



Social Media Use and High-Risk Sexual Behaviour among Tertiary Institution Students in Kwara State, Nigeria

AJIBOYE, Samuel Kolawole

Department of Counsellor Education, University of Ilorin, PMB. 1515, Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria

*Corresponding author, Email: ajiboye.sk@unilorin.edu.ng

Abstract: This study examined the relationship between social media use and high-risk sexual behaviour among tertiary institution students in Kwara State, Nigeria. A total of 561 students were selected by using stratified sampling technique. Data was collected with an instrument titled: Social Media and High-Risk Sexual Behaviour Questionnaire (SMHRSBQ). The measure of central tendency (mean) and mean average were used to determine levels of social media use and involvement in high-risk sexual behaviour. The Pearson's Product Moment Correlation and One-Way ANOVA Statistics were used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level. The Mean Average of responses on social media use was 3.19 while that of high-risk sexual behaviour was 2.83 indicating high levels on both variables among tertiary institution students respectively. Relationship between social media use and high-risk sexual behaviour was significant ($p=0.00$); no significant difference in social media use and high-risk sexual behaviour based on institution type (University=0.61; Polytechnic=0.13; College of Education=0.06; University=0.11; Polytechnic=0.16; College of Education=0.21) respectively. It was concluded that high use of social media predisposes students to high-risk sexual behaviour. School guidance counsellors should organise seminars periodically to sensitise students on the association between social media use and high-risk sexual behaviour.

Keywords: social media; high-risk; sexual; behaviour

1. Introduction

Sexual behaviour is an act exhibited by individuals to gratify one of their basic needs, that is the sexual need. There is an array of activities among young people that can be classified as sexual behaviour ranging from intromission to engagement in arousal of sexual interest of others. However, the way in which sexual activities are practised, whether knowingly or otherwise, may lead to negative consequences suggesting levels of risk. People engage in a variety of sexual activities, ranging from activities done alone (such as, masturbation) to activities with another person (such as sexual intercourse, non-penetrative sex and oral sex), at different frequency and for a wide variety of reasons. Whichever way sexual behaviour is expressed, the parameter used to determine the risk involved is based on the person(s) and nature of activities. In this parlance, sexual activities between students who are not couple would be regarded as high-risk sexual behaviour since the practice may likely endanger the lives of both involved.

High-Risk Sexual Behaviour (HRSB), which is similar to risky sexual behaviour, has been defined as sexual activities that expose the person to danger of contracting sexual transmitted infection (STIs), thus affecting the health of individuals involved (Chawla & Sarkar, 2019). HRSB could also be viewed as the description of the activity that increase the probability that the person engaging in sexual activity will likely endanger his/her health through injury, pregnancy, abortion or infection. Owing to the increasing accessibility to internet services in response to social distance regime occasioned by global Covid-19 pandemic, students of tertiary institutions use social media than ever before under the pretext of virtual learning. However, the much dependence on social media, which also contain numerous uncensored materials on sexual

activities, have made tertiary institution students more vulnerable to high-risk sexual behaviours (HRSB); the acts that differ from societal norms of civilized societies.

High-Risk Sexual Behaviour (HRSB) is a behaviour of initiation of sexual activity at an early age, engaging in unprotected or unnatural (anal/oral) sexual intercourse (or inconsistent condom use), having sexual intercourse with multiple partners (protected/unprotected), engaging in irregular or paid or incentive-driven sex, or sexual intercourse with injecting drug user or under the influence (especially intoxication) of psychoactive substances, which may result in sexually transmitted infections (including HIV/AIDS), unintended/early pregnancies (or abortions), or interpersonal or legal conflicts (Chawla & Sarkar, 2019; Felson, 2020). HRSB is characterized by different hazardous behaviours such as premarital sex, multiple sexual partners, and unprotected sex. Such hazardous sexual behaviours are reported to end up with unpleasant health outcomes like HIV/AIDS, unwanted pregnancies, and unsafe abortions (Srahbzu & Tirfeneh, 2020). According to Asyraaf and Badayai (2022),

The consensus that students of tertiary institutions (who are invariably adolescents) engage in high-risk sexual behaviours that predispose them to reproductive health problems in a popular phenomenon. This could be as a result of environmental influence as well as physiological and psychological changes which propel them to attempt various sexual activities and take risks, leading to unfavourable sexual and reproductive health indices including unintended pregnancies, unsafe abortions, early childbearing, sexually transmitted diseases, and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). HRSB among youths in tertiary institutions manifest in different forms. Some of the common types are barebacking (sex without a condom), mouth-to-genital contact, starting sexual activity at a young age, having multiple sex partners, having a high risk partner (such as commercial sex worker), anal sex without a condom or proper lubrication, engaging in sex work and engaging in group sex to mention a few. Some of the consequences of HRSB are sexual transmitted infections and diseases, death, low productivity due to diseases and death, and more importantly poor academic achievement among students particularly in tertiary institutions where the youth are at the prime of developing different worthwhile skills. HRSB exposes the students to harmful consequences, both physical and psychological. These include teenage pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections and diseases, abortion, major depression, suicidality, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), sexually transmitted disease (such as acquired immune deficiency syndrome i.e. AIDS) among others. Other issues of concern as regards students' sexual behaviour are casual sex, use of contraception, abortion, masturbation, pornography and prostitution. If the phenomenon of HRSB is not well addressed it may have psychological consequences on these young people who are students at various tertiary institutions, such as regret and guilt, loss of self-respect and low self-esteem, stunting personal development, shaken trust and fear of commitment in future relationships. One of the factors that affect sexual behaviour of undergraduate is social media. Social media provides array of platforms where students can explore ideas regardless of the type and consequences. Thus, social media and sexual behaviour of tertiary institution students are paramount because they could undermine their academic activities.

According to Manning (2014), social media is the term often used to refer to new platform of media that involve interactive participation; all social media involve some sort of digital platform, whether that be mobile or stationary. Some form of social media commonly used by students include social network, social gaming, blogging, photo sharing, virtual world, and much more. They are platforms for social interaction, using highly accessible and scalable publishing

techniques. Social media use web-based technologies to transform and broadcast media monologues into social dialogues. They support the democratization of knowledge and information and transform people from content consumers to content producers. Social media are elements of the new media and, according to Manning (2014), the use has become the highest activity on the internet. Thus, Ashiekpe and Ugande (2017) reported a high association between social media sexting and adolescents and youths' sexual behaviours in Nigeria.

In Nigeria, tertiary institution comprises educational level beyond secondary school, that is post-secondary school education. The three major types of tertiary institutions are university, polytechnic and college of education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014). The advancement of technology and freedom have given students in tertiary institutions more easy access to social media, many students can be in their various hostels and get connected to what is happening online. Since the wake of Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 institutions of learning have given more access to social media by providing devices for students and further provision of free wi-fi on campus. Hence, tertiary institution students can easily search for sexual information which in turn influences their involvement in HRSB.

High-risk sexual behaviour among students of tertiary institutions may take different dimensions which include unprotected intercourse, intercourse under the influence of substances, intercourse with persons with injecting drug use, multiple sex partners, early age on initiation of sexual intercourse, and casual sex (Uzobo, Michael-Olomu & Enoch, 2020; Onasoga, Aluko, Adegbuyi & Filade, 2020). Substance-use disorders have often been associated with high risky sexual behaviour (Landry, Turner, Vyas & Wood, 2017; Chaurla & Sarkar, 2019; Pew Research Centre, 2018). Ajagunna and Oladeji (2017) found that alcohol influenced risky sexual behaviour among college women. Further, the study revealed that impulsivity, alcohol use, condom use and self-efficacy were significant predictors of risky sexual behaviour. Kassa et al (2016) reported that 16% of high school and preparatory school students in Amhara region, Ethiopia were involved in risky sexual behaviour which predisposed them to sexual and reproductive health problems; more than half (56.3%) of the respondents' first sexual intercourse was before their eighteenth birthday. According to Girmay and Mariye (2019), in a study conducted on secondary and preparatory school students of Aksum town, northern Ethiopia, overall, 19.6% had practised risky sexual behaviour. Olaleye (2017), in a study on social media use and in-school adolescents' sexual behaviour, found that most (88.0%) of the respondents reported the use SM, the highest used social medium was Facebook (71.2%) while some enjoyed watching pornography. Arulogun, Ogbu and Dipeolu (2016) adduced reasons for high risky sexual behaviour among students to include age, drinking alcohol, and having poor knowledge towards Sexual Transmitted Diseases (STDs). Tilahun and Mamo (2020) in a study conducted in Ethiopia, found that 75.9% and 76.5% of the respondents (students) have awareness about risky sexual behaviour and consequences of unsafe sex respectively, yet 61.7% had more than one sex partner. This is an indication that regardless of knowledge and awareness of high risky sexual behaviour, students would still engage in the practice. Landry, Turner, Vyas and Wood (2017) found that in-school youth engaging in social media had significantly higher sexual risk than those not using social media. Thus, high risk sexual behaviour is associated with social media. Asyraaf and Badayai (2022) found there is a significant, positive relationship between social media exposure and sexual behaviour.

2. Statement of the Problem

High risk sexual behaviour among students have negative effects on their academic activities and by extension their future health. Many students of higher education otherwise known as tertiary education have much liberty to engage in different activities that predispose them to high risk sexual behaviour. Such liberty is related to cohabitation regardless of gender difference and freedom to use internet services as much as they desire. Extant literature has indicated that the use of social media, peer pressure and substance abuse are significantly associated with high risk sexual behaviour (Broom & Allen, 2017; Laundry, Turner & Wood, 2017; Asrese & Mekonnen, 2018). In Bahir Dar and Mecha Districts of North West Ethiopia, Districts of North West Ethiopia, Asrese and Mekonnen (2018) found that Youth (of school age) embedded within increasing network tie strength and homogeneous networks were more likely to had risky sexual behaviour. In Nigeria, involvement of students in high-risk sexual behaviour could be equally prominent because of easy accessibility to social network both on campuses and outside. Akhuetie, Uzobo and Ogbeide (2017) found positive relationship between social media and online predation in Benin City, Nigera. Uzobo, Michael-Olomu and Enoch (2020) found that respondents who have had more than a sex partner had the highest number of social media account. This study therefore became imperative considering the high probability of association between social media use and high risk sexual behaviour among young people in institutions of higher learning.

3. Research Questions

1. What is the level of social media use among tertiary institution students in Kwara State, Nigeria?
2. What is the level of high-risk sexual behaviour among tertiary institution students in Kwara State, Nigeria?

4. Research Hypotheses

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between social media use and high risk sexual behaviour of tertiary institution students in Kwara State, Nigeria.

Ho2: There is no significant difference in social media use among tertiary institution students in Kwara State, Nigeria based on institution type.

Ho3: There is no significant difference in high risk sexual behaviour among tertiary institution students in Kwara State, Nigeria based on institution type.

5. Method

The study adopted the descriptive survey method and quantitative in nature. Therefore, a sample size of 561 participants was used; selection of the participant across was done through the stratified random sampling technique. An institution was selected from each of the three types of tertiary institutions in Kwara State, Nigeria. The institutions are University of Ilorin, Federal Polytechnic, Offa and College of Education (Technical), Lafiagi. The institutions are located across the three senatorial districts of the state. The questionnaire type of instrument was used to collect data for the study. While Part A sought to establish social media use B focused on high-risk sexual behaviour. The instrument was patterned in the four-point Likert Scale Format with responses on a continuum of 4-1: Very True of Me (VTM); True of Me (VM); Rarely True of Me (RTM); and Never True of Me (NTM) respectively. In scoring the instrument, the study adopted the measure of central tendency (the mean score). The highest possible Mean

Average was 4.00 while the least 1.00; the mid-point mean was 2.50 (since it was a four-point Likert scale). Hence, mean average between 2.50 and 4.00 indicated high level of social media use and involvement in high-risk sexual behaviour. The hypotheses were tested using the Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and the ANOVA Statistics at 0.05 Alpha level..

5.1. Ethical Procedure

While collecting data for the study, the researcher officially contacted the authorities of the various institutions involved to seek permission, which was granted. Further, a consent form was attached to each questionnaire which sought voluntary participation. Only those who accepted to participate were involved. Thus, the researcher adequately established informed consent of respondents.

6. Result

6.1. Demography

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents Across Institution Type

Institution Type	Frequency	%
University	213	38.0
Polytechnic	187	33.3
College of Education	161	28.7
Total	561	100.0

Research Question 1: What is the level of social media use among tertiary institution students in Kwara State, Nigeria?

Table 2. Means Scores on level of Social media use

Items on social media use	\bar{X}
I use social media every day	3.51
I choose friends on social media	3.50
I discuss vital issues on social media	3.44
I share my sexual experience on social media	3.40
I often send erotic messages on social media	3.36
I regularly view nude pictures on social media	3.27
I chat on social media while in classroom	3.18
I use social media as the major means of communication	2.84
I use social media all the time	2.77
I keep my account on social media active always	2.63
	$\sum \bar{X} = 31.9$
	Mean Average = 3.19

Results in Table 2 shows that the mean average of 3.19 is greater than the mid-point (2,50), hence social medial use among tertiary institution students is high. The items that most depict high level are:”I use social media every day”; ”I choose friends on social media”; and ”I discuss vital issues on social media”.

Research Question 2: What is the level of high-risk sexual behaviours among tertiary institution students in Kwara State, Nigeria?

Table 3. Means Scores on Types of High Risk Sexual Behaviour

Items on social media use	\bar{X}
I have more than one sex partner	3.11
I engage in unprotected sex	3.10
I practice unprotected mouth-to-genital contact	3.03
I started sexual intercourse before age 15	2/97
I cohabit with opposite sex	2.91
I watch pornography regularly	2.88
I masturbate to satisfy sexual urge	2.72
I practice group sex	2.53
I practice unprotected anal sex	2.51
I engage in sexual intercourse under the influence of drug	2.47
	$\sum \bar{X} = 28.33$
	Mean Average = 2.83

Results in Table 3 indicate that high-risk sexual behaviour (HRSB) is high among tertiary institution students. The most significant statements that depict involvement in HRSB are: I have more than one sex partner; I engage in unprotected sex; and I practice unprotected mouth-to-genital contact.

H0₁: There is no significant relationship between social media use and high-risk sexual behaviour among tertiary institution students in Kwara State, Nigeria.

Table 4. Relationship between social media use and high-risk sexual behaviour among tertiary institution students

Variables	\bar{X}	SD	Df	Cal r.	Crit r	p-val
Social media use	35.12	5.49				
High-Risk Sexual Behaviour	32.06	7.93	559	0.55	0.19	*0.00

*Sign., p<0.05

The result in Table 4 shows that the p-value (0.00) is less than the alpha level (0.05), hence the null hypothesis was rejected. Thus, there is significant relationship between social media use and high-risk sexual behaviour among tertiary institution students in Kwara State, Nigeria.

H0₂: There is no significant difference in social media use among tertiary institution students in Kwara State, Nigeria based on institution type.

Table 5. Summary of ANOVA Matrix showing the difference among the moderating Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4
Social media use	1.000			
University	0.61	1.000		
Polytechnic	.006	0.13	1.000	
College of Education	.033	0.007	0.06	1.000

The result of ANOVA matrix in Table 5 shows that there is no significant difference on the moderating variables since their values are greater than the alpha level of 0.05: University = 0.61; Polytechnic = 0.13 and College of Education = 0.06.

H0₃: There is no significant difference in high-risk sexual behaviour among tertiary institution students in Kwara State, Nigeria based on institution type.

Table 6. Summary of ANOVA Matrix showing the difference among the moderating Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4
High risk sexual behaviour	1.000			
University	0.11	1.000		
Polytechnic	.021	0.16	1.000	
College of Education	.060	.053	0.21	1.000

The result of ANOVA matrix in Table 6 shows that there is no significant difference on the moderating variables because all the p-values are greater than the alpha level of 0.05: University = 0.11; Polytechnic = 0.16 and College of Education = 0.21. Thus, respondents from the three types of institution are similar in high-risk sexual behaviour.

7. Discussion

The analysis of responses of tertiary institution students in Kwara State, Nigeria on social media use indicated a mean average of 3.19, whereas the maximum obtainable is 4.00 and the least is 1.00, while the mid-point is 2.50. The implication is that respondents' social media use is high. On the specific, the students alluded to using social media every day, to choose friends, to share vital issues, share sexual experience and even kept social media accounts active always. The phenomenon is an indication that these group of (tertiary institution) students could be disposed to erotic information on social media and thereby become susceptible to high-risk sexual behaviour. This supports the earlier findings of Asrese and Mekonnen (2018) that secondary and preparatory school students use social media significantly and involved in risky sexual behaviour.

The result also indicated that high-risk sexual behaviours among tertiary institution students was high because they alluded to having engaged in several risky sexual behaviours. Out of the maximum obtainable mean average of 4.00, the mean average on high-risk sexual behaviour was 2.83, which is above the mid-mean (cut-off point) of 2.50. Among the major types of high-risk sexual behaviours are: having more than one sex partner, unprotected sex, unprotected mouth-to-genital contact, intercourse at young age (before 15years old); and cohabiting with opposite sex. However, respondents did not allude to sex under the influence of substance use. This result disagrees with the earlier findings of Hayhurt (2009) and Girmay and Mariye (2019) where substance abuse was the major variable associated with HRSB. The reason for the dissimilarity between present and previous studies could be as a result difference in policies on substance abuse across countries.

The result of Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) showed significant relationship between social media use and high-risk sexual behaviour. The reasons could be that tertiary institution students come in contact and learn different risky sexual behaviours on social media and thus practice such. Kassa, Yitagew, and Ayehu (2016) and Kato, Tilahun and Mamo (2020) had earlier reported similar association between social media and risky sexual

behaviour. However, there was no significant difference in the social media use among respondents on the basis of school type. By implication, respondents from the three (University, Polytechnic and College of Education) types of institution are similar in the use of social media. Similarly, respondents were similar in high-risk sexual behaviour on the basis of institution type. One may allude the reason to the fact that these categories of students have adequate and regular access to the internet (social media platforms) especially since the wake of the global pandemic, covid-19. The effect of the pandemic promoted maximum engagement on social media where students take their virtual classes and other activities. This expedient engagement with the internet might have as well predisposed students to other notorious activities, such as risky sexual practice, apart from worthwhile academic engagement.

8. Conclusion

The study has revealed that tertiary institution students are engrossed with social media use which could be a pointer to their involvement in high-risk sexual behaviour. Significantly, respondents engage in several high-risk sexual behaviour, which could serve as hindrance to academic achievement and equally expose them to health risks. There is significant association between social media use and high-risk sexual behaviour, a phenomenon which should be of concern to the society particularly education sector.

9. Recommendations

- There should be control on the use of the internet, particular social media, by students on campuses;
- School guidance counsellors should organise seminars periodically to sensitise tertiary institution students on association between social media use and high-risk sexual behaviour;
- School counsellors should educate students on moderate use of social media; and
- Information available to students on social media should be censored in order to reduce contact with risky sexual activities.

References

- Ajagunna, . A., & Oladeji, D. (2017). *Media influence as predictors of adolescent's sexual risky behaviour in Nigeria*. *MOJ Women's Health*, 5 (2): 00112. DOI: 10.15406/mojwh.2017.05.00112.
- Akhuette, E. R., Uzobo, E., & Ogbeide, F. W. (2017). Social media and online sexual predation in Benin-City, Nigeria. *Ilorin Journal of Sociology*, 9 (1), 14-27
- Arulogun, O. S., Ogbu, I. A., & Dipeolu, I. O. (2016). Influence of internet exposure on sexual behavior of young persons in an urban district of southwest Nigeria. *The Pan African Medical Journal*, 25, 112-124
- Ashiekpe, A.J. and Ugande, G.B. (2017). Analysis of the effects of social media sexting on adolescents and youths' sexual behaviours and attitudes towards sexuality in Nigeria. *International Journal of Innovative Research and Advanced Studies*, 4(1), 222-232.
- Asrese, K. & Mekonnen, A. (2018). Social network correlates of risky sexual behaviour among adolescents in Bahir Dar and Mecha Districts, North West Ethiopia: An institution-based study. *Reproductive Health*, 15(1): 61. <https://reproductive-health-journal.biomedcentral.com/articles>.
- Asyraaf, A.-S., & Badayai, A. R. A. (2022). Relationships between technology, social media and sexual behavior among University Students. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 12(5), 180-191.
- Broom, M., & Allen, N. (2017). Social media and sexual behaviour among adolescents. *Public Health Surveillance*, 3(2), 28.

- Chawla, N. & Sarkar, S. (2019). Defining “high-risk sexual behaviour” on the context of substance abuse. *Journal of Psychosexual Health, 11(1)*. 26-31.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014). *National policy on education*. Lagos; NERC Publishers.
- Felson, S. (2020). What’s risky sex? Retrieved January 2, 2022 from webmd.com/sex/whats-risky-sex.
- Girmay, A. & Mariye, T. (2019). *Risky Sexual behaviour practice and associated factors among secondary and preparatory school students of Aksum Town, Northern Ethiopia*. Retrieved January 10, 2022 from ncbl.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/pmc6815056/
- Kassa, G.M. Degu, G., Yitayew, M., Misganaw, W., Mucbe, M., Demelash, T., Mesele, M. & Ayehu, M. (2016). *Risky Sexual Behaviours and Associated Factors among high school and preparatory school students, Amhara region, Ethiopia*.
- Keto, Tilahun, A. & Mamo, A. (2020). *Knowledge, attitude and practice towards risky sexual behaviours among secondary and preparatory students of Metu Town, South West Ethiopia*. Retrieved January 16, 2022 from bmcpulichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-020-
- Laundry, M. Turner, M., Vyas, A. & Wood, S. (2017). Social media and sexual behaviour among adolescents; Is there link? *JMIR Public Health Surveillance, 3(2)*; e28.
- Manning, J. (2014). Social media, definition and classes. In K. Harvey (Ed.). *Encyclopedia of social median politics*, pp. 1158-1162. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Olaleye, O.S. (2017). Social-media use and sexual behaviour among in-school adolescents in Ibadan, Nigeria. *Behavioural and Social Science Research, 93 (2)*. Retrieved Dec., 3, 2022 from https://sti.bmj.com/content/93/Suppl_2/A219.2.info
- Onasoga, O.A., Aluko, J.O., Adegbuyi, S.N. & Filade, O.A. (2020). Influence of Social Media Use on Sexual Behaviour of Undergraduate Students in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Education, 3 (2)*, 122-134.
- Pew Research Centre. (2018). Internet connectivity seen as having positive impact on life in Sub-Saharan Africa but digital divides persist. Retrieved from www.pewresearch.org.201.419.4517.
- Srahbzu, M. & Tirfeneh, E. (2020). Risky sexual behaviour and associated factors among adolescents aged 15-19 years at government high schools in Aksum town, Tigray, Ewthipia, 2019: An Institutional based, cross-sectional study, *BioMed Research International, Vol. 2020, 8 pages* <https://doi.org/10/lss/2020/3719845>.
- Uzobo, E., Michael-Olomu, O. & Enoch, R.O. (2020). Social media use and sexual behaviour of undergraduate students in a Nigerian University. *Journal of Demography and Social Statistics, 7 (2)*; 1-14.