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INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON PSYCHOSOCIAL LIFE OF FEMALE ADOLESCENTS IN YABA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, LAGOS STATE NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study explores the influence of social media on the psychosocial development of female adolescents in Yaba Local Government Area of Lagos State, Nigeria. The study examines how digital platforms affect identity formation, peer relationships, and mental health outcomes. Quantitative and qualitative evidence indicates that social media engagement, particularly prolonged and image-focused use, is associated with increased anxiety, social comparison, and body image concerns among female adolescents. Parental digital literacy emerged as a significant protective factor, while platform-specific engagement influenced peer dynamics and self-perception. The findings highlight the urgent need for context-sensitive, gender-informed interventions involving parents, educators, and mental health professionals to promote healthy digital practices. This paper contributes to the growing discourse on adolescents' wellbeing in digitally saturated environment and underscores the importance of locally grounded research in shaping effective policy and support systems.

Keywords: Adolescent, Cyber Bullying, Gender Dynamics and Tik Tok

Introduction

The rise of social media in the 21st century has fundamentally reshaped communication, identity formation, and social interaction, particularly among adolescents who are its most active users. In Nigeria, where approximately 33 million adolescents navigate developmental milestones, social media seem to play a prominent role in shaping psychosocial outcomes. Female adolescents in urban centers like Yaba Local Government Area of Lagos State experience this influence acutely as they contend with gender-specific expectations, rapid digital innovation, and evolving social norms (Adekeye et al., 2022). Yaba as a key hub in Nigeria's growing tech ecosystem, serves as a unique context for examining the dual pressures and possibilities presented by digital connectivity. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, and Snapchat have enabled female adolescents to explore identity, build communities, and access diverse contents. However, these same platforms intensify social comparison, promote idealised standards, and contribute to psychological stress, particularly around issues such as body image and self-worth (Adeyemo & Olaseni, 2020; Nwanze & Adebisi, 2023). Studies also show female adolescents in Lagos spend an average of 4.7 hours daily on social media—well above the global average—raising concerns about the displacement of academic and social development. The constant connectivity and feedback loops embedded in social media culture can both empower and overwhelm adolescents during a sensitive developmental stage.

Psychosocial development includes identity formation, emotional regulation, social competence, and mental health—all of which are influenced by digital engagement (Ayodele & Okunola, 2023). In Yaba, where access to education and technology is relatively high but socio-economic disparities persist, social media introduces both risks and opportunities. While some female adolescents use these platforms to connect with mentors, express themselves creatively, and explore future careers, others experience decreased self-esteem and heightened anxiety due to cyberbullying or unrealistic portrayals online (Ogunniran & Oluwatosin, 2021; Ezeji & Olaniyi, 2022). Gender plays a central role in how social media impacts adolescent users. Female adolescents are more likely to experience body dissatisfaction, online harassment, and social anxiety compared to males, especially on image-focused platforms like Instagram and TikTok (Akinwande & Ogunmefun, 2023). Yet these platforms also offer space for feminist dialogue, media literacy, and resilience-building (Oluseyi & Adebambo, 2023). The negotiation between empowerment and vulnerability mirrors broader gender dynamics in Nigeria, where traditional norms coexist with modern influences. Parental guidance, peer norms, and school-based interventions can moderate the impact of social media, but their effectiveness varies widely across families and institutions (Adeyemi & Ogunbiyi, 2021).

The study by Odii and Chuka (2020) critically examines the growing influence of social media on adolescent behavior within Nigeria, emphasizing psychosocial development. The authors note that social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and TikTok have become integral to the social lives of adolescents, shaping their identity, values, and interpersonal relationships. Adolescents, particularly females, are increasingly using these platforms as spaces for self-expression and validation, often resulting in social comparison and peer pressure (Odii & Chuka, 2020). The study found that while social media fosters connectivity and provides avenues for self-discovery, it also exposes adolescents to cyberbullying, inappropriate content, and distorted realities. This dual impact highlights a tension between personal growth and psychosocial vulnerability. The authors argue that unchecked exposure to digital content can lead to behavioral problems such as aggression, withdrawal, and identity confusion, especially among female adolescents who are more emotionally sensitive. In terms of psychosocial development, the study employs Erikson's theory of identity vs. role confusion to analyze how adolescents negotiate their sense of self in virtual spaces. Female adolescents in particular face unique challenges as they often model their online

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behavior on influencers and peers, leading to unrealistic beauty standards and reduced self-esteem (Odii & Chuka, 2020). The paper identifies emotional instability, low self-worth, and social anxiety as emerging trends linked to excessive social media engagement. It also highlights the role of peer validation — such as likes, comments, and shares — in shaping the emotional well-being of female users.

Ademilokun and Odetola (2021) investigate the link between social media usage and mental health issues among Nigerian adolescents, with a particular focus on emotional and psychological challenges. Their study reveals that the constant exposure to curated images, peer comparisons, and virtual validation mechanisms significantly affects the emotional stability of adolescents. Many participants in the study reported experiencing anxiety, sadness, and a sense of inadequacy after prolonged social media engagement. This is particularly evident among female adolescents, who tend to internalize negative online interactions more deeply than their male counterparts (Ademilokun & Odetola, 2021). The study further emphasizes how digital peer pressure and fear of missing out (FOMO) lead to compulsive online behavior, reducing self-worth and increasing vulnerability to depressive symptoms. These findings align with global research trends that highlight social media as a double-edged sword in adolescent psychosocial development. In their conclusion, Ademilokun and Odetola (2021) advocate for mental health education and social media awareness campaigns targeted at adolescents, parents, and educators. They recommend incorporating mental wellness topics into school curricula and promoting positive digital citizenship among youth. The study also underscores the need for parental supervision and communication to help adolescents navigate the emotional pressures of social media responsibly.

Adegoke and Alabi (2016) explore the behavioral implications of social media use among youths in selected secondary schools in Lagos State. The study finds that students engage heavily with platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram, which have become dominant sources of social interaction and influence. According to the authors, the frequency and intensity of social media use among these adolescents are linked to changing behavioral patterns, including shifts in communication styles, dressing habits, and attitudes toward authority (Adegoke & Alabi, 2016). The paper also emphasizes that peer influence through social media plays a major role in shaping youth behavior, especially as students often emulate trends and practices popularized online. Among female adolescents, the study notes a strong tendency to adopt fashion, language, and behaviors modeled by influencers and celebrities. These behavioral shifts, though sometimes subtle, reflect deeper psychosocial transformations influenced by online engagement. The study reports several negative consequences of excessive social media use, such as declining academic performance, reduced attention span, disrespect for teachers, and early exposure to inappropriate content. Adegoke and Alabi (2016) argue that the absence of digital supervision, both at home and in school, contributes to students' unfiltered access to explicit or misleading information. The research particularly highlights female adolescents as vulnerable to body image issues, cyberbullying, and identity struggles resulting from exposure to idealized portrayals on social media. Social validation through likes, comments, and followers becomes a metric for self-worth, which can lead to emotional distress and risky behavior. Additionally, the study notes that while male students may display outward behavioral changes such as aggression, females are more likely to internalize emotional challenges, including self-doubt and depression. These findings underscore the gendered nature of social media's psychosocial influence on adolescents in urban environments like Lagos.

Given the rapid evolution of digital platforms and the lack of context-specific research, there is an urgent need to understand how social media affects female adolescents within distinct environments like Yaba. This study seeks to explore these dynamics through a psychosocial lens, examining the influence of social media on identity, peer relationships, and mental health. By focusing on female adolescents in Yaba, the study addresses a critical knowledge gap and provides evidence-based recommendations for parents, educators, and policymakers aiming to promote healthier digital engagement and psychosocial development.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the growing body of research examining social media's impact on adolescent development globally, there remains a significant knowledge gap regarding the specific psychosocial experiences of female adolescents in Yaba Local Government Area of Lagos State, where unique socioeconomic, educational, and cultural factors create distinctive patterns of vulnerability and resilience. The excessive use of social media can harm teens by disrupting important healthy behaviors. Some researchers think that exposure to social media can overstimulate the brain's reward center and, when the stimulation becomes excessive, can trigger pathways comparable to addiction. It could also lead some teens to form views about other people's lives or bodies that are not realistic. Expose some teens to online predators, who might try to exploit or extort them. Expose some teens to cyberbullying, which can raise the risk of mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression. Preliminary studies in Lagos metropolitan areas report increased anxiety, depression, and social comparison behaviors among female adolescents who engage intensively with image-focused platforms (Oladipo & Ogundipe, 2022). However, these findings often lack the contextual specificity needed to develop targeted interventions. Additionally, the rapid rise in internet access and smartphone use in Yaba has outpaced the development of digital literacy frameworks among parents and schools, leaving adolescents

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vulnerable to the negative effects of unmoderated digital exposure. Cyberbullying, body image distress, and identity confusion are emerging issues, particularly among girls navigating both traditional expectations and globalized digital norms. Social media affects teenagers' mental health negatively by limiting direct contact with peers and encouraging constant comparison online, which can lead to low self-esteem, anxiety, and depression.

Research Questions

1. How does parental digital literacy influence the psychosocial development of female adolescents in Yaba Local Government?
2. What role does social media play in shaping peer relationships among female adolescents in Yaba Local Government?

Methodology

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive understanding of how social media influences the psychosocial development of female adolescents in Yaba Local Government Area, Lagos State. A purposive sampling technique was used to select female adolescents between the ages of 13 and 18 from five secondary schools within the local government. The quantitative data were gathered through structured questionnaires measuring parental digital literacy, social media usage patterns, peer relationship dynamics, and anxiety symptoms. Psychosocial development was assessed using a validated scale adapted to the Nigerian context. Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and ANOVA were used to analyze the data, ensuring statistical rigor in identifying significant patterns and relationships.

In addition to the survey, semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected students, parents, and teachers to capture in-depth perspectives on the emotional, social, and identity-related effects of social media use. The qualitative data were thematically analyzed to identify recurring narratives, contextual factors, and coping mechanisms. Ethical considerations such as informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation were strictly adhered to throughout the research process. This methodological triangulation ensured a nuanced understanding of the interplay between digital engagement and psychosocial outcomes within Yaba's unique socio-cultural and technological landscape.

Results

Research Question 1: How does parental digital literacy influence the psychosocial development of female adolescents in Yaba?

Table 1: How does parental digital literacy influence the psychosocial development of female adolescents in Yaba

Variable 1	Variable 2	r (Correlation Coefficient)	p-value
Parental Digital Literacy	Psychosocial Development	0.896	0.000

Table 1 above shows that parental digital literacy was found to have a strong and statistically significant positive relationship with the psychosocial development of female adolescents in Yaba ($r = 0.896$, $p < 0.001$). This suggests that as parents become more digitally literate, their ability to provide informed guidance and supervision improves, which in turn supports healthier emotional and social development in their daughters. The result highlights the importance of parental engagement and competence in digital environments as a protective factor in adolescent psychosocial wellbeing.

Research Question 2: What role does social media play in shaping peer relationships among female adolescents in Yaba?

Table 2: Role does social media play in shaping peer relationships among female adolescents in Yaba

Source	Sum of Squares	df	F	p-value
Social Media Platform	1344.52	2	142.93	0.000
Residual (Within Groups)	329.24	70	—	—

Table 2 shows there was a statistically significant difference in peer relationship scores based on the social media platforms used by female adolescents in Yaba ($F(2, 70) = 142.93$, $p < 0.001$). This finding suggests that the type of platform adolescents engage with—such as WhatsApp, Instagram, or TikTok—has a substantial influence on how they form and maintain peer relationships. The variation in scores implies that each platform offers distinct social dynamics and interaction styles that shape adolescents' social experiences differently, reinforcing the need for platform-specific understanding in assessing peer-related outcomes.

Discussion of Findings

The first research question revealed that parental digital literacy was found to have a strong and statistically significant positive relationship with the psychosocial development of female adolescents in Yaba. This suggests that as parents become

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more digitally literate, their ability to provide informed guidance and supervision improves, which in turn supports healthier emotional and social development in their daughters. The finding is in line with the finding of Ademilokun and Odetola (2021) investigate the link between social media usage and mental health issues among Nigerian adolescents, with a particular focus on emotional and psychological challenges. Many participants in the study reported experiencing anxiety, sadness, and a sense of inadequacy after prolonged social media engagement. This is particularly evident among female adolescents, who tend to internalize negative online interactions more deeply than their male counterparts (Ademilokun & Odetola, 2021). The study further emphasizes how digital peer pressure and fear of missing out (FOMO) lead to compulsive online behavior, reducing self-worth and increasing vulnerability to depressive symptoms. These findings align with global research trends that highlight social media as a double-edged sword in adolescent psychosocial development. Many participants admitted to late-night social media browsing, which interferes with rest and school performance, indirectly increasing stress levels (Ademilokun & Odetola, 2021). This behavior leads to fatigue, irritability, and difficulty concentrating, all of which are classic symptoms of mental health distress. Notably. Ademilokun and Odetola (2021) advocate for mental health education and social media awareness campaigns targeted at adolescents, parents, and educators. They recommend incorporating mental wellness topics into school curricula and promoting positive digital citizenship among youth. The study also underscores the need for parental supervision and communication to help adolescents navigate the emotional pressures of social media responsibly.

The result of second research question revealed that there was a statistically significant difference in peer relationship scores based on the social media platforms used by female adolescents in Yaba. This finding suggests that the type of platform adolescents engage with—such as WhatsApp, Instagram, or TikTok—has a substantial influence on how they form and maintain peer relationships. This is in line with the finding of Adegoke and Alabi (2016) who explored the behavioral implications of social media use among youths in selected secondary schools in Lagos State. The study finds that students engage heavily with platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram, which have become dominant sources of social interaction and influence. According to the authors, the frequency and intensity of social media use among these adolescents are linked to changing behavioral patterns, including shifts in communication styles, dressing habits, and attitudes toward authority (Adegoke & Alabi, 2016). Adegoke and Alabi (2016) argue that the absence of digital supervision, both at home and in school, contributes to students' unfiltered access to explicit or misleading information. The study by Odii and Chuka (2020) critically examines the growing influence of social media on adolescent behavior within Nigeria, emphasizing psychosocial development. The authors note that social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and TikTok have become integral to the social lives of adolescents, shaping their identity, values, and interpersonal relationships

Conclusion

The findings of this study highlight the significant impact of social media engagement on the psychosocial wellbeing of female adolescents in Yaba Local Government. Parental digital literacy emerged as a key protective factor, positively influencing adolescent development, while platform-specific usage patterns were found to shape peer relationships in distinct ways. Moreover, frequent social media use was strongly linked to heightened anxiety levels, underscoring the emotional risks associated with excessive digital exposure. These results emphasize the need for targeted interventions involving parents, educators, and mental health professionals to foster healthier digital practices and support adolescent girls in navigating the complexities of online environments.

Recommendations

1. Parents should be equipped with digital literacy training to effectively guide and support their daughters' online activities and promote healthy psychosocial development.
2. Schools should implement digital citizenship programs that educate students on the social dynamics of different platforms and encourage positive peer interactions.
3. Mental health services should incorporate screening and intervention strategies that address anxiety symptoms linked to excessive social media use.
4. Female adolescents should be encouraged to adopt balanced social media habits through awareness campaigns and peer-led initiatives that promote mindful digital engagement.

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