

# INVOLVEMENT OF CHRISTIAN MOTHERS IN THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AS A CATALYST TO REDUCING SOCIAL MEDIA ABUSE AMONG TEENAGERS

Florence Akpan (Mace)  
West Africa Theological Seminary, Lagos  
(08096379681 [fakpanmega@gmail.com](mailto:fakpanmega@gmail.com))

## **Abstract**

This paper delved with mothers' involvement in the use of social media to ameliorate abuse of social media among the teenagers. In order to do justice to this work, descriptive research design was employed. The study is qualitative in nature. Oral interview method was used to elicit relevant information from the twenty selected mothers through cluster random method based on age grades. The findings revealed most of the mothers were less concerned about the way their wards use social media. It was also discovered that many mothers have shallow knowledge on the use of social media. It was thus recommended that, mothers should undergo training on the use of social media. Also, that mothers should closely monitor their wards on the use of social media in order to curb abuse usages.

**Keyword:** Social Media abuse, mothers' Involvement.

## **Introduction**

Social media has come to stay as a global modern medium of communication. This technologically oriented communication network has reduced the entire world into a global village. It is the fastest and effective means of communication with other attached functions and benefits. The usage of social media has grown much faster day by day, especially among the youth and the teens. Apparently, everything that exists in this world has its pros and cons for the people. In the same vein, social media has lots of benefits to mankind; but equally has its bad effects. It is observed that, social media has been grossly abused especially among the teens and the youth. To ameliorate the abuses of social media among the youth and teenagers, the roles of mothers are indispensable.

In the all-round training of children spiritually, socially, emotionally and intellectually; the role of mothers in every family cannot be over emphasized. Giving a thought to how mothers socially follow up with their wards in this 21st century, whereby most mothers to some extents are limited in the knowledge and the use of social media application; this calls for adequate training and understanding. As mothers seek to get involved in social media usage, adequate information to acquaint with social media and all forms of gadgets to navigate along with the teens are required. Moreover, this paper examines the social media status of mothers as they prepare teens for future challenges. When mothers are rightly informed in the use of social media, it will in turn enhance their responsibilities in curbing social media abuses among teenagers. This happens to be the main focus of this study.

## **Concept of Motherhood and Parenting**

Motherhood is viewed as the main purpose in life of every woman and the most illustrious of states. It has been presented as women's ultimate purpose and main mission in life, to be holy mission and the highest form of service to humanity (Swift, 2015). Joshi (2001) defined motherhood as the activities and responsibilities of female parents. While

Ross (2018) opined that motherhood is the cultural process of locating women's identities on their capacity to nurture infants and children.

Motherhood entails the act of being mother which involves giving birth to a child, training until the stage of accountability. Mothering is a great task that comes without formal training and no mother should fail in this responsibility as the failure could be so dangerous to the society and nation at large. Every child comes from a home, given birth to, by a mother, therefore mother's role in the life of every child should be jealously protected. One thing with mothers is that every child should succeed and be well to do. By being a mother requires total upbringing of a child imbibing moral values such that involve teaching, love, wisdom, discipline, care, education and so on. Also grooming spiritually as Holy Scripture said. "Train up a child in the way of the Lord when he grows he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22 vs 6). Every mother understands her child better than an outsider, although not all mothers handle their children based on each peculiarity as well as managing emotional bonding.

Parenting according to Brooks (2012) promotes and supports the physical, emotional, social and intellectual development of a child from infancy to adulthood. In his view, Bernstein (2008) asserted that the most common caretaker in parenting is the Father or mother or both the biological parents of the child in question. Feeney (2018) opined that child rearing is a great challenge, but also a great privilege. Raising godly children is not automatic. It is as a result of applying godly parenting principles. He suggested three keys as germane to raising godly children, these include: Training, Love, and Discipline. Kretchmer-Hendricks (2005) defined parenting as the process of raising children and providing them with protection and cares in order to ensure their healthy development into adulthood.

## **Types of Social Media**

Social media according to Lutkevich (2021) is a collective term for websites and applications that focus on communication, community-based input, interaction, content – sharing and collaboration. Social media are of different types based on the application and usage. These include the following:

- a. Social Networking sites:** Examples are Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApps, LinkedIn, Instagram, Pinterest, etc.  
These platforms help to connect with friends, family and brands. They are built around the user and everything that is important to them and social circles. Business can be grown on some of these platforms.
- b. Social Review Sites:** Examples are Yelp and TripAdvisor display reviews from community members for all sorts of locations and experience. It helps to understand the customer's perspectives and solve problems.
- c. Image Sharing Sites:** Visual contents are displayed such as infographic, snapchat. It is also used for photogenic businesses. By creating, curating and sharing your own images, you can inspire and engage users bonding over a share interest.
- d. Video hosting site:** With this site it is easier to host website. Good example is Youtube, Sharing of Phenomenal content is possible.
- e. Community blogs:** It can be daunting, you can use this platform to find your voice, get some readers and get clear about your vision.

## **Merits of Social Media Use**

According to Samuel (2021), Social media has made it easier to connect with family and friends, the following are some of the merits and demerits of social media. Social media has made it easier to connect with family and friends anywhere in the world. Whether they live near or far away, one can easily talk to any family members without any worries or fear, share achievement, milestone and cute moments with relatives who you might not see often through this platforms, Whatsapp, Telegram, Facebook, etc. With social media, educational training and online classes were effectively achieved during Covid-19 pandemic despite the lockdown.

Some schools run a term lesson with pupils and students on the social media. Some tertiary institutions and secondary schools in Lagos state successfully implemented this innovation. Creating or raising awareness on several issues or subjects is another great thing that most people do on social media. People are taking the great initiative by teaching others on topics that are mostly not spoken about such as religious issues, health, women empowerment and politics, for instance Covid-19 Safety Measures.

As a business owner, you can market, advertise your products or services through social media. When used properly, it can promote one's business beyond widest imagination. Some of the applications include, Jumia, Jiji, Konga, Ali baba, Amazon, among others.

Through social media one can learn from other parents and make use of other valuable resources for training. If one follows some honest parents or educationists on social media, one can learn from their experiences, frustration, mishaps and some joyful moments. Navigate with Idy on Max Fm Radio, Info-graphic is made possible and some teenagers documented and build their profile for job opportunities. Likewise, access to news and events all over the world are made possible.

## **Demerits of Social Media**

Fake news can easily go viral like wild fire without any penalty to the broadcaster. When both parents and children are addicted to social media devices it becomes a real challenge. Some people end up having mental disorder, low self-esteem, depression, anxiety as a result of unhealthy comparison on social media. (Andrew Hutchinson, 2008). Distraction in form of what pop in while opening some site thereby wasting data and time for important things and also lose focus.

Time wastage: spending so much time on social media especially on unproductive issues not related to what one has in mind to open is another issue. Being on social media while driving and thereby become absent mindedness has caused several avoidable accidents, fatalities, injuries, sorrow and sometimes untimely death. (Samuel, 2021). Posting family pictures and sharing family activities/events or locations of family members on social media can expose family members to security threats and challenges like kidnapping, assassination and other evil attacks. (Andrew, 2018).

## **Methodology**

The paper underscored the involvement of Christian mothers in the use of social media as a major avenue to reduce its abuse among the teenagers. The study adopted descriptive research design and it was qualitative in nature. Oral interview method was employed to elicit useful information from twenty selected mothers through cluster-random method based on age grades. The data collected were analyzed qualitatively.

## **Perception of Social Media among Mothers**

In June 2021, the researcher attended a Women Conference, tagged Foursquare Women International Conference held at Ajebo, Ogun State. The participants who attended the Conference were over five hundred (500) women. The participants were enjoined to attend a seminar section, of which individual was given free hand to choose any group of her choice out of the thirty-three (33) groups. One of such groups was on social media where just eighteen (18) women participated. This incidence motivated this study.

It is a matter of concern that in 21st century, many mothers' usage of phone are limited to making call and texting message despite great opportunities available to explore on social media. It calls for concerns that some mothers in 21st century are still limited to making call and texting message on their phone despite the great opportunities available to explore on social media.

The internet and social media can be trusted sources of parenting and health information that mother's turn to when making infant take decision. For instance, if a child is having high temperature, you can goggle on immediate first aid. Even though some mothers are not interested or showing attention to social media, it is important to know that social media has great benefits to offer and opportunities such as maintaining and strengthening relationship with family and friends, job opportunity right in their home without shop or office, marketing both locally and internationally. Every mother needs a new direction on social media to step into the next level of life, with the support instead of criticism from the family.

The twenty interviewees individually shared their experiences on their perceptions of social media as mothers.

Mrs. Mary Ibu stated that she seldom access internet talk less of operating social media.

Mrs. Faderin Olanrewaju spoke of social media as a time waster and though she has the application on her phone but she visits it once in a blue moon.

Mrs. Aigbe Christianah explained that she only uses her Android phone to make call and at best makes use of the calculator on it to sum-up money.

Mrs. Ntaniyi Agnes noticed that the cost of purchasing data constituted set back on the use of social media.

Two of the respondents, Mrs. Elizabeth Nnaoma and Mrs. Mercy C. Israel asserted that social media is meant for young people, not for mothers.

The respondents shared their subjective insights on their perceptions on social media. It can be inferred from the foregoing that, most of them pay less attention to social media. They did not attach much significance to social media. These attitudes and dispositions displayed by the majority of the respondents to social media posed dangerous signs on the part of the teeming young people who are glued to the use social media. The mothers who are closer to the teenagers would not be able to monitor or caution them.

### **Preparing Teenagers for Future Challenges and Social Media**

According to Duncan (2020), Social media was originally designed to connect people and enable us to share exciting moment and information with friends and families Despite the positive effect of this social media, it also has negative effects in which every teenager should be aware and well guided. Interestingly, some use technology to manipulate, intimidate and control another person. It could occur as bullying, harassment, textual coercion, stalking and online dating. In all these abuses, teenager should identify early that excessive texting by any one is not love but should realize that the jealousy and possessiveness is an act or sign to control. Then, by the time that abuse has escalated to more serious forms of control like demanding to know where they are at all times, limiting who they can interact with on social media, monitoring their messages and emails and stalking them online, they are already deeply entrenched in the relationship and breaking free of the abuse become more of a challenge. Another pattern of behaviour that makes teens feel nervous, afraid, harassed is called stalking. When this emotional distress happens as a mother you should observe and know your teenager's schedules. Show up at the same place unannounced; call or text repeatedly, check or drives to your teen's workplace repeatedly, follow your teenagers on social media. Reduce your personal pictures and information online. Teenagers should not respond to some messages you are not sure. Teen should speak out their mind especially on cyber bullying as parent every media abuses should be taken as a serious matter never to be overlooked.

### **Role of Mothers on the Use and Reduction of Social Media Abuse among Teenagers**

Mothers are essential in the upbringing and raising their children in various context of life. They are known to have great deal of influence on their children in various aspects of life even more than the father. Elias (nd) a psychologist submits that children regularly require a great deal of care and nurture for their all-round development. In the traditional and social system of family, both parents are expected to be responsible for the care and nurture of their children. However, in most cases "mothers tend to be the primary caregivers that uniquely influence their child's growth" This submission suggests the fact that mothers have great deal of influence on their children. The report of the findings of Erickson and Aird (2005) revealed that nearly 93% of the mothers sampled agrees that "a mother's contribution to the care of her children is so unique that no one else can replace it". This finding indicates that the level of care a child/children receives from a mother accounts for the bond they experience later in life. This also accounts for the level of influence the mother has on the child. Given these submissions, it suffices to say that the mother has roles to play on her children. She has parts to play on the things they get involved in, those they relate with and all that happens to them in life. One of those areas is the way they socialize. In today's generation, a good way teenagers socialize is through the use of social media. These roles have been grouped into physical, spiritual and educational roles.

## **Physical Role**

The mothers as earlier noted often times have been said to be closer to the child than the father is. Her place in the family makes it easier for her to get involved physically in the life of her child than the father. Goodwin and Huppatz (nd,) while quoting the Miller (2005) discourse submit that “good mother discourses require that mothers act responsibly and present themselves in culturally recognisable and acceptable ways”. This submission implies that the mother must first present herself in a way that is acceptable for her to be able to get involved in what her children are doing. In noticeable number of times, teenagers get carried away in the things they do on social media and some have been misled and it has sometimes resulted to crisis in their early stage of life. This therefore requires that the mother be such who is able to stand her ground and also lead by example.

Also, she can get involved physically by her willingness to know what her teen child is doing on the social media. Hays (1996) in Goodwin and Huppatz asserted that “a good mother would never simply put her child aside for her own convenience. And placing material wealth or power on a higher plane than the well-being of children is strictly forbidden”. Thus, though it would cost her a lot she must be willing to sit with the child to know what the child is doing. There are many things on the social media today that may not capture the interests of adults and considering the busy and tight schedules one may not have the time to give. As well, it is likely not to be convenient for the mother because of her cultural roles in the family. However, she must see it as a point of responsibility to attend to her teen child out of her busy schedule. She must be there at all time to encourage the teenager on the use of social media platforms. This is not to say that she should stop the teenager for the use of social media because of the benefits that accrue instead she is to let the teenager understand the boundaries.

## **Spiritual Roles**

In addition to the physical roles of a mother on her teen is her spiritual roles. A mother must understand that motherhood is not a hobby; it is a calling. Children should not be raised if cannot squeeze the time in. Motherhood is what God gave you time for Jankovic(2014). This submission indicates that motherhood is not for the lazy one. It is not a task that one takes up because of the title or benefits that accrue with time. It is a divine responsibility which also means that one would account for it. The society has her standards on acceptable values, so does God. Mothers are expected to be up and doing in this regard. A mother is expected to pray her way into the heart of her teenage child. She is expected to make the teenage child understand moral and values at all times whether they are required physically or on the social media platforms. Noticeable numbers of teenagers spend almost the whole of their days on the internet surfing one social media platforms to the other doing all manner of things.

Therefore, as a mother her role spiritually starts with praying for her Teenagers and then teaching them the word of God. She must be able to teach her teenager to weigh every online activity in the light of what the scripture says. This way the teenager is helped to take godly decisions even in the face of the corrupt society. Jankovic (2014) further bolsters this by saying “Christian mothers carry their children in hostile territory, when in public with them, she stands with, and defends the objects of cultural dislike. She publicly testifies that she values what God values, and that she refuses what the world values”. This submission implies that Christian mothers must be able to stand their ground against worldly standard. Noticeable numbers of teenagers have been misled on the social media platforms. The mother is to serve as an eye opener for the teenager. She should be able to let the teenager know that in everything they do, they must please God and this includes what they do online. Good example of a grandmother and a mother in the Bible is the story of young Timothy whom Loi and Eunice handed down spiritual heritage to him. Timothy was a young man who inherited an unwavering and sincere faith that was passed on to him by the mother and grandmother. Therefore, it is recorded that thousand of people’s life were touch and affected through evangelist grandson, Timothy.(2Timothy1:5). Loi and Eunice taught the word of God to Timothy and if compare to today’s world how many mother have the time to read and pray together with their children daily. Grooming the children in the way of the Lord is for the good of the family and the larger society.

## **Educational Role**

Education has been considered from various perspectives. Tidwell (1982) defines “education as the act or process of developing and cultivating mentally or morally. It is teaching, discipline, or forming. It is the discipline of mind and character”. In the same vein, Aggarwal (2004) defines education as “a conscious and deliberate process, well-planned to modify the behaviour of the educated in desirable and socially approved channels and to bring about in the educated in specific knowledge and skills”. From these views it can be established that education is a conscious and deliberate effort on the part of the educator to bring about a positive change in attitude and behaviour of the learners. Thus, a mother is to consciously educate her teenager child on the pros and cons of the use of social media platform. This is not to out rightly discourage the use but to help the teenager in taking the right decision(s).

Also, Scripture says “teach your children right from wrong, and when they are grown they will still do right” (Proverbs 22: 6, Contemporary English Version). This portion of the Scripture encourages that children be taught the right from the wrong such that when they grow up, they will still remain in the right part. Teaching and training of a child continues

just as learning has been said to be a life-long process. The mother is to continually teach her teenage child on what is expected of him or her as a Christian teenager. She must approve or disapprove where necessary. All of these must be done out of love. In fulfilling all roles as discussed in previous paragraphs, the mother must ensure that the teenager does not feel hated or out casted instead he or she should feel loved. Only then will she be able to succeed in her motherhood roles.

### **Conclusion**

The place of mothers as justified in this study in the upbringing of children from cradle to adulthood cannot be overemphasized. Parenting in the years back cannot be compared with the present due to technological challenges of the contemporary time. It is in the light of this, that the study has delved into how Christian mothers can be involved in the use of social media for proper monitoring of the teenagers. This will in turn help in reducing the abuse of social media among them.

### **Recommendations**

Arising from the findings of the study, the following recommendations were therefore made:

Parents especially the mothers should be social media compliance and friendly. This becomes imperative in this age of technology. Apart from the fact that it will help the mothers to curb excesses of their children in the use of social media, it will equally help to monitor and guide them as appropriate.

Mothers should also learn more about opportunities that are available on social media and utilize it to the benefits of their wards. These include, Online- learning, maintaining and strengthening relationship with other parents, access to news and information, religion and moral lessons can be acquired which can be of immense benefits to the children among others.

Parents should guard and guide their children/wards activities on social media by being involved. This is paramount to the safety of the children. Knowledge is power. And according to the Biblical injunction, *my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge* (Hosea 4:6); ignorance is a great disease. Many children have shipwrecked their glorious future because they did not find someone to caution them, especially the parents.

Parents should educate their children/wards on the abuses of social media and some sites that can influence them negatively, hence, the need for mothers to be well informed on the nitty-gritty of social media and related knowledge.

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The below interviewed was carry out in WATS environment on October 27th,2021.  
Do you think mothers are taking advantage of social media very well?

NAME	ADDRESS	AGE	OCCUPATION	RESPONSES	
Mary Ibu	144 flat 5 Abesan Estate	51	Teacher	Yes	
Faderin Olanrewaju	WATS	48	Minister	Yes	
Osikemuwe Glory	West Africa Theological Seminary	23	Student		No
Adud Claris	WATS	21	Student		No
Florence	WATS	28	Entrepreneur	Yes	
Tina Aidebhere	WATS	43	Nurse	Yes	
Aigbe Christiana	WATS	64	Nurse		No
Hussein Modupeola	-	30	Stylist		No
Obiako Racheal	-	33	Business	Yes	
Chinyere	WATS	43	Business		No
Ntaniyi Agnes	WATS	65	Missionary		No
Elizabeth Nnaoma	WATS	55	Librarian	Yes	
Israel Mercy C.	WATS	50	Librarian		No
Doyinsola Oladipupo	WATS	47	Accountant		No
Miriam Inyang	WATS	36	Secretary		No
Igwe Aminat		30	Business	Yes	
Gbolawaga Seyi		32	Business		No
Gloria Sumbo		-	Business	Yes	
Kovi Isaiah		47	Clergy		No
Dickson Onuelu	Gospel power assembly 2, Aboaba Afilaka Avenue Ifako, Ogba, Lagos	43	Clergy/Teacher		No
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>8</b>	<b>12</b>