

# Impact of Social Network on Society: A Case Study of Abuja

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## Abstract

Social networking sites such as Facebook, Whatsapp, Youtube and Twitter are amongst the most popular destinations on the web. No doubt in some cases this has contributed to Internet Addiction Disorder and fraudulent activities on the internet, but have they on the whole had a positive effect in our lives? Some believe that the benefits provided by social network sites such as Facebook and whatsapp have made us better off as a society and as individuals, and that, as they continue to be adopted by more diverse populations, we will see an increase in their utility. Anecdotal evidence of positive outcomes from these technologies — such as educational and business activities organized via Facebook or jobs found through LinkedIn — is well-known, but now a growing corpus of research on social networks sites supports this view too. Social networking sites, such as Facebook, Twitter and Whatsapp are examples of communication tools available online. With proliferation of social networking online comes impact on society; a difference in what people do and how they do it. Changes in society are simultaneously useful and negative and this is the case with the impact of online social networking. This paper aims to look at the positive effect that interaction through social networking sites has on today's society in relation to the modern media concept of greater interaction.

**Key words:** Social network and Society.

## 1. Background of the Study

Social networking has become an everyday part of many peoples' lives as evidenced by the huge user communities. Some communities even exceed the population of large countries, for example Facebook has over 400 million active users in countries like Nigeria, Ghana, Togo, Liberia etc.

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Social networks provide a platform to facilitate communication and sharing between users, therefore modelling real world relationships. Social networking has also extended beyond communication between friends, for instance, there are a multitude of integrated applications and some organisations even utilize a user's Facebook credentials for authentication rather than requiring their own credentials (for example the Calgary Airport authority in Canada uses Facebook Connect2 to grant access to their Wi-Fi network). The structure of a Social Network is essentially a dynamic virtual organization with inherent trust relationships between friends.

Social computing begins with the observation that humans and human behaviour are profoundly social. From birth, humans orient to one another, and as they grow, they develop abilities for interacting with each other. This ranges from expression and gesture to spoken and written language. As a consequence, people are remarkably sensitive to the behavior of those around them and make countless decisions that are shaped by their social context. Whether it's wrapping up a talk when the audience starts fidgeting, choosing the crowded restaurant over the nearly deserted one, or crossing the street against the light because everyone else is doing so, social information provides a basis for inferences, planning, and coordinating activity. The premise of social computing is that it is possible to design digital systems that support useful functionality by making socially produced information available to their users. This information may be provided directly, as when systems show the number of users who have rated a review as helpful or not. Or the information may be provided after being filtered and aggregated, as is done when systems recommend a product based on what else people with similar purchase history have purchased. Alternatively, the information may be provided indirectly, as is the case with Google's page rank algorithms which orders search results based on the number of pages that (recursively) point to them. In all of these cases, information that is produced by a group of people is used to provide or enhance the functioning of a system. Social computing is concerned with systems of this sort and the mechanisms and principles that underlie them [1].

Social networking is a phenomenon which has existed since society began. Two Human beings have always sought to live in social environments. The proliferation of social networking sites (SNS) and their pervasion in everyday practices is affecting how Western societies manage their social networks. To a significant extent, SNS have shifted social networking to the Internet. In less than five years, these sites have grown from a niche online activity into a phenomenon through which tens of millions of internet users are connected, both in their leisure time, and at work [2].

There are various factors which have prompted us to consider the implications of these technologies for policy-making. One of these is the willingness of users to embrace SNS as a means of communication and social networking in everyday life. The increasing dependence on technology for basic communication also highlights the importance of analysing how SNS are affecting daily processes. Sites like Facebook, Friendster and LinkedIn are influencing the way users establish, maintain and cultivate a range of social relationships, from close friendships to casual acquaintances.

Finally, there has been very little research on the socio-economic impact of these sites. Recent advancements in mobile device technologies are revolutionizing how we socialize, interact, and connect by connecting the virtual community with the local environment mobile social networks (MSNs) create the opportunity for a multitude of

new personalized services for mobile users. Along with that comes the need for new paradigms, mechanisms, and techniques with the capacity to autonomously manage their functioning and evolution. Currently, most books about mobile networks focus mainly on the technical point of view [3].

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

Since the advent of social networking sites in the 1990s, it is assumed in some quarters that the academic performance of students is facing a lot of neglect and challenges, job at work place has suffered a lot of neglects, relationships has been ruined, it has opened up opportunities for hackers. There is a deviation, distraction and divided attention between social networking activities and education, businesses and job at workplace. It is observed that students and workers devote more attention to social networking sites than they do to their studies and job respectively.

Therefore, the question this study is out to answer is: how do social network affect education, businesses and other jobs of the Abuja populace?

## **3. Objectives of the Study**

The study has the following objective. They are:

- 1) To find out the various social networking sites mostly used in our society;
- 2) To find out reasons why people join social networks;
- 3) To determine how social networks impact on young people in the society; and
- 4) To ascertain how the use of social media has affected the people negatively and positively;

## **4. Scope of the Study**

The essence of this research work is to primarily study the impact of social network on the society. The research intends to focus on Abuja metropolis for easy analysis of data. This will reduce cost and avoid complexity that may arise as are a result of having a very large population.

## **5. Conceptual clarification and literature review**

We shall clarify some concepts and review some literature with regards to developing the subject in Africa:

### **Computer**

According to Wikipedia; the free encyclopedia defines: A computer is a machine that manipulates data according to a set of instructions called a computer program. The program has an executable form that the computer can use directly to execute the instructions.

### **Computer user**

A user is an agent, either a human agent (end-user) or software agent, who uses a computer or network service. A user often has a user account and is identified by a username (also user name), screen name (also screen name), nickname (also nick), or handle, which derives from the identical Citizens Band radio terms [4].

### **Computer programming**

Computer programming in general is the process of writing, testing, debugging, and maintaining the source code and documentation of computer programs. This source code is written in a programming language which is an artificial language often more restrictive or demanding than natural languages, but easily translated by the computer. The purpose of programming is to invoke the desired behavior (customization) from the machine [5].

### **Computer software and hardware**

Computer software or just "software" is a collection of computer programs and related data that provides the instructions for telling a computer what to do and how to do it (wordreference.com). Software refers to one or more computer programs and data held in the storage of the computer for some purposes. In other words, software is a set of programs, procedures, algorithms and its documentation concerned with the operation of a data processing system. Computer hardware is the physical devices [6].

### **Application software**

Application software, also known as an "application" or an "app", is computer software designed to help the user to perform specific tasks. Examples include enterprise software, accounting software, office suites, graphics software and media players [6].

### **System software**

System software or systems software is computer software designed to operate and control the computer hardware and to provide a platform for running application software. System software includes operating systems, utility software, device drivers, window systems, and firmware. Frequently development tools such as compilers, linkers, and debuggers are classified as system software [7].

### **Internet**

The Internet is a global system of interconnected computer networks that use the standard Internet protocol suite (TCP/IP) to serve billions of users that consists of millions of private, public, academic, business, and government networks, of local to global scope, that are linked by a broad array of electronic, wireless and optical networking technologies (Wikipedia; the free encyclopedia). The Internet carries an extensive range of information resources and services, such as the inter-linked hypertext documents of the World Wide Web (WWW) and the infrastructure to support email. While the popularity of social networking consistently rises,

new uses for the technology are frequently being observed. At the forefront of emerging trends in social networking sites is the concept of "real-time web" and "location-based." Real-time allows users to contribute contents, which is then broadcast as it is being uploaded - the concept is analogous to live radio and television broadcasts.

For corporate communications, internet technologies offer many possibilities, from text-based e-mail to transmission of images and sound, even via own web sites [8] .

Organizational websites provide challenges and opportunities for public relations (PR) practitioners by building dialogue with its different publics [9]. The web also has the ability to express the position of different stakeholders in the communication process more equitably <sup>10</sup> Before the advent of the World Wide Web (www), advertising was the only means to send a controlled mass medium. Www can be considered the "first controlled mass medium" (white and Raman, 2000) for organizations as it allows messages to flow directly to targeted publics without the storekeeping function of the journalists and editors.

### **Internet in Africa**

The Internet is regarded as one of the most useful inventions in mass communication, as an agent of human and social development or as an important transmitter of globalization <sup>12</sup> However, the Internet Usage and Population Statistics show that by the end of 2010, Africa still shared only five percent of Internet traffic. But there is constant growth in accessibility and application of Internet knowledge to many aspects of social life in Africa [8].

The same Internet report of 2011 indicated an increase in the number of Africans using the Internet from 2000 to 2010 to about a 1000 percent, while globally it was pegged at 260 percent. However, Internet use in Africa is not much different from other parts of the world such as Europe, the Middle East, and the Americas. For instance, there are businesses that depend on Internet use to reach both old and new clients who have developed a sophisticated test for technology and new media in general. The youths in Ghana, South Africa, Nigeria and other parts of Africa increasingly use the Internet as a way of crafting and testing out lifestyles, such as making new friends and online dating across the globe [9].

It is common now to hear African teenagers talk about *Facebook* and their goal of befriending people around the world to build social capital. The major challenge with the Internet in Africa, however, is the slow speed due to bandwidth and overcapacity. Audio-visuals also contribute to the limitations of Internet usage in most parts of Africa. In the early 2000s, [10] drew attention to how the Internet was used by individuals, institutions, and nations alike to represent their culture and to promote national identity. He claimed that at that time, the scramble to produce online content to promote national identities sometimes led to cyber warfare, which he conceptualized as the use of the Internet to attack the views and opinions of opposing groups and ethnicities. Later in the decade, reference [15] opined that some governments were uneasy about the potential of new media and its effectiveness in shaping the mindsets and attitudes of citizens concerning dictatorial regimes in Africa. They feared the dawn of a new socialized media environment where citizens mobilized themselves to overthrow

governments. Reference [15] argued that the attempt by these dictatorial regimes to control the media space with legal and extralegal measures was successful at that time because they controlled the traditional media such as radio, television and newspaper. However, citizens reinvented and developed the social media phenomena, first by employing their mobile phones to call in to live radio talk shows and other current affairs on television to discuss and engage in political discourse. They accessed and began to use the Internet as a force for political mobilization, social and political advocacy, and citizen participation. According to international press reports on the BBC and Reuters, new media gadgets such as mobile phones and pagers were used to record secret plots to rig election results in Ivory Coast in 2010 and in Zimbabwe in 2008. Lately, however, the social media outlets such as *Facebook*, *Twitter*, and *Myspace* as well as mobile phones were used to mobilize citizens to engage in the political discourse on behalf of various opposition political parties in countries like Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Tunisia, Zambia, Kenya, and lately in Egypt.

**Social computing:** is an area of computer science that is concerned with the intersection of social behaviour and computational systems. It is based on creating or recreating social conventions and social contexts through the use of software and technology. Thus, blogs, email, instant messaging, social network services, wikis, social bookmarking and other instances of what is often called social software illustrate ideas from social computing, but also other kinds of software applications where people interact socially [16].

"Social Computing" refers to systems that support the gathering, representation, processing, use, and dissemination of information that is distributed across social collectivities such as teams, communities, organizations, and markets. Moreover, the information is not "anonymous" but is significant precisely because it is linked to people, who are in turn linked to other people [17].

**Social networking:** is the practice of expanding the number of one's business and/or social contacts by making connections through individuals. While social networking has gone on almost as long as societies themselves have existed, the unparalleled potential of the Internet to promote such connections is only now being fully recognized and exploited, through Web-based groups established for that purpose [18].

A social structure made of nodes that are generally individuals or organizations. A social network represents relationships and flows between people, groups, organizations, animals, computers or other information/knowledge processing entities [19].

**Social network:** Alternatively referred to as a virtual community or profile site, a social network is a website on the Internet that brings people together in a central location to talk, share ideas and interests, or make new friends.

### **Social Network in Nigeria**

The use of the internet and subsequently social media has become widely recognized by people of all ages and geographical dispensations [11]. People rely on the internet as a source of information, and as a way of getting fast information. The traditional media have been acknowledged for years as reliable sources of getting news [20], but the same cannot be said of the social media.

Recently, some rumours spread like wild fire among Nigerian undergraduates. These rumours later turned out to be untrue. E.g. that the longest bridge in Nigeria, Third Mainland Bridge, was also going to be blown up by the terrorist group. Social network users also circulated the rumour that certain food items from northern Nigeria have been poisoned, causing panic among people. Since social networks involve users' generated content, the sources and truthfulness of these contents are hardly ascertained.

**social media:** Unlike traditional media that is often created by no more than 10 people, social media sites contain content that has been created by hundreds or even millions of different people. Social media has become an outlet that is one of the most widely used ways of interacting through computers. Though there are many different platforms that can be used for social media, they all serve the same primary purpose of creating a social interaction through computers, mobile devices, etc. Social media has evolved into not just an interaction through text, but through pictures, videos, and many other forms of multimedia. This has provided users an enhanced way to interact with other users while being able to more widely express and share during computational interaction. Within the last couple decades, social media has blown up and created many famous applications within the social computing arena [21].

**List of some of the biggest social networks used today :**

**Friendster:** (<http://www.friendster.com/>) - A popular social network that brings together friends, family, and allows you to meet new people who share similar interests to you from all over the world.

**Google+:** (<http://plus.google.com/>) - The latest social networking service from Google.

**LinkedIn:** (<http://www.linkedin.com/>) - One of the best if not the best locations to connect with current and past co-workers and potentially future employers.

**MySpace:** (<http://www.myspace.com/>) - One of the most popular social networks and one of the most viewed website on the Internet.

**Orkut:** (<http://www.orkut.com/>) - A popular service from Google that provides you a location to socialize with your friends and family, and meet new acquaintances from all around the world.

**Path:** (<http://path.com/>) - A mobile only social network that allows you to keep in contact with your closest friends and family.

**Pinterest:** (<http://www.pinterest.com/>) - An upcoming and popular picture and sharing service that allows anyone to easily share pictures, create collections, and more.

**TagWorld:** (<http://www.tagworld.com/>) - Great clean social networking site that brings users together who enjoy similar music tastes or other similar interests. In addition to allowing users to create their own blog users can post videos, music, etc or browse other users videos and music.

**Twitter:** (<http://www.twitter.com/>) - Another good service that allows users to post 140 character long posts from their phones and on the Internet. A better way to get the pulse of what's going on around the world.

**Windows Live Spaces:** (<http://spaces.live.com/>) - A service by Microsoft that allows any user to create their own personal blog and social networking site.

**YouTube:** (<http://www.youtube.com/>) - A great network of users posting video blogs or Vlog's and other fun and interesting videos.

**Facebook:** (<http://www.facebook.com/>) - One of the most popular social networking websites on the Internet. Facebook is a popular destination for users to setup their own personal web pages, connect with friends, share pictures, share movies, talk about what you're doing, etc.

### **Mobile social networking and computing**

The internet has long been used for social interaction, with some of the more popular examples being social networking applications such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram. These types of applications help users share digital media and have proven to be successful tools for expanding the social network. There is also a trend toward extensive use of social networking application from mobile devices. The landscape of mobile platforms has seen a major evolution in the recent past. In the era of smart phones and tablets, mobile applications are providing added value to several industries including transportation, ecommerce, net banking, and travel, retail, and enterprise services. Developers are exploiting the state-of-the-art functionalities of the smart devices to offer a revolutionising user experience. In turn, they are becoming the engine for innovation. Thus, it is of prime importance for a mobile platform provider to attract more and more developers in order to boast external investment and revenue. Not only the mobile platform owners and handset manufacturers but also network service providers and chipset makers are investing heavily to develop and release software kits to reach out to the developers [22].

### **Characteristics of SNS**

1. Presentation of oneself: The basic level of entry in most SNS is the setting up of a 'profile' personalised page developed by the user in which he/she presents him/herself to peers, through text, photos, music and videos amongst others functionalities. SNS allow users to mobilise and organise their social contacts and profiles in the way they want other members to *see* them [21].
2. Externalisation of data: Most SNS allow their members to view the networks of their contacts and also in many cases, to traverse them.
3. Bottom-up activities: SNS provide the ideal platforms through which users with similar values and interests can come together to collaborate effectively and cheaply. For instance, doctors can share and double check rare medical cases on health, or activists can organise a protest through sites.
4. Reorganisation of Internet geography: SNS support new points of entry to the internet: people's personal worlds. Until recently, people spoke of the internet in metaphors of places (cities, addresses, homepages). SNS have shifted such location-based metaphors to personal ones (profiles, blogs, my



pictures, my space etc).

Taking all these characteristics together, we can observe significant changes in how users network and operate their social contacts according to different social environments. In particular, SNS seem to be influencing and shaping the way we communicate between ourselves and how we manage our social contacts [21].

## **6. Methodology**

There are diverse set of people in Abuja both the Young and old, unemployed and employed, students and so also different offices and work place. Using the simple random sampling technique, five different offices were visited which include Federal Ministry of Defence, FCMB bank, National Defence College, NYSC secretariat and the Cyber cafes Using the purposive sampling technique, the researcher purposively selected a sample size of 100 respondents from the five offices. Each offices contributed 20 sample sizes Therefore, the sample size for the study were 100 respondents.

Data was collected using the questionnaire which the researcher administered face to face to the respondents. Out of 120 copies of questionnaire distributed to the respondents, 100 copies were retrieved. This represented a response rate of 83.3%.

### **Data presentation and analysis**

#### **Analysis of Demographic Data**

Items 1 and 2 in the questionnaire answered question on the demography of respondents.

#### **Question 1; What is your Occupation?**

41% of the Respondents are Civil servants, 24% were Unemployed, 19% are NYSC Corps member and 16% are students. This indicates that the Civil servants uses social networks a lot which may lead to inefficiency at work dues to some workers that waste their time on SNS, so also it affect the Students who are distracted by social network instead of concentrating on their studies, it could also be of positive impact on the unemployed as it helps them to get information on different SNS.

#### **Question 2; what is your age bracket?**

50% of the Respondents were between the age of 35 and 50, 20% were age 10 to 20 while 20% were between the age 20 and 35 and 10% between 55 and above.

This implies that the age bracket 35 and 50 in Abuja is mostly involved in the usage of social network which may affect them negatively in the case of Cyber bullying and distractions at work place as most of them are in working class.

#### **Analysis of Data from Survey (field)**

**Research question 3:** Do you believe social networking has been of help in our World?

**Table 3:** Response to question 3

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY
Yes	88
No	12
Total	100

**Question 4;** Would you prefer the world without social network?

**Table 4:** Response to question 4

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY
Yes	24
No	76
Total	100

Table 1&2 shows that even though 88% of the respondents agreed that Social networks has been of great help on society but 24% still believed the World would have been better without Social network. Therefore, this implies 14% of the respondents believe even though Social network could be of help on Society but the negative implications still shows that the world would have been better without Social networks.

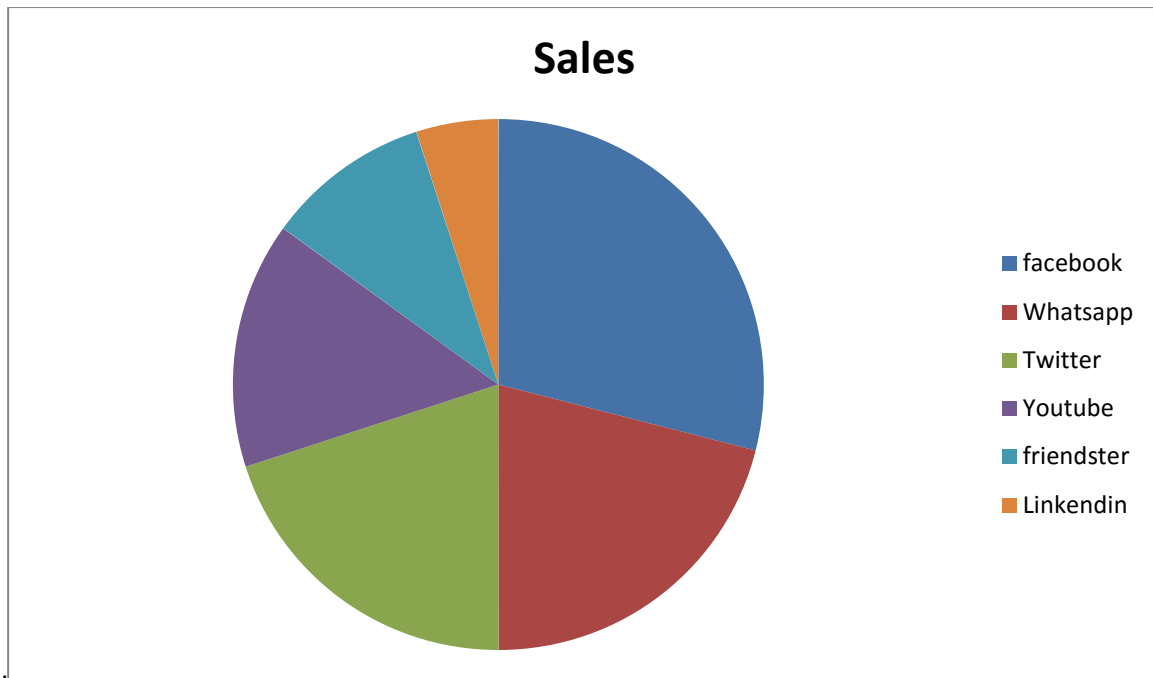
**Question 5;**

Which of the Social Networking sites do you prefer most?

Facebook is the most used of all the Social networks followed by Whatsapp, Twitter, Youtube, Friendster and Linkendin respectively.

**Table 5:** Response to question 5

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY
Facebook	29
Whatsapp	21
Twitter	20
Youtube	15
Friendster	10
Linkendin	5
Total	100



**Figure 1**

**Question 6;** Would you allow your kids to have access to social networks?

**Table 6**

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY
Yes	75
No	25
Total	100

**Question 7;** Do you think social network has been of negative impacts on youth?

**Table 7**

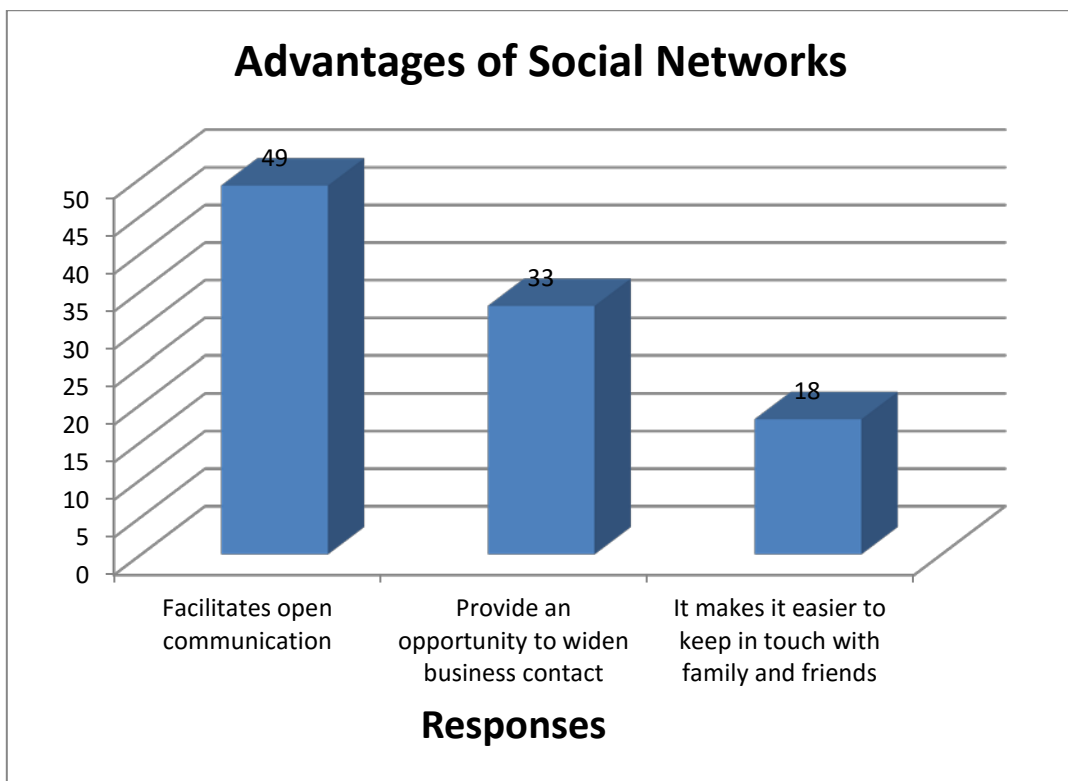
RESPONSE	REFERENCE
Yes	72
No	28
Total	100

Table 6&7 indicates that despite the disadvantages of owning a social network account it is still more advantageous so parents should allow their children to have access to social network as it assist them in knowing what is happening around them and it also help them to keep up open communication among friends and family, so also the youths should make better use of the positive aspect of Social networks.

**Question 8;** Which do you think is the major advantage of social networks?

**Table 8**

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY
Facilitates open communication	49
Provide an opportunity to widen business contact	33
It makes it easier to keep in touch with family and friends	18
Total	100

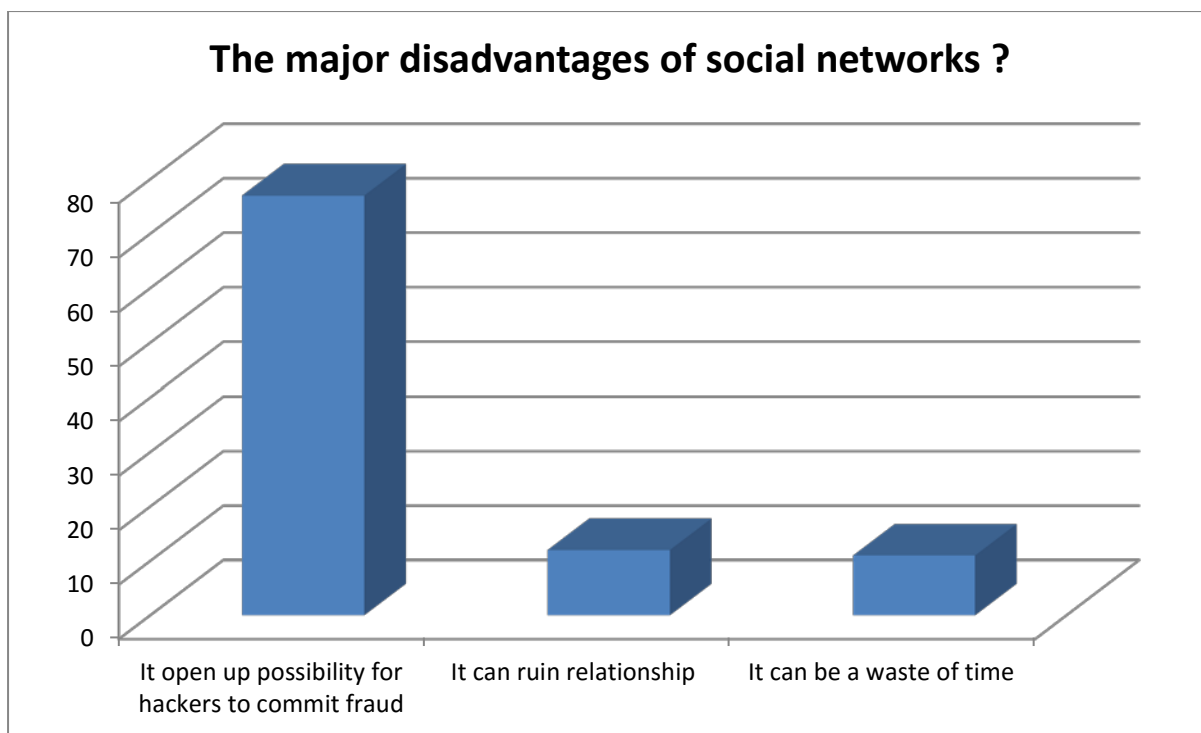


**Figure 2**

**Question 9;** Which do you think is the major disadvantage of social networks?

**Table 9**

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY
It open up possibility for hackers to commit fraud	77
It can ruin relationship	12
It can be a waste of time	11
Total	100



**Figure 3**

Table 8&9 shows the major advantages and disadvantages of social networks. Social networks facilitate open communication, provides an opportunity to widen business contact and it makes it easier to keep in touch with family and friends. All these advantages helps to impact the Society positively, it boost up the economy and promote love and intimacy among friends and family. The major disadvantages of social networks are It open up possibility for hackers to commit fraud which can also be a threat to National and financial security, It can ruin relationship: several relationship has been ruined since the emergence of Social networks and lastly social network has really affected a lot of jobs at work place and education of students at it waste peoples time due to the distraction.

**Question 10;** What are your reasons for joining social networks?

**Table 10**

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY
Meet New People	27
Find Old Friends	23
Chat the Day Away	18
Create Photo Albums and Share Photos	16
Get Advice	11
Help Others	5
Total	100

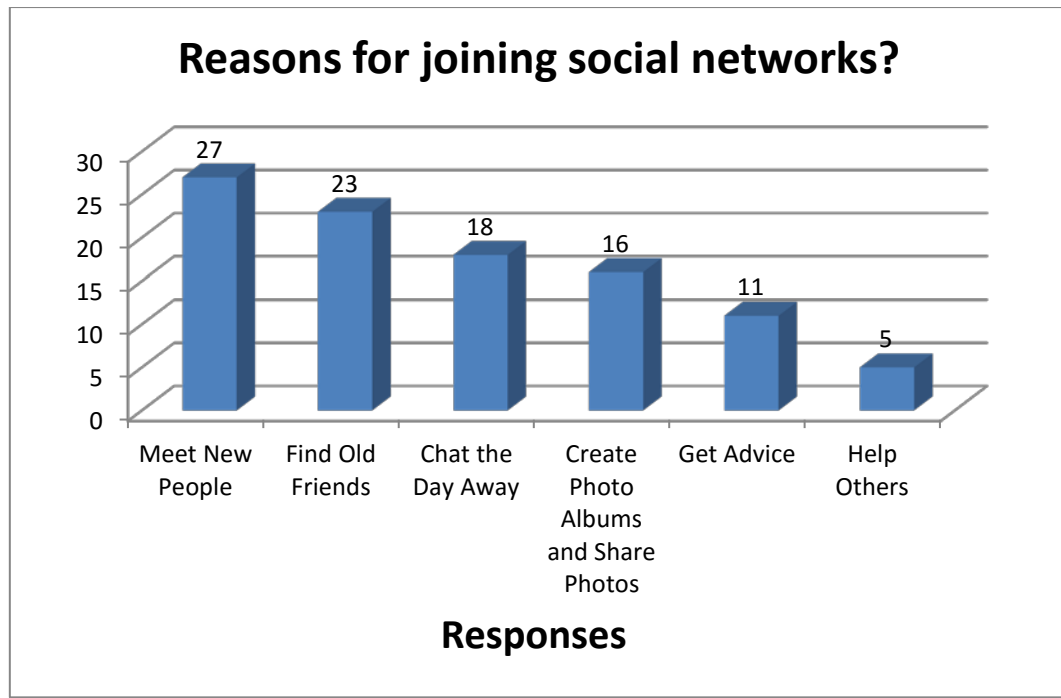


Figure 4

## 7. Summary of Findings

The findings showed that:

- I. A great number of the people living in Abuja uses Facebook most followed by Whatsapp, Twitter, Youtube, Linkendin and friendster respectively.
- II. The reasons why people of Abuja join social networks include meet new people, find old friends, chat the day away, join interest group, create photo album and share photos, get advice, help, belong.
- III. Social networks have been of 50% negative impact on youth.
- IV. Due to a great number of crimes committed on social network and times spent on social networking activities and therefore, fail to create a balance between the social media and education, business and at work place, social network has negative impact so also the positive effects include: it facilitates open communication, provides opportunity to widen business contact, makes it easier to keep in touch with friends and family.

## 8. Conclusion and Recommendations

### 8.1 Conclusion

While social networking is a phenomenon which has existed since the beginning of societies, SNS are a recent

trend. In less than five years, these sites have shifted from a niche online activity to a phenomenon in which tens of millions of internet users are engaged. Discussion on the emergence of a new social phenomenon has permeated both industry and academia. Based on the research of this report, the following conclusions have been drawn:

- SNS are those sites which, on a basic technological level, combine social networking, a list of contacts and a profile. They are distinct from other applications in the way they support people's presentation of themselves, externalisation of data, though SNS can appear to be similar, many of them are, in fact, quite different in terms of their purpose and the types of users they attract.
- Social networking may seem to have some negative effects in the society but it is still more advantageous than the negativity attached to it
- As with any other social problem and threat related to people in society, banning access to SNS is not the best solution. Young internet users are often intelligent enough to find new ways and means of accessing SNS.
- From the interpretation of my analysis I discover that SNS may be having a significant impact on youths' social behaviour. Both positive and negative effects have been observed. The positive consequences of SNS usage are related unity among friends and family, facilitates open communication, helping others amongst others. Negative consequences observed are cases of bullying, and different levels of addiction, amongst others.
- In conclusion, the emergence of SNS plays an important role in understanding developments in ICT and the social and economic implications of new technologies. As observed by various SNS analysts, the continuous evolution of SNS brings with it new opportunities and concerns. Accordingly, this work has attempted to provide some modest contributions about the various social trends and their impacts inherent to the emergence of SNS today.

## **8.2 Recommendations**

In compliance with the analysis of my survey on Impact of social network on society. I will recommend the following:

- Government should encourage both the young and old by making it cheaper to get access to internet which lead to having good opportunity to access social network as it promotes unity and love among individuals most especially citizens of the country.
- Government should find a way of securing SNS so as to avoid fraudulent acts of hackers as this is the major negative effect of SN in our environment.
- Parent should introduce their kids to social networking to make them more effective in knowing what is happening around the world as it is a source of getting information.
- Young people should try not to be wasting their time on SNS so as not to affect their academics rather they should make judicious use of the positive effects of SN.
- More awareness raising and educational campaigns highlighting safe usage of SNS are needed. It is

important that people learn how to manage their online data. Parents should also be involved in such educational events.

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