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Impact of Social Media and Peer Pressure on Moral Disengagement among Secondary School Students in Onitsha North LGA, Anambra State

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ABSTRACT

Nigerian students are at a crossroads because of the rapid erosion of the value system in Nigeria, not because of corruption, unemployment, and poverty. The emergence of social media and peer influence has a different impact. This study explored the effects of social media and peer pressure on moral disengagement among secondary school students in Onitsha North LGA of Anambra State. The research sample size was 400 secondary school students selected through a multi-stage sampling technique from a population of 1,400 secondary school students in 12 government secondary schools in the Onitsha Education Zone. The results show that the presence of participants on social media, such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, etc., is quite high, with more than half of the population 167 (50.9%) always using social media. These findings also reveal the high use of social media among students, which may hurt student life, especially moral life. It was also confirmed that friendship and fun were the main satisfactions students got from social media, with a combined rate of 68% for 238 students. In addition, peer pressure has a negative (but not significant) impact on students' moral disengagement. However, this impact did not reach a substantial proportion at $\beta = 0.06$, $p > 0.05$ ($n = 389$), which means that the results did not support the first hypothesis, so it was rejected. Social media has a positive and significant impact on students' moral disengagement at $\beta = 0.49$, $p < 0.05$ ($n = 389$). These findings reveal a directly proportional impact of social media use on students' moral disengagement. It is recommended that parents, teachers, and other guardians regulate internet exposure via social media in teenagers and young adults to prevent them from becoming too busy or becoming addicted.

1. Introduction

A lot has taken its toll on Nigerians; from poor leadership to mismanagement of the economic resources of the nation and from corruption to directionlessness and valuelessness. In these

circumstances the students are not immune as academic fruit of Nigerian educational system undeniably appears to be moribund and utterly useless (Solomon et al., 2020). There are very little or no jobs after school with tons of students graduated yearly from Nigerian Universities, Polytechnics, Colleges of Education and the secondary schools no thanks to institutional corruption in Nigeria (Etodike et al., 2018)-(Etodike & Ojiakor, 2020). Even so, when there are few jobs, they are scrambled for and given to the highest bidder (Onwujekwe et al., 2019). Also, the teachers across all boards are poorly trained and remunerated to impact on students the independent skills for entrepreneurship, a situation which teachers have pressed home demands with frequent industrial actions out of neglect from the government who are their employers (Ukaogo et al., 2021).

Within these confusions, the Nigerian secondary school student is in perpetual conflict to uphold the true meaning of education and have drifted from pole to pole in search of meaning (Anierobi et al., 2021). In this wanton wandering, the societal ills have taken their toll on them and have debased their true essence that majority of them now at very tender ages are losing the touch of morality and may become morally disengaged as a result of aggregated societal ills (Yu et al., 2023).

Moral disengagement is the process by which an individual convinces him or herself that ethical standards do not apply to him or herself within a particular situation or context (Mazzone et al., 2016), it is also where an individual or group of people distances themselves from the normal or usual ethical standards of behavior and then become convinced that new unethical behaviors are justified due to some perceived extenuating circumstances (Luo & Bussey, 2019). To disengage from the moral parlance; individuals find a justification for their actions irrespective of their social and moral consequences (Meter & Bauman, 2018). This justification is the sustenance of their deviations from the norm. According to Bandura in Tan (2024), usually, moral disengagement is a progressive deterioration of ethics and morality which occurs in stages until one is fully disengaged (Gomm, 2008), the process may take as much as eight critical stages till morally disengagement sets in (Xie et al., 2024).

One of the most important stage is leading to moral disengagement is 'justification.' In the instance of Nigerian unemployment rate and the bleak economic situation (Thornberg et al., 2018), many youths have found economic justification for engaging in all forms of internet crimes especially the much nick-named yahoo-yahoo. Thus, it could be said that to a great extent the economic woes of Nigeria is the driving force for moral disengagement among youths (S. I. Lazarus, 2018). This economic justification in addition to youths' envisioned hopelessness of the future (due to poor leadership in the country) may be catalyzing youths' involvement in various crimes with the pricking of their conscience (S. Lazarus et al., 2022). Most of the youths have equally seen it as

a means of livelihood and survival and have therefore found economic justification in the crimes (Nwosu et al., 2021).

Given youths' perception of their state of affairs, it is pertinent to probe the probable accelerators to moral disengagement among secondary school students (Brolin et al., 2020). One of the critical influencers of the students in their adolescent ages and young adult ages is the influence of peers and in the 21st century, the second is the mobile phone because of the access it provides for social media (Thurlow & Mroczek, 2012).

This study explored the influence of social media and peer group on moral disengagement of secondary school students situated in Onitsha North LGA, Anambra State (Brown, 2020). Specifically, the objectives of the study are as follows: (1) To determine the extent of presence of students on WhatsApp and Facebook. (2) To ascertain the gratification from usage of social media. (3) To identify the impact of peer group on moral behaviors of secondary school students in Onitsha Local Government Area. (4) To evaluate the impact of social media on moral values of secondary school students in Anambra State. The study will provide answers to the following questions: (1) To what extent are students present on WhatsApp and Facebook? (2) What are the gratifications derived from usage of social media? (3) How does peer group impact on the moral behaviors of secondary school students in Onitsha North Local Government Area? (4) To what extent do WhatsApp and Facebook influence the moral values of students?

2. Method

The study adopted a descriptive research design. According to Fab-Ukozor & Ojiakor (2020) descriptive design explores the prevalence and occurrence of a phenomenon or problem with a population. This study adopted this method because it is interested in exploring the impacts of social media and peer pressure on moral disengagement (Gomm, 2008). Thus, the proposed research design is suitable for this study among the variables of interest (Carr & Lesniewska, 2020). The method of this study is through survey which was actualized through the administration of research instruments in form of questionnaire (Button & Cross, 2017). The population of the study comprised 1,400 SS2 secondary school students in 12 public secondary schools in Onitsha Education Zone (Onitsha North, Onitsha South) of Anambra State (Source: Nwoka, Okafor & Nnubia 2022. The choice of students for this study is because they are living in urban metropolitan with a lot societal influence on the moral lives (Howard-Grenville, 2020).

The sample size of the study was 400 secondary school students using Taro Yemane's formula for the calculation. The sampling technique employed in obtaining participants of the study was Multi stage sampling procedure. A set of questionnaires on social media influence, peer pressure and moral disengagement were used as instruments for data collection for the study (Carroll et al.,

2017). Data that was collected in the study were analyzed in line with the research questions and hypotheses. Research questions were answered using means and descriptive statistics while the hypotheses were tested using independent t-test. This was done using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS 20). The decision rule was to accept the null hypothesis is the r value is greater than the table value at 0.05 level of significance (p > 0.05). Reject the null hypothesis is the r value is less than the table value at 0.05 level of significance (p < 0.05).

3. Theoretical Framework

According to Bandura 1977, The work is hinged on the social work learning theory of (Ayala-Enríquez & Guerrero-Dib, 2024). The social learning theory is credited to Albert Bandura; who in line with Kurt Lewin has assumed that human behavior is, in general, a function of the person plus the environment; a position that can be presented in the formula, B=F (P&E). By the term person here, Bandura essentially means cognitive factors, while the term environment he means the social models around as well as the circumstantial contingencies pressing upon the individual (Alqahtani, 2024).

According to Bandura, indeed, the entire three elements: the person, the behavior, and the environmental situations are highly interrelated variables, with each being capable of influencing the other, as follows: By this kind of image, Bandura emphasizes that behavior can either change a person's perceptions or rather be changed by them. In the same way, according to him, a person's perceptions can either introduce a change in the person's environment or the environment, introducing a change in the individual's perceptions (cognitions)(Yang & Salman, 2024). Lastly, and in the same way, behavior can be influenced by environmental circumstances, while environmental circumstances can also be modified by behavior (Jeong et al., 2024). Applied to adolescents, the theory could explain the seeming relationship between peer pressure, time management, and academic performance (Cheng et al., 2013). The implication is that some of the adolescent's behaviors may be outside his control as the theory clearly shows that the person, the behavior, and the environmental situations are highly interrelated, each influencing the other (Donalds & Osei-Bryson, 2019). Within the adolescent are some cognitive or personal factors which may make adolescents prone to certain behaviors. Within the environment, however, are some other factors, such as friends, peers, and significant others, that may contribute to how the adolescent lives his life and, by implication, manages his time (Clough, 2015). The theory is, therefore, very clear on the environmental possibilities within which the peers exist, lends the theory to the researcher's use in the work, and has been supported by Bakken in (Peck & Shu, 2018).

Social Media

It is undisputable that globalization coupled with technological advancements have been significantly successful in shrinking the world into a global village as predicted by Marshal McLuhan

(Drury, 2018). One of such advancement is quite evident in the internet and the popularity and acceptability of social media by various age groups in Nigeria and most especially among the youths and currently, teenagers (Enoh et al., 2014). It is an undeniable fact that social media commands a significant number of users worldwide of which students form a large chunk. Wiley and Sisson (2006) revealed that more than 90% of students use social media sites (Hasugian et al., 2020).

The extent of popularity is so high that there is an internet enabled phone in most homes in Nigeria especially in the urban areas (Wang, 2022). Before social media, teenagers have always sought and found identity within their social circle (Fusco et al., 2019). Most times, it was a worry to parents and society regarding the makeup of the said circle of friends (Meter & Bauman, 2018). As if it was not bad enough, social media came into the scene with features like privacy, anonymity and addiction (Xu, 2022). Thus, the proliferation of the internet has deepened human interactions with positive and negative outcomes of communication process (Shrubsole, 2021).

Communication by way of definition is "an interaction process through which person or groups relate to each other and share information, experiences and culture" (Okunna & Omenugha 2012 in Umeogu & Ojiakor, 2014). It is through such interactions that bridges and gulfs are bridged. It is also through such interactions that the world has become a global village through the advent of internet in general and social media to be specific. According to O' Riley 2007 in Mensah & Kyei, (2019), Since creation, Human beings have always been socially connected or networked. In the early 21st century, the internet saw the dawn of a new era of information sharing, social media, which is now a growing phenomenon on the internet (Hendrickson, 2024). Owing to its role of communication as one of the most fundamental aspect of human existence, communication has evolved from what it was during the pre- historic times to what it is today (Orokpo et al., 2018).

The arrival of the internet became a game changer for virtually every aspect of human existence. Many internet users rely on the internet for shopping, educational purposes, socialization, religion, politicking, fortune telling, business transactions and what have you (Pratt et al., 2011). Suffice it to say that internet is our life as we live it (Steinberg et al., 2009). Internet has become an essential part of our being and existence so much so that it has usurped the traditional and conventional ways of doing things with both positive and negative implications on the people and the society as a whole. Supporting this assertion is Adeyeye et al (2013) who quoting Kubani 2010 in Umeogu & Ojiakor (2014) opined that "with over "*500 million Facebook users, over 5o million tweets, over 450 million mobile internet users, and about 68 million bloggers, society has changed and there is a paradigm shift in the way things are done worldwide".* Research has also revealed that Nigeria is the highest internet market in Africa. In that case, one may not be presumptuous to conclude that the internet has indeed become our life. In relation to secondary school students who are the

population and focus of this study, how has social media which is a brainchild of the internet, coupled with peer group contributed to moral degradation in Nigeria?

Social media which actually relates to websites and applications that enable users create and share content or participate in social networking Merriam-Webster 2018 in Gupta (2023) refers to interactive web and mobile phones platforms through which individuals and communities share, co-create, and exchange information, ideas, photos, or videos within a virtual network (Naslund, 2016 in Singh, 2024). There are numerous social media sites that users can choose from. We have Badoo, LinkedIn, 2go, Telegram, WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and a host of others. However, in 2017, the top four social media sites were Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and Twitter (Statista, 2017 in Mensah & Kyei, 2019). However, according to Motteram et al., (2020), WhatsApp and Facebook are the most subscribed social media apps in Nigeria. This influenced the decision for the current study to focus on WhatsApp and Facebook at the exclusion of other social media platforms.

Before exploring social media downsides, it is worthy to note that there are good sides to the internet in literature. For instance, it contributes positively to the academia, boost to business, youth empowerment, promoted many entrepreneurs and influencers to limelight through their creative content on Facebook, Instagram, Tiktok, Vskit and others, (Umeogu & Ojiakor, 2014)-(Mensah & Kyei, 2019)-(Fab-Ukozor & Ojiakor, 2020). It also helps in administrative routines Stoltenberg (2024) and may equally assist work from home (C. Etodike & Ojiakor, 2020). In the negative, the advance social media is a hub of new world problems and challenges ranging from; job loss and unemployment (Etodike et al., 2018), sexual harassment (Anierobi et al., 2021), academic procrastination (Anierobi et al., 2021), cyber-loafing (Etodike & Ojiakor, 2020), dangerous in-vehicular dialogic communication while driving (Ojiakor, 2019), and vulnerability to sexual risk behavior (Etodike & Ojiakor, 2020).

In recent times, accessing Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp etc. can be done anywhere and at any time simply by the use of mobile phone (Luik, 2010 in Kumar & Nanda, 2024), and may I add, by anyone regardless of age and socio economic background. Indeed, the proliferation of mobile devices in all forms, sizes and shapes which is truly affordable to the students has increased youths' exposure and vulnerability to new media contents and associated risks (Szpilko et al., 2020). I also want to add that gone are the days when computers are needed to be hooked to the internet. Nowadays, phone manufacturers have reduced the cost and sophistication of so many phones that even once perceived small phones like 'Nokia torch' can now be connected to the internet. For a clearer picture, the number of internet users in Nigeria in 2022 is 80.93 million while the number of mobile connections in Nigeria is 187.9million (Statista, 2022) .

Peer Pressure

A peer group is a social group made up of people with similar social position who have similar interests and are roughly of the same age or within the same age bracket, (Ryan 2000 in Obiageli & Nasiru, 2021). A peer might be somebody you look up to in terms of behavior or someone you believe is your age or aptitude level (Hardcastle, 2002). For social and emotional developments, most human beings associate with their peers (Bos, 2020). It is however more glaring among adolescents or teenagers as the case may be (Kirnan, 2018). Being a member of a peer group presents advantages and disadvantages because most actions, emotions and character of members are influenced by their peers. Such conscious and unconscious influence is linked to peer pressure.

Peer pressure refers to the influences that peers can have on one another, or 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 (Hartney 2011; Weinfield, 2010)-(Sivasubramanian, 2007). While peer group is necessary for socialization and social development of a child, the disadvantages far outweighs the advantages especially in the face of technological savvyness of youngsters (Walters, 2019). For example, peer association is connected to adolescents' assertiveness challenges (Etodike et al., 2017 in Consiglio et al., 2023) and social mal-adjustment (Ifinedo, 2014).

Most times, teenagers are exposed to drug abuse, cheating, alcoholism, smoking, emotional relationship with opposite sex or same sex, misplaced priorities, loitering, partying and they all contribute to moral derailment (Arief 2011 in Obiageli & Nasiru, 2021). Nowadays, connecting with one another for both positive and negative acts becomes easier with social media. All one needs is to have an internet enabled phone and data or be in an area with free Wi-Fi (Walker et al., 2020). This explains the reason peer group is seen as contributing to moral disengagement among secondary school students in our society. Apart from the influence of peers, another factor that may be adversely influencing students' moral is their exposure to the social media which is the window to unlimited information and socialization. This is as a result of man's cleaving for social interaction.

Moral Disengagement

From observation, there has been a sharp decline in the moral values of Nigeria as a developing nation and most researchers like (Umeogu & Ojiakor, 2014)-(Mensah & Kyei, 2019)-(Etodike et al., 2018) and a host of others opined that the internet has the bulk of the blame for such derailment. Now, if the survival and progress of a country to a reasonable extent depends on the youths and their ability to steer the ship, what is the fate of Nigeria? With the combined influence of social media and peer group, what bunch of youths will Nigeria bring to the globalization table?

Moral disengagement refers to the process where an individual or group of people distance themselves from the normal or usual ethical standards of behavior and then become convinced that new unethical behaviors are justified due often to some perceived extenuating circumstances

(Pelton et al., 2004). Research Thornberg et al., (2018) has found that usually people or groups of people have to go through the process of moral disengagement in order to carry out unethical behavior. Timm, (2016) also contend that there are four stage processes by which people disengage morally in order to engage in unethical behavior. They are: (1) Firstly the individual or group has to mentally reconstruct or tell themselves a story or context where the action or actions being or about to be taken cannot be viewed as being immoral or unethical. This can include recourse to devices like 'others are doing it', or 'it's not against the law' for example. (2) Secondly they will usually reduce their own sense of importance or agency in their actions. This is usually done by blaming others, the organization, situation or context as the driver or originator of the actions. (3) Next they will fail to see or deny the consequences of the actions being undertaken or their inaction. (4) Lastly they will need to change how they perceive and regard the victim(s) by either downgrading their status, importance or the effect and impact on them.

Against this backdrop, one wonders to what extent social media and peer group contributed to derailment and degradation of the rectitude of morality in Nigeria especially among secondary school students (Bello et al., 2020). Consequently, the following hypotheses have been formulated to guide the inquiry into the impacts of social media and peer pressure on moral disengagement of students (Ukaogo et al., 2021). Peer group will positively and significantly impact moral disengagement behavior of secondary school students in Onitsha North Local Government Area. Social media will positively and significantly impact moral disengagement behavior of secondary school students in Onitsha North Local Government Area.

4. Result and Discussion

Presentation of Result

Table 1. SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE BY STUDENTS

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Always	167	50.9	50.9	50.9
Occasionally	100	27.7	27.7	78.5
Rarely	49	10.0	10.0	88.6
Almost Never	48	9.7	9.7	98.3
Never	25	1.7	1.7	100.0
Total	389	100.0	100.0	

From Table 1, it is observed that participants' presence on the social media such as whatsAppp, Facebook, instagram etc. is high with more than half of the population 167 (50.9%) indicating that they are always present on the social media. Also, 100 (27.7%) students indicated that they are occasional users while only 49 admitted using the social media rarely. Those who declined using any social media platform were only 25 whereas 48 admitted to almost never used social media

platforms. The findings revealed a high usage of social media among college students which may have negative impacts on the students' life especially the moral life.

Table 2. GRATIFICATION FROM SOCIAL MEDIA

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
For information	49	10.0	10.0	10.0
For fun	112	31.8	31.8	41.9
For relaxation	66	15.9	15.9	57.8
For friendship connection	126	36.7	36.7	94.5
For biz commercials	36	5.5	5.5	100.0
Total	389	100.0	100.0	

From Table 2, it is observed that participants mainly use social media for friendship and connection and fun at the rate of 126 (36.7%) and 112 (31.8%) respectively. This indicates that the major attraction and fascination of students about social media is that of making friends and being socially connected to the public and for the purpose of catching fun. This is worrisome as only 49 approximately 10.0% indicated using the social media for information purposes while only 5.5% (about 36 students) used it for biz commercials in terms of affiliate rewards. Additionally, 15.9% (66) students indicated that their gratification from social media use is based on using the platform form relaxation such as recreation. The finding raised concerns on the potential dangers social media usage may have on students especially on their moral life considering that most the students are using social media for less important things.

Table 3. IMPACT OF PEER GROUP ON THE MORAL DISENGAGEMENT

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	36.606	3.820		9.583	.000
1 Peer Pressure	-.062	.049	-.065	-1.265	.207
SociM	.651	.069	.487	9.401	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Moral Disengagement

Result from Table 3 reveals that there is a negative impact of peer pressure on students' moral disengagement; however, this impact did not reach significant proportion at $\beta = .06$, $p > .05$ (n = 389). The result means that though moral disengagement of students seems to increase with decrease in peer pressure, but it is not substantiated by the statistical finding implying that the result does not support the hypothesis and thus rejected.

Table 4. IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE MORAL DISENGAGEMENT

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	36.606	3.820		9.583	.000
1 Peer Pressure	-.062	.049	-.065	-1.265	.207
SociM	.651	.069	.487	9.401	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Moral Disengagement

Result from Table 4 above reveals that there is a positive and significant impact of social media on students' moral disengagement at β = .49, p < .05 (n = 389). The result means that students' moral disengagement is positively impacted by their social media usage such that the higher the students' social media use the higher their moral disengagement and the lower the students' social media use the lower their moral disengagement. The finding revealed a direct proportional impact of social media use on students' moral disengagement.

Summary of Findings

The following findings were garnered from the study: (1) Participants' presence on the social media such as whatsAppp, Facebook, instagram etc. is high with more than half of the population 167 (50.9%) always on social media. The findings revealed a high usage of social media among college students which may have negative impacts on the students' life especially the moral life. (2) It was observed that friendship connection and fun was the main gratification students get from social media at a combined rate of 68% for 238 students. (3) There is a negative (but not significant) impact of peer pressure on students' moral disengagement; however, this impact did not reach significant proportion at β = .06, p > .05 (n = 389) implying that the result does not support the hypothesis one and thus rejected. (4) There is a positive and significant impact of social media on students' moral disengagement at β = .49, p < .05 (n = 389). The finding revealed a direct proportional impact of social media use on students' moral disengagement.

Discussion of Findings

This study evaluated the impact of peer group and social media exposure on students' moral behavior among secondary school students in Onitsha North LGA of Anambra State. The study utilized quantitative survey method to elicit participants' responses using two research questions and two hypotheses. At the end of the data analysis revealed the secondary school students' use of social media was high and many used it for fun surfing and friendship with a few students using it for information and commercial purposes. In analyzing the hypotheses, the findings revealed that only one hypothesis was confirmed while the other was rejected. The finding from the hypotheses is thus discussed.

In hypothesis one, the impact of peer group on students' moral behavior was sought; using moral disengagement behavior scale to measure students' moral behavior, the researcher found that there is no significant peer group impacts on students' moral behavior among Onitsha North secondary school students although the impacts were negative, it did not reach significant proportions. The finding means that the moral behavior of the participants Onitsha North secondary school students was not impacted by peer group influence. The finding implies that the effect of socialization outcome of peers was not strong enough to impact students' moral disengagement behavior. Consequently, hypothesis one which stated that peer group will positively

and significantly impact moral disengagement of secondary school students in Onitsha North Local Government Area was not confirmed. Although the finding appears to be less supported by literature, for example, Sternisko et al., (2020) found that peer group pressure is a strong agent of socialization which affects adolescents and young adults especially regarding their socialization growth and moral behavior.

Their findings and others in literature support that there is significant impacts of peer group or peer pressure on moral behavior of students (usually adolescents and young adults), however, the finding may be accepted in the light of the facts that currently there is a growth of individualistic life styles due to the growing presence of social media such that peers, friends and socialization agents are having less impacts on students. Also, in Nigeria there is empirical evidence against the current findings that peer group and the pressures that emanate from it significantly impacts on the moral behaviors of adolescents and young adults especially students. For instance, Eze-Michael (2021) found that peer pressure is one of the leading factors which influence students' vulnerability to internet fraud which is a kind of moral perversion or disengagement behavior.

According to Eze-Michael, peer influence do not act alone; they stand on the effects of poverty and unemployment to erode students moral behavior such that what they formerly perceive as moral wrong is now justified as being accepted thereby disengaging the students from their usual moral lives. Perhaps, there is a unique pattern among secondary school students in Onitsha North Local Government Area which did not recognize this established pattern in the cause of moral disengagement of students. Displacement of factors such as social media and the growth of individualized which reduces group influence may account for this negation in result.

In hypothesis two, the finding did indicate that hypothesis one which stated that social media will positively and significantly impact moral disengagement of secondary school students in Onitsha North Local Government Area was confirmed. The finding implies that the positive direction is an indication that while social media use is on the increase, moral disengagement is also on the increase on a significant proportion. This offers evidence that there is a growth of moral disengagement behavior of secondary school students in Onitsha North local government area as their involvement and use of social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Tik-tok, WhatsApp etc. increases. This is in line with literature which emphasized that social media has negative impacts on moral behavior of adolescents and young adults especially at secondary school level.

The finding on the positive impacts of social media on students' moral disengagement behavior is also supported in literature. For example, the current research outcome supports the finding made by Octavia et al., (2022) which found significant correlation between moral disengagement behavior and social media behavior in early adolescents. The age corresponds with the sample of

the current study which is secondary school students in Onitsha North Local Government Area. Supporting this study, Sari et al. found that there were significant correlations among social media behavior with moral disengagement and parental communication pattern. Likewise, the findings made by Obiageli & Nasiru (2021) also disclosed that there is a significant relationship between moral development and dark triad influence on social media intent. This is also supported by the Fissel et al., (2021) findings which showed that cyber stalking perpetration among young adults significantly affects self-control and moral disengagement behavior. These findings in evidence provide support that the current finding in hypothesis two is in line with literature. Consequently, hypothesis two which stated that social media will positively and significantly impact moral disengagement behavior of secondary school students in Onitsha North local government area was confirmed.

Implication of the Study

The implication of the current study is obvious; such that with growing and unregulated access of students (adolescents and young adults) to social media through mobile phones, computers, and other digital devices, more moral challenges are expected in the society. This is because the exposure to social media uncensored contents is very morally damaging to the fragile moral conscience of the secondary school students. Although peer group did not significantly impact the moral disengagement of the students, it cannot be neglected as it may be the cause of high exposure to social media use as found in the descriptive report of the current study. There may be more pressure from friends and classmates to use social media more than there may be to engage in morally depraving behaviors. The implication just extends to the facts that peers and the consequent pressures from them may be increasing students' vulnerability to use social media. This new influence other the former directional influence may become more dangerous in students' moral life than before due to the versatility of social media.

Equally, with the high exposure to social media, it is expected that new students and adolescents' delinquent behaviors which connotes moral deviations may emerge. These new modifications can be fuelled by endless possibilities of the internet which anchor social media and can affect the students, their parents and the society socially and psychologically.

Limitations of the Study

The current study was designed as a quantitative study which adopted the use survey in data collection; as in other studies, this method has an inherent error due participants' bias and tendency for social responding. In order to minimize the effects to the barest minimum, the researcher ensure that proper ethical procedure were followed especially in handling the participants; thus, the participants were made to understand without doubt that their participation is voluntary and that they enjoy the right to withdraw from the survey at any point in the survey until they submit their

questionnaire. Questions were entertained from the participants to clarify their doubts and confusions were they arise as the participants were meant to understand that the survey was not an examination or a test of any kind or being used for any form of assessment or evaluation.

5. Conclusion

The study examined the impacts of peer group and social media on students' moral behavior measure in the current study as moral disengagement. While descriptive revealed that students were high on social media use, and identified friendship and fun as the major reason for use of social media, only hypothesis two was confirmed which indicated that social media positively and significantly impacted students' moral disengagement behavior in Onitsha North LGA of Anambra State. The implication of the findings was given as well as limitations and recommendations. The study was concluded with suggestion for future study.

Recommendation: Although peer group influence was not ascertained in the current study, there is still need for parents to oversee their wards circle of friends in order to ascertain when they are negatively influenced by peers. This can manifest in poor grades, recalcitrant behaviors and truancy. It is recommended that parents, teachers, and significant other guardians (older siblings, Uncles, Aunties etc.) regulate adolescents' and young adults' exposure to the internet through social media in order to prevent them from be pre-occupied with it or become addicted to it. There is also the need for parents to regulate the contents which the students (adolescents and young adults) surf on the social media such as adult contents (violence, pornography and strong language) in order to protect them from the effects of such contents on their fragile minds.

Suggestion for Future Study: There is need to replicate this same study across other samples to ascertain whether the responses have a unique pattern in order to understand how social media impacts students' life in general and their moral behavior in particular. There is also the need to confirm the impacts of peer pressure and social media on moral behavior of students using experimental studies in order to control and reduce the effects of extraneous variables. This will increase the empiricism of the inquiry and provide robust understanding of the impacts.

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