

A Focus Group Investigation of Internet Usage Perception and Correlation Between Internet Pornography and the Incidence of HIV/AIDS in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The upsurge in the use of the information and communication technology (ICT) facilities such the Global System for Mobile Communication (GSM) and the Internet for criminal activities like spamming, credit card frauds, sex crimes, phishing and a host of others lends credence to the view that ICT is contributing to moral and social decadence. Concern is reinforced by the increase in the level of ICT penetration in the Nigerian society and Africa at large. ICT products continue to allow increasing access to spurious web contents such as pornography and violence. Some schools of thoughts already posited that exposure of internet users to web pornography might contribute to the increase in the incidence of HIV/AIDS (Emeozor 2005, Katherine, 2006, Adebayo et al, 2006). Using a self-constructed questionnaire titled: Focus Groups perception of Internet-Induced HIV/AIDS Incidences in Nigeria we solicited responses on the perceived relationship between internet pornography and the possible increase in the incidence of HIV/AIDS as well as the effectiveness of current deterrents adopted against web pornography in Southwestern Nigeria. Findings from the analysis of collected data using chi square-analysis, regression and other descriptive measures showed that internet pornography will likely lead to possible increase in the incidence of HIV/AIDS in Nigeria. Content channeling technology is also adjudged to be a better predictor for reduction in web-pornography induced incidences of HIV/AIDS in Nigeria than Public enlightenment on sex education, parental guidance and web content filters. Recommendations were made based on our findings.

Keywords: Pornography, Sexualities, Children, HIV/AIDS, Adolescents, Nigeria, Internet, Youths, CP80, Education

1. INTRODUCTION

Despite the fact that empirical data about internet pornography and its impact on the life of internet users are not readily available, fears are already very rife in some quarters about the possible negative consequences obnoxious and uncensored internet contents will have on the psychosocial well being of varying categories of web users in Nigeria. This is not unconnected with the increase in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) penetration in Nigeria (Chiemeke & Longe, 2007). The Internet, aided by technology-induced anonymity has popularized the sex business more than any other means of advertisement. With unlimited access to a variety of websites, and the impediment of needing to enter a brothel physically removed, immoral gratification is just the click of a mouse away from any intending customer (Sackson, 1996).

Anonymity has been an aid to most crimes perpetrated on the Internet and other IT applications. Progress in the fight against Internet pornography has been moving at a very slow pace in Nigeria. The story is not any different across Africa. Majority of Cybercafés are combating the menace in unorthodox manners such placing notices on cybercafe walls warning against browsing pornographic sites and other spamming activities. (Longe & Longe, 2005).

1.1 Preserving Moral Values on The Internet

The disorganization of primary societies, and resort to urban life, with its attendant loss of rich cultural values has encroached on the adolescents ability to handle their newly awakened sexual impulses. Across all the tribes represented in Nigeria and Africa in general, we had forefathers who gave young ones informal/traditional education to prepare them for life (Fafunwa, 1974; Baker and Rich, 1992; Bledsoe and Cohen 1993; Barbara et al., 1999; Grindal, 1982). Today, we notice gross sexual misconducts among different age groups in our nation fuelled by the claim of urbanization, modernization, spurious sexual expressions in junk magazines and of course pornography and internet dating. The consequences are not far fetched. They include child-pregnancy, abortion, sexually transmitted diseases and of course possible increase in the incidence of HIV/AIDS due to unguided sexual escapades (Ojo and Fasuba, 2005; Nwanko, 1983; Fasuba 1995; Verkiyl, 1995; Briggs, 1995).

1.2 Current Efforts at Combating Internet Pornography

A couple of non-governmental organizations across the country in conjunction with other bodies within and outside Africa have taken it upon themselves to address the problem of the spread of HIV/AIDS among Nigerian youths and children. Notable among these organizations are the HIV/AIDS Prevention for Secondary Schools, the Youthcare 2000 and Beyond, the Save Our Future Foundation, the AIDS Prevention Foundation, the AIDSCare Group, Planned Parenthood Foundations,

the CP80 Foundation (CP80, 2007) etc.

The focus of most of the enlightenment programmes organized by these bodies in workshops and seminars on the prevention of HIV/AIDS emphasize the use of condom, sticking to one single sexual partner, saying No to sex before marriage (popularly referred to as “ZIP UP”) and abstinence of sex outrightly among non-married youths and teenagers. To the best of our knowledge, none of these organizations championing the prevention of HIV/AIDS in Nigeria nor sexuality education curriculum in schools have addressed the prevalence of internet pornography as a possible factor for the increase in the incidence of HIV/AIDS in Nigeria..

2. RELATED RESEARCH

Existing literature opined that harm could come after repeated exposures to Internet pornography when users may be drawn to seek it out, and can quickly become addicted (Cheryl, 2007). Ojo and Fasubaa (2005) studied sexuality behaviour among youths and young adults in Nigeria and concluded that adolescents’ sexuality behaviour in Nigeria and sub-Saharan Africa is seriously going through transformation from what it used to be in the past. They attributed this to the effect of modernization caused by industrialization, education, exposure and enculturation through importation of various foreign cultures, which were alien to the Nigerian culture in particular and African as a whole. Unfortunately, the Internet, more than any other agent of social change has contributed in no small measure to the removal of guilt, fear and shame associated with unconventional sexual activities. An interaction effect was also established between the use of the Internet by males and risky sexual behavior orientation (Adebayo et al, 2006) Emeozor (2005) raised an alarm on the possible relationship between access to pornographic contents on the Internet and risky sexual tendencies that can lead to the spread of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

Brown and Eisenberg (1995) investigated the relationship between young adults’ involvement with online sexual activities such as chats, quest for romantic and sexual relationships and the development of their sexuality and found a positive correlation between online sexual activities and negative sexual compulsion. Using time spent in viewing sexually related activities online as a yardstick. Cooper et al (2000) found that excessive usage is positively related to stress and sexual sensation seeking among youths. Some studies replicated the same phenomenon in which participants’ attitude towards seeking sex information and sexual entertainment varied based on the frequency of their Internet usage (Young, and Rogers, 1998).

A positive correlations between exposure to spurious web content and sexual beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors was also established by Kraut, Patterson and Lundmark, (1998). Other researchers also correlated early initiation of sexual intercourse with cybersex exposures (Brown & Newcomer, 1991). Longe & Longe (2005) x-rayed Internet pornography in Nigeria and advocates the use of web filtering programs as a robust measure against unwanted Internet content.

3 METHODOLOGY

Research Questions

Based on the foregoing, this paper wishes to provide answers to the following questions that have emanated from our discussions.

What is the perception of the selected focus groups on the possible connections between internet pornography and the possible increases in the incidence HIV/AIDS in Nigeria ?

Our focus population consist of active Internet users such as undergraduates, health professionals, parents/guardians, cybercafe Operators, social workers and Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) working on AIDS/HIV prevention. The questionnaires titled Focus Groups perception of Internet-Induced HIV/AIDS Incidences in Nigeria was carefully designed and administered to the respondents.

A total of 270 questionnaire were administered over a 3 months period cutting across four locations in Southwestern Nigeria. 241 questionnaires were returned out of which 232 satisfied the statistical stratification for our research purposes. The questionnaire solicits information about the relationship between internet pornography and possible increase in the incidence of HIV/AIDS. The Alpha reliability measures for the experiments were 0.821.

4. RESEARCH DESIGN

Research Hypotheses

To address our research questions, we formulated the following null hypotheses:

H_0 : *Internet pornography will not lead to possible increase in the incidence of HIV/AIDS in Nigeria*

Table 1: Data Presentation for Section A of Questionnaire

OBSERVED				THEORETICAL			
Focus Group	No. in Groups Answering Yes	No. in Groups Answering No	Totals	Proportion Of Totals	No. in Groups Answering Yes	No. Groups Answering No	Totals
Health Workers	250	150	40	0.159	29.256	12.402	41.658
Undergraduates	330	170	50	0.198	36.432	15.444	51.876
Parents/Guardians	350	60	41	0.163	29.992	12.714	42.706
Café Operators	170	90	26	0.103	18.952	8.034	26.986
Social Workers	370	180	55	0.218	40.112	17.004	57.116
NGOs	370	130	40	0.159	29.256	12.402	41.658
1) TOTAL	184	78	252	1.000	184	78	262

Since there is a difference between the totals of the observed and the computed values, the chi-square test is applied.

Degree of freedom $df = (c-1)(r-1) = (2-1)(6-1) = 5$.

χ^2 calculated is 8.716 is less than χ^2 tabulated at 0.01 and 0.05 level of significance which are 15.086 and 11.071 respectively. We therefore reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative that *Internet pornography will lead to possible increase in the incidence of HIV/AIDS in Nigeria*.

5. DISCUSSIONS OF RESULTS

In Table 1, the computed chi-square value f is less than that of the table values. We therefore reject the formulated hypothesis. The alternate holds, that is Internet pornography will lead to possible increase in the incidence of HIV/AIDS in Nigeria. The results from our research show that most commercial public internet access points such as Cybercafés are reluctant to filter because currently available filters prevent users from accessing other web documents that share similar content characteristics with pornography.

Where filtering is in place, some of the filters currently being used are inefficient against pornographic contents as users are still observed browsing sex sites. On a general note parents and guardians are either unconscious of the consequences of web pornography or are outrightly non-challant about the content their children consume in schools and at home. Those conscious are handicapped because they are not aware of any measures for combating internet pornography. Some parents perceived and correlate defiant behaviours in their children to exposure to the internet

6. CONCLUSION

Effective and vigorous law enforcement can help deter Internet pornography and diminish the supply of inappropriate sexually explicit material available to users. Across Africa, collaborative approaches must be adopted in terms of technology and education to wade off these evil incursions from ICT usage. For practical and technical reasons, it is most feasible to seek regulation of commercial sources of such material. The pornography industry seeks to draw attention to its products, whereas noncommercial sources of sexually explicit materials generally operate through private channels. Vigorous efforts against operators of commercial Web sites that carry sexually explicit material that is clearly obscene under any definition would help to clarify existing law so as to make it a useful tool in reducing the supply of such material.

Acceptable-use policies in families, schools, libraries, and other organizations provide guidelines and expectations about how people will conduct themselves online, thus providing a framework in which users can become more responsible for making good choices about the paths they choose in cyberspace, a skill helpful for any use of the Internet.

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