

INVESTIGATING THE LEVEL OF PARENTAL FACEBOOK MEDIATION AMONG 15-19-YEAR-OLD TEENAGERS' FACEBOOK USE IN SOUTHEAST NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigates the level of parental Facebook mediation in 15-19-year-old teenagers' Facebook use in southeast Nigeria. It embodies four research objectives and four research questions, and its theoretical framework is social learning theory. It adopted questionnaires and informant interviews as primary instruments for data collection and journal articles and books as secondary data sources. The quantitative survey sample size was 400, obtained through the Taro Yamane formula. Also, the sample size of the qualitative survey is 40, calculated based on Hagaman and Wutich's data saturation method. The study presented and analysed its data using a 5-Likert scale, simple percentages, and weighted mean scores. The finding showed a low level of parental mediation, as the parents never helped the teens to know how to set Facebook's privacy, set rules about the time for their Facebook use, or inspire a discussion about their Facebook-related issues. The findings also indicated that parents rarely explained the importance of online safety to teens. Hence, the study, among other measures, recommends media literacy for parents and teens.

Keywords: Facebook, Facebook mediation, media literacy, Parents, Teenagers

Introduction

Today, Facebook is the foremost social networking site, followed by YouTube and WhatsApp (Dixon, 2024a; Statista, 2024; Orioque, 2021). As of February 9, 2024, the fourth quarter of 2023, Facebook has approximately 2.1 billion daily active users and 3.1 billion monthly active users (Statista, 2024b; Dixon, 2024; Kemp, 2024). Besides Google and YouTube, Facebook is the third most visited site (Kemp, 2019; SimilarWeb, 2024). Studies have also shown that Facebook users are mainly young (Alonzo, 2019).

Another striking thing about Facebook is that it is subject to proper use or abuse, leading to its positive and negative uses. Positively, Facebook aids in interpersonal relationships, connects users to their friends and family members, serves educational and medical purposes, and enables users to engage in online meetings and conferences, share videos, photos, etc. (Chowdhury & Saha, 2015). Negatively, users can use Facebook to engage in privacy invasions and cyber-crimes such as cyber-bullying, cyber-stalking, addiction, fear of missing out, smartphones, nomophobia etc. (Kuss & Griffiths, 2011 & 2017).

Studies have also shown that Facebook abuse negatively impacts young people's moral education (Siddiqui & Singh, 2016; Badawi, 2018; Griffiths, 2018; Synod of Bishops, 2018).

These moral issues pose enormous challenges to critical stakeholders of children's media literacy: parents, caregivers, teachers, government, and Facebook company owners. For instance, given the critical role Facebook plays in children's development, most parents felt it is better to devise ways of mediating their children's Facebook use to curtail the observed abuse and maximise the strength and opportunities the site presents. Previous studies showed several strategies these parents employed, such as restrictive mediation, active mediation, co-use, participatory learning, distant mediation, monitoring, interpretative, enabling, and wholeness approach (Nathason, 1999; Livingstone & Helsper, 2008; Zaman, Nouwen, Van Attenhoven, de Ferrers & Looy, 2016; Smahelova, Juhová, Cermak, & Smahel, 2017).

Despite the studies above, there remains an area that is still yearning for scientific or scholarly attention. This knowledge gap concerns the levels of parental Facebook mediation in South-East Nigeria, especially among young people. Hence, to fill this academic lacuna, this study focused on the levels of parental Facebook mediation in 15-19-year-old teenagers' Facebook use in South-East Nigeria. The geopolitical zone comprises five states: Imo, Abia, Anambra, Enugu, and Ebonyi, with a 2016 projected population of 21,955,414, based on the 2006 National Population Census (National Population Estimates, n.d).

Literature review

Reviewing related literature on the subject matter is crucial to appreciate this study. In order to achieve this, it is necessary to start with a definition of social media and, from there, move to social networking sites, such as Facebook. Hadiapurwa, Joelene, Nugraha, & Komara (2023) defined social media as interactive digital channels for virtually creating and sharing information, ideas, and interests through communities and networks. Kaplan Haenlein (2010) classified social media into six types: collaborative projects, content communities, blogs and microblogs, social networking sites, virtual games, and social worlds. Social networking sites. Boyd & Ellison (2007) described social networking sites as internet-mediated services that aid users to:

- i. Construct a public or a partially public profile within a bounded system;
- ii. Catalogue of other users with whom they share a common link and
- iii. See and navigate their connections and those of others.

Social networking sites include WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, etc.

Amante & Mendes (2017) described Facebook as a social network site that permits users to create profiles that join or combine information provided by themselves and their friends. Besides, Amante & Mendes (2017), like Boyd (2008), assigned four roles to Facebook: persistence, replicability, scalability, and searchability. Another crucial fact about Facebook is its merits and demerits (Mierzwa & Jurjewicz, 2016). Facebook helps **connect with friends, create communities, engage with customers, search for jobs, and sell goods and services** (Kerner, 2021). Negatively, it could encourage cyber-bullying and cyber-stalking and also lead to addiction, fear of missing out, smartphones, and nomophobia (Kuss & Griffiths, 2011 a & b; Kuss & Griffiths, 2017).

Given the harmful effects of Facebook, parents have put some measures in place to ensure teens' responsible use of the site. The strategies include restrictive mediation (involving time, device, content, location, and purchase), co-use, active mediation, participatory learning, distant mediation, and a wholeness approach (Zaman *et al.* 2016). Smahelova *et al.* (2017) added supervision, parent as a role model, and trial and error to the above list.

There is also the issue of parents' level of mediation on their teens' Facebook use. Here, the emphasis is on whether they do it multiple times daily, weekly, monthly, or never. A related

literature here is Yardi (2012). The work did not deal with the level of parents' Facebook use; rather, it considered why parents fail to set rules concerning their children's online behaviour. The paper argued that such a situation occurs because parents do not have a clear goal for the rules and why they exist. Hence, in doubt, the best option is to suspend action (*in dubio non agere*). It implies that there is a knowledge gap in the subject matter of this study. Subsequently, this study investigates the levels of parental Facebook mediation in 15-19-year-old teenagers' Facebook use in South-East Nigeria.

Research objectives

Principally, this study investigates the levels of parental Facebook mediation in 15-19-year-old teenagers' Facebook use in South-East Nigeria. Specifically, it aims to

- i. Examines how frequently parents explain the importance of using Facebook safely to 15-19-year-old teenagers in South-East Nigeria,
- ii. Explore how regularly parents help 15-19-year-old teenagers to know how to set Facebook's privacy,
- iii. Determine how frequently parents set rules about the time of Facebook use for 15-19-year-old teenagers in South-East Nigeria,
- iv. Ascertain how regularly parents inspire 15-19-year-old teenagers in South-East Nigeria to discuss their Facebook-related problems with them.

Research questions

This study rests on four research questions following the abovementioned research objectives, namely:

- i. How frequently did parents explain the importance of using Facebook safely to 15-19-year-old teenagers in South-East Nigeria?
- ii. How regularly did parents help set Facebook privacy for 15-19-year-old teenagers in South-East Nigeria?
- iii. How frequently did parents set rules for 15-19-year-old teenagers about the time for Facebook use?
- iv. How regularly did parents inspire 15-19-year-old teenagers to discuss their Facebook-related problems with them?

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework for this study is social learning theory propounded by Albert Bandura in 1977/94 (Bandura, 1977). The basic tenets of the theory are the following:

- i. Learning occurs through observing others' behaviours.
- ii. Learning can also occur when one models or imitates others' behaviours.
- iii. Adopting the model proposed through social learning reinforces behaviours.

The theory helps one to analyse and understand the effects of television violence. Anaeto, Onabajo, & Osifeso (2008) underpinned that it applies to other areas of mass media effects. However, this theory applies to this study as it shows a correlation between parental mediation and teens' Facebook use, given that teens view parents as role models and learn from them through observations and imitation.

Research methodology

This study adopted a quantitative (questionnaire-based) and qualitative (semi-structured informant interviews-based) survey research design. The study population is 2,329,408, 2016 projected population of 15-19-year-old teenagers in the South-East (National Population Estimates, n.d). The quantitative survey sample is 400, obtained through the Taro Yamane formula. Besides, the qualitative survey sample size is 40, derived using Hagaman & Wutich's

(2017) data saturation method. The study's secondary sources are books, journals, the Internet, etc. Further, it presented and analysed data using a 5-Likert scale, simple percentages, and weighted mean scores.

Data presentation and analysis

The data presentation and analysis comprise quantitative and qualitative data. The former involves a tabular portrayal of the four research questions outlined above in a 5-Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree - Strongly Disagree. The latter follows it. It is better to undertake the presentation and analysis seriatim, beginning with research question one (RQ), where the enclosed abbreviation RQ designates the Research Question.

RQ1: How frequently did parents explain the importance of using Facebook safely to 15-19-year-old teenagers in South-East Nigeria?

The researcher asked the respondents to rate the four questions in Table 1 below to address research question one. The table also portrays the outcome of the inquiry.

Table 1: Parents explaining of the importance of using Facebook safely

Indices	SA 5	A 4	U 3	D 2	SD 1	Σf	Σfx	WMS X	Remarks
1. My parents explain the importance of using Facebook safely to me multiple times a day	40	24	9	116	197	386 100%	752	1.95	Rejected
2. My parents explain the importance of using Facebook safely to me weekly	50	78	7	146	105	386 100%	980	2.54	Rejected
3. My parents explain the importance of using Facebook safely to me monthly	18	10	2	102	254	386 100%	594	1.54	Rejected
4. My parents rarely explain to me the importance of using Facebook safely.	98	199	3	68	18	386 100%	1449	3.75	Accepted

Table 1, index 1, shows that 313 respondents disagreed that their parents explain the importance of using Facebook safely to them multiple times daily. Index 2 shows that 251 disagreed that their parents did so weekly. Likewise, index 3 shows that 356 held that they did not do it monthly. The weighted mean in each of the above cases is below the average mean core, leading to the rejection of the propositions. However, given that index 4 indicates that 297 respondents admitted that their parents rarely explain the importance to them, and the weighted mean score is 3.75, it is accepted.

In the qualitative analysis, the 40 interviewees were asked whether their parents explained the importance of using Facebook safely multiple times a day, weekly, monthly, or rarely. Their responses verify the result of the quantitative analysis above. Therefore, the findings from the

analysis of research question 1 show that parents rarely explain the importance of using Facebook safely to 15-19-year-old teens in South-East Nigeria.

RQ 2: How regularly did parents help set Facebook privacy for 15-19-year-old teenagers in South-East Nigeria?

To deal with research question two, the researcher asked the respondents to evaluate four questions enclosed in Table 2 below. The table likewise depicts the outcome of the investigation.

Table 2: Parents setting of Facebook's privacy

Indices	SA 5	A 4	U 3	D 2	SD 1	Σf	Σfx	WMS X	Remarks
5. My parents helped me learn how to set Facebook's privacy multiple times daily.	21	20	5	242	98	386 100%	782	2.03	Rejected
6. My parents helped me to learn how to set Facebook's privacy weekly.	30	45	12	198	101	386 100%	863	2.24	Rejected
7. My parents helped me to know how to set Facebook's privacy monthly.	26	12	9	243	96	386 100%	787	2.04	Rejected
8. My parents never helped me to learn how to set Facebook's privacy.	122	110	14	68	72	386 100%	1300	3.37	Accepted

Table 2, index 5 shows that 340 respondents disagreed that their parents helped them learn how to set Facebook's privacy multiple times a day. Index 6 shows that 239 held that their parents did not do that weekly. Index 7 indicates that 339 noted that they did not do it monthly either. The weighted mean score in each case above is below the minimum mean score, so the propositions are rejected. Index 8, however, affirmed that 232 observed that they never helped them set it, and the weighted mean score is 3.75, leading to the acceptance of the proposition.

Under qualitative survey research design, the researcher asked the 40 interviewees whether their parents helped them to know how to set Facebook's privacy multiple times a day, weekly, monthly, or never. Their responses corroborate the findings of the quantitative analysis above. Therefore, the quantitative and qualitative analysis findings indicate that most parents of 15-19-year-old teens in Southeast Nigeria never help them to know how to set Facebook's privacy.

RQ 3: How frequently did parents set rules for 15-19-year-old teenagers about the time for Facebook use?

To tackle research question three, the researcher raised four questions to the respondent, as shown in Table 3 below. The table also depicts the results of their responses.

Table 3: Parents setting rules about the time of teens' Facebook use.

Indices	SA 5	A 4	U 3	D 2	SD 1	Σf	Σfx	WMS X	Remarks
9. My parents set rules about my time on Facebook multiple times a day.	18	22	4	241	101	386 100%	773		Rejected
10. My parents set weekly rules about my time on Facebook.	33	36	10	223	84	386 100%	869	2.25	Rejected
11. My parents set monthly rules about my time on Facebook.	26	21	11	203	125	386 100%	778	2.02	Rejected
12. My parents never set rules about my time on Facebook.	125	105	13	98	45	386 100%	1325	3.43	Accepted

Table 3, index 9 shows that 342 respondents admitted that their parents do not set rules about the time for Facebook use multiple times a day. Index 10 reveals that 307 respondents admitted that their parents do not also set rules weekly. Index 11 shows that 328 respondents disagreed that parents set the rules monthly. Also, Index 12 shows that 230 respondents acknowledged that their parents never set the rules. The propositions embodying indices 9-11 are rejected because their weighted mean scores are below average. However, since the weighted mean score of the index 12 is above the minimum, it is accepted.

In the domain of qualitative analysis, the researcher asked the 40 interviewees whether their parents set rules about their time on Facebook multiple times a day, weekly, monthly, or rarely. Their responses confirm the findings of the quantitative analysis above. Hence, the findings from the analysis of research question 3 indicate that most parents of 15-19-year-old teens in Southeast Nigeria never set rules about time for Facebook use

RQ 4: How regularly did parents inspire 15-19-year-old teenagers to discuss their Facebook-related problems with them?

The researcher asked the respondents four questions to address research question four, as shown in Table 3 below. Besides the table depicts the outcome of their responses.

Table 4: Parents inspiring teens to discuss their Facebook-related problems with them.

Indices	SA 5	A 4	U 3	D 2	SD 1	Σf	Σfx	WMS X	Remarks
13. My parents inspire me to discuss my Facebook - related problems with them multiple times a day.	32	20	15	164	155	386 100%	768	1.99	Rejected
14. My parents inspire me to discuss my Facebook - related problems with them weekly.	27	18	7	158	176	386 100%	720	1.87	Rejected
15. My parents inspire me to discuss my Facebook - related problems with them monthly.	25	20	6	170	165	386 100%	728	1.87	Rejected
16. My parents never inspire me to discuss my Facebook -related problems with them.	49	195	10	96	36	386 100%	1283	3.32	Accepted

Table 4, index 13 indicates that 319 respondents said their parents did not inspire them to discuss their Facebook-related problems with them multiple times daily. Index 14 shows that 334 objected to their parents inspiring them weekly. Index 15 shows that 335 disagreed that their parents inspire them along the same line monthly. The weighted mean scores for the three cases above are below the minimum mean score. However, 244 respondents admitted that their parents never inspired them to discuss their Facebook-related problems. Therefore, the findings show that parents of 15-19-year-old teens in Southeast Nigeria never inspire them to discuss their Facebook-related problems with them.

Under the qualitative research survey, the 40 interviewees were asked whether their parents inspire them to discuss their Facebook-related problems with them multiple times a day, weekly, monthly, or never. Their responses validate the result of the quantitative analysis above. The research further inquired why the above low level of parental Facebook mediation was in the zone. The interviewee credited the situation to parents' lack of adequate Facebook regulating knowledge. Thus, the analysis of research question 4 shows that parents of 15-19-year-old teens in SouthEast Nigeria never inspire them to discuss their Facebook-related problems with them. Besides, the findings indicate a generally low parental Facebook mediation, given the parents' lack of proper knowledge of such exercise.

Discussion of findings

The analysis of the first research question reveals a low level of parental Facebook mediation of

Facebook use among 15-19-year-old teens in the South-East, as shown in indices 1-4 in Table 1. Index 1 indicates that 313 (81.09%) respondents disagreed that their parents explained the importance of using Facebook safely multiple times daily. Index 2 shows that 251 (65.02%) disagreed that their parents did so weekly, while index 3 portrays that 356 (92.23%) held that they did not do it monthly. Index 4 shows that 297 (76.94%) respondents noted that their parents did it rarely. The qualitative analysis also corroborates the above findings.

Hence, the above findings from the quantitative and qualitative analysis helped address the first research question by asserting that *Parents rarely explain the importance of using Facebook safely to 15-19-year-old teens in South-East Nigeria, depicting a low level of parental Facebook mediation in the zone.*

The findings above validate Wisniewski, Xu, Rosson, & Carroll (2017), who discovered that most teens had little or no communication with their parents concerning their online risk experiences and that parents and teens shared very dissimilar perceptions and reactions when risks were reported, providing the rationale for understanding why communication was so poor. Likewise, the findings verify social learning theory, which stresses how teens learn by observing and imitating role models. So, teens would view parental emphasis on online safety as a model to follow.

The analysis of the second research question indicates that most parents of 15-19-year-old teens in Southeast Nigeria never helped them know how to set Facebook privacy, as depicted in Table 2 indices 5-8. Index 5 reveals that 340 respondents stated that their parents did not help them learn how to set Facebook's privacy multiple times daily. Index 6 shows that 239 respondents noted that their parents did not help do so weekly, while index 7 reveals that 339 respondents observed that their parents did not help do so monthly. Besides, index 8 shows that 232 respondents held that their parents never helped them to do so. The qualitative analysis involving 40 interviewees corroborates the above findings.

Hence, the findings from the quantitative and qualitative analysis helped the researcher to respond to the second research question thus: *most parents of 15-19-year-old teens in Southeast Nigeria never helped them know how to set Facebook's privacy.*

The findings confirm Yardi (2012), who contended that parents fail to set rules regarding their children's online behaviour because they lack a clear goal for the rules and why they exist. Also, the findings verify social learning theory as it reveals the import of observation, imitation, and reinforcement in modelling of behaviours. Hence, it shows that the lack of parental role modelling affects 15-19-year-old South-East teens knowing how to set Facebook's privacy.

Also, the quantitative analysis of the third research question shows that most parents of 15-19-year-old teens in Southeast Nigeria never set rules about the time for Facebook use, as shown in Table 3, indices 9-12. Index 9 reveals that 342 respondents agreed they did not set such rules multiple times daily. Index 10 indicates that 307 noted that their parents did not do so weekly, while index 11 observed that their parents did not do it monthly. Nonetheless, index 12 affirmed that 230 said their parents never set such a rule, and the weighted mean score is 3.43, and accepted, being above the minimum mean score. Interestingly, the qualitative analysis validates the above findings.

Therefore, the quantitative and qualitative analysis findings helped the researcher address the third research question: *most parents of 15-19-year-old teens in Southeast Nigeria never set rules*

about the time for their Facebook use.

The findings authenticate Yardi (2012), who reasoned that parents fail to set rules about their children's online behaviour as they are deficient in knowledge about the goal of the rules and why they exist. Further, the findings verify social learning theory, given that parents' failure to set rules regarding the time of teens' Facebook use affects them negatively, as it fails to provide a model worth emulating.

Equally, the quantitative analysis of the fourth research question shows that most parents of 15-19-year-old teens in South-East Nigeria never inspire them to discuss their Facebook-related concerns, as portrayed in Table 4, indices 13-16. Index 13 shows that 319 respondents believed their parents did not inspire them to relate their Facebook issues to them multiple times daily. Index 14 noted that 334 observed that their parents did not encourage them weekly, while index 15 indicates that 335 admitted that their parents did not inspire them monthly. Nevertheless, index 16 shows that 244 respondents observed that their parents never encouraged them accordingly. Thus, the findings from the above analysis show that most parents of 15-19-year-old teens in Southeast Nigeria never inspire them to discuss their Facebook-related issues. The qualitative research survey involving 40 interviewees corroborates the above findings. However, it went further to ascertain the reason for the low level of parental mediation and found out that the situation accrued from parents' lack of adequate knowledge for regulating teens' Facebook use.

Thus, quantitative and qualitative analysis findings helped the researcher address the fourth research question: *Parents of 15-19-year-old teens in Southeast Nigeria never inspire them to discuss their Facebook-related problems with them. Besides, the findings indicate that the low level of parental Facebook mediation was due to the parents' lack of adequate knowledge of such exercise.*

The findings also corroborate those of Wisniewski et al. (2017), who observed that most teens had little or no communication about their online risk involvement with their parents. Undeniably, parents of such teens cannot encourage them to discuss their Facebook-related issues. Besides, the findings confirm social learning theory, which accents learning by observation, imitation, and reinforcement. The theory explains why parents' failure to encourage teens on Facebook-related issues is counterproductive.

Summary of findings

This study investigated the level of parental mediation among 15-19-year-old teens in Southeast Nigeria. It arrived at the following findings:

- i. Parents rarely explain the importance of using Facebook safely to 15-19-year-old teens in South-East Nigeria, depicting a low level of parental Facebook mediation in the zone.
- ii. Most parents of 15-19-year-old teens in South-East Nigeria never helped them know how to set Facebook's privacy.
- iii. Most parents of 15-19-year-old teens in South-East Nigeria never set rules about the time for their Facebook use.
- iv. Parents of 15-19-year-old teens in South-East Nigeria never inspire them to discuss their Facebook-related problems with them. Besides, the findings indicate that the low level of parental Facebook mediation was due to the parents' lack of adequate knowledge of such exercise.

Conclusion

Facebook is a foremost social networking site. It has positive and negative effects. As a result,

most parents are concerned about maximising the constructive aspect and reducing the adversative side. However, this study investigated the level of this parental Facebook mediation towards 15-19-year-old teens in Southeast Nigeria. It approached it via four dimensions designated as the research objectives of this study. The result of the investigation generally showed a low level of parental mediation in teens' Facebook use. Such is obvious from the fact that 15-19-year-old teens never inspired them to deal with Facebook issues nor helped set privacy rules, etc. Parent's failure in the above regard accrued from their lack of Facebook expertise. Hence. Media literacy, among others, is recommended to salvage the situation.

Recommendations

in order to remedy the lapses noticed in this investigation, this study recommends the following:

- i. Parents should constantly engage in media literacy to update their Facebook knowledge and teach their teens the basics about Facebook.
- ii. Parents should teach their teens how to set Facebook's privacy to save them from online risks. Where they cannot perform that role in person, they should employ the services of responsible Facebook experts.
- iii. Parents should regulate the time teens spend on Facebook to avoid deploying study time on Facebook.
- iv. Parents should allow teens to share their Facebook experiences with them to avoid sharing them with those who may ruin them.

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