FACEBOOK ADDICTION AS CORRELATE OF RISKY SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ABAKALIKI EDUCATION ZONE, EBONYI STATE

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated Facebook addiction as correlate of risky sexual behaviour among secondary school students in Abakaliki Education Zone, Ebonyi State. It was guided by two research questions and two null hypotheses. The study adopted a correlational research design. The sample comprised 352 SS II students from two Local Government Areas within Abakaliki Education Zone, selected using a multistage sampling procedure. Data were collected using Facebook Addiction Questionnaire (FAQ) and Risky Sexual Behaviour Questionnaire (RSBQ). Simple linear regression analysis was used to answer research question and also to test hypothesis one while process macro was used to answer research question two and to test hypothesis. at 0.05 level of significance. Findings of the study indicated a strong and significant positive relationship between Facebook addiction and risky sexual behaviour among secondary school students. Also, gender did not have significant relationship between Facebook addiction and risky sexual behaviour of the students. The study underscores the need for school counsellors to provide targeted counselling services addressing social media use and risky sexual behaviours, promoting healthier decision-making among students.

Keywords: Facebook addiction, Risky sexual behaviour, Secondary school students

Introduction

The place of secondary school students is very vital in every society. It is expected that they will bring about national development. Contrary to this expectation, the Nigerian society is plagued with problems of Facebook addiction and risky sexual behaviour among students. This holds serious implications for their future. This state of affairs also has negative impact on national development. In the course of indulging in these practices some of these students have on several occasions found themselves in dangerous and compromising situations that have had devastating consequences on them (Onwuekwe, 2017). Thus, these practices expose them to STIs, HIV/AIDS, unwanted pregnancy, abortion, premature death, single parenthood, cohabitation and dropping-out of school. Due to uncontrollable use of Facebook secondary school students tend to lose focus on their studies, meet online sexual partners, get exposed to nude pictures and pornographic movies and websites that describe people having sex, show clear pictures of nudity or people having sex, movie or audio that describes people having sex (Adebowale, 2017).

The experiences include: sexual intercourse and non-sexual intercourse experiences such as attitudinal act and peripheral act like masturbation, petting and kissing. Most of the young people in our society whose sexual behaviour are of serious concern are the ones found in secondary schools (*Uchidu*, Magadi & Mostazir, 2020).

Around the globe, Africa and Nigeria, Facebook addiction and sexual practices among secondary school students are serious problems that need urgent attention.

In Abakaliki Education Zone of Ebonyi State, secondary school students engage themselves in Facebook addiction and risky sexual behaviour spite of the efforts of the parents and teachers to dissuade them from these social menace. Addiction to Facebook may lead to poor feeding habit, sleepless nights, brain drain, depression and academic failure. Facebook, the popular social networking website and platform has revolutionalized the way people connect with friends and family, share information, and engage with businesses, organizations and learning. As many students are using Facebook daily, it seems to offer great potentials for teaching and learning. Mayowa (2022) argued that students take advantage of Facebook as a tool in their studies as this platform makes it possible for them to exchange ideas and opinions or to interact with the other users at multiple levels. Omeogun (2022) asserted that several educational institutions have integrated Facebook into their management, for instance, to promote the institution, to communicate with their personnel, and to communicate with the students. Teachers have used Facebook as an instructional tool inside and outside the classrooms as well as to bring an air of freshness to the learning environment (Young, 2023). Facebook is consistent with the requirements of the learners and makes it possible for the teachers to connect with the learners more quickly. It allows for better participation in the learning activities as well. However, in spite of the numerous benefits of Facebook, excessive use of the platform can lead to a phenomenon known as Facebook addiction. Facebook addiction can be viewed as one form of Internet addiction, where individuals exhibit a compulsion to use Facebook in excess (Griffiths, 2020;). Thus, it is a behavioural addiction characterized by an inability to limit the use of Facebook despite experiencing negative consequences. Operationally, Facebook addiction refers to over use and uncontrolled use of Facebook that exposes secondary school students to negative behaviours. With the advancement and development of technology, social media gradually become one of the important sources on sex-related information for students (Haggstrom-Nordin, Tyden, Hanson & Larsson, 2019). Omoponle (2013) reported that 60% of secondary school students experienced their first intercourse as early as fourteen (14) years. Only one female student out of 400 in that study reported being a virgin. Facebook addiction may be related to risky sexual behaviour.

Sexual behaviour is any activity that occurs alone or in a group that causes sexual arousal. It encompasses all actions and reactions related to pleasure seeking. Risky sexual behaviours according to Ali (2017), are any sexual activities that increase the risk of contracting the human immune deficiency virus (HIV), other sexually transmitted infections (STIs), or becoming pregnant. In the context of this study, risky sexual behaviour implies illicit and unguarded sexual experiences or practices of secondary school students such as erotic touch, oral sex, anal sex and intercourse. It manifest in different forms like bare backing (sex without a condom), mouth-to-genital contact, starting sexual activity at a young age, multiple sex partners, a high risk partner (such as commercial sex worker), anal sex without a condom or proper lubrication, sex work and group sex to mention a few. There are many factors that could lead to risky sexual behaviour among secondary school students such as Facebook addiction, peer pressure, lack of education, lack of parental guidance and supervision, substance abuse, poor selfesteem, poverty, mental health issues, among others. In fact, statistically significant associations are found between Facebook addiction and sexual behaviours (Seto, Maric & Barbaree, 2021). Facebook addiction was chosen for this study because it is considered to be the integral tool for interaction, social relationships, independence and communication among secondary school students. Gender may influence Facebook addiction and risky sexual behaviour among secondary school students. Gender refers to masculine and feminine (Nobelus, 2021). In this study, gender refers to male and female secondary school students who might engage in risky sexual behaviour. Given the high prevalence of Facebook addiction and risky sexual behaviour among secondary school students, the main purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between Facebook addiction and risky sexual behaviour among secondary school students in Abakaliki Education Zone of Ebonyi State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were posed and answered in the course of the study:

- 1. What is the relationship between Facebook addiction and risky sexual behaviour among secondary school students?
- 2. What is the relationship between Facebook addiction and risky sexual behaviour of secondary school students as moderated by gender?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were postulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between Facebook addiction and risky sexual behaviour among secondary school students.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between Facebook addiction and risky sexual behaviour among secondary school students as moderated by gender.

Methodology

The study adopted a correlational survey research design. This design is appropriate for studying naturally occurring associations and enables the use of statistical tools to measure the strength and direction of these relationships. The area of the study was Abakaliki Education Zone, Ebonyi, State which comprises four Local Government Areas, (LGAs) namely: Abakaliki, Ebonyi, Izzi and Ohaukwu LGAs. The choice of the area was compelled by frequent complaint in some schools in the area about high rate of risky sexual behaviours among secondary school students in the area. Also the findings of earlier researchers showed that Facebook addiction is associated with risky sexual behaviour among secondary school students. The population of this study was 4,159 respondents comprising 776 SS II students from Abakaliki Local Government Area, 1403 SS II studen from Ebonyi Local Government Area, 998 SS II students from Izzi Local Government Areas and 982 SS II students from Ohaukwu Local Government Area. This figure also consists of 1863 males and 2296 female SS II students from all the 71 public secondary school in Abakaliki Education Zone. (Source: Post Primary Schools Management Board, Ebonyi State (PPSMB, 2022). Senior secondary two students were chosen for the study because they are at essential stage of adolescence, marked by increased exposure to Facebook and experimentation, making them more prone to risky behaviours. Moreover, the stage also offers a timely opportunity for behavioural intervention through counselling. The sample size for the study was 352 respondents. The sample was drawn using multi-stage sampling procedure. In the first stage, cluster sampling technique was used to draw two out of the four local government areas which are: Abakaliki, Ebonyi, Izzi and Ohaukwu. In the second stage, simple random sampling technique was used to select five schools each out of the two local government areas. In the third stage, list of the SS2 students (sampling frame) in the ten school were obtained.

With the lists, the researcher, using a table of random number generated from Microsoft Excel randomly drew 34 students from each of the ten schools. Two instruments were used to collect data for this study. The instruments were:" Facebook Addiction Questionnaire (FAQ) and Risky Sexual Behaviour Questionnaire (RSBQ)". The instruments were developed by the researchers. The (FAO was made up of 15 items which obtained information on students' interaction with Facebook. The RSBQ was used to obtain information on various aspects of students' sexual activities. It was made up of 14 items. The FAQ and RSBQ were structured in four-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA: 4 points), Agree (A:3 points), Disagree (D: 2 points), and Strongly Disagree (SD:1 Point). The instruments were face validated by three experts two from the Department of Counselling and Human Development Studies and one from the Department of Science Education (Measurement & Evaluation), all in the Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. To ensure the reliability of the instruments, a pilot study was conducted by administering the instruments to 20 students in an education zone which is outside the study area but shares similar characteristics with the study area. Data obtained from the pilot study were subjected to a test of internal consistency reliability analysis using Cronbach Alpha method. Reliability coefficients of 0.74 and .0.87 were obtained for FAO and RSBQ, respectively. Therefore, the reliability coefficients indicated that the instruments were reliable and therefore considered appropriate for use. To gain access to the respondents and co-operation of the school authority, the researchers obtained a letter of introduction from the Head of Department, Counselling and Human Development Studies, University of Nigeria, introducing them to the principal of the schools. The researchers briefed the research assistants on how to administer the instruments. At the end, the researchers and the research assistants collected the instruments on the spot from the respondents. This idea ensured high return rate of the instruments for the study. Simple linear regression analysis was used to answer research question one and to test hypothesis one. This is because they merely seek to establish a linear relationship between two continuous variables. Process Macro was used to answer research question two and to test its corresponding hypothesis. This is because they sought to establish whether a categorical variable (gender) moderates the relationship between two continuous variables.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between Facebook addiction and risky sexual behaviour among secondary school students?

Table 1: Regression of the relationship between Facebook addiction and risky sexual behaviour among secondary school s Students (N = 352)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate				
1	.900	.809	.81	2.13				

The analysis result in Table 1 reveals a strong and positive relationship between Facebook addiction (FA) and risky sexual behaviour (RSB) among secondary school students with a correlation coefficient of .809.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between Facebook addiction and risky sexual behaviour among secondary school students.

Table 2: Regression analysis of the relationship between Facebook addiction and risky sexual behaviour of the students

Model	D	SE	Beta	T	P -	95% CI	
Moaei	В	SE				LL	UL
(Constant)	11.10	.88		13.57	.000	10.26	13.74
FA	.73	.02	.90	38.52	.000	.69	.77

Note. FA = Facebook addiction; N = 352; $R^2 = .809$; F(1,350) = 1483.69, p < .05; Cl = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit

Data in Table 2 reveals a strong, statistically significant positive relationship between Facebook addiction (FA) and risky sexual behaviour (RSB) among secondary school students (Beta=.90, p<0.05). The model explains 80.9% of the variance in risky sexual behaviour, as indicated by the R^2 value. The unstandardized coefficient shows that for every unit increase in Facebook addiction, risky sexual behaviour increases by 0.73 units (p<0.05).

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between Facebook addiction and risky sexual behaviour of secondary school students as moderated by gender?

Table 3: PROCESS macro moderation analysis relationship between Facebook addiction and Risky sexual behaviour of secondary chool students as moderated by gender (N = 352)

Model	Coeff	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	45.98	0.40	114.60	<.001	45.19	46.77
FA	0.78	0.07	11.88	<.001	0.65	0.91
Gender	-0.12	0.24	-0.52	.61	-0.59	0.34
Int_1	-0.03	0.04	-0.87	.38	-0.11	0.04

Note. FA = Facebook addiction; Product terms key: Int_1= FA x Gender; LLCI=lower limit confidence interval; ULCI=upper limit confidence interval

The moderation result in Table 3 using the PROCESS macro shows that Facebook addiction (FA) has a statistically significant positive relationship with risky sexual behaviour (RSB) among secondary school students (B = 0.78, p < 0.001). This indicates that for every one-unit increase in Facebook addiction, risky sexual behaviour increases by 0.78 units. The model explains 81.0% of the variance in risky sexual behaviour ($R^2 = 0.81$), showing a strong model fit. Gender, on the other hand, does not have a significant direct effect on risky sexual behaviour (B = -0.12, p = .61), indicating that risky sexual behaviour does not differ between male and female students. Moreover, the interaction effect between Facebook addiction and gender (FA * Gender) is not statistically significant (B = -0.03, p = .38), meaning that gender does not moderate the relationship between Facebook addiction and risky sexual behaviour among students. The change in R^2 due to the interaction is minimal (R^2 change = 0.0001), confirming that the effect of Facebook addiction on risky sexual behaviour is similar for both male and female students. Therefore, gender does not alter the strength or direction of the relationship between Facebook addiction and risky sexual behaviour.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between Facebook addiction and risky sexual behaviour of the students as moderated by gender. The analysis result in Table 3 reveals a significant positive relationship between Facebook addiction and risky sexual behaviour among students (B = 0.78, p = .000), meaning that as Facebook addiction

increases, risky sexual behaviour also increases. Therefore, the null hypothesis is not accepted. However, the interaction between Facebook addiction and gender is not statistically significant ($B=0.03,\,p=.38$). This suggests that gender does not significantly moderate the relationship between Facebook addiction and risky sexual behaviour. Whether a student is male or female does not meaningfully alter the effect of Facebook addiction on their engagement in risky sexual behaviour. As a result, we fail to reject the null hypothesis for the moderating effect of gender.

Discussion

The findings of the study revealed a strong and positive relationship between Facebook addiction and risky sexual behaviour among secondary school students in Abakaliki Education Zone, Ebonyi State. The relationship suggests that higher levels of Facebook addiction are associated with an increase in risky sexual behaviours. This implies that students who spend more time on Facebook may be more susceptible to engaging in risky sexual behaviour. Several factors may contribute to this relationship. Facebook serves as a platform where peer interactions and social validation are prevalent, which can lead to increased exposure to risky behaviours shared within one's social network. Additionally, students may experience a sense of anonymity or disinhibition online, potentially leading to riskier choices that they may not consider in face-to-face interactions. This finding agrees with the earlier findings of Vannucci, Simpson, Gagnon, and Ohannessian (2020), Griffiths (2020) and Landry, Turner, Vyas, and Wood (2017). These studies also found significant link between social media and risky sexual behaviour among adolescents. In Vannucci et al, positive links were identified between social media and risky behaviours during adolescence in their meta-analysis. Landry et al. found statistically significant positive association between social media use and increased sexual risk behaviours over a 16-month period. According to Landry et al., those who are more active on social media could partake in more risky behaviours because of a larger peer network influencing their attitudes and social norms. A systematic review by Suyanto (2021) also showed that higher percentage of studies reviewed mention that the effect of social media exposure was related to sexual attitudes of adolescents.

The moderation analysis in this study showed that gender did not moderate the relationship between Facebook addiction and risky sexual behaviour among secondary school students. The finding also revealed that gender does not significantly moderate the relationship between Facebook addiction and risky sexual behaviour. The lack of significant moderation by gender implies that the influence of Facebook addiction on risky sexual behaviour is consistent across both male and female students. This challenges the notion that gender may play a differential role in how social media use impacts sexual behaviour. Instead, it suggests that both genders may respond similarly to the pressures and behaviours associated with Facebook addiction, indicating a broader societal trend in how social media shapes adolescent experiences and decisions regarding sexual health. The finding of this study disagrees with some finding of other studies which show that gender significantly moderate the relationship between Facebook addiction and risky sexual behaviour of students. According to Purba et al. (2023), males are more likely to be influenced by the adventure and thrill aspects of content on Facebook, which may increase their likelihood of engaging in riskier sexual. However, in contrast, females may experience peer pressure more through social connections and emotional engagement, which could also lead to risky behaviours but through different social dynamics (Sifer & Getachew, 2024).

Conclusion

From the findings of the study, Facebook addiction significantly correlates with risky sexual behaviour among secondary school students in Abakaliki Education Zone, Ebonyi State. Also, gender did not significantly moderate the relationship between Facebook addiction and risky sexual behaviour among students, indicating a uniform impact across male and female students. Therefore, school counsellors should educate students on the dangers of Facebook addiction and its potential link to risky sexual behaviour among secondary school students through holistic digital literacy programmes.

Recommendations

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

- 1. School counsellors should implement comprehensive digital literacy programmes that educate students about the dangers of Facebook addiction and its potential links to risky sexual behaviour. These programmes could include workshops and seminars that encourage self-regulation and responsible social media usage..
- 2. It is essential for schools to adopt a holistic approach and collaborate with community organizations that can enhance these initiatives.
- 3. Given that gender does not significantly moderate the relationship between Facebook addiction and risky sexual behaviour, schools should design interventions that are inclusive and applicable to all students. Training for teachers and counsellors should focus on recognizing and addressing the unique challenges faced by students, regardless of gender.

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