Social Media, Peer Influence and Moral Decadeness among in-School Adolescents in Osun State

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Abstract
This study investigated social media usage and peer influence as factors that could predispose adolescents to moral decadence. Descriptive research design of correlational type was used in the study to find the relationship between the independent variables (social media usage, peer influence) and the dependent variables (moral decadence). Simple random sampling technique was used to draw participants of 300 in-school adolescents in Osun state (male = 121; female = 179) with the age range of 11 – 17 years and mean age of 12.5years. Data was collected through three standardized scales which were self-administered to participants in their various schools. The data obtained were analyzed using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS v16); specifically, Pearson product moment correlation (PPMC) and multiple regressions statistics. Three research hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The result showed that moral decadence was significantly correlated with social media usage (r=.686 ,p<0.05) and peer influence (r=. 571, p<0.05) ; independent variables (social media and peer influence) when combined together have significant relationship with (moral decadence) the dependent variable (R=0.844 & adjusted R square=0.711) which means that the independent variables accounted for 71.1% in the prediction of moral decadence among adolescents and each of the independent variables made a significant contribution to the prediction of moral decadence. In terms of magnitude of the contribution; social media usage (β =0.626, t= 19.989, p < 0.05) indicates most potent contributor to the prediction, followed by peer influence (β = 0.496, t= 15.831, p < 0.05) .There is need for effective delivery of counselling services most especially peer counselling geared towards morality and peer sensitization programmes on positive moral behaviour and healthy usage of social media network and the internet.

Keywords: Moral decadence, In-school adolescents, Social media, Peer influence

Introduction

In this 21st century, the level at which the world is faced with the issue of moral decadence most especially among younger generation is so worrisome and alarming. Moral decadence has negatively affected the dignity of the manhood and this is made manifest in vices which include banditry, kidnapping, armed robbery, rape, incest, cultism, touting, cybercrimes and bullying as well as moral depravity such as acts of disrespect, insubordination, laziness, idleness, gossip, impatience, indecent dressing and among others. Moral decadence seems to be a permanent feature of the present day Nigerian society. Honesty, moral rectitude, respect for elders, and respect for fellow citizens, respect and loyalty to family values, hard work, resourcefulness, truthfulness, transparency, accountability, and responsibility, truthfulness, respect, decency, obedience, dressing code and language are values that have lost their relevance in the contemporary Nigerian society.

Nigeria, as a country has experienced tremendous changes in all spheres of life through social media. The alarming rate of moral decadence in Nigeria could be regarded as the cumulative effects of excessive social media usage and social influence most importantly from peers. Parents and older family members set out of the house early in the morning in search of means of survival and come back late in the evening tired, they abandoned their responsibilities to peers, friends, neighbours and technological devices through social media networking. The consequences of this action are antisocial and immoral behaviours learnt from television, films, video games, internet and other social networks.

In the contemporary Nigerian society, social media is a popular market being patronized virtually by everyone and most especially adolescents and youths in all homes either consciously or unconsciously. A study carried out by Lenhart, Purcell, Smith and Zichuhr (2010) discovered that; *almost two-thirds (63%) of the adolescents use the internet at least once daily, (73%) use a social networking site such as Facebook; 38% share content such as photos, videos or art work online; and 14% blog. Consequently, 75% of the adolescents have a cell phone, with 88% using it to send text messages, 23% to access social networking sites while 64% for exchanging pictures and contents.* However, the most popular social media platform, Face book, bragged that in a single day 1 in 7 people on the planet logged on (Drege in Nche, 2012). Social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, are easily accessible with android and smartphone to chat, share images, audios and videos with others.

It is worthy to note that the use of android and smart phone for social media use has led to some moral issues being experienced in the country. For instance, Nche (2012) observed that with the technological devices, it is common to see some Nigerian adolescents and youths engrossed and chatting on the road, in the market, classroom, library, church, toilet, bathroom and so on in utter negligence and recklessness. In time past, when an average Nigerian child comes back from school, he/she is expected to take up his/her assignment after lunch and house chores. But presently, Nigerian children hardly keep any quite time without getting busy with devices used for social networking. Adolescents may engage themselves with anti-academic activities on social media platforms at the slightest chance or opportunity even within the school environment.

Additionally, social media network has become the best friend of most adolescents and youths of today, *however, its unchecked use among Nigerian children has contributed to moral decadence (Shitu, 2018). Adolescents use* ICT gadgets negatively to indulge in hacking, financial frauds, identity theft and juvenile anti-social behaviour. Moreover, large proportion of immoral contents and materials are passed on through social media channels to thousands of homes on daily basis and this has

continued to increase geometrically. Thus, moral decadence has substituted the Nigerian family value system held with high esteem in time past. On the other hand, peer groups are the next closest society group to the adolescents after the family. Peers impact knowledge and disseminate ideas as well as imbibe values. Where the problem lies is that peer pressure can be extremely strong and hard to resist during adolescence. Kiragu (2015) observes that increasing access to social media has enhanced the capacity to access explicit sexual materials such as nudity and pornographic materials which are shared among peers. Consequently, some identified effects of moral decadence on health and wellbeing include brain stress, eyes problems and sexual harassment which is rampant due to a new culture of nudity among adolescent girls. Researchers (Ugoagu, 2017; Njoku & Njoku 2017; Ogbonnia & Brooke 2020) have documented that moral decadence manifests in sexual promiscuity and prostitution and other forms of sexual abuses and this has prone victims to life threatening diseases like Human Immune Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). Poor academic performance is also another prominent effect of moral decadence among younger generation. Anzene (2010) noted that the number of students who engaged in examination and test malpractices has increased greatly.

Moreover, Jones and Espery (2008) reported that sexual interaction among student is on the rise and very frequent among students. Also, Mlyakado (2013) noted that sexual intercourse among adolescents has led to increased cases of unplanned pregnancy and ultimately dropouts of school. Moreover, Statistics from Ghana Demographic and Health Survey in 2018 showed that 10% of teenage pregnancy was reported between the ages of 15 and 17. World health organization emphasized the average age-range from 14 – 19 years at first application of substances and the documented medications widely consumed by students are tobacco, nicotine, weed, methamphetamine, tranquilizer, heroin, narcotics were frequently used at school or at home.

However, Shittu, (2018) asserts that a day hardly ever pass without some media reports of ethno-religion conflicts, examination leakages and malpractices, students' unrest, cultism attacks, sexual abuse and victimization, certificate forgery, drug abuse and other cases of indiscipline across the country which are due to negative societal influence such as social media and peer influence. Chima, (2010) noted that Nigerian society has witnessed a tremendous deterioration in its moral, social and educational values, most especially among the youths. Despite the unrelenting effort of parents, stakeholders and government at different levels to inculcate positive moral behaviour, the Nigerian society is becoming a society where moral decadence not only thrives, but is accorded with pride most especially among adolescents and youths.

Given the statistics of social network users and the alarming rate of moral decadence and it consequences, there is an inevitable need to investigate the influence of social media and peers on moral decadence among in-school adolescents so as to help reduce moral decadence among adolescents. The outcome of this study would provide valid evidence that should benefit developmental, counselling psychologists and social workers in designing effective intervention that could reduce moral decadence in Nigerian society. Moreover, the finding of the study could assist stakeholders in education to make provision for strategies that could reduce moral decadence among in-school adolescents and youths.

Researchers (Ugwu, 2010; Gert, 2012) have described morality as the astuteness of one's conduct and behaviour which enhances good conduct and fair relationship. Also, Muraino and Ugwumba (2014) documented that morality is collectively the upholding of certain beliefs, ideas, values and behaviours, rules and regulations which are considered good, right and acceptable by the society and to which members of the society are bound. Morality is an accepted code of conduct in a society or within a subgroup of society that comes to be regarded as essential to its survival and welfare (Ezekwu, 2008). On the other hand, Omoregbe (1993) submitted that these accepted norms or codes of conduct in any society often appeal to the moral nature of man for the human nature is a moral nature, and the moral sphere is exclusively the human sphere.

On the other hand, Selwyn (2012) defined social media network as the application that allows users to converse and interact with each other; to create, edit and share new forms of textual, visual and audio content, and to categorize, label and recommend existing forms of content. Moreover, Rithika and Selvaraj (2013) asserts that social media is the modern interactive communication channels through which people connect to one another, share ideas, experiences, pictures, messages and information of common interest. *Social media network is a technological innovation which aids communication through the transfer of multimedia files from source to destination.*

Furthermore, social media are used as channels of disseminating information to heterogeneous audiences without the constraints of time, space or distance. This could be done through multi-chat windows like Yahoo-messenger, Facebook, Twitter and so on to single-chat windows Whatsapp, Instagram and so on. Educative, cultural, social, cognitive, entertaining, economical, morally advantageous or disadvantageous texts, audio, animation, video and graphics are shared on the social network media. Moreover, during adolescence, the peer group has a big impact on the behaviour of students. The adolescent years is characterized with rapid biological, cognitive, emotional, and social changes. At this stage of life, there is a growing need to form peer relationships, which may affect the initial childhood family relationships to some extent. Coleman (2014) asserts that adolescents attach more value to personal relationship with their classmates, sharing and influencing each other's thoughts and feelings. Ryan (2000) defined a peer group as a social group made up of people with similar social position who have similar interests. Hardcastle, (2002) noted that a peer might be somebody looked up to in terms of behaviour. However, pressure otherwise known as influence refers to the process of persuading individuals to do something they would not otherwise do. Steinberg (2005) has defined peer pressure as when persons in the same social group (such as age, grade, or status) exert emotional or mental pressure on one other to act or behave

in a similar way The ability of persons of the same social rank or age to influence another person of the same age could be referred to as peer influence Jones (2010).

Researchers (Hartney, 2011; Black,2012 & Adeagbo, 2013) have documented that peer influence is linked to adolescence risk-taking behaviours such as delinquency, drug and substance misuse, and sexual behaviours which are often done along side with peers. They may encourage or lure one another to skip courses, steal, cheat, use drugs or take alcohol, join cults or engage in other harmful activities such as street loitering, watch immoral movies, and attend night parties and clubs, armed robbery (Arief &Martins, 2011). On the other hand, Kellie (2013) asserts that adolescent could also be pressured by peers to engage in positive behaviour, which could have a positive influence.

Additionally, Uche (2010) submitted that peer influence is one of the main factors that affect individuals either positively or negatively in moral competence. Adeagbo (2013) noted that peer influence entails conforming to the ideas, beliefs and judgment of peers. He concluded that the negative aspect of peer influence strives more than the positive aspect. Mostly, during the period of adolescence which falls within the secondary schools years, the child tries to assess and analyze the value system and principles imbibed during childhood. The child may sooner or later reject most of the normalization as practiced by adults in the society. In a study done by Onah and Nche (2014) on the moral implications of social media among Nigerian youths using qualitative and quantitative research method, it was discovered that social media phenomenon is overwhelmingly popular among Nigerian youths as one of the major contributions to moral degeneration in Nigeria. Also, in another research carried out by Njoku (2016) on teachers' perception on the dimensions of moral decadence among 250 secondary school students in Ebonyi state Nigeria, the result of the research work revealed causes of moral decadences to include mass media, influence of peer group among others.

Consequently, a research was done by Chukwu, and Chiemeka (2019) on social media usage, moral decadence and the impact on family values. The sample size of 100 secondary school students participated in the study. Findings revealed that access to social media through smart phones; tablets and computers have disorganized family values system through which moral education is being taught. Using explanatory sequential research design which employees both qualitative and quantitative research techniques. Also, a qualitative research was conducted by Ogbonmia and Brooke (2020) on the social media network and moral decadence of the African child. 4 parents and 2 teenagers participated in the study. Result of the study revealed that the consumption of audio-visual materials by children on social media network has greatly increased moral decadence among African children.

On the other hand, a study was done by Britwum, Adjei, Nyamekye and Britwum (2021) among some high school students on perceived cause and effects of moral decadence in Kumasi metropolis. The study was carried out using a descriptive survey approach (quantitative study design) and total of 321 students participated in the study. The result of the study indicated that peer influence, watching immoral films, unregulated media landscape where media content is not censored were contributing causes of moral decadence. Moreover, Mwaraby, Mwonge and Hongoli (2021) conducted a research on social factors for moral decadence in secondary schools students. Finding of the research indicated the use and development of internet technologies as one of the factors contributing to moral decadence in Nigeria.

Furthermore, a study was conducted by Uzoka and Njoku (2015) on environmental factors influencing the moral behaviour of secondary school students in Owerri municipal area, Imo state, Nigeria. The sample of the study was made up of 450 secondary school students. The study discovered that peer influence is one of the environmental factors that strongly influence the moral behaviour of secondary school students. Furthermore, Yonas, Asasta and Mesmer (2019) carried out a study on the relationship between peer pressure and moral competence among 400 students in Kenya. The findings of the study indicated that there was weak positive and significant correlation between peer pressure and moral competence.

Purpose of the Study

The thrust of this study is to investigate the relationship between social media usage, peer influence and moral decadence among in-school adolescents in Osun state, Nigeria. In order to achieve this, the following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Ho_1: There is no significant relationship between social media usage and moral decadence among in-school adolescents.

Ho_2: There is no significant relationship between peer influence and moral decadence among in-school adolescents.

Ho_3: There is no significant joint and relative contribution of social media usage and peer influence on moral decadence among in-school adolescents

Methodology

The study adopted the correlational research design to find the relationship between the independent variables (social media usage, peer influence) and the dependent variables (moral decadence). The sample consists of 300 in-school adolescents (male = 121; female = 179) with the age range of 11 – 17 years and mean age of 12.5years. Simple random sampling technique was used to draw the sample out of the secondary school students in Iwo Local Government Area, Iwo, Iwo East Local Government Area, Olomo wewe, Oluponna, Iwo West Local Government District Area, Ayedire Local Government Area, Ile-Ogbo, Ayedire South Local Government Area of Osun State. In each of the five selected local government areas, two secondary schools are selected to participate in the study totaling 10 secondary schools. In each of the ten selected secondary schools, 30 students were randomly drawn, to participate in the study. The instruments used for data collection were Social Media Usage Questionnaire: (r= 0.77), Peer Influence Scale(r= 0.73) and Moral Decadence

Inventory(r= 0.69). In each of the selected schools, administration and collection of questionnaire was done on the same day. The data obtained were analyzed using statistical package for social sciences (SPSs v16) while Pearson product moment correlation was used to establish the relationship between the variables (independent and dependent) multiple regressions was also used to establish the joint and relative contribution of independent variables to the prediction of the dependent variable. The research hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Hypotheses

Ho_1: There is no significant relationship between social media usage and moral decadence among in-school adolescents.

Table 1: Result of PPMC showing the significant relationship between social media usage and moral decadence among in-school adolescents.

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	R	P	Remark
Social media usage	25.26	6.01	300	.686**	.000	Sig.
Moral decadence	19.50	2.86				

*Sig. at 0.05 level

Table 1 above shows that there is significant relationship between social media usage and moral decadence (r = .686, N= 300, p <.05) among in-school adolescents. The result rejected the null hypothesis and accept alternative which states there is significant relationship between social media usage and moral decadence among in-school adolescents.

Ho_2: There is no significant relationship between peer influence and moral decadence among in-school adolescents.

Table 2: Result of PPMC showing the significant relationship between peer influence and moral decadence among in-school adolescents.

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	R	P	Remark
Peer influence	24.50	5.40	300	.571**	.000	Sig.
Moral decadence	19.50	2.86				

*Sig. at 0.05 level

Table 2 above shows that there was a positive significant relationship between peer influence and moral decadence (r = .571**, N= 300, p<.05) among in-school adolescents. The result rejected the null hypothesis and accepted the alternate hypothesis which states there is a significant relationship between peer influence and moral decadence among in-school adolescents.

Ho_3: There is no significant joint and relative contribution of social media usage and peer influence on moral decadence among in-school adolescents.

Table 3: Summary of Regression Analysis of the combined prediction of social media usage and peer influence on moral decadence among in-school adolescents.

.R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate			
0.844	0.713	0.711	4. 088			
SUMMARY REGRESSION ANOVA						
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	P	Remark
Regression	1747.245	2	873.622	368.688	0.000	Sig.
Residual	703.755	297	2.370			
Total	2451.000	299				

Table 4.3.3 showed there was a significant joint contribution of social media usage and peer influence on moral decadence among in-school adolescents. The table shows a coefficient of multiple correlations (R) of 0.844 and a multiple R square of 0.713. This means that 71.1% (Adj. R^2=0.711) of the variance in moral decadence is accounted for by the independent variables, when taken together. The significance of joint contribution was tested at $p<0.05$ using the F- ratio at the degree of freedom (df = 2/297). The table also showed that the analysis of variance for the regression yielded a F-ratio of 368.688 (significant at 0.05 level).

Table 4: Relative contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variables (Test of significance of the regression coefficients)

Variable	Unstandardize d Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			
Model	(B)	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Remark
Constant	5.531	.527	-	10.486	.000	-
Peer influence	.263	.017	.496	15.831	.000	Sig.
Social media usage	.298	.015	.626	19.989	.000	Sig.

Table 4 reveals there a significant relative contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variable, expressed as beta weights. The correlation coefficients of social media usage and peer influence on moral decadence among in-school adolescents. Using the standardized regression coefficient to determine the relative contributions of the independent variables, social media usage (β =0.626, t= 19.989, $p < 0.05$) indicates most potent contributor to the prediction, followed by peer influence (β = 0.496, t= 15.831, $p < 0.05$) has a relative contribution of moral decadence among in-school adolescents. It implies that there was a relative contribution of social media usage and peer influence on moral decadence among in-school adolescents.

Discussion

Result obtained hypothesis one showed that there is significant relationship between social media usage and moral decadence. This corroborates the findings of Onah and Nche (2014). Their study discovered that social media phenomenon is overwhelmingly popular among Nigerian youths as one of the major contributions to moral degeneration in Nigeria. Consequently, Uzoka and Njoku (2015) documented causes of moral decadence to include media. Moreover, the finding in this study is consistent with the finding reported in the research of Chukwu, and Chiemeka (2019) that access to social media through smart phones; tablets and computers have disorganized family values system through which moral education is being taught. Moreover, the finding of this study is in line with the finding in the study of Ogbonmia and Brooke (2020), The study reported that the consumption of audio-visual materials by children on social media network has greatly increased moral decadence among African children. On the other hand, Britwum, Adjei, Nyamekye and Britwum (2021) reported that watching immoral films, unregulated media landscape where media content is not censored were contributing causes of moral decadence. Also, Mwaraby, Mwonge and Hongoli (2021) submitted that the use and development of internet technologies as one of the factors contributing to moral decadence in Nigeria. However, this study and earlier studies have discovered that increased usage of social media network among adolescents accounted for moral decadence being faced presently in Nigeria. This could be that majority of the videos, pictures and other contents shared on the social network are tends towards immorality and thus, encourages immoral behaviour (negative behaviour) among adolescents. Also, majority of the younger generation rely heavily on the internet and social network for information on any issue or matter than elsewhere.

Result obtained from the study revealed that there is significant relationship between peer influence and moral decadence. This finding is consistent with the discovery of Uzoka and Njoku (2015) that peer influence is one of the environmental factors that strongly influence the moral behaviour of secondary school students. Furthermore, this result corroborates the finding in the work of Yonas, Asasta and Mesmer (2019) that there was correlation between peer pressure and moral competence. Possible reason for this could be that majority of the participants greatly yield to peer pressure. That is, their behaviour is being influenced by friends and peers.

The result presented on Tables 3 and 4 indicated that there is joint and relative contribution of social media usage and peer influence on moral decadence. In terms of magnitude of the contribution; social media usage indicated most potent contributor to the prediction, followed by peer influence .This finding substantiates the result in the work of Njoku (2016) which discovered causes of moral decadences to include mass media, influence of peer group among others. Consequently, Britwum, Adjei, Nyamekye and Britwum (2021) reported in their study that peer influence, watching immoral films and unregulated media landscape where media content is not censored was contributing causes of moral decadence. Also, this finding is in line with the finding in the research of Ogbonmia and Brooke (2020) that the consumption of audio-visual materials among children on social media network has greatly increased moral decadence among African children. By implication, social media network

usage and peer influences are factors that contribute to moral decadence among adolescents.

Conclusion

The present study examined the relationship between social media, peer influence and moral decadence among adolescents. The alarming rate of moral decadence and it consequences among Nigerian adolescents is an indication that there is an inevitable need to investigate the influence of social media and peers on moral decadence among in-school adolescents. The study revealed that there is a significant relationship between social media, peer influence and moral decadence among adolescents. The study concluded that there is need for effective delivery of counselling services most especially peer counselling geared towards morality and peer sensitization programmes on positive moral behaviour and healthy usage of social media network and Internet.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Counselling facilities and resources in schools should be improved for effective delivery of students' counselling services geared towards morality.
2. Moral education/ instruction could be embedded into the school co-curriculum so as to enhance the development of positive moral behaviour. This should include sensitization of students on the negative effects of immoral behaviour as well as seminars on positive moral behaviour and healthy usage of social media network and Internet.
3. Parents should teach and strongly instill acceptable cultural moral values of the society in their wards and as well correct them when necessary. They should also monitor their internet usage through the use of parental control buttons to set limit on social media usage and availability. Additionally, they should screen and guide wards on the type of videos, films and contents shared and viewed on social media. Moreover, parents are encouraged to be conscious of the friends and peers of their wards and should discourage friendship that could promote moral decadence.
4. Government through the Federal Ministry of information and communications should make provision for Social Media Use Act. This would be a legal back-up to check the excessive social media usage, thereby encouraging healthy usage.

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