

# Patterns of Social Networking and Social Personal Functioning of Senior Secondary School Students in Ogun State, Nigeria

*A.O.K. Noah, PhD & Oyeniyi, Taiwo P.*

## Abstract

*This study investigated patterns of social networking and social personal functioning of senior secondary school students in Ogun State, Nigeria. Two research questions guided the study. A descriptive survey was adopted for the study. A total of 600 senior secondary school students were randomly selected from all secondary schools across the twenty local government areas in Ogun State. The instrument used for collection of data was Social Networking and Student Personal Functioning Questionnaire (SNSPF). Data were gathered quantitatively with the use of structured questionnaire. Each of the hypotheses was either rejected or not rejected at 0.05 levels of significance. The research questions were subjected to descriptive statistics of means, frequency counts and percentages. The study found a significant correlation among patterns of social networking social personal functioning and social capital formation. It was concluded that students tend to lose focus on other things when they are engaged online. They also display solitary behavior in their personal functioning. The study recommends that social media usage should be encouraged among senior secondary school students in this information age, while all stakeholders like government, schools, educators, ICT experts parents, non-governmental organizations should constructively engage the internet issue.*

*Keywords: social networking, personal functioning, students, communication*

## Introduction

Among several factors which determine success or otherwise of a child in relationship, education and life generally is the sociopersonal functioning of such child. Sociopersonal functioning is perceived to denote personal ability of an individual to work, to engage in social relationship with partners, family, to attend to self-care and to participate in recreational and community activities. Personal functioning represents the internal events, processes, and experiences of an individual, whereas social functioning involves interaction with another person or with a target reference group (Walter, 2000). It is perceived that interaction among individuals has become global probably as a result of wide spread and usage of different social networking services now available for use as a means of communication and interaction. Social functioning defines indi-

viduals' interaction with their environment and the ability to fulfill their role with such environment as work, social activities and relationship with partners and family. It describes the general quality of child's performance in writing task or mathematical task (Wilkinson & Robertson, 2006).

The impact of social functioning is observed across different life stages such as learning at school, working in a firm, and even during retirement. Social functioning is a broad construct that reflect an overall performance across many everyday domains like independent living, employment, interpersonal relationship and recreation (Wang et al. 2013). Overall performance expressed by Wang may not exclude social personal functioning of an individual. Bellini (2006) observed that social functioning describes students' relationship with peers, the number of close friends he/she has, the type of children a child prefers to play with, how other children treat

him/her and his/her comfort interacting with adults than peers. It also includes what a student typically does at recess, whether he/she plays with others. It covers how a child displays his emotion. Does he or she exhibit fear or distress regarding social interaction? Does he/she avoid social interaction or situation?

Social functioning also embraces communication interaction. Crick & Nelson (2006) found that children often value their friends because they provide opportunities for emotional support and self-disclosure. Researchers have typically assumed that self-disclosure in friendship indicates healthy functioning. Rose (2002) observed that having multiple friends is usually and rightly considered a positive sign of adjustment. With the growing level of digital information, people particularly young adults seem to find it more convenient to create friends and relate with them via the internet. Some researchers have referred to ability of an individual to navigate a world full of interconnected information, make new friends, discover new sites, read up to date information as "surfing." Senior secondary school students are not exempted from surfing.

A study by Awal (2015) found that interaction by collaboration among students is positive to knowledge acquisition, building social skills and emotional support which in turn gives motivation for learning at school. Social competence in childhood is often a powerful predictor of achievement. Children who are accepted by their peers or display prosocial and responsible form of behavior at school tend to be high achievers, whereas socially rejected and aggressive children appear to be especially at risk for academic failure (Dishion, 1990). These behavioral and interpersonal forms of competence are often more powerful predictors of achievement than intellectual ability. Intrapersonal aspects of social competence such as social goal setting, problem-solving capabilities, and feelings of social support and trust have been linked to intellectual accom-

plishment as well (Ford, 1982, 1987; Wentzel, Feldman, & Weinberger, 1991). In the social cognitive perspective, students' academic achievement skills result from continuous, reciprocal interaction among behaviors (e.g. social skills), the external environment and cognitive and other internal events that can affect perception and action (Bandura, 1978).

Sharma (2016) observed that social skills are important because they allow an individual to interact in a well acceptable way in the society. He claimed social skills enhance the quality of life by making relationship very strong. Strong social skills help in facilitating interpersonal interaction and it is the basic need of an individual's personality traits and determines his or her success in life to a large extent. There is possibility of interrelatedness between students' social skills and students' social personal functioning.

Skills are manifested in actions, and it is common to operationalize teacher rated social skills in three domains: cooperation, self -control, and assertion (Gresham and Elliot, 1990). Essential social skills that enable students to be successful in the classroom include raising one's hand for permission to speak in the classroom, following classroom rules, complying with teachers' directives, asking for help, helping others, cooperating with peers, and controlling temper in conflict situations both with adults and peers (Gresham & Elliot, 1990; Lane & Givner, 2003; Meler, Diperna, & Oster, 2006).

The wide spread of social networking sites globally has increased the participation of secondary school students in the adoption of social networking sites either as communication tools or for creation of other social relationships. The internet has now become an almost inevitable modern means of obtaining information and for communication. Social networking among secondary school students has become more and more popular over the years because it is a way of making connections among friends within and outside school. Social networking use by senior secondary school students is on the rise with an increasing number of students accessing WhatsApp, Twitter, Intagram, Facebook, and other social media sites.

Ellison & Boyd (2007, 2013) defined social networking sites as "web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system; articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, view and traverse their list of connection and those made by other within the system." Ellison & Boyd made interchangeable use of "social networking sites," "online social networks or "social network" to refer to a diffuse and sometimes improbable range of sites and services. As a result of the popularity of social networking among students, people begin to ask whether the performance of students are being affected by how much time they spend on various sites of social networking (Stollak, et al., 2011). By making connections

with one another and keeping them going over time, people are able to work together to achieve things they either could not achieve by themselves, or could only achieve with great difficulty (Lin, 2001).

### **Review on Patterns of Social Networking**

The internet has almost become a potential driving force of the economy, society, and education. People use the internet to access the needed information. As a result, societal and educational organizations are challenged to use the internet more efficiently. Given this climate, it is important to understand the patterns of internet usage. Studies have been done on internet technology, technological developments and services, but there are few studies on individual internet usage. People in the United States use the internet more than any other country in the world (Fusilier et al., 2005).

The U.S. National Opinion Research Center 2000-2004 conducted general social survey, to determine who is more or less likely to use the internet for activities other than e-mail. Results of the study showed that demographics (such as age and race) and socioeconomic status variables (such as education level and household income) play significant roles in predicting the patterns of internet use. The respondents who were older or African-Americans were more likely to use the internet for activities other than e-mail. Those with higher levels of education or family income were less likely to use the internet in this manner. Gender, marital status, region, and employment variables appeared to have no influence. To determine factors influencing internet usage within the United States, including demographics and social-economic and employment variables, a literature review of applicable and available research was conducted, focusing on the studies on the main factors related to individuals' use of the internet or World Wide Web. According to the literature, teachers and students are the main users of the internet. (Jones & Madden, 2002) conducted a study on college students' internet usage. Browsing the internet was a daily activity; 73% of college students use the internet more than the library for research. Seventy-nine percent of the students agreed "that internet use has had a positive impact on their college academic experience" (Jones & Madden, 2002).

Princeton Research Associates for the Pew Internet & American Life Project conducted nationwide telephone surveys, and analyzed how respondents penetrated the internet. The data results showed that all respondents (59%) of the general population did not penetrate the internet more than those (86%) of college students (Jones & Madden, 2002). Mehra & PapaJohn (2007) surveyed 260 international teaching assistants at a representative state university in a semi-rural setting in the United States, and analyzed 130 returned surveys. The variables such as gender, marital status, and age were found to be signifi-

cant predictors in explaining the correlations between communication and information intersections in international teaching assistants' use of the internet.

Region has been used as an important factor to explore the regional variations in internet use. Disparities existed in internet usage by American adults (Spooner, 2003). For the highest rates of internet penetration, 66% of the adult population used the internet in New England. The South (48%) was far behind the other regions in use of the internet. "The largest proportion of female users is in the Mid-Atlantic (54%); the largest of male users is in New England (55%)" (Spooner, 2003). Outside of the United States, (Kumar & Kaur, 2006) surveyed 792 teachers and 1,188 undergraduate students in India, and determined that the World Wide Web is an important tool for teaching, research, and learning. These researchers found that 1,587 (99 percent) respondents browsed the internet for the World Wide Web. However, the study did not determine factors that influenced internet usage.

Taylor et al. (2003) conducted the computer-assisted telephone interviews to examine the factors that affected home internet usage patterns in central Queensland, Australia. The variables such as age, gender, location, marital status, education level, family income, and employment status were used in that study. They found significant differences in variables such as gender and age. The males and the youngest group might use the internet more at home for information search. Grover et al., (2010) examined the pattern of internet use across people of various professions who have access to it; the study concluded that the internet affects the users' life in multiple ways. The sharp difference in the prevalence estimates of internet addiction depending on the type of criteria used shows the fragility of the construct of internet addiction.

In India, the number of people actively using social media is about 66 million but it is growing faster with the availability of cheaper broadband connection and internet enabled handsets at very low prices (Nielsen, 2012). Social media is transforming the contours of social interaction. Emotions like love, friendship, family bonding, intimacy and language are finding various platforms and forms of expression. No other media has become so popular in such a short period of time as social media. Credit of this tremendous success goes to user friendly features of Social Media. According to Nielsen, (2012) internet users continue to spend more time with social media sites than any other type of site. At the same time, the total time spent on social media in the U.S. across PC and mobile devices increased by 37 percent to 121 billion minutes in July 2012 as compared to 88 billion minutes in July 2011 (State of media report, 2012). It has been observed that Facebook is now the primary method for communication by college students in the U.S (Harris, 2008).

## Reviews on Senior Secondary School Students and Social Networking

Asif & Ibrahim, (2015) investigated the effect of social networking on student performance. Variables which were used in the research were gender, education, age, academic performance and social influence. The result revealed that in age range, between 15 to 25 mostly use social networking websites for enjoyment, 60% of male respondents used these websites for information. The result also revealed some people use social websites for social influence. This study also showed that students also used social websites to communicate with relatives, their lecturers and friends. Students whose GPA are 3.0 to 3.5 GPA (grade point average) commonly use social networking websites for enjoyment (Asif, & Ibrahim, 2015).

Findings by Kuppuswamy & Narayan (2010) revealed that social networking websites like Orkut, Facebook, Myspace and You-Tube are becoming more and more popular and have become part of daily life for an increasing number of people. Because of their features, young people are attracted to social networking sites. The authors explored the impact of social networking sites on the education of youth. The study argued that these social networking websites distract students from their studies, but these websites can be useful for education based on sound pedagogical principles and proper supervision by the teachers. Moreover, the research concludes that social networking websites have both positive as well as negative impacts on the education of youths, depending on one's interest to use it in a positive manner for his or her education and vice versa (Kuppuswamy & Narayan 2010).

Teenagers are today's most profuse users of social networking sites. Contemporary youths are growing up in a cultural setting in which many aspects of their lives will be mediated by social media and many of their experiences and opportunities will be shaped by their engagement with social networking services. Subsequently, questions and controversies emerge about the effects social networking services have on adolescent development due to how embedded their lives are in social media. A systematic review of fifteen articles was used in gathering information on the effects of social networking on adolescents' social and emotional development. The studies gathered concluded that there are both risks and benefits to teenager's social and emotional development (Christofferson & Jenna, 2016).

Bala (2014) noted that social media has impacts on communication levels. Social media has become an important tool of self-expression and self-presentation. Whatever we think important, we are communicating to others; be it birthday party, marriage ceremony, outings, dinners and even shopping, the expression to build image in the eyes of others is leading to narcissism. We want

to project we are living the best life irrespective of reality. The desire to post and check comments after every moment is making youth addicted towards the social media. The presence and affordability of smart phones are catalyzing this phenomenon of addiction.

Social media was created for social interaction and it is serving its purpose fully Bala, (2014). It has made communication faster, cheaper and achievable anytime anywhere. This very feature which seems to be useful is becoming a problem in interpersonal communication. People are virtually connected all the time with updated status on social media sites. Over-obsession of update in virtual world is leading to “non communication” in real world. Most of the time, SNS users are so much engrossed in their virtual communication they hardly find time to talk to those near and dear one who are present in their physical surroundings. In the world of over-communication, we are moving away from the real world and living a virtual world of fake identities and intimacies. Those who are not really using them due to lack of knowledge, access or disinterest find themselves alienated. Not only is it affecting the quantity and quality of communication but it is also affecting the kind of language we are using in our informal and formal written communication. Like on Twitter, one can post messages in limited number of characters. Social networking users have developed a variety of acronyms. This is affecting the language of present generation in various ways. Students have started using these acronyms in their examination answer sheets and many of them have forgotten the actual words.

There used to be hardly 15-20 friends of a person with whom interaction was possible, but with the development of social media, the number of friends whose updates one can have is running into hundreds (Bala, 2014). Something that was shared amongst friends in inner circle, the very information gets disclosed instantly. Earlier relationships were maintained in secrecy and break ups were having silent tone. With changing times, people have started commitment on Facebook and that commitment is broken on Facebook itself. Before now, these were matters of embarrassment and people used to hide such instances. Now people announce them on Facebook with fun. Now the concept of interpersonal communication is fading as people have created many groups on Facebook. Anything and everything are communicated amongst all the group members (Bala, 2014).



## Theoretical Framework

### Symbolic interactionism

Symbolic interactionism developed from the work of a group of American philosophers who included John Dewey, Williams I. Thomas and George Herbert Mead. Symbolic interactionists are concerned with explaining social actions in term of the meaning that individuals give to them.

George Herbert Mead (1863-1931) is generally regarded as the founder of symbolic interactionism. In his view, human thought, experience and conducts are essentially social. They owe their nature to the fact that human beings interact in terms of symbol, the most important of which are contained in language. Symbols provide the means whereby humans can interact meaningfully with their natural and social environment. They are human made and refer not to the intrinsic nature of objects and events but to the ways in which people perceive them. Without symbols, there would be no human interaction and no human society. Mead concluded that via symbols, meaning is imposed on the world of nature, and human interaction with that world is thereby made possible.

The view of symbolic interactionism is applicable to the use of social networking sites and how one's identity is presented on those sites. With social networking sites, one can boast (or post) their identity on their news feed. The social identity presents itself when individuals “tag” others in their post, pictures etc. Looking at social networking sites as an extension of offline communities, it becomes useful to make use of a theory of interaction that takes into account the dialectic character or nature of the relationship between subject and object of self and society. According to Mead, it is through communal activity or what Mead called “social fact” that people realize their own role in relation to others when learning to see themselves from the perspective of their co-actors. Mead argued that it is through this process of realization that selfhood arises. Herbert Blumer, following Mead, advanced this notion by claiming that people not only react to each other's action, but also interacts with each other by interpreting or defining each other's action.

### Research questions

- i. What are the patterns of social networking among secondary school students?
- ii. What is the social personal functioning among senior secondary school students?



**Methodology**

This study employed descriptive survey design. The sample for the study was 600 senior secondary students drawn from 16 schools across 4 Local Governments out of the 20 Local Government councils in Ogun State. Questionnaire titled Social Networking and Student Personal Functioning (SNSPF) was used to collect data. The instrument was divided into 3 sections. The section A contained the bio data of the respondents, section B contained 19 questions on patterns of social networking among senior secondary school students while section C which had 20 questions elicited information on social personal functioning of students. The instrument was validated by 2 experts in Measurement and Evaluation and the supervisor of the researcher. The reliability of the instrument was arrived at after a pilot study which used Cronbach Alpha and the reliability index yielded 0.789. The data were coded and analysed with descriptive statistics of means, frequency counts and percentages.

**Results of Findings**

The research questions were answered descriptively with frequency counts and percentages.

- Research question 1: What are the patterns of social networking among secondary school students?

To answer this question, the data collected were subjected to descriptive statistics of means, frequency counts and percentages as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Patterns of social networking among secondary school students**

Patterns of social networking	NVT	NT	T	VT	Mean	SD
For academics	-	26 (6.1)	327 (76.6)	74 (17.3)	3.11	0.471
For social welfare	3 (0.7)	46 (10.8)	297 (69.6)	81 (19)	3.07	0.567
For interpersonal relationship	-	45 (10.5)	297 (69.6)	85 (19.9)	3.09	0.544

*Mean aggregate = 3.09 SD = 0.53.*

*Key: Not Very True = (NVT); Not True (NT); True (T); Very True (VT)*

Table 1 showing the patterns of social networking among secondary school students indicated that majority of the students, 401 representing 93.9% directed their social networking activities towards their academic development such as using social networking sites for online academic group discussion, to do

research work, learn about curricular aspect, for preparation of examinations and solving academic problems. Meanwhile, 382 (89.5%) of the students directed their social networking activities towards social welfare like keeping in touch with relatives, sharing pictures, getting relief from academic stress and for watching movies. Also, 378 (88.6%) of them directed their social networking activities towards interpersonal relationships as in becoming more sociable, seeking help from teachers and getting information regarding current social events for sharing pictures. The mean aggregate 3.09, which is greater than the mean bench value of 2.5 further confirms the patterns of social networking among secondary school students.

- Research question 2: What is the social personal functioning among senior secondary school students?

To answer this question, the data collected were subjected to descriptive statistics of means, frequency counts and percentages as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2a: Factors of social personal functioning among secondary school students**

Social personal functioning	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	SD
Lack of self-esteem	36 (8.4)	216 (50.6)	167 (39.1)	8 (1.9)	2.66	0.658
Solitary	43 (10.1)	268 (62.8)	115 (26.9)	1 (0.2)	2.83	0.592
Unsociable	42 (9.8)	235 (55)	148 (34.7)	2 (0.5)	2.74	0.631
Engrossed in online activities	78 (18.3)	247 (57.8)	99 (23.2)	3 (0.7)	2.94	0.663
Non-collaborative	49 (11.5)	224 (52.5)	146 (34.2)	8 (1.9)	2.74	0.68

**Table 2b: Activities of social personal functioning among secondary school students**

Activities of social personal functioning	SD (f, %)	D (f, %)	A (f, %)	SA (f, %)
1. Would rather be online alone than with others.	62, 14.5	122, 28.6	123, 28.8	120, 28.1
2. Does not join group activities unless told to do so online	48, 11.2	117, 27.4	161, 37.7	101, 23.7

3. Avoids initiating social interaction with others.	38, 8.9	120, 28.1	169, 39.6	100, 23.4
4. Don't not engage with recreational activity when I am online	44, 10.3	134, 31.4	160, 37.5	89, 20.8
5. Lose focus on other things when I am on online	55, 12.9	118, 27.6	149, 34.9	105, 24.6
6. Is unresponsive to emotions of others while online	64, 15	160, 37.5	126, 29.5	77, 18
7. Avoids people who want to be close during social networking.	46, 10.8	148, 34.7	143, 33.5	90, 21.1
8. Has difficulty making friends online, even when trying to do so.	65, 15.2	136, 31.9	138, 32.3	88, 20.6
9. Does not play appropriately with children of the same age while online.	63, 14.8	145, 34	121, 28.3	98, 23
10. Socially awkward online, even when trying to be polite.	52, 12.2	122, 28.6	146, 34.2	107, 25.1
11. Don't eat on time when engaged online	58, 13.6	111, 26	139, 32.6	119, 27.9
12. Sometime sleep late anytime online	46, 10.8	90, 21.1	159, 37.2	132, 30.9
13. Gets teased a lot while online with friends	39, 9.1	91, 21.3	162, 37.9	135, 31.6
14. Has trouble communicating feelings to others while online	52, 12.2	117, 27.4	145, 34	113, 26.5
15. Has trouble keeping pace with the flow of a normal conversation online.	53, 12.4	121, 28.3	155, 36.3	98, 23
16. Gets frustrated trying to get ideas across in conversations when online.	47, 11	123, 28.8	152, 35.6	105, 24.6
17. Does not seem self-assured or confident when interacting with others.	60, 14.1	126, 29.5	132, 30.9	109, 25.5
18. May not have time for house chores when online	67, 15.7	101, 23.7	145, 34	114, 26.7
19. Chat with friends anytime of the day	47, 11	69, 16.2	167, 39.1	144, 33.7
20. My parents complain about my use of social media	70, 16.4	96, 22.5	146, 34.2	115, 26.9

Table 2a shows that 252 students representing 59% agreed that they lack self confidence in their social personal functioning as indicated in some items in Table 2b such as losing focus on other things when online, getting frustrated trying to get ideas across in conversations when online, avoiding people who want to be close during social networking and do not play appropriately

with people of the same age while online. Most of the students, (72.9%) agreed that they usually display solitary behavior in their social personal functioning as shown Table 2a. Activities of solitary behavior include having difficulty making friends online, would rather be online alone than with others, do not engage with recreational activities with others while online. Furthermore, Table 2a shows that 64.8% of the students agreed that they are unsociable in their social personal functioning while online as they indicated in Table 2b where 59.3% of the students agreed that they are socially awkward while online even when trying to be polite. Also, 56.9% of them agreed that they would rather be online alone than with others, whereas 69.5% of them get teased while online with friends; 60.5% agreed that they have trouble communicating feelings to others while online.

Table 2a shows that 76.1% of the students agreed that they are usually engrossed in online activities. For instance, Table 2b shows that 61.1% of the students agreed that their parents do complain about their use of social media; 60.7% of them are of the opinion that they may not have time for house chores when online; while, 72.8% of them agreed that they chat with friends anytime of the day. Finally, 64% of the students agreed that they do not work collaboratively with friends while online as shown in Table 2a. Table 2b explicitly shows that about 56.4% of the students seemed not to be self-assured or confident when interacting with others; while 63% of them agreed that they avoid initiating social interaction with others and 61.4% do not usually join group activities unless told to do so online.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the outcome of this study, it is concluded that students' engagement in online social networking negatively affect their social personal functioning.

## **Recommendation**

As a measure to instill discipline in students and ensuring a balanced personal functioning, schools and parents should regulate the time and hour students visit and spend surfing the internet. What students do on the internet should also be monitored. Access of senior secondary school students to social media should be regulated by the government.

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