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SOCIAL MEDIA AND ARM BANDITRY INVOLVEMENT AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN SOKOTO STATE: IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGIST

Umar Abubakar Nasarawa

Yusuf Umar Abdullahi

&

Halimattu Sadiya Abubakar

Abstract

This paper examined social media and arm banditry involvement among secondary school students in Sokoto State. Two instruments: Risk Factor Associated with Youth Banditry Gang Involvement Questionnaire (RFAYBIQ) and Counselling Strategies Questionnaire (CSC) were used for the study. Descriptive research design was used for the study. A sample of 500 students and 50 counsellors were randomly selected for the study. Data obtained were analyzed using frequency and percentages. The result revealed that risk factors associated with social media and arm banditry involvement among secondary school students in Sokoto State include poverty and lack of much concern by family, communities, poor parental supervision, tribalism, political influences by the politicians, desire to be friends with people those on power, crises in neighborhood/community and access to drugs and arms. It was recommended that school counselors should brace-up in sensitization of students for the uncommon challenges of assisting students in an insecure environment, as the study found insecurity as risk factor associated with social media and arm banditry involvement. Two research questions were used in the study.

Introduction

Social media no doubt has taken a central stage as far as information dissemination is concerned. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools have made communication easy for people around the world. It helps people to be well-informed with the world happenings as well as developments. For the youths and students particularly, social media has become their companion or friend in which at any point in time, they are online either on WhatsApp or Facebook chatting, or watching movies in You Tube. The current college students grew up in the technology era and social media that is now a part of their daily routine. In those days when something happened, one hardly hears about it until after a while. Through social media, happenings and news are now known within a short time. For

the youths, the social media is a channel for communication, entertainment and meeting friends (Maurya, 2019).

Although the invention has brought with it a lot of positive impacts such as ease of obtaining information from relatives, friends, business associates all over the world, etc, the invention has often been misused by some miscreants who utilize the medium as an instrument to perpetuate heinous crimes in communities. As noted above, we are living in an era of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and social media such as WhatsApp, Facebook, X (formerly known as Twitter), etc for chatting, YouTube, Snapchat, TikTok, etc for watching movies and so on, is a very important and almost most utilized part of the ICT. Youth are always exposed to these media sources and are always enticed and fascinated with the information they obtain from them. Some of these sources provide them with all the necessary information they need to perpetuate crimes. This is so true considering the fact that currently in Nigeria and in most countries of the world, there is no any regulation with regard to the level of information accessible to youths and citizens. Some of these sites promote all levels of crimes ranging from kidnapping, rape, arson, arm robbery, burglary, etc.

Sheley and Wright (2013) opined that social media and internet have its positive and negative effects on the Nigerian youths of today. According to him, technology has helped make what was impossible become possible, for instance, difficult tasks have become faster and easier to accomplish, and has also made it easier for us to see what is happening in other parts of the world, from current affairs, natural disasters, politics, innovation in medicine, invention of electronic gadgets etc. He added that it has helped people to connect emails for one-to-one interaction, blogs for expressing and discussing, groups for specialized discussion, etc. For the fact that Technology tools have made communication easy, a lot of youths are now using the social media negatively, such as involving in immoral and criminal acts like murder, harassment, raping and some have even become internet addict, just for the reason that they are not known. They engage in activities that are unsafe and harmful.

Over the years in Sokoto State, there have been series of clashes between the armed youths and security forces. In some cases, members of the group were arrested, during rubbery or blocking the road or attacking villages killing both men and women including the children and collecting their money and animals sparking deadly clashes. Many were arrested and killed by army forces and in police custody (Ade, 2017). Apparently provoked by death of their parents, brothers and sisters or tribes, the group escalated the frequency and intensity of attacking some markets at market days by shooting and kidnapping many people for ransom in some villages and many roads across Sokoto State. It is based on this background that this research

was conducted to investigate social media and arm banditry involvement among secondary school students in Sokoto State.

Statement of the Problem

The level at which insecurity and crime have been ravaging the states in North eastern part of the country in recent times has reached an alarming stage. In states like Sokoto, Kebbi, Katsina, Niger and Zamfara states, it is already a norm to hear that someone or people have been kidnapped or robbed. On several occasions, there have been incidences of kidnapping, arm robbery, rape, arson and even forced evacuation/sacking of the whole villages as witnessed in Sabon Birni, Goronyo, Illela, Silame, Wurno, Isa, Tangaza, Binji, Tambuwa land Tureta Local Governments. Some of these villagers were permanently displaced and multiple casualties ranging from loss of life and family member/relative, burning of houses and properties, destruction of farmland, rustling of livestock, etc, have been recorded so far. These unwarranted incidences have deteriorated the social and economic situations of the indigenes of these local governments. The victims are seen roaming the major towns in the state begging for basic necessities of life.

Study by Quinn & Downs (2005) revealed poverty, illiteracy, peer/gang attachment, drug, and school dropout as reason for youth to join bandit activities. However, there are other factors such as youths' exposure to social media. Many youths have learnt different dubious acts through the social media. Such bad acts include production of explosive materials, how to handle guns and swords, how to camouflage and so on. There are many sites on the You Tube that teaches such bad act on the social media. These social problems are believed to be manageable if adequate and proper counselling technique is utilized and applied effectively. This paper therefore focuses on social media and arm banditry among secondary school students in Sokoto State.

Objectives

The objectives of the study are as stated below:

1. To find out the risk factors associated with social media and arm bandit involvement among secondary school students in Sokoto State.
2. To find out what counselling approach should be adopted to reduce students' use of social media and banditry activities in Sokoto State.

Research Questions

The study is set to answer the following questions.

1. To what extent is social media associated with armed bandit involvement among Secondary School Students?

2. What are the counselling approaches adopted to curb students' use of social media and armed banditry?

Methodology

This is a descriptive survey design study. The population of the study is 5,514 Senior Secondary School SSII Students in Sokoto State and school Counsellors. The choice of SSII Students was because they are nearly to finish their Secondary School they can be targeted for banditry involvement. The researcher randomly selected ten SSII (10) Senior Secondary schools within the State. Samples of 50 students were drawn at random from each of the ten selected schools making a total of 500 that participated in the study, Counselors identified and used for the study were 50.

Two instruments – Risk Factor Associated with youth banditry Gang Involvement Questionnaire (RFABGIQ) and Counselling Strategies Questionnaire (CSC) were used for the study. The (RFABIQ) has 20 items directly measuring risk factors associated with youth gang involvement in banditry using the coding system for the instrument was the modified three point Likert Scale that had 3 to 1 in order of Agree (A) 3 points, Disagree (DA) 2 points, Undecide (D) 1 point.

The CSC has 10 items for recommendations on how counselors can approach the menace of gang involvement rated on a scale of "Highly effective", "Effective" and "Not Certain" Items for the instrument were mostly drawn from literature reviewed and suggestions from experts in the Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education and Extension Services, Usmanu Danfodiyo University Sokoto. Item derivation process was supervised by a Senior Lecturer at Usmanu Danfodiyo University Sokoto Test and measurement evaluation, Unit for face and content validity. The instrument was pilot tested using 50 students from Nagarta College Sokoto and 20 counsellors from Sokoto State Teachers Service Board and Shehu Shagari College of Education respectively. Reliability of the instruments was determined using Cronbach alpha reliability for CSCBIQ and RFABIQ and its coefficients were at .975 and .859 respectively. Data obtained were analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequency and percentages.

Results

Research question 1: To what extent is social media associated with armed bandit involvement among Secondary School Students?

Table 1: Risk Factors Associated with Students Involvement in Arm Banditry

S/N	Item Description	Agree	Disagree	Undecided
1.	Lack of family/community ties/attachment	59.4%	0%	40.6%
2.	Strict compliance to peer-approved lifestyles	18.8%	52.7%	28.5%
3.	Desire to belong to peer group	22.3%	62.7%	15%
4	Poor parental supervision	59.0%	17.29%	23.8%
5.	Substance abuse or drug use	40.7%	21.5%	37.8%
6.	Over reliance on anti-social friends	3.5%	85.0%	11.5%
7.	Less interest in education because no sponsorship	43.19%	38.19%	18.8%
8.	Poverty and tribalism	69.8%	30.2%	0%
9.	Desire for recognition and to be rich early	33.5%	45.8%	20.6%
10.	Feeling of worthless	20.6%	41.0%	38.3%
11.	Desire to be friends with people who wield power	73.8%	26.2%	0%
12.	Aggressiveness	11.5%	41.0%	47.5%
13.	Broken home	41.9%	18.8%	38.9%
14.	Crises in neighborhood/ community	100%	0%	0%
15.	Access to drugs and arms	56.3%	11.5%	32.3%

The result from table 1 indicated that risk factors associated with youth banditry potential involvement. Outstanding risk factors identified include lack of family, communities/ attachment, poor parental supervision, poverty, desire to be friends with people who wield power, crises of tribalism in neighborhood/community and access to drugs and arms.

Research question 2: What are the counselling approaches adopted to curb students' use of social media and armed banditry?

Table 2: Counselling Approaches for Curbing Students Involvement in Arm Banditry

S/N	Item Description	Agree	Disagree	Undecided
1.	Building good relationship with student	52.1%	47.9%	0%
2.	Strengthen students with my family/ community	64.8%	35.2%	0%
3.	Revamping office of the counselor in schools	47.6%	52 4%	0%

4	Building up students' perceived self-worth	49.3%	50.7%	0%
5.	Pro-active counselling	37.2%	62.8%	0%
6.	Reaching out to students through orientation, gift and price giving day	46.5%	53.5%	0%
7.	Maximizing PTA in reaching out for update about students	75.1%	24.9%	0%
8.	Emphasizing drug-free-life	61.7%	38.3%	0%
9.	Inviting students suspected to have risk factors for counselling	64.4%	35.6%	0%
10.	Separating friends when one is negatively influencing the other.	59.7%	40.3%	0%

The result in table 2 showed that counseling approaches recommended by school counselors in curbing gang involvement. Rated highly effective was building good relationship with students, strengthen student's attachment with my family/community maximizing PTA in reaching out for update about students, emphasizing drug-free-life inviting students suspected to have risk factors for counseling and separating friends when one is negatively influencing the other.

Discussion

The study found risk factors associated social media and bandit involvement among senior secondary school students include weak family, communities, attachment, poor parental supervision, poverty, desire to be friends with people who wield power, crises in neighborhood, community and access to drugs and arms. The findings aligned with risk factors outlined by Worley, Scot and Tanner (2003) as reduced attachment to family and community, strict compliance to peer-approved lifestyle even if against parental training, reduced attachment to family and community, poor parental supervision, drug abuse and over reliance on anti-social friends. This finding agrees with Quinn & Downs (2005) who identified parental skills and low self-esteem as a risk factor. Likewise, Eme and Ibietan (2012) found insecurity, poverty and corruption to be risk factors enhancing banditry recruitment in some part of the country. It is worth noting that these factors are negatively complemented by the impact of ongoing banditry crisis in the study area, which on its own presents great fair and stress to the psychosocial personality development of these young people.

The study found some effective counseling approaches towards curbing gang involvement. These are building good relationship with students through group and individual, strengthening students' attachment with my family/community, maximizing PTA in reaching out for update about students suspected to have risk

factors for counseling and separating friends when one is negatively influencing the other. These recommendations are in line with the position of Quinn & Downs (2005), who outlined protective factors against gang banditry involvement include; building strong family attachment, disbanding students gathering involving known delinquents at unhealthy corners or the school, strengthening positive teacher/counselor-student relationship, regular feedback from parents on child conduct through PTA, discouraging unhealthy friendship among students among others. The counselors need to strengthen protective factors as observed by Howell and James (2005). These protective factors are likely to produce positively influences that may mitigate impacts of risk behavior and decrease likelihood of problem behavior.

The role of value education for the educational psychologist in counselling students

The role of value education means principles or standards of education and it is through these standards one should know judgment of what is important in life. Values in this instance are associated with some rightness or wrongness. Values is synonymous with the concepts: moral principles, ethics, moral code, moral values, moral standards, code of behaviours, rules of conduct, and standards of behaviours some of these values with their examples have been classified as follows:

i. Spiritual value: e.g. piety, obedience and authority
ii. Moral value: e.g. honesty, gratitude, tolerance and respect
iii. Political value: e.g. Probity, accountability and justice
iv. Economic value: e.g. productivity and efficiency
v. Social value: e.g. courtesy, commitment and hospitality
vi. Intellectual value: e.g. intelligence and clarity
vii. Professional value: e.g. success, diligence and skillfulness
viii. Aesthetic value: e.g. beauty and symmetry
ix. Sentimental value: e.g. Love and acceptance
x. Material value: e.g. Physical health, safety and comfort (Ganguli, Mehrotra & Mehlinger, 2021)

The above categories of values mentioned above can inculcate students' confidence and forms part of the types of values that the educational psychologist need to address in teaching students and in the therapeutic session in order to build confidence, friendliness among the students.

Conclusion

From the findings of the study, the researcher concluded that there are high risk factors associated with social media and banditry involvement among senior secondary school students. These are both socially and psychologically induced.

However, with proper counseling skills, the school counselor may contribute meaningfully towards sensitization of students and curtailing likelihood of luring young students into gangs and banditry in Sokoto state.

Recommendations

1. There is need for the schools' counselors to embark and brace-up in sensitizing students for the uncommon challenges of assisting students in an insecure environment, as the study found insecurity as risk factor associated with banditry involvement.
2. Government, NGOs, and other Stakeholders need to undertake and cooperate with the counselors by providing necessary material, sensitizations awareness for the affected students.

Implications for Educational Psychologist

Form the results findings in this study; it is pertinent to educational psychologists to wake-up in discharging their responsibilities as actors for facilitating teaching, learning and it is conditions. From the above findings educational psychologist need to draw attention of counsellors, educational administrators, curriculum implementors and all stalk holders in teaching and learning on the dangers that students and learning faces in terms social media and armed banditry in our society. For the Counsellors they basically involve processes of helping the client to discover the coping mechanisms that found useful in the past, how they can be used or modified for the present situation, and how to develop new coping mechanisms. School counseling relate more with guiding students in making right and informed choices that foster balanced academic life. The school counselor is saddled with the responsibility of assisting students develop healthy life style, make good career decision and properly adjust to realities of the adolescence. The school counselor has much to do in minimizing students' involvement in gangs. Gang involvement is influenced by the individuals' familial and social experience. A watchful school counselor is likely to detect evolving risk factors before students join gangs proper, this is because gang involvement is a process that happens overtime.

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