



# Effect of Social Media on Teenagers and Youths: A Study of Rural Nigerian Teenagers and Youths in Secondary Schools

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## Abstract

Access to Information and Communication Technology such as the use of social media is the concern of many in the 21st century. The question whether rural Nigerian communities have access to social amenities including media technology prompted this study which adopted survey research method to investigate teenagers and youths in four selected secondary schools in the rural communities in Edo North, Nigeria to ascertain if they use social media. From a population of 1,751, a sample size of 260 students was drawn for the survey research study. It was found that, rural teenagers and youth have access to social media through their personal/parents internet-access mobile phones though not for academic purpose but to enhance their lives which are more or less social. They also prefer Facebook to other social networking sites. They were also exposed to other social media such as Instagram, Whatsapp, Twitter and YouTube, to make their day.

**Keywords:** Communication technology; Social networking sites; Social media; Online interactions

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## Introduction

The evolution of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has thrown young people 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, et al. [1] 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".

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 [2] state that social media provides efficient ways for education; students used social media for E-learning, develop communication skill and raise their learning skills. 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, et al. [2] 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. 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.

Though the Internet and social media studies are dominating literature in social psychology as well as communication psychology much of the literature on this subject matter is focused on urban youths particularly in the university. Rural youths have been left out in most of the discourse. In Nigeria,

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social amenities are sparsely available in the urban areas while the rural areas are left with nothing. This creates a serious social divide which is also pronounced with the use of ICT facilities. Opata [3] commenting on urban/rural divide in Nigeria said, "a majority of Nigerians live in the rural areas, yet coverage of telecommunications services and access to telecommunications services, facilities and applications remains lopsided in favour of the urban areas and cities when juxtaposed with the rural part of Nigeria". As awareness and uses increased in the urban areas with attendant effects we are not sure if the rural communities are experiencing same. This study therefore is set to ascertain the exposure and its effects on Nigerian teenagers and youths in the rural secondary schools.

## Objectives

The main objective behind the selection of this topic is to ascertain the effect of the social media on the Nigerian teenagers and youths who live and school in the rural communities. The specific objectives for the realization of the broad objective are itemized as follows:

1. To find out if Nigerian teenagers and youth who live and school in the rural communities have access to social media,
2. To ascertain the means of access to social media,
3. To find out most prefer social media platform,
4. To ascertain the motivating interest to social media exposure.

## Research Questions

1. Do Nigerian teenagers and youth who live and school in the rural communities have access to social media?
2. How do Nigerian teenagers and youths in rural secondary schools access social media?
3. Which social media platform is most prefer amongst Nigerian teenagers and youths in in rural secondary schools?
4. What motivate their interest to social media exposure

## Review of Related Literature

Literature review provides deep insight into related studies and it helped to select appropriate objectives, hypotheses and methodology that further enhance the topic under consideration. "The advent of social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Intagram represent a new phase of revolution and development in the globalized world" Adegbilero-Iwari and Ikenwe, 2014 cited in Zakaria and Birikorang [4]. "Social media otherwise known as the new media is a form of electronic communication which facilitate interaction based on certain interest characteristics on web 2.0 technology" Asemah [5,6] defines social media as a digital interactive media. Sambe (2014) sees social media as a "new media technology, a product of information of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Social media have been tagged a 'hot topic', and a 'new spirit' and

one of the most significant social and technological development of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century", Levy, 2007 in Anyanwu and Agwu [7] Social media are also seen as a form of electronic communication on the Internet. Social media is also referred to as "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" [8]. 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. But the extent of their usage in the rural area has been an issue of concern to communication and ICT scholars alike. Odoh, et al. [9] note, "despite the effort of the past to locate mass media houses in rural areas, the trend has been that almost all the media houses are urban centered. This has far reaching implication to urban-rural communication relationship. Consequently,...the mobile communication networks that made their debut... followed the same pattern." In spite of this challenge, empirical data show that Nigeria is greatly benefiting from the new technological revolution of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. According to Internet World Start cited in ref. [10] state:

*The growth of the number of Internet users in Nigeria from 2000 to 2010 is quite alarming as it recorded 21,891.1% growth rate. According to Internet World Start...there were 200,000 internet users in Nigeria in year 2000. This number is however less than 1% of the national population. In the year 2006 the number has grown to 5,000,000. This figure doubled in 2008 with 10 million people having access to the Internet. In 2009, the figure went above double at 23,982,000 people used Internet in Nigeria. By June 2010, the number of Internet users in Nigeria has grown to 43,982,200, that is 29.5% of the county's population.*

World Development Indicators (2013) cited Anyanwu and Agwu [7] also 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 not for academic 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 [11] 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.

Singh, et al. [1] in their study of positive and negative effects of social media on Indian youth sampled 126 students of pre and post-graduate colleges situated in Chandigarh City found that India youth are not using social media for academic purpose but rather surfing, chatting and entertainment. Their findings also showed that over-utilization of the social media by students reduces production ability due to continuous surfing which also creates physical as well as mental problems such as mental and physical fatigue, strain, anxiety and panic. Ahaotu and Amadi (2014) in their survey of youth exposure to social media found that 94.9% of the youths sampled used social media not only for social purposes but also for teaching, research and business purposes amongst others. In their other findings, they also realized that the most preferred social media amongst youth is Facebook. Ahaotu and Amadi research findings agreed with Ngonso and Egielewa (2018) study of students in Edo University Iyamho which findings showed that Nigerian youth are increasingly using social media and Facebook is the most preferred. Oka cited in Anyanwu and Agwu [7] in his study of South-South Nigerian students discovered that 80% of the surveyed students use social media.

## Theoretical Framework

Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) is anchored on mainly on the view that media use served a variety of needs stemming from the personal social situation of the individual, McQuail [12]. Nwafor [13] describes uses and gratification as an idea that media use depends on the perceived satisfactions, needs, wishes, or motives of the perspective audience member, which are derived from psychological instincts (needs) such as information, relaxation, companionship, diversion and escape. Ndolo [14] also 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. The major proponents of this theory are Dennis McQuail, Blumler Jay, Katz Elihu and Joseph Brown.

## Methodology

This study adopts quantitative survey method. A set of questionnaire was designed to elicit responses from respondents (students) in the selected schools who were purposively drawn from four secondary schools in the rural areas of Edo North, Edo State, Nigeria. The four schools were also randomly selected from the pool of 56 government approved schools in the region. The four selected schools have a total population of 1,751 students which stood as the actual population of this study. The selected schools were: Government Secondary School, Iyahmo-550

students; Government Secondary School, Oluoke- 150 students; Government Secondary School, Iyora-181 students and Government Secondary School, Afowa-900 students. Progressive 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 15 % of the population, giving a sample size of 260. This implies that 260 respondents were drawn from the four Government Secondary Schools randomly selected. The questionnaire copies were administered to the students who filled and returned to the researcher independently. Thereafter, the analysis was done using SPSS version 20. The data generated were analyzed in line with the four research questions that were earlier stated to guide the execution of the study.

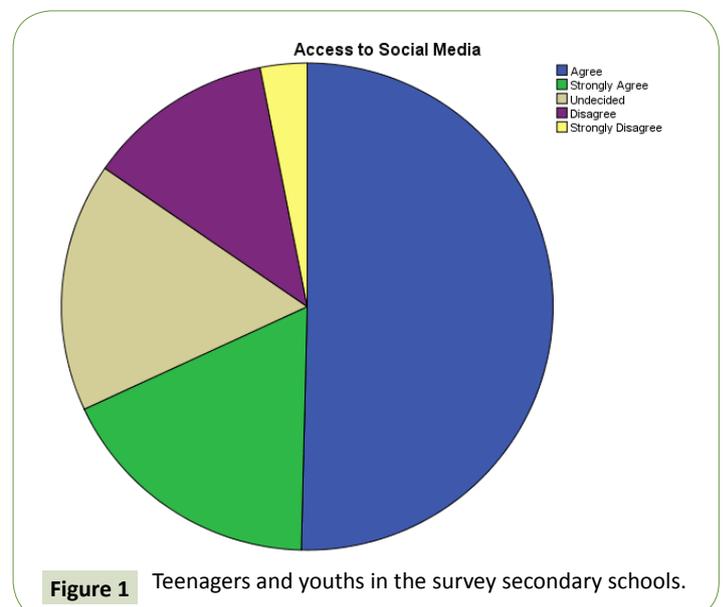
## Data Presentation/Analysis/Discussion of Findings

The responses captured on **Table 1 and Figure 1** above indicate that teenagers and youths in the survey secondary schools have access to social media. 50.4% respondents agreed while 17.7% strongly agreed giving a total of 68.1% users of social media.

**Table 2 and Figure 2** above indicate the responses of students about the means through which they access social media. 119

**Table 1** Nigerian teenagers and youth who live and school in the rural communities have access to social media.

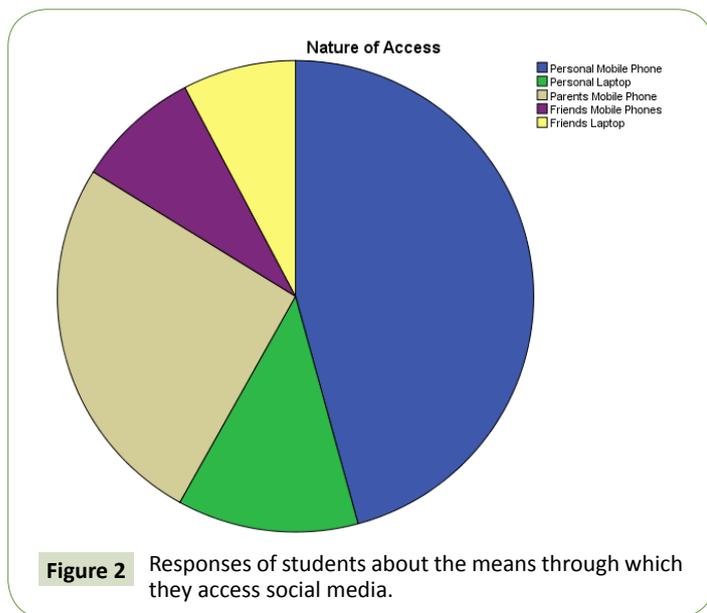
Access to Social Media					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	131	50.4	50.4	50.4
	Strongly Agree	46	17.7	17.7	68.1
	Undecided	43	16.5	16.5	84.6
	Disagree	32	12.3	12.3	96.9
	Strongly Disagree	8	3.1	3.1	100
	Total	260	100	100	



**Figure 1** Teenagers and youths in the survey secondary schools.

**Table 2** How Nigerian teenagers and youths in rural secondary schools access social media.

Nature of Access					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Personal Mobile Phone	119	45.8	45.8	45.8
	Personal Laptop	32	12.3	12.3	58.1
	Parents Mobile Phone	67	25.8	25.8	83.8
	Friends Mobile Phones	22	8.5	8.5	92.3
	Friends Laptop	20	7.7	7.7	100
	Total	260	100	100	



(45.8%) have access through their personal mobile phone, 32 (12.3%) have access through personal laptop, 67 (25.8%) respondents said that they have access to social media through parents mobile phones. Those who said that they have access to social media through friends phones were 22 (8.5%) while 20 respondents said that they have access to social media through friends laptops.

The above **Table 3 and Figure 3** indicate the social media preference amongst teenagers and youths in the rural secondary schools in Nigeria. The data presented above show that, Facebook is the most preferred social media platform, 195 (75.0%) respondents confirmed these data followed by WhatsApp. 19 (7.3%) respondent said that this is their most preferred social media while 17 (6.5%) respondents preferred Instagram. This result indicates that Facebook is the most preferred social media platform for Nigerian teenagers and youth in the rural secondary schools.

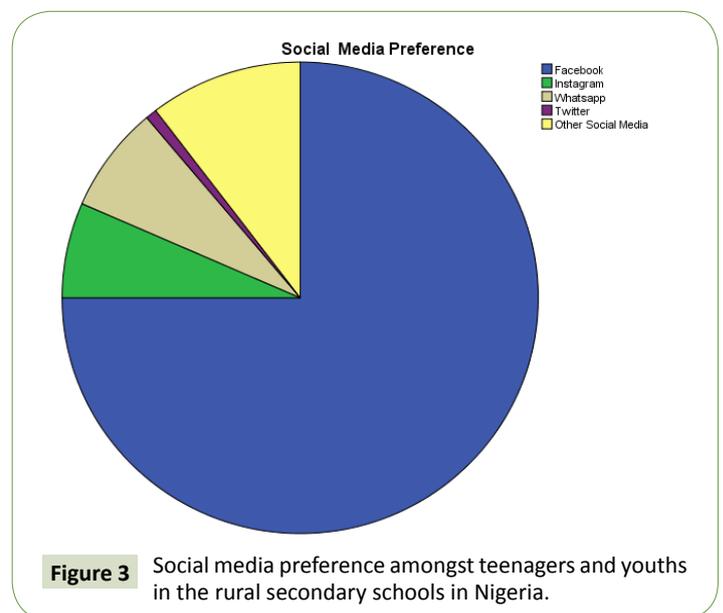
The data presented in **Table 4 and Figure 4** measured the interest of teenagers and youths on social media. The idea was to ascertain if respondents exposure themselves to social media information that enhances their life. 191 (73.5%) respondents opined that they do seek for information that will enhance their lives while 30 (11.6%) said they do not seek for information that will enhance their lives.

## Discussion of Findings

From the study it has been realized that teenagers and

**Table 3** Most preferred social media platform amongst Nigerian teenagers and youths in rural secondary schools.

Social Media Preference					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Facebook	195	75	75	75
	Instagram	17	6.5	6.5	81.5
	Whatsapp	19	7.3	7.3	88.8
	Twitter	2	0.8	0.8	89.6
	Other Social Media	27	10.4	10.4	100
	Total	260	100	100	



**Table 4:** Motivation for social media usage.

My Interest in Social Media					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	152	58.5	58.5	58.5
	Strongly Agree	39	15	15	73.5
	Undecided	39	15	15	88.5
	Disagree	15	5.8	5.8	94.2
	Strongly Disagree	15	5.8	5.8	100
	Total	260	100	100	

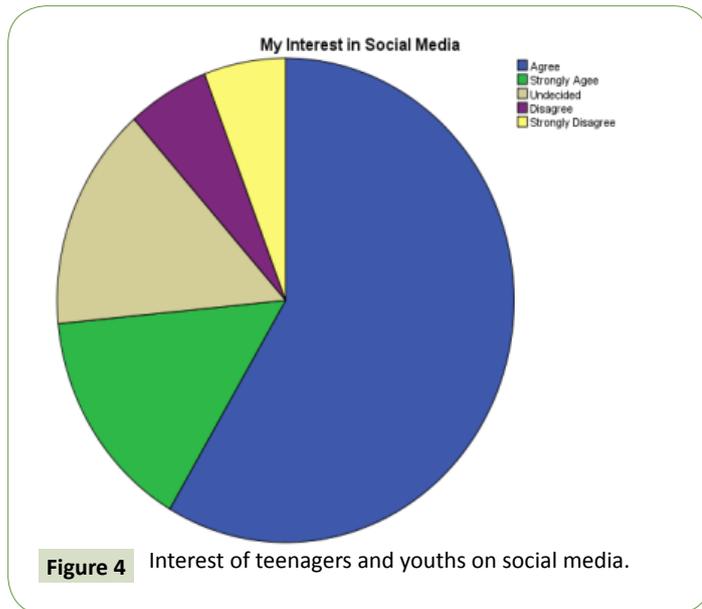


Figure 4 Interest of teenagers and youths on social media.

youths in Nigeria secondary schools have access to social media through personal/parents mobile phones, empirical data in this study showed that 119 (45.8%) respondents have access to social media through their personal mobile phone, 67 (25.8%) respondents said that they have access to social media through parents mobile phones. This finding also supports Odoh and Ajah [9] study which revealed that the rural Igbo-Etiti have access to telecommunication services as well as the use of social media. This study also concludes that Facebook is the most preferred social media platform amongst the rural teenagers in secondary schools in Nigeria. This result also agrees with Ahaotu and Amadi, Ngonso and Egielewa [5] studies which attest that youth most preferred social media is the Facebook. The findings also showed that respondents expose themselves to social media information

to enhance their lives and not for academic purposes. 191 (73.5%) respondents opined that they do seek for information that will enhance their lives while 30 (11.6%) said they do not seek for information that will enhance their lives. 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 for social reasons rather than academic purposes. Singh, et al. [1] in their study of positive and negative effects of social media on Indian youth also found similar result, that students of pre and post-graduate colleges situated in Chandigarh City, India do not use social media for academic purpose but rather surfing, chatting and entertainment.

## Conclusion

This study therefore concludes that, students in the rural areas in Nigeria have access to social media through personal/parents mobile phones. However, their use of social media has no connections with their studies. These students only seek for information that would enhance their social life.

## Recommendations/Suggestions

1. Parents and teachers should monitor what teenagers and youth of school age are doing with their mobile phones.
2. Parents, guidance/teachers should ensure that teenagers and youth exposure to social media is for basically academic purpose.
3. Awareness programmes relating to social media use should be organized in schools for students.
4. The harmful effects of over-utilization of social media on academic performance should be told to students.

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