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**SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS ACTIVITIES AND PARENTS IN UYO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF AKWA IBOM STATE**

**USOROH, C. I.;**

**ISHAKU, G. Y.**

**AND**

**AZEH, P. I.**

**Department of Home Economics Education  
Faculty of Education  
University of Uyo, Uyo**

**ABSTRACT**

*The advent of social media platforms activities has diversely influenced family communication. The study was undertaken to investigate social media platform activities and parent-child communication in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. Three research purposes and questions were raised to guide the study. The population of the study comprised of 427873 parents in Uyo Local Government Area. A sample size of 400 respondents were drawn from the four clans in the study area using stratified random sampling technique. An instrument tagged "Social Media Platforms Activities and Parents Questionnaire" (SMPAPQ) was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by three experts, all from the University of Uyo. Cronbach Alpha statistical method was used to determine the internal consistency and a reliability coefficient of 0.94 was obtained. Data obtained were analysed using descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage). The findings obtained revealed the various social media platforms used by parents in Uyo local government area, with Facebook (321; 97%) ranking the highest, followed by WhatsApp (307; 93%), and others. The findings further reveal that Facebook (189;57%) and WhatsApp (142: 43%) were the most and second most preferred social media platforms respectively by parents in Uyo Local Government Area. The findings equally revealed the various social media activities engaged by parents in Uyo Local Government Area with chatting (197;73%) ranking the highest social media activity engaged by parents in Uyo Local Government Area amongst others. Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended amongst others, that parents should evolve more ways of using these social media platforms to communicate frequently.*

**KEYWORDS: Social media, Platforms, Activities, Parents and Communication**

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**Introduction**

Social media usage has increased exponentially in modern years and this can be attributed to the fast growth of the internet, which has greatly altered traditional face-to-face communication within the family and society at large. Research has shown that social media has become an important part of our daily lives with more people using it as a method of communicating and connecting socially across the globe, be it between friends, relatives,

spouses, and has greatly transformed and impacted communication and interactions within families and households (Ngonidzasho, 2016). According to Kemp (2020), social media users grew to 4.66 billion people around the world in October 2020, and an average of nearly 2 million new users are joining every day. The author further averred that users around the world spent 7 hours per day between April and June 2020, spending roughly 15% of their waking life using social media platforms. The integration of social media in social settings such as families and households has influenced social interaction in major ways among families and household members; for instance, among siblings, between parents and their children, and even between spouses. In fact, a study showed that excessive use of social media has led to a decrease in the many communication processes necessary to create strong bonds between parents and children (Contreras, 2016). Bianchi and Phillips (2015) posit that parents and children no longer have face-to-face conversations but will rather text each other, even when they are in close proximity.

According to Cohen (2020), social media is an internet-based form of communication through the various platforms that allow users to have conversations, share information, and create web content. There are many forms of social media, such as blogs, microblogs, wikis, social networking sites, photo-sharing sites, instant messaging, video-sharing sites, products, widgets, virtual worlds and more. Mahmoud and AhmedShafik (2020) posit that billions of people around the world use social media to do a myriad of activities, to share information, and make connections. On a personal level, social media allows one to communicate with friends and family, learn new things, develop one's interests and be entertained. On a professional level, social media can be used to broaden one's knowledge in a specific field and build one's professional network by connecting with other professionals in that field. At the company level, social media allows one to have a conversation with one's audience, gain customer feedback, and elevate one's brand. Just like anything that can be used for both good and bad, social media has also impacted family lives and specifically parent-child relationships both positively and negatively, as reflected by much research in the literature.

Existing literature reveals that social media impacts social interaction with family and households in many diverse ways. According to Emeksiz (2017), social networking sites such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube have a key role in the daily lives of contemporary society.

Facebook is a social media website that is user-friendly and open to everyone where users can post comments, share photographs, chat live, watch short-form videos, and post links to news or other interesting content on the web. Although it started out as a way to keep in touch or reconnect with long-lost friends, it rapidly became the darling of businesses that were able to closely target an audience and deliver ads directly to the people most likely to want their products or services. The site is entertaining and a regular daily stop for many users. Unlike some social networking sites, Facebook does not allow adult content, and where users transgress, they are banned from the site (Facebook, 2014). According to Boyd (2012), Facebook provides a customizable set of privacy controls so users can protect their information from getting to third-party individuals.

According to Jasra (2010), Twitter is an online news, social media, and networking site, otherwise called microblogging, where people communicate in short messages called

"tweets". Tweeting entails posting short messages for one's followers with the hope that one's messages are useful and interesting to the audience or followers. Twitter provides a stream of quick updates from friends, family, scholars, news journalists, and experts, and others use it to discover interesting people and companies online, opting to follow their tweets. Although the great majority of tweeps microblog recreationally for reasons like vanity, attention, shameless self-promotion of their web pages or simple boredom, a growing number of Twitter users send out useful content to their audience or followers.

Instagram is a photo and video-sharing social media networking site that allows users to upload photos and videos, which can be edited with various filters. The account's posts can be shared publicly or with pre-approved followers, and users can browse other users' content by tags and locations, as well as view trending content (Carragher, 2010). Users also have the option of making their profile private so that only their followers can view their posts. As with other social media platforms, Instagram users can like, comment on, and bookmark others' posts, as well as send private messages to their friends via the Instagram Direct feature. Photos from Instagram can be shared on one or several other social media sites, including Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp, with a single click.

WhatsApp Messenger is a freeware, cross-platform messaging and voice over social media platform which allows users to send text messages and voice messages, make voice and video calls, and share images, documents, user locations, and other media. WhatsApp's client application runs on mobile devices but is also accessible from desktop computers, as long as the user's mobile device remains connected to the Internet while they use the desktop app (Buchanan, 2010). The service requires users to provide a standard cellular mobile number when registering with the service. In January 2018, WhatsApp released a standalone business app targeted at small business owners, called WhatsApp Business, to allow companies to communicate with customers who use the standard WhatsApp client.

Social media usage has grown tremendously in the last few years, and individuals spend countless hours of their lives attached to devices with the intent of communicating with their loved ones, sharing their daily lives, and acquiring new information. Many of these individuals therefore neglect other aspects of their lives by spending more time on social media and social networking sites through the use of mobile devices. Face-to-face communication is affected as some people no longer have face-to-face communication with their family members but prefer to communicate via text to each other, even when they are in the same location. For these reasons and others, Blake and Wrothen (2012) reported that mobile devices such as cell phones and tablets have become ubiquitous and an ever-expanding aspect of socialisation for parents. In fact, research shows that 90% of adults own a smartphone (Maeve, Amanda, Cliff, and Nicole, 2016). Another study found that 72% of Nigerians and an average of 43% of the global population own a smartphone (Elhai, 2016). Pewresearch (2018) carried out a survey that took a broad look at the social media habits of parents. The research revealed that social media use across a variety of platforms was common among internet-using parents, 74% of parents used Facebook, while 28% used WhatsApp, 25% used Instagram, 23% used Twitter, and 27% used LinkedIn. Parents on Facebook are especially avid users, with 75% who log on daily and 51% who do so several times a day. The same research indicated that there was a statistically significant difference when compared with non-parents, of whom 67% logged on to Facebook daily, including 42% who do so several times a day. Mothers on Facebook were more likely to check the platform several times a day compared with fathers, 56% vs. 43%. The cited

research further showed that given Facebook's status as the most popular social media platform, three-quarters (74%) of parents used Facebook. 94% of Facebook-using parents (mothers and fathers) share, post, or comment on Facebook (as opposed to simply reading or viewing content), with 70% of parents doing so "frequently" or "sometimes." This compares to a statistically similar 93% of non-parents who say they never posted content on the platform.

Social media platforms are composed of a variety of people, of which not all are necessarily considered close. Parents who used Facebook in the Maeve et al. (2016) study were asked how many of their friends on the platform they considered actual friends. A majority (76%) reported they considered 0–100 of their Facebook friends "actual friends". The typical parent reported a median of 50 "actual friends." As noted above, parents reported having a median of 150 Facebook friends, and non-parents reported having a median of 200 Facebook friends. Thus, a typical parent's Facebook network is about one-third "actual" friends, while non-parents typically report that less than a quarter of their network is made up of actual friends. Therefore, family and friends make up the bulk of social media networks for parents and non-parents alike. Age is a major factor in who makes up the bulk of parents on social media networks. 93% of younger parents (those under the age of 40) who use Facebook are connected with old friends. Younger parents are also more likely to be Facebook friends with their own parents (71% vs. 35%). Older parents, those ages 40 and above, are more likely to be friends with their children on Facebook. Some 65% said so, compared with 30% of younger parents who said otherwise. These findings likely reflect the fact that Facebook requires users to be at least age 13 and older.

Technology has brought a lot of advantages to modern society. From the most developed nations to the under-developed countries, every nation is utilising the power of social media to enhance the lives of its people. From the way technology is growing, it is obvious that more and more people are going to grasp its benefits for the betterment of their lives. Despite the ubiquitous use of social media platforms by people of all ages around the globe, there is little or no synthesis of evidence on social media platform activities by parents in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, hence the need for the study to fill the research gap.

**Purpose of the Study:** The main purpose of the study was to investigate social media activities and parents in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine the social media platforms used by parents in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State
2. Ascertain the social media platform preferred most by parents in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.
3. Identify activities that parents engage with their children on social media platforms in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.

**Research Questions:** The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What are the social media platforms used by parents in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State?

2. Which is the social media platform preferred most by parents in the study area?
3. What are the activities that parents engage with their children on social media platforms in the study area?

### **Methodology**

**Research Design:** A survey research design was adopted for the study. The research design was appropriate for the study as it allows the use of questionnaire to obtain the opinion of parents on the usage of social Media platforms to communicate with their children.

**Area of the Study:** The area of the study was Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. Uyo is situated in the South South Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria, and serves a dual purpose of being the state capital and the headquarters of Uyo Local Government Area. Uyo occupies the South eastern portion of Akwa Ibom State territorial expanse with latitudes 5.2<sup>o</sup> North and longitudes 7.55<sup>o</sup> East. Uyo lies on the road map from Oron to Ikot Ekpene, Uyo is blessed with a rich and enviable cultural heritage. "Ibibio", the language spoken by inhabitants, conveys a unique culture and identity to the people. Uyo has a plethora of cultural display such as Ekpo, Ekpe masquerade and dances. According to National Population Census (NPC, 2006) the population of Uyo is 427873. The Local Government has two seasons: wet season and the dry season. Uyo is home to the prestigious University of Uyo. The University of Uyo Main Campus is located at Nwaniba, while the town and Annex Campuses are located along Ikpa Road.

**Population of the Study:** The population for this study was 427,873. Comprising of indigenes and residents of Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State (National Population Census).

**Sample and Sampling Technique:** A sample size of 400 respondents drawn from the 4 clans of Uyo Local Government Area namely Etoi, Offot, Oku, Ikono was used for the study. Multi stage sampling procedure and stratified sampling technique were adopted to determine the respondent used for the study. Stage one involved selection of churches, workplace and social gathering in the four clans in Uyo Local Government Area namely; Etoi, Offot, Oku, Ikono using simple random sampling. Stage two involved the selection of 100 respondents each from the selected clans respectively using simple random sampling technique. This yielded a total of 400 respondents which was used as the sample size for this study.

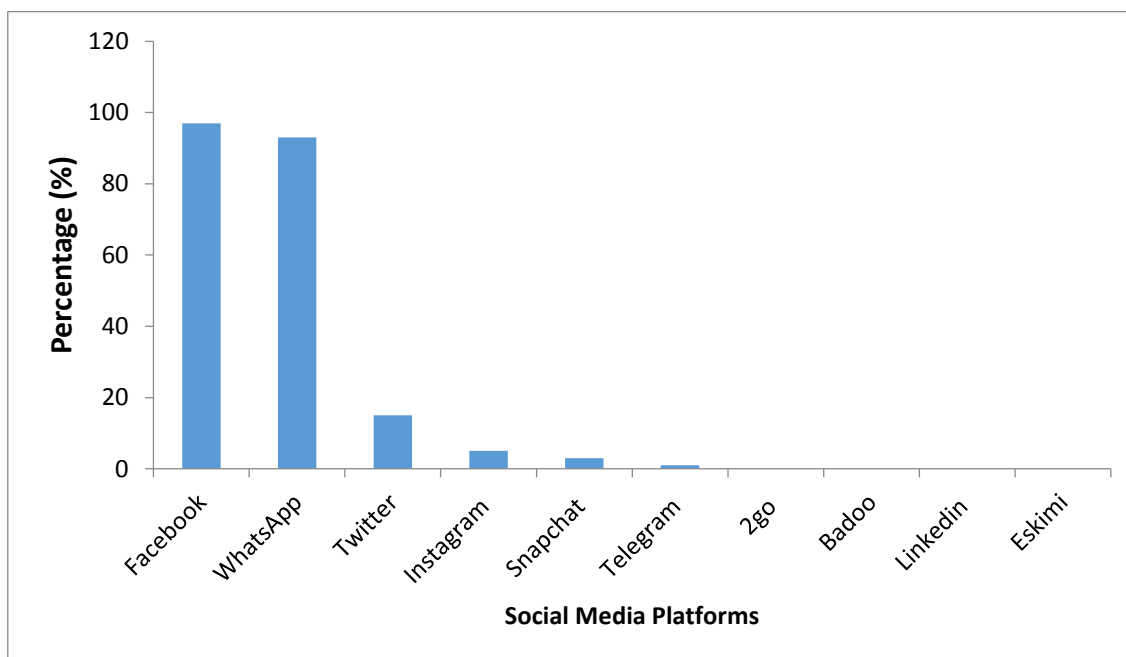
**Instrument for Data Collection:** The researchers developed questionnaire which was used to elicit responses from the respondents for the study. The questionnaire was designed based on the objective of the study. The questionnaire consisted of 3 sections, A, B and C with 34 items. The instrument was validated by three experts one each from Departments of Communication Arts, Sociology and Anthropology and the Industrial Technology Education all in University of Uyo. Cronbach alpha statistical method was used to determine the internal consistency and a reliability coefficient of 0.94 was obtained.

**Method of Data Collection and Analysis:** The data was gathered with the use of a questionnaire. The instrument was distributed to the respondents drawn from each of the 4 clans of Uyo Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State. Permission was sought from the heads of the churches, work places, and social gathering visited in order to ensure fair representation of different categories of respondents. The researchers briefly enlightened the respondents on how the

questionnaire was to be filled. The instruments were administered and retrieved on the spot. The data gathered were analyzed according to the purposes and research questions that guided the study. Descriptive statistic (Frequency, Percentage) was used to analyse the research questions and the results presented on chart and tables.

**Results:**

**Research Question 1: What are the Social Media Platforms used by Parents in Uyo Local Government area of Akwa Ibom State?**



**Fig.1:** Chart showing the Social Media Platforms used by Parents in Uyo Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State

Figure 1 shows the frequency, Percentage and rank of Social Media platforms used by parents in the study area. The result shows that 321(97%) Respondents used Facebook; 307(93%) Respondents used WhatsApp; 49(15%) Respondents Used Twitter; 17(5%) Respondents used Instagram; 10(3%) Respondents used Snapchat; 4(1%) Respondents used Telegram while no Respondents used 2go, Badoo, LinkedIn, Eskimi. This implies that Facebook and WhatsApp were the most used social media platforms by parents in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.

**Research Question 2: Which is the Social Media Platform preferred most by Parents in the Study Area?**

**Table.1: Frequency and Percentage Analysis of the Social Media Platform preferred most by Parents in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. N = 331**

S/N	Social media Platforms	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Rank
1	Facebook	189	57	1
2	WhatsApp	142	43	2

Table 1 shows the frequency and percentage analysis and rank of the social media platform preferred most by parents in the study area. The results show that 187(57%) Respondents preferred Facebook while 142(43%) Respondents preferred WhatsApp. This implies that Facebook is the social media platform preferred most by parents in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.

**Research Question 3: What Activities do Parents Engage with their Children on Social Media Platforms?**

**Table 2: Frequency and percentage analysis of activities that parents engage with their children on social media platforms  
 N = 331**

S/N	Social Media activities	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Video call, Voice call, Chat, Posting of picture	2	1
2	Voice call, chat, Posting of pictures	7	3
3	Chat, Posting of picture	31	11
4	Posting of picture	12	4
5	Chat	197	73
6	Video call	8	3
7	Voice call	14	5

Table 2, shows the Frequency and percentage analysis of activities that parents engage with their children on social media platforms. The results shows that 2 (1%) respondents engaged in Video call, Voice call, Chat, posting of pictures; 7 (3%) respondents engaged in voice call, chat and posting of pictures; 31 (11%) respondents engaged in Chat and posting of pictures; 12 (4%) respondents engaged in posting of pictures only; 197 (73%) Respondents engaged in Chats only; 8 (3%) respondents engaged in video call only; 14 (5%) Respondents engaged in voice call only.

### Discussion of Findings

The study revealed various social media platforms used by parents in Uyo local government area. Based on the research question one and two the findings of the study revealed that Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat and telegram where the various social media platforms used by parents in Uyo Local Government area of Akwa Ibom State. A very large number of respondents acknowledge their use of face book and WhatsApp in which the findings of the study later revealed that Facebook is the most preferred social media platform and WhatsApp follows suit as the second most preferred social media platforms by parents. This finding agrees with Denis (2016) who empirically established that Facebook is the most widely used and preferred social media platform by 97% of parents in the study. This is in agreement with a study by Maeve *et al.* (2015) who found out that “parents are particularly active on Facebook and LinkedIn and Instagram less often than non-parents. In the cited study Facebook topped the list of the range of social media platforms used by parents. The finding however, disagrees with Ngonidzashe (2016) whose study revealed that WhatsApp social media platform was the most used and preferred social media platforms by Zimbabwean parents.

Social media platforms have various social media activities which enhances smooth flow of communication and act as an interaction tool between parents and children. This study further reveals that video calling, voice call, chat, posting of pictures were the different social media activities that parents engaged with their children on the various social media platforms based on research question 3. Chat was the social media activity that parents engaged most with their children in the study area. This agrees with Wager (2011) that individual spend not less than 30 mins- 1hour chatting which most times affects face to face communication and interpersonal relationships.

### **Conclusion**

The findings of this study have revealed how vast the use of social media has become since its introduction to society and conclude that Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat were the social media platforms used, with Facebook and WhatsApp, respectively, being the most preferred social media platforms by parents, and chat as the social media activity engaged most by parents in the Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proffered:

1. Parents should evolve more ways of using the various social media platforms to communicate frequently with their children and others. Parents should make use of other popular social media platforms used by young people other than Facebook and WhatsApp. For instance, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat are other up-coming social media platforms used by young people nowadays. Parents can make use of as many social media platforms as possible.
2. Social media platforms have various broad features and activities parents should access more of these features and activities rather than being limited to the regular and popular ones.
3. Parents should acclimatize the frequent used of other social media platforms not just been restricted to the use of just Facebook and WhatsApp. This will equally have an effect on their preferences.
4. Social media platforms can make the charges for other social media activities as affordable and straight forward as chatting as parents prefer activities they can do within the minimum time and rate



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