying habits. They use their credit cards to make purchases of even fake materials on social media sites without knowing it. These young people and their parents need to be aware of how they are targeted so smarter choices can be made around their spending habits (Clark-Pearson, O'Keeffe, 2011).

LOW ACADEMIC GRADE:

When an umpteen time is dedicated to social media, academic time is affected. The high rate of being in the social media platforms of Children goes a long way to affect them in their studies. A student who usually reads from 7pm to 10pm seldom does that because he needs to check his Whatsapp or Facebook friends by 8pm; and when he does that, he refuses to come back to continue his studies even after 10pm because of interesting issues of discuss initialized by his friends online. Because of this, he doesn't concentrate anymore to increase his knowledgebase and he is eventually going to be affected during examination. So, too much of everything is bad especially to children. As with just about everything, social media should be used in moderation. Studies have

shown that adolescents and even college students who are on Facebook too much have lower grades (Rosen, 2011).

ONLINE WORKAHOLISM:

When a teenager is married to his social media platforms, he is too busy even to remember to eat except his online friends are absent. He is ready to stay from morning to night especially on weekends without thinking of any reasonable thing to do. This is bad for an African Child who should be helpful to his parents on house chores and other income activities.

EYES PROBLEM:

One who stays online often is bound to have eyes problems because such person constantly looks on the rays emanating from the screen of his gadget. Worst are people who use two different devices of different kind of illumination and color settings for social media engagements. These people suffer looking on different screen colors at the same time and the aftermath of this is dire to the eyes when they grow older. But when these

EASE-OF-USE OF VULGAR WORDS:

Vulgar words are obscene words, particularly with regard to sex or bodily functions. In social media communication, teenagers have been found using words like “Fuck, sweet, love, sex” etc when chatting with the opposite sex. This is too corrupt to be known, heard of or seen by an African Parent who would not want his son or daughter to get spoilt at such an early stage. It has also been noticed that a boy who can’t tell an opposite sex his immoral mind in real life would easily do so in a social media platform because the hormone “oxytocin” that controls the shyness or boldness that follows a face-to-face interaction is relatively high when communicating in social media platform.

TIME-WASTE:

Teenagers, especially the female gender waste the whole day snapping bulky pictures on good looking pavilions like the one of Government Secondary School, Afikpo, sorting the pictures for the one to be sent online. The worst may not be the time of snapping but the time of editing and “photoshopping” the already snapped pictures as to look good to online visitors. Who wouldn’t want to make herself look cooler if she can? These teenagers prune their online

identities, trying to project an idealized image after wasting time, sorting through hundreds of photos, agonizing over which one is to be made a display-picture. The male are not also left out of these activities of picture editing in order to look better. They waste time competing for attention by trying to out-gross one other, pushing the envelope as much as they can.

RESEARCH METHOD

For the purpose of this research, 4 parents and 2 teenagers were interacted with, on their experience pertaining Homosexuality, Social media behavior, Pornography and Masturbation using nonfiction qualitative method.

HOMOSEXUALITY:

This is an act of being attracted sexually to somebody of the same sex. This act is condemnable in Africa and as such is a taboo to be practiced especially by a teenager of an African blood. Through social media platforms, teenagers have been exposed to meeting homosexuals online who lure them into believing that it is best to practice homosexual acts than the normal.

Mrs Ebere has this to say to the question: **Have you had any homosexual sight or experience as a mother?:**

“Everything came crashing when I returned from the market one Saturday and met my kids outside playing. I did not see my first daughter and when I asked her siblings where he was, I was told that aunty Samiat had called him inside. Without even thinking, I went straight to her room and pushed the door open and met the most horrific sight in my life. There was my housemaid, a 19-year-old girl on top of my 10-year-old daughter in a homosexual act with an Android phone beside them, displaying porn. I must have passed out momentarily after I screamed because, by the time I came to life, I saw my neighbours gathered around me on my sitting room settee. I managed to come out of coma fully and gathered myself together.” (Online Interview, 10th of June, 2019).

Mrs Aisha has this to say to the question: **Have you ever suspected or accosted anyone in homosexual act in your life as a mother?**

“Oh my God! I hate saying this, but I have. My little Cousin brother ones visited my house during a holiday and was molested by my neighbor in the ass. It was an experience any mother prays never to have. This man lured him into his sitting room and gave him fruits and meet to enjoy. As this went on, the man jumped on him and started kissing him. A poor little boy, he started shouting

and luckily I was almost at the door post of my neighbor when I heard his voice. I pushed the door and it opened, being that they forgot to lock the door. Lo and behold my poor little cousin almost raped by his fellow man.” (Online Interview, 14th of June, 2019).

SOCIAL MEDIA BEHAVIOR

Adaobi who is a teenager has this to say to the question: **How have you been influenced by social media?**

“I am 16 and I have a boyfriend who is 17. He always sends me sex pictures through Whatsapp and that made me wet. Consequently, I visited him and that was how I lost my virginity. So it influenced me in a bad way.” (Online Interview, 11th of April, 2019).

Johnson has this to say “I feel free to talk to any lady about sex or whatever in Facebook or Whatsapp. But if I see such a person life, I keep mum. So whatsapp is a place to make feelings real” (Face to Face chat, 12th of September, 2019)

PORNOGRAPHY AND MASTURBATION:

Pornography connotes multimedia elements (films, magazines, writings, photographs), or any other materials that are sexually explicit and intended to cause sexual arousal to man. With such materials in the reach of a teenager, he starts practicing masturbation or looking for the opposite sex to have sex with; thereby facing the risks that come with unprotected sex like abortion which is an abomination to an African man. These materials are easily shared on social media platforms thereby easily at reach of teenagers. Video Chats and the “Selfie” picture syndrome have also contributed a lot to the ease at which erotic and naked videos or images are shared through Social media platforms.

Mrs willie who caught his 10 year old son masturbating has this to say to the question: **Have you ever been in a Masturbation scene as a mother?**

“Yes, On one faithful night, I noticed that the night lamp was switched on. There, in the dim-lit room, I saw him looking on his phone screen and rubbing himself. I could see everything! I was so stunned; I didn’t know how to react. I froze for a few seconds, just staring down at him, and he freaked out, started yelling for me to leave the room, and took his blanket as cover.” (Face to Face chat, 12th of September, 2019).

Mr. Ikenna has this to say on the question: **Have you ever been in a Masturbation scene as a mother?**

“Yes, I caught my daughter with a heavy toy on her bed, masturbating. Her legs were spread wide and she didn't see me so I let her finish and then she saw me and got a shock. I finally found out she was chatting with a boy who sent her nude pictures through a Social Media Platform. (Online Interview, 11th of April, 2019).

RESULT

All the 6 persons interacted with at random have had experiences as per negative influence of social media around their environment in one way or the other. The 4 parents reported horror experiences which they were eye witnesses to, while the 2 teenagers reported negatively also.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Social media network which was innovated for positivism is misused by people to commit varying degrees of crime, especially the teenagers. After an inward research approach, it was noted that most parents already are aware of this menace on their children. So it can no longer be over emphasized that when African children are not well guided, social media network will mar them than make them. Therefore, parents must rise and face the battle of monitoring, guiding, if not stopping the frequent use of social media gadgets by teenagers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

LEAD BY EXAMPLE:

Parents should curtail their excesses of using social media platforms first before counselling their children. If a Child sees you often on social media platforms, he will try to imitate your actions and as such will opt to learn from the parents. So, regulating one's steadiness on computer screens or severing oneself from chat rooms (Whatsapp, Facebook, Twitter etc) alone would encourage one's children to reduce the way they visit social media platforms. So, it is up to parents to set a good example of what healthy computer usage looks like.

CHECK YOUR CHILD'S DEVICE OFTEN:

Information stored online and shared on social media is there for people who should get access to it. In other words, information that explains about how to give birth should be kept for women, mid-wives and other concerned

professionals. Information on how to repair home used items should be for the consumption of home refurbishing experts. Information kept online for adults should not be allowed to get loose to teenagers. So, parents should be up and doing in the responsibility of checking their children's phones as to intermittently see what content they are consuming.

TECHNOLOGY-FREE TIME:

Technology-free time is a period when nobody in the house is allowed access to any form of technological devices. This when establish will help all and sundry to stay clear from phones including the parents. If you choose 8.pm to 10.pm as Technology-free time, replace the 2 hours with another interesting practice. It could be a time to tell African fairytales or a time to indulge in academic activities. If you must check your mail or Facebook at these Technology-free hours for any reason, then go inside your room and do it without them knowing it. Not only does limiting the amount of time you spend plugged in to computers provide a healthy counterpoint to the tech-obsessed world, it also strengthens the parent-child bond and makes kids feel more secure. Kids need to know that you are available to help them with their problems, talk about their day, or give them a reality check.

DELAY AGE OF FIRST USE:

It is advisable not to buy ICT gadgets for your too tender kids. Allow them to grow and get to a certain level of education, say SS1 before you buy gadgets for them.

KEEP YOUR CHILDREN OFFLINE:

Offline, the gold standard advice for helping kids build healthy self-esteem is to get them involved in something that they're interested in. It could be sports or music or taking apart computers or volunteering—anything that sparks an interest and gives them confidence. When kids learn to feel good about what they can do instead of how they look and what they own, they're happier and better prepared for success in real life.

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