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SOCIAL MEDIA USE AND YOUTH SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR IN NIGERIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL COHESION AND EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

As social media have become a ubiquitous part of the lives of Nigerian youths, many have expressed interest in its impact on social behavior, social cohesion, and education. The study examined the relationship between social media usage, social behavior and its implications for social cohesion and education development among the youths in Nigeria. Descriptive survey research design was used. The study population consists of Nigerian youths aged 15-35 years and a sample of 900 respondents was selected from selected states in the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria using multistage sampling technique. Questionnaires were used to gather data, and an expert-validated questionnaire, Social Media Use and Youth Social Behaviour Questionnaire (SMYSBQ), was developed and found to have an overall Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.89. The statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 29 was used to analyse the 872 questionnaires returned which were valid. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation, independent samples t-test and multiple linear regression at 0.05 level of significance. The results indicated a very positive correlation between social networking and youth social behavior. The use of social media also played a pivotal role in social cohesion and educational development by promoting collaborative

Keywords: Social media use, youth social behaviour, social cohesion, educational development, Nigeria.

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Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

learning, facilitating access to education, and fostering digital literacy. But overuse of entertainment had a negative impact on concentration in school and time management. There was no significant gender difference on the influence of social media use on the social behaviors of youth except for the frequency and purpose of using social media significantly predicted the behavioral outcomes. The study ends with a conclusion that the impact of social media is neither positive nor negative, but either can be positive or negative depending on the nature and purpose of use. The study suggests that digital citizenship education and responsible use of social media is an education and youth development agenda that can be incorporated into educational and youth development programmes to bring about positive behavioural change in the use of social media, better social cohesion and educational development in Nigeria.

Introduction

People's use of social media has revolutionized the way they communicate, interact, share information, and learn worldwide. The rise of social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, X (Twitter), TikTok, Snapchat, and YouTube has afforded unprecedented opportunities to socialize, co-create, share ideas, and engage in civic, educational, and economic endeavors with a diverse range of youth. With the increasing availability of the internet and smart phones, social media has become a part of the daily life of youth, shaping the ways they build their identities, connect with others, learn and interact with society (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Nigeria is a huge digital market, young population and a rapidly expanding internet penetration. Youth are the most significant users of social media in the country, where they are using digital platforms to communicate, learn, work, and play, as well as to organize politically and engage in social networking. With the rising availability of mobile technologies, social media has become an integral platform for communicating with one another and disseminating information among Nigerian youths. This means that face-to-face interaction is gradually being supplemented by, and in some cases replaced by, digital interactions and influencing social norms and behavioural expectations. Social media technologies have also revolutionized the education industry. The use of social networking sites to enable collaborative learning, sharing of teaching resources, peer learning and better communication outside the classroom is becoming more common in educational institutions, among lecturers and students. Social media has improved the dissemination of educational resources, facilitated self-education and knowledge sharing among students regardless of location. There is recent evidence that positive social media engagement can positively affect students' sense of belonging and academic

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

participation, but that over-dependency can have a negative impact on academic achievement and concentration.

These advantages come with a few concerns about the possible side effects of social media overuse. Extended time on social media has been linked to cyberbullying, misinformation, online harassment, addiction, interpersonal communication decreases, moral values loss, anxiety, depression, poor academic engagement and exposure to harmful online content. The widespread adoption of digital technologies in Nigeria has added to the ongoing discussions about the impact of social media on youth behavior, values, and cohesion in the community. Research conducted among adolescent Nigerian youths and university students has shown that social media has a tremendous effect on the behaviour of these youths, their attitudes, peer influence, and moral decision making. A sociological interpretation of youth social behaviour goes beyond the scope of individual behaviours and actions to include the patterns of interaction, conforming to norms, civic responsibility, interpersonal relationships and involvement in community life. Socialization is now an important medium of socialization besides family, schools, religious organizations, and peer groups, which is social media. Continuous exposure to online communities and digital experiences can foster attitudes, beliefs, behavioural orientations, and social identities that can further undermine or enhance social cohesion. The digital platforms have also enabled civic engagement, youth activism, and collective action but have also played a role in the dissemination of misinformation, hate speech, polarization and antisocial behaviours that can have a negative impact on trust and social solidarity.

Social cohesion is the measure of connectedness, trust, inclusion and cooperation among the members of society and is an integral part of national development. A cohesive society fosters peaceful living, respect for each other, tolerance, civic engagement and shared responsibility. Social cohesion is of great relevance to sustainable development in Nigeria due to its multicultural and multi-ethnic character. But, as digital communication gains more influence, the nature of social relations is also evolving, offering opportunities for more inclusion and causing issues of conflict, misinformation and digital exclusion. It is, therefore, crucial to grasp the influence that social media has on youth behaviour in order to enhance social cohesion and responsible digital citizenship.

Another key aspect of social media's impact on society is in the realm of educational development. Educational development includes cognitive development, critical thinking, group learning, creativity, digital literacy, and lifelong learning, in addition to learning in the classroom. Social media platforms have become a new place to learn—where students share ideas, find educational materials, interact and discuss learning and participate in building twenty-first-century skills. However, too much recreation can interfere with schoolwork, lessen concentration and have a negative impact on school

performance. Therefore, knowing how to balance productive and problematic social media use continues to be an area of concern for educators and policymakers, Fadipe etal (2025). However, in such polarized views, the overall impact of social media on youth social behaviour is not clear. Although some research views it as a benefit to education, civic involvement and social cohesion, other work emphasizes its link to behavioural issues and loss of social values. Moreover, few studies have studied the interdependencies among social media usage, social behavior among youths, social cohesion and educational development concurrently in the Nigerian context. This study aims to close this gap and generate empirical evidence that can guide educational policy, youth development programs and digital governance programs.

Statement of the Problem

With the unprecedented advancement of social media, the way the youths in Nigeria communicate, learn, socialise and engage in public life has changed. These are the platforms for sharing knowledge, networking, innovation and civic engagement, but there have been growing worries about their impact on behaviours and social interactions. Educators, parents are concerned, policymakers are worried, and sociologists have voiced concern regarding cyberbullying, Internet usage addiction, misinformation, hate speech, interpersonal communication problems and decreased academic engagement. While there is a growing body of research on social media use among students and young people, much of the current research has tended to put a strong emphasis on school attainment, psychological well-being or technology adoption. In contrast, there has been relatively lesser empirical research that has investigated the triple effects of social media use on the social behaviour, social cohesion and educational development of the youths in Nigeria. Additionally, there is not a consistent finding from previous studies that there are positive effects, and some studies report mainly negative behavioural effects.

This is a major issue of inconsistency as far as knowledge gaps are concerned, especially with regard to the general sociological effects of social media on national cohesion and educational development. The lack of empirical data can make it challenging for policymakers and education stakeholders to develop effective interventions that bring the greatest developmental benefits with minimal risk associated with social media. Given this, the study seeks to find out how the use of social media affects the social behaviour of the youth in Nigeria and what the implications of this usage are to social cohesion and education in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

To investigate the influence of social media use on youth social behaviour in Nigeria and examine its implications for social cohesion and educational development.

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Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

1. Examine the relationship between social media use and youth social behaviour.
2. Determine the influence of social media use on social cohesion among Nigerian youths.
3. Investigate the effect of social media use on educational development.
4. Examine gender differences in the influence of social media use on youth social behaviour.
5. Determine whether the frequency of social media use predicts youth social behaviour.

Research Questions

1. What relationship exists between social media use and youth social behaviour?
2. How does social media use influence social cohesion among Nigerian youths?
3. What effect does social media use have on educational development?
4. Does gender influence the relationship between social media use and youth social behaviour?
5. To what extent does the frequency of social media use predict youth social behaviour?

Research Hypotheses

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between social media use and youth social behaviour.

H_{02}: Social media use has no significant influence on social cohesion among Nigerian youths.

H_{03}: Social media use has no significant effect on educational development.

H_{04}: There is no significant gender difference in the influence of social media use on youth social behaviour.

H_{05}: Frequency of social media use does not significantly predict youth social behaviour.

Significance of the Study

The results of this study will help build the body of sociological knowledge because it will give empirical evidence on the interaction of digital technologies and youth social behaviour in Nigeria. The study will support policy makers in the creation of evidence-informed policy for responsible social media use and digital citizenship. The results can be used to create digital literacy programs for education that promote responsible digital use and support the cognitive growth of learners. Parents, counsellors and youth development agencies will also gain from understanding the patterns of behaviour as seen with the use of social media. Finally, the study will offer a good platform for further research on digital sociology, youth development, and social cohesion in developing societies.

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Social Media

Social Media are applications that allow users to make, share, exchange and interact with content created by other users in online communities and networks. Unlike traditional media, social media fosters interaction, collaboration and immediate information sharing. Social media like Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, X (Twitter), Snapchat, LinkedIn or YouTube have become the hubs of communication, entertainment, trade, learning and civic participation among the young generation (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The adoption of smartphones and low-cost internet connectivity has greatly raised social media usage in Nigeria. According to Fadipe (2025), the youths are making use of social media as an important platform to create friendships, seek educational ideas, share thoughts, undertake entrepreneurship, and join political and social movements. These platforms, however, can also be a source of misinformation, cyberbullying, online fraud, hate speech, and excessive screen time that can impact behaviour and social interactions. The impact of social media seems to be more about how, how long, how for, and how well they use it than whether or not they have access to it.

Youth Social Behaviour

Youth social behaviour refers to the attitudes and values, interpersonal relationships, communication style, civic involvement, and behaviours of young people in their social context. Social behaviour is socially acquired through interaction within families, schools, peer groups, religious organizations, community, and more recently, the digital media environment. Social media has emerged as an influential socialization agent that affects the formation of identities, the expression of self, value orientations and behavioural norms of the young population. The repeated exposure to information online and interaction with peers can teach behaviours that support social values and positive behaviours, or can foster antisocial behaviours like aggression, cyberbullying, social comparison and misinformation.

Social Cohesion

The social cohesion is the extent to which people in a society trust, feel united by shared goals and values, feel included, respect each other and cooperate with one another. It demonstrates the quality of interpersonal relationships and readiness of people to cooperate with each other for common interests, even when there are ethnic, religious, socioeconomic or political differences Fadipe etal (2026). Social cohesion fosters peaceful living, civic duty, social integration and sustainable national development. The digital age has created a double edged sword for social media and how it impacts the social cohesion. On the other hand it supports communication, social support, community participation and collective action. It can, however, fuel polarization, misinformation, hate speech, and

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

online polarization and conflict, which can erode trust and social cohesion. Hence, the importance of the relationship between social media use and social cohesion has become more pivotal in a multicultural society like Nigeria.

Educational Development

Educational development is not restricted to learning and academic achievement but also encompasses enhancement in knowledge acquisition, critical thinking, creativity, digital competence, collaborative learning, and skill development in lifelong learning competencies Fadipe etal. (2026). Students have been increasingly using social media as an informal learning space to use for a range of learning activities – looking for educational resources, sharing academic information, collaborating on assignments, and communicating with teachers and peers outside the classroom. Some researchers believe that the educational value of social media can improve student engagement, motivation, research capabilities and collaborative learning. But too much recreational time can also lead to less study time, make it more difficult to focus, promote procrastination, and adversely impact academic achievement. So, with regards to the educational outcomes of social media, it will rely a great deal on how the social media is used.

Theoretical Framework

This study is rooted mainly on Social Learning Theory of Bandura (1977). The theory suggests that people learn attitudes, behaviours, and values from others through observations, role modeling, and reinforcement and punishment. Learning takes place not only from personal experience, but also by observing the behaviour of others in social situations. Social media adds another dimension to observational learning and allows children and young people to view a variety of different behavioral models in a visual format like a video, photo, live stream, or interaction online. Digital influencers, celebrities, peers, and online communities often become role models whose actions are modeled, emulated, and praised (or criticized) via likes, comments, shares, and followers. Thus, social media can promote behaviors that are beneficial, including learning and participating in school and life, entrepreneurship, creativity, volunteering, and civic engagement, and it can also reinforce negative behaviors, such as cyberbullying, misinformation, risky online behaviors, and materialistic lifestyles when they are socially acceptable. To support Social Learning Theory, the study draws on Uses and Gratifications Theory which suggests that users select media to fulfill their cognitive, emotional, education, information, or social needs. This view proposes that rather than being a function of technology, the effects of social media use depend upon what users seek from the technology and how they interact with it. These theories collectively offer

a comprehensive understanding of the impact of social media on the social behaviour, social cohesion, and educational development of young people.

Empirical Review

The evidence on the impact of social media on youth social behaviour is mixed. Some research findings are positive, others focus on the negative behavioural and educational effects.

Elekwa and Douglas-Chukwu (2022) studied the role of social media in the education of Nigerian youth and discovered social media has improved access to educational resources, improved collaborative learning and communication between students and teachers. On the other hand, the study revealed that "excessive use" and "distraction online" are important factors that hinder academic productivity.

Ngonso, et al. (2024) studied the psychological impact of social media on the learners in secondary schools of Edo state, Nigeria. Their research showed that social media encourages communication and information sharing but heavy use of social media is associated with behavioral issues, lower focus and risk of exposure to cyberbullying and negative online content. These results point to the need for positive digital engagement as a pathway to positive youth development. Recent research also has shown that social media is a valuable medium for youth identity development, civic involvement and social involvement. While digital platforms offer avenues for collaboration, self-expression, knowledge sharing, and community, they also have the potential to expose to misinformation, algorithmic bias, online harassment and social comparison, all of which impact behavioural outcomes and perceptions of belonging.

Likewise, research based on Social Learning Theory proves that there is a strong influence of online behavioral imitations on the attitudes of young people and their actions. While positive online role models promote creativity, academic joint learning and social awareness, the frequent exposure of deviant online behaviours is likely to lead to imitation, especially among adolescents and young adults. Overall, the empirical literature shows that the use of social media, neither per se good nor bad. Instead, its impact is tied to usage patterns, users' intentions, digital literacy, peer pressures and the social context.

Research Gap

Researchers have explored the relationship between social media use and academic performance, psychological well-being, technology adoption, or digital communication; but, few studies have explored the three-way interaction of the use of social media and youth social behaviour, social cohesion and educational development in Nigeria. Previous research has also tended to be limited to a single institution, state, or specific educational outcomes. Also, much of the previous research has focused on the positive or negative

effects of social media without taking a holistic sociological approach that attempts to account for how social media digital interactions affects behavioural formation and social cohesiveness as well as education outcomes. This study fills these gaps by giving a detailed empirical evaluation of the linkages between social media use, youth social behavior, social cohesion and educational growth in Nigeria. The results of the research have implications for digital sociology, youth studies, educational policy and sustainable national development.

Research Design

The study used descriptive survey research design. The design was judged as appropriate as it allowed the researcher to collect data from a representative sample of the target population and to analyse the association between the different variables (social media use, youth social behaviour, social cohesion and educational development) without having to manipulate any of them. The survey approach also helps to make the findings generalizable to the general population of Nigerian youths. The study was carried out in Nigeria with the selected state from the six geopolitical zones for national representation. Nigeria is a relevant study case where existing high levels of youth unemployment in the country coexist with a rapidly expanding digital environment with high internet penetration, increasing mobile phone use and large youth population using social media in the country. This target group was the Nigerian youths between the age of 15 – 35, as reflected in Nigeria's National Youth Policy. The study was conducted among youths attending tertiary education institutions and out-of-school youths who are active on any of the social media platforms. This wide range of users allowed for the examination of a variety of experiences and behaviours of social media users. The number of 900 respondents was deemed adequate for the study to be statistically powerful and representative of the nation. The sample was drawn in a multi-stage sampling process. One State of Origin was sampled from each of six geopolitical zones in the first stage. In stage two, one tertiary institution and one major urban community were purposely chosen from each state due to the large number of youths and the study was not carried out in other institutions.The study, however, was not conducted in institutions other than those with high concentration of youths in the second stage, which involved purposive selection of one tertiary institution and one major urban community from each state. The respondents were stratified by gender and educational status in the third stage. Finally, simple random sampling was used to select for each stratum a number of subjects proportionate to the size of that stratum. Multistage sampling helped to reduce sampling bias and enhance representativeness of the sample.

Participants were asked to fill a researcher developed questionnaire titled Social Media Use and Youth Social Behaviour Questionnaire (SMYSBQ). The items were adapted from

the previously validated instruments and modified to fit the Nigeria sociocultural context using 5-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Undecided (3), Disagree (2), Strongly Disagree (1). Face and content validity were carried out on the instrument using some experts in the fields of Sociology, Educational Research, Measurement and Evaluation, and Digital Media Studies. They gave feedback on clarity, relevance, appropriateness, and coverage of the constructs prior to the final administration of the instrument. To provide a pilot study, the present study included 60 youth from a non-study state. The answers from the pilot study were analyzed by Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient. The coefficients were above the acceptable value of 0.70 showing that the instrument had a good internal consistency and was appropriate for the main study.

The relevant institutional research ethics committee gave approval for the study to be commenced. Consent was also obtained from the institutions that participated and community leaders as appropriate. The questionnaire was printed and handed out by trained research assistants, and also given electronically. All subjects were properly informed of the purpose of the study and volunteers were assured that participation would be voluntary. Completed questionnaires were immediately collected where possible, and the electronic ones were collected in a secure online questionnaire over a total period of 6 weeks. The data was coded and analyzed with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 29. The analyses were performed as follows: Mean, Standard Deviation and Pearson Product-Moment (PPMC) correlation were used for answering Research Question 1–3, while Independent Samples t-test was applied for answering Research Question 4. The Multiple Linear Regression Analysis was used to answer Research Question 5. The hypothesis was tested at 5% level of significance with the following statistical techniques:

Results

A total number of 900 questionnaires were given to the respondents from the selected states. Of these, 872 questionnaires were properly completed, and returned, resulting in a 96.9% return rate, and 28 (3.1%) were incomplete or not suitable for analysis.

Table 1: Demographic Distribution of Respondents (N = 872)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	431	49.4
	Female	441	50.6
Age	15–20 years	214	24.5
	21–25 years	338	38.8
	26–30 years	207	23.7

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
	31–35 years	113	13.0
Educational Level	Secondary	196	22.5
	Undergraduate	421	48.3
	Postgraduate	255	29.2

The demographics distribution shows that the samples are evenly divided between males and females. The majority of participants (38.8%) were between the ages of 21 and 25, with the undergraduate students the largest educational group.

Research Question One

What relationship exists between social media use and youth social behaviour?

Table 2: Pearson Correlation between Social Media Use and Youth Social Behaviour

Variables	Mean	SD	r	p-value
Social Media Use	3.87	0.68		
Youth Social Behaviour	3.61	0.72	0.482	< .001

The findings show that social media use had a moderate positive, but statistically significant relationship with youth social behaviour ($r = .482$, $p < .001$). This implies that positive social media engagement has a positive correlation with the communication, collaboration and social interaction that is observed among Nigeria's youths.

Research Question Two

How does social media use influence social cohesion among Nigerian youths?

Table 3: Regression Analysis of Social Media Use and Social Cohesion

Variable	β	t	p-value
Social Media Use	0.274	7.83	< .001

Model Summary: $R = .274$, $R^2 = .075$, $F(1,870) = 61.29$, $p < .001$.

The results show that social media use has a significant positive effect on social cohesion and accounts for 7.5% of the variability in social cohesion. This means that good social media practices foster networking, community involvement and social interaction among young people.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

Research Question Three

What effect does social media use have on educational development?

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	SD	Decision
Educational Collaboration	4.11	0.71	High
Access to Learning Resources	4.18	0.69	High
Digital Literacy	4.05	0.73	High
Academic Concentration	2.63	0.91	Low
Time Management	2.58	0.95	Low

The results suggest mixed results. Social media in education was reported to support learning collaboration, the reach to learning resources, and digital literacy by respondents. They also noted that overuse has a negative impact on academic focus and time management.

Research Question Four

Does gender influence the relationship between social media use and youth social behaviour?

Table 5: Independent Samples t-test

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	p-value
Male	431	3.59	0.71		
Female	441	3.64	0.73	1.04	.299

The analysis shows **no statistically significant gender difference** in youth social behaviour associated with social media use ($t = 1.04$, $p = .299$).

Research Question Five

To what extent does the frequency of social media use predict youth social behaviour?

Table 6: Multiple Regression Analysis

Predictor	β	t	p-value
Frequency of Use	0.366	10.52	< .001
Educational Purpose	0.294	8.14	< .001
Entertainment Purpose	-0.181	-4.63	< .001

Model Summary: $R = .612$, $R^2 = .375$, Adjusted $R^2 = .372$, $F(3,868) = 173.64$, $p < .001$.

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Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

The model accounts for 37.5% of the variance of the children's social behaviour. Educational use and frequency of usage of social media were positive indicators of desirable social behaviour while entertainment oriented use was significant in predicting less desirable social behaviour.

Hypothesis One

H_{02}: Youth use social media in a way that is unrelated to their social behaviour. Pearson correlation analysis showed that there was a significant correlation between social media use and social behavior of youth ($r = .482$; $p < .001$). Thus, H_{01} was rejected.

Hypothesis Two

Alternative hypothesis (H_1): Social media significantly affects the social cohesion of youths in Nigeria. To assess the impact of social media use on social cohesion, a regression analysis was carried out and showed that social media use significantly predicted social cohesion ($\beta = .274$, $p < .001$). Thus, H_{02} was accepted.

Hypothesis Three

H_{03}: There is no significant relationship between the use of social media and educational development. But, regression results showed that the use of social media significantly affected educational development ($p < .001$). Collaborative learning and digital literacy showed positive effects and concentration and time management showed negative effects. So, H_{03} was rejected.

Hypothesis Four

Alternative hypotheses are tested by comparing the results to those found in the H_{04}.Comparisons are made with the result of the research for the alternative hypotheses - H_{04}. There was no significant difference between the females and males, $p = .299$, using the independent samples t-test. So, H_{04} was retained.

Hypothesis Five

H_0: There is no significant difference between the frequency of social media use and the social behaviour of youth. The result of multiple regression analysis revealed that frequency of social media use significantly predicted the social behavior of the youth ($p < .001$, $\beta = .366$). So, H_{05} was rejected.

Discussion of Findings

The current study investigated the effect of using social media on the social behavior of the youths in Nigeria and implications for social cohesion and education. The results show

that social media offers positive and negative effects on the youths of Nigeria relating to their use and purpose, and the attitude to its use. The study revealed that there was a positive significant relationship between the use of social media and social behaviour of youths. This finding indicates that youth communicate, collaborate, socially network, and interact with others though responsible social media use. This finding confirms the Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) in the process of learning a behaviour, people learn what to do by their observations and interactions with the people around them. Youth can engage with positive role models and in constructive discussions, build interpersonal skills and get involved in civil engagement through social media that supports positive behavioural development. It aligns with the perspective of Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) that social media allow interactive communication, collaborative knowledge creation and relationship building. Likewise, Klanjšek et al. (2024) found that positive interaction on social media positively influences students' sense of belonging, social connectedness, and educational involvement. The discovery also corroborates the findings of Lawal and Ifegbesan (2024) who noted that educational purposeful social media usage among Nigerian undergraduates facilitates collaborative learning, responsible digital use, and positive behavioural outcomes among them.

The study also found that use of social media significantly affects social cohesion of youths in Nigeria. Respondents indicated that social media helps them to network, to be part of a community, to gather information and to become involved in civic life. The results reveal that digitally supported relationships can become stronger and it can be fostering togetherness for community development, if used responsibly. Social media is a space for reach and mixing in a multicultural society like Nigeria, enabling people to exchange ideas and feelings with others who have various cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds, and fostering understanding and social inclusion. The effect on social cohesion was statistically significant but the amount of variance accounted for by social media use was relatively small. This indicates that factors outside of social cohesion like family values, educational experiences, socioeconomic status, cultural orientation and government policies play a role. Social media needs to be seen as one of a number of influences that contributes to social cohesion, not a defining factor. The first significant result of the study relates to the double impact of social media on educational development. The findings showed that the use of social media platforms helps to improve collaborative learning, access to education, digital literacy, academic communication, and all of these are significant. Students will find many opportunities to use platforms like WhatsApp, YouTube, Telegram, or Google Classroom to receive instruction, share academic information, engage in group conversations and enhance their learning experience. The results corroborate with Elekwa and Douglas-Chukwu

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

(2022) who reported that social media was effective when properly incorporated in the teaching and learning process.

The study also confirmed that social media usage has a significant effect on social cohesion of the youths in Nigeria. The respondents said that social media helps them in building networks, involvement in communities, sharing of information, and civic engagement. The results suggest that when digital platforms are leveraged responsibly, they can help to enhance the social aspect of a service and promote a sense of community participation in developing communities. In a multicultural society like Nigeria, social media offers responsiveness to both individuals and groups of different ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds which in turn facilitates understanding and inclusion within society. The effect on social cohesion, however, was statistically significant, but the amount of variance accounted for by social media use was comparatively small. Other factors beyond family values, education, and socioeconomic status, cultural orientation, and government policies play a role in social cohesion. Thus, social media should be seen as creating a social cohesion that is part of a range of effects and not its exclusive cause.

An important result of the study lies in the double phenomenon of social media on educational development. The findings highlighted the significance of social media in improving the collaborative learning, the access to the learning resources, the digital literacy, and the academic communication. Students are increasingly using websites like WhatsApp, YouTube, Telegram, and Google Classroom to get their coursework, share academic information, join group classes and enhance their learning. The results support Elekwa and Douglas-Chukwu (2022) which indicated that, when integrated properly in the teaching and learning process, social media is an effective educational tool.

On the other hand, the research also indicated that the overuse of social media for recreation is detrimental to the focus of study and time management. Respondents agreed that being exposed to entertainment-type content can decrease study time, can be a cause for procrastination and can be distracting from tasks. This result correlates with that of Ngonso et al. (2024) which revealed that overuse of social media by young people in Nigeria is related to poor concentration, behavioural issues and poor academic engagement. Likewise, Ofoegbu (2023) noted that misuse of social media leads to erosion of values, misinformation and behaviours that can affect education and society. Another interesting result of the study is that there is no statistically significant difference between women and men in terms of the impact of social media on young peoples' social behavior. This indicates that male and female youth are likely to have the same behavioural outcomes as a result of social media use. Finding suggests that instead, behavioural impacts of social media are linked to use and patterns rather than gender. With internet penetration and smart phone usage steadily growing across all groups in Nigeria, it looks like it is converging towards a similar experience for both males and females.

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Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

The regression analysis also revealed that the frequency of social media usage and the intent of using social media is significant in predicting the social behaviour of youth. A positive relationship was found between the orientation of the use and pro-social behavior in the case of the education-oriented use, while a negative relationship was found in the case of the entertainment-oriented use. The result confirms the tenets of Uses and Gratifications Theory, which assumes that people select media choices that meet specific needs and that the outcomes of media consumption are directly related to media users' motives. Thus, there is no such thing as a negative or positive use of social media, it is what people do with it that makes it either bad or good. In sum, the evidence suggests that social media is an effective socialization agent that affects the behaviours of Nigerian youths, their educational experiences and social relationships. It has positive implications for communications, collaborative learning, digital literacy, civic engagement and social connectedness. However, overuse and improper management can actually cause distraction, poor academic concentration, misinformation, cyber-bullying, and poor interpersonal relationships. The results have several significant implications for the fields of sociology, education, and public policy. First, the schools must incorporate digital citizenship and responsible social media use across the curriculum to teach students how to use digital technology ethically and responsibly. Second, parents, educators, and community members should give students and adults a positive example of balanced social media use, by encouraging them to use educational apps and discouraging overconsumption of entertainment. Third, Digital Literacy programmes should be reinforced and the policy makers should work with technology firms and entities to limit the distribution of harmful online material and foster safe environments online. This will help the Nigerian youths reap maximum benefits from the educational and social utility of social media and reduce potential risks of social media.

The results indicate that social media has both positive and negative impacts, and can be used as a platform to support educational initiatives. Instead its effect on young people's social behaviour, social cohesion and education outcomes depends on the quality, purpose and level of engagement. Hence, fostering responsible digital citizenship and educationally purposeful social media usage should continue to be crucial in enhancing social cohesion and thus, sustainable educational development in Nigeria.

Certainly. The last part of the manuscript (Page 15) is prepared in the style that is generally followed by Scopus-indexed and Web of Science-indexed sociology journals.

Conclusion

This study examined how the use of social media was affecting the social behavior of youths in Nigeria and the implications for social cohesion and educational development. The results reveal the effectiveness of social media as a socialization tool that has positive

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

and negative impacts on Nigerian youths. Use of social media, as well as responsible and education-oriented, alongside excessive and entertainment-oriented, has a positive effect on communication, cooperative learning, digital literacy, social interaction and civic involvement, while the latter has a negative impact on the ability to focus on the task and its time management, and on behavioural problems. The research also found that there is a strong link between the use of social media and the social behaviour, social cohesion and educational development of youth. But, the researchers found no difference between the behavioral impacts of social media when there was a gender divide, indicating little distinction in the digital experience of Nigerian youths regardless of gender. Further, the frequency and function of the users' social media activity was found to be a significant factor in the prediction of behavioural outcomes, highlighting that there was some benefit or harm to social media use depending on how these platforms are used. In conclusion, the results indicate that social media can't be necessarily good or bad. Instead, its effect relies on the users' digital literacy, self-regulation, motivations and engagement patterns. It is therefore imperative to promote responsible digital citizenship and educationally purposeful social media use to enhance social cohesion and sustainable educational development of youths in Nigeria.

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