

SOCIAL MEDIA INTERACTION AND THE PROMOTION OF CHARACTER AND PERSONALTY ETHICS AMONG SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION UNDERGRADUATES

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Abstract

It is believed by some that the increasing level of lawlessness and undemocratic practices among youths are majorly caused and influenced by the youths' interaction with social media. It is believed that social media has significant impact on the youths' behaviour and societal values that guide their character and personalities. Despite the negative impacts of social media on youths, it has been observed that, it also has positive impacts on the character development of youths, especially on students whose discipline is about the promotion of our societal values. It is assumed that such students should be conscious of their roles in the society, and should not allow negative influence from the social media to dominate them. Therefore, this study examined the influence of social media on character and personality ethics of Social Studies students in Tai Solarin University of Education. Descriptive research of the survey type was used for the study. The sample for the study consisted of 200 students who were randomly selected from the four levels of students in the department of Sociological Studies of Tai Solarin University of Education. Social Media, Character and Personality Ethics Scale (SMcCPES) was the instrument used to collect data from the respondents. The validity of the instruments was ascertained by experts in the area of test and measurement. The reliability coefficient of 0.86 was obtained. The study revealed that social media and promotion of character ethics had a positive relationship (0.269). Also, social media had a significant relationship with the promotion of personality ethics of the students. Among others, it was recommended that University management should also enlighten the students on the significance and relevance of character and personality ethics to the development of our society, and students should be encouraged to always use social media to promote them in others and in themselves.

Keywords: Character Ethics, Personality Ethics, Social Media, Social Studies Students

Introduction

It has been observed that many factors are responsible for the decline in societal values and the prevalence of negative behaviours demonstrated by Nigerian youths. Aronimo (2020) opines that good character or bad character are influenced by various factors such as religion, morality, family background, peer group, temperament, et cetera. Isokon, Archibong, Tangban and Edet (2022) observed that factors such as western ideology and the dilemma of globalization as well as western educational system, social media and the family have influenced youth's negative attitude towards African traditional values. Indeed, these factors have greatly influenced

the youth to undermine the societal values. Isokon et.al (2022) added that the craze for western values through social media resulted to the adoption of strange criminal behaviors such as scam, hate speeches, kidnappings, terrorism, fraud, corruption, youth restiveness, drug abuse, cultism and conflicts among the youth.

From the above summation of Isokon et.al (2022), social media has been listed to be one of the major factors that contribute to the demonstration of negative attitudes by our youths. Many believe that the interaction of youth with the social media is the major cause for the prevalence of indiscipline and delinquencies among youths (Akomolafe & Ajayi, 2029). News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) (2023) also states that social media encourage youths to spread rumours, to engage in bullying, to have unrealistic views of other people's lives and peer pressure. It states further that the extreme use of social media by the youths could be disruptive, it causes distraction and does not reflect our traditional African values. Social media has also been found to have its negative impact on the society. Some of which include, spreading of false information, promoting criminal activities, helping in the quick spread of vices, delinquencies in Juveniles. It is also addictive, and can preoccupy someone and prevent him or her from attending to other more pressing things.

Despite the negative contributions of social media to the prevalence of negative behaviours of youths, some scholars believe that social media still have many positive contributions to individuals, especially youths and the society they belong to. Social media is the means of interactions among people, in which they create, share, and/or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. Social media, derived from the social software movement, are a collection of internet websites services and practices that support collaboration, community building, participation, and sharing (Junco, Heibergert, & Loken, 2017). As defined by Bryer and Zavatarro (2016) social media are technologies that facilitate social interaction, make possible collaboration, and enable deliberation across stakeholders.

Moreso, social media have positive roles played on learning, especially at tertiary institutions. With social media, education can be sent across the world without physical presence, businesses can be done virtually without physical presence, and musicians can reach a wider range of audience than they would have reached physically (Erhiegueke et.al, 2023). Social media play a very vital role in every student's life. Social media helps in the provision of a lot of information, communication with friends, classmates, teachers and colleagues have become an easy-fit option. Students & teachers now get connected while making better use of this platform for gaining & providing education, respectively.

Furthermore, social media have positive impacts on the fostering of ethical and character development of our youths. The positive effects of social media are plentiful. According to Hashem (2024), besides, the promotion of good mental health, social media use is positively associated with social wellbeing of youths. Social media can be used to inspire, educate, show empathy, and become better communicators. Social media promotes creativity, learning, education, motivation, support, kindness, empathy and positive relationship among youths (Hashem, 2024)

Social media has a significant impact on character development. It can influence students' character formation by providing motivations for self-enhancement and positive distinctiveness, uncertainty reduction, and optimal distinctiveness (Qiu, 2022). Social media platforms allow individuals to showcase their experiences and play certain characters in the virtual and physical social life, enabling identity expression, exploration, and experimentation (Qiu, 2022). The

development and popularity of social media have led to the emergence of character setting culture, where people play various roles in the online world (Baharun, Al-Hasani & Sari, 2023).

Additionally, social media presents new challenges in character education, particularly in virtual learning, emphasizing the importance of ethics and digital literacy in positive social interactions. Social media plays a significant role in shaping the character values of children, potentially leading them towards deviant and conflicting values that can impact their attitudes and behavior (Zanini, 2023). Sundarsih and Sudiarti (2023) found out that there was a significant correlation between social media usage and forming of Pancasila characters among adolescents in the digital era. The more frequently teenagers use social media, the lower their Pancasila character tends to be. Overall, social media has the potential to shape and influence individuals' character development, highlighting the need for guidance and education in navigating its impact. Cabral (2020) states that social media has a significant impact on character development. Social Media influence students' character formation by providing motivations for self-enhancement and positive distinctiveness, uncertainty reduction, and optimal distinctiveness. Using social media involves social interacting which has generated both positive and negative influences. At the global level, uncountable people are active on social media as users. This means that the effect of social media on peoples' way of life especially on social interaction is inevitable. Akomolafe and Ajayi (2019) found out that the behaviours of children and adolescents were highly influenced by their activities on social media. Social Media may influence students' behaviour, sometimes in a negative way if it was used in ineffective way Julia, 2014 cited in Ntakirutimana & Andala 2019). Role of social media to character development of youths despite its documented negative impacts has inspired the researcher to investigate the impacts social media play in the development of character ethics and personality ethics of youths, using Social Studies undergraduates. Character and personality ethics are determined by each individual person, but can also be influenced by social media (Cabral, 2020). **Character Ethic focuses on foundational traits, including integrity, humility, hard work, loyalty, self-control, courage, justice, patience, modesty, and morality.** These are basic principles that any person in any culture or time period — could agree are important. Akingunola (2017) acknowledged character as an ingredient of success, but tended to compartmentalize it rather than recognize it as foundational and catalytic. Character Ethic as the foundation of success things like integrity, humility, fidelity, temperance, courage, justice, patience, industry, simplicity, modesty, and the Golden Rule (Akingunola, 2017).

Character ethics is about significant changes, and those changes start with ourselves. It is about courage, integrity, justice. If the roots of the tree are healthy, then the tree will live longer. Character ethics is a vital tool because if a person wants to make a change and have its role in the community, he/she must be an honest, responsible, humane member (Hnityunyan, 2021). The character ethic taught that there are basic principles of effective living, and that people can only experience true success and enduring happiness as they learn and integrate these principles into their basic character Akingunola, 2017). Hnityunyan (2021) believes that people need to develop character ethics to have the ideal democratic society where all the members can think critically and where all the members are not afraid of paradigm shifts. In the community where character ethics are encouraged, people start the positive changes within themselves and not the government, and they are ready for other external changes.

Similarly, like character ethic, personality ethic is determined by each individual person, but it can also be influenced by social media (Cabral, 2020). One's personalty is what others

observe when one interacts with others, such as words, deeds and attire (World of Work Project, 2022). Personality ethic emphasizes the skills and practices that affect individual's image, attitudes, and behaviour. For one to form his/her personality ethics, one has to possess character ethics such as integrity, selflessness, honesty, loyalty, equality, fairness, empathy, respect and self-respect. One transforms character ethics into a compelling personal ethics.

Youths need to develop character ethics in order to portray good personality ethics, which will enhance their relationship with others and their survival in the society. Character and personality ethics which are in tune with the acceptable societal values will help individuals to develop a sympathetic appreciation of the diversity and inter-dependency of all members of the local community and the wider national and international community. Character ethics will foster in students, positive attitudes of togetherness, comradeship and cooperation towards a healthy nation. Character and personality will help Social Studies Education students to achieve the goals of Social Studies Education. Therefore, the study examines the impact of social media on character and personality ethics of Social Studies students in Tai Solarin University of Education.

Statement of the Problem

The biggest revolution in the history of communication is social media. Social Media brought a completely new spontaneous era in the world today. Social media is the means of interactions among people in which they create, share, and/or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. Social media has been seen as the major factor responsible for delinquencies among youths. Some scholars observed that social media contributes immensely to wide spread of social vices among students. It is believed that youths get negative influence through what they watch on their different social media applications. With the roles of social media on our youths, there is no doubt that it has significant impacts on their character development. Social Media influence students' character formation, either positive or negative. Despite the negative impacts of social media on youths, it is worthy to note that it also has positive influence on the youth too. It has been observed that some contents that youths watched on Social Media have positive impacts on their behaviours and character development, hence it promotes the acquisition of acceptable values. Therefore, this study examines the impacts of social media on character and personality ethics of Social Studies students of Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun.

Objective of the study

The major objective of this study is to examine the impacts of social media interaction on character and personality ethics among Social Studies students of Tai Solarin University of Education. The specific objectives are to:

- (i) assess the various forms of social media applications usually visited by Social Studies students
- (ii) investigate the impacts of social media on the promotion of character ethics Social Studies students in TASUED.
- (iii) examine the impact of social media on the promotion of personality ethics among Social Studies students in TASUED

Research Questions

- (i) What are the various forms of social media applications usually visited by Social Studies

students

- (ii) What are the impacts of social media on the promotion of character ethics among Social Studies students in TASUED.
- (iii) What are the impacts of social media on the promotion of personality ethics among Social Studies students in TASUED

Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is a no significant relationship between social media interaction and promotion of character ethics among Social Studies students of TASUED.

H₀₂: There is a no significant relationship between social media and personality ethics among Social Studies students in TASUED.

Methodology

The research design for this study is descriptive survey, this is because descriptive survey research seeks the opinion of individuals on a particular problem and the consensus of the opinion is expected to provide solution to the problem. The population of the study was all Social Studies Education undergraduates of Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ogun State. The sample for this study was two hundred (200) Social Studies students who were purposively selected from the Department of Sociological Studies, College of Social and Management Sciences (COSMAS), TASUED. 50 students were randomly selected with the use of simple random sampling technique from each of the four levels of students in the Department of Social Studies, hence the sample size was 200 students. Social Studies Education Department was purposively selected because the objectives of the course deal with the acquisition of right type values, knowledge, attitudes and skills, the researchers want to see how Social Studies students interaction with social media affect their development of character ethics, which are the acceptable values needed to be functional and effective in the society; and the development of their personality ethics, which are the values they portray to people as what they are.

The research instrument for the study was questionnaire which was developed by the researchers and it is titled –Social Media, Character and Personality Ethics Scale (SMcCPES). SMcCPES was divided into two sections; Section A contained the demographic data of the respondents while Section B contained information on the variable stated in the study. The SMcCPES was a close ended 4 points Likert scale. A total number of twenty items were prepared on the scale used. Options were given to each question to help facilitate easy choices from the respondents. The scale was subjected to both face and content validity in which errors and mistakes were corrected and suggestions were integrated in the scale. The reliability of the instrument was tested by administering thirty copies of the instrument to a set of respondents in another school which is outside the area of study. The data was subjected to statistical analysis using Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient where 0.71 was obtained which revealed that the items had high reliability value. The returned copies of distributed questionnaire were coded and analysed using simple percentages to analysis demographic characteristics of the respondent while mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the research questions and chi-square was used to test the research hypotheses.

Presentation of Results

Question one:

What are the various forms of social media applications usually visited by Social Studies students

Table 1: Various Social Media Applications used by Social Studies Students

S/N	ITEMS	Often	Rarely	Never
1	Facebook	169 (84.5%)	23 (11.5%)	8 (4.05%)
2	Instagram	148 (74%)	39 (19.5%)	13 (6.5%)
3	Tiktok	138 (69%)	51 (25.5%)	11 (5.5%)
4	Telegram	117 (58.5%)	52 (26.0%)	31 (15.5%)
5	WhatsApp	146 (73.%)	39 (19.5%)	15 (7.5%)
6	Snapchat	133 (66.5%)	59 (29.5%)	8 (4.0%)
7	Youtube	141 (70.5%)	34 (17.0%)	25 (12.5%)

Table 1 shows the respondents opinion on the various forms of Social Media applications they usually visit. The table reveals that Tai Solarin University of Education's Social Studies students often visit Facebook (84.5%); this is followed by Instagram (74%), after which is WhatsApp (73%), then youtube (70.5%), after youtube is Tiktok, Snapchat (66.5%) and then Telegram (58.5%)

Question 2: What are the impacts of social media on the development of character ethics among Social Studies students of Tai Solarin University of Education

Table 2: Social Media and the Development of Character Ethics among social Studies Students

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD
8	Through the contents of movies, short-plays and writeups on Social Media, I learnt to be tolerant and empathetic.	82 (41.0%)	72 (36.0%)	35 (17.5%)	11 (5.5%)
9	Through the contents I watch on social media I learnt to be self-independent, hence I to be hard working	56 (28.0%)	97 (48.5%)	38 (19.0%)	9 (4.5%)
10	Through different contents on Social Media, I had learnt not be wicked or hate people, but to show love to people around me.	56 (28.0%)	81 (40.5%)	48 (24.0%)	15 (7.5%)
11	Social Media enhance positive character development through the contents people post on social media which are against social vices, and consequences of social vices.	73 (36.5%)	57 (28.5%)	51 (25.5%)	19 (9.5%)
12	Because there is a government agency incharge of regulating the contents posted on social media, social media have been	68 (34.0%)	75 (37.5%)	39 (19.5%)	18 (9.0%)

	important mean of learning acceptable social values				
13	Through the comedy, movie and other contents on Social Media I learn modesty and moderation	94 (47.0%)	61 (30.5%)	34 (17.0%)	11 (5.5%)

Table 2 shows the respondents opinion on the roles of social media towards the development of character ethics among Social Studies students. From the table, it is presented that through the use of social media, Social Studies students in Tai Solarin University of Education learnt social and societal values like tolerance (41%) and empathy (36%), self-independence (28%) and empathy (48.5%), love (28%) and compassion (40.5%), and moderation (47%) and modesty (30.5%). The table also reveals that social media is an important means of learning acceptable values of the society (34% and 37.5%) and it creates awareness against the consequences of engaging in social vices

Question 3: What are the impacts of social media on the personality ethics of Social Studies Students in Tai Solarin University of Education

Table 3: What are impacts of social media on the personality ethics of Social Studies Students in Tai Solarin University of Education

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD
14.	With social media, I'm encouraged to always showcase my skills	74 (37.0%)	89 (44.5%)	31 (15.5%)	6 (3.05)
15.	I use social media purposely to show case my talents	66 (33.0%)	80 (40.0%)	43 (21.5%)	11 (5.5%)
16.	I usually be on social media in order to boost my self esteem.	57 (28.5%)	64 (32.0%)	59 (29.5%)	20 (10.0%)
17.	I'm always on social media to promote my socialization with people of different ages and categories	66 (33.0%)	67 (33.5%)	41 (20.5%)	26 (13.0%)
18	I constantly be on social media for personal gratification.	63 (31.5%)	75 (37.5%)	51 (25.5%)	11 (5.5%)
19	I use social media to showcase my beauty and to make people discover and love me	80 (40.0%)	64 (32.0%)	42 (21.0%)	14 (7.0%)
20	Social media platforms allow students to express themselves and showcase their creativity.	70 (35.0%)	69 (34.5%)	41 (20.5%)	20 (10.0%)

Table 3 shows the respondents opinion on the impacts of social media on the personalty ethics of Social Studies Students in Tai Solarin University of Education. 37% and 44.5% of the respondents used social media to showcase their skills. 30% and 40% used social media to showcase their talents; 28.5% and 32% used social media to boost their self esteem; 33% and 33.5% used social media to promote their socialization with different categories of people; 31.5% and 37.5% used social media for personal gratification; 40% and 32% used social media to show case their beauty; and lastly, 35% and 34.5% used social media to showcase their creativity.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant impact of social media interaction and the development of character ethics among Social Studies Education undergraduate students.

Table 4: Social media and Development of Character ethics

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Social media interaction	1.55	.849	200
Character Ethics	2.15	.781	200

Interpretation:

The descriptive statistics shows social media interaction has a mean value of 1.55 and standard deviation of 0.849 with a sample size of 200. Character Ethics has a mean value of 2.55 and standard deviation of 0.781 with a sample size of 200

Table 5: Testing of significant relationship between social media interaction and promotion of character ethics among Social Studies students.

Correlations			
		Social media interaction	Indiscipline
Social media interaction	Pearson Correlation	1	.269**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	200	200
Character Ethics	Pearson Correlation	.269**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	200	200

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The result of the correlation shows a positive relationship of 0.269 between social media interaction and the promotion of character ethics. Therefore, we can reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis i.e there is significant relationship between social media interaction and the promotion of character ethics among undergraduate students.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between social media interaction and promotion of personality ethics among Social Studies students.

Table 6: Social Media interaction and promotion of personality ethics among Social Studies students Table

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Social media interaction	1.85	.790	200
Personality Ethics	2.00	.877	200

The descriptive statistics shows social media interaction has a mean value of 1.85 and standard deviation of 0.790 with a sample size of 200. Promotion of Personality Ethics has a mean value of 2.00 and standard deviation of 0.877 with a sample size of 200

Table 7: Testing of significant relationship between social media interaction and Personality Ethics of Social Studies Students

Correlations		Social media interaction	Character building
Social media interaction	Pearson Correlation	1	.042
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.551
	N	200	200
Personality Ethics	Pearson Correlation	.042	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.551	
	N	200	200

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Interpretation:

The result of the correlation shows a positive relationship of 0.42 between social media interaction and the promotion of personality ethics. Therefore, we can reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis, hence, there is significant relationship between social media interaction and the promotion of personality ethics of Social Studies students.

Discussion of findings

This study revealed that the participants, who were Social Studies students of Tai Solarin University of Education were Social media friendly; they often interact with different applications of the social media. Some of the applications are, facebook, Instagram, tiktok, telegram, whatsapp, snapchat and youtube. This is line with the findings of Nnanne (2015), who carried out research on the perception and use of social media among students in South-South Nigeria. Her study revealed that the majority (83.5%) of students accessed one to two social media sites on daily basis, and the sites most visited by them were WhatsApp (100.0%), Facebook (97.8%), Instagram (76.9%) and Google+ (74.7%). Also, Tayo, Adebola and Yahya (2019) found that social media platforms used by undergraduates, include WhatsApp (97%), Facebook (85%), Instagram (65%), YouTube (62%), Twitter (25%), LinkedIn (21%), Google Plus (15%), Snapchat (10%), and Skype (7%).

Furthermore, the study reveals that social media promotes character ethics, that is, through the interactions with different social media handles, students get motivated to develop and promote their personal values that are in accordance with the societal values, they develop and promote their character ethics which are **integrity, humility, hard work, loyalty, self-control, courage, justice, patience, modesty, and morality**. The result is against the findings of **Zaman (2022) who states that** students who spend more time on social media, their social values are damaged compared to the non-users of social media. The result is also in line with Qiu (2022) who states that social media has a significant impact on character development by influencing students' character formation by providing motivations for self-enhancement and positive distinctiveness.

Conclusion

The study has revealed to a great extent that social media has positive influence on the promotion of personality ethics among Social Studies students of Tai Solarin University of Education. Global Training Solution (2024) supports this findings by stating that Social media use has been associated with increased social support, allowing individuals to connect with others, seek advice, and find a sense of belonging. It can provide a platform for positive self-expression, promote positive affect, and enhance self-esteem. It is recorded that social media provide interactive nature which in turn promotes provides opportunities for social comparison, which can shape individuals' behavior and self-perception. When exposed to the behaviors and lifestyles displayed on social media, individuals may emulate or aspire to adopt similar behaviors, leading to behavior change.

Recommendations

1. Based on the findings, the following were recommended that University Management and lecturers needed to inform and educate students on the harmful effects and the negative behaviours that students could pick up from social media on regular bases; and they should always organise workshop for the students on the benefits of social media and encourage the students to make use of social media to their benefits.
2. University management should also enlighten the students on the significance and relevance of character and personality ethics to the development of our society, and students should be encouraged to always use social media to promote them in others and in themselves.
3. The students should be enlightened on the need to set limit on the amount of time they need to be spending on different the social media, in order to be able to attend to other things.

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