

**THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON TEEN SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR AND
RELATIONSHIP IN THE UNIVERSITY OF BENIN**

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UNIVERSITY OF BENIN.**

OCTOBER, 2025

UNIVERSITY OF BENIN
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
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**A B.S.C PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND
ANTHROPOLOGY, FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN,
IN PARTIAL FUFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE
DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF SCIENCE (B.S.C) IN SOCIOLOGY AND
ANTHROPOLOGY.**

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OCTOBER, 2025.

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this project titled, THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON TEENSEXUAL BEHAVIOUR AND RELATIONSHIP was carried out by PRECIOUS OSEREMEN OSEBOR, with Matriculation number SSC2105980 of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Benin, Edo state, Nigeria.

This work has been read, assessed and approved and meets with the fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Bachelor Degree (B.S.C), in Sociology and Anthropology, University of Benin.

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Date: _____

Date: _____

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to God Almighty for His Love, Grace, Strength, Faith, Joy and Blessings. And also my wonderful and supportive parents, Mr. and Mrs. Osebor, whose prayers, sacrifices and unwavering love have been the pillars upon which I stand. To myself, for being courageous, enduring the long nights and daring to dream.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

I want to express my profound gratitude to God for making this work possible for strength and courage to sail through my educational career in the University of Benin, I also want to show my deepest and profound appreciation to my parents, Mr. and Mrs. Osebor and my entire family for their consistent and constant financial, spiritual, moral, and emotional aid, may God continue to bless, protect and enrich them. My appreciation also goes to my siblings, Favour Osebor and Eromosele Osebor, my cousins, Eloho Egba-Okaro and Erouke Egba-Okaro in particular, God bless them and keep them safe.

I will not fail to acknowledge my wonderful Project Supervisor, Barr. E.I. Obarisiagbon, whose academic support contributed to the success of this work. Sir, I say a very big thank you and may God continue to bless and Enrich you for all your Intellectual support and care. It is worth of note to acknowledge to acknowledge Dr. Greg Igbinomwanhia (Head of department), Prof. Augustine. O. Dokpesi (H.O.D Emeritus) and other lecturers in the department of sociology and Anthropology.

To my friends, who also contributed immensely throughout my stay in school, Faith Igbinosa. Joanna Nmonye, Ruth Ezefili, Deborah Edeh, Happiness Efe, Gift Irabor, my roommates and others too numerous to mention for their far stretched support. I love you and God bless you all.

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the influence of social media on the sexual behaviour and interpersonal relationships of adolescent students at the University of Benin. Guided by the Uses and Gratifications Theory and Social Learning Theory, the study employed a survey design. Data were collected from 200 students selected from halls of residence using a structured questionnaire and analysed through descriptive statistics. The results demonstrate that social media plays a significant and dualistic role, facilitating connection and information while simultaneously introducing substantial risks to relationship quality and sexual conduct. Key issues identified include the prevalence of social comparison, exposure to explicit content, and a critical gap in guidance from parents and educators. The study concludes by advocating for integrated educational programs and stronger protective policies to safeguard adolescent well-being in the digital age.

CHAPTER ONE.

INTRODUCTION.

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY.

In this era of globalization, social media is one of the advances in the internet technology that greatly influences the society. Social media is also used as a means of communication and socializing with each other. It is done online, which allows humans to interact with each other without being limited by space and time. Humans can then communicate wherever they are and at any time. The evolution of technology has changed the world. It is seen as the ideal medium for exploring a wide range of information.

According to Boyd and Ellison (2007), as cited in Rambe (2011) defined social network as “web-based service that allow individuals to construct a public or semi- public profile within a bonded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view a traverse their list of connections and others within the system”. The social media have the capacity to educate, entertain, inform, engage and inflame the audience. This potential is what refers to as THE UNSTOPPABLE POWER OF THE WORLD (Osahenye and Ezeah, 2013).

Social media is now used on a regular basis. If correctly used, social media can assist youth in gaining knowledge that can be used to improve their academic performance. One of the groups significantly affected by social media is **teenagers**. Social media significantly impact teen relationships, both positively and negatively-by influencing communication, potentially fueling jealousy and insecurity, and affecting the quality of

face-to-face interactions- by providing a way to connect with distant friends and family and also media can be as a source of cyberbullying and other forms of aggression, damaging self-esteem and leading to anxiety and depression.

Social media can help teens make friends and create relationships, but it can also put them in danger if they meet strangers or divulge too much personal information (Person, 2022). If teens rely too much on social media, they may withdraw from society and become more isolated. They start to compare themselves to others on social media, they start to feel like they are not good enough. They start to believe that everyone lives are better than ours and that we need to measure up (this is especially for teenagers who are trying to figure who they are).

One important impact of the use of social media is free sex. Most adolescents engage in premarital-time sexual behaviour for the first time at the age of high school or, equivalent, at the age of 15-18 years. Negative impacts carried out after premarital sexual behaviour include Unwanted Pregnancy (KTD) and abortion. As a fact that occurs in society, many minors are victims of crimes that originate from the use of social media.

Almost every day, news about cases of immorality, sexual violence and pornography is reported. The male adolescents have been known to open more pornography sites as compared to their female counterparts (Braun, 2009). Websites of these kind of contents attracts their attention because the media videos and images that increases their interest and desire to try out what they have seen in the real world (Mattebo and Chen L et al, 2014 & 2018). Therefore this study seeks to investigate how social media influences teens sexual behaviour and relationships either positively or negatively.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The impact of social media on teens has become very alarming in recent times and also a difficult and troubling topic in colleges (Akilakpa, 2017). The internet is the most essential source of information today and the growing importance of social media use among students should not be overlooked. It has been said that the internet has more harm than good although the betterment gotten from it cannot be underrated.

While social media offers educational and supportive opportunities, its influence on teen sexual behaviour and relationships also presents serious challenges. One alarming concern is the exposure to sexually explicit content. They open internet sites that offer pornography because they are driven by their curiosity to know certain things about the sexuality of the opposite sex, or because of coincidental factors that may cause them to open these sites (Attwood C & Barker M, 2018). Teens often feel pressured to engage in behaviours that align with popular trends, including sexting, provocative self-presentation, and casual hook-ups (Klettke, Hallford, & Mellor, 2014). Furthermore, social media has been linked to toxic relationship dynamics, including cyberbullying, digital dating abuse, and emotional manipulation. Despite this increasing concerns about these impacts, there remains limited awareness on how deeply social media is shaping teen behaviour and relationship patterns.

Therefore, this study seeks to examine the negative impact\influence on teen sexual behaviour and relationships focusing on exposure to sexualized content, peer pressure, and digital dating abuse aiming to provide insights that will inform parents, educators, and policymakers on guiding safer digital experiment for teens.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS.

The following research questions will guide this study:

1. How does teenage use of social media lead to poor relationship dynamics and dangerous sexual behaviour?
2. What detrimental effects does social media have on adolescent sexual behaviour and relationships?
3. What measures can be taken by parents, educators, and policymakers to curb the negative effects of social media on teen sexual behaviour and relationships?

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES.

General Objectives:

To examine the influence of social media on teen sexual behaviour and relationship in the University of Benin.

Specific Objectives:

1. To examine how adolescent use of social media leads to a detriment on teen relationship dynamics and hazardous sexual conduct.
2. To assess the adverse effects of social media on adolescent sexual behaviour and relationship.
3. To identify strategies that should be taken by parents, educators and as well government to mitigate the negative effects on teen sexual behaviour and relationships.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY.

This study is important because it tackles the crucial relationship between digital media and teenage development at a time when teens use social media extensively. The study

adds a better understanding of how online environment influence young people's views and behaviours by examining the positive and negative effects of social media on sexual behaviour.

This study provides crucial information for schools, parents and legislators looking to encourage safer and better informed adolescent internet activity by giving empirical insights that might guide the creation of digital literacy initiatives and focused interventions, for instance, programs that are designed to reinforce positive qualities while reducing the possible risks of peer pressure, cyber dating abuse, and exposure to sexualized content.

The findings will also contribute to academic discourse as well as health workers by bridging gaps in existing literature on adolescent sexuality and to gain a more lucid understanding and exploring both the positive and negative influences of social media and giving a more deeper view on how digital platforms shape teen decision-making and romantic experiences, thereby aiding in support techniques and prevention programs or enlightenment the emotional and behavioural risks teens face due to online influences.

Finally, this research will provide a basis for further investigations and actions aimed at creating a digital environment that is safer, healthier, and more encouraging for adolescents.

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY.

This study will focus on students residing in the Halls of Residence at the University of Benin, specifically in Hall 1, Hall 2, Hall 3 and Hall 4. The research will examine their social media usage and its influence on their sexual behaviour and relationship dynamics. It seeks to investigate the ills and benefits of social media among students in the University of Benin.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW.

2.0 INTRODUCTION.

Man as a social being desires the need to communicate on a daily basis even to long-distance friends and family(Aristotle). Due to technological development, advancements and inventions in wireless technologies have resulted in new styles and methods of communication. In accordance to this, a rise in technological growth has been seen – “THE SOCIAL MEDIA”.

In contemporary digital era, social media is pivot in the lives of adolescents. From early teenage years, individuals encounter various platforms that function as communication instruments but also significantly influence their behaviors and social development and may also affect their understanding and engagements in sexual relationships (Livingstone &Gorzig, 2014).

2.1 CONCEPT OF SOCIAL MEDIA.

The birth of social media is one of the advances in internet technology that greatly influences society. As Jacka and Scott (2011) argued, “there is no single definition for social media”. Nonetheless, a number of academics have characterized it from different angles over time.

Social media can be broadly defined as the set of interactive Internet applications that facilitate (collaborative or individual) creation, curation, and sharing of user-generated content (Davis, 2016). These set of applications share the abovementioned characteristics,

but are unique from one another in many respects. It is an online platform where people can connect, share, communicate, establish and maintain connections with others for variety of reasons (Boateng and Amankwaa, 2016).

According to Manning [2014], Social media is a term often used to refer to new forms of media that involve interactive participation. It allows individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system (Boyd and Ellison, 2007).

The advent of the World Wide Web and faster internet connections brought about the first recognizable social networking sites. In the late 1990s, the first recognized social media network, “SixDegrees”, was launched, allowing users to create profiles and make friends (Boyd , Danah, Ellison and Nicole, 2007). Since then, there has been tremendous progress, and today there are countless social networking sites designed for local. Specific-purpose or international use. Social media is the fastest growing web application in the twenty first century, and its rapid growth has fuelled technological advancements (Heyam, 2014).

According to Kaplan and Haenlein's (2010) widely cited framework, social media is divided into six categories, based on two main dimensions: media richness (the extent to which information can be conveyed) and self-presentation/self-disclosure (the extent to which users reveal themselves).

The six categories are:

1. **Collaborative Projects:** These platforms allow for the co-creation of content.
 - *Examples:* Wikipedia, OpenStreetMap

2. **Blogs and Microblogs:** These involve content creation and sharing, often with a focus on individual expression.
 - *Examples:* Blogs (e.g., WordPress, Blogger), Microblogs (e.g., Twitter)
3. **Content Communities:** These are platforms where users share specific types of media content.
 - *Examples:* YouTube (video), Flickr (photos), Pinterest (images), SoundCloud (audio)
4. **Social Networking Sites:** These platforms focus on connecting individuals and allowing them to build and maintain social connections.
 - *Examples:* Facebook, LinkedIn.
5. **Virtual Game Worlds:** These are online environments where users interact as avatars within a game.
 - *Examples:* World of Warcraft.
6. **Virtual Social Worlds:** These are online environments where users interact as avatars in a simulated social setting.
 - *Examples:* Second Life (can also fall here, emphasizing social interaction over gaming)

The advent of mobile phones that support social network applications has given social media a new dimension and increased involvement. Social network programs have now been transported from computers to mobile phones, communication can be integrated into the public sphere, allowing people to form, grow, and reinforce their social bonds (Humphrey, 2007).

These platforms provide spaces for individuals to express their thoughts, opinions, creativity, and personal experiences. This can contribute to identity formation, self-presentation, and the

articulation of individual and group affiliations (Papacharissi, 2002). It acts as a primary news source for many, offering real-time updates and direct access to information from organizations and individuals (Mitchell & Shearer, 2016).

Social media allows individuals to find and join communities of like-minded people, offering emotional support, shared experiences, and a sense of belonging, particularly for those with niche interests or facing specific challenges (Wright, 2015). Platforms enable direct interaction with customers, allowing businesses to respond to inquiries, address complaints, gather feedback, and build stronger customer relationships in real-time (Kietzmann et al., 2011).

Social media can be used as a supplementary tool for learning, facilitating collaborative projects, sharing educational resources, and connecting students with educators and experts (Greenhow & Robelia, 2009). It can also connect people from different cultures, fostering understanding, promoting cultural exchange, and bridging geographical and cultural divides (Larsson, 2013).

2.2 SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS.

In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the use of social media around the world. Social media platforms are the digital infrastructures that enable the different forms of social interaction, content sharing, and community development. They vary greatly in terms of features, target audiences, and principal functions.

2.2.1 Facebook.

Since its first release in 2004, by a former Harvard student named Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook has grown to become one of the most popular social networking sites worldwide (Cheung, Chiu and Lee, 2010). By the end of 2019, Facebook had 1.66 billion daily active

users. Every Facebook user with an account has a personal profile (called a "Timeline") that displays a timeline of their experiences, including events, status updates, images, and app interactions. Another notable feature found on this site is the news feed, Facebook selects a handful of updates to actually show users every time they visit their feed, out of an average of 1500 updates they can potentially receive. The News Feed displays information such as profile revisions, upcoming events, and birthdays, among other items(Wikipedia). One of the most visible features of Facebook is the ability for the public or peers to examine users' personal profiles, as well as pass judgment and provide feedback through comments, ensuring that the user is aware of their thoughts on his personal life (Muise, Christofides and Desmaries, 2009). Facebook has also helped people develop new relationships and preserve current ones, eliminating distances and making them feel more connected (Boyd and Ellison, 2007).

2.2.2 Instagram.

Instagram is a popular mobile-first social networking platform that focuses on photo and video sharing. Founded and launched in 2010, it soon garnered popularity for its user-friendly design, square photo format, and a multitude of filters that allowed users to improve their images (Constine, 2010). It's a mobile app that lets users share photographs and videos with their followers (Dubovik, 2013). Instagram boasts a global user base, particularly popular among younger people (Pew Research Center, 2021). Instagram users can capture photographs and videos at any time and share them with their local and international followers (Jadhav, Kamble and Patil, 2015).

2.2.3 WhatsApp.

This application has been on the market since 2010. WhatsApp is smartphone app that is compatible with almost all modern hardware and operating systems. Numerous features are

available on WhatsApp, including text messages, links to websites, audio and video files, and associated photographs (Sayan, 2016). Teenagers' use of text messaging is a common occurrence that has increased significantly in recent years due to the introduction of new and more reasonably priced mobile phone technologies (Skierkowski and Wood, 2012).

According to Mistar & Embi (2016), in addition to its many advantages for students, WhatsApp also enables them to improve their learning outcomes by encouraging active participation in discussions and conversations. Karen McIntyre and Meghan Sobel (2019), in their study on the use of WhatsApp by Rwandan journalists, found that reporters regularly used the app to generate story ideas, communicate with sources in remote areas, disseminate news, receive audience feedback, and invite the audience to submit tips. Because of its straightforward functioning, the application is accessible to a wide range of individuals from various backgrounds and ages.

2.2.4 X (formerly known as Twitter).

Twitter, now known as X, is a microblogging and social networking service that allows users to post and interact with short messages called tweets. By enabling users to interact with others and share information by creating a profile, which may include a blog and personal webpage, this social network promotes international connection (Jonah, 2013). Short posts called "tweets" allow users to communicate brief text messages, pictures, and videos as well as follow friends updates publicly reply to friends, or simply post questions or comments as their current status (Sorav, 2010).

2.2.5 TikTok.

In recent years, TikTok, a short-video app with material ranging from 15 to 60 seconds, has gained enormous global popularity (Mozur et al, 2023). Because of its Chinese ownership

and popularity among underage users, however, the platform has attracted criticism and been subject to close scrutiny (Pew Research Center, 2024). The short-video industry took off in China (Yi, 2020) around 2014–2015, in tandem with the country’s maturing livestreaming and e-commerce ecologies. The mobile app allows users to create short videos, which often feature music in the background and can be sped up, slowed down, or edited with a filter. They can also add their own sound on top of the background music (Medina & Rosin, 2021). Since its launch, TikTok has become one of the world's most popular social media platforms, using recommendation algorithms to connect content creators and influencers with new audiences (Whalen, 2022).

2.2.6 Snapchat.

Snapchat is a mobile messaging app that combines images and videos. Snapchat builds easily talk with family and friends, and it has a feature called Live Stories in which people can explore and discover the world. The application also includes the 'story' feature which allows people to post images in a few seconds. (Petersen & Kim, 2017). Snapchat is popular among the younger generations, with most users being between 18 and 24 (Statista, 2024).

2.3 TEENS AND SOCIAL MEDIA.

2.3.1 Adolescence.

In 1986 the World Health Organization proposed that the term 'young people' be used to refer to individuals aged between 10 and 24 years. The modern understanding of adolescence is comparatively recent, emerging only at the beginning of the twentieth century (Bessant, Sercombe & Reed, 1998). Generally speaking, adolescence is a complicated and dynamic developmental stage that lasts from the beginning of puberty, which usually occurs between the ages of 10 and 12, until the mid-20s (Steinberg & Morris, 2001; NCBI Bookshelf, n.d.). It is not just a biological shift; rather, it is a complex stage characterized by notable shifts in the

physical, mental, emotional, and social spheres that profoundly influence a person's path from childhood reliance to adult autonomy (Curtis, 2015).

Certain Key concepts apply to this cause:

- **Peer Influence:** As adolescents gain more independence from their families, peers take on a more significant role in their lives. Peer groups play an important role in identity formation and self-esteem by providing environments for social comparison, validation, and a sense of belonging (Ahmad, n.d.; Simply Psychology, n.d.). Teenagers frequently follow peer expectations, which can have an impact on a variety of behaviors, including risk-taking, sexual activity, and academic achievement (Kirby, 2001). Teenagers' decisions and actions, both online and off, can be greatly influenced by their desire for acceptance and belonging from their peers (Research Gate, 2017).
- **Sexual behaviour:** According to Crockett, Raffaelli, and Moilanen (2003), teenage sexual behavior varies from non-intercourse physical intimacy [such as kissing or touching] to sexual intercourse. However, the frequency and timing of sexual beginning differ depending on personal characteristics and cultural background.
- **Sexual Relationships:** According to the APA Dictionary of Psychology (n.d.) and Britannica (n.d.), a sexual relationship is any connection between two people that includes shared sexual activity and intimacy, frequently entwined with emotional attachment, affection, and mutual consent. These connections serve a variety of purposes, including as pleasure, reproduction, and emotional bonding, and they can take many different forms, from casual encounters to committed partnerships (Williamsburg Therapy Group, 2024; Britannica, n.d.).

2.3.2 Adolescent Social Media Statistic Trends.

It has been estimated that about 4.48 billion people use social media worldwide (Kemp, 2021). Social media has emerged as a crucial component of teenage life, providing a vibrant forum for identity development, self-expression, and communication use social media worldwide. This highlights the need for responsible social media use and promoting healthy digital habits. Understanding the extent of social media use in this demographic setting is vital for evaluating its impact on mental health, as excessive engagement has been linked to various psychological challenges, including anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem (Olugbenga, Okeola & Adeyemo, 2022).

Teenagers are the 2nd largest group of people affected by social media (Searchlogistics, 2025). The average daily screen time for teenagers has also increased, with some reports indicating **around 8.5 hours per day** (The Cleveland Observer, 2023). Moreover, the number of social media users worldwide in 2019 is **3.484 billion, up 9% year-on year** (Kemp, 2019). A statistic shows the gender distribution of social media audiences worldwide as of January 2020, sorted by platform. It was found that only **38%** of Twitter users were male but **61%** were using Snapchat, in contrast, females were more likely to use LinkedIn and Facebook (Kemp, 2020).

Teenagers in Nigeria are especially active on social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok, which influence how they connect with others and view themselves. Compared to boys, adolescent girls are more likely to use Instagram and TikTok, frequently reporting "almost constant" use (Pew Research Center, 2022).

Social media is linked to a number of detrimental effects on mental health, even while it gives Nigerian youth the chance to interact, exchange stories, and keep up with current events (Agbo, 2021). According to research, teens who use social media more frequently are more likely to have problems including anxiety, sadness, suicidal thoughts, and low self-esteem (Ajike and Nwakoby, 2016). However, social media has helped in the interconnectedness of

the world, platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat help teens stay in touch and give them a sense of belonging and acceptance.

2.3.3 Detrimental Impact of Social Media on Teen Relationship Dynamics.

The influence of social media is shaped by cultural factors, with norms, values, and communication styles affecting how platforms are used and understood across different contexts (McFarland and Ployhart, 2015). Social media impact on teen relationships has completely transformed how our teens connect, communicate, and even fall in love. Social media is often used as a heuristic for the relationship world. People see happy couples on social media, and then their expectations for their own relationships change (Kakembo, 2024). Social media can also act as a pair maintenance strategy, helping people form connections and forge relationships with like-minded others (Krueger and Forest, 2020). Encouraging young people to use social media to express their thoughts and feelings with others helps to let friends know what is happening in their lives and keep in touch with friends (Valkenburg and Peter, 2009). Social media provides a lot of opportunities for young people to discover new information, learn about current events, engage with issues, and have their voices heard.

However, dynamics on social media platforms is not as simple as it might first appear and comes along with its own set of intricacies and rituals (Boyd, 2014; Livingstone, 2008). Teenage relationships have undergone a significant transformation as a result of social media, which has brought forth both previously unheard-of opportunities for connection and complex difficulties (Boyd, 2014). The precise ways that social media platforms affect teen relationship dynamics are examined in this section. It looks at how digital spaces can change communication, create new kinds of conflict, and influence expectations for closeness and cooperation (Mesch and Talmud, 2010).

Teenagers' use of social media is changing how they establish, preserve, and view peer and romantic relationships.

- **Unrealistic Expectations and Relationship Dissatisfaction.**

Teenagers who are constantly exposed to frequently romanticized depictions of love relationships on social media may grow up with irrational expectations for their own relationships (Rasmussen et al., 2017). They could feel inadequate and unsatisfied if they contrast their own flawed relationships with the ostensibly "perfect" ones that are shown online (Valkenburg & Peter, 2007). Since teenagers are always keeping an eye on their partners' or friends' internet activities, this comparison can further exacerbate feelings of insecurity and jealousy (Clayton et al., 2013).

- **Changes in Communication and Conflict**

It may also diminish adolescents' opportunities to develop crucial face-to-face communication and conflict resolution skills, as difficult conversations are often avoided or handled through asynchronous messages (Mesch and Talmud, 2010). Relationship performance on the internet, including disagreements or public displays of love/affection (PDA), can sometimes intensify disputes or put more strain on partnership (Pempek et al., 2009). In terms of family relationship, Teens' growing need for **privacy and autonomy** clashes with parental desires for monitoring and safety (Livingstone and Helsper, 2008). Arguments can arise over parents following teens' accounts, demanding passwords, or sharing personal information about their teens online without consent.

- **Digital Dating Abuse and Cyberbullying**

Digital dating abuse, such as harassment, stalking, public humiliation, or distributing false information about a relationship or ex-partner, can be carried out with the use of social media

platforms (Crosslin and Golman, 2002; Drouin et al., 2013). According to Patchin and Hinduja (2010), cyberbullying can cause severe emotional pain in both romantic and non-romantic contexts, which might impact one's self-esteem and inclination to get into new relationships.

2.3.4 Detrimental impact of social media on sexual behaviour and conduct.

Social media platforms let people easily view and exchange sexual content. Social media can affect how teenagers think about and understand sex and sexuality as they grow up and become more social (Ward, 2003). Sexual content can influence people to pursue casual relationships, behaviour but it can also be used to share harmful messages. Another type of sexual content that has gained popularity recently is called "sexting." This is the practice of sharing sexually explicit images or text messages over social media or text messaging (Van Ouytsel et al, 2015). In summary, social media has significantly impacted adolescent sexual behavior and conduct in recent years.

- **Exposure to Explicit and Risky Content.**

Social networking platforms offer widespread and frequently unfiltered access to pornography and sexually explicit content, sometimes accidentally (O'Keeffe and Clarke-Pearson, 2011). This exposure can desensitize teenagers, create inaccurate expectations of sexual interactions, and normalize potentially hazardous or abusive behaviours (Wright and Tokunaga, 2016).

Teens may also be exposed to dangerous sexual practices that are depicted as normal or desirable by peers or influencers, giving the impression that such actions are typical or expected (Morelli et al., 2015). Social networking sites make pornography easily accessible, which can result in addiction, inflated sexual expectations, and changes in sexual behaviour,

particularly in young people (Peter and Valkenburg, 2016). Risky sexual conduct, which includes practices like unprotected sex, alcoholism, substance abuse, anal sexual contact, mouth-to-genital contact, and having several sexual partners, has been linked to teens, according to research studies (Ahmed, 2014 and Imaledo, 2012).

- **Sexting and Associated Risks.**

Teenagers frequently send or receive sexually provocative messages or photographs through technological means, a practice known as "sexting." (Drouin et al., 2013). There are several reasons why people sext, such as to show affection, get attention, or give in to peer pressure (Temple et al., 2015). Despite the fact that sexting is common among teenagers, 20% of them have exchanged or shared semi-nude or nude photos or videos of themselves, according to a recent survey (Walker, 2010) Sexting can also result in emotional discomfort and related mental health problems for victims, as well as school suspension for offenders (Patchin and Hinduja, 2016).

- **Online Grooming and Sexual Exploitation.**

Online grooming is made possible by social media, where predators gradually gain the trust of teenagers with the goal of sexually exploiting them (Livingstone and Helsper, 2017). Online grooming can be described as a practice by means of which an adult 'befriends' a child/teen with the intention of sexually abusing her/him (Craven, Brown, and Gilchrist, 2006). Such interactions can rapidly escalate to the point that a kid or teen is vulnerable to human trafficking, sexual abuse, or even sexual assault (Wolak and Mitchell, 2008). An estimated 500,000 predators are active online every day, teenagers 12 to 15 years old are particularly vulnerable to being influenced or coerced by adults they meet online (NCMEC and Finkelhor et al., 2005).

2.4 ADVERSE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON TEENS' SEXUAL RELATIONSHIP AND BEHAVIOUR.

Teenagers', relationships, and sexual activities are greatly influenced by social media in today's digital environment. Teens are exposed to a variety of risks on these platforms, such as early awareness of sexual activities, the normalizing of dangerous sexual conduct, and vulnerability to exploitation, even while they also provide chances for self-expression and connection (Subrahmanyam and Mahel, 2011). Teenagers' perceptions of and participation in romantic and sexual interactions may be adversely affected by the continual exposure to sexual content, peer pressure, and damaging gender stereotypes made possible by social media's persistent accessibility (Vandenbosch and Eggermont, 2013).

2.4.1 Positive Effects of Social Media on Teen Sexual Relationships and Behaviour.

While much attention is given to the dangers of social media use among adolescents, it is also important to acknowledge its potential benefits. Teen sexual relationships and behavior can be positively influenced by social media since it gives users access to reliable information on sexual health and encourages candid conversation (Fox and WellBeing , 2018).

- **Access to Sexual Health Information and Education.**

According to **Rideout and Fox, (2018)**, more than half of teenagers and young adults have utilized online resources to research health-related topics, with sexual and reproductive health ranking among the most common issues. The social media provides an easily accessible ocean of information on sexual education while giving room for anonymity (Goldberg and Smith, 2013). Facebook, the most popular social media channel with over 1.5 billion members, is an excellent example of a platform for spreading and promoting sexual health information (Statista, 2016).

- **Building and Maintaining Relationships.**

Teens can establish and maintain relationships using social media since it allows for easy communication and shared experiences (Valkenburg & Peter, 2009). It can assist shy kids in initiating contact or deepening relationships that begin offline. According to Uhls, Ellison, and Subrahmanyam (2017), social media enables teenagers to learn how to express their wants, resolve conflicts, and provide support when navigating and negotiating the emotional dynamics of romantic relationships in ways that are advantageous to their development.

- **Improvement on academic performance.**

According to Nicole Ellison (2007), what started out as a pastime for a few computer-savvy individuals has evolved into a social standard and way of life for people all over the world. These websites are particularly well-known among teenagers because they allow them to communicate with their peers, exchange information, change their identities, and display their social lives. Furthermore, several organizations are still creating groups on a number of websites nowadays (Saba Mehmood 2013). Social media has now become a popular platform for knowledge sharing between medical students and teachers, and have enabled students to work together, interact with colleagues and classmates, and acquire the latest knowledge, which has positive impacts on their academic performance (Wakefield and Frawley, 2020). Higher education students make substantial use of social media platforms for learning. These platforms can also be used for entertainment and social connections, among other purposes [Greenhow and Galvin, 2019).

2.4.2 Negative Effects of Social Media on Teen Sexual Relationship and Behaviour.

Although social media platforms provide a wealth of opportunities for communication and knowledge, there are serious worries about their negative effects due to their widespread incorporation into daily life, particularly among teenagers (Keles, McCrae, & Grealish, 2020).

In addition to the obvious advantages, prolonged use of these digital spaces is becoming more and more associated with a number of negative psychological, social, and developmental consequences (Twenge and Campbell, 2018).

- **Mental Health Issues [Anxiety, Depression, Loneliness].**

Overuse of social media has been associated with increased incidence of anxiety and depression symptoms in youth. The pressure to maintain an idealized online identity, fear of missing out (FOMO), cyberbullying, and social comparison can all be factors in this (Vannucci, Flannery, & Ohannessian, 2017). According to some study, excessive usage of social media can unintentionally aggravate feelings of social isolation and loneliness even while one is "connected" online. This could be because it fosters superficial connections or replaces more genuine in-person contacts (Primack et al., 2017). Also, unfavorable social comparisons can result from continuous exposure to carefully chosen and frequently unrealistic depictions of other people's lives, which can diminish self-esteem and cause feelings of inadequacy (Fardouly and Vartanian, 2016). Teenagers may find it more difficult to move on and heal from breakups due to social media, which can cause public displays of dispute, online harassment, or ongoing monitoring of ex-partners (Tokunaga, 2011).

- **Influence on Sexual Norms and Early/Risky Sexual Initiation.**

Teenagers' perceptions of sexual standards might be influenced by social media, which can give them the impression that particular actions are more prevalent or acceptable than they are offline (Vandenbosch and Eggermont, 2013). Increased pressure to participate in

dangerous sexual behaviors, such as unprotected sex, many partners, and substance-related sexual activity, or to initiate sexual activity early can result from this. Frequently disseminated on social media, false information on consent, sexual health, and contraception can also raise risks and encourage unhealthy behaviours (Goldberg & Smith, 2013).

- **Promotion of Sexualization and Objectification.**

Teens may experience pressure to display themselves in a sexually suggestive manner in order to attract attention, approval, or popularity (Ringrose & Barajas, 2011). In relation to the former, social media platforms might unintentionally promote sexualization of oneself and others due to their visual content and following counts (Uhls et al., 2017). This can result in embracing an external gaze, lowering one's value to one's looks, and encouraging an objectifying perspective on relationships in which people are viewed less as complex partners and more as tools for achieving their goals (Ward, 2016). For girls in particular, this can be harmful.

- **Peer pressure and risky norms.**

Risky sexual behaviours can be portrayed on social media as more prevalent or acceptable than they actually are (Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2015). Teenagers may overestimate the incidence of substance use, early sexual initiation, or casual sexual experiences by observing their classmates' posts or tales, which might create a false consensus effect (Sussman & Pokhrel, 2013). Teens may be pressured to participate in activities they might normally avoid in order to blend in or seem "cool." Premature sexual participation can also result from the competitive aspect of social media, which can put pressure on users to "perform" sexually or seem more experienced than they actually are (Livingstone and Mason, 2015).

2.5 MITIGATION STRATEGIES FOR SOCIAL EFFECTS.

In order to protect youth online and encourage healthy online behaviour, effective mitigation techniques are essential. In order to lessen negative effects and create a more encouraging and safe environment for teenagers navigating their sexuality and relationships online, this section describes a number of strategies that can be jointly adopted by individuals, families, educators, social media companies, and governmental organizations.

2.5.1 User & Family Empowerment.

Important strategies for the family include fostering candid conversations about online experiences and hazards and working together to establish ground rules and limitations for social media use at home (Rideout & Robb, 2018). Simultaneously, it emphasizes **fostering** mindful social media use and self-regulation, encouraging habits like setting screen time limits and engaging in digital detoxes to prevent problematic engagement (Hunt, 2017). These efforts empower users and families to actively manage their digital interactions and protect against negative influences.

2.5.2 Education & Public Awareness.

The goal of education and public awareness is to use both formal and informal learning channels to provide adolescents and the larger community with information and critical skills (UNESCO, 2018). In addition to formal education, it involves creating and distributing public awareness campaigns that use a variety of media, including social media, to educate people about potential risks and encourage a user base that is resilient, safe, and able to handle all aspects of digital interactions pertaining to relationships and sexual behaviour.

2.5.3 Policy & Governance.

Enacting strong laws and regulations that require social media companies to safeguard users—especially children—address online dangers like cyberbullying and unconsented

image sharing, and maintain strict data privacy are the regulatory activities performed by government (Montgomery and Livingstone, 2019). The goal is to create a thorough operational and legal framework that protects teenagers' digital wellbeing and holds platforms responsible.

2.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.

For the purpose of this study, two theories were adopted; Uses and Gratification theory and Social learning theory.

2.6.1 USES AND GRATIFICATION THEORY.

The uses and gratification theory is a media theory that deals with the media's use values for audiences and users. U&G Theory, which was created in the 1970s by Elihu Katz, Jay G. Blumler, and Michael Gurevitch, radically changes the focus of media studies from "what media do to people" to "what people do with media" (Blumler & Katz, 1974]. This idea is crucial to our research since teens' use of social media platforms is greatly influenced by the unique pleasure they derive from them. Media companies are released from accountability when audience members' media choices and consumption of the content they create or distribute lead to adverse media consequences. Simply put, the media provides people with what they desire (Baran, 2019). In particular, this theory—is a research approach that prioritizes audience engagement (Lipschultz, 2018).

The Uses and Gratification history has been employed to investigate the reasons for media consumption by audiences (Rubin, 1981). We must comprehend why we utilize media or why we select particular kinds of content in order to comprehend how media impacts us. The uses and gratifications theory seeks answers to questions such as why individuals use the media or with what motivations they choose certain media content, is actually how they use the media (Krcmar and Strizhakova, 2009).

Since users actively edit their feeds, choose who to follow, and choose what to post in search of different gratifications, social media's dynamic and customized nature makes it a perfect case study for U&G (Stafford et al., 2011; Whiting & Williams, 2013). Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1973) assert that we select media according to our requirements. These demands can be divided into four groups: surveillance (information that aids in an individual's task), personal relationships (reinforcing values through media), diversion (escape from everyday difficulties), and personal identity. For instance, we can watch comedy shows when we want to laugh and a news channel when we want to learn about current events.

Furthermore, the Fiske (2011) model is the idea that audience members' uses and gratifications are a complicated collection of demands that they are trying to meet through mass media. Classifications of the gratifications people can experience as a result of using media have been established within the framework of studies on the uses and gratifications approach. In essence, Elihu Katz's theory of uses and gratifications tries to explain the relationship between user satisfaction and media choice (Ozer, 2016).

When audience members' media choices and consumption of the content that media companies create or distribute lead to harmful media effects, media industries are released from accountability. People just get what they want from the media (Baran, 2019, s. 330). In particular, this theory—is a research viewpoint that prioritizes audience engagement (Lipschultz, 2018). In this way, the media audience is at the center of the uses and gratifications idea. As a result, it is assumed that users in the twenty-first century are active and use social media platforms to satisfy their own needs and desires. It indicates that significant research on the purposes and satisfactions of social media platforms (such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and others) is growing in the present day.

2.6.2 SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY.

Social learning theory is a psychological theory of social behaviour that explains how people acquire new behaviours, attitudes, and emotional reactions through observing and imitating others. The **Social Learning Theory (SLT)**, primarily developed by Albert Bandura, is highly relevant for understanding how social media influences individuals, particularly teenagers, in the context of their sexual behaviour and relationships. According to SLT, people pick up attitudes, behaviors, and emotional responses by watching others—often referred to as "models" (Bandura, 1977). Users of social media platforms are continuously exposed to a wide range of prospective models and their actions, making them extraordinarily rich and accessible environments for social learning. According to Bandura (2001), the media can serve as a powerful agent of socialization, shaping behaviour through repeated exposure to certain models and outcomes. Teens who view sexualized content on social media are more likely to adopt similar activities, adopt permissive sexual attitudes, or feel pressured to meet unattainable sexual expression standards, according to studies (Brown & L'Engle, 2009).

Note that there are certain mechanisms under this theory:

- Reciprocal Determinism
- Observational Learning (Modeling).
- Self-Efficacy.

- **Reciprocal Determinism.**

Reciprocal determinism, a theory first proposed by Bandura (1977) , holds that three elements interact dynamically and continuously: the individual (cognitive elements such as beliefs, expectations, and self-efficacy), their behavior, and the environment (social influences, physical settings) (Bandura, 1986). Every element both affects and is affected by

the others. For instance, a person's beliefs (a cognitive element) affect how they behave, which can change the surroundings, which can then affect the individual.

- **Observational Learning (Modelling).**

The idea that learning may happen just by observing others is the foundation of SLT. People observe the actions of "models" (who may be real-life, symbolic, such as fictional characters in media, or even educational), create a mental image of their actions, and then decide to copy them.

Four sub-processes have an impact on this process (Bandura, 1986).

- I. Attention: The student needs to focus on the model. Attention is influenced by various factors, such as the model's attractiveness, perceived status, or the behaviour's uniqueness.
- II. Retention: The student needs to be able to recall the conduct they saw, frequently using spoken codes or mental pictures.
- III. Reproduction: The learner needs to be able to replicate the behavior they have seen, both mentally and physically. Self-correction and practice may be necessary for this.
- IV. Motivation: The learner needs to be inspired to carry out the action. The expected outcomes have a big impact on this.

- **Self-Efficacy.**

Self-efficacy is a key idea that comes from SLT and describes a person's confidence in their ability to carry out the actions required to achieve particular performance goals

(Bandura, 1997). When someone has high self-efficacy in a certain area, they are more likely to try, continue, and succeed at actions linked to that area, even behaviors that they have learnt through observation.

In recent years, the social learning environment has changed due to the emergence and widespread use of social media platforms. The notion that social media may have far-reaching potential beyond personal requirements and is more directly linked to educational settings where it can contribute to a graduate who is digitally proficient and confident is now being dissected by education experts (Williams, 2020). Social media platforms allow consumers to see the behaviors, ideas, and experiences of others in real time and across large networks (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). According to Jones and Shao (2011), social media can be utilized in a number of ways to enhance learning experiences in educational settings. These platforms give users the ability to interact with others in a number of ways, including sharing, like, and exchanging information. Students at universities who used Facebook frequently reported higher levels of social connectedness, which enhanced their academic and personal development, according to Kirschner and Karpinski (2010). Social media platform users can also distribute information and expertise by sharing videos, articles, and other content with their following (Wang et al., 2015). Due to social media's simplicity of use and usefulness, students may get more involved, increase their knowledge and communication with peers, instructors, supervisors, and experts, seek professional assistance, and resolve problems (Ghani et al., 2019). This propensity for sharing makes it possible for knowledge to spread quickly, providing people with access to a range of opinions and concepts.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter focuses on the various techniques, method and procedures used in collecting and analyzing data. It is of great importance to discuss the research design and methodology used for the collection and analyzing of data. This comprises of research design, population of the study, sample size, sample technique, method of data collection, instruments of data collection and method of data analysis.

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN.

The research design for this study which is on the influence of social media of teens sexual behavior and relationship in the University of Benin, it is a **Survey design**. The methodical process of developing and executing a survey in order to collect accurate and useful data from a particular population is known as survey design. It is an essential part of survey research and goes much beyond simply formulating a list of questions. A well-designed survey aims to guarantee that the information gathered is accurate, useful, and representative of the intended audience. The strength of this research will be based on the method that will be used which include a quantitative method of data collection and analysis.

3.2 POPULATION OF THE STUDY.

The total population of the study according to the university's records, there are approximately 70,000 students in total in the University of Benin, spread across various faculties and departments. The targeted population of this study is 5,040 students in Halls of residence in the University of Benin.

3.3 SAMPLE SIZE.

A total number of 200 respondents will be used for this study. These respondents range from Hall 1, Hall 2, and Hall 3 and Hall 4, where 50 respondents will be used from each hostel (Hall1, Hall 2, Hall 3 and Hall 4) in the University of Benin.

3.4 SAMPLING TECHNIQUE.

The sampling technique used in this study was the convenience sampling technique which will be based on access, readiness, and ease of availability of the respondents. And maximum objectivity.

3.5 INSTRUMENT OF DATA COLLECTION.

A structured questionnaire was used as an instrument for collecting data, which consisted of simple questions. It was divided into two sections, Section A and Section B, C, D and E, consecutively. Section A, consists of demographic data of respondents such as gender, age, marital status, ethnicity, and so on, while Section B, C, D, E was used to elicit responses from the respondents for the purpose of the the study.

3.6 METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION.

This study will employ a one-time, face- to- face survey administration of a structured questionnaire, whereby the researcher approached the respondents once and retrieved the questionnaire immediately after it was filled.

3.7 METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS.

The study will make use of a descriptive analysis. Descriptive statistics will be used to summarize the characteristics of all variables in the administered questionnaires in order to present data in a more meaningful way, which allowed for more simpler interpretation of the data. The research data will be statistically analyzed using Cumulative Frequency with an emphasis on frequency and percentages tables.

3.8 VALIDITY OF INSTRUMENT.

By closely matching the questionnaire's questions to the study's goals about social media, relationship dynamics, and sexual behavior among University of Benin students, its validity was guaranteed

The instrument will be scrutinized by the project supervisor. Thereafter, his comments and suggestions will be offered, while the final copies will be produced in accordance with his suggestions and comments. This guaranteed clarity and helped to clarify unclear items. By organizing the questions into pertinent sections, construct validity was also attained. These processes rendered the instrument suited for measuring the intended variables.

3.9 RELIABILITY OF INSTRUMENT.

Reliability was confirmed using a test-retest method, and internal consistency was measured indicating that the instrument is both valid and reliable for the study. Standardized administration procedures also ensured consistency. As a result, the questionnaire was stable and reliable for the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This Chapter deals with the analysis, presentation and interpretation of data results on The Impact of Social media on Relationship dynamics and Sexual Behavior among students in the University of Benin obtained through shared questionnaires. It presents the results obtained from the analysis of data for answering the research questions formulated for the study through structured questionnaires to students in Halls of Residence.

4.2 SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTIC OF RESPONDENTS

Table 1: The sex distribution of respondents

SEX	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Male	75	37.5
Female	125	62.5
Total	200	100

Source: fieldwork 2025

The information above shows that, with a total sample of 200 respondents out of which 37.5% of the respondents are male representing 75, while 62.5% of the respondents are female representing 125. Therefore, I can be inferred that majority of the respondents in the area under review are female making about 62.5% of the total respondent.

Table 2: Age distribution of the respondents

AGE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
16-20	79	39.5%
21-25	103	51.5%
26-30	16	8%
31-35	1	0.5%
36-40	1	0.5%
Total	200	100

Source: fieldwork 2025

The information from above shows that, 79(39.5%) represented respondents within the age of 16-20 years, 103(51.5%) represented respondents within the age of 21-25 years, 16(8%) represented respondents within the age of 26-30 years, 1(0.5%) represented respondent within the age of 21-35 years, and another 1(0.5%) represented respondent within the age of 36-40 years. Therefore, it can be inferred that majority of the respondents are between 21-25 years.

Table 3: Distribution of Grade Level

LEVEL	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
100	36	18%
200	25	12.5%
300	26	13%
400	93	46.5%
500	20	10%
Total	200	100

Source: fieldwork 2025

The information above shows that, 36(18%) represented respondents in 100 level, 25(12.5%) represented respondents in 200 level, 26(13%) represented respondents in 300 level, 93(46.5%) represented respondents in 400 level, and 20(10%) represented respondents in 500 level.

Table 4: Distribution of Marital status of respondents

STATUS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Single	190	95%
Married	9	4.5%
Separated	1	0.5%

Divorced	0	0%
Total	200	100

Source: fieldwork 2025

The information above shows that, 190(95%) represented respondents that were single, 9(4.5%) represented respondents that were married, 1(0.5%) represented respondent that was separated and 0% of the respondent were divorced.

Table 5: Distribution of Halls of residence

RESIDENCE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Hall 1	50	25%
Hall 2	50	25%
Hall 3	50	25%
Hall 4	50	25%
Total	200	100

Source: fieldwork 2025

The information above shows that, the data on 200 respondents who are evenly distributed among four hall of residence with 50 respondents (25%) coming from each hall.

Table 6: Distribution of Religion of respondents.

RELIGION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Christianity	176	88%
Muslim	17	8.5%
Traditional	3	1.5%
Others	4	2%
Total	200	100

Source: fieldwork 2025

The information above shows that majority of the respondents are Christians as they make up 176(88%) of the entire respondents, while 17(8.5%) of the respondents are Muslims, 3(1.5%) of the respondents are Traditionalists and 2% of the respondents are from other religion.

4.3 SECTION B: SOCIAL MEDIA USE

This section investigates the diverse experiences linked with social media use among students at the University of Benin. This part will be studied using the study's purpose in drawing and assessing the responses obtained from the field.

Table 7: ARE YOU BETWEEN THE AGES OF 13 AND 19?

ARE YOU BETWEEN THE AGES OF 13 AND 19?	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Yes	64	32%
No	136	68%
Total	200	100

Source: fieldwork 2025

The information above shows that, Of the 200 respondents, 64 (32%) were between the ages of 13 and 19, whereas 136 (68%) were not. This information is shown in Table 7. This indicates that while teens made up a significant proportion of the responders, older teenagers or young adults made up the majority. The distribution shows that both teenage and non-teenage groups' perspectives are included in the study, which can offer a more comprehensive understanding of the problem being studied.

Table 8: ARE YOU CURRENTLY IN A ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIP?

ARE YOU CURRENTLY IN A ROMANTIC	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)

RELATIONSHIP?		
Yes	86	43%
No	114	57%
Total	200	100

Source: fieldwork 2025

According to Table 8, 86 (43%) of the 200 respondents said they were in a romantic relationship, while 114 (57%) said they were not. This indicates that while a significant percentage (almost half) of the respondents are currently in romantic relationships, over half are not. The outcome emphasizes how important it is to look at both groups because their experiences and actions with regard to social media's impact on relationships may vary.

Table 9: DO YOU USE SOCIAL MEDIA EVERY DAY?

DO YOU USE SOCIAL MEDIA EVERY DAY?	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Yes	177	88.5%
No	23	11.5%
Total	200	100

Source: fieldwork 2025

The information above shows that, just 23 (11.5%) of respondents said they do not use social media daily, whereas 177 (88.5%) of respondents said they do. This suggests that social media use is very common among the respondents and plays a significant role in their day-to-day activities. Given its extensive use, social media is probably going to have a big impact on their relationships and behaviour, especially how they perceive and participate in romantic and sexual behaviours. These respondents are actively registered on:

- Facebook

- Whatsapp
- Twitter (now known as X)
- Instagram
- Telegram
- Snapchat.

Table 10: DO YOU HAVE ACCESS TO YOUR OWN PERSONAL SMARTPHONE OR DEVICE?

DO YOU HAVE ACCESS TO YOUR OWN PERSONAL SMARTPHONE OR DEVICE?	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Yes	193	96.5%
No	7	3.5%
Total	200	100

Source: fieldwork 2025

In accordance to the table above, only 7 respondents (3.5%) do not have access to their own smartphone or gadget, whereas 193 respondents (96.5%) do, according to Table 10. This indicates that practically all of the respondents have personal access to digital gadgets that allow them to stay connected to social media sites at all times. Given how simple it is for young people to interact online, the high percentage of device ownership raises the possibility that social media will have an impact on their relationships and sexual behaviour.

Table 11: DO YOU FOLLOW OR ENGAGE WITH REALTIONSHIP OR LIFESTYLE CONTENT ONLINE?

DO YOU FOLLOW OR	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
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ENGAGE WITH RELATONSHIP OR LIFESTYLE CONTENT ONLINE?		
Yes	153	76.5
No	47	23.5
Total	200	100

Source: fieldwork 2025

This table shows that in contrast to 47 respondents (23.5%) who do not monitor or interact with relationship or lifestyle information online, 153 respondents (76.5%) do. This implies that the vast majority of respondents regularly read relationship and lifestyle-related content, which may have a big impact on how they treat romantic and sexual relationships in terms of attitudes, expectations, and behaviours. Social media's impact as a source of information and role model for relationship patterns among young people is highlighted by the high level of involvement.

4.4 SECTION C: SOCIAL MEDIA AND RELATIONSHIP DYNAMICS.

This section looks at how social media affects the dynamics of relationships amongst University of Benin students. The analysis is directed by the study's goals through the evaluation of field responses and focuses on how online interactions influence romantic relationships, communication styles, and expectations.

Table 12: HAS SOCIAL MEDIA EVER CAUSED MISUNDERSTANDINGS OR CONFLICTS IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP?

HAS SOCIAL MEDIA EVER CAUSED MISUNDERSTANDINGS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)

OR CONFLICTS IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP?		
Yes	55	27.5%
No	145	72.5%
Total	200	100

Source: fieldwork 2025

According to Table 12, 145 respondents (72.5%) said social media had not led to misunderstandings or disputes in their relationships, but 55 respondents (27.5%) acknowledged it had. This suggests that a significant minority of respondents face difficulties related to online contacts, even though the majority do not directly link social media to relationship issues. This implies that although social media can help people connect, in some relationships it can also lead to misunderstandings, envy, or problems with trust.

Table 13: DO YOU FEEL PRESSURE TO SHOW YOUR RELATIONSHIP ON SOCIAL MEDIA?

DO YOU FEEL PRESSURE TO SHOW YOUR RELATIONSHIP ON SOCIAL MEDIA?	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Yes	58	29%
No	142	71%
Total	200	100

Source: fieldwork 2025

According to the table above, 58 respondents (29%) are compelled to post about their relationship on social media, whereas 142 respondents (71%) do not. This implies that, while the majority of students are not swayed by social media demands to expose their private life, approximately one-third still feel the pressure. This demonstrates how social media can shape external expectations about relationships, potentially influencing self-expression, privacy, and the genuineness of love interactions.

Table 14: HAVE YOU EVER COMPARED YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO THOSE YOU SEE ON SOCIAL MEDIA?

HAVE YOU EVER COMPARED YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO THOSE YOU SEE ON SOCIAL MEDIA?	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Yes	66	33
No	134	67
Total	200	100

Source: fieldwork 2025

This table shows that 66 respondents (33%) compared their relationships to those they saw on social media, whereas 134 respondents (67%) did not. This suggests that, while the majority of students do not use direct comparisons, a considerable proportion—roughly one-third—do. Such comparisons can have an impact on self-perception and relationship pleasure, often leading to erroneous expectations created by idealized images found online. This highlights social media's influence on how young people view their romantic life.

Table 15: HAVE YOU EVER FELT PRESSURED BY FRIENDS TO POST CERTAIN THINGS ABOUT YOUR RELATIONSHIP ONLINE?

HAVE YOU EVER FELT PRESSURED BY FRIENDS TO POST CERTAIN THINGS ABOUT YOUR RELATIONSHIP ONLINE?	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Yes	58	29%
No	142	71%
Total	200	100

Source: fieldwork 2025

According to the table, 58 respondents (29%) reported feeling compelled by friends to share particular details about their relationships online, whereas 142 respondents (71%) said they had not experienced such pressure. This implies that, while the majority of students have control over their online connection presence, roughly one-third are influenced by peer norms. This illustrates peers' social impact in shaping online behaviour and demonstrates how friendship circles can add to the pressure of performing relationships publicly on social media.

Table 16: DO YOU THINK SOCIAL MEDIA SETS EXPECTATIONS FOR UNREALISTIC RELATIONSHIPS?

DO YOU THINK SOCIAL MEDIA SETS EXPECTATIONS FOR	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)

UNREALISTIC RELATIONSHIPS?		
Yes	144	72%
No	56	28%
Total	200	100

Source: fieldwork 2025

According to the table, 144 respondents (72%) believe that social media creates unrealistic relationship expectations, whereas 56 respondents (28%) disagree. This demonstrates that a huge majority of students understand social media's tendency to depict idealized or exaggerated representations of relationships that may not reflect real-life dynamics. Such beliefs can influence how young people evaluate their own relationships, potentially leading to discontent, pressure, or influenced notions of love and intimacy.

Table 17: HAVE YOU EVER CHANGED YOUR BEHAVIOUR OR APPERANCE TO FIT IN WITH WHAT YOUR FRIENDS POST ON SOCIAL MEDIA?

HAVE YOU EVER CHANGED YOUR BEHAVIOUR OR APPERANCE TO FIT IN WITH WHAT YOUR FRIENDS POST ON SOCIAL MEDIA?	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Yes	63	31.5%
No	137	68.5%
Total	200	100

Source: fieldwork 2025

According to the table, 63 respondents (31.5%) admitted to modifying their behaviour or look to match what their friends post on social media, whereas 137 respondents (68.5%) denied this. This implies that, while the majority of students retain their identity, approximately one-third are impacted by peer content online, prompting them to change how they express themselves. This emphasizes the subtle but significant impact that social media plays in defining young people's identity, self-expression, and conformity.

Table 18: HAS SOCIAL MEDIA EVER MADE YOU FEEL LIKE YOU MUST MEET A CERTAIN STARNDARD TO BE ACCEPTED OR ADMIREED?

HAS SOCIAL MEDIA EVER MADE YOU FEEL LIKE YOU MUST MEET A CERTAIN STARNDARD TO BE ACCEPTED OR ADMIREED?	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Yes	115	57.5%
No	85	42.5%
Total	200	100

Source: fieldwork 2025

According to the table, 115 respondents (57.5%) believe social media has taught them that they must satisfy particular standards in order to be accepted or admired, whilst 85 respondents (42.5%) disagree. This suggests that more than half of the students feel pressured to conform to perceived social media ideals, whether in terms of lifestyle, appearance, or relationships. Such findings indicate that social media might have a major impact on self-esteem and social validation, encouraging the desire to acquire acceptability by conforming to online trends and standards.

Table 19: HAS SOCIAL MEDIA EVER MADE YOU FEEL JEALOUS OR INSECURE IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP?

HAS SOCIAL MEDIA EVER MADE YOU FEEL JEALOUS OR INSECURE IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP?	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Yes	59	29.5%
No	141	70.5%
Total	200	100

Source: fieldwork 2025

According to the table above, 59 respondents (29.5%) stated social media made them jealous or insecure in their relationships, whereas 141 respondents (70.5%) said it didn't. This implies that, while most students do not equate social media with jealousy or insecurity, a substantial minority—nearly one-third—do. This demonstrates how online contacts, comparisons, and exposure to partners' activities can occasionally cause tension and emotional strain in relationships.

SECTION D: SOCIAL MEDIA AND SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR

This section looks at how University of Benin students' sexual behaviour is influenced by social media. It focuses on how peer relationships, digital trends, and exposure to online content influence sexuality-related beliefs, choices, and behaviours. The study's goals will serve as the basis for the analysis, which will evaluate field answers to determine how much social media influences students' sexual behaviour patterns, pressures, and perceptions.

Table 20: HAVE YOU SEEN SEXUAL OR SUGGESTIVE CONTENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA?

HAVE YOU SEEN SEXUAL OR SUGGESTIVE CONTENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA?	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Yes	168	84%
No	32	16%
Total	200	100

Source: fieldwork 2025

According to the table, only 16% of respondents have not seen sexual or provocative content on social media, compared to 84% who have. This suggests that this kind of content is very common on the internet. Given the high exposure rate, it is likely that social media has significant impact on how users perceive and experience sexuality, which can then affect how they behave and interact with others.

Table 21: HAVE YOU EVER FELT PRESSURED TO DRESS OR ACT MORE SEXUALLY BECAUSE OF SOCIAL MEDIA?

HAVE YOU EVER FELT PRESSURED TO DRESS OR ACT MORE SEXUALLY BECAUSE OF SOCIAL MEDIA?	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Yes	63	31.5%
No	137	68.5%
Total	200	100

Source: fieldwork 2025

According to the table, 31.5% of respondents reported feeling forced to dress or act more sexually as a result of social media, whereas the majority (68.5%) said they had not felt this pressure. This implies that, while social media influences a large number of people's sexual expression, the majority of respondents do not regard it as a direct source of pressure.

Table 22: HAVE YOU EVER RECEIVED UNWANTED SEXUAL MESSAGES OR IMAGES THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA?

HAVE YOU EVER RECEIVED UNWANTED SEXUAL MESSAGES OR IMAGES THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA?	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Yes	130	65%
No	70	35%
Total	200	100

Source: fieldwork 2025

The findings show that the majority of respondents (65%) reported getting unwanted sexual messages or photographs via social media, while 35% said they did not. This implies that unwanted sexual content is a regular experience among users, emphasizing issues of online harassment and the lack of control over exposure to such items.

Table 23: DO YOU THINK SOCIAL MEDIA ENCOURAGES TEENAGERS TO ACT SEXUALLY?

DO YOU THINK SOCIAL MEDIA ENCOURAGES TEENAGERS TO ACT SEXUALLY?	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)

Yes	182	91%
No	18	9%
Total	200	100

Source: fieldwork 2025

The information shows that, a vast majority of respondents (91%) feel that social media encourages youth to engage in sexual behaviour, with only 9% disagreeing. Respondents strongly believe that social media plays a big influence in molding and promoting sexual habits among teenagers.

Table 24: HAVE YOU TRIED SOMETHING SEXUALLY BECAUSE YOU SAW IT ONLINE?

HAVE YOU TRIED SOMETHING SEXUALLY BECAUSE YOU SAW IT ONLINE?	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Yes	85	42.5%
No	115	57.5%
Total	200	100

Source: fieldwork 2025

According to the data, 42.5% of respondents claimed to having tried something sexual after seeing it online, while 57.5% claimed they had not done so. This suggests that online sexual content influences the behaviour of a significant number of users, yet the majority still claim not acting on what they see.

SECTION E: SUPPORT AND MITIGATION MEASURES

This section investigates the support structures and solutions available to help University of Benin students manage the issues associated with social media use in relationships and sexual behaviour. It examines the role of family, peers, institutions, and personal coping mechanisms in minimizing negative consequences, as well as initiatives that can promote healthier and more responsible online behaviour.

Table 25: DO YOU FEEL COMFORTABLE TALKING TO YOUR PARENTS OR GUARDIANS ABOUT SOCIAL MEDIA AND SEX?

DO YOU FEEL COMFORTABLE TALKING TO YOUR PARENTS OR GUARDIANS ABOUT SOCIAL MEDIA AND SEX?	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Yes	73	36.5%
No	127	63.5%
Total	200	100

Source: fieldwork 2025

The data above suggest that only 73(36.5%) of respondents are comfortable discussing social media and sex with their parents or guardians, whereas the majority 127(63.5%) are not. This shows a communication gap between young people and their parents regarding sensitive matters such as sexuality and social media, which may limit family guidance and assistance.

Table 26: DO YOU THINK SCHOOLS SHOULD TEACH MORE ABOUT SOCIAL MEDIA SAFETY AND SEXUAL HEALTH?

DO YOU THINK SCHOOLS SHOULD TEACH MORE ABOUT SOCIAL MEDIA SAFETY AND SEXUAL HEALTH?	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Yes	157	78.5%
No	43	21.5%
Total	200	100

Source: fieldwork 2025

The information above show that, while only 43(21.5%)of respondents disagreed, the vast majority of respondents (78.5%) think that schools should teach more on sexual health and social media safety. This demonstrates the overwhelming need for educational institutions to do more to help youth understand the dangers of social media and make wise choices regarding their sexual health.

Table 27: WOULD YOU USE PRIVACY OR SAFETY TOOLS ON SOCIAL MEDIA IF THEY WERE EASIER TO ACCESS?

WOULD YOU USE PRIVACY OR SAFETY TOOLS ON SOCIAL MEDIA IF THEY WERE EASIER TO ACCESS?	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Yes	150	75%
No	50	25%
Total	200	100

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Source: fieldwork 2025

According to the data, 75% of respondents would use privacy or safety features on social media if they were more easily accessible, whereas 25% would not. This implies that while most users are prepared to take preventative measures, accessibility and ease of use remain significant impediments to their widespread adoption.

Table 28: DO YOU THINK GOVERNMENT SHOULD MAKE STRICTER RULES FOR WHAT TEENS SEE ON SOCIAL MEDIA?

DO YOU THINK GOVERNMENT SHOULD MAKE STRICTER RULES FOR WHAT TEENS SEE ON SOCIAL MEDIA?	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Yes	150	75%
No	50	25%
Total	200	100

Source: fieldwork 2025

The information above suggest that, 150(75%) of respondents feel the government should impose stronger controls on what minors see on social media, while 50(25%) disagree. This demonstrates strong support for increased legislation to safeguard young people from harmful or inappropriate online content.

Table 29: HAVE YOUR PARENTS OR TEACHERS EVER TALKED TO YOU ABOUT SAFE ONLINE BEHAVIOUR?

HAVE YOUR PARENTS OR TEACHERS EVER TALKED TO YOU ABOUT SAFE ONLINE BEHAVIOUR?	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Yes	82	41%
No	118	59%
Total	200	100

Source: fieldwork 2025

According to the findings, the majority of respondents (59%) have not received any guidance from parents or instructors regarding safe online conduct, while only 41% have. Given that many young people are left to handle the risks associated with social media on their own, this illustrates a serious communication and educational gap. Stronger parental participation and school-based digital safety education are necessary since inconsistent advice may make them more susceptible to dangerous behaviours, hazardous content, and online exploitation.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study shows that social media is deeply woven into the daily lives of University of Benin students. A striking 96.5% of respondents said they own smartphones, and 88.5% confirmed they use social media every day. This demonstrates that students are not only highly connected but also frequently exposed to online content, including relationship and lifestyle topics, which 76.5% said they actively follow. Such high engagement suggests that social media serves as a vital space for interaction, learning, and identity formation. However, it can also put pressure on young people, impacting their self-image and behavior. Regarding relationship dynamics, the findings reveal both positive and negative effects. While most

respondents (72.5%) did not report conflicts due to social media, nearly 27.5% acknowledged that social media had led to misunderstandings in their relationships. A significant number (33%) admitted to feeling pressured to showcase their relationships online, and 72% believed that social media promotes unrealistic ideas about love and relationships. These results indicate that while social media provides a platform for expression and connection, it also fosters a culture of comparison and the need for validation, which can weaken relationship stability. The study highlights peer influence through social media as a major factor. For example, 29% felt pressured by friends to post about their relationships, while 31.5% felt compelled to change their behavior or appearance to fit perceived online standards. Furthermore, over half of the respondents (57.5%) said they often felt the need to meet certain expectations to gain admiration or acceptance. This aligns with social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954), showing that students measure themselves against idealized images of relationships and lifestyles on social media, often resulting in feelings of inadequacy, jealousy, or low self-esteem. Sexual behavior also stands out as an area significantly impacted by social media. The majority (84%) reported seeing sexual or suggestive content online, and 65% revealed they had received unwanted sexual messages or images, indicating a high rate of cyber harassment. A noteworthy 42.5% admitted they tried something sexual after seeing it online, illustrating that exposure often leads to action. Furthermore, 91% agreed that social media encourages teenagers to engage in sexual behavior. This implies that sexual content online is not only normalized but also actively influences young people's experimentation, curiosity, and risk-taking. Support and guidance for navigating these risks seem limited. A majority (63.5%) reported feeling uncomfortable discussing sex or social media issues with parents or guardians, and 59% stated that parents or teachers had never talked to them about safe online behaviour. This gap in communication leaves many students without reliable support. Nevertheless, the findings indicate a strong desire for intervention: 78.5% believe schools should provide more education on social media safety and sexual

health, 75% said they would use privacy or safety tools if they were easier to access, and another 75% supported stricter government rules on what teenagers can see online. Overall, the findings paint a clear picture: while social media is central to young people's lives, it brings substantial risks to relationships, self-image, and sexual behaviour. The widespread exposure to sexual content, the pressure to conform to online standards, and the lack of adequate guidance from parents and teachers highlight the urgent need for collective action. Schools should include social media and sexual health education in their programs, parents need to encourage open discussions, and governments should enhance online safety regulations. By tackling these issues together, the risks of social media can be lowered while still benefiting learning, expression, and connection.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

This study investigated the Influence of Social Media on Teen Sexual Behavior and Relationship among students in the University of Benin. Three research questions were raised for this study. The study adopted survey research design and the instrument for data collection was a questionnaire. It was built around the research question and validated by the researcher's supervisor. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics of tally marks and cumulative frequency. The following is a summary of the findings from the empirical analysis of the study:

1. The study found that social media has a strong impact on adolescents and young adults by shaping how they communicate, build relationships, and view sexuality. Theories like Uses and Gratification and Social Learning Theory explain that young people use social media to fulfill their needs for information, identity, and validation. They also learn behaviors, including sexual ones, by watching their peers and influencers online.
2. The analysis showed very high levels of smartphone ownership, with 96.5% of respondents having them. Additionally, 88.5% use social media daily. A significant 76.5% follow content about relationships or lifestyles, indicating that these platforms serve as spaces for forming identities, expressing themselves, and influencing peers.
3. The data indicated that while social media helps people connect, it also creates pressure. About 27.5% reported having conflicts in their relationships because of social media. Another 33% compared their relationships to how they appear online, and 72% felt that social media encourages unrealistic expectations. This suggests that social media can lead to dissatisfaction, jealousy, and norms shaped by peers among students.
4. Findings showed considerable exposure to sexual influences, with 84% of respondents seeing sexual content. Additionally, 65% received unwanted sexual

messages, and 42.5% admitted trying something sexual because they saw it online. At the same time, 78.5% wanted schools to provide more education about sexual health and safe online behavior, while 75% supported stricter government regulations. This indicates that students are aware of the risks of social media and want structured education and protective measures.

5.2 Conclusion

This study finds that social media is heavily integrated into the lives of University of Benin students. It plays a significant role in shaping their relationship patterns and sexual behavior. Theories like Uses and Gratification and Social Learning Theory explain why students are attracted to and influenced by social media, whether for connection, validation, or building their identities. However, the findings show that while social media can help with bonding and learning, it also exposes young people to risks.

Additionally, the results reveal a serious gap in guidance and protection. Most students lack parental or teacher support in practicing safe online behaviors, which makes them vulnerable to negative influences. A majority of students, 63.5%, do not feel comfortable discussing social media and sex with their parents, and 59% reported that neither parents nor teachers had talked to them about safe online practices. This lack of guidance puts young people at risk of misinformation, exploitation, and peer pressure. However, their desire for more education in schools, safety tools, and stricter regulations indicates they are ready for help. The study stresses the need for collaboration among families, schools, policymakers, and technology companies to ensure that the benefits of social media are balanced with protective strategies that support young people's wellbeing.

5.3 Recommendations

1. **Integration of Digital Literacy in Schools:** Schools should implement programs on social media safety, online ethics, and sexual health to help students engage critically with online content.
2. **Parental Engagement:** Parents and guardians should be encouraged to communicate openly, which will reduce the discomfort students feel when discussing sex and social media at home.
3. **Government Regulation:** Policymakers should set stricter rules to limit minors' exposure to explicit content, enforce age restrictions, and hold social media companies accountable.
4. **Platform Responsibility:** Social media platforms should make safety and privacy tools easier to access. They should also improve reporting and content moderation systems to protect young users from harassment and harmful material.
5. **Counselling and Peer Support:** Universities should provide safe spaces, including counselling units and peer support groups, where students can talk about pressures from social media, relationship issues, and sexuality in a supportive environment.

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APPENDIX

UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, EDO STATE

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY

QUESTIONNAIRE.

I am a Final year student of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Faculty of Social Sciences at University of Benin, Edo State. I am conducting a research on “**THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON TEEN SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR AND REALTIONSHIP IN THE UNIVERSITY OF BENIN**”. Kindly give your candid opinion on the said topic as it will be used strictly for academic purpose. Your responses will be handled confidentially and your participation and cooperation will be highly appreciated.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA.

1. SEX: Male [] Female []
2. AGE: 16-20 [] 21-25 [] 26-30 [] 31-35 [] 36-40 []
3. LEVEL: 100 [] 200 [] 300 [] 400 [] 500 []
4. MARITAL STATUS: Single [] Married [] Separated [] Divorced []
5. RELIGION: Christian [] Muslim [] Traditional [] Others []
6. Halls of Residence: Hall 1 [] Hall 2 [] Hall 3 [] Hall 4 []

SECTION B: SOCIAL MEDIA USE.

1. Are you between the ages of 13 and 19? [] Yes [] No
2. Are you currently in a romantic relationship? [] Yes [] No
3. Do you use social media every day? [] Yes [] No
4. Do you have access to your own personal smartphone or device? [] Yes [] No
5. Do you follow or engage with relationship or lifestyle content online? [] Yes [] No

SECTION C: SOCIAL MEDIA AND RELATIONSHIP DYNAMICS.

6. Has social media ever caused misunderstandings or conflicts in your relationship? [
] Yes [] No
7. Do you feel pressure to show your relationship on social media? [] Yes [] No
8. Have you ever compared your relationship to those you see on social media? [] Yes
[] No
9. Have you ever felt pressured by friends to post certain things about your relationship
online? [] Yes [] No
10. Do you think social media sets unrealistic expectations for romantic relationships? [
] Yes [] No
11. Have you ever changed your behaviour or appearance to fit in with what your friends
post on social media? [] Yes [] No
12. Has social media ever made you feel like you must meet a certain standard to be
accepted or admired? [] Yes [] No
13. Has social media ever made you feel jealous or insecure in your relationship? [] Yes
[] No

SECTION D: SOCIAL MEDIA AND SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR.

14. Have you seen sexual or suggestive content on social media? [] Yes [] No

15. Have you ever felt pressured to dress or act more sexually because of social media? [

Yes [] No

16. Have you ever received unwanted sexual messages or images through social media? [

Yes [] No

17. Do you think social media encourages teenagers to act sexually? [] Yes [] No

18. Have you ever tried something sexually because you saw it online? [] Yes [] No

SECTION E: SUPPORT AND MITIGATION MEASURES.

19. Do you feel comfortable talking to your parents or guardians about social media and

sex? [] Yes [] No

20. Do you think schools should teach more about social media safety and sexual health?

[] Yes [] No

21. Would you use privacy and safety tools on social media if they were easier to access?

[] Yes [] No

22. Do you think the government should make stricter rules for what teens see on social

media? [] Yes [] No

23. Have your parents or teachers ever talked to you about safe online behavior? []

Yes [] No