



The Effects of the Use of Social Media on the Ethical Values of University Students: A Case Study of Akwalbom State University, ObioAkpa Campus

Richard Archibong

Department of Religious and Cultural Studies
Akwalbom State University, IkotAkpaden, Akwalbom State
Richyarchibong@gmail.com

&

Dominic Umoh (Associate Professor)

Department of Religious and Cultural Studies
Akwalbom State University, IkotAkpaden, Akwalbom State
dominicumoh@aksu.edu.ng

&

Casmir Uyanga (PhD)

Department of Religious and Cultural Studies
Akwalbom State University, IkotAkpaden, Akwalbom State

Abstract

Social media has been so prevalent in recent times and it has attracted the attention of many. Still, it is among the most important media of communication. Thus, young people especially students have come to prefer the use of it to the conventional media. Previous studies have indicated that social media has been used for several purposes with several consequences. Though studies have addressed the effects of social media on students on diverse angles, few or no study has addressed how the use of social media affects the ethical values of university students. Thus, this work is aimed at evaluating the effects of the use of social media on the ethical values of Akwalbom State University students in ObioAkpa Campus. Ethical values here imply a set of established principles governing virtuous behaviour which helps a person or group of persons in maintaining good reputation. This study is significant to parents, government agencies, policy makers, among others as it will help them to guide youths on the proper use of social media. Survey method was employed for findings. The scope of the study borders on selected social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, etc. among students of Akwalbom State University, ObioAkpa Campus. It is true that social media has both negative and positive effects on university students. However, parents, government, lecturers, pastors, policy makers, among others are obliged to guide youth on the ethical use of the social media. Religious and cultural norms which are sources of ethical principles should be respected in order to curtail immoral moral activities on social media sites. In conclusion, if there are ethical guidelines to regulate the use of social media, students will refrain from the use of social media for immoral purposes.

Key words: Social media, Ethical values, Effects and Students



Introduction

Over the years, social media has gained acceptability as a source of information (Pathak, 2022). Users engage with social media via computers, tablets, or smartphones via web-based software or applications (Dollarhide, 2021). The vast majority of people living in the 21st century interact and communicate through the different social media platforms or applications. These social media applications which range from Facebook to Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Telegram, WhatsApp, among others, have both positive and negative effects on its users mostly on teens and students who frequently use them (Ayeeni, 2021; Adil, 2022).

Social media has been so prevalent among students to the extent that it seems difficult to isolate it from their daily routine. In fact, social media has become a demigod or an idol that has come to be worshipped by students through the object of worship which is the cellular phone. For instance, there have been cases where students chat and snap pictures for Facebook in the classroom while lecture is on-going. Even in the serious and busy period of examination where most students are preoccupied with studies, students still make out time to login to one social media platform or another in order to engage in one activity or the other.

Although the tool of social media and the use of it is not bad in itself, it seems like the use of social media has so much intoxicated students to the extent that it has been observed to affect their moral values. Similar concerns have been expressed in recent Nigerian scholarship, which argues that the misuse of modern communication technologies contributes to moral decline, weakens ethical consciousness and influences behaviour that conflicts with accepted religious and cultural values (Edem & Akpan, 2025; Oko, 2017). More so, the language of social media is detrimental to current academic language. Now adays, students tend to imitate what they have seen and read on the social media sites. Consequently, it has been noted that so many things that students imitate on the social media are things that are contrary to the norms and moral values accepted in society. It is in this view of this that this study is dedicated to find out the effects that the use of social media on the ethical values of students.

Meaning of Ethics

According to Ekpoudom (2009), ethics is derived from the Greek word, *Ethos* and Latin word *Moralia* which means customs, habits, conduct, norms or accepted ways of behaviour. He also postulated that ethics “studies human actions in terms of their being right or wrong, good or evil.” Accordingly, Umotong (2007) defines ethics as the branch of philosophy that “raises questions about the morality of human conduct and actions and entails question of the purpose, end or goal of human existence.” More so, Ozumba (2008) maintains that “ethics is that branch of philosophy known as moral philosophy or philosophical thinking about morality. It includes moral problems and moral judgments.”

Ethical Theories

According to Umotong (2007), in order to answer the question of what gives an action its moral worth (classifying it under good or bad); teleological and deontological theories are two



main groups of theories that should be considered. These theories will help in our understanding of the effects that social media has on the ethical values of students.

3.3.1 Teleology

The word *teleology* is derived from the Greek word *teleos* which means end, and it is the study of the ends and purpose of things (Ekpoudom 2009). And Ozumba (2008) in his view defines teleology as “specie of axiological ethics which makes the determination of the rightness or wrongness of an action wholly dependent on estimate of its actual or probable conduciveness....” As an ethical theory, teleology holds that the consequence or results of an action is the one and only basic determinant of right and wrong (Ekpoudom 2009). That is to say that what is right or wrong is determined by the consequence that an action brings into effect. Echekwube (2005) in his viewpoint avers that “teleological theory bases the rightness or wrongness of a human act on the intuition from which the person acts. That means that the end or purpose of an action gives it justification on the statement for being right or wrong”

One of the popular schools-of-thought in Teleologism is utilitarianism. Francis Hutcheson who advocated the doctrine of Utilitarianism was one of the earliest proponents; but, Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) and John Stuart Mill (1808-1873) are the famous proponents of it. Utilitarians conceived that their philosophical work was an attempt of laying down objective principle for determining when an action was right or wrong, and they called this maxim the principle of utility. This principle states that an action is right in so far as it tends to produce the greatest happiness to the greatest number of people. Utilitarianism in its essence emphasizes on the effect of an action; that is, an action which produces beneficial (pleasurable) effects over harmful ones is morally right (Popkin *et al*, 1969).

3.3.2 Deontology

Another ethical theory which is worthy of note in this study is deontology which is otherwise known as Deontologism. Deontologism is an ethical theory which states that actions are intrinsically good (right) or bad (wrong) in themselves notwithstanding the consequences of such action (Ekpoudom 2009). As Ozumba (2008) maintains, deontological ethics is different from teleological being that it maintains that the theory of moral obligation does not depend on theory of judgment of value, and that rather value. The main proponent of deontological theory is Immanuel Kant (Echekwube 2005). Thus, Umotong (2007) links deontological theory to Kantianism being that Kant held this view by drawing a distinction between acts done from the sense of duty and those that of inclinations. He reveals that Immanuel Kant made a distinction between acts done from a sense of duty and those that are products of mere inclinations; while acts done from the sense of duty are obligatory, those done from inclinations are done because the doer likes the action. Echekwube (2005:32) also sees the nexus that exist between deontological ethics and Kantianism as he opines that; “Kant...propounds the deontological theory...bases it on the Greek *deon* (duty), and the morally good act must therefore be duty-founded.... For Kant and..., we should act for the sake of duty, not just for the end which may be selfish.”



Meaning of Social Media

The term social media simply refers to a computer-based and internet-based technology that facilitates the sharing of ideas, thoughts, and information through virtual networks and communities giving users the platform for quick electronic communication of content, such as personal information, documents, videos, and photos (Dollarhide, 2021). Social Media is a set of applications and websites that provide users a platform for sharing information and increasing their social networking (Pathak, 2022). According to Lake (2022), social media encompasses a number of websites, applications, and platforms that allow for the sharing of ideas and information online by users. Accordingly, Manning (2014) avers that social media is a means of transferring information and ideas online. It is the term often used to refer to new forms of media that involve interactive participation.

History and Use of Some Selected Social Media Sites

From 2000 onward, there has been a radical improvement in the development of fascinating social media sites. For Ufuophu-Biri and Iwu (2014), the explosion of social media sites came in 2004 following the establishment of Facebook. However, considering the scope of this study, it will be pertinent to review the history and uses of some prominent Social Media Sites such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok and SnapChat.

Facebook: In February 2004, Mark Zuckerberg with his colleagues in Harvard University founded Facebook which has become the most popular social media platform which is also easy to use (Khan et al 2015). Khan *et al* however see Facebook as an online social networking service, whose name, firstly used from the colloquial name for the book given to students at the start of the academic year by some university administrations in the United States to help students get to know each other. White (2014) reveals that Facebook proximately have over 1.4 billion users worldwide which has made it to currently be considered as the most popular Social Media website.

Youtube: YouTube is a video-sharing website which allows people to upload their own videos and also watch videos that other people have uploaded (White, 2014). YouTube was founded in February 2005 by two friends, Chad Hurley and Steve Chen. Its institutional aims were to entertain, inform and empower the world through video. Chad Hurley and his companion want to see YouTube on every screen of home pc, laptop, and cell phone; YouTube is facilitating to empower everyone to share and watch videos on the internet (Khan *et al* 2015).

Twitter: Twitter was created in March 2006 and was launched in July the same year by Evan Williams, Biz Stone, Noah Glass and Jack Dorsey and it was Biz Stone who gave twitter its name. Twitter is online news and social networking service where users post and read short 140-character messages called “tweets”. As a messaging service, Twitter records more than 140 million tweets from over 200 million users from all over the world and many different fields and professions interacting each day (Khan *et al* 2015). On 27th October, 2022, Elon Musk, one of the world’s



richest men concluded the deal for the acquisition of Twitter for the sum of 44 billion (Southern, 2022).

WhatsApp Messenger: WhatsApp Messenger was incorporated in 2009 by Brian Acton and Jan Koun who were employees of Yahoo. It enabled the use of internet to send text messages, documents, PDF files, Gift images, video, user location and audio messages to other users using standard cellular mobile numbers. As of February 2013, WhatsApp was used by 200 million people and only 50 employees worked at that time, soon after, the app was bought by Facebook for \$19 billion and it was the biggest deal in the world at that time. According to the company's blog, WhatsApp logs over 100 million voice calls daily (Kumar, 2021).

Instagram: Instagram is a photo and video-sharing social media application that was launched in 2010 by Kevin Systrom. The first prototype of Instagram was a web app called Burbn. The Instagram app was launched on 6th October, 2010, and racked up 25,000 users in one day (Blystone, 2022). In 2010, Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger launched an app called "Faces" on the iPhone. In 2012, they decided to launch their own website, which would allow people to view other people's photos. They named it "Instagram" because it was originally intended as a mobile application. Instagram now has more than 300 million active monthly users. Its popularity has grown so much that Facebook bought it for \$1 billion in April 2014. Instagram has become very popular among young people because it allows them to post pictures and videos quickly and easily (Gutsal, 2023).

TikTok: TikTok currently boasts 800 million active users worldwide with over 2 billion downloads on the App Store and Google Play - an impressive feat for a platform launched in 2016. TikTok was created by Chinese tech giant ByteDance and was first released in September 2016 under the name "Douyin", which was marketed as a video-sharing social networking service similar to Facebook and Instagram (Big 3 Media, 2020).

Snapchat is one of the most widely used social media platforms in the world. The site has 360 million active monthly users, as of January 2020, with three billion "snaps" (photos and videos every day). Snapchat was founded in 2011 by Evan Spiegel, Reggie Brown, and Bobby Murphy, all students at Stanford University. Reportedly, Brown came up with the idea of a social media app that enabled users to post photos and videos that disappeared from the site after a few moments (O'Connell, 2020).

The Use of Social Media by Students and its Ethical Implications

According to Pathak (2022), research shows that the most popular social media platform among students are WhatsApp (83.3%), Facebook (78.0%), Twitter (12.8%), LinkedIn (7.9%), Instagram (7.5%), Imo (2.6%), Snapchat (1.8%), Myspace (1.3%), and Skype (0.9%). Thus, as the use of social media is so prevalent in the world today, there are negativities and positivities that are associated with it. The recognition between good and bad on the social media space is blurry having no clear distinction as social media users hardly follow any moral code (Manning, 2014). According to Laninhun & Amadi (2019), social media sites have more negative than positive



influence on moral values on young people with WhatsApp leading among the platforms that wield most influence.

Accordingly, Umekachikelu (2013) makes it clear that notwithstanding all its benefits, social media have inadvertently given rise to moral decadence and degeneration in Nigeria, especially among the youthful popularity who are mostly students, and the moral issues that have arisen from the use of social media in the country. It is of this effect that Shabir, Hameed, Safdar, and Gilani (2014) observed that the impact of social media on youth is on both ends- good and bad and social media is one of the impacting sources of influences throughout the world. Similarly, Feeney and Freeman (2015) maintain that Social media websites just like any new technology bring both rewards and challenges and have become a significant part of our lives especially being used in childhood programs by educators.

It is from this observation that it can be said that social media has come to play both positive and negative roles in lives of students. The causative factor resulting in the positive or negative influence of social media is evaluated based on how the social media is used. In this case, the positivity or negativity of the influence or effect of social media cannot be determined without first of all evaluating or assessing the activities of the users on the social media platforms. Hence, it is worth asking the following questions; ‘is social media good or bad in itself’ or ‘is it the usage of it by people that makes it good or bad’? It seems that social media as a tool of communication is neutral. In this sense, Tartari (2015) posits that social media on one hand affords students opportunities for learning, entertainment, enrichment and personal growth or good in itself. On the other hand, it poses risk to users by exposing them to negative content such as pornography, violence, commercialism, cyber bullying, unsupervised social relations as well as privacy issues if not properly used.

Therefore, by examining the use of social media based on the view point of ethics, it will obviously be discovered that the influence that social media has on the moral values of students in higher institution of learning is colossal. As Christopher (2015) rightly posits, there has been a sharp decline in moral values and the internet has a bulk of blame for such derailment. For instance, students cannot go for 2-3 hours without checking and updating their profiles on these social networks even at the detriment of other activities such as educational and career pursuits. As a result, social networking has a negative impact on their social interactions and moral values of students since it can be addictive, distractive, and posing a threat to their privacy (Kitsantas, Dabbagh, Chirinos & Fake, 2016).

Furthermore, Ayeni (2021) opines that although social media can be a good tool for learning, it can also adversely affect students since there are a lot of distractions on social media. In the process of using social media to learn certain unwanted posts can pop up on the app which can distract the user from their main aim. Such distractions include: pornographic images and videos, uncultured music or movies, among others, which are capable of corrupting the values of the user. According to Mensah & Kyei (2019), there is a nexus between the amount of time spent on



social media and the moral development of students. According to them, students who spend more time on social media are less morally developed as compared to those who spend less time on social media. This indicates that there is a strong morally negative influence of social media use on students.

The Use of Social Media among Akwa Ibom State University Students, ObioAkpa Campus

Akwa Ibom State University, just as the name implies, is a university established and run by Akwa Ibom State government. The university is a conventional, multi-campus institution. The main campus is located at Ikot Akpaden, Mkpate Enin Local Government Area. The other campus is located at Obio Akpa, Oruk Anam Local Government Area (www.aksu.edu.ng).

From the survey that was adopted for this study, it was discovered that majority of Akwa Ibom State University students own or have access to smart phones which they use to interact on the popular social media sites including Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn, TikTok, among others. The above social media sites are used for diverse purposes which may be positive or negative.

The Effect of the Use of Social Media on the Ethical Values of Akwa Ibom State University Students, ObioAkpa Campus

Studies have shown that the use of social media has distinctive effects on students. For instance, Singh (2021) aver that social media has both positive and negative effects on students. Thus, it can be deduced that the effect that social media has on the ethical values can be positive as well as negative. As was earlier stated, ethics deals with the concept of right and wrong in relation to human actions. Values on the other hand, according to Mintz (2018), are essential in ethics. Values are basic and fundamental beliefs that guide and motivate attitudes or actions. Values provide the general guidelines for conducts; it guides our interaction with people in the society.

According to *European Network for Academic Integrity* (2022), ethical value as a concept means the set of established principles governing virtuous behaviour which helps a person or group of persons in maintaining good reputation. Also, ethical value denotes a set of moral guiding principles that determine on how a person can and should behave or conduct his/her affairs (Baker, 2022). Lal (n.d.) states five generally accepted ethical values in humanity which includes: Truth, Righteous Conduct, Peace, Love and Non-Violence, among others. Thus, it is from this yardstick that I shall determine how the use of social media by students of Akwa Ibom State University, Obio Akpa Campus violates or upholds ethical values.

Immoral Uses of Social Media and Its Effects on the Ethical Values of Akwa Ibom State University Students, ObioAkpa Campus

Students of Akwa Ibom State University, Obio Akpa Campus use social media for many immoral purposes which include but not limited to the following:

Sexting: Sexting is a wrong or immoral type of communication that people indulge in on social media. The term sexting stand for a combination of sex and texting; it is the act of sending sexual



messages (Brennan, 2021). According to Salter (2013), sexting entails the sending, receiving, or forwarding of sexually explicit messages, photographs, or images via mobile phones, computer, or digital devices. It involves the sending and receiving of naked pictures or nudes, underwear shots, sexual or dirty pictures or rude text messages or videos, and can be done through mobile phones by use of social networks. According to some anonymous students interviewed, it has been discovered that majority of students indulge in sexting using the platform of social media. They do this for several purposes which may include: to appeal to their sexual fantasy, to please their lover, or to express their sexual feelings to the opposite sex, among others. To some, by sexting, they are having fun. There are reported cases in higher institutions where students, especially those in the hostels, exchange nude pictures with their male or female lovers via social media sites such as WhatsApp, Telegram, Facebook Messenger, etc. In fact, as some students interviewed opined, guys do not need to directly communicate their intention to a lady for relationship, all they need to do is to get the girls number or social media user name of which they can send sexually implicit messages and pictures to such girls.

However, using social media for this purpose is ethically wrong. Since sexting is ethically wrong, the continuous use of social media for this purpose affects, negatively, the ethical values of students. Our society frowns at flirting and illicit sexual relationship which is characterized by sexting. Sexting is against the norms and values of our society which encourages sexual purity. In fact sexting undermines students' ethical value of sexual purity. This is because sexting is socially and morally abhorred; it is considered irreligious and evil.

Watching Pornographic Pictures and Videos: According to Champlin (2015), pornography refers to material or representations designed to arouse or give sexual pleasure to the individual who reads, sees, hears or handles it. It is a depiction of nudity or erotic behaviour in writing, pictures, or videos with the intent of causing sexual excitement. From interview and findings, it has been observed that many students use social media sites like YouTube, Telegram, Pinterest, etc to watch pornographic videos and pictures. Some even post pornographic pictures and videos on Facebook while others would share link on Facebook that connect to pornographic sites. In corroboration, Onasoga, Aluko, Adegbuyi, Filade, and Shittu (2020) aver that despite the fact that social media enhances access to information; it has also paved way for exposure to illicit sexual content online which has been linked to risky sexual behaviour among students. And, findings have shown that there is significant association between exposure to sexual contents on social media and risky sexual behaviour among undergraduate students.

Exposure to pornography has been amplified by social media leading to lack of focus, addiction, and lack of enthusiasm for gainful activities, thus leading to premarital sex and deviant sexual behaviour among viewers (Oloyede, M. & Oloyede, G., 2022). In this sense, the use of the social media negatively affects students' ethical values as students who *ab initio* had good sexual orientation from parents and religious groups are influenced by what they watch on the social media. Similar observations have been made regarding the weakening of moral values and



responsible human behaviour when cultural and religious standards are neglected (Ntebonol, Oko, Olusakin & Ahamuefule, 2025). In fact, it has been reported that some students who, after watching the pornographic pictures and videos, are forced to masturbate in their rooms or hostels, while others indulge in homosexual sexual relationship with their fellow male or female student. Also, after seeing those pornographic images and videos, some students seem to view rape as the only means of expressing their sexual fantasy.

In this sense, the effect of social media on the ethical value of the users (students) is negative as it affects their sense of sexual purity. This is because masturbation, lesbianism, homosexuality, fornication, rape and other perverted sexual behaviours which are influenced from what students see on the social media are all abhorred in our society.

Attracting Sexual Partners: Deducing from interviews and participant observation, it has been observed that many girls in higher institutions especially university use social media in attracting sexual partners. According to Nwaoboli, ezeji& Osife-Kurex (2022), findings have shown that due to poor regulation of contents on social media, among other factors, social media has facilitated promiscuous practices among students of tertiary institutions.

Corroborating the above assertion, there was a reported case in a university where a female student once posted her half-naked picture on a departmental WhatsApp group and wrote: ‘My boyfriend cannot last even for 5 minutes on bed and I need a flesh, strong and vibrant guy as a sex mate’. This was a direct invitation to a romantic relationship with the male students. In order to attract sexual partners, some female students do post their almost-nude photos on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, among other platforms, with the aim of attracting sexual partners. In other words, these students use social media for prostitution. Hence, Ufuophu-Biri (2014) notes that prostitution is a common practice among students of higher institutions of learning worldwide. It has been observed that prostitution among female students is now on an increase as students of universities, polytechnics and other higher institutions of learning engage in this act due to some reasons of which include: (i) Poverty and hardship (ii) Bad influence from offline and online friends (iii) Stress, loneliness or depression. These female students resort to using the social media platforms to advertise themselves by posting or sending seductive pictures of themselves to men who would admire the picture and call them for their services. The popular word used in describing this act of promiscuity is hook-up. It is in this sense that Ufuophu-Biri (2014) averred that students’ use of social media plays a significant role in their involvement in prostitution.

Using social media in attracting sexual partners is morally wrong because our society abhors prostitution or any other sexual licentious behaviour. The commercialization of intimate relationships also diminishes human dignity and encourages the treatment of persons as objects rather than individuals deserving respect and moral consideration (Essien & Edem, 2024). The practice of using social media for prostitution by updating sexually fantasized post or pictures by students in a view of attracting sexual partners has effects on the students’ sense of sexual purity.



Spreading of rumour and falsehood: The spread of rumour or falsehood on social media is ethically wrong as it is against acceptable norms and values. It violates the principles of truthfulness and honesty. Truthfulness and honesty are important ethical values in our society which are generally accepted and upheld by all in every religious tradition and culture the world over. But the use of social media has negatively affected students' ethical values of truth-telling and honesty. In many higher institutions, it is a new normal for students to use the social media sites like Facebook, WhatsApp, etc. in spreading rumours. According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, rumour is information or story that is passed from one person to another but has not been proven to be true; or opinion widely disseminated with no discernible source.

Thus, Srivastava (2012) notes that most of the information put across on the social networking sites is fake, concocted or half-truths. In corroboration, Adil (2022) affirms that social media is one of the platforms that facilitate the spreading of falsehood especially by students. Most students invent fake news on social media while some ignorantly forward or disseminate the fake information without fact checking. This can have adverse effects on other students.

Hence, spreading of rumour or falsehood is ethically wrong. In fact, in view of teleological ethical theory which holds that the consequence or result of an action is the one and only basic determinant of right and wrong, it can be deduced that since the consequence of spreading of rumour brings about bad consequences, for instance making students confused and misled, spreading of rumour is ethically wrong. So, the use of social media by students to spread rumour affects and contradicts their ethical value of honesty and truth-telling.

Cyber-Bullying (Online Blackmailing): Cyberbullying can occur if online users try to intimidate, exclude or humiliate others online through abusive texts or emails, hurtful messages, images or videos, or online gossip and chat (Oloyede, M. & Oloyede, G., 2022). Oftentimes, cyberbullying happens privately through text messages, messaging apps, or email, but many times it plays out on a more public platform such as social media (Ranch, 2022). Mason (2008: quoted in Tartari 2015:325) postulates that cyber-bullying is an act where an individual or group wilfully use information and communication involving electronic technologies to facilitate deliberate and repeated harassment or threat to another individual or group by sending or posting cruel text or graphics using technological means.. Cyber-bullying in the context of this work is what I term as Online Blackmailing or Libelling.

Some students seem to use social media in bullying other students. Many of those who are culprits of this are mostly students' unionists who use social media to either 'rubbish', criticize or expose their opponents' weaknesses. Some students use social media as a platform of attacking fellow students, especially when they want to publicize their feud. Using social media in blackmailing and rubbishing others is ethically wrong. Cyber-bullying does not promote the ethical value of love and togetherness among students but it rather breeds conflicts. Rather than promoting peaceful coexistence, online harassment deepens hostility, revenge and social fragmentation



among young people. Therefore, cyber-bullying (online-blackmailing) affects students' ethical values of love and unity.

Gambling and Fraud: Gambling is one of the most controversial leisure activities in contemporary society. Despite its far-reaching popularity, many cultural, social and ethical implications have been attributed to it (Shani, Fong, Leung, Law, Gavriel-Fried, & Chhabra, 2014). Gambling according to Dictionary.Com is the activity and practice of playing at a game of chance for money and other stakes. On the other hand, fraud is a broad legal term referring to dishonest acts intentionally use deception to illegally deprive another person or entity of money, property or legal rights (Longley, 2022). Fraud implies when trickery is used to gain a dishonest advantage which is often financial over other person (*National Fraud and Cyber Crime Centre*, n. d.).

Gambling and Fraud have been noted to be among the various immoral acts students perpetrate on social media. Due to the fact that Online Betting Companies are reaching out directly into the news feeds of adolescents on social media, and according studies, posts showcasing brands and encouraging people to place bets online or visit their sites influence students to gamble (Schetzer and Preiss 2015). This is the case in where some students have been using social media to gamble by betting for football scores or doing something else. Also, some students, turned fraudsters, rely on social media to commit their crimes either by deceiving fellow students or involving in one kind of fraud or the other.

Using the social media for the above mentioned purposes are ethically wrong because gambling does not allow students to invest their money wisely and in wrong deceiving someone in a bit of getting his/her money or belonging is ethically wrong. Gambling violates students' ethical value of hard work. And, fraud is robbery and theft. It violates students' ethical value of hardwork, sincerity and love.

Moral Use of Social Media and its Effects on the Ethical Values of Akwa Ibom State University Students, ObioAkpa Campus

Despite the fact that the use of social media has negative effects on the ethical values of Akwa Ibom State University Students, ObioAkpa Campus in a multiplicity of ways, it should also be noted that social media helps to promote the ethical values of students positively. The following are the ways by which the use social media positively affects the ethical values of students:

Promoting Good Dressing Ethic: With social media, students criticize those who dress indecently. In other words, social media gives concerned students the platforms to address the issue of indecency in dressing. At the same time, some students who dress decently promote good fashion thereby helping others to dressing morally. Thus, dressing decently helps students who hitherto were not used to dressing well to have a rethink of their dressing code. The more students



are exposed to decent dressing the more ethically they would want to dress. For instance, from participant observation, many students after church service do always like to take pictures and post such pictures of their fine dressing either on Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp or Snapchat. On the other hand, some students who always like putting on their traditional attire do always post pictures of their traditional dresses on Facebook to show how they are proud of their culture. However, social media in this sense affects positively the ethical values of students as it relates to their dressing ethics.

Disseminating Christian Moral Teachings: Through participant observation, it can be reported that students use social media sites mainly Facebook and WhatsApp in disseminating Christian moral teachings. This is otherwise known as social media evangelism. According to Musonda (2022), social media evangelism is the act of spreading Christian beliefs and doctrines through digital platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, among others. Affirming this fact, some students are fond of posting their church devotionals every morning on Facebook and WhatsApp group. For instance, students of denominations like Christ Embassy, Redeemed Christian Church, etc. are always fond of updating their church devotionals every day. This helps in promoting the religious and moral values of students thereby affecting their ethical values positively. Students who share religious teachings on social media develop positive self-confidence. They have the feeling that they are approved of God and this improves their self-worth.

Disseminating Educational Information: Despite the fact that there are a number of reasons why students use social media sites, sharing of information, seeking for information, communication seem to top the list (Mensah & Kyei, 2019). It has been observed that students use social media as a medium of disseminating academic information. According to Pathak (2022), decent social networking impacts learning in a student's life. Students find it interesting and comfortable to use technology in order to gain sufficient knowledge in their syllabus' respective subject or topic. Thus, Buruah (2012) notes that sharing information online on social media promotes and facilitates learning among students. For instance, there are cases where notice for class, test or meeting is passed across on Facebook and WhatsApp groups. Also, there are situations where information about registration, deadline for submission and notice from social media are quickly disseminated to the students' populace. Using social media to disseminate educational information is ethically right because the end of the use has the greatest good on the greatest number of people. It most importantly has positive effect on the ethical value of the disseminator and the receiver of the information as both are happy and fulfilled.

Finding Scholarship Updates, Job Opportunities and Business Adverts: Students of Akwalbom State University, ObioAkpa Campus have also been observed to use social media for good purposes such as for finding scholarship updates. According to MacDonald (2019), by using social media positively, students might get advantage of scholarship opportunities. Other students use social media to check for job opportunities while some use it to do business adverts thereby



promoting their businesses. Social media sites like Facebook and LinkedIn provides students with information the latest job or scholarship opportunities. At the time of the writing of this research, networking businesses were so rampant among students; in this sense, students saw social media as a platform of convincing students to join the networking business. From the above, students who are entrepreneurs use social media to advertise their businesses most especially on WhatsApp and Facebook. Since the above uses seem to have no negative effect on the user or others, it can be deduced that using the social media for the above purposes is ethically right. It therefore upholds students' ethical sense of innovation and handwork.

Political Campaigning: Aside from using social media to rubbish or to blackmail other candidates, some students leaders use social media sites most especially WhatsApp and Facebook for their political campaigns. Instead of spending too much money in printing posters and flex banners campaigning for on-campus elective positions, these students rather see social media as a forum where they make their political ambition known to their fellow students. Also, by way for advocating for good governance, students also use social media to campaign for their preferred aspirants in macro politics. Indeed, this use of social media is right most especially if the end of the use does not bring about negative consequences.

Motivating and Inspiring Others in Moral Living: With social media, students get motivated and fostered to learn (Singh, 2021). On Facebook and WhatsApp, some students do inculcate the attitude of posting motivating and inspiring messages on the platform with the aim of motivating and inspiring other students. Some students even have blogs of which they use in criticizing the negative things and the immoral behaviours that are going on in campus. By so doing, these students who use social media for this purpose have helped in changing the views and the attitudes of other students who had *hitherto* not exposed to the truth to learn such by their fellow students even on social media. So, it can however be said in this case that the use of social media affects positively the ethical values.

Fostering Unity and Togetherness among the Students: Since 'love' and 'solidarity' are important ethical values, the use of social media to foster unity among student among students is ethically rights. Students have group chats and forums either at the departmental or faculty level. With these forums, student share academic ideas and disseminate information thereby creating a sense of community among themselves.

The Way Forward

A general re-orientation and change in the way people use social media, especially towards a more positive and developmental use requires that policies that set expectations for appropriate social behaviour should be put in place (Oloyede, M. & Oloyede, G., 2022). Thus, in order to arrest the negative effects of the use of social media on students' ethical values, drastic and timely measures need to be taken.



One, charity, they say, begins at home. Therefore, Parents should guide against social media obsession among their children, by ensuring that they are not allowed much time to surf the internet as this to help them inculcate self-control. There should be a balance relationship between social media engagement and moral development of students. Thus, parents, school authorities, teachers, among other, are to help in monitoring the activities of students on social media. This is to make sure that students use social media sites are basically for learning and searching of relevant information (Mensah & Kyei, 2019).

Also, awareness on social media applications that are sensitized to moral values and norms can be created for students to utilize them whenever they are online (Mensah & Kyei, 2019). School managements should be organizing periodic seminars and symposiums for students to be properly oriented on the rightful use of social media. In fact, “Social media ethics” should be taught in Introduction to Philosophy and Logic. Likewise, religious organizations should play a role in helping youth out of social media obsession by exhorting them to refrain from those social media activities that contradict Biblical principles. In fact, churches should design their Sunday school curriculum to include the subject of ‘morality and social media use’.

More so, students should be encouraged to use social media sites positively rather than using it for negative outcomes such as exploring the internet for illicit sexual content. School administrators and lecturers should discourage and guide against addictive use of social media for fun in order to prevent students’ exposure to illicit sexual content which can result in risky sexual behaviour (Onasoga et al, 2020). Hence, students should be warned to refrain from every social media activity that is immoral. They should come to the extent whereby they could make good decision on social media without being checked or monitored by anyone.

Furthermore, government and other stakeholders should develop and implement stringent guidelines and policy that will curb what is being uploaded and viewed online by undergraduates (Onasoga et al, 2020). Government through its legislative arm should make laws that regulate the activities of social media use among youths. For instance, legislations that prohibit the posting of nude pictures and videos on social media should be enacted. Also, the Ministry of Information in collaboration with the Ministry of Education should come up with lofty programmes for students of Tertiary institutions especially those of Universities in view of educating students on the rightful social media use. In order to compel compliance, government should encourage management of tertiary institutions to enact punishable rules and regulations that give guidelines on social media use and ensuring that any student who violates such regulations is punished.

Conclusion

This study was aimed at determining the effect that the use of social media has on the ethical values of students of Akwa Ibom State University, Obio Akpa Campus. It has been established as a problem that as a result of how students use the social media, social media influences students negatively as it makes them to engage in licentious behaviours. In the aspect



of students' usage of it, this work has revealed that students use social media numerous of purposes including good and bad purposes. But it has been seen that unethical reasons of why students use social media are more than they use it for those purposes that are good (ethical). In this sense, it can be said that when social media is used for good purposes, the effect of it in the ethical value of the user is likely to be positive, and vice versa. Though it has been found that students basically use social media for immoral purposes than they use it for moral purposes, it has been seen that the use of social media also promotes ethical values among students. Thus, if there are ethical regulations on the use of social media, it will help to a great extent to address its negative effect on students thereby making students to be ethically conscious of their social media activities. This will help students to refrain from immoral activities on social media and rather use it for good purposes.

References

- Adil, M. (2022). 10+ Reasons why social media is bad for students in education. Retrieved on 14th January, 2023 from <https://adilblogger.com/reasons-social-media-bad-students-education/>.
- Ayeni, S. (2021). Effects of social media on education. Retrieved on 14th January, 2023 from <https://www.schooltry.com/effects-of-social-media-on-education/>.
- Baker, C. (2022). What are ethical values in business? Retrieved on 14th January, 2023 from <https://leaders.com/articles/company-culture/ethical-values/>.
- Big 3 Media (2020). A brief history of Tiktok and its rise to popularity. Retrieved on 14th January, 2023 from <https://www.big3.sg/blog/a-brief-history-of-tiktok-and-its-rise-to-popularity>.
- Blystone, D. (2022). Instagram: What it is, its history, and how the popular app works. Retrieved on 14th January, 2023 from <https://www.investopedia.com/articles/investing/102615/story-instagram-rise-1-photo0sharing-app.asp>.
- Brennan, D. (2021). What Is Sexting? Retrieved on 14th January, 2023 from <https://www.webmd.com/sex/what-is-sexting>.
- Buarah, T. D. (2012), "Effectiveness of Social media as a Tool of Communication and its Potential Technology Enabled Connections: A Micro-level Study" *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, Vol. 2, Issue 5
- Champlain, K. (2015). Pornography. Retrieved on 14th January, 2023 from <https://legaldictionary.net/pornography/>
- Christopher, F. P. (2015), "Social Media and Moral Decadence Among Youths in Niger Delta University. Retrieved on 28 September, 2016 from <https://korisamuel.wordpress.com/2015/10/25/social-media-and-moral-decadence-among-youths-in-niger-delta-university>
- Dollarhide, M. (2021). Social Media: Definition, effects, and list of top apps. Retrieved on 14th January, 2023 from <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/s/social-media.asp>



- Echekwube, A. (2005). What is Ethics?: Definition, Principles, Theories, and Relationship to other Disciplines. In Iroebu, P. and Echekwube, A. (Eds.) *Kpim of Morality Ethics*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books.
- Edem, E. B., & Akpan, N. A. (2025). Dance across generations from elders to children: The uniqueness of Akwaobio Theatre Troupe in Akwa Ibom State. *AKSU Diakonia: Journal of Religion and Culture*, 5(1), 95–116.
- Ekpoudom, N. P. (2011) “Ethics: Its Nature, Scope and Theories” in Essien, E. S. (Ed.) *Summa Philosophica: An Introduction to Philosophy and Logic*, Lulu Press, U.S.A.
- Ekpoudom, N. P. (2011) “Ethics: Its Nature, Scope and Theories” in Essien, E. S. (Ed.) *Summa Philosophica: An Introduction to Philosophy and Logic*, Lulu Press, U.S.A.
- European Network for Academic Integrity (2022). Ethical values. Retrieved on 14th January, 2023 from <https://www.academicintegrity.eu/wp/glossary/ethical-values/>.
- Gutsal, N. (2023). The History of Instagram. Retrieved on 14th January, 2023 from <https://instamber.com/the-history-of-instagram/>
- Iwu, C. And Ufuophu-Biri, E. (2014). Social media as a correlate of prostitution among students of higher institutions of learning in Delta State, Nigeria. In *Covenant Journal of Communication (CJOC)*, Vol. 2, No. 1.
- Khan, A. W., Adnan, M., Gilani, M. F. and Tariq, M. (2015) “Social Media and Youth: A Study of Uses and Impacts” *International Journal in IT and Engineering IJITE* Vol.03 Issue-01
- Kitsantas, A., Dabbagh, N., Chirinos, D.S., Fake, H. (2016). College students’ perceptions of positive and negative effects of social networking. In: Issa, T., Isaias, P., Kommers, P. (eds) *Social Networking and Education. Lecture Notes in Social Networks*. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-17716-8_14
- Kumar, R. (2021). History of WhatsApp and its features Part-1. Retrieved on 14th Jan., 2023 from <https://lagatar24.com/history-of-whatsapp-and-its-features-part-1-2/61953/>.
- Lake, R. (2022). What is social media for small businesses? Retrieved on 14th January, 2023 from <https://www.thebalancemoney.com/what-is-social-media-2890301>
- Lal, H. (n.d.). Values and Ethics in School Education”. Retrieved on 6th of December, 2016 from <http://www.qcin.org/nbqp/qualityindia/vol-2-No2/column.htm>
- Laninhun, B. A. & Amafi, P. O. (2019). Influence of social networking sites on the moral values of selected undergraduate students of the University of Ibadan. Ibadan: *Journal of Humanistic Studies*.
- MacDonald, J. (2022). Social Media and scholarships: The good, the bad, and the ugly. Retrieved on 14th January, 2023 from <https://www.scholarshipscanada.com/News/9/4919/Social-Media-and-Scholarships-The-Good,-the-Bad,-and-the-Ugly>
- Manning, J. (2014.) Social media, definition and classes of. In K. Harvey (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of social media and politics*, pp. 1158-1162.
- Mensah, E. & Kyei, S. (2019). Social media use and moral development of students: A Cross-Sectional Survey. In *International Journal of Innovative Research & Development*. DOI No. : 10.24940/ijird/2019/v8/i11/NOV19025.



- Mintz, S. (2018). What are values? Retrieved on 14th January, 2023 from <https://www.ethicssage.com/2018/08/what-are-values.html>
- Musonda, N. (2022). 8 digital evangelism methods every ministry should use in 2022. Retrieved on 14th January, 2023 from <https://www.delmethod.com/blog/digital-evangelism-methods>
- National Fraud and Cyber Crime Centre (n.d.). Types of fraud: Action fraud. Retrieved on 14th January, 2023 from <https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/types-of-fraud>.
- Ntebono, A. M., Oko, A. E., Olusakin, V. A., & Ahamuefule, C. I. (2025). The impact of the Catholic Diocese of Ikot Ekpene on the development of Akwa Ibom State. *African Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2(1), 21–42.
- Nwaoboli, E. P., Ezeji, A. & Osife-Kurex, P. (2022). Social media influence on the indulgence in promiscuity among students of select tertiary institution in Benin City, Nigeria. In *GVU Journal of Communication Studies*, Vol. 4. DOI: <https://journals.sau.edu.ng/index.php/sjmas>
- O'connell, B. (2020). History of Snapchat: Timeline and Facts. Retrieved on 14th January, 2023 from <https://www.thestreet.com/technology/history-of-snapchat>.
- Oko, A. E. (2017). Leadership responsibility, justice and integrity in public life: A panacea for sustainable national development. *Contemporary Journal of Inter-Disciplinary Studies*, 3(2), 83–93.
- Oloyede, M. O. & Oloyede, G. K. (2022). Effects of social media on morality of youths in Nigeria and the role of Religion. Proceedings of the 31st Accra Bespoke Multidisciplinary Innovations Conference. University of Ghana/Academic City University College, Ghana. 1st – 3rd June, 2022. Available at: www.isteam.net/ghanabespoke2022.
- Onasoga, O. A., Aluko, J. O., Adegbuyi, S. N., Filade, O. A and Shittu, H. I. (2020). Influence of social media use on sexual behaviour of undergraduate students in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. In *Interdisciplinary Journal of Education*, Vol. 3, No. 2.
- Ozumba, G. O (2008). *A Course Text on Ethics*. Calabar: Jochrisam Publishers,
- Pathak, A. (2022). Role of social media in a student's life. Retrieved on 14th January, 2023 from <https://blog.madeeasy.in/role-social-media-students-life>.
- Popkin, R. Stroll, A. and Kelly, A. V. (Eds) (1969). *Philosophy Made Simple*. London: W. H. Allen and Company Ltd
- Ranch, I. Y. (2022). Effects of cyber bullying on social media & how to prevent it. Retrieved on 14th January, 2023 from <https://www.youthranch.org/blog/social-media-dangers-and-the-effects-of-cyberbullying>.
- Salter, M. (2013). Beyond Criminalisation and Responsibility: Sexting, Gender and young people. Sydney Law School. 24: 310–315
- Shabir, G., Hameed, Y., Safdar, G., and Gilani, S. (2014). The Impact of Social Media on Youth: A Case Study of Bahawalpur City. In *Asian Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities* Vol. 3(4)
- Shani, A., Fong, L. H., Leung, D., Law, R., Gavriel-Fried, B. & Chhabra, D. (2014). Ethics of Gambling? In *Tourism Recreation Research*, Vol. 39, Issue 3, pp. 453-486. DOI: 10.1080/0250821.2014.11087011



- Singh, A. (2021). Positive & Negative Effect of Social Media On Education. Retrieved on 14th January, 2023 from <https://www.theasianschool.net/blog/positive-negative-effect-of-social-media-on-education/#4-negative-effect-of-social-media-on-education>
- Southern, G. (2022). Elon Musk's Twitter takeover: A Timeline of events. Retrieved on 14th January, 2023 from <https://www.searchenginejournal.com/elon-musks-twitter-takeover-a-timeline-of-events/470927/>
- Srivastava, P. (2012). Networking & its impact on education-system in contemporary era. In *International Journal of Information Technology Infrastructure* Volume 1, No.2.
- Umekachikelu, F. C (2013). The effect of social media on youth development. Available at www.nigeriavillagesquare.com, pdf
- Umotong, I. D. (2007). *Exploration of Knowledge*. Uyo: Minder International.
- White, M. G (2012). What types of social networks exist? Retrieved on 18/10/2016 from http://socialnetworking.lovetoknow.com/What_Types_of_Social_Networks_Exist