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Influence of New Media on Sexual Orientation of Youths in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Background: The advent of new media has revolutionised the way people access and share information, particularly among youths. In Nigeria, the increasing penetration of new media has raised concerns about its impact on the sexual orientation of youths. Obio-Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State, with its high youth population and widespread use of new media, provides a unique context for exploring this phenomenon.
Objective: The study investigated influence of new media on the sexual orientation of youths in Obio-Akpor Local Government Area, examining the role of social media, online pornography, and other digital platforms in shaping their perceptions and attitudes towards sexuality.
Method: The study adopted qualitative research method and used in-depth interview to generate data. The population of the study was residents of Obio-Akpor who according to the National Bureau of Statistics, was put at 665,000 in 2023. The snowball sampling technique was used to select four participants both online and offline: two male and female. Participants were selected based on their willingness to respond to the interview questions. Interview guide was used in the collection of data from interviewees. The recorded interviews were transcribed. The reviewed transcripts were analysed using thematic development and condensation of meaning stages.
Result: Findings show that access to new media through smartphones, tablets and computers have increased queer practices and heightened distractions which have exposed a large number of our young ones to wrong practices. New media aid youths in sending erotic messages, watching pornographic films, and also increases risky sexual behaviour such as masturbation, sexting and LGBTQ+IA practices.
Conclusion: The conclusion of this study is that new media technologies have significant on the sexual orientation of youths of Obio-Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria.
Unique contribution: This study contributes to the growing body of literature on the impact of new media on youth sexuality, providing insights into the complex and nuanced ways in which digital technologies are reconfiguring traditional notions of sex, gender, and identity among Nigerian youths.
Key recommendation: The study recommends that religious bodies, government, teachers and parents should undertake measures to control adverse effects of new media consumption by the youths. Youth counsellors should provide information specifically on the dangers inherent in the negative uses of new media and analyse the safe, respectful use of technology and possible benefits. Youths should be encouraged to lessen their access to new media and give careful consideration to their studies for more meaningful life.

Keywords: Influence, New Media, Sexual Orientation, Youths.

INTRODUCTION

New media is the use of technology for content creation, which includes; blogs, podcasts and video blogs. According to New Media Institute, is an all-embracing word that refers to the internet and the interaction of technology, pictures, music, websites, blogs, email, social media networks, television streaming services, virtuals, chat rooms, online communities, mobile apps, web advertising, digital cameras and augmented reality are just a few examples. Any internet-based form of communication, from a website or email to mobile phones and streaming applications, can be accepted and approved as new media. New media considerably breaks the connection between physical place and social place, making physical location less significant for our social relationship (Croteau & Honey 2003, p.311).

New media, often known as multimedia or digital media, relies on digital means to communicate, as opposed to traditional media like print newspapers or television. It is also a modern way of sharing information, providing entertainment and as well showcasing adverts, for example the internet or smart phones. One of the greatest vital aspects of new media is that it advances with time and technology. It has succeeded in attracting the entire globe and engaged users with several offers and contents that have made life easy (Nwafor, 2021).

Jacka and Scott (2011) contend that "there is no single renowned definition for new media" (p.12). However, some scholars have defined it in diverse ways over the past years. Among them are Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), who define the new media as the interaction among people, through which they create, share, and/or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks via social media sites.

Bertot, Jaeger, and Grimes (2010) affirm that the concept of new media is based on four strengths: partnership, participation, enablement, and time. Similarly, Selwyn (2012) defines it as the application that allows users interact with each other; create, edit and share new forms of textual, visual and audio content, and to categorize, label and recommend existing forms of content.

According to Kim and Kim, (2010), new media are the emerging digital communication channels, which create a user-oriented information sharing ground where anybody can generate or subscribe to information content as both information provider and consumer. Andreas and Michael (2010) aver that, new media is a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological grounds of web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content. Kietzmann and Hermkens (2011) elaborates on this, stating that "new media depends on Mobile and Web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms through which individuals and communities share, discuss, and advance in relationship. The *Oxford Dictionary* (2011) also defined new media as "websites and applications used for social networking". Another definition of new media is that it is a "communication channel which is very popular, extremely fast and broad, has proven to be highly effective, as well as trusted by billions of people, to share and discover content concerning individuals, brands, information, entertainment, sexual orientations and knowhow" (Dearborn, 2014, p.56). As new media continuously keeps changing, it is difficult to tie it to a single definition.

New media has become a big part of the lives of all civilized, socialized, educated, non-educated and the youths who are the subject matter of the study. People and more especially the youths can get progressively addicted to the use of the new media, and are lured to explore it features both positively and negatively. It connects us with the scenarios in the world and informs us about many things like news, history, entertainment, peoples' experiences, peoples' sexual activities and orientations etc. which exposes recipients to all manner of things and influence their decisions. The power of new media has become so much that its role in the world today is beyond any doubt (Bartleby, 2016).

Nigerian Youths have diversified the application of mobile phone features to either connect with friends, screenshot, make videos, live stream, engage in sexting, exchange nude pictures and videos, engage in long Whatsapp chats, Instagram, upload events on YouTube, make use of their cameras to take some snapshots and daily post on Facebook. A good number of our young population in Nigeria make use of twitter and go online to hook-up with friends from different parts of the world. The new media has affected the psychology of the Nigerian youths and produced celebrities who are now victims of insane practices and perversions. The chains of perversion among our Nigerian youths are actually disturbing, as good number of them now suffer from sex addiction and keep experimenting other sexual behaviours (Nwafor, & Orji-Egwu, 2015).

The arrival of the new media was intended to improve the society in all ramifications through the positive applications of its features and offers. For instance, our mobile phones have the following features; WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Xender, Google, Messenger, Games, Gallery, Boomplay, Camera, Chrome, Compass, Downloads, Drive, Face unlock, File Manager, Opera Mini, Yahoo Mail, YouTube, Xtheme, Xshare, Settings, Showmax, Play Store, Weather, Photos, Palm Store, PalmPay, MovieBox, Scooper, Ayoba, Bigo Live, Carlcare, EasyKash, , FM Radio, Gmail, Maps, Meet, Opay, Palm credit, Phoenix, Truecaller, Xclub, WPS Office, Yahoo Mail, Visha, NotePad, Feedback, Hago, Hi Translator, Dictionary, Music Play, Snapchat, Sound Recorder, Setting, Bank App, etc. which are meant to be used properly in meeting our social needs. These mobile apps were provided to enable users address different challenges associated with the old media such as Radio and Television and spontaneously meet these social needs to better our lives.

However, it is disheartening to state that large proportion of these mobile apps have been wrongly channeled by the Nigerian Youths to satisfy their curiosity, quest for modernity, sexual motivation and to remain active in connecting with other persons of same interest and social desire. The Nigerian Youths due to modernity are hyperactive and inclined to sexual activities as they watch and download nude videos, pictures and exchange such contents with their peers. Ceaseless and uncontrollable use of the new media and the consumption of its contents is destructive to the preservation of family value system. Rather than channel their strength positively to engage in watching videos that would enhance their morality, improve their level of education and develop their skills, they prefer to download online sensational music and play it on WhatsApp, spend couple of minutes to upload and view several videos on Facebook which has given rise to all kinds of sexual perversions (Nkajima, 2020; Nwafor, & Odoemelam, 2012).

According to Nkajima (2020), the new media has promoted online fraud, pornography, nudity, sexual promiscuity, masturbation and other obscene materials such as videos of multiple sexual partners which are heightened in social media platforms. All these have affected the morals of the Nigerian youths. These ills of new media have frustrated communal living, proper conduct of the youths, disorganized, and grossly fractured the lives of the young generation. Much access and uncontrollable use of the new media through smart phones, tablets and computers have made home training very difficult, as some of them have abandoned those informal relationships with siblings and parents for the social media. In addition, there have been an increased online fraud through which theft and fake emails to scam unsuspecting victims of their savings. Furthermore, new media has become a dangerous master to the loss of family's dreams of educating their children, raising decent and Godly seeds.

Basically, there are several of things wrong with the Nigerian family. The power of New Media which by all standards, is globalization personified, has become so obvious in today's rejection of honesty, truthfulness, respect, decency, obedience, dress code and expression. In the mad rush to acquire the new status of being ardent social media consumers, most Nigerians, particularly the younger generation no longer treasure the moral values of the family. From the foregoing, honesty, uprightness, respect for elders, and for fellow citizens, respect to family values, hard work, transparency, accountability, and taking responsibility are values that have lost their relevance in present-day Nigerian Youths due to the influence of the new media. This thesis therefore, attempts to examine the religious communication approach that addresses new media and fight against sex and gender perversion among Nigerian Youths.

With the freedom of expression open to the public through the new media, the vicious circle of moral decadence ensuing from the influence of new media phenomenon is glaringly evident in the gross misconducts of the Nigerian Youths. The frustration finds meaning in the failure to recognize the fact that Nigerians as a people had an identity, a factor that distinguished them from other societies and makes them unique. Their world view and ways of life associated with the people were remarkably distinct. For Chukwu (2013), the principles that formed these qualities constituted their philosophy, their ideology and of course their moral codes, but today, the good and the enviable family values have not only changed, but distorted and yielded way to a depraved one. The craze to be ardent consumers of new media and gender perversion are now issues of great concern.

Such is the extent to which new media has distorted the age-old family values that young people in modern-day times no longer regard nor take seriously. There was therefore, a reward system that served to promote good character, hard work, honesty and transparency in the affairs of men, particularly female youths were celebrated for keeping their virginity until marriage. Most of these female youths were the pride of their parents and were applauded by the society. Unfortunately, Nigerian Youths have today, been cornered by the influence of new media to become sex workers, response to multiple sex partners, engage in sexual parties, promote nudity, cross dress to any degree, engage in homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, masturbation, intersex, asexual and some even purchase sex toys to fiddle themselves, while others deploy cucumbers to insert in their private parts (vagina) and made moral decadence the order of the day. What a pity and depravity! Kiragu (2015) substantiated this assertion when he observes that the privacy accorded by these social media accounts has not been favored by the availability of sexual imagery online, but

contributes to their popularity among the youths as avenues for sharing nudity and pornographic materials and also learning risky sexual behaviours'.

Ekeanyanwu (2015) lamented that decency has been abandoned due to the emergence of new media among our Nigerian Youths. The glamour for new media has placed the pursuit of money, and its accumulations, irrespective of its bloody or fraudulent source as great success. Hence, youthful Nigerians who are heavy consumers of new media believe that blood money and easy wealth are the shortest route to societal compliment. As a result, innocent people are being brutally murdered in all corners of the Nigerian society with eyes gored out of their sockets, breasts, and vaginas chopped off, and tongues severed, as human butchers on rage. Astonishingly, in the present time, the place of new media has taken a different perception among Nigerian youths. The judgment has been that the mad rush, learned from new media, to easy wealth, especially amongst the young people, and politicians seem impossible to abate.

Consequently, the alarming rate of perverse affluence among Nigerian youths owing to new media demonstrates naivety, desperation, high-level nudity, obsession to body enhancement, fame pursuit, slaying to have more followers on social media and un-godly helplessness. Thus, in a frantic attempt to dismiss whatever misgivings presented against new media, the supporters have unashamedly promoted the utilitarianism and existentialism principles of existence as a way of remaining glued unto new media platforms, despite all doubts. This, they argued that new media will continue to earn acceptance, credibility and followership because of its usefulness. Disappointingly, the moral authority of families over young people has been lost to new media and within this influence is the consequence**:** dwindling respect for collective family values. Most Nigerian Youths feel that they owe no one any explanation in their indulgence on new media because without this treat, the world is meaningless. In spite of this, the current obsession with new media is actually making insane practices to be rampant.

New media seems to be the influencing factor to youth sexual activeness, and gender orientation (Nyasha, & Nwafor, 2015). According to *Oxford Dictionary* (2009) sex is the state of being a male or female and the sum of characteristics concerned with sexual reproduction and raising of children by which males, females, and hermaphrodites may be distinguished. It is considered the organ used for sexual intercourse to progress into orgasm and possible pregnancy. Sexual intercourse is a process wherein the male reproductive organ is inserted into the female reproductive tract.

Research Questions

The following questions were raised to guide the study.

1. What is the level of exposure of youths to new media sexual and gender-oriented contents on new media?
2. What are the gratifications sought by the youths in consuming new media sexual and gender orientated contents?

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

The study was anchored on the social learning theory. The social learning theory is the brainwork of Bandura (1971) and it highlights that behavior is learnt, the individual's psychological and social change can be evaluated in relation to accumulated impact of a series of learning experiences. Bandura further affirmed that learning principles like observation principle of

learning can adequately explain such social psychological change of individuals. He contends that the most crucial and significant principles of social learning are the reinforcement principles, through which lot of behavior is learned and sustained. In this vein, Bandura reveals the implication of reinforcement in situations where an individual observes that the actions of his models are always celebrated rather than punished, may substantively copy and uphold it. Behavior is modified to show that reinforcement plays a vital role as far as modeling is concerned in the social and psychological development of individuals.

It is in this light that Bandura and his associates classify model into two groups, real life and reinforcement model. The real-life model which involves parents, siblings, friends, teachers, heroes, books, magazines, pictorial representation, and of course, social media show that the real-life models have a helpful significance in learning, and therefore held in high esteem. However, individuals seem to adopt those standards of self-reinforcement that correspond with the standard of the models to which they have been exposed, mostly as in this situation: social media. Thus, positive reinforcement strength responds and develops the tendency for the responses to repeat itself in future. The individual resemblance with the above notion learns behavior from his environment through observation, probably from his models, and this then begins to spread out, as he continues to remain addicted to social media platforms. In principle, the family and other familiar factors which include real life models begin to decline for self-reinforcement models to become the major bases of individual's behavior. Individuals' characteristic behaviors are therefore molded by their experiences and by the models they copy from social media. Such reinforcement models in the social media or new media plays a very vital role in structuring and remolding the individuals.

From this proof, it thus follows that new media platform is reinforced by the acceptance or endorsement that the user gets rather than the moral depravity it is imposing on individuals resulting to the decline of morality among the Nigerian society. The over reliance on new media by the younger generations in Nigeria has not been in the interest of parents who cry for the loss of their children to foreign influence and deviant conducts.

Expounding further, Bandura and Walter developed a social learning theory of personality which supports this fact. To them, this theory is based on the premise that behavior is learned and personality can be explained in terms of collective effects of a series of learning experiences. Consequently, with rapid industrialization, urbanization and increased movements to urban areas which came with social media, new ways of life have been brought in and new values have taken over the old ones, hence, creating conditions under which family values, age-old taboos and traditional social control mechanism have ceased to have importance on the people's way of life. Under this ugly scenario, the domineering role of social media has weakened the social system of the Nigerian family values and giving access to leniency that has led the youth into pornography, nudity, sexual promiscuity, sex toys sexuality, cross-dressing, and sensational music and also in patronizing such oddity as multiple sexual partners.

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

New Media

This includes anything transmitted digitally, from newspaper articles and blogs to music and podcasts. Any internet-related form of communication, from a website or email to a mobile phone and a streaming app, can be termed new media. New media are computational types of media that rely on computers for redistribution (Nwafor, & Ezike, 2015). Websites and virtual words are two examples of new media. Facebook and Twitter are two more instances of new media in which the majority of users are also participants. Computers are used to redistribute new media, which are computational sorts of media. New media includes computer animations, computer games, human-computer interfaces, interactive computer installations, websites, and virtual worlds. Other examples are Wikipedia, an online encyclopedia, combining internet-accessible digital text, photos, and video with web-links, contributors' creativity, user feedback, and the building of a participant community of editors and benefactors for the benefit of non-community readers.

History of New Media

In the 1950s, the connection between computer and radical art became stronger. Rather than having a major firm in charge of this, Alan Kay and his coworkers at Xerox, PARC began providing individuals with the computability of a personal computer in the 1980s. However, a new type of parallel interaction between societal changes and computer design seems to have arisen in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Although not casually related, it is understandable that the Cold War and the Internet's development occurred at the same time.

During this time, writers and thinkers like Marshall McLuhan were powerful in the development of media theory. His non-famous claim in *Understanding Media: The Extensions of man* (1964) that the medium is the message highlighted the too-often-overlooked impact that media and technology, rather than their content, have on people's perceptions of the world and society as a whole. Print and analog broadcast modes, such as television and radio, were the strengths of the media till the 1980s. The speedy shift into media based on the usage of digital technology, such as the Internet and video games, has happened over the last twenty-five years. These examples, however, represent only a small part of new media. As evidenced by the introduction of digital television and online publications, the usage of digital computers has altered the surviving traditional media. Traditional media forms like the printing press have been changed by the use of technologies like image editing software, Adobe Photoshop, use of Direct Imaging printing machine and desktop publishing tools.

Youths

Youth is defined as "the appearance, freshness, vigour, vibrant, energetic spirit, etc, characteristic of one who is young." An individual's actual maturity may not correspond to their chronological ages. Youth can refer to the entire time of life when one is young, full of energy and brooding ideas including childhood, but often refers specifically to the time of life that is neither childhood nor adulthood but rather somewhere in between. This word demands the qualities of youth, not a time of life but a state of mind, a quality of imagination, a predominance of courage over timidity, of the appetite for adventure over the life of ease (Kennedy 1966). Youth is an alternative word for the scientifically-oriented adolescent and the common terms, „teen" and „teenager". Other

common terms for youth are young persons and young people. It is the time of a person's life in which they make choices which will affect their overuse of new media.

Gender, and Gender Orientation

Our gender identity is how we feel about our bodies, inside and outside, and how we present and relate to this feeling in our environment. Some people feel that their gender matches their sex assigned at birth, such as feeling like you connect with the label female or male. Unlike sex, which defines biology and sexual functioning, gender identity is a social construct that does not always coincide with one's biological sex. Some common examples of gender identity include genderqueer, cisgender, and gender fluid etc.

History of Gender Identity: Although humans have experienced gender identity since the beginning of time, it is relatively newer concept. It wasn't until the 1960s that the term "gender identity" was used as a way to express one's reflection on their gender. Decades later, the American Psychological Association described gender identity as "the person's basic sense of being a male, female, or of indeterminate sex", showing that we did not expand our knowledge of gender in that time. Today we know that gender is more in depth than the otherwise binary notion, and that there are many different gender identities besides the former assumption of being only male or female. The different genders are:

a) Agender: Is someone who has an internal sense of being neither male nor female nor some combination of male and female. Someone who is genderless or neutral. Also referred to as genderless or gender free.

b) Cisgender: This gender refers to when someone whose gender identity corresponds to the sex assigned at birth such as male or female. For example, years ago, the doctors looked at a newborn infant's babies and labeled them "male" or "female" on the birth certificate, known as the child's biological sex. If the child continues to identify with the gender as they grow, and their gender matches their sex assigned at birth, they are cisgender.

c) Transgender: Is someone whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. Some transgender people seek medical assistance to transit from one sex to another identity as transsexual. Again, people whose gender identity is opposite of their assigned sex. When someone's gender identity does not match the gender, they were assigned at birth, this is referred to as transgender. For example, when "Shaun" was born, he was assigned the "female" sex on his birth certificate. However, as he grew, he found that he did not feel feminine, and he felt more like a boy. Having the persistent feeling that your biological sex doesn't match your gender is known as gender dysphoria. His gender identity is male, and does not match the sex assigned on his birth certificate-therefore he is trans.

d) Agenderflux: A person whose gender changes or varies in degree over time. Sometimes active of the gender and some other times less active of the gender. He or she loses strength of that gender.

e) Ambigender: This is someone who has two genders simultaneously or double plurigender. That means the person has both male and female gender identities. There is usually not any overlap or fluidity with these gender identities, as both are present simultaneously.

f) Amicagender: People who are amicagender are those whose gender changes depending on the friends they have, stay with or social influences and social circle.

g) Andrgynous: Someone who feels some part of him is male while some other part of him is female. The person is partly male and partly female in appearance; indeterminate sex. Again, it refers to a person who often feels some combination of feminine and masculine gender identities. This can be illustrated by "Sam" who often reports that they like the parts of themselves that feel and appear masculine, and they also like the parts of themselves that feel and appear feminine.
h) Autigender: Many autistic people use this term to define their gender identity. This gender identity is heavily influenced by autism. Most times they bring out their tongue and feels satisfied with it.
i) Bigender: This gender identity refers to someone with two or more genders that they experience simultaneously or experiencing two different genders at the same time. The bigender identity is sometimes referred to as dual gendered due to the presence of two different gender.
j) Boyflux: Someone who mostly identifies as male but also experiences fluctuation in gender identity. For example, sometimes the male feels strongly masculine and other time less so.
k) Demifluid/Demiflux: The experience of having multiple genders, or relating to multiple gender identities. Many people who are demifluid will report that some of their gender identities are changing, while some do not change.
l) Demigender: Someone who identify partly, but not fully with a certain gender. Sometimes this person will display some gender characteristics or traits of one gender and some characteristics of another gender.
m) Domgender: The individual often feels like they identify with multiple genders. However, there will usually be one dominant gender identity.
n) Fluidflux: This is when someone's gender fluctuates between two or more while varying in intensity. "Fluidflux can be described as being genderfluid and genderflux at the same time.
o) Genderqueer: This identity refers to someone who cannot be labeled on the femme or masculine gender spectrum, or identifies as anywhere along the gender spectrum. They confuse people.
p) Girlflux/femmefluid: Is when someone identifies anywhere along the femme end of the gender spectrum. Sometimes they may present or identify as very feminine, and other times they may present more "tomboy" "softball dyke", or anywhere along the feminine spectrum.
q) Nonbinary: The nonbinary identity is when someone does not identify as male or female. This identity relates to not identifying along the gender binary. Some nonbinary people also identify as trans but not all.
r) Pangender: Often referred to as omnigender. This identity refers to an individual who is experiencing all genders.
s) Xenogender: This gender identity refers to someone who experiences gender in a way that cannot be explained or understood by our human understanding of gender. Some report that their gender more closely relates to that of plants, animals, and others.
t) Aesthetigender: it is a type of gender identity derived from concepts other than connection to female or male. Example perfect decorators are usually influenced by their decorations.
u) Affectugender: This is based on the person's mood swings or fluctuations.
v) Ambonec: The person identifies themselves as both man and woman and yet does not belong to either.

Gender diverse individuals, especially youths, are more likely to engage in self-harming behaviours. However, despite trans and gender diverse youths being more likely to engage in these behaviours, they are also more likely to have difficulty accessing care. Perversion: Is a form of

human behavior which deviates from what is considered to be orthodox or normal. Although the term perversion can refer to a variety of forms of deviation, it is most often used to describe sexual behaviours that are considered particularly abnormal, repulsive or obsessive. Perverse personality is characterized by constant manipulation of others, transgression of law and disrespect of limit.

Perverted sex is unnatural: "The concept of perversion implies that a normal sexual development has been turned aside by distorting influences" and "if humans will tend to develop some version of reciprocal interpersonal sexual awareness unless prevented, then the cases of barrier can be called unnatural or perverted." Here is then Nagel's famous theory of sexual perversion. Perversion means unnatural sex and unnatural means that a person's normal psycho-sexual development became distorted by some external influences or trauma so that the person, becomes unable to recognize the other. Moreover, the ideas of sexual perversion are flexible, as the homosexual narratives show. One of the biggest challenges facing individuals who struggle with sexual perversion is the societal stigma and misunderstanding surrounding the issue. Many people assume that those who engage in sexually deviant behavior are dangerous or immoral, when in reality, these individuals are often dealing with complex psychological issues that require professional help.

Perversion is practiced as a way of showing deliberate and determined desire to behave in a way that most people think is wrong, unacceptable and irritating. It is important to understand that sexual perversion is not a choice, but rather a manifestation of underlying psychological issues. These issues can stem from childhood trauma, mental illness, or other factors that are beyond an individual's control. A perverse person is called deviant, weirdo, debauchee, degenerate person. And there are ways to deal or handle perverse persons; be straight forward, tell the person how irritating he is, let him know that you have dislike for his behavior. This will give such a person the good chance to correct himself and give you a good image as well.

Sexual perversion can encompass a broad range of behaviours and can be difficult to define. Some common examples of sexual perversion include voyeurism, exhibitionism, sadomasochism, incest, pedophilia, and necrophilia. Voyeurism involves the act of watching others engage in sexual activity without their consent. At times people look through the window or any available opening within a house to watch others have sex without their knowledge. Exhibitionism is the act of exposing one's genitals in public or showing sensitive parts of the body. Sadomasochism involves engaging in sexual activity that inflict pain, being aggressive, dominating and demanding submission from the next person. Example slapping, whipping, flogging, or piercing the skin with knives to get to orgasm or even hair pulling during sex. Incest refers to sexual activity between family members, while pedophilia involves sexual attraction to children. Finally, necrophilia involves sexual attraction to corpses. Seeking help from a mental health professional, and religious organizations is recommended for individuals struggling with these types of sexual desires or behaviours. It important to prioritize the safety and well-being of oneself and others in all sexual encounters.

Another example is masturbation, when norms change certain forms of sex get modernized and when this happens more and more people find their variety tempting. People want to explore new possibilities because they feel free and unconstrained, which is fun. Incidentally, Nagel stumbles when he evaluates the status of homosexuality and sadism. Sadism is first a perversion "if anything is" and then sadism is a "really difficult case" to evaluate. About homosexuality, he recognizes that homosexual sex can be as good as heterosexual but then he says that it is possible that it is

unnatural, depending on the genesis of the relevant desire. This is to say that of two similar sexual acts one may be perverted and one normal.

The media and cultural influences can also impact the development of sexual perversion. Exposure to sexually explicit contents at a young age can contribute to the distorted perceptions of sexual behaviours mentioned earlier. Additionally, societal stigma and shame surrounding sexual deviancy can exacerbate existing feelings of guilt and embarrasement, making it difficult for individuals to seek help.

Gender Perversion: This is the habit of leaving the norm, and expected sexual behavior acceptable by biologically laws to deviative sexual behaviors such as LGBTQ+. So many young people who are prone to sexual misconducts have explore these misconducts to distort the traditional ways sexuality should be practiced to all manner of perversions that have given rise to societal unrest. Thus, gender perversion is the strange behavior of admitting and practicing distorted sexuality of various kind such as lesbianism, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and beast/animated sex.

METHOD

The peculiarities of the study necessitated the adoption of an interview method. This allowed for qualitative data to be taken. The population of the study consisted of the residents of Obio-Akpor which, according to the National Bureau of Statistics, was put at 665,000 in 2023. However, the snowball sampling technique was used to select four participants both online and offline whose sexual orientation is influenced by new media interactions. The youths were selected considering their voracious search for knowledge and almost constant use of the new media. A sample size of four was chosen; two male and female. The snowball sampling was the only criterion for selecting the availability of the interviewees backed by their willingness in responding to interview guide of the study.

Interview guide was used in the collection of data from interviewees. It contains interviewee A, B, C, D questions on relevant issues as regards Nigerian youths' involvement in the use of new media, sexual and gender orientation. A combination of open-ended and close-ended interview guide of five questions were developed to guide in the generation of qualitative (semi ethnographic) data for the study. Throughout the research, the confidentiality of the participants was maintained by identifying them solely with their designated interview numbers. The recorded interviews were transcribed following the naturalized intelligent verbatim transcription method which allows for the omission of grammatical blunders, mistakes, repetitions, to better detail the intention of the interviewee. The reviewed transcripts were analysed using thematic development and condensation of meaning stages. This meant that interviewees expressed meaning in responses were summarized into more concise formulations without eroding their essence.

RESULT

Explanation Techniques from interviewee A, B, C, D in an informal form

INTERVIEWEE (A) MALE

1. What is the level of exposure of youths to new media sexual and gender oriented contents?

You are a young guy, how were you initiated into LGBTQ+IA practice?
Answer: I was initiated when I was in the boarding School during my secondary days, precisely in 2000

Really, so long a time?
Answer: Yesooo

What are the gratifications sought by the youths in consuming social media sexual and gender oriented contents?

You must have gathered experience?
Answer: Yes, off course and I like chubby men.

Okay, do you love the practice?
Answer: Yes, in fact it gives me satisfaction because when you stay with someone you love, you get excited and catch fun. Again, I feel relief and relax.

Do you have a partner or partners?
Answer: I have a serious date, however, once in a while I relate with other persons whenever my partner is not around. But I don't let him know.

How often do you meet with your partner?
Answer: We meet on weekly basis whenever he is around.

INTERVIEWEE (B) MALE

What is the level of exposure of youths to new media sexual and gender-oriented contents?
This LGBTQ+IA practice, what is it all about?
Answer: Ok! Lesbianism, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer +Intersexual and Asexual.

How do you identify them?

Answer: For men who are into it, they like chubby men with butt, some of them walk like women, good percentage of them like to wear tight trousers, chain on their hand, doted earring as fashion, they are fashion crazy, whenever they are conversing with their fellow men they feel sexually stimulated. You ask too many questions!

When did you begin the lifestyle?

Answer: I started 10 years ago when I visited my friend in Enugu in 2004 and past the night in his house. He is someone I appreciate so much but never knew he is into it. He took good care of me, gave me money but forced himself on me. After then, we lost contact but I never knew that he

succeeded in depositing that feeling in me until I met another friend who later showed me affection and got my full consent in 2005.

Have you been exposed to it on social media platform?

Answer: Yes. There are lots of contents on social media now and it has given me a sense of belonging.

What are the gratifications sought by the youths in consuming social media sexual and gender-oriented contents?

Do you like the practice?
Answer: I find it pleasurable to resist the urge.

Do you have a partner in Port Harcourt?

Answer: I have a partner who lives at Rumuokoro, in fact, there are three but one among them is very matured whom I spend more time with.

Which venue(s) do you use for this practice?
Answer: My house or his house.

Have you met anyone online?

Answer: Yes, I have. Quite a number I have met were from social media platforms.

INTERVIEWEE (C) FEMALE BISEXUAL

What is the level of exposure of youths to new media sexual and gender-oriented contents?

How old are you?
Answer: I am 28-year-old

Do you live with your parents?
Answer: No, I live alone.

Do you have a date?
Answer: Yes, both male and female

Wow, how do you relate with them? That means you are a bisexual?
Answer: Yes, I do both male and female.

Do you see bisexual contents on social media platforms?

Answer: Yes, I do. Mostly on X (formerly Twitter)

Has that influenced your orientation?

Answer: To a great extent it has because I see a lot people like me and we connect.

What are the gratifications sought by the youths in consuming social media sexual and gender-oriented contents?

How do you cope with this lifestyle?

Answer: It is not a problem to me because whenever my guy wants me, I respond to him and I get satisfied. But if my girlfriend come to stay long in my house, my pleasure for men reduces.

Really?
Answer: Yes

Anyway, are there ladies who are into this game?
Answer: Yes, many in Port Harcourt.

How long have you been a lesbian?
Answer: I am not a lesbian but bisexual. Anyway, since 2013.

Do you make use of social media to look out for possible dates?

Answer: Of course. So many sites out there – Facebook, X, Instagram, so much apps.

INTERVIEWEE (D) FEMALE LESBIAN

What is the level of exposure of youths to new media sexual and gender-oriented contents?

What age were you when you got involved?
Answer: 20

People that are into this practice, are they more of aged people or youths?
Answer: They are more of youths.

Was your sexual preference changed by what you saw on social media?
Answer: Not exactly. I was already a lesbian before exploring social media for a match. It only aided my search for partners.

What are the gratifications sought by the youths in consuming social media sexual and gender-oriented contents?

Are you comfortable that you are into it?
Answer: I like it.
Do you have a permanent partner in Port Harcourt?
Answer: Yes, two ladies and I like them because they understand the game.

Are they married?
Answer: No.

How often do you meet with your partner?
Answer: Any time I want them or they want me, we relate.

Do you use social media to scout for dates?
Answer: I already said so. I do, a lot.
Research Question One: What is the level of exposure of youths to new media sexual and gender-oriented content on new media?
Findings show that the youths are generally exposed to sexual and gender-oriented contents on new media in an unrestricted manner. This is due to lack of security restrictions on the sites that offer pornography as content.

New media which was introduced more than a decade ago has drawn large numbers of users. Boyd (2009) confirmed that the involvement of youths in new media has increased considerably since 2004. Boyd (2007) also reported that young people embraced new media so as to interact with peers for information exchange and to re-formulate their personalities in order to get their social lives off the ground. Following the interviews granted to the interviewees, new media has aided the initiation of young people into LGBTQ+IA practices through Gay sites where people are allowed to exchange numbers, get integrated, share erotic and nude pictures of themselves. Online appointments are kept, booking of hotels for fun, recording and listening to erotic voice note for sexual stimulation. Sexual chats are more consistent and faster than meeting each other.
According to Keller (2013), social media has significance on how we interact with one another in all settings and at all ages. There has been a swing in the way we communicate; we are increasingly preferring mediated communication over face-to-face engagement, he says. We would send an email than meet in person, and would rather text than converse on the phone.

According to Booth (2017), three significant challenges are emerging about the role social media currently plays in people's communication method.

i. For starters, when we connect on social media, we are more likely to trust the individuals on the other end of the line, so our messages are more open.

ii. Second, because social media does not reinforce our social ties as much as face-to-face interaction does, we do not tend to deepen our relationships-they tend to remain stagnant.

iii. Finally, we tend to follow and communicate with people who share our beliefs, so we aren't getting the same multiplicity of perceptions as in the past. With each new communication device, there are changes in the style and nature of interpersonal contact, and bonding.

Obviously, the greater the impact of technology, the more changes we see in communication method, says the author. Keller is a professional in the field (2013, p.10).

Research Question Two: What are the gratifications being sought by the youths in consuming social media sexual and gender-oriented contents?

Findings reveal that youths consume sexual and gender-oriented contents on the new media due to fame and growing popularity of the practice, need for sexual satisfaction through pornography, need to know more about the practices and integration into sexual groups. In essence, the reasons why youths engage in new media, sex and gender oriented contents is mostly in the area of fame-(being popular to communicate with people from all walks of life, and hook-up with people with

the same sexual orientation), watch and download pornography- (leading to masturbation, sexting, and sex) and integration into identified sexual groups through designated platforms such as Lesbianism, Homosexuality, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer for bonding and for sexual activities. This implies that the Nigerian youths believe that life outside the new media is not in their social favour, as socialization, information, active sexuality and integration are made possible.

In contemporary Nigeria, there are several factors that need to be considered why the youths are much into new media, sex and gender-oriented contents. Bolu (2004; 2011) show that young people make up the lion share of those consuming new media as high as seventy percent! Secondly, a typical demography structure shows that Internet bandwidth is fast increasing with the huge number of obscene materials which is the main reason for moral decadence. This is an indication that the country is experiencing some negative technological revolution which is breaking down family value, making children upbringing and instilling discipline difficult. This finding therefore finds expression in the words of Reyes-Chow (2009) who argued that the access to new media, ability to navigate swiftly, download pornographic videos at little cost, access to data, and chatting with people of all walks of life who have different sexual orientations have increased sexual harassment, rape, inordinate affection, homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexual activities, transgender and queer activities; those who have sold themselves to moral decadence and vices with greater adaptability and speed. Also, Tan (2009) noted that social networking has to become part of the lives of the young generation which exposes them to too many information, having multiple sexual partners, addiction to pornography, and gender perversion evident in their cross-dressing, seductive lifestyle, masturbation, engaging in breast enlargement, butt enlargement, penis elongation, showcasing of hair chest, cleavages, sagging, quest for sex, rape, downloading of nude pictures, sexting to hook-up, frequent sex booking in hotels and other deviant attitudes. A good number of our Nigerian youths no longer understand what it means to live a life of sanity, promote morality, dress decently, engage themselves with media content for enlightenment, academic pursuit and to develop themselves positively.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it will be safe to conclude that LGBTQ+IA practices are no longer hidden as there is a widening net of practitioners among the youths. The observations by the researcher show that a lot of people are involved in these practices under several cover. The major problem is that sexual acts are carried out under the cover of darkness and it is very difficult to see open display of affection by the practitioner in the light of the *taboo* tag placed on it by the society. This is because the new media is very accessible and affordable to the youths with minimal restrictions on sexual and gender-oriented content. This has made the trend to fester.

Accessing these contents on new media platforms makes it easy to adopt certain sexual orientation and practices which may be inimical to societal morals and norms which could in turn have adverse effects on the younger generation because these practices are outlawed.

Ethical clearance
Ethical consent was sought and obtained from the participants used in this study. They were made to understand that the exercise was purely for academic purposes, and their participation was voluntary.

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Conflict of Interest
The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Authors' Contributions.
Theophilus Ikenna Christopher conceived the study, including the design, collated the data, and handled the analysis, interpretation and wrote the initial manuscript under the supervision of Professor Barigbon Nsereka and Itieke-Idamieba Harry. All authors have critically reviewed and approved the final draft, and are responsible for the content and similarity index of the manuscript.

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