PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKING ON THE CHILDREN OF DEMONSTRATION SECONDARY SCHOOL, AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY, ZARIA.

BY

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SEPTEMBER, 2012

DECLARATION

I declared that the research work was conducted and carried out by me and all the materials used were properly acknowledged.

_____	_____	_____
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CERTIFICATION

This project thesis titled "Parents' Perception of the Influence of Social Media Networking on Demonstration Secondary School Children of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria" meet the regulations governing the award of the degree of Masters of Science of Ahmadu Bello University, and is approved for its contribution to knowledge and literary presentation.

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DEDICATION

To the angel of my heart, Mrs. Sarfatu Stephen Madugu who is an angel on two feet and in loving memory of my late sister, Mrs. Mary Simon Pam. May her soul rest in peace with the Lord.

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In humble adoration I stand in awe of the Lord God Almighty for all that He has bestowed on me to make this study a success. I really appreciate the privileges I enjoined in His presence despite my weaknesses.

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ABSTRACT

This study sets out to determine Parents' Perceptions of the Influence that Social media networking have on their Children with special focus on parents whose children attend Demonstration Secondary School Zaria. The study adopts descriptive Research design while survey was use as method of data collection and questionnaire was employ as instrument for data gathering. The research adopts simple percentage as method of data analysis. Of a total population of 1,974 parents of students in the senior secondary classes, 450 parents constitute the researcher's sample size thereby representing the whole. This sample was picked using purposive sampling method. The study finds that parents had different perceptions of the influence that social media networking have on their children. The study goes on to show that, 76.7% of the respondents are computer literate. Even though most of the study population (84%) had access to the internet, only 46.6% are registered on one social media or the other. The study also shows that it is difficult to deny children access to the social media because advances in technology have made internet accessibility via mobile telephone possible. Findings show that parental monitoring is a mediating factor in supervising children's activities online. The researcher therefore, recommends that parents should learn to create a conducive and communicative home environment were their children can feel at home to discuss online issues bothering them. The study further recommends that, parents, rather than stop their children from joining these networks, should be supportive of any effort towards educating them about the negative influence that the social media may have on them any time they visit their accounts. This is more so because children can neither be denied access to these social networks nor be stopped from joining them.

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The advent of the internet has made today's web more than an electronic bulletin board, and the days of using the internet as a mere one-way supplier of news, is over. With social media tools, information can be exchanged back and forth (McCrea, 2010; Munkittrick, 2010; Wallace, 2006).

A social media networking website is an internet website containing profile web pages of members that include their names or nicknames along with their photographs or any other personal or personality identifying information placed on such pages and linked to other profile web pages of friends or associates on the social networking websites. As such, members can be accessed by other members or visitors to the websites. A social networking website provides members and visitors to such website, the ability to leave messages or comments on the profile web page that are visible to all or some visitors to the profile web page and may also include a form of electronic mail for members of the networking site (Boyd & Nicole 2007).

According to Pro and Cons (2010:3), a social media network is defined as "an online services platform, or site that focuses on building and reflecting of social networks or social relation among people who share interests and/or activities. A social network essentially consists of a representation of each user (often a profile), his/ her social links, and a variety of additional services". Examples of social media networks are; **Face book, Twitter, 2go, MySpace** and the rest of them. In a broader sense, social networking means an individual or group-centred service that allow users to share ideas, activities, events, and interest within their individual or group networks.

All over the world, people experience joy when they form new social attachments and react with loneliness and despair when these bonds are broken. Previous research by media scholars show that, people who have a network of family and friends are happier and healthier and live longer than those who are more isolated. People need people, which are why social situations can have such a profound effect on our thoughts, feelings, and behaviour (Kabakci, Ferham andAhmet, 2008).

For society to exist, certain communication needs have to be met. Such as; the ability to read and write. Over the years, human beings have so explored and utilized communication that we now live in a media age. Today, the mass media have become a persuasive part of our lives, possibly because a combination of technological, economic and social factors have led to several media that have pervaded contemporary society. These trends, among others, include the internet, mobile phones and the social media. Indeed, mobile phones and social media have become so prevalent that the world has virtually 'shrunk' to what is termed a global village. Children now use the social media networks to satisfy their communication needs. This is however, not without some fears and challenges.

In ancient times, say some 200,000 years ago (Dominick, 2011), language developed and this led to the development of oral culture - a culture that relied heavily on memory. As humans developed, it became more and more difficult to rely on oral communication. Writing became the next big development as the need to keep more detailed, permanent and accessible records arose. Thus around 1450, printing developed and made the written word an important means of communication. However, as printing and books became expensive and exclusive, technological developments led to the era of the electronic media (Dominick, 2011). The telegraph,

photography, radio, television, computer and the internet, all changed the way people communicated with one another and the way information is stored and transmitted. Cell phones, laptops and other mobile information devices have further widened the horizon of communication.

Moreover, The United State Federal Trade Communication (2010) observed that children from ages 13-17 are heavy users of digital technology and new media applications, including social networking, mobile devices, instant messaging and file sharing. The online world has changed how children learn, socialize and are entertained. It is obvious that children's use of computer technologies or mobile phones is pervasive. This is because many children use their phones, not for making calls or sending text messages alone, but increasingly, for applications like e-mailing, web browsing and social networking (Lenhart, Madden, Macgill, & Smith, 2007; Kaiser Family Foundation, 2010; Commonsense Media, 2009; Nielsen, 2009).

In 1959 the United Nations adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, which affirmed the rights of children everywhere to receive adequate care from parents and the community. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted in 1989, attempts to consolidate international law on the basic rights of children to survival, education, and protection from abuse and exploitation (Children's and Women's Right in Nigeria, 2001).

Adolescents have been assumed to be more promiscuous, more abusive of drugs and alcohol, more violent, self-absorbed and generally lacking in altruistic social values in comparison to the previous generations (Stern, 2005; Sternheimer, 2003). This supposed decline in teenagers' altruistic values is blamed on cultural influences, particularly, the mass media. Parents and policy makers argue that, video games such as Grand Theft Auto, television shows such as The Hills,

and sites such as Face book, MySpace and Twitter, promote ideals of violence, drinking, drug abuse, misogyny and risky sexual behaviours (Richard, 2010).

In this scenario, parents feel powerless and helpless to make changes as teenagers have access and freedom to select their own media diets and circles of friends. Attempted removal or restriction of these freedoms would be both somewhat futile and could also cause immediate retribution in the form of rebellion by the teens (Nathanson, 2001). In this case, parents may acknowledge a belief in negative influences of media culture on adolescents, but at the same time feel there is little or nothing they can do to protect their children from its effects.

It is important to acknowledge that teenage years are the most influential times of self development in a person's life and a stage in the course of life in which children test models of conduct as they construct their personal lives (Fine, 2004 cited in Liau, Khoo,& Hwa 2005). Young people are looking beyond family norms and defining "selves" which may differ from their parents' ideal versions. This is a period in an adolescent's life when his/her comprehension of the world increases and needs and goals change. A lot of influences might have caused these changes in the teenage development which may include; parents, peers, and the mass media.

Shield & Behman (2000:23) submit that; *"*as computer technologies become easier, cheaper, more accessible, and simpler to use, and early childhood software becomes more common, children's use of technology is becoming widespread". By extension, this means that children are exposed to a massive amount of media and technologies and many spend more time with media and digital activities- from playing computer games, to surfing the internet, particularly in online chat rooms and sending e-mails. Most often than not, they do this more than they do with

their family and friends off- line. (Shield & Behman, 2000; Insafe Coordinator, 2001; Awake, 2011; Anaeto, Onabajo, & Osifeso, 2008).

Insafe Coordinator (2010: 1) observes that:

> As children are getting access to computer and mobile phones at a younger and younger age, parents are faced with several challenges. On one hand, they like the conveniences a mobile phone provides. On the other hand, they are concerned about the negative issues it exposes them to.

However, this is not the first time concern has been raised over the effects that digital technologies have on children. Similar concerns have accompanied the introduction of each new media technology in the last few decades. For example, in the 1990s, argument ensued about the harmful effect of violent videos, computer games, popular literature, cinema, radio and television on the grounds that they have damaging effect on children (Kwek, 2010; Weekly Trust, 2012).

Some of the concerns with respect to social media networks are children's exposure to sexual solicitors, paedophiles, problematic contents, imposters, fraudsters, murderers and bullies, among others. Research has shown that lots of children have been killed by the people they met on social media, while some were bullied- leading to emotional trauma that subsequently led to the victims committing suicide (Blumenfeld, 2010).

For this reason, many parents want their children's profiles secluded (Wallace, 2006). The researcher is now forced to ask this question. Would bringing children's profile down solve the problem? It is worthy of note that these technologies have come to stay. As Nicholas Negroponte puts it, "Like a force of nature, the digital age cannot be denied or stopped; it has four very powerful qualities that will result in its ultimate triumph: decentralizing, globalizing,

harmonizing and empowering" (cited in Glorious Assembly, 2011). He equally asserts that; "It is almost genetic in its nature in that each generation will become more digital than the preceding ones" (Glorious Assembly, 2011). Research has also shown that, children have a sense of immortality and they tend to be more impulsive than adults. In most cases, they may not clearly think as adult's do about the consequences of what they do on social media (The Federal Trade Commission, 2010; Wallace, 2006). This explains why children are trying to map out their own public territory removed from adult world culture. They are trying to do so online because their mobility and control over physical space is curtailed and monitored (Boyd & Jenkins, 2006).

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The rapid growth of social media networking sites and other genres of social media among children is driven by the way and manner in which these tools provide the children with a powerful space and environment for participating in public life, learning new things and socializing with other people around the globe. Some parents feel comfortable with these newer forms of social media sites because they believe they have a positive influence on their children; whereas many other parents have grave concerns about the dangers posed by these social media sites on their children or wards, as the case may be. For example, ajm12458 (2010) cited in Baker (2010:6), contend that, "I would say 'no' to Facebook and MySpace sites. I call them Waste book and waste your space. The intentions are good but what a waste of our kids' time and family time. To be honest with ourselves we would admit that it is addictive and sucks so much of our time. We just sit down for a minute then an hour is gone".

Mom of four-1196152 (2010:1) suggest that, "even if you don't allow Facebook, many kids set up an account on a friend's computer and never tell their parents" (cited in Baker 2010). To some

parents, “I would rather die than allow my children registered on any of the social media networks” (Saint, 2010:2).

Kabakci, Ferhan & Ahmet (2008) submit that, children have more knowledge and ability to use this technology due to the fact that they encounter internet technologies earlier than their parents. In other words, while the social media is a new technology for parents, it is a familiar environment for children as they have known and grown up with it since their early ages. In addition, some studies revealed that children’s use of the internet and the social media in particular has some positive effects such as access to information, communication, support to education and individual development (Cramer, 2002). Additionally, it is asserted that children’s internet uses also have some negative effects such as exposure to violence and pornography, addiction to Internet, delusion with strong advertisement components, abuse of personal and parental information, and allocation of inadequate time to activities for physical and social development.

Children on their part, sometimes send text messages and images with sexual content without considering the potential dangers and harm to their reputation (Weekly Trust, 2012; Paige, 2010). The Federal Trade Commission (2010: 4) reports that; “cell phone owners aged 12 to 17 have sent sexually suggestive images to someone they know by phone”. Improvements on cell phone capabilities now further increase children’s vulnerability to social networking threats. With cell phones children are able to do virtually anything that they would on the computer.

Furthermore, with mobile social networking becoming popular, children can now create their own profiles, make friends, participate in chat rooms, hold private conversations, share photos and videos, and share blogs by using their mobile phones. These then expose them to Killers like

Peter Chapman and Christopher James (Rohrer, 2010). Many children were killed by people they met on Face book and other social networking sites like Twitter (Rohrer, 2010, CNN, 2011). A case in point is a teen boy who was killed by four Nigerian boys, who were connected via Face book (Daily Trust 2012), Synthia's who was killed by someone she meet through Facebook and another teen boy who was bullied to death; Sydney and Nona Belomesoff who were killed by Peter Chapman and Christopher James- the men they met through Face book and Twitter (Kwek, 2010; CNN, 2011). This kind of online killers and sexual predators usually make effort to meet their victims' offline.

Based on the literature reviewed, especially Communication Journals, it was clear that social media studies were centred on politics. For example, Hanson, Haridakis, Cunningham, Sharman & Ponder (2010) worked on "The 2008 Presidential Campaign: Cynicism in the Age of Face book, MySpace and YouTube". Kushin & Yamamoto (2010) did a study on "Did Social Media Really Matter? College Students Use of Online Media and Political Decision Making in the 2008 Election"; While Limperos & Oliver (2010) content analyzed "The 2008 Presidential Election, 2.0.A content analysis of User-Generated Political Face book Groups." And Fernandez, Giurcanu, & Neely (2010) researched on the topic "The Writing on the Wall: A Content Analysis of College Students' Face book Groups for the 2008 Presidential Election."

However, research on parents' perception of the influence that social media networking have on children is scanty or virtually non- existent among Nigeria communication scholars despite the challenges children face online. This study seeks to contribute to knowledge in this area by assessing parents' perceptions of the influence of social media networking on the children of Demonstration Secondary School, Zaria.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

It is important to look at parents' perceptions of the influence of social media networking on their children by resolving the issues raised by the following research questions.

1. What are parents views regarding social media networking?
2. What should be the role of parents in the use of social media networking by the children?
3. How can a communicative parenrent-child relationship help parents understand what influence the social media may have on their children?

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY.

1. To know parents views regarding social media networking.
2. To determine the role of parents in the use of social media networking by the children.
3. To find out if a communicative parent-child relationship can help parents understand what influence the social media may have on their children.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study will not only help researchers studying social media influences on children but will also pave way for future studies on other adolescent subgroups. Adolescents are an important group to study because, as they progress to adulthood, much of the new technological package they acquire will determine the way in which they learn, search for jobs, and interact with society in general. This knowledge will set today's adolescents apart from previous generations and help researchers better understand the effect of new media on future generations.

1.6 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study was limited to social media networking and centred mainly on parents whose children attend Demonstration Secondary School of the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

1.7 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Children Children below 18 years

Threat A person or thing that is likely to cause danger, trouble, violence or disaster. It also means a statement in which you make so as to you punish or harm someone especially when they do not do what you want

Ward A child who is under the legal protection of a guardian

Predators People who use children for their own advantage

Educate To enlighten someone or a group of people on a particular issue of concern

Perception Point of view regarding a particular issue or event

.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

A lot of controversies exist over the effects of the media on children, particularly the social media. However, related literature will be reviewed to have a better understanding of children and their use of digital technology. Psychologists believed that children are very impressionable about things or issues they were asked not to touch or go to (Awake, 2011). Understanding the times, the social media, the technologies involved, and the nature of children will give us a better understanding of the issues at stake. Therefore, literature will be reviewed under the following headings: Media effects on children, Media and children's safety, Social media networks, The advent of social networking, New trends in social networking, Benefits of social networking, Children and digital environment, Threats on the social networks, Online safety tools, Parental monitoring, Parents, their children and the social media-the converging point, Social media: the Nigerian experience.

2.2 MEDIA EFFECTS ON CHILDREN

Research concerning the effects of media (broadcast media in particular) on children have been well documented by mass media scholars (e.g Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, Signorielli, Shanah 2002; Signorielli, 2005; Sobowale, 1999; Zhao & Cai, 2008; Thompson & Haninger 2001; Andison & Bushman, 2001; Sharrer, 2004; Interactive Digital Software Association, 2001).

Right from the early days of television, there has been public outcry about its harmful effects on children (Signorielli, 2005). Existing literature indicates that television programmes create or

reinforce violent tendencies or behaviours in children (Signorielli, 2005; Kunkle and Wilcox, 2001, Hoerrner, 1999, Gerbner, Morgan & Signorieli, 1994), instill fear, intimidation and vulnerability (Shanahan, 2002; Kunkle & Wilcox, 2001; Sobowale, 1999), and expose children to sexual and problematic contents (Hoermer, 1999; Kunkle & Wilcox 2001; Sobowale 1999).

Research evidence exists showing that the internet has also revolved into an unparallel outlet for pornography which expose children to harmful effects (Heider & Harp, 2002; Zhao & Cai, 2008; Lee & Tamborini, 2005; Lo & Wei, 2002; Wu & Koo, 2001), breakdown of morals, involvement in sexual behaviours and disrespect (Harris & Scott, 2002; Malamuth, 1996; Sharp & Joslyn, 2001; Smith, 1990 cited in Zhao&Cai, 2008). Heider & Harp, (2002) claim that there may be as many as 7 million pornographic sites on the web. Powerful technologies have made access to the internet pornography fast and of tremendously high speed because internet connection can deliver pornographic videos within seconds. Sites like BBS and Spam e-mail can provide users with pornographic images at almost no cost (Zhao & Cai, 2008).

Looking at video games and its effects on children, documented research has shown that many video game users are young children who are in the process of exploring their own identities in relation to the social world and this perhaps has made them vulnerable to media influence than their older audience (Scharrer, 2004; Woodward & Gridina, 2000; Interactive Digital Software Association, 2001). As video games increase in popularity, the public and parents' outcry over the potential effects of playing them calls for concern. Recent studies have demonstrated that there is a link between playing violent video games and aggression (Andison & Dill, 2000; Anderson & Bushman, 2001; Sherry, 2001, 2001).

Thompson & Haninger (2001) conducted a study on the contents of video games using a convenient sample of 55 E-rated (E stands for everyone) video games, examining the games as they played them for portrayal of violence, sex, and substance abuse. The researchers discover that 64% included violent acts intentionally designed to harm other characters, and such violence was required for progress in 60% of the games.

Sobowale (1999), who conducted a survey, which was commissioned by the National Film and Censors Board, on the "Impact of video Films on Children and Adolescents in Lagos State" discovered that those mostly influenced or affected by motion pictures are children and adolescents. Dalton et al (2003) and Sargent et al (2004) cited in Scharrer, (2004), did a study on the impact of smoking and substance abuse portrayal in movies on youths using a sample of adolescents. The study indicated that viewing R-rated movies in which smoking and substance abuse is a commonplace, is a strong and significant prospective predictor of youth smoking and substance abuse. Other studies had it that films expose children to sexual behaviours (Sobowale 1999).

A very crucial pointer here, is that, despite all the effects those media technologies have on children, we still have them with us although every effort is being made by different communication bodies (like Federal Communication Commission, National Broadcasting Commission, National Film And Video Censors Board among others) to come up with measures and devices like V-Chip and Rating systems to curtail them. Even though, it can be deduced, based on the literature reviewed, that media programmes exposed children to negative influences and behaviours, it was not their intention primarily to do so. It is important to acknowledge that the media also contribute to the positive development of children, especially to their educational, social, psychological and spiritual well-being. Existing literature also revealed that there are

many media programmes that are packaged which use virtual reality to educate, inform and entertain children in amazing ways (Sobowale, 1999). Such programmes are in form of cartoons (e.g. Walt Disney's Ice Age, the jungle Boy, Lilo and the Stitch, Bugs Life among others), musicals (like Sing Along Songs, ABCD Series), films (like ' The Scout Master' , ' The Karate Kids') and games (like ' The Adventure').

2.3 MEDIA AND CHILDREN'S SAFETY.

Previous studies looked at the use of different measures put in place to protect children from the harmful effects of the media which include: exposure to sexual act, violent and aggressive behaviours, portrayal of smoking and substance abuse, among others (Signorielli, 2005; Kunkle & Wilcox, 2002; Sobowale, 1999). One of such devices was the use of V-chip which was implemented in 1997. The Telecommunication Acts of 1996 mandated that all television sets 13-inch and larger manufactured after 1999 be equipped with the "V-chip". This device was to label and filter violent and sexual explicit programming (The Federal Communication Commission 2000). However, research has shown that it has not succeeded (Kunkle et al 2003). Moreover, several studies have been conducted on Film Rating Systems and the use of V- Chip by communication scholars (Signorielli, 2005; Kaye & Sapolsky, 2004; Ableman, 1999). Par alert is another devise that is installed on the computer to monitor what children are doing online. This device however could not achieve much because children set up their accounts using their mobile phone (Boyd & Jenkins, 2010). As regards Rating system and V-chip, findings revealed that relatively little is known about how the rating system reflect programme content and many felt that information about V-Chip, Rating system and programme contents especially violence, sex, and/or language was needed. This then brings us to the tenet of our theoretical framework which

posits that, people learn or come to know what they know via the media especially the electronic media that has the cumulative effect of rapid impact.

On the other hand, advances in technology had led to the invention of the internet and subsequently, mobile phones – particularly, the i-phone which enable children to download and record films, images and music from the internet. Study has shown that borrowing is a common practice among children (Sobowale, 1999). What this means by implication, is that, parents who claim to stop their children from exposure to media content by refusing them access to mobile phones will find out in the long run that they are not wiser because their children can use their friend's phones. The best anyone can do is to educate them on the risks and consequences of whatever thing they expose themselves to.

2.4 THE ADVENT OF SOCIAL NETWORKING

Early social networking on the web began in the form of generalized online communities such as Theglobe.com in 1994, Geocities.com in the same year and Tripod.com in 1995 (Boyd &Nicole, 2007 cited in Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Many of those communities focused on bringing people together to interact with each other through chat rooms and encouraged users to share personal information and ideas via personal Web Pages by providing easy-to-use publishing tools and free or inexpensive webpage. Moreover, communities such as Classmates.com used simple approach by having people link to each other through email addresses. By 1996, user profiles became a central feature of social networking sites, paving ways for users to compile list of friends and equally search for other users with similar interests (Boyd & Jenkins 2006; Rohrer, 2010; Collier & Magid, 2010).

Over time, newer social networking methods were developed and many sites began to come up with more advanced features for users to find, manage and maintain relationships with friends. However, the new and improved generation of social networking sites began to flourish with the emergence of Friendster in 2002, which eventually became part of the internet mainstream (Boyd & Jenkins, 2006). MySpace, LinkedIn and Badoo were launched in 2003. By 2005, MySpace was reportedly getting the highest page view than Google. Face book was founded and launched by Mark Zuckerberg in 2004. Since then, it has remained the largest social networking site in the world over with over 500 million users (Rohrer 2010). The mission of Facebook was to "create a Facebook for Harvard University to find cute girls and guys" (Rohrer, 2010: 5*).* Presently, it is estimated that there are over 200 active sites using a wide variety of social networking models. These include, but not limited to, the following: LinkedIn, Nexopia, Bedo, Hi5, Hyeves, StudiVZ, IwiW, Tuenti, Nasza-Klasa, Decayenne, Tagged, XING, Badoo, SKyrock, Orkut, Friendster, Mixi, Wretch, Renren, Cyworld, among others (Boyd & Jenkins 2010, Wikipedia 2010).

2.5 THE BENEFITS OF SOCIAL NETWORKING

According to Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe (2007), social media networking offers some benefits to its users in almost all areas of human endeavour. These include, but not limited to the following:

News gathering and dissemination – Individuals, groups and some media outfits resort to using the social media for their sources of news. Good examples are CNN and BBC who used Twitter, Facebook, MySpace and other social media networking sites to source for news updates about

what was happening in the Middle East. They use individuals' sites to access peoples' opinions, comments and situational analysis (CNN, 2011; BBC, 2011)

1. Education - Perhaps it is in the field of education that social networking plays its most active role by supporting relationships between teachers and students and among students themselves. These provide opportunities for learning, education, content sharing and professional development. Research has shown that about 65% of students, who use social networking, talk about education while 50% talk specifically about homework. Example of such sites is Teacher Street (Mazer, Murphy & Simonds, 2007; Ellison, et al 2007).

2. Business – One popular use for this technology is social networking between businesses. Companies have found that social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter are great ways to build their brand image. There are five major uses for businesses and social media: to create brand awareness, as an online reputation management tool, for recruiting, to learn about new technologies and competitors, as a lead to intercept potential prospects. Frazer & Dutta (2009:9) asserts that "the use of social network services in an enterprise context presents the potential of having the major impact in the world of business and work". Social networking connects people at low cost which can be beneficial to entrepreneurs and small businesses looking to expand their contact basses. These networks often act as a consumer relationship management tool for companies selling products and rendering services. Companies used the social media networking for advertising in the form of banners and text advert (Tynan, 2007). Social networking makes it easier for business to be conducted globally. Such websites include LinkedIn.com which has over 40 million users in 200 countries (Frazer & Dutta, 2009)**.**

3. Government -Social networking tools serve as a quick and easy means for government to get the opinion of the public about a particular issue, event and personnel or to keep the public updated on its activities (Tynan, 2007).

4. Politics -Politicians are now exploring the social networking sites to launch their campaigns and to keep in touch with their supporters. Barrack Obama was the first to use the social media to aid his electioneering campaign which turned out to be successful. These new media provide an opportunity for ordinary citizens, especially the youth, to create their own political content and distribute it on-line and equally comment on other political contents. (Hanson, Haridakis, Cunningham, Sharma & Ponder, 2010; Limperos & Oliver, 2010; Fernandes, Giurcanu & Neely, 2010; Kushin & Yamamoto, 2010). President Goodluck Jonathan also used the social media to reach out to millions of people. This was evidenced in his book "My friends and I" which contained the profile of his Facebook friends. Via this medium; he was able to break the barrier of space, time and geographical distance.

5. Medicine and Pharmacy - Social media is making an impact in the field of medicine and pharmacy by helping its members with different physical and mental ailments. For people suffering from life-threatening diseases, **PatientsLikeMe** site offers its members the opportunity to connect with others struggling with similar issues and research patients data related to their condition. For alcoholics and addicts, **SoberCircle,** offers people in recovery the enablement to communicate with one another and strengthen their recovery through the encouragement of others who can relate to their situation. **DailyStrength** is also a site that gives support to groups for a different range of topics. Websites like **SparkPeople** offers community and social networking tools for peer support during weight loss (Frazer & Dutta, 2008).

6. Building Relationship - Many social networks provide an online environment for people to communicate and exchange personal information for dating purposes. Intentions can vary from looking for a one time, short term and long term relationships. (Ellison et al, 2007). Most of these social networks just like online dating require users to give out certain pieces of information which can include; user's name, age, gender, location, interest, and may be the user's photographs.

2.6 CHILDREN AND DIGITAL ENVIRONMENTS

Computer technology plays a significant role in the lives of children and this role is rapidly increasing, transforming their everyday living in profound ways. To support this idea, Shields & Behman (2000:10) asserts that, "as computer technology becomes easier and simpler to use, children's use of the computer and mobile phones become wide-spread. Research regarding the impact of digital technology on children has found mixed results". Some suggest that these technologies hinder children's cognitive development, whereas others indicate that the use of these technologies are a building block for cognitive development and a link to better academic performance (Subrahmanyam, Kraut, Greenfield, & Gross, 2000).

Critics of computer technologies argue that, computer and other newer technologies have negative impact on children. For example, Subrahmanyam, et al (2000), were of the view that the use of computer technology is on the increase. As a result, researchers, teachers, and media professionals are questioning the impact this has on children in relation to their cognitive, social, physical and psychological development, as well as the potential dangers it exposes them to and the effect on their education. In the researcher's point of view, critics are concerned about the effects computer technology has on children more than any other subgroup, because of the social

anxieties inherent in children and the children's desire to try new innovations and not the computer technology itself.

Moreover, the issues of time spent on computer-based activities have been questioned by opponents of social media who believe that social networking is creating loss of childhood innocence, traditional values and authority (Strasburger & Wilson, 20002). This assertion prompted the researcher to wonder: Is it the technologies that are largely responsible for children's loss of traditional values, childhood innocence and authority, or the activities conducted on those environments? Are there no other intervening variables that lead to such actions? Were there no deviants in various societies and the countries of the world before the advent of such technologies?

Computer technologies and social media have also been accused of causing a rise in individualized and privatized lifestyles increasingly dependent on global consumerism (Wartelle & Jennings, 2000). The idea of global village by Marshall McLuhan has been realized here. With these newer technologies, one is able to perform all forms of business transactions without being compelled. The idea of consumerism is an individual choice with respect to individual needs. The technologies aid in showcasing the globe and "everything" inherent in it. However, it is an individual option to make good choices out of what the technology presents. This explains why children need better orientation to be able to make good selection.

However, proponents of newer technology especially social media regard these as building blocks for cognitive development and a sure means to better academic performance

Subrahmanyan et al, 2000).

Research has shown that about 60% of students who used social networking sites talk about education (Mazer et al, 2007). It is clear that the computer and mobile phones have changed the way children communicate with friends and families. Insafe Coordinator (2010:1) opines that "Parents like the conveniences mobile phones provides."

In addition, proponents of newer technology believe that the challenges children face on-line are not much different from the ones they face off-line (Paige, 2010). They argued that parents and guardians know how to guide their wards against meeting strangers and staying out long, and hanging with friends. They can leave stern instructions on what their wards should and should not do. This argument does not hold true because the online domain is a terrain which parents themselves cannot lay claim to knowing fully well nor do they know everyone and everything that goes on there. However, parents' knowledge of how the digital environment works can go a long way in helping their children to know how to utilize those devices (Boyd & Jenkins, 2006).

2.7 THE VULNERABLE GROUP

Vulnerability is general. Even adults have encountered some forms of online threats as a result of their activities on the social media networks (Emmanuel Television, 2010). However, Task Force (2003) stressed that children aged 13- 17 years are at the greatest risk because they tend to engage in some risky behaviours which include revealing detailed information about themselves to strangers on-line. On the whole, girls are usually the target of sexual predators especially those who feel comfortable discussing sexual topics or those who go on social networking sites in search of boyfriends (Task Force, 2003).

2.8 THREATS ON THE SOCIAL NETWORKS

The net today is the real world for the overwhelming majority of children. Good as it may be, especially with respect to social media networking, these sites were not originally intended for

them but strictly meant for the adults. In the words of Rohrer (2010:5), "…these sites (like Facebook) were created by and intended for the adults. The content was adult". But at present, the social networks are full of children's profiles and images of children's sonograms posted by their parents. What parents do when they post such pictures online is creating a visual image for someone who may want to pursue them later in life (Rohrer, 2010). Within two years of Facebook being launched, the media began identifying it as a hunting ground for paedophiles. Indeed, one of the biggest risks of these technologies is not the way they allow children to escape adult control but rather the permanent traces left behind of their transgressive conduct (Boyd & Jenkins, 2006; Rohrer, 2010). However, (Rohrer, 2010; Wikipedia, 2002), highlight some of the social networking threats to include, but are not limited to the following:

- **SEXUAL PREDATORS -** Otherwise known as sexual solicitors (Pros and Cons, 2010), are people who seek sex partners on the social networks. This category of people could be people of their age bracket. Some research findings revealed that about 43% of sexual solicitors were identified as adults while some other researches revealed that teens sent sex text messages and sexual suggestive images to their fellow teens (Magid, 2010). However, talking with strangers online may increase the possibility of sexual solicitation, particularly among children who are willing to engage in conversation about sexual topics (Task Force, 2003).
- **ON LINE BULLYING-** Also known as cyber-bullying or real life bullying (Magid & Collier, 2010), involves deliberate and repeated aggressive and hostile behaviour by an individual or group of individuals with the intention to humiliate, harm, and control another individual or group of individuals of lesser power or social status. Cyber bullying has increased exponentially as new technologies are released. Online bullying can cause

emotional trauma for the victim. It can inflict mental anguish that can be very painful. Cyber attack can reach a vast audience and haunt the victims. These can follow the children home from online to offline and possibly for the rest of their lives. In most cases it affects different people in different ways (Blumenfeld, 2010). People react differently to cyber bullying which is dependent on a host of factors the perpetrators cannot predict. A case in point is Tyler Clementine's death whose roommate tormented him by using a webcam to secretly record (and live stream on the internet) Tyler engaging in sexual activities in his room with another male student. His roommate tweeted to 150 fellows (Blumenfeld, 2010). This led Tyler Clementine to commit suicide. Bullying and harassment have long been problems for young people (even adults) the world over. The advent of information and communication technologies has now allowed this abusive and destructive practice to extend to virtually all aspects of the person's life. A lot of social network users have received threatening messages (Magid, 2010). To this effect, Whitney (2010:1) cautioned, "Be careful about what type of pictures you post. Photos that may be appropriate for family viewing could be inappropriate, if shared with the general public".

- **PAEDOPHILES-** On the social networks are adults who are sexually attracted to young children. These are adults who lie about their age and post fake pictures to sites like Facebook, MySpace, Twitter and other sites to initiate relationship with minors (Rohrer, 2010).
- **KILLERS- S**ocial media networks have become a dwelling place for killers like Peter Chapman and Christopher James who made effort to meet their victim face-to-face and afterward killed them (Rohrer 2010; Kwek, 2010). Children find it difficult to

understand the intention of these killers from the outset. This is simply because the social networks were not originally designed for them (Rohrer, 2010; Kwek, 2010).

- **PROBLEMATIC CONTENTS-** This covers a broad spectrum which include: hate speech, content discussing or depicting self- harm, child pornography, and content that could be considered obscene (Task Force, 2003). There are basically three concerns under this; children are unwittingly exposed to unwanted problematic contents during some online activities. Secondly, minors are able to seek out and access content to which they are forbidden either by parents or by the law. And finally, the intentional or unintentional exposure to content that may have negative psycho-social or behavioural effects on the children. In support of this, Livingstone & Bober (2004:20) opine that, "majority of research on problematic content focuses on exposure and consumption, although there are indications that children are also contributing to the production of problematic content". Children created or distributed contents like: hate speech, pornographic images or videos of one or one's friend's, and contents for pro-eating disorder and self-injury websites constitute problematic contents.

2.9 ONLINE SAFETY TOOLS /MEASURES

A sizeable number of online safety measures have been put in place by some social media networks as compelled by the Taskforce Report of 2003. Below are different categories of technology solutions presented, and some comments made occasionally on particular technologies, and discussions on the overall strengths and the weaknesses of each category in application to enhancing online safety for children. In each category, some solutions help a little bit and some help more extensively. The following are some of the tools or measures enumerated by the final report of the internet technical task force (Task Force, 2008).

Age Verification and Identity Verification

Age verification technologies seek primarily to verify the age of adults and children, while identity technologies seek to verify individual identities. The primary goal of these technologies is to utilize age as a mechanism for limiting inappropriate contact between children and adults as well as preventing access by minors to inappropriate content. Although some technologies attempt to verify age/identity remotely, other technologies rely on a trusted third party for verification (e.g., schools, notaries, or government agencies). Age verification and identity authentication technologies are appealing in concept but challenged in terms of effectiveness. Any system that relies on remote verification of information has potential for inaccuracies. For example, on the user side, it is never certain that the person attempting to verify an identity is using their own actual identity or someone else's. Any system that relies on public records has a better likelihood of accurately verifying an adult than a minor due to extant records. Many of these technologies are designed primarily for the United States context not for international contexts.

Filtering and Monitoring

Filtering and monitoring solutions attempt either to prevent a user from accessing inappropriate content or provide a monitoring mechanism to document this activity after it occurs. These tools are based on a set of predetermined criteria that allow dynamic monitoring of web content and on-the-fly determination of the appropriate level of access. They are usually software-based and installed on a user's computer. They can often be packaged with logging features that allow an individual to review prior Internet activity on the computer. Historically, filtering and monitoring tools have enjoyed widespread success and have been in use by parents, schools, and other

public venues in which Internet restrictions are appropriate. Overly restrictive tools can filter out too much information, leaving its users frustrated and resulting in a reversion to less restrictive settings, and thereby exposure to greater risk. Some filtering tools address all Internet technologies, but some do not. For example, one package can restrict access to inappropriate websites but still allow unfiltered conversations to occur over instant messaging programmes. Finally, although many programmes offer users a varying degree of control over what they filter, frequently filtering software makes decisions that rely on its own criteria, not that of the parents, limiting parents' control over what they deem appropriate.

Commonly, these filters can detect certain types of inappropriate content, but the focus of filtering software is more on prevention of access to pornographic content than it is to violent images and video or content involving self-harm. These tools also function more accurately with text and images than with video and audio. For continued effectiveness, it is critical that filtering tools must constantly adapt to the constant changes in Internet technologies. Though relatively easy to implement, filtering tools typically require a software purchase and enough technological ability to install the application. Additionally, they require the time and understanding to properly configure the software for the appropriate age level and often require regular updates via the Internet. The issue here is that responsible adults may not be computer-literate enough to be comfortable with installation, configuration, and updates, which may ultimately put minors at risk. Filtering software can be easily circumvented or disabled by computer-savvy users, completely eliminating their effectiveness.

Text Analysis

These technologies are designed to automatically detect sexual predators, bullies, paedophiles, murderers, harassment, or otherwise inappropriate conversations on the Internet. These solutions generally work by obtaining samples of the conversations to be detected, extracting a statistical signature from these conversations, and classifying them based on the measured statistic. Text analysis tools vary in their deployment schemes, ranging from local installation at Internet cafes, libraries, and other public access sites to large-scale deployments across an entire social network website. Some solutions even incorporate the automated analysis as part of a parental auditing tool, locally operating on a home computer. An area for further development for text analysis technologies is error rate. The current typical error rate in analyzing contextual text is problematic. Not enough research has been done yet to determine the impact of known error rates. It is likely that any large-scale implementation of text analysis technology would produce far too many false positives at this point in time, and would require additional, non scalable manual effort to identify illicit behaviour. An additional risk is that legitimate users may be denied access to Internet-based services that automatically blacklist users based on criteria. The problem also exists in the reverse. A low rate of positive identification can minimize the dangers posed on the Internet, provide a false sense of security, and actually endanger the individuals it intends to protect.

Biometric

Biometric technologies attempt to identify an individual or class of individuals based upon intrinsic physical (e.g., fingerprint, iris, or DNA) or behavioural traits (e.g.typing style). These tools often use a hardware-based device to accept and transmit certain biometric information through the computer. In one instance, a device attempts to determine an individual's age grouping based on a bone density analysis of that individual's hand. Another tool attempts to

actually identify a specific individual through facial recognition and match the individual to a known sex offender database. Others are still more novel in their approach, attempting to identify specific individuals through the analysis of a user's typing behaviour and patterns. In each instance, information is gathered by either the hardware or software tool and submitted to determine the appropriateness of an individual using a particular service. The website or web service employing this solution incorporates the safeguard in their system and where necessary, requires the user to purchase the biometric device for their computer

Peer Verification for Minors

Facebook uses a peer verification system for users who identify themselves as under-18. MySpace has a closed school section that relies on peer approval and moderation to separate current students from alumni and provides a report abuse category that allows current users to report underage users. This online measure does not work well because some children register as adult (Task Force, 2003).

Restrictions on Changing Age Information after Registration.

Some social network sites restrict users from changing their date of birth or age after they have registered. For example, MySpace offers alerts, via its Parent Care software, to parents whose children change their ages and controls that limit how minors may change their ages. On Facebook, users cannot edit their birth date to one that makes them under-18 without first contacting the "User Operations Team for review." On Community Connect, Inc., "members cannot change their date of birth after registering."

Enforcement of Age Restrictions

Some social network sites use cookies or other technology to help enforce age restrictions. For example: Community Connect Inc. places a cookie on a registrant's browser to help prevent age falsification; people who try to sign up on Facebook with a birth date that makes them under 13 are blocked, and a persistent browser cookie is used to prevent further attempts at signing up; Google places a session cookie on a registrant's browser to help prevent age falsification when Martha registers for Roseline; and MySpace places a cookie on a registrant's browser to help prevent age falsification in addition to employing an algorithm to locate and remove underage users. Loopt has implemented an "age-neutral" screening mechanism in its subscriber registration flow, which requires users to input their age, blocks users who do not meet the minimum requirement, and tags the mobile device of such unsuccessful registrants and prevents registration from the same device.

Restriction on Searching for Minors

Several social network sites restrict the ability of users registered as adults from searching for users registered as minors. For example: Bebo does not allow the use of search engines to search for users under 16; Facebook does not allow minors and adults on the same regional network to see one another's profiles and does not allow adults to search for minors based on profile attributes; MTV Networks/Viacom does not allow adults to search for minors, and adults can become "friends" with users under 16 only if they know the user's last name, email address, or username; and on MySpace, profiles for users under 18 are set to "private" upon account creation by default, and adults cannot add a user under 16 as a friend without knowing that user's last name or email address.

Removal of Registered Sex Offenders

MySpace uses one of the technologies to identify and remove registered sex offenders from its site. Facebook disables the accounts of convicted sex offenders and plans to "add the Kids Act registry" to disable accounts and prevent those on the list from registering. MTV Networks/Viacom is "exploring utilizing sex offender registry software to assist in locating and removing RSO's" from its sites.

Amber Alert

AOL, MySpace, and Yahoo! participate with the National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children in disseminating reports on missing children.

Educational Resources

Some social network sites offer educational resources and online safety tips for their users.

Paralert

Paralert is an online tool for parents who want to spy on or monitor their children's online activities. It is designed for parents of children from ages 6-15 years. Paralert scans the child's activities in social networks and online chats, and sends SMS and email alerts to the parents in real time. Paralert makes use of real time monitoring services that track the child's activities on the computer on which the Paralert is installed. It detects the use of "suspicious" words and messages, and communicates data and screen shots to the Paralert server. The server analyses the data and automatically sends alerts via email or SMS to the parents' mailbox or mobile phones. This device cannot stand the challenges posed by the newer technologies like the mobile phones that come with Geographic Positioning Systems. Paralert can only be effective if it is installed on

the parent's computer. Monitoring what children do online is difficult because they use their mobile phones to navigate around their social media without being caught.

From the foregoing, it can be said categorically that, no single technology is suppose to solve all of the disparate problems that children face online or even to eliminate completely any one risk. Instead, each technology seeks to address specific aspects of safety for children in particular online contexts, often with significant parental or caregiver involvement. Moreover, a technology or combination of technologies designed for one environment or for use by one type of service provider may not be able to provide the same level of effectiveness in a different context. Each site has its own unique architecture, equipment, and operations, so integration of new software requires careful planning and testing in order to avoid unintended consequences or even site outages.

Thus, any technological approach must be appropriately tailored for the context in which it operates, given the wide range of services on the Internet. Looking critically at all the online tools or measures, most of them do not address or cater for the needs of children in the developing countries where they do not have well documented system of children birth registration that can be used online to know and track children who posed as adults. Therefore, a combination of education, parental involvement, and sound policies by service providers, may help to reduce some online risks.

2.10 PARENTAL MONITORING

There is no way in which parents can evade having a determining effect upon their children's personality, character, and competence. The functions of parenting greatly influence how children develop. One important task of parenting is the socialization of children. This task

requires parental expectations and guidance that change with the development of the child to encourage positive child outcomes ((Baumrind, 1978 cited in Cramer, 2002). The socially competent child can be described as possessing independence, social responsibility, vigour, and achievement orientation, which is the drive to seek intellectual challenges and solve problems efficiently and with persistence (Cramer, 2002).

Research in communication has examined parental responses to the risk posed by the mass media, particularly, the television and recently the internet. To the adults, children represent something the weak and helpless, in need of protection and supervision (Tsfati, & Cohen 2003). This explains why parents are particularly careful and concerned about any potential danger that may threaten the lives of their children especially on the social media networks. Researchers have used the concept of parental monitoring or parental mediation to refer to the act of tracking and structuring of child social activities or ecology (Tsfati, Ribak & Cohen, 2005). Most often than not, this monitoring represents the parents belief system, which include values, parental goals and behaviour management. Some parents equally set limit to shape their children's positive outcomes (Nathanson, 2001).

Media scholars have examined parental practices like imposing restrictions on children's media exposure, talking to children on media contents and watching television with children (Friday, 2008; Gentile & Walsh, 2002). These are all conscious efforts towards protecting children from harmful effect of the mass media. It is therefore, not surprising that parents are worried about their children's activities on the social media networking sites. Decades of research in communication has revealed that media consumption is a social activity. Gurevitch & Hass (1974) cited in Tsfati et al, (2005:6) observed that, "Kids watch television with other kids: Kids talk about television with other Kids: Kids influence each other to consume media content.

Watching television fulfils social integrative needs in addition to cognitive, effective and escapist need".

The above assertion clearly depicts how children talk and influence each other on the social media networks. The social media networks have over taken the attention of children more than did the television and the internet. These days, children use the social media networking sites for all manner of social activities ranging from building relationships to eliciting or exposing themselves to strangers which make them vulnerable to all kinds of on line threats. Interestingly, the digital age has completely altered some of the parental practices (like imposing restrictions) used to monitor children's media activities. With mobile phones, restrictions cannot work against the world of social media networking because access to social media is made easy, cheaper and quite affordable via mobile phones. Mobile phones service providers have equally made internet connectivity via mobile phones cheaper. There is therefore, the need for a more elaborate and collaborative approach to parental monitoring.

Parents may worry about the dangers and risk of online predators associated with computer use and the Internet. Privacy becomes an issue. Families interact, live, and spend much of their time at home. The Internet and new media may help facilitate and foster better relationships because both parents and adolescents can have their own space in which to thrive as individuals. This could suggest that, because of this, they are then able to interact as a family on a deeper level. Adolescents may find their parents not as adept at computer skills as their siblings or peers. They may be less likely to ask parents for help with computer-related questions.

In contrast, Subrahmanyam et al (2000) found that, because parents are often less skilled with the latest computer and Internet tools; children become technology teachers to parents in a complete role reversal. This suggests a positive relationship between communication within the home and

new media. If children can help parents in this way, it gives them a sense of importance and increases interpersonal communication. Subrahmanyam et al (2000) noted that much of children‘s time alone on computers appears actually to be spent extending social relationships by connecting with others through interpersonal communication applications via the social media.

Valentine and Holloway (2002) cited in Cramer, (2002), confirmed that online activities do not necessarily take time away from offline ones, but rather are incorporated into them. Brown Mounts, Lamborn, and Steinberg (1993) wrote: Peer group pressures serves to reinforce behaviour patterns by which adolescents come to be associated with a particular crowd. By fostering certain traits in their children, parents essentially direct a child toward a particular peer group and thus exercise some control over the type of peer group influences to which their child is exposed. (cited in Collier & Magid, 2010). In this way, parents are also responsible for how their children interact and engage with the social media, computers, cell phones, and the Internet. If parents value these items and make them accessible within the home, it will influence how and with whom children communicate. If being online is acceptable, then so are the uses of such a privilege. Most parents want their children to take advantage of all new media have to offer while also protecting them from harm or dependency on media. How to employ supervision and rules for operating such new age tools is often a conundrum for parents. Wang, Bianchi, and Raley (2005) cited in Kabakci (2008), noted that, there are three types of characteristics associated with rule-setting: child, family, and parent. These rule setting characteristics are universal (Wang et al. 2005 cited in Kabakci, 2008), expected that parents with higher incomes and familiarity with the Internet would be more likely to set rules regarding Internet use than parents with lower socioeconomic backgrounds and limited skills. Yet that study‘s results showed income was not a factor in Internet monitoring.

Parents with higher education levels felt more confident about monitoring their children's Internet use than parents with less education. The study found that 61% of parents believed they had rules about going online, although only 38% of teenagers felt these rules were enforced (Wang et al, 2005 cited in Kabakci, 2008). The rules and monitoring of children using new media appear to be influenced by parent-child relationships (Wang et al. 2005 cited in Kabakci 2008) wrote that fathers may spend more time on the Internet at home than mothers or have more experience with computer technology therefore, they take responsibility for checking children's online activities. Fathers are generally thought of as computer savvy because, stereotypically, their jobs require it or because they take on the role of teacher within the home.

Lei and Wu (2007) examined paternal attachment and Internet use. The quality of father-child attachment served as a reliable predictor of an adolescent's success in school adaptation, coping strategies, and with social situations. Adolescents may learn a dominant way of receiving social support from their fathers. Symbolic communication (the Internet, cell phones, and computers) becomes more important to adolescents than approximate-seeking behaviour in childhood (Lei & Wu, 2007). Lei and Wu (2007) further noted that adolescents might regard the Internet as their new attachment figure or may seek new attachment figures, such as online friendship, through the social media. Adolescents seek independence from parents and the rules and regulations they often put on their activities. At this stage in life, many adolescents turn to friends for support and confirmation of values and beliefs.

2.11 HOME ENVIRONMENT: A RISK MEDIATING FACTOR

Studies on online safety has shown that, a poor home environment full of conflict and poor parent–child relationships is correlated with a host of online risks. And a high parental conflict

was correlated with higher online sexual victimization (Wolak, Mitchell, & Finkelhor, 2003). Also, a poor caregiver–child relationship (with poor emotional bonds, infrequent discipline, and infrequent monitoring) was related to increased online harassment (Ybarra & Mitchell, 2004). These data mirror findings in the real world, where low parental monitoring is correlated with a host of negative consequences, such as increased likelihood of violence over time (Brendgen, Vitaro, Tremblay & Lavoie, 2001), while a positive parental relationship mediated effects of poverty and other demographic indicators (Barnow, Lucht, & Freyberger, 2001). Greenfield (2004:741) wrote that:

> A warm and communicative parent–child relationship is the most important non-technical means that can be used to deal with the challenges of the sexualized media environment.

Wolak, Mitchell, & Finkelhor (2006) in their study, revealed that, the vast majority of parents (90%) are concerned about their child's online safety and about half of them have discussed related topics (such as online sexualized talk, adult pictures, and harassment) with their children. About a third received this information from school.

These instructions appear to be helpful, although the positive benefits may relate more to a healthy home life. Those parents who talked with their children about Internet safety or had rules for using the Internet generally have a better environment for most types of Internet threats, and parenting. A positive home environment inoculates youth against a host of dangers. Parents who talked about Internet dangers had more safety-conscious children (Fleming, Greentree, Muller, Elias, & Morrison, 2006). More family rules regarding the Internet were correlated with less risk of a face-to-face meeting with someone met online (Liau, Angeline & Peng, 2005). Family cohesion and shared activities led to less exposure to negative content such as pornography (Cho & Cheon, 2005).

Despite an interest in the topic, parents generally believed that online issues of harassment, solicitation, and access to adult content were less prevalent than they actually were. Similarly, parents also underestimated the amount of adult content youth were exposed to either accidentally or deliberately (Cho & Cheon, 2005) and the amount of information adolescents posted online (Rosen, Nancy & Carrier, 2008).

These findings echo similar earlier studies that showed adults weren't savvy to the latest developments online. In 2002, parents were found to underestimate how frequently their children engage in activities such as e-mail (17% compared with 45%), posting online personals (68% compared with 81%), and corresponding with strangers (30% compared with over 50%) (Computer Science and Telecommunications Board National Research Council 2002: 165). The underestimation of incidents may be due to the very infrequent reporting of incidents by youth to parents or other adults. Only around a third of those harassed reported the occurrence to a parent or guardian (DeHue, Catherine, Vollink, 2008; Patchin & Hinduja, 2006; Wolak et al, 2006) and less frequently told another adult such as a teacher. Wolak, Mitchell & Finkelhor (2006), found that 63% did not report the incident because they thought it was "not serious enough." This explains why many children were bullied to death while some others were raped and killed (Rohrer, 2010).

2.12 PARENTS' PERCEPTONS OF SOME SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKING SITES

Social media networking sites like 2go, MySpace, Facebook and Twitter, are some of the most popular and controversial types of social media networks (Boyd & Ellison, 2007).Young people are frequently members (Lipsman, 2007) and use them to communicate and maintain social relations (Boyd, 2008) and as a base for online communities (Ito et al, 2008). Facebook was

fingered as one of the most popular social media networks associated with a number of online cases of threats (Rohrer, 2010).

With this popularity has come wariness about these types of websites, particularly from parents. In 2007, 85% of adults were uncomfortable with their children participating in online communities (Center for the Digital Future, 2008) and in 2006, 63% of parents thought there were "quite a few sexual predators" on MySpace; 83% of teens felt that social network sites were generally safe (Rosen, 2006). By 2008, 83% of parents were concerned about sexual predators, yet only 35% of teens felt that predators were a concern (Rosen, Cheever & Carrier, 2008). Rosen (2008) found that 15% of teens reported being approached by strangers, but almost all (92%) took appropriate steps in response. Initial research suggests that at least some minors meet people offline after meeting them on social network sites (Skinner, 2008). Although certain Social media networking sites members (those who posted a picture and those who flirted online) were more likely to receive online contact from strangers.

Parents' negative view of the social media came to the fore because the youths post information of all kind (text, pictures, video, and images) which in most cases exposed them to online dangers. Research has indicated that children post the most sensitive contact information such as phone numbers, name of school, hometown, first and last name (Lenhart & Madden, 2007,). An analysis by Hinduja & Patchin (2008) of approximately 1, 500 randomly retrieved MySpace profiles revealed that children post information such as picture (81%), hometown (93%), and first name (53%). Parents are therefore more concerned about the posting of such information on the social media networking site and also, some other activities of their children online. This

fears is what informed parents to have their children's profiles secluded all in an effort to protect them.

Facebook on the other hand, is said to be the most popular social media network that has the highest number of users worldwide. It is also regarded as the major social media network that lurks up sexual predator, bullies, paedophiles, rapist, killers and the rest of them (Rohrer, 2010; Lenhart & Madden, 2007; Boyd, 2008). These negative activities of some social media users have created a negative view of the media such that parents don't seem to see anything positive about it. To most parents, social media network is not good for their children because it will distract them from their academic pursuits (Weekly Trust, 2012; Centre for the Digital Future 2008). Whether social media is allowed by parents or not, children have ways of going there. The best bit therefore is to look for ways of educating these young ones.

2.13 PARENTS, THEIR CHILDREN AND THE SOCIAL MEDIA: THE CONVERGING POINT

A lot of controversies have been going on between parents and their wards over social networking. To ajm12458 (2010) cited in Baker (2010:6), "I would say 'no' to Facebook and MySpace sites. I call them Waste book and waste your space. The intentions are good but what a waste of our kids' time and family time. To be honest with ourselves we would admit that it is addictive and sucks so much of our time. We just sit down for a minute then an hour is gone".

Mom of four-1196152 (2010) cited in Baker(2010:2) contends that, "even if you don't allow Facebook, many kids set up an account on a friend's computer and never tell their parents" (cited in Baker 2010). To some parents, they would rather die than allow their children to register on any of the social media networks (Saint, 2010). Interestingly, a number of children are on one

social media networks or the other using pseudo-names or identity without their parent's knowledge (Belkin, 2009). Marcus (2010) cited in Baker (2010:4) affirms that;

> Parents seem uncommonly naive about the big wide world-talking about monitoring their kids' Facebook/internet use by having the computer on the kitchen table is 10 years out of date. Most social networking these days is carried out via cell phones, where the children can happily take/share photos with others, post on Facebook/the internet, bully others, be bullied themselves without parents being wiser.

This implies that even when parents stop their wards, they still know their way in there. Chances are that these children may encounter lots of problem because they will not open up when they encounter online problems. If children can go to this extent, then a lot need to be done to help them. Majority of the parents who stop their children from joining social media are not on any of the social networking sites and don't even know how these work (Weekly Trust, 2012). This explains why they seem to be confused and completely ban their children from joining them with the sole idea of protecting them online. To support this, Miola (2010: 12) argues that "we are two steps behind our children even if we think we know what they are doing online".

According to Boyd & Jenkins (2006), children are at a higher risk of being abused in their homes and in the homes of their friends than they ever were in digital or physical publics. This assumption does not hold true because children are curtailed and monitored by geographical distance. And in most cases, parents have a grasp of who their children's friends and acquaintances are and their personalities and activities. Sometimes, watching them and listening to their conversations with friends is a good indication of what they are up to. In most cases also, children are to a larger extent, familiar with their environment. But the online world is something else altogether. It is a global environment consisting of people from different countries, cultures, background, home training, religion, norms, beliefs, values and every other thing that can be imagined.

In line with this, Task Force (2003:10) maintains that:

> In the past, however, the risks were primarily local, and ideally addressed by parents, educators, social services, law enforcement and others working together at the local level. In the online context, the risks implicate services from

> companies and access to audiences from around the world. The technologies involved also make visible, risky behaviours and problematic interactions that were less visible offline, while allowing at-risk children to more publicly and prominently display signs that they need help. Parents and local community members often are unfamiliar with the relevant technologies and do not have direct experience with the way the risks evolve in the context of the Internet and interactive technologies. Addressing risks online therefore carries different challenges and requires broader collaboration to find innovative solutions.

According to Boyd & Jenkins (2006), parents hold the view that social media networks are exposing large numbers of children to high risk situations and these technologies are not likely to disappear (Boyd & Jenkins, 2006). Then what should be done? Stop children from going there as being suggested by some? Unfortunately, the technology does not have the software that indicates or confirms children's actual ages when they lie about their ages just to get registered. Are the roles of parents and educational institutions not to help children understand the risks involved and develop strategies for dealing with them? Will it not be better to have children engaged in social media but under the supervision of knowledgeable and informed adults? Historically, parents taught children what to do when a stranger comes to the house or when they are away. Parents should equally educate them on how to manage presentation of themselves in digital space. Parents' responsibility should be to bring reason to bear on situations which are wrought with ignorance and fear, not to hide or overlook the troubling aspects of children's cultures (Boyd & Jenkins, 2006).

However, Furrier (2010:11) was of the view that, "if we cannot control our children from joining social media, at least, we parents can warn them on the risks they might encounter on the online world". Moreover, the researcher wondered how parents would teach their children what they have little or no idea about. Marcus (2010) cited in Baker (2010), advised parents to acquaint

themselves with the use of modern technology by joining the social networks. This way, they will have a wider perspective of the benefits and disadvantages of their children joining these social media networks. The researcher is of the view that children should not be banned from joining social media networks but rather, they should be educated on how to present themselves online.

Online safety is another area of concern for parents and children alike. The need for online safety comes to bear because children face online risks, ranging from sexual solicitation, bullying, harassments, and exposure to problematic and illegal content. Websites and organizations like: ConnectSafety (connectSafety.com) and Internet Keep Safe Coalition (ikeepSafe.org) are some of the online safety websites (Collier & Magid, 2010). These sites are presented as user-driven, friendly and multi-platform. ConnectSafety.com advises industry, parents, children and educators on social networks, while ikeepSafe teaches safe and healthy use of internet technologies. However, to parents, children and educators, these safety websites are not reliable because they do not offer much in respect to on line safety and privacy. Online safety provides a false sense of security (Task Force, 2003; Furrier 2010). Just like in real life or off line, safety is not 100% guaranteed, but proper awareness creation can achieve a lot, much more than online safety measures alone. After all, there is nothing wrong in monitoring children's activities online as Lokio124 cited in Baker (2010:6) advised parents:

> Your role is not to be a friend. It is to be a parent... it is your responsibility to keep them safe, not happy. You raise them; don't let the internet and TV raise them. Think the internet as a person, its content is random thoughts in that persons mind"… observe your children's pages regularly and seek out sexual predators who feign to be other 13-year- old boys.

Children, on their part, do not understand what parents mean when they insist on sharing their password or becoming their friends online. A 13- year- old boy argue, "I will rather die than share my passwords with my parents" Aletta (2009) cited in Furrier (2010). It is perhaps because of this insistence that children have gone underground to seek out places where parents are unaware of, to socialize. This puts children at an increased risk and neither educators nor law enforcement agents will be around to help. Instead, parents should guide and monitor their children's involvement with the social media in a friendly manner rather than the use of force.

Talking about parents, their wards and the social media, Furrier (2010) argued that it is much more effective to take a collaborative approach rather than dictates. This is the converging point. Teaching self-discipline, boundaries, and wisdom is the only defence against the big mean world of technologies. Therefore, hiding and preventing access will do nothing in parent's goals, obviously not in the long term. This applies not only to Facebook and technology, but to many other areas of life as well (Makessensetome, 2010; Lauri-2406224, 2010 cited in Baker 2010).

2.14 SOCIAL MEDIA: THE NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE

The Social media network is a global environment which, a critical observation has shown that many Nigerians, especially the youth, visit. Facebook, Twitter, Bedo, MySpace, 2go. Different companies, organizations, communities, family trees, and associations, use it for different purposes. Of recent, politicians have also come to grips with the power of using the social networking sites to reach out to their target audiences. President Goodluck Jonathan of Nigeria used the platform in his electioneering campaign to reach out to a large audience. His book "My friends and I" contained a profile of his Facebook friends.

The Nigerian children are equally not left out in the world of social media networking. A survey of networks like the Facebook, Twitter, 2go and others revealed that many are on the social media (Twitter.com; Facebook.com). Some parents even post the images of their yet unborn sonogram or their baby's picture on the walls of social media (Task Force, 2003). Good as this may be, it has its own implications which include making the baby vulnerable for someone who may want to pursue them later in life (Boyd & Jenkins, 2006). Parents should therefore check what they do on the social media.

In Nigeria, the social media is used as one of the major sources of news gathering and dissemination, especially when other sources of news seem inaccessible. During the recent election crises in Nigeria, many people resorted to the use of social media to reach out to individuals, their families and friends.

2.15 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Perception theory formed the researcher's theoretical framework which was propounded by B. Berelson and G.A Steiner in 1964. The central thesis of the theory simply posit that, mass communicators want audiences to pay attention to their messages, learn the contents of their messages, and make appropriate changes in attitudes or beliefs, or produce the desired behavioural responses. The perception theory further emphasized that, the process of interpreting messages is complex and that these goals may be difficult to achieve.

In explaining perception, Berelson & Steiner (1964:88), state that, "perception is the complex process by which people select, organize and interpret sensory stimulation into a meaningful and coherent picture of the world" (cited in Anaeto et al 2008). Perception involves learning, updating perspectives, and interpreting the observed. It equally means the process by which we interpret sensory data that come to us through our five senses (Bennet, Hoffman & Prakash 1989;

Lahry, 1991 cited in Anaeto et al 2008). Researchers have identified two types of influences on our perception: structural and functional perception. A structural influence on our perception comes from the physical aspects of the stimuli to which we are exposed to. While functional influences are the psychological factors that influence perception and thereby, introduce some subjectivity into the process.

Studies in perception actually led to the discovery of the selectivity processes which hold that each of us as human beings tends to perceive and then decode communication messages in the light of our previous experiences and current dispositions – our needs, moods and memories. Scholars have categorized these processes into four areas. These are Selective Exposure, Selective Attention, Selective Perception, and Selective Retention, all of which, rather than in isolation, work together in complex ways (Anaeto, Onabajo, & Osifeso, 2008).

Parents' perceptions of the threats on the social networks can be viewed from many perspectives. This is evidently so because parents, as individuals, differ in their outlook (Individual differences perspective), are on different social strata and belong to different social groups (Social Category perspective) and are influenced by peer groups and "significant others" like relations, friends and social groups (Social Relations Perspective).

Individual differences Perspective is one platform on which many parents base their fears, saying their children are not matured enough to correctly interpret or identify the many threats that abound on the social media networks, that seek to damage their self-image and values and even their lives (Folarin, 1998).

These unintended consequences are what many parents seem to be worried about. They assume that some media contents their children consumed on the social networks may contain veiled threats that may be harmful to them. Indeed they believe that criminals also use the social

networks to satisfy their warped intentions and that children may be too naïve to discern between gratifying and dangerous content and may fell prey to unscrupulous people who 'prowl' the social media networks (Boyd, & Ellison, 2007). Also, Parents, because of their ages, are more likely to give careful thought and consideration to a message than children who are more prone to be attracted by mere fancy.

Parents, especially because of their experience are said to be less prone to social media predators of their different personal psychological organization. Parents' opinions about social media networks influences on their children differ. Their opinions may also differ on the likely harm that social media influence may have on their children.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This segment discusses the methods and procedures used in the collection of data under the following sub-heads: Research design, Study variables, Population of the study, Area of study, Sampling techniques, Sample size, Method of data collection, Instrument of data collection and Method of data presentation and analysis.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

For the purpose of this study, descriptive research was employed. A descriptive research attempts to picture or document an event, conditions or attitudes so as to describe what exist at the moment (Wimmer& Dominick, 2000). Descriptive research is primarily concerned with the collection and analysis of data for the purpose of describing, evaluating or comparing current or prevailing practices, events and occurrences (Olayiwola, 2007). Babbie (2001) observes that, "scientific descriptions are typically more accurate and precise than are casual ones". It is against this backdrop that the researcher designed the research to describe the ongoing situations and events concerning social media networking among children and the views held by their parents.

3.3 STUDY VARIABLES

Central to the study are two variables; dependent and independent variables. Usually, the dependent variables rely on the independent variables to occur. In this study, the dependent variable is parents' perception. Perception refers to the way someone regards something and that person's beliefs about what it is like. In this study, parents' perceptions refer to the views held by the individual parents. On the other hand, the independent variable is the influence of social

media networking on children. It refers to the power to have an effect on the way someone or something develops, behaves or thinks without the direct use of force or commands.

3.4 AREA OF STUDY

Demonstration Secondary School of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, was the area of study for this research. Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, occupies a land area of seven thousand (7,000) hectares. The university attracts people of different race, religion, cultural background and belief system. Demonstration Secondary School is an extension of the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, where students are trained, specially the children of the university staff. The choice of the study area hinged on the fact that the researcher had earlier conducted a study on "Assessing children's Awareness of Social Media Networking threats" using the Demonstration Secondary School students as a case study (Stephen, 2011). The study revealed that 80% of them were registered on one social media network or the other. The researcher felt convinced to pick up from there because it was established by the study that their children were involved.

3.5 POPULATION OF THE STUDY

Since a study population is that aggregation of the elements from which the sample is to be drawn (Babbie, 2001), it therefore became imperative for the researcher to define her study population. The population of the study was all the parents of the students in the senior secondary classes of Demonstration Secondary Schools of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, which stood at 1,974 parents. (Demonstration School List and Staff Disposition for Year 2011 Academic Session). Children in the senior secondary classes were chosen for this study because they constituted a specific group of adolescents that not only have extensive knowledge of social

media networking, but have practically unlimited access to mobile phones and internet, unlike those in the junior secondary classes (Stephen, 2011).

3.6 SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

The Sample for this study was drawn using non- probability sampling in which purposive sampling was used to pick all parents whose names started with letter A and O. The researcher purposely picked A and O because they constitute the largest number. Wimmer & Dominick (2000) stress that, the larger the sample size the better. In this type of sampling method, selections are made on purpose or based on the judgement of the researcher. It is also known as judgemental sampling method (Babbie, 2001).

3.7 SAMPLING FRAME

Sampling frame is the list or quasi list of elements from which a sample is drawn (Babbie, 2001; Wimmer & Dominick, 2000). The sample for this study was obtained from the list of parents of the students from the telephone directory of parents provided by the school in a book titled, "The School List and Staff Disposition for year 2011 Academic Session".

3.8 SAMPLING SIZE

The researcher adopted 450 parents. This sample size made up all the parents, whose names started with letter A and O. Wimmer & Dominick (2000) observe that, the size of a sample is important because the larger the sample size, the more representative it is of the total population and therefore, the more reliable a researcher's generalizations to be made.

3.9 METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

Survey method was employed for this study. Through survey, a large amount of data was collected with relative ease from a variety of people or the target population through the use of questionnaires thereby subjecting the data to statistical analysis (Babbie, 2001; Wimmer & Dominick, 2000). The survey method was ideal for this study because survey is chiefly used for descriptive purposes and at the same time where individual people constitute the unit of analysis. Babbie (2001) observes that, "survey is the best method available to a social researcher who is interested in collecting original data for describing a population too large to observe directly". Surveys are also excellent vehicle for measuring attitudes and orientations in a large population. This method will therefore, allow the researcher to examine different variables – demographics, lifestyles, information, attitudes, motives and intentions with respect to the research topic (Wimmer & Dominick, 2000).

3.10 INSTRUMENT OF DATA COLLECTION

Questionnaire formed the researcher's instrument for data collection. This was because carefully constructed standardized questionnaires provide data in the same form from all respondents. On the whole, questionnaires are essential to and most directly associated with survey research (Babbie, 2001) which formed the researcher's method of data collection. Written questionnaire was employed based on the fore knowledge of the target population who were mostly literate.

The questionnaire contained both open and close-ended questions. Questions were designed to elicit information from the sample drawn. The questionnaire was divided into two sections: Section A contained the demographic data while section B elicited responses based on the questions related to the topic.

3.11 METHOD OF DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Data collected was analyzed using Special Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) while tables were used for data presentation. In analyzing the data, simple percentage and frequency was used. In addition, both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to provide answers to the research questions.

3.12 VALIDITY AND RELIABILTY

A pilot study was conducted to ensure the validity and reliability of the instrument to be used for data collection which is the questionnaire. In the words of Bordens & Abbott (2002:145), "Pilot study can help you to clarify instructions, determine appropriate levels of independent variables, determine the reliability and validity of your observational methods …also gives you practice in conducting your study so that you make fewer mistakes when you do it for real." The pilot study for this research was conducted to test the validity and reliability of the study. In measuring the reliability of the instrument, reliability of Psychological tests or measures was used in which the researcher administered the questionnaire twice to the target audience and then, determined the correlation between the first and the second administrations and the result showed r = 0.79, which was very significant. This was achieved using test-re-test reliability which entails administering the same test twice between the spaces of three months so that the problem of remembering the previous responses could be dealt with.

In measuring the validity of the instrument, content validity was employed. Judging by the appearance of the questionnaire, it was clear that the researcher used the research questions to frame the items in the questionnaire. 100 questionnaires were used and the response rate was

75%. However, some modifications were effected on those items on the questionnaire that did not adequately answer the research question. An example was that of the concept of "social media." Some parents did not know that Facebook, Beboo, MySpace, Twitter were referred to as the social media.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF RESULT

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This segment presents the data obtained from the field. Of the total number of 450 questionnaires administered, 343 were retrieved, 30 were rendered invalid because more than one choice were picked in each of the items on the questionnaire. Therefore, 313 questionnaires were analyzed and presented below.

TABLE 1: Respondent Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
25-29	**3**	**1.0**
30-39	**55**	**17.6**
40-49	**163**	**52.1**
50-59	**60**	**19.2**
60-above	**32**	**10.2**
Total	**313**	**100**

The age range of respondents shows a mixture of different age grades with those within the age range of 40-49 carrying the highest percentage 52%.

Table 2: Sex of Respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	**193**	**61.7**

Female	**120**	**38.3**
Total	**313**	**100**

The above table shows that there were more male than female respondents. Although respondents were selected purposely, however, the researcher did not intentionally seek to distribute questionnaires to more male than female.

TABLE 3: Respondents Marital Status

Status	Frequency	Percentage
Married	**293**	**93.6**
Single	**10**	**3.2**
Divorced	**5**	**1.6**
Widower	**1**	**.3**
Widow	**5**	**1.6**
Total	**313**	**100**

The table above indicated that, most of the respondents were married- which suggest that their children are under their care and supervision. Only an insignificant number is under the supervision of a single parenting.

TABLE 4: Respondents Occupation

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Private Employee	**17**	**5.4**

Civil Servant	**252**	**80.5**
Unemployed	**5**	**1.6**
Housewife	**16**	**5.1**
Self-Employed	**23**	**7.6**
Total	**313**	**100**

The above table shows that most of the respondents were civil servants. This number mirrors the study area which was an academic environment with most of them working as staff of the institution or other government parastatals in the surrounding area of study.

TABLE 5: Respondents Number of Children

Variables	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
None	**4**	**1.3**
1-3	**111**	**35.5**
4-6	**124**	**39.6**
7-above	**74**	**23.6**
Total	**313**	**100**

The above table indicated that the respondents who have 4-6 children constitute the majority which is 39.6% the number of respondents who do not have children is insignificant in the distribution 1.3%.

TABLE 6: Respondents Educational Background

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
No Formal Education	**16**	**5.1**
Primary/Secondary cert.	**30**	**9.6**
OND/NCE	**15**	**4.8**
HND/Degree	**73**	**23.3**
Higher Degree	**179**	**57.2**
Total	**313**	**100**

From the above table, it can be seen that respondents with higher degree have the higher percentage in the spread 57.2%. this margin signal the area of study where the school is situated where there are people of different educational qualification.

TABLE 7: Respondents Computer literacy

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	**240**	**76.7**
No	**73**	**23.3**
Total	**313**	**100**

The table above shows that most of respondents were familiar with the use of the new technology and have basic skills of the tool.

TABLE 8: Respondents Internet Accessibility

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	**263**	**84.0**
No	**50**	**16.0**
Total	**313**	**100**

The table above indicates that those who had internet accessibility constituted the majority of the respondents. This accessibility might influence the respondents to join the social media.

TABLE 9: Respondents social media registration

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	**146**	**46.6**
No	**162**	**51.8**
Total	**308**	**100**

This table shows that there was no significant difference between those that were registered on the social media and those that were not registered on the social media.

TABLE 10: Respondents reasons for not registering on the social media

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
It is a waste of time	73	23.3

It is meant for children	41	13.4
It is dangerous	21	6.7
Because am not computer literate	3	1.0
Don't have time	21	6.7
Am not interested	4	1.3
Total	**162**	**100**

This table indicates different reasons why some of the respondents were not registered on one social media or the other. Some of those reasons could be attributed to demographics reasons like age, sex educational background, among others.

TABLE 11: Respondents awareness of Children registration on social media

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	**175**	**55.9**
No	**87**	**27.8**
I don't Know	**51**	**16.3**
Total	**313**	**100**

The table shows that not all parents were aware of their children's registration on the social media. Some could not tell whether their children were registered or not which means they did not discuss such issues.

TABLE12: Respondents response to approval/disapproval of children being on the social media

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	**129**	**41.6**
No	**152**	**48.6**
I don't know	**29**	**9.3**
Total	**313**	**100**

The above table shows that most of the respondents were not in support of their children's involvement on the social media.

TABLE 13: Respondents reasons for stopping their children

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Distract them from their study	**51**	**16.3**
It contains obscene materials	**18**	**5.8**
Because I cannot control it	**18**	**5.8**

It affects their moral upbringing	**21**	**6.7**
I don't know what they do there	**9**	**2.9**
Total	**117**	**100**

The table above shows different reasons by different respondents for stopping their children from joining the social media out of which distraction from their study has the highest percentage 16.3%.

TABLE 14: **Respondents reasons for not stopping their children**

Variables	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
It exposed the children globally	**27**	**8.6**
It is entertaining	**30**	**8.16**
Because I am equally registered	**19**	**6.1**
Helps the children to socialized with friends	**27**	**8.6**
It helps the children to gain more knowledge	**27**	**8.6**
I want them to be matured independent of me	**17**	**5.4**
It teaches and enlightens the children	**11**	**3.5**
It teaches them about the technology	**8**	**2.6**
I permit them to join	**15**	**4.8**

It is another means of communication	**12**	**3.8**
It is the in-thing	**3**	**1.0**
Total	**196**	**100**

The table above revealed that the respondents believed that the social media have positive effect on their children with most of them indicating that the medium can entertain and educate their children on how to socialize with friends which is represented by 8.16% and 8.6 respectively.

TABLE 15: Respondents most prefer online social media tools/measures

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Parental monitoring	**208**	**66.5**
Age verification	**60**	**19.2**
Biometrics	**45**	**14.4**
Text analysis	**0**	**0**
Paralert	**0**	**0**
Total	**313**	**100**

The table indicates that social media networking tools were not familiar to parents except for parental monitoring.

TABLE 16: Respondents who discussed social media topics with their children

Variables	Frequency	Percentage

Yes	**229**	**73.2**
No	**43**	**13.7**
I don't know	**41**	**13.1**
Total	**313**	**100**

The table above indicated that a significant number of the respondents do not discussed social media related issues with their children which is represented by 13.7%

TABLE: 117: Respondents choice of whose responsibility it was to protect children online.

Variables	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Parents	**86**	**27**
Teachers	**12**	**3.8**
Schools	**8**	**2.6**
The Internet Service Providers	**2**	**.6**
The Mass Media	**4**	**1.3**
All the above	**201**	**64.2**
Total	**313**	**100**

The above table shows that everyone is responsible for children online safety and that this collaboration entails the support of individuals, governmental and non-governmental organisations.

4.2 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

From the study conducted, findings revealed that most of the respondents fell between 40-49 years old making up about 52.1 % which is closely followed by those who fell within the range of 50-59 years old constituting about 19.2 %. In this study, age is a factor that affects the respondents' perception of the influence of the social media on their children. Study has shown that parents, because of their experience, tend to view phenomena differently from their children and also select their media diet different from their children (Boyd & Ellison, 2007).

This now brings us to the thrust of the researcher's theoretical framework that perception has everything to do with selectivity and that perception actually led to the discovery of the selectivity processes which hold that each of us as human beings tends to perceive and then decode communication messages in the light of our previous experiences and current dispositions – our needs, moods and memories. Scholars have categorized these processes into four areas. These are Selective Exposure, Selective Attention, Selective Perception, and Selective Retention, all of which, rather than in isolation, work together in complex ways (Anaeto, Onabajo, & Osifeso, 2008).

Most of the respondents were fathers of the children which constituted 61.7% as against 38.3% that made up the percentage of the mothers. This study mirrors previous research findings that that fathers spent more time on the Internet at home than mothers or have more experience with computer technology thereby, taking responsibility for checking children's online activities. Also, those fathers were generally thought of as computer savvy because, stereotypically, their jobs require it or because they were comfortable with complex electronic equipment within the home (Wang et al, 2005).

About 93.6% respondents were married with most of them (39.6%) having 4-6 children. This implies that the respondents' children would learn using the social media through their sibling. By extension, children can borrow phones from their older siblings to have access to the social media. Sobowale (1999) submits that, borrowing is usually a common practice among children.

The majority of parents in the study (80.5%) were civil servants holding higher degree (57.2%) and HND/Degree (23.3%) respectively. This finding supports Wang et al (2005) assertion that Parents with higher education levels felt more confident about monitoring their children's Internet use than parents with lesser education. This means that educational qualification is a factor that should determine parents' perception of the influence of social media networking on their children. Previous research has shown that children whose parents are in the urban area and are educated tends to have access to and learn newer technologies compared to those that are underprivileged (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). The demographic data also fingered the area of study as an academic environment. Most of the respondents are A.B.U staff.

On parents' views regarding social media networking, findings from this study revealed that parents had different views on the influence that the social media networking have on their children. The study further revealed that 41.6% of parents emphasized the positive aspects of the social media with the idea that it enabled the children to be exposed to what is happening globally, that the children acquired more knowledge, were entertained, socialized with friends, became more enlightened, learned the new technology, and served as a means of communication.

These findings mirrored similar study by Kabakci et al (2008) on 'Internet for Children" which revealed that parents viewed the internet as having positive influence on their children as it enabled them to access information, make friends, play games and got a virtual teacher, gained

education and facilitated easy communication. In the same vein, Boyd & Jenkins (2006) explained that social media networking enabled the children to form their circles of friends, independent of their parents' interference.

In contrast, the research indicated that 48.6% parents had negative view of the social media influence on their children which include fear that it distracts the children from their studies (16.3%). Others include the concepts of exposure to obscene materials, negative moral upbringing and above all, the children cannot be controlled. This findings support previous studies that social media exposed children to online threats and problematic contents such as sexual solicitors, murderers, paedophiles, bullies, and the host of others (Task Force, 2003). Parents' negative view of the social media came to the fore because the youth post information of all kinds (text, pictures, video, and images) which in most cases exposed them to online dangers. Research has indicated that some children post sensitive contact information such as phone numbers, name of school, hometown, first and last name that left them vulnerable to online predators (Lenhart & Madden, 2007, Centre for the Digital Future, 2008).

Within the context of those expressions, it can be deduced that parents worried about their children's use of the social media as well as appreciated it in terms of their children's personal development. As Cramer (2002) figured, today's adolescents have new media readily available at their fingertips and being fluent and comfortable with the use of those technologies is not a choice, but rather, a requirement to survive in the technologically advanced world.

The research findings showed that the majority of parents were computer literate (76.6%) and had access to the internet (84.0%). Wang et al (2005) said that parents who were familiar with the Internet would be more likely to set rules regarding Internet use than parents with limited skills.

However, the study has shown that most of them were not registered on the social media networks (51.8%). This result supports the submission that parents were two steps behind and did not know what their children were doing on the social media networks (Boyd & Jenkins, 2010). For this reason, adolescents may find their parents not as adept at computer skills as their siblings or peers. And they might be less likely to ask parents for help with social media networking-related questions. In contrast, Subrahmanyam et al. (2000) found that, because parents were often less skilled with the latest computer and Internet tools; children become technology teachers to parents in a complete role reversal.

To this, Furrier (2010 advised that, parents should learn to be abreast with the newer technologies so as to know how to advise their children on social media issues. It is interesting to know that being computer literate is one thing and being on the social media is another thing entirely. Therefore, knowing what is going on the social media and the different forms in which social media predators present themselves can help parents with a clue on how to teach the children on how to present themselves on the social media networks and at the same time handle online issues with minimal risk.

The study revealed that 55.9% of parents confirmed that their children were registered on one social media networks or the other. Even though majority of parents (48.6%) were not in support of their children being on those social media sites, the children have their way. Parents who claimed that their children were not registered were those whose children went underground and registered on the social media without their knowledge. To further buttress parents' point of view, 60.4% of parents indicated that if they had their way they would stop their children from joining any of the social media. The above findings confirmed the study that children could

neither be denied access nor stopped from joining the social media because newer forms of technology enabled them to join without their parents' knowledge.

Furthermore, the study fingered Facebook and Twitter as the most dangerous social media networks which parents would not want their children to join. This finding agreed with the previous research finding that Facebook, Twitter and 2go were some of the most controversial sites and those who were murdered, bullied, or received sexual solicitations were lined to those sites. (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Rohrer, 2010; CCN, 2011; Kwek, 2010).

The best idea is therefore, to support any effort towards monitoring and enlightening the young ones on how to present themselves online because a lot of people are not who they present themselves to be.

Result from the findings revealed that 73.2% of parents do not discuss issues concerning online safety with their children. These respondents might be those who had negative view of the social media and feel that discussing such issues is a waste of time and the best solution is to have their children's files secluded. Studies have shown that a poor home environment with poor emotional bond, infrequent discipline and poor monitoring and a home full of conflict and poor parent–child relationships is correlated with a host of online risks (Wolak, Mitchell & Finkelhor, 2003).

Only about 13.7% discussed social media online safety with their children. These could be those who were registered on the social media and were aware of online threats and those who have a warm and communicative home environment. Greenfield (2004) submits that, a warm and communicative parent-child relationship is the most important non-technical means that can be used to deal with the challenges of media environment.

The study revealed that it was the responsibility of all in the society to safeguard children online which is represented by 64.2% of the total respondents in the distribution, closely followed by parents (27%) who are the major key players when it comes to safe guarding the children online. This can only be achieved if the children feel at home to discuss virtually all the issues bothering them. In view of this friendly home environment, where children are free to relate with their care–givers, is an avenue to fast track and showcase the ills of online predators.

On the effectiveness of online safety tools or measures in protecting children online, findings have shown that the respondents were not familiar with those social media online safety tools/measures and how they were operated. These findings followed what Task Force (2003) observed that parents were not familiar with most of the online safety tools and at the same time, those tools do not address or provide the need of children in the developing countries, where they do not have well documented system of children birth registration that can be used online to know and track children who posed as adults but rather, focused only on what was obtainable in the western world.

Studies have shown that to effectively use safety tools like Paralert, Biometrics, and text analysis, one need to install the software on a computer. In contrast, most of the parents were not aware and lack basic knowledge on how these operate. From the researcher's point of view, the software would achieve little or nothing in the long run because technology has made it possible to set social media account via mobile phones of which monitoring and control becomes practically impossible.

On the other hand the research work revealed that 66.5% of respondents preferred and were familiar with the concept of parental monitoring as the best online safety measures as against

other items listed in the table. Previous study indicated that the culture of parental monitoring or supervision was quite effective in protecting children against the negative effect of the media. There is no way in which parents can evade having a determining effect upon their children's personality, character, and competence. The functions of parenting greatly influence how children develop. One important task of parenting is the socialization of children. This task requires parental expectations and guidance that change with the development of the child to encourage positive child outcomes ((Baumrind, 1978 cited in Cramer, 2002).

Therefore, a combination of education, parental involvement, and sound policies by service providers, may help to reduce some online risks. Online safety measures/tools can therefore, only protect the children to a lesser extent.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 SUMMARY

From the study conducted, it can be deduced that parents had divergent views concerning their children's use of the social media networking. These views vary along the line of social media usage and exposure to some mass media messages that reports social media issues based on currents happenings around the globe, some medium of mass communication like the CNN, BBC and the Daily Trust and also sometimes, on what parents hear other people say or report about some of the threats or ills associated with some social media networking sites which made a lot of parents uncomfortable with their children being there.

The Study associated the negative view of the social media networking with the concepts of distracting children's attention from their study, exposure to illicit contents, encouraging laziness among others. The researcher's choice of the theoretical frame work further explained this standpoint that parents' perception about the influence that social media pose for their children are likely to be influenced by their relationships with friends, peer groups, family members, and other agents of socialization otherwise known as 'significant others'

However, a sizeable number of parents held a positive view of the influence that the social media has on their children. The respondents indicated that, via the social media, children can be abreast with the new technology thereby helping them to know what is happening around the globe and acquired more knowledge. Also, through these media, children can be entertained and form new association with the significant other, which further explained the theoretical framework that people make use of a particular media to satisfy their needs.

The study also revealed that it is important for parents to learn and be abreast with the new technologies because that is how they could be able to mediate the negative effect that the social media networking predators have on their children. Moreover, study has shown that those who discussed internet related issues with their parents are less likely to be victims of online predators because they are there to guide them.

Part of the findings also indicated that instead of denying access to social media networks, effort should be made towards enlightening the children on the dangers they may likely encounter each time they visit their social media accounts. It was also revealed that parents-child relationship and a communicative home environment is a panacea to monitoring children's social media activities.

The study revealed that online safety tools /measures alone were not adequate in protecting children online. But a combination of parental monitoring, education and enlightenment can go a long way in helping children in this digital age. Therefore, parents, rather than stop their children from joining these networks, should become collaborative in any effort towards educating the children on how to present themselves each time they visit their accounts.

5.2 CONCLUSION

In the age of the Internet and social media networking, change has occurred not only in the technology itself, but also in how individuals interact, define, and organize their world. People of all ages are in various stages of transition with regard to the use of social media. Kabakci *et al* (2008) wrote that, young adults may feel more comfortable communicating and building relationships online than middle and late adults because they are growing up in a technological era.

Children may not recall how or when they learned to use the social media, a computer or access the Internet; for as long as they can remember, those tools were always there. Growing up in a world of constantly evolving technology is unique to children as a whole because they have known nothing else. Therefore, using the social media is not a consciously learned experience for children. It is an acquired skill, similar to that of a child learning to speak his native tongue (Kabakci et *al*, 2008). The prevalence of new media within the home and school affects the way children learn and interact with teachers, parents, and peers. In this technological age, they rely on the social media for entertainment and educational resources. But, despite their prowess in using the new media technologies, they may lack imagination and basic skills on how to present themselves on the social media networks.

Cramer (2002) submits that, children use cell phones primarily for text messaging and accessing the social media. Picking up the phone to convey information verbally is not as common as it once was, just five years ago. Children may not connect, as often, to one another or their family on traditional interpersonal levels because of numerous communication options such as text messaging, social media networking or the Internet. Because of the new technologies, children have many options that allow them more contact than ever with their parents and peers. How the children handle all this new media knowledge and how it influences their relationships and connectedness to the real and offline worlds are what parents are mostly worried about. What makes this age group worthy of study is the fact that today‘s children were born into and have grown up in the age of the Internet and are surrounded by the latest technologies.

In the past, physical geography determined our range of friends. Today virtual communities are possible. Global neighbourhoods have become as familiar as physical neighbourhoods. It is now

possible to get connected to millions of other people. The down side however, is that the social network linkage can be used for evil purposes. With proper guidance, children can use the technology properly.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

- Parents should learn to be abreast with new technologies like social media tools so as to enable them educate their children on how to present themselves each time they are on the social media.
- Parents should endeavour to create a friendly atmosphere in their homes such that it can enable their children to open up and freely discuss issues bothering them particularly issues on social media networking.
- To safeguard children from online predators, parents and caregiver should learn to be abreast with online social media tools or measures so as to know how to use them to monitor their children's activities online.
- Rather than stop children access to social media, parents should allow their wards to participate on the social media so that they will not be left behind among their contemporaries.

5.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Some areas of youth online safety are under-researched, particularly minor to minor sexual solicitation. Further research should also look at the interplay between socio-economic class and risk factors. Researchers should also look at the role pervasive digital image and video capture devices play in minor to minor harassment and youth production of problematic content. Finally, because new environments present new risks, there is the need for on-going large-scale national surveys to track these complex dynamics as they unfold.

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Appendix A

DEPARTMENT OF MASS COMMUNICATION,
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES,
AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY, ZARIA

Dear respondent,

I am a post-graduate student of Mass Communication Department, Faculty of Social Sciences, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, conducting a study on the topic "Parents' Perceptions of the Influence of Social Media Networking on their Children: A Study of Samaru and Kongo Demonstration Secondary Schools, A.B.U Zaria, Parents."

Kingly tick as it applies to you. All information shall be treated confidentially and purely for academic purpose.

Thank you.

Martha Stephen

Appendix B

QUESTIONNAIRE

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Age:

(a) 25-29 ( )

(b) 30-40yrs ( )

(c) 41-50yrs ( )

(d) 51-60yrs ( )

(e)Above 60yrs ( )

Sex:

(a) Male ( )

(b) Female ( )

Marital Status:

(a) Married ( )

(b) Single ( )

(c)Widow ( )

(d) Widower ( )

(e)Divorce ( )

Occupation:

(a)Private Employee ( )

(b) Civil Servant ( )

(c) Unemployed ( )

(d) House wife ( )

(f) Self-Employed ( )

Number of children

(a) None ( )

(b) One ( )

(c) Two ( )

(d) More than two ( )

Educational Background:

(a)First School Leaving certificate ( )

(b)JSS/SSCE ( )

(c) OND/Equivalent ( )

(d) HND/Degree ( )

(e)Higher Degree ( )

(f) No formal Education ( )

SECTION B

Are you computer literate?

(a) Yes

(b) No

Do you have any access to the internet either at work/home or in a cyber café or on your phone?

(a) Yes

(b) No

Are you registered on any social media networks like Facebook, Twitter, 2go, or MySpace?

(a) Yes

(b) No

If no why? _____

Is your child registered on any of the social media networks?

(a) Yes

(b) No

(c) I don't know

Are you in support of that?

(a) Yes

(b) No

(c) I don't know

If you have your way, can you stop your child from joining any of the social media networks?

(a) Yes

(b) No

(c) I don't know

If yes why? _____

If no why? _____

Which of the social media networks do you considered dangerous and would not let your child to join?

(a) Facebook

(b) 2go

(c) Twitter

(d) Badoo

(e) MySpace

(f) Others. Please specify _____

Are you aware that there are threats on the social media networks?

(a) Yes

(b) No

(c) I don't know

Do you discuss social media networking threats with your Children?

(a) Yes

(b) No

(c) I don't know

Which online social media safety tools/measures are you familiar with?

(a) Paralert

(b) Biometric

(c) Text analysis

(d) Parental monitoring

(e) Others Please specify……

In your opinion, can parental involvement/monitoring/and or supervision of their children's activities on the social media network reduced the risk children face on line?

(a) Yes

(b) No

(c) I don't know.

Whose responsibility is it, on the whole, to teach, monitor, educate and protect the children on social media issues?

(a) Parents

(b) Teachers

(c) Schools

(c) Internet Service Providers

(d) The Mass Media

(e) All of the above