

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL MEDIA INVOLVEMENT AND ESCAPIST BEHAVIOUR AMONG PUPILS IN NSUKKA EDUCATION AUTHORITY OF ENUGU STATE

Ifelunni, Clara O. (Ph.D) & Ugwu, Gloria C. (Ph.D)

Department of Educational Foundations

University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

Abstract

This study sought to investigate social media involvement as determinant of escapist behaviour among primary school pupils in Nsukka LGEA of Enugu State. Three research questions and three null hypotheses guided the study. Correlation survey research design was adopted for the study. A population of 2798 primary school pupils in all the 118 public primary schools in Nsukka LGEA, of Enugu state was used for the study. The sample for the study comprised 280 Primary 5 pupils. A multistage sampling technique was used to draw the respondents. Two questionnaires titled “Pupils’ Social Media Involvement” and “Escapist Behaviour of Primary School Pupils” were developed by the researcher from research materials reviewed. The instruments were subjected to validation by three experts from University of Nigeria, Nsukka and a reliability index of 0.91 and 0.88 were obtained for “Pupils’ Social Media Involvement” and “Escapist Behaviour of Primary School Pupils” respectively using Cronbach Alpha. Statistical scores from respondents were analyzed using Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation Coefficient, Regression Analysis and ANOVA. The findings of the study revealed, among others, that there is a strong positive correlation between social media involvement and escapist behaviour among primary school pupils. It was recommended, among others, that parents and school teachers should monitor social media contents that children are exposed to, so that harmful contents can be avoided, thus, reducing escapist behaviour among pupils.

Introduction

Generally, primary school pupils are seen to exhibit escapist behaviour. Pupils are sometimes seen to be in a world of their own, which is an attempt to avoid the harsh realities on ground. According to Perl (2016) escapism is a way to make negative feelings disappear without taking necessary steps to get relief through mental resolution. In escapism, reality ceases to exist, as children fantasize about their ideal world, thus escaping the realities on ground. Furthermore, Henning & Vorderer (2001) see escapism as

the extent to which the user becomes so absorbed that they tend to fulfill their desire to 'leave' the reality in which they exist in a cognitive and emotional way. The tendency to fantasize about the dream world in order to avoid reality is termed escapism. An example of such is the cartoon children watch, which they equate with the real world or even the video games which help them escape into the imaginary reality.

Any behaviour in extremes can be regarded as an escapist behaviour. Katz and Foulkes as cited in Hoffmann, Lutz, Müller & Meckel (2017) emphasized that the concept of escapism suggests that mass media, one of which is social media, can fulfill individuals' needs to distract from everyday life by turning them to dreamlike world of social media for substitute fulfillment. Escapist behaviour in children can be in different forms, such as throwing tantrums, anger, withdrawal, overeating, as well as addictions which can be in the form of smoking, drugs, alcohol, gambling or even internet / social media addiction. Henning and Vorderer (2001) advocated three forms of escapism, namely, sociological escapism, social-psychological escapism and individual-psychological escapism. According to the authors, sociological escapism is a person's desire to make the hardships of daily life more bearable through use of media operations like watching television programmes, operating mobile tablets, computers, among others. Social-psychological escapism is a person's tendency of compensating the deficit in his or her social interactions. Social-psychological escapism is linked with a person's close social settings. Individual-psychological escapism is related to the personality aspects of an individual which are not directly caused by social settings. However, the focus of this study will be on sociological escapism which has to do with use of social media as means of getting temporary relieve from the harsh realities of everyday life. Many people use this escapist behaviour as an avoidance coping strategy. From the above assertions, social media could be used by pupils as a tool of escape from the realities of life.

Social media is an important medium which has offered multiple benefits to its users. It serves as a means to make life easier for its users. It would appear that social media has viable roles to play in enlightening, educating and entertaining pupils in particular and the society in general. However, it has also been a major source of worry to parents and other stakeholders as it is perceived to be a source of moral decadence in our society. One can rightly say that social media is a basket of joy and sadness for most people. With its typical features of addictions, it can have harmful effects on its users, change their behaviour, abilities or habits in a negative way (Kalibova & Milkova, 2016). This motion was corroborated by Burns (2016), who asserted that children who use social media are prone to anger, violent

behaviour, hostility, arrogance, among others. These behaviours are forms of escapism.

Social media as a group of Internet-based applications are built on the philosophical and technological foundations of Web 2.0 which allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, Izzal & Yusniza, 2015). Examples of social media include, Facebook, twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, 2go, Myspace, among others. Bawden (2015) noted that nearly three quarter of children aged 12 to 15 spend an average of 19 hours per week online in UK and the story is not different in Nigeria. This could lead to internet addiction which could give rise to escapism.

Social media is a social site that has so far received an enormous number of users and has managed to attract Internet users more quickly than any other medium online in terms of interaction and personalization. It has seven functions – identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, reputations and groups, in which each function allows the user to reveal and examine a specific facet of the social media experience (Kietzmann, Kristopher, McCarthy, & Bruno, 2011). A study by Hameed, Maqbool, Aslam, Hassan and Anwar (2013) revealed positive and significant relationship between social networking sites and students' academic achievement and their behaviour in University of Pakistan. Furthermore, some studies opine that social media engagement and playing of online video games can be used to escape from reality (Gao, Liu, & Li, 2017; Masur, Reinecke, Ziegele, & Quiring, 2014; and Yee, 2006). In the same vein, Kircaburun (2016) found in a study conducted in Turkey that addiction levels of the male students were significantly higher than females. Thus, indicating that gender was a positive predictor of social media involvement.

The study area is Nsukka Town in Enugu State located in the southeastern part of Nigeria. Nsukka town was purposively chosen because it is a University town with people from different backgrounds and experiences, which is a yardstick for checking their children's behaviour. However, research evidence seems to show that escapist behaviour of pupils tends to be on the high side (Gao, Liu, & Li, 2017). From experience, this seem to be the case in the study area as the enormous number of public and private owned primary schools which are supposed to engage them, have not solved this. This trend tends to take the children away from all kinds of constructive activities, including reading and tackling assignments coupled with the possibility of breeding addiction (Mistry, Minkovitz, Strobino, & Borzekowski, 2007). Supporting this assertion, Okika & Agboola (2017) are of the opinion that a lot of digital technologies have been implicated in antisocial behavior, ill health and underperformance among the young. It is

against this background that the study investigated social media involvement as determinants of pupils' escapist behavior in Nsukka Local Government Education Authority of Enugu State.

Statement of the Problem

The global use of social media seem to have a tremendous influence on the social interaction between individuals, the community and society, such that there tend to be less face to face interaction between people and more of interaction between people who are far apart. This could be due to pupils' early involvement and unrestricted access to the use of social media, which results to high level of addictions to social media. This could lead to pupils exhibiting escapist behaviour in order to avoid the harsh realities in the real world. They do this by watching cartoons, playing video games, among others. The use of social media during this important developmental stage is very significant as they could determine the behaviour of pupils now and later in life. This could be an explanation for the behaviour problems children exhibit like throwing tantrums, being withdrawn and in extremes cases, being addicted to drugs, alcohol, drinking, among others. The wrong use of social media by children can be very damaging for them because it leaves permanent traces behind of their misconducts as it is believed that the internet never forgets.

Given these worrisome behaviour of pupils in Nsukka LGEA of Enugu State, one begins to wonder if their early involvement in the use of technology especially social media is a determinant of this high level of escapist behaviour or not. Hence there is need to investigate the relationship between social media involvement and escapist behaviour among pupils. It is against this concern that this study was conducted to ascertain the relationship between social media involvement and escapist behavior among pupils in Nsukka LGEA of Enugu State.

Purpose of the study

Generally, the study sought to examine escapist behaviour and social media involvement among pupils. Specifically, the study sought to determine the relationship between:

1. Social media usage and social escapist behaviour among pupils.
2. Social media usage and social escapist behaviour among pupils based on location.
3. Social media usage and social escapist behaviour among pupils based on gender.

Significance of the study

The study is anchored on cognitive theory of personality by Adler (1929). This theory is centred around the principle that behaviour can be seen to be predictable. Human behaviour develops within a social context which can be a child's interlocking relations with their parents, siblings and relatives. These relations can be developed through the use of social media. It therefore suggests that people's earliest involvement in the use of social media can lead them to exhibit escapist behaviour in order to avoid some negative forces in the environment. Practically, the outcome of this study will no doubt benefit stakeholders such as the parents, guardians, teachers and childhood educators, policy makers and the children themselves on the relationship of social media involvement in forming their behaviour. It will help these stakeholders restrict children's exposure to excessive social media knowing its influence on their behaviour.

Research questions

The following research questions guided the study

1. What is the correlation between social media usage and social escapist behaviour among pupils?
2. What is the correlation between social media usage and social escapist behaviour among pupils based on location?
3. What is the correlation between social media usage and social escapist behaviour among pupils based on gender?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses guided the study and were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

HO¹: There is no significant relationship between social media usage and escapist behaviour among pupils.

HO²: There is no significant relationship between social media usage and escapist behaviour among pupils based on location.

HO³: There is no significant relationship between social media usage and escapist behaviour among pupils based on gender.

Method

Correlational survey research design was adopted for the study. Three research questions and three null hypotheses guided the study. A population of

16,307 primary school pupils in all the 118 public primary schools in Nsukka LGA, of Enugu state was used for the study (Enugu State Universal Basic Education Board, 2018). A sample size of 390 Primary 5 pupils was determined using Taro Yamane formula (Yamane, 1967). Multistage sampling procedure was used to draw the respondents. In the first stage, 2 LGAs were drawn from the 3 LGAs that make up Nsukka LGEA of Enugu State using simple random sampling technique. In the second stage, 5 public primary schools were drawn from each of the two (2) sampled LGAs. A total of eighteen (18) public primary schools were drawn using simple random sampling technique. Stratified sampling technique was used to draw the sample into 5 urban schools and 5 rural schools. Finally, all the primary 5 pupils in each of the sampled schools were included in the study. See distribution of the sample on table 1.

Two instruments titled “Pupils’ Social Media Usage Questionnaire” and “Escapist Behaviour of Primary School Pupils Checklist” were used to collect data for the study. Pupils’ Social Media Usage questionnaire is divided into Sections A and B. Section A is on the demographic variables of respondents while section B has items on social media usage. This questionnaire was structured using 4-point likert-type rating scales (Strongly Agree = 4, Agree = 3, Disagree = 2, Strongly Disagree = 1). In taking decision, any response option below 2.50 was not accepted while those from 2.50 and above were accepted. On the other hand, Escapist Behaviour of Primary School Pupils Checklist has response options of: Very High (VH), High (H), Low (L) and Very Low (VL) with numerical value of 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. The mean value of 3.50-4.00 is VH, 2.50-3.49 is H, 1.50-2.49 is L and 0.50-1.49 is VL. In taking decision, any response option below 2.50 was rejected while those from 2.50 and above were not rejected. The researcher with the help of two research assistants employed direct delivery and retrieval method in the administration and retrieval of the questionnaire in order to minimize wastage and maintain a high return rate and there was 100% return rate.

The instruments were subjected to validation by three experts from University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The instruments were trial-tested and reliability coefficients values of 0.91 and 0.88 were obtained using Cronbach Alpha Reliability Coefficient statistics for the two instruments respectively. Scores from respondents were analyzed using Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and regression analysis. Regression ANOVA was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Table 1: Sample distribution by location and gender

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Freq</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Location</i>		
Urban	218	56%
Rural	172	44%
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	192	49%
Female	198	51%

From Table 1, it can be seen that. 49% of the respondents were male while 51% were female. By virtue of location, gender notwithstanding, 56% of the respondents were urban residents while 44% resided in the rural areas.

Result

Research Question 1: What is the correlation between social media usage and social escapist behaviour among pupils?

Table 2: Pearson's Product Moment Correlation of social media usage and social escapist behaviour among pupils.

Model	r	R²	n	Adjusted R²	Std. error of the estimate	Sig
SMU	.394	.155	390	.152	9.13861	.000

Dependent variable: Escapist behaviour

Table 2 show the relationship between social media usage and social escapist behaviour among pupils which was investigated using Pearson product moment correlation coefficient. Result shows that there is a positive correlation between the two variables, $r = .394$, $n = 390$, $P < .05$, with moderate level of social media usage leading to moderate level of social escapist behaviour among pupils.

Hypothesis 1 (H₀¹): There is no significant relationship between social media usage and social escapist behaviour among primary school pupils.

Table 3: Regression Analysis of social media usage and escapist behaviour among pupils.

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	4261.495	1	4261.495	51.027	.000
Residual	23216.948	388	83.514		
Total	27478.443	389			

$$\alpha = 0.05$$

Table 3 is the Regression Analysis of the relationship between social media usage and social escapist behaviour among pupils. Result showed that there was a statistically significant relationship as the p-value is less than 0.05 level of significance. Social media involvement was statistically significant as the p-value was less than 0.05 level of significant. The null hypothesis of no significant relationship between social media usage and social escapist behaviour among primary school pupils was rejected. In other words, social media usage significantly correlated with social escapist behaviour among primary school pupils.

Research Question 2: What is the correlation between social media usage and social escapist behaviour among pupils based on location?

Table 4: Pearson's Product Moment Correlation of social media usage and social escapist behaviour among pupils based on location

Location	n	r	R ²	t-val	Sig	Dec
Urban	218	0.328	0.107	1.398	0.000	N.S
Rural	172	0.618	0.028			

Dependent variable: Escapist behaviour

Table 4 is the Pearson product moment correlation analysis of relationship between social media usage and social escapist behaviour among pupils based on location. There is a positive correlation between social media usage and social escapist behaviour among pupils based on location, urban $r = .328$, rural $r = .618$, with pupils in urban location having more usage of social media.

Hypothesis 2 (HO²): There is no significant relationship between social media usage and social escapist behaviour among primary school pupils based on location.

Table 5: Regression Analysis of social media usage and escapist behaviour among pupils based on location

	Standardized Coefficients			df	F	Sig.
	R square	Beta	Estimate of Std. Error			
Location	.704	.328	.053	1	18.771	.000
Social Media involvement		.618	.057	1	1.885	.000

Dependent variable: Escapist behaviour

Table 5 is the regression analysis of the contribution of school location on relationship between social media usage and social escapist behaviour among primary school pupils. The total variance explained by this model was $P = .000$. School location made 32% unique contribution with Beta value (beta = .328, $p = .000$) which showed that there was a statistically significant relationship as the p-value is less than 0.05 level of significance. Social media usage which made 61 % unique contribution with Beta value (beta = .618, $p = .000$) was statistically significant as the p-value was less than 0.05 level of significant. The null hypothesis of no significant contribution of school location on relationship between social media usage and escapist behaviour among primary school pupils was rejected. In other words, school location significantly contributed to social media usage and escapist behaviour among primary school pupils.

Research Question 3: What is the correlation between social media usage and social escapist behaviour among pupils based on gender?

Table 6: Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation of social media usage and social escapist behaviour among pupils based on gender

Gender	n	R	R ²	t-val	Sig	Dec
Male	192	0.255	0.665	-0.258	0.797	N.S
Female	198	0.284	0.278			

Table 6 is the Pearson product moment correlation analysis of relationship between social media usage and social escapist behaviour among pupils based on gender. There was a positive correlation between the two variables, male $r = .225$, female $r = .284$, $n = 390$, $P > .05$, with high level of social media usage leading to social escapist behaviour among pupils based on gender

Hypothesis 3 (HO³): There is no significant relationship between social media usage and social escapist behaviour among primary school pupils based on gender.

Table 7: Regression Analysis of social media usage and escapist behaviour among pupils based on gender

	Standardized Coefficients		df	F	Sig.
	R square	ANOVA F			
Gender	.894	190.434	1	.979	.797
Social media usage			2	317.198	.000

Dependent Variable: Escapist behaviour

Table 7 is the regression analysis of the contribution of gender on relationship between social media usage and escapist behaviour among primary school pupils. The total variance explained by this model was 89% = 190.434, $P > .797$. Gender made 4% unique contribution with Beta value (beta = .043, $P > .797$) which showed that there was no statistically significant relationship as the p-value is greater than 0.05 level of significance. Social media usage which made 89 % unique contribution with Beta value (beta = .896, $p = .000$) was statistically significant as the p-value was less than 0.05 level of significant. The null hypothesis of no significant contribution of gender on relationship between social media usage and escapist behaviour among primary school pupils was accepted. In other words, gender has no significant contribution to social media usage and escapist behaviour among primary school pupils.

Discussion of Results

The findings of the study revealed that there is a positive correlation between social media usage and escapist behaviour among primary school pupils, with moderate level of social media usage leading to moderate level of social escapist behaviour among pupils. Furthermore, social media usage significantly contributed to social escapist behaviour among primary school pupils. This finding corroborates those of Hameed, Maqbool, Aslam, Hassan and Anwar (2013), who found a positive and significant relationship between the social networking sites and students' academic achievement and their behaviour. This result also aligns with the finding of Gao, Liu, & Li, (2017) who asserted that social media engagement and playing online video games

can be used to escape from reality. This shows that the more children engage in the use of social media, the more they are exposed to the dangers it contains and thus, exhibit escapist behaviour. Additionally, the unrestricted use of social media is unhealthy, as it could make children have access to harmful contents like viewing pornography, online gaming, that could damage them emotionally, mentally, psychologically, among others.

Result also revealed that there is a positive correlation between the two variables, with high level of social media usage leading to social escapist behaviour among pupils based on location. Furthermore, school location significantly contributed to social media involvement and escapist behaviour among primary school pupils. The result of this present study showing that school location significantly contributed to social media usage and escapist behaviour among primary school pupils could be explained by the availability of social amenities in urban locations than rural areas. This is because these technologies that are required to use social media make use of light to function maximally.

Findings of this study also showed that there is a positive correlation between social media usage and escapist behaviour, with high level of social media usage leading to social escapist behaviour among pupils based on gender. In addition, gender has no significant contribution to social media usage and escapist behaviour among primary school pupils. This finding contradicts that of Kircaburun (2016), who found that addiction levels of the male students were significantly higher than females. Thus, indicating that gender was a positive predictor of social media usage. The result of this present study suggest that both males and females are equally involved in social media use and also use it as an escapist strategy away from their worries. This way, they avoid the realities of the life. This obtained result of the study could be an effect of the harsh economy and realities of life as both male and female get involved in social media usage in order to avoid these realities which do not have gender colouration.

Conclusions

From the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn;

This study has provided empirical evidence to show that there is a positive correlation between social media usage and escapist behaviour among primary school pupils. It has also revealed that school location significantly contributed to social media usage and escapist behaviour among primary school pupils but gender has no significant contribution to social media usage and escapist behaviour among primary school pupils. This outcome has implication for the need of stakeholders such as the parents and guardians,

teachers and childhood educators and policy makers to monitor and control the content of social media primary school pupils are exposed to. This study has also provided a framework that further studies on other variables that might inhibit or help escapist behaviour flourish.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that;

1. Parents and school teachers should monitor the content of social media that children are exposed to, so that harmful contents can be avoided, thus, reducing escapist behaviour among pupils.

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