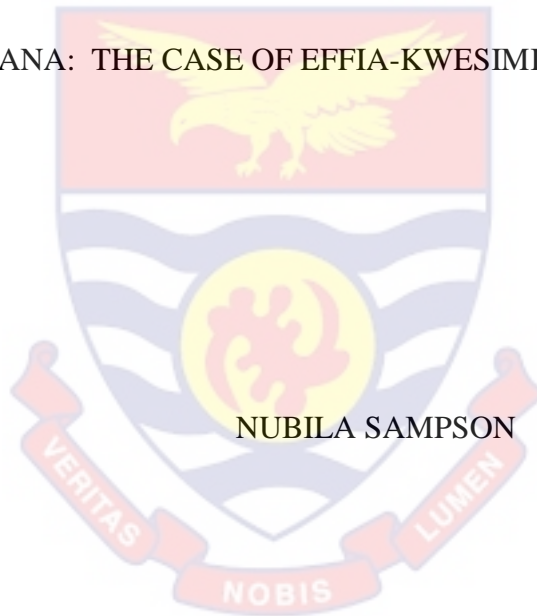


UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

SOCIAL MEDIA AND MORAL DECADENCE AMONG THE YOUTH IN
GHANA: THE CASE OF EFFIA-KWESIMINTSIM DISTRICT.



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2024



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GHANA: A CASE OF EFFIA-KWESIMINTSIM DISTRICT.

BY

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Thesis submitted to the Department of Religion and Human Values, Faculty of
Arts, University of Cape Coast, in fulfillment of the requirement for the award
of Master of Philosophy (MPhil) Degree in Religion and Human Values

FEBRUARY, 2024

DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that I conducted this research work (thesis) and there is no research work so far conducted by any candidate on the topic for an award of a degree in this University.

Candidate's Signature:

Date:

Name: SAMPSON NUBILA

Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the presentation of this thesis was supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis by the University of Cape Coast.

Supervisor's Signature:.....

Date:.....

Name: REV. DR. JOSEPH OPPONG

ABSTRACT

Social media has witnessed much usage over the years since its inception. Social media use especially its contents consumption comes with some level of influence on the users' lives, either positively or negatively. This study investigates how contents consumption has contributed to the decline of the youth's morality. This research aimed at identifying the youth's experiences and outcomes of their consumption of social media contents on their moral lives. A qualitative research method was used to investigate this, where twenty-eight (28) participants were sampled for the data collection via interviews and focus group discussions. Social media contents come with positive impacts on users; however, the negative contents seem to outweigh the positive ones. According to the data, moral decadence is a reality and the contents the youth often consume have contributed to moral decadence in the district. The study further points out that the consumption of social media contents lures the youth to become immoral. The study concludes that the youth have become morally decadent as they practice unethical lifestyles such as disrespecting the elderly, masturbation, prostitution (Hookups), fraud, identity theft, drug abuse, stealing and betting as a result of consuming negative contents on social media. The youth are found in such unethical lifestyles because they watch contents such as sexual-related contents, gambling contents, videos and movies on any of the social media handles. It is therefore, recommended that, proper measures should be put in place to check the canker to avoid the occurrence of more decadence in the society. Again, to achieve this aim, there should be government and stakeholders' intervention especially social media service providers to regulate social media usage in Ghana.

KEY WORDS

Content Consumption

Concept of social media

Ghanaian society

Influence

Morality

Moral decadence

Privacy invasion

Moral Values

Youth

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The research was successful by the help of some few personalities whom I want to acknowledge. I express my appreciation to my supervisor, Rev. Dr. Joseph Oppong for his immense support and guidance throughout the research work. To my family for their supports and encouragement. Not leaving out the participants I interviewed, I appreciate their effort, time, dedication and commitment to make this research a success. Thank you.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my family.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

NGO (Non-Governmental Organization)

NCA (National Communication Authority)

CID (Criminal Investigation Department)

TV (Television)

ICGC (International Central Gospel Church)

LI (Legislative Instrument)

STDs (Sexually Transmitted Diseases)

G.S.M.S. R (Global Social Media Statistical Research)

I.W.S (Internet World Statistics)

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Social media is understood in the words of Ezeah et al. (2013:23) as the “modern interactive communication channels through which people connect, share ideas, express themselves, experiences, pictures, messages, videos and information of common interest”. Social media makes connectivity and communication with people over the globe easier. It consists of the traditional media and social networking sites. Social media networking sites include; Facebook, TikTok, X formally Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Snapchat inter alia while the traditional media includes; email, magazine, television, radio etc. It has become a global accepted platform where the youths for instance have largely welcomed this new technology. Sode (2019) referenced Boyd (2007) to state how social media has now become a way of life and social norm across the globe which is used as medium to disseminate information and unveil social lives.

Social media has witnessed much usage during the introduction of mobile technologies (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Kent, 2016; and Jeessmitha, 2019). This mobile technology helps users to easily connect to the internet to be able to use these social media handles. This is because, social media cannot be utilized without the internet and all the social media handles like Facebook, WhatsApp, X all depend on the internet to operate. With the coming in of social media, life seemed to be smart, easy, and faster for its users. However, one will wonder why social media users would disclose their real identity, share pictures and videos of themselves, relatives and friends on the internet

via social media and put their lives in danger or on the line which they could be defrauded or have their account hacked. While there are exchange of sensitive information and contents of interest among social media users as well as discussing topics, passing of comments, likes or dislikes of information shared on social media by others (Sode, 2019), one could possibly encounter fraudsters who could hack his or her account or jump into pornographic contents inter alia.

Social media has witnessed much recognition in this 21st century especially in the late 1990s and in the early 2000s. In the United State of America for instance, about 90% of its users are adolescents with 75% of users' use the internet for connectivity twice a day (Kist, 2008). In Ghana, then trend does not look different as the populace are found using social media. Ghana for that matter is among the African nations that patronize social media and the fourth largest internet connection in Africa and 87th internet connectivity globally. Sode (2019) cited Ghana Social Media Report (2016) to explain that, the prevailing internet usage increased rapidly in 2011. Places where two or three people meet globally, they are found of using the internet to visit any of the social media handles. In 2016 alone, it recorded 40% of registered social media users in Ghana which has witnessed an increase in percentages of about 60% in 2022 (Sasu, 2022).

This research focuses on social media handles (WhatsApp, Facebook, TikTok, Snapchat, Tinder, X and Instagram) and how these handles influence users' moral lives especially in Ghana. Among the high patronage of social media in Ghana according to the Internet World Statistical report (2017), 35% is Facebook. Sasu (2022) estimates 89% of WhatsApp users, 59.3% of

Facebook and 61.9% of Instagram users in Ghana. For instance, Facebook and WhatsApp dominate in terms of patronage with WhatsApp and Tiktok being the favourite social media handles used by the youth in Ghana. This demonstrates the level Ghanaians make use of social media and by specification, the type of social media handles they mostly visits. This suggests that, most Ghanaian youths' interest lies in betting and adult website (sexuality contents) and they visit the various handles to consume contents of such nature. The issue of the youth and sexual contents consumption is also found in the works of Anderson and Oppong (2013) who state that the youth find interest in watching pornographic materials via the internet which affects their moral standards.

Rawath and Satheesh (2015) and Mensah and Kyei (2019) further shown in their studies that the youth patronise social media than adults and about 95% of the youth spend half of their time online which affect their mental health and their behaviors. This serves as indication that social media frequent usage could have impacts on the life of the users. Since social media is key in the world today and the Ghanaian society has witnessed its high usage, the potency of affecting users for that matter, one's morality cannot be underestimated (Mageto, 2017).

Morality is also very essential in very human environment especially in Ghana. Morality provides sets of rules to govern the behaviour of people in order for an action to be right or wrong, good or evil (Fagothey, 1959; Gyekye, 1996), however, there has been reports and condemnation on the insurgences of moral decadence in the Ghanaian society. Once there is moral decadence, the impression is that the moral fabrics of the society have fallen

and it is injurious to the society because it does not promote moral development. Moral decadence in this instance suggests the high rate of prostitution, cybersex, identity theft, cyber frauds, drug abuse, and many other ill lifestyles one can imagine. These immoral lifestyles could be influenced by many factors and reason.

Some studies have indicated how social media affect character formation (Dapaah, 2015). Scholars like Mageto (2017), and Oloyede & Oloyede (2022) for instance have worked on the effects of social media on the well-being of children, its influence on academic performance and social lives (Mensah and Kyei, 2019). These scholars try to indicate that, social media usage has influence on users' lives. This means if people use social media for the appropriate purposes and its predetermined goals, the outcome will be positive and the reverse is true for the negative side.

The motive for the study is based on the evidence in literature on the high usage of social media handles like Facebook, WhatsApp, TikTok, Tinder and Instagram and how it influences one's life. The study will help to reveal how its usage has negatively affected the youth's daily lives as they consume social media contents. This is to look at the moral implication on the use of social media on the Ghanaian youth where the concern is on the youth's recent indulgence in sexual immoral acts (prostitution), cybersex, identity theft, betting and drugs as well as fraud. The study will highlight the experiences of the youth on the contents they consume and its effect on their morality. In this way, the research will expand literature on how social media influences moral lives. Therefore, interrogating if there is some correlation between social

media and morality and how it has influenced people's moral lives is in the right direction.

Statement of the Problem

Many Ghanaian youth use social media (Mensah and Kyei, 2019; Sasu, 2022). Literature also indicates how social media influences the life of the users and for that matter the youth (Rawath and Satheesh, 2019). Other scholars like Dapaah (2015); Makwei (2015) and Mensah and Kyei (2019) have worked on the influence of social media on the character formation of adolescent, academic performance of students and its effects on the moral lives of Ghanaian youths. With all these studies, however, there is still the case of moral decadence in the Ghanaian society and it appears that of the youth is rather higher (Mensah and Kyei, 2019). The issue of moral decadence among the youth in Effia-Kwesimintsim district in recent times raises a lot of concerns of what could possibly be the cause. Could it be the youth's consumption of social media contents that have contributed to the decline of their morality? Since there is scanty literature on how the contents of social media influence the youth's actions and behaviours, it is therefore imperative to examine how social media contents consumption influence the youth into exhibiting unethical lifestyles. This study seeks to investigate how the contents the youth consume on social media has caused moral decadence in the Effia-Kwesimintsim district. This will help address the need for policy implementation to regulate social media activities that affect users and lowers moral standards among the youth in the Effia-Kwesimintsim district and by extension the Ghanaian society.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate how the consumption of social media contents have contributed to the moral decline of the youth in the Effia-Kwesiminstim district.

Significance of the study

This study will contribute to knowledge by highlighting on social media contents the youth consume and how it has negatively impacted their moral lives.

Again, it will benefit and serve as a guide to policymakers to make policies to regulate social media against contents that turn to have negative behavioral impacts on consumers. This will help to orient and reshape the way people use social media.

It will bring to light some of the ethical challenges associated with the use and content on social media in other for the services providers to check and monitor activities that goes on social media platforms.

It will provide the opportunity for stakeholders and the government to know the current state of moral decadence in the society in order to regulate the use of social media to meet the moral demands of society.

Aims and Objectives

The aim of this study is to carry out an investigation on how the consumption of social media contents have contributed to the level of moral decadence we see in the selected research area.

Objectives

The main objective of this study is to investigate how social media contents consumption has caused moral decadence among the youth in the Effia-Kwesimintsim district. The following are the sub-objectives of the study.

- 1) To know the youth's choice of social media sites.
- 2) To understand which contents the youth mostly consume and why?
- 3) To explore the youth's awareness of social media use and its contents effects on them when consumed inappropriately.
- 4) To investigate how social media contents consumption has contributed to the moral decadence among the youth in the Effia-Kwesimintsim district.

Research Questions

The following questions were implored to investigate the youth's consumption of social media contents and how it has influenced their moral lives.

1. Which of the social media sites do the youth mostly visit?
2. Which social media contents do the youth find interesting and why?
3. In what way are the youth aware of the effects of social media contents consumption on one's moral life?
4. In what way(s) has social media contents consumption contributed to the moral decadence among the youth in the Effia-Kwesimintsim District?

Scope of Study

The study focused on Effia-Kwesimintsim district. The research investigated how social media contents consumption has contributed to moral decadence among the youth in the district. The youth were the target population who are between the ages of 15-35 years. The research was

delimited to social media networking sites such as; Facebook, TikTok, Snapchat, Tinder, X, Instagram and WhatsApp. This is because it has become the current social media sites the youth mostly consume.

Methodology

This section covers the research design and approach, the population sample and sampling techniques, research instruments, the data collection procedure and data analysis procedure.

Research Design and Approach

The research design this study adopted was a case study. A case study according to Yin (1994), offers an in-depth examination of a single instance or event - a case. It provides a systematic way of looking at an event, collecting data, analysing the data and reporting the results. Again, a case study is used to examine a programme or problems usually focusing on a particular jurisdiction or organization, hence, the study using case study as a research design. Case study can be grouped into intrinsic, instrumental and collective. This study is an intrinsic case study because it has helped the researcher to understand the problem under researched and helps to understand in details about that particular case or uncover it.

The study was approached qualitatively. Qualitative research according to Dennis (2002) is a system of inquiry that seeks to build on a holistic, descriptive, and largely on narratives in order to inform the researcher to undertake some socio-cultural phenomenon. Again, according to Creswell (1998), qualitative research takes a natural form or setting which uses multiple interactive and holistic methods. Qualitative research helps to deal with data gathering with the use of interview, focus group discussion and observation

method for analyses to understand a phenomenon. The researcher chose this approach to conduct a thorough investigation by interacting with participants so that they could provide an in-depth view on the subject under study and by this method, the researcher comes to understand the concept and phenomenon under study in order to interpret the said events.

Research instrument

Interviews (face-to-face) and focused group discussion were the study's data collection instruments. An interview was used because it provided flexible strategies for obtaining the data, which provided opportunity for the interviewees to express their thought, experiences, feeling and offered suggestions about the issue under study. Sixteen (16) participants were engaged in a face-to-face interaction to share their views. For the focus group discussion, twelve (12) persons were grouped into two teams to share their knowledge on the issue under study. With these groups, they were sampled through a snow balling approach. Their responses helped the researcher to obtain data suitable from a varied group of persons where the researcher was being guided by the research questions. The interview guide used was a semi-structured one which provided grounds for the interviewees to freely respond to the questions for suitable data for the study.

Population Sample and Sampling Method

A sample population is the sub-group of a target population that a researcher uses for his or her study to represent the whole. While population looks at a study of an entire area or elements under investigation, the sample is a part of the whole population (Singh & Masuku, 2014). For this study, the sample population is twenty-eight (28). These twenty-eight (28) were youths

whose views and opinions on the subject under study were sought out. These 28 participants consist of sixteen (16) males and twelve (12) females who are secondary and tertiary students, pastors, teachers and counsellors who fall within the age bracket (15-35 years). These groups of people were chosen on the bases that they are conversant with the use of social media and could give more insight into how their use of social media affects their moral lives. The 28 participants were chosen and will validate the research because, to Stratton (2019), sampling a population for qualitative research does not require selecting huge number but a group or individuals to represent the whole since it deals with interpreting an in-depth information and views of the participants on the subject under study. Morse (1995) also states that, there is no clear cut or accurate reference to estimate a number to form sample size to reach saturation. Therefore, using 28 are enough to work with on the conviction that they could give right information on the subject under study.

The sampling method used by the researcher to select the participants was a non-probability sampling. To Stratton (2019), a non-probability sampling method enables the individual to be selected based on non-random criteria and in that case, not everybody has the chance of being selected or participated in the study. Under the non-probability sampling, the researcher implored the convenient sampling technique to select the participants for the research work. The researcher used this sample technique to select the participants based on their availability for the collection of the data. The researcher interviewed the participants for 45 minutes to 55 minutes depending on the availability of the participants and the focus group discussion took 1 hour 30 minutes.

Another non-probability sampling technique was snowballing. The snowballing technique is typically used to select participants with common trace of traits for a study. This sampling technique involves making referral from existing participants to recruit new participants and it build trust and rapport between the researcher and the participants. By this sampling technique, the research was able to approach the subject under investigation with full rigor of presenting good data for the research work since the participants were willing to cooperate and to share their views on the subject under researched.

The Study Area

Effia-Kwesimintsim is a district located in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis, which formed part of the fourteen (14) districts within the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolitan Assembly. It got its district status on March 15, 2018, separating from the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolitan Assembly under the legislative instrument (L.I.) 2349. It includes towns such as Anaji, East Tanokrom, Efi, Kwesimintsim, Assakae, Whindo, Efiakuma and others. The district is mainly Fante and Ahanta dominated. The district is located at the south western part of the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolitan Assemble (STMA). The main economic activities include farming, fishing and other private or small-scale business within Takoradi and Sekondi Township. According to 2021 population census, the population of Effia-Kwesimintsim district is 1,739,575 with females dominating in percentage, with 88,111 forming 50.6% and 85,864 males at 49.4% (<https://ekma.gov.gh>, 2022). The youth are also believed to form part of the larger population in the district of about 66,634 with 33,637 males and 32,997 females. One of the key challenging in the

district is unemployment. The youth especially are the very people who lack jobs opportunities which the district has captured in the social intervention plan to deal with.

According to the 2021 census, the youth form about 35% of the total population in the district with males dominating over the females (<https://census2021.statsghana.gov.gh/>). In the district, there have been constant developmental projects and social intervention activities, including welfare services, skill training services like ICT for the youth, social and community services, educational services, etc. (<https://ekma.gov.gh/2022>

Data Collection Procedure

For this study, the participants were interviewed using a well semi-structure interview guide. With the help of the semi-structure guide, the participants had the free-will to express their opinions on the subject under researched. Twelve (12) of the participants took part in the focus group discussion who were grouped into two teams with six (6) members in each team to discuss the subject under research based on the research questions. Among those who formed the focus group, six (6) were females and six (6) males and 8 females and 8 males for the interview. In the process, tape recorder and notes were taken to support the exercise. The remaining thirteen (13) were interviewed on one-on-one with the interviewer.

Data Analysis Procedure

The data was analysed thematically using the responses from the participants. The data collected were transcribed, analysed, and categorised into emerging themes to enable the researcher to give accurate information on

the work and draw a logical conclusion. The emerging themes were discussed with the help of literature.

Ethical Consideration

The ethical dimensions of the study were taken into consideration. An ethical certificate was sought from the Institutional Review Board of the University of Cape Coast (UCC) before going to conduct the research. Again, the selected participants were briefed and well informed of the purpose and objectives of the research to be conducted. The participants who agreed to be part of the research were the one's recruited. The interview guide was read out to the participants for them to understand before taking the data. Again, a consent form was given out to the participants to fill before the data was collected. The participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality that the information given was going to be used for the study only since some of them were giving their personal information. They were assured that the data will be managed well. The data was then kept safe on a pen drive and only the researcher had access to it and was later destroyed and thrown away.

Literature Review

This section presents a thematized literature review on the subject under inquiry. The themes considered for the study are; the concept of social media, the opportunities of social media use, the challenges of the use of social media and social media and its effects on users.

The concept of social media

Social media is one of the most powerful platforms available today for simple interaction and connection. Many attempts to give a definition to social media has been made by scholars, however, it has become difficult to

characterise social media using a single vocabulary. For this reason, Carr and Hayes (2014) maintain that social media has several definitions. This is because for them, social media can be defined in every field like economics, politics, business, and communication. Nonetheless, given its more expansive definition, social media's primary aim is to facilitate social networking and relationships between individuals.

The term social media is clearly defined in the words of Addai-Mensah (2020) as the channel of communication that facilitate interpersonal relationship. By this, Ezeah et al. (2013) also added that it is a modern interactive platform (social media) that allows for creating user-content to share any information or contents of the user's interest. In this way, people from far and near could easily access the information or content of interest. He gave out examples of these social media handles such as, Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, X and snap chat. These social networks facilitate finding friends and sharing contents with friends and relatives.

Furthermore, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) aver that social media is an internet application platform that builds upon the technological and the framework of Web 2.0, facilitating the creation and exchange of user-generated content and simplifying life through its evolutionary changes. The modern internet, which is more user-friendly for end users, which Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) attempt to justify as the foundation is referred to as Web 2.0. In general, Web 2.0 is an online application from the 21st century that has revolutionized the digital age. The digital age has made life simpler and has revolutionized how humans do things. For instance, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) argue that the invention of the telegraph in 1792 made it easier to

transmit communications over large distances. Computers, phones, radios, and networking sites such as user networks, bulletin board systems, and online services were created in the 19th and 20th centuries, and subsequently social media networks. It appears Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) try to highlight that although there were several ways for individuals to communicate and connect with one another in recent times unlike the past where verbal communication and letter writing were their means of interaction. As Balbir (2017) also points out, social networking technology has made communication easier and has turned into an avenue for family engagement. Adding to Kaplan and Haenlein and Balbir, social media has enabled users to engage in online discussions, add to user-generated material, and become part of online communities through a variety of internet-based and mobile services (Dewing, 2010). This suggests that social media allows users to share, and post videos, take photos and pictures, and screenshots of others and themselves via computers or smartphones through web-based software applications such as Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, and WhatsApp, among others. One will agree with Dewing (2010) on the significance of social media within the human environment, however, we cannot take away the fact that social media has its negative side effects which includes sharing of bad contents such as pornography, fraud, gambling and participating in them.

Bandura (1987) and Mageto (2017) noted that, while social media is a learning environment, it has also had a negative impact on youth since they are exposed to negative information and that affects their character and behaviours. For instance, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, WhatsApp, TikTok, Instagram, and many more traditional media outlets are among the social

media platforms from which the majority of individuals learn diverse attitudes and behaviours. There are many kinds and forms of social media, but they all help with content sharing, education, producing and sharing photographs, and opening up previously unimagined opportunities for people to meet in person. Since social media sites are all designed with specific purposes in mind, the content that is posted is determined by their features. For example, most social networking networks such as X and Facebook have channels for texting, communicating, sharing videos, audio, and fast publishing and some including are limited.

Social media has found its way into improving education by fostering effective learning and transforming business. Today, online business has seen market boom and easy patronisation without any worry about distance. Following the above submission, it seems social media provides only good business service and transforms the educational sector; however, social media has its own negative implications. Barker (2011) holds that the majority of the people shifting speedily to social media most times witnessed a negative impact on their social and moral lives. There are a lot of unacceptable behaviours and conduct in the world that are perceived to be social media projecting it such as forwarding fake news, sharing nude pictures and showing crime videos, images and other content that affects behavioral, character and ethical standards of the individual.

People have become addicted to social media and they take things as “normal” and practice them as it appears to them without taking into consideration their ethical implications (Mageto, 2017). The position of the Mageto (2017) materializes when the youths do not get any proper guidelines

as to which content are good for them and what to consume. When that happened, their morality become threatened and could lead to developing bad character.

Social media use is growing daily throughout the world. Barker (2011) state that social media have proliferated in comparison to previous years, providing young people with a new means of interacting with one another and the outside world. Adding to his submission, from the early 2004 to 2006, social media became more and more popular, especially after Facebook and other social media platforms were established. Since its founding, Facebook, for instance, has amassed over 1.44 billion monthly active users and 1.25 billion mobile users, of which 65% utilise the platform every day (Protalinski, 2015). By this data, it indicates how it has been patronized at its inception and the probability of further proliferation.

Most social media users use mobile data or subscribe to any data in order to access information. In Ghana, for instance, the number of Internet users as of June 2014 was 5,171,993 with 20.1% Internet penetration. Out of the total Internet users in Ghana, 1,630,420 users were on Facebook (Internet World Statistics, 2014). Here, the statistics have not indicated whether the majority of users of social media are youth so it becomes unrealistic to really identify how many of the users are youth and to what extent it has affected them so as to draw a logical conclusion from the data.

From the above statistics provided by IWS (2014), one could assert that the youth have embraced social media by connecting with their peers, share information, reinventing their personalities, and new ideas, and showcase their pride intelligence, and social lives and behaviours

(Dapaah,2015). As the youth flood social media, it will eventually have influence on them and as a result, they will be involved in activities that may or may not be injurious and could have lasting moral consequences.

The Benefits of the Use of Social Media

Social media are applications that enable people to reach out to relatives and friends and build a social network that bridges the distance gap existing in the world. Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, MySpace, and other traditional media outlets like radio and television are utilised for communication, photo and video sharing, information sharing and material retrieval (Lusk, 2008). Some of the opportunities that come with using social media will be discussed in this part because it appears that these social media platforms have a profitable value when used.

Information Sharing and Communication: social media is the medium of online communication channels dedicated to information dissemination, interaction, content-sharing, and collaborations. For this reason, people create social media handles in order to reach out to their friends, followers, and cronies. For example, the youth utilise these handles to practise and participate in it in different ways, learn new creative ways, and socialise (Tapscott, 1998).

According to him, social media is the most practical medium for the present generation of social media users to communicate their feelings, ideas, and inventions. This is somewhat accurate, as the majority of young people utilise social media platforms like Facebook, Snapchat, and TikTok to share their experiences and expertise with others. However, when people use social media for the appropriate purposes and its predetermined goals the outcome

becomes positive but when used in inappropriately like watching pornographic materials, showing nudes, its outcome becomes negative. This is why in recent years the use of social media has made people exhibit certain immoral behaviours which raise questions and concerns about the societal cherished ethics and the need to address such menace. To mitigate and prevent detrimental impacts on society while promoting beneficial ones, cooperation among all relevant platforms is necessary (Damota, 2019). Today, the easiest way to disseminate a full-size wide variety of information, with pleasant and less worrying situations, is through social media platforms. Therefore, in working collaboratively to safeguard the morality and norms of the society, social media can serve as a medium to address it if used profitably and for such intended purposes.

Social media platforms have helped public lifestyles and have made information retrieval easier, for instance, report situations to receive help, organise fora and conferences, advertise for patronage, etc. when it comes to interaction with company partners, communication between public officials and business owners, it takes place so quickly. For example, Ocansey et al. (2016) noted that the value of social technology cannot be separated from the human aspect of the world since it gives our everyday existence purpose and, in doing so, reduces barriers to communication and distance. They tend to believe that for this generation, social media is a primary means of communication and information seeking, and possibly, a central component of their identity and community building.

In as much as social media has its positive ways, we cannot also deny its negatives. This is why Balbir (2017) stipulated that social media impose

threats to the moral life or behaviour of people, especially the youth when it is not used appropriately. From Balbir's (2017) argument, there is reason to appreciate why recently there have been unwarranted posts of indecent dresses, dating sites, sexual drugs, and criminality in our society. More so, one cannot deny that social media technology links people together in ways that resemble traditional feelings of connection, belonging, loosely defined memberships, exchange of feelings and ideas, and the reporting of experiences and actions. This is because it creates a generation of "we" feelings and a sense of togetherness. Everywhere one finds him or herself, there is such an avenue to link up though it has its own challenges.

Socialisation and communalism (togetherness): Another insightful benefit with the use of social media is its way of bringing people of different race and people living in distance locations together. Social media sites allow people to stay connected with friends and family, make new friends, share pictures, and exchange ideas. In view of this, social media helps to bring people from diverse locations together and today one can socialise with distant relatives and friends so easily. This shows that social media participation can offer people deeper benefits that extend into their view of self, community, and the world, including opportunities for community engagement through raising money for charity and volunteering for local events, thus political and philanthropic events. This of course shows how people mobilise themselves through social media like Zoom and Skype to carry out any event planned or undertaken by any group either by association or non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Social media helps people build positive relationships with others, which in turn improve people's lives. It also gives people the chance to respect, tolerate, and have more conversations about personal and global issues, which in turn helps to foster each person's unique identity and social skills (Boyd, 2007 and Boyd, 2008). Furthermore, social media acts as a place where people meet and develop new acquaintances, providing a convenient means of interacting and expanding one's social circle. It can be countered, though, that people use social media not just for social interaction thus calling or chatting each other but also for learning, language acquisition, and a variety of other activities, therefore, fostering socialisation and encouraging the spirit of communalism.

Socialisation becomes easy and simple because almost everybody uses smartphones and these smartphones contain all the social media sites for navigation, making new friends and forming acquaintances. Before internet-based interactions, there were social interactions among people in the world. People take part of their leisure time to visit friends and have some fun before they come to their homes. They meet to communicate, interact, play, and have the necessary fun of the day (Bocar & Josco, 2022). The challenging part is with the communication and friendship-making in distant places where it takes a long time to reach out to each other. However, things have become easier and faster with the coming of an online system called social media. Later, when social networks sprang up, the entire idea of friendship and interactions changed. In the present, young individuals utilise their free period to socially interact with each other without traveling to meet friends at distant places. The existence of social media has changed the traditional activities of the way

people make friends and connect with them. The coming of social media technology has brought comfort by linking people together in ways that create a feeling of connection and belongingness.

In our world today, distance has no place in distorting friendship, because social media has bridged that gap, and this occurrence has particularly moved and changed the patterns of communication. As advanced by other researchers, social media has become the commonly desired medium of communication and togetherness for the young generation. Balbir (2017) argues from a different perspective that social media has allowed unwarranted posts such as indecent dresses, prostitution, sexual harassment, etc. in the society. Since morality is what we express in what we do, unwarranted post on social media poses a threat to the ethics of society (Williams, 1985).

Bocar and Josco (2022) contend that utilising social media to make new acquaintances is one of its benefits. In that scenario, it becomes feasible to socialise with friends who live thousands of miles away. This is why Yang's (2021) perspective seems to emphasis social media as a new means of creating close bonds, particularly friendships. Although it is typically done virtually, it is simple to stay in touch with friends, but as Williams (1985) earlier pointed out, social media usage should not go against ethical and societal norms. According to this indicator, social media turns into a community when friends perceive it as one. Social media serves as this generation's main channel for communication and information gathering, and it may even play a major role in shaping their sense of self and the sense of community.

Business and marketing: social media have provided many successful benefits for people. Apart from sharing and receiving information,

communicating and connecting people, it has become a place for jobs creation and business venture. People use the opportunity and the medium to sell and advertise their business packages. In other words, business companies use the platform to market their products to attract customers and investors and in doing so they primarily depend on social media platforms to do their advertisements (Jeesmitha, 2019). On the part of Njoroge (2013), some of the advertised social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, etc. also serve as a platform to promote customers' feedback to make it easy for customers to share experiences with companies thereby ensuring customers' confidence and broadening their understanding of the quality of their products.

Interestingly, social media has become a platform for successful businesses, companies and business partners and they use the medium to get ideas, opinions, innovations, and business plans from employees, customers, and the general public for improving products or developing goods and services (business). Making social media more useful in the global world, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) argue that business directors use social media to convey, inform and engage in important discussions for the development of their business. For instance, LinkedIn is designed purposely for business communities to create a network platform made of professionals. Most of these businesses and companies convey their meetings and channel vital information concerning the company via it. LinkedIn sometimes creates platforms for ideas, information and feedback to monitor the growth of the business and how to strategise things to ensure the effective rendering of good service to customers.

On the contrary, social media sometimes does not always guarantee free access to online services since it has its own challenges and shortcomings and as a result, social media can easily ruin someone's business just by creating a false story or spreading fake information about the products. Similarly, the argument that companies may also lose out as a result of negative reputations propagated on social media is supported by Jeemitha (2019). From his perspective, businesses utilise a popular new communication medium to reach out to clients and sell out their businesses, as social media appears to be a socially-originated site. Parallel to this, social media's role as a main channel for information sharing, community development and communication facilitates the creation of spaces that encourage idea sharing at the workplace.

Enhanced Learning Opportunities: There is no doubt that social media enhances students' learning opportunities. Social media is a tool that some middle and high school students use to communicate with one another and complete group projects and assignments (Boyd, 2008). Students can get together outside of class on Facebook and other social media platforms, for instance, to collaborate and work on assignments, share ideas with one another, and impart information to one another. Boyd (2008) reports that several educational institutions employ blogs as effective teaching tools, which have the advantage of enhancing students' written expression, creativity, and English-speaking abilities. Many information can be retrieved on social media to help address academic and learning challenges.

However, in some instances, it corrupts their writing skills and fluent speaking of the language. For instance, the short form of words used on

WhatsApp affects the student's essay expression or writing. Social media helps young people grow, and it may be argued that when young people utilise social media, it strengthens their ability to make meaningful decisions (Berson and Berson, 2005), as referenced by Njoroge (2013). In doing so, the users of social media have to be aware of the risks of social media use and how it can affect one's learning abilities, therefore, students require supervision. This is due to the fact that they may make poor decisions of copying the wrong. This is because young people are frequently seen as being more susceptible to dangerous behaviours like drug or alcohol use, prostitution, and if they are guided, they could be affected academically.

In Damota's (2019) view, the youth are vulnerable in the sense that, they spend much time on social media, and they develop many behavioural complications. He is of the conviction that, the wrong usage of social media affects the youth to practice and exhibit bad moral habits. Again, they become lazy and reluctant to learn which destroys their writing skills due to short-hand writing on the nets. The position of Damota seems to suggest that social media affects the academic and moral lives of the youth negatively however, social media has helped people to learn, research for academic work, link people for life coaching, and other benefits that come with social media use.

Online behaviours are commonly practiced by people today and in most cases, they do not see any problem with it but constantly exhibit different forms of behaviour as Mageto (2022) puts it "normalcy" meaning everything is seen as normal. The problem is, there is no ethical urgency to authenticate the information or what is posted before practicing them. However, many of these behaviours are encouraged or reinforced by the very structural

characteristics of the virtual space, and sometimes the manifestation of certain behaviours is necessary in order to participate with others in cyberspace and enjoy the full benefits of online applications (Njoroge, 2013).

One will agree that learning takes place where there is a form of communication and interaction, and that is why recent educational development around the world concerning virtual learning has improved communication and academic activities. In this way, it makes education more comfortable and easier and relaxing.

Challenges associated with the use of social media

Everything has its own challenges and weak side. Social media has contributed in many diverse ways to the development of the society; however, we cannot write off its negative impacts. We will consider some of the negative effects of the use of social media.

Fake news and fake advertisements: social media content mostly is used to send and receive information and news. Moreover, some of the information and news we receive from social media turn out to be fake. Fake news is information, opinions, or messages from a person or cooperating entities with the intent to circulate or send information that might be intentionally or unintentionally which is verifiably false, and could mislead users. The kind of fake information on social media clearly spell out how people post fake messages without taking into consideration the greater implications. Some of the implications fake news and information could cause are national upheavals or unrest, breeds trial conflict, disputes, and others it can and has created. Allcott and Gentzkow (2016) made a strong case using the results of the 2016 US presidential election to show that fake news

circulated on many social media platforms and was misconstrued as true, particularly on X and Facebook. The two political parties were in a panic until they realised the report was false.

Fake news on social media can take many various forms, but it typically originates from unreliable sources. Allcott and Gentzkow (2016) provided justification for the claim that occasionally, people attempt to incite friends by disseminating false information, which ultimately has negative effects on them. Social media has on many occasions used to spread information, and it has a moderately high potential for people to upload false information, which accelerates the spread of false information around the world.

Social media has been used to advertise fake products, create fake identities, and make fake advertisements on other merchandise that influence people to patronise them. From this reason, the implications that come with it make those who make income online lose the genuity and trust of customers and affect people's interest in patronising things online. On Facebook and Instagram for instance, people place orders for things advertised or showcased for sale and this might have compelled Allcott and Gentzkow (2016) to conclude that fake news and fake advertisements reduce trust for investments in online business creating a huge problem in the market space.

To help reduce the level of fake news and information put on social media, there has been recent regular monitoring and checks on these various social media accounts. This to some extent has limited the stretch at which people advertise and post fake news and fake information. In Ghana, the Police Service issued a statement against what they referred to as "charlatanic

advertisement and activities” during the Christmas festivity, because people are easily lured into engaging in such dubious acts in circulating fake news, information, and advertising fake products (issued on 23rd December 2022, by Chief Superintendent Grace A. Arkrofi). According to Berson and Berson (2005), in order for young people to develop their capacity for making decisions in life, they particularly need adult supervision. In the absence of that, failing to discern between false news and legitimate news and marketing will have negative effects and make one more disadvantaged.

Engagement in sexual activities: Sexting is the act of sending, receiving, or forwarding sexually explicit messages, photographs, or images via cell phone, computer, or other digital devices to another individual or group. It can also be taking pictures of oneself and a partner while having sexual intercourse or intimacy. For instance, according to Dapaah (2015), in Ghana, sexting has become the usual thing and this phenomenon does occur among the youth especially, and it is perceived as normal. The author seems to argue that only the youth engage in sexting however, some adults also take pictures of themselves and their spouses or fiancée during intimacy.

When people get involved in sexting, the ethical standards of the society come under threat. It is based on this that remedy is required to avert such immoral acts in society. Mageto (2017) believes that the “normalcy” of what is experienced and practiced among the youths has caused greater harm than good. The emergence of sex videos on social media nowadays is simply because they have easy access to the internet. Ghanaian youths see nothing wrong with having sex and recording the act since such are common on social media and would always want to do same.

Social media has also resulted in online sexual victimisation among the youth. According to a sex poll that was mentioned by Njoroge (2013), sexual activity has grown more common in today's globe. Njoroge (2013) explains that the Crimes Against Children Research Centre at the University of New Hampshire produced the Youth Internet Safety Survey, which indicates that most young people use social media and have experienced unwanted sexual solicitation online. The intriguing part about this situation is that some people were disturbed, but others did not think it was bad. To the supporters, since it creates an avenue for people to learn good things, it has not totally corrupted their moral standards. The supporters seem to look at the good expects of social media usage without considering its negative outcomes when used inappropriately.

Consequently, this technology has resulted in the development of dangerous online behaviour like sharing nude pictures, sex videos, etc. Thus, not only the exposition of unwanted material has been considered a serious risk, but also the participation and the facility to become a member of controversial groups. This kind of information may resonate deeply with some people, who may feel validated and inspired to practise it.

Cyberbullying and criminal activities: Bullying and other negative actions have been committed on multiple instances via social media. The term “bullying” refers to the frequent and persistent use of force by an individual or group against a victim who is unable to defend themselves (Bannink et al., 2014). People use social media to defraud people, insult and blackmail others, break and hack people’s accounts, exhibit war equipment to deter other nations, engage in terrorism, and much other bad behaviour one may think of.

Recently, people have shifted from the previous social media available like radio and television to more digital networks like Twitter, Snapchat, Facebook, WhatsApp, Tinder etc. because of limited capacity for self-regulation and ability to control peer influence and pressure. Due to this, adolescents and young people of age in society are at risk as they navigate through and experiment with what they see on social media (Damota,2019), the risk factors end them in very poor and bad conditions decaying their moral standards. There are many moral deficiencies as a result of social media's tendency to narrow people's moral attention. Because of the repercussions, it is utilised to commit internet fraud or scams in order to obtain financial gain. For example, they break into people's accounts, hack them, and then use the compromised account to control the victims or other individuals for their own gain. Remarkably, individuals who commit social media fraud are adept users of the platform; they manipulate or steal people's personal information in order to intimidate them. Cybercriminals occasionally utilise the accounts of other people to carry out illegal acts.

Cyberbullying has become the practice where friends try to post secret chats or videos, nudes, or information about their peers to sabotage or bully them. As people navigate through the social media site, they come into contact with bad content exposing them to bad groups who easily join these radical groups like terrorist groups, occultism, fraudsters, etc. The social milieu ought to instill positive behaviour in young people to avoid having the detrimental effects on them observed on social media (Berson and Berson, 2005).

Weimann (2008) submits that, social media is one of the tools used by terrorist groups to communicate with one another when planning a mission.

From his view, we could notice that terrorists use social media to monitor situations to accomplish their mission, for example, the Boko Haram of Nigeria and other Islamic countries. Weimann (2008) asserts that terrorism is a problem in many European nations with a majority of Muslims, including Russia, Iraq, Iran, and Syria among other countries. The recent reports on attacks have resulted in losing many lives. From his view, current tweets and replies on social media clearly indicate that there are ethical implications and challenges in the world.

The breakdown of family systems: Although social media presents the opportunity for effective communication, socialisation and communalism, it has a negative impact on the family system. The traditional family system where parents and their children spend quality time has gradually broken down as parents and children stay glued to their mobile phones either chatting on WhatsApp or checking the latest news, life videos and updates on Facebook, Snapchat, TikTok, etc. This has put family unity in jeopardy and has impacted young people who still require parental direction and support (Dapaah, 2015). Again, social media usage affects many families globally; Indonesia is one country where families are experiencing the effects of using platforms like YouTube and Instagram (Wolff, 2021). Given how dependent their kids are on social media, some parents even worry that they will lose them to the platform.

However, social media are the easiest way to interact with families in isolated locations, allowing for constant connection and keeping them informed about family affairs. The problem is sometimes, the bad content of social media post affects the person's understanding to believe that applying

or living by that lifestyle is the best practice but, in the end, results in fights, misunderstanding, and divorce disintegrating the family. The fact is, social media influences users, and once the families stick to its usage, they become vulnerable to online posts. The issue of social media's effect on the family system can be brought to a minimal if there are restrictions barring people from accessing any contents that may negatively affect family life. To do so and achieve the said aim requires that much attention and time must not be given to online contents that would not promote family life.

Again, social media does not help sustain most marriages and homes due to lack of attention which takes away family affection and togetherness. In most cases, couples do not have time to talk about family issues but have time to make friends and watch funny videos giving all their attention to social media. Inasmuch as social media has formed a major part of couples' daily lives in a way, boundaries have to be set to avoid ruining marriages and disuniting families as well.

Social media and its relation to depression and anxieties: Anxiety and depression exacerbate psychological discomfort and have an impact on mood. People's moods have been negatively impacted by prolonged use of social networking sites (Damota, 2019). The use of social media has been likened by several experts to a recent phenomenon that increases anxiety and despair. He further stated that, many young people spend their time on Facebook, for example, replying to messages, watching movies online, and finding new friends, it has been identified as the site that most frequently contributes to depression. Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and other social media platforms are also linked to depression, not just Facebook.

However, the intensity of online usage, which requires constant engagement, creates a factor of self-awareness that may trigger depression in some people. Jackobs (2014) argued that individuals who experience offline depression run the risk of social isolation and may seek support from dubious websites and blogs that may encourage substance abuse, hazardous sexual conduct, aggressive behaviour, and self-destructive thinking. In recent times, the very common place of anxiety and depression are users of social media. O'Keeffe and Clarke-Pearson (2011) confirm in a survey conducted that mothers who use photo-sharing sites alone on social media suffer from stress. It is because of these bad attitudes toward the use of social media that requires attention to find the extent to which it has influenced the moral lives of the youth as it will go a long way to guide people to use social media profitably. This is due to social media's promotion of posting information that highlights success and fun, which we find enjoyable, but which does not really reveal where we are having difficulties in our daily lives and instead fosters a false sense of intimacy (O'Keeffe and Clarke-Pearson, 2011).

Unhealthy sleep is an indicator of the use of social media and aside from the high level of anxiety and depression, too much time used on social media can prompt poor sleep. According to numerous researches, using social media frequently lowers one's quality of sleep (Bocar and Josco, 2022), as referenced by Lee (2015). They clarified that six out of ten cell phone owners, who are between the ages of 18 and 34, admitted to having trouble sleeping at night and keeping their phones close by in case they missed any texts, calls, or other information. Some individuals can stay on a phone call or message a friend, relative, or partner for the whole night and this affects their health

conditions and causes depression. Using social media is not all bad but it makes one feel insecure and unhappy if he or she is to go offline and this makes one stay online throughout the night without considering the health implications.

Social media and individual privacy: social media have been used to breach individual privacy and has had an impact on both physical and information security. Although children and teenagers make up the majority of Internet users, they typically do not safeguard their personal information on social media, leaving them open to cybercrimes involving privacy violations (Barrett-Maitland & Lynch, 2020). Some people do not think there is a need for social media privacy and that they share their private information and internet fraudsters capitalise on it to blackmail them. The youth tend to share every sensitive and secret issue about themselves which later hunts back at them.

In some cases, the user mistakenly taps or circulates such personal information. Privacy itself is the right to enjoy freedom from unauthorised intrusion and once there is no secret, there is no privacy because it contains information about a person or organisation without another person's notice. As privacy is a human right as well as a natural right, disregarding privacy rights frequently results in invasions of these rights (Barrett-Maitland and Lynch, 2020). When one has privacy, the thought of having this right leads to peace of mind and can provide an environment of solitude. This solitude can allow people to breathe freely in a space that is free from interference and intrusion. There is a conscious need to avoid invading privacy but social media is causing a threat to privacy and thus people share things about their secret lives

through their accounts. In some instances, people are consulted before their information are been exposed. In this case, privacy laws help provides protection against anti-social behaviours and against any disclosure of false information about others.

According to Njoroge (2013), the digital age and social media have "redefined" privacy because one cannot vividly say that he or she has some level of total privacy because social media platforms are used to make provide and share information which are known to the public. Privacy on social networking sites is heavily dependent on the users of these networks because sharing information is the primary way of participating in social communities. The nature of social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter and other social media platforms causes users to re-evaluate and often change their personal privacy information in order to participate in these socially networked communities.

Social media and its Effect on Moral Norms and Values

Social media handles like Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, Tinder, Twitter, WhatsApp and many others have played a role in facilitating the sharing of ideas, thoughts, and information with friends and families. Though social media has promoted ethical standards, however, it has posed a threat to the ethical lives of people. The most challenging part is that social media does not reveal things that promote and reflect one's moral and cultural values. It is, for this reason, Balbir (2007) and Bandura (2009) asserted that social media has influenced social norms and affected the character and behavioral development of children and the youth. Social media carries a very powerful and influential message to the extent its contents can influence people's

decisions and choices. The misleading nature of social media makes people accept what is posted and the worst of it is that, the moral values that hold people, bring them together and define them are being eroded.

Morality guides peoples' conduct to determine what is wrong and right and to make decisions and pass judgment according to their own sense of right and wrong (Fagothey, 1959). Morality also forms a component of a person's character which is recognised by society and it is expected of everybody to exhibit these moral qualities. Failure to comply with the norms and ethics of society, the person is disciplined. According to Mageto (2017), social media has had such an impact on people's morality that they now accept things they see online as "normal" leaving behind their ethical values.

In Ghana, for example, some people no longer care about adhering to the values and norms. Besides, it is very crucial to focus attention on the societal ethics social media has negatively affected and how it has become a challenge in the society. One learns morality and it becomes the leading principle throughout his or her life, however, these days, the youths' morality is waning due to their exposure to social media and its bad contents. For instance, sensitive sexual, and pornographic programmes are shown on all other social media platforms that do not help moral formation. People watch and listen to profane songs and videos which easily influence them and form part of their character.

Some people use the media to advertise sex (prostitution) for money, for example, hookup girls and slay queens create sites to invite men to engage in sexual intimacy for money. These acts could be considered as immoral and against the moral principles in the Ghanaian society and it does not promote

and reflect the societal value of chastity and decency (Sarpong, 1979). Social media seems to have taken full control of the basic ethics in the society and it is no surprise things have become worse as we have it today.

Social media has paved the way for people to accept and adopt practices contrary to moral values. Bandura (2009) posits that morality emerges from one's personal environment and in his view, society prescribes the norms and values for people to practice and that makes them unique. We can stretch further to explain that character or behaviour is shaped by what people observe and copy from friends, families, and the people in the community in which they live. For that reason, if morality has declined then one can in a way blame the exposure people have within their social environment and not necessarily social media consumption. However, the fact that social media has affected the moral life of people does not also mean social media has not contributed to shaping people's moral life. This is because, some of the traditional values that are found in rituals, proverbs, folklore and stories that teach about good life are shown on social media for people to learn and draws good lifestyle from it.

However, in recent years, things have changed and fallen apart and that has made many people to be worried concerning the fall of morality in the society. For example, some youth dress exposing parts of their bodies which are not an acceptable way of dressing in the Ghanaian society and in order to ensure decent lifestyle, the norms and customs are to be respected to ensure social order (Sarpong, 1979). Once there is the case of bad social environment causing changes on people's behaviour and attitudes, social media cannot solely be the cause. There are other factors contributing to the moral decline

among people but social media seems to receive much critiques. The reason for these critiques could be the level of usage and how certain behaviours are exhibited on the social media space.

For Balbir (2007), social media posts such as dating sites, advertisements, sexual abuse, and criminality have imposed threats to the moral life or behaviour of people, especially the youth. He made an assessment that social media users' moral lives are in danger appears to be correct. In contrast, one will contest Balbir's (2007) assertion that social media actually makes life simpler and easier. This is because, the youth are finding their way into the social media space to become relevant so as to fit into and be part of the current trend in the social media space and that might cause a moral threat to one's life. For instance, for someone to get more likes, subscription and followers, he or she has to post contents that will attract people's attention and by doing so, nude pictures could be posted to get that attention she needed. This might have paved the way for rampant sexual harassment in the society, cybercrimes, prostitution and social sexual sharing (nudity) as people could simply share their nudity without being shy.

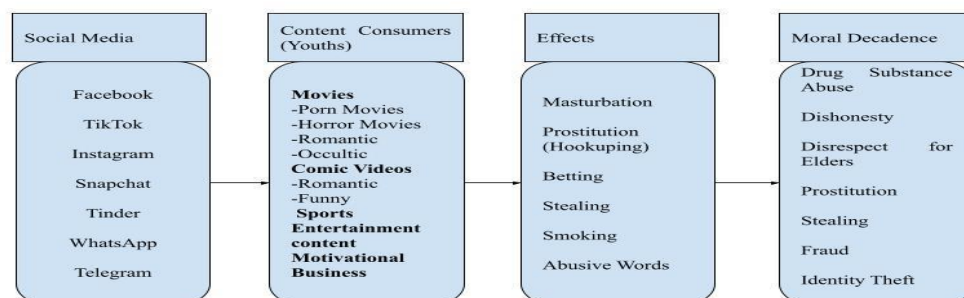
To put it more accurately, when people's behaviour changes, it affects their moral lives and that affects the society as well. In this case, any acceptable way of life in the society will no longer be regarded. As the saying goes "If you do not know what defines you or your identity, you lose your sense of being". One of the things social media does is to create anti-social or individualism which makes the communal life society used to live as family, friends, and society become irrelevant. This view can be contested on the

grounds that, not all the time social media create anti-social lifestyle or individualism, rather, it sometimes brings people together.

Another effect is that, people have learned to use abusive language when communicating with each other. A critical observation shows how people hide behind social media to insult elders and custodians of the land with impunity. Social media has affected loyalty and honesty. People no longer tell the truth, not being honest, humble, and showing respect to the elderly. The belief is that people are attracted to things posted on social media and accept them as real even though they are deceptive. Social media commercialises photographs and images for individuals to access, and as globalisation has brought about a number of changes, it attempts to express itself by undermining community values (Balbir, 2007). He further discussed how children's character development has been impacted by social media.

Once we investigate the use of social media and its influence on the moral lives of users, the scholarly work and literature available will deal with such moral gaps existing in the lives of the youth. Indeed, from the above indication, social media has affected people's moral values and the society in general.

Conceptual Framework



Author's construct from the findings and literature

This conceptual framework presents the various variables in the study and shows how the variables are interrelated. The framework looks at social media, social media consumers (youths), contents consumed, social media effects and moral decadence. The conceptual framework depicts that, social media has sites such as Facebook (FB), Instagram (IG), Snap chat, TikTok (TK), WhatsApp, Tinder and Telegram. From the findings and literature, the sites mostly visited by the youth and the contents they consume are movie contents, comic content, sport contents, entertainment, motivational and business contents. The movie contents the youths' watch includes porn movies, romantic, occultist and horror movies. The comic contents are the romantic and funny ones. They also enjoy watching sports update and participating in them. Entertainment, business and motivational contents are also consumed by the youths. The findings show that the consumption of these contents affect the moral lives of the youth. The negative impacts are seen in the areas of masturbation, prostitution (hook upping), betting, stealing, smoking, fraud, identity theft and the use of abusive words. These effects have made the youths to be dishonest (telling lying, cheating), disrespectful to elders, prostitution (hook upping) and engaging in drug abuse (smoking, sex drugs), fraud and stealing.

As the youths consume their preferred contents on any of the social media sites, they become addicted and influenced to watch in multiple times and get carried away with what they have consumed. The choice of social media handle depends on what the person derives from it. To better understand this conceptual framework, the use and gratification theory helps to get clearer picture and explanations to why selecting specific social media

handles and consuming its contents affect one's moral life. This theory was used by Katz and Blumler (1974) to mean that, people take active participation in social media based on the gratification they get. This theory has been applied in various forms of media including traditional broadcasting, online platforms and social media. By this, it means that, the individual selects specific social media sites and the preferred contents they consume.

The use and gratification theory further provides justification on how people choose their preferred social media sites and contents for self-satisfaction. This theory does not only focus on social media contents, but the user's active role in choosing which contents to consume to fulfill one's needs. This means that, any content consumed, is because of the satisfaction one will derive from it. The various contents consumed from the social media sites by the youths also have the potency of affecting their moral lives. The study further justifies that, content consumed like porn and other sexual-related contents for example, influence their sexual lives. From the findings, the youth have become morally decadent due to their consumption of social media contents

Limitations

The researcher faced a challenge of participants availability. Some of the participants though have vital information to share but they were not available (busy) to share with the researcher. Some were not also willing to disclose some important information at their disposal because of confidentiality. The research considered only qualitative method which he could have considered either mixed method or qualitative method as well.

There were others who opted for phone calls and online discussions like video calls and at some point, the network disrupted the engagement.

Delimitation

The researcher worked on the possible cause of moral decadence among the youth in the Effia-Kwesimintsim district. The researcher tried to look at social media and how it has contributed to moral decline among the youth. The participants were youth who fall between the ages of 15-35 years. The youth who use social media like Facebook, Tiktok, Instagram, WhatsApp, Tinder, X and Snap chat inter alia. were the ones considered for the work.

Definition of Terms

Youth: By definition as adopted by Ghana from the African Charter and enshrined in the 1992 constitution in the Youth Employment Agency Acts 2010 is a young person who is between the ages of 15 to 35 years. These group of people form in most cases, the active individuals and highly into using social media in the country.

Social media: From the works of Addai-Mensah (2020), the term social media is the channel that facilitates interpersonal relationship and contents sharing. By this, social media allows users to share their experience, thought, forward information and pictures with friends and relatives both far and near (Ezeah et al. 2013). In this work, social media handles used were the social networking sites. Examples of these social media handles (sites) includes; Facebook, WhatsApp, Tinder, X, Instagram and Snapchat. It has enabled the individuals to interact and access information.

Moral decadence: in simple terms, it is the “decline in acceptable way of life” in the society or the depletion of moral values, principles, and

standards within the individual, group or society. It is where the right behaviours are no longer regarded.

Immoral behavior: the actions and conducts of an individual or group of people which violate the moral principles, values and norms causing harm to the society or the individual's life.

The Organisation of the Study

This research is organised into five chapters. Chapter one provided the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the significance of the study, the aims and objectives of the study, the research questions, the scope of the study, the methodology, literature review, limitation, delimitation and the organization of the study. Chapter two looked at the concept of social media and its impact on users. Chapter three focused on moral decadence in the Ghanaian society. Chapter four focused on the discussions and analyses of the data collected from the field work. Finally, chapter five presented the summary, conclusion, and recommendations of the research work.

CHAPTER TWO

SOCIAL MEDIA

Introduction

This chapter is about social media. The details of the chapter were categorised into sub-themes and is discussed with the help of existing literature. The literature provides insight on social media and how it affects users. The themes considered are; the nature of social media; the impacts of the use of social media; the outcomes of social media's influence on users and social media influence on the moral lives of the youth.

The nature of social media and its use

Many attempts have been made to define social media. Some scholars have defined it from their own perspectives. Carr and Hayes (2014) for instance, submit that social media cannot be categorised into a single, definitive category. Social media, they argue, has multiple meanings rather than just one. Every field has its own definition of social media, and according to Carr and Hayes, one can define social media, for example, in the fields of economics, politics, business, and communication inter alia. However, despite the fact that the scholars' view suggests several definitions rather than a specific one, does not mean it cannot be put into a single meaning. From the works of Addai-Mensah (2020), the term "Media" is the plural version of "medium" which means mass communication, channel or outlet instruments, and information sharing. The terms "social" originated from the Latin word "*socius*" to mean "friend or ally" which suggests social interactions and interpersonal relationships, or the ways in which people can relate to one another.

On the part of Junco et al. (2010) and Dewing (2010) for instance, these scholars define social media as a broad category of web-based and mobile applications that has variety of online platforms which allows users to create and share original material, promote collaboration, and build relationships with other users in virtual communities. The definition by the scholars suggests that, social media serves as a means to reaching out to cronies and interacting with each other by way of creating contents, exchanging ideas and information virtually. Social media comes with many forms; blogs, photo-sharing sites, podcasts, virtual world, and social networking sites, which serve the purpose of connecting and helping people to interact with others.

Since the invention of social media, creating, sharing, and exchanging ideas and information and doing businesses have been some of the benefits people have derived. This demonstrates the extent to which social media has made life easier for people to engage in online activities. The advent of smartphones and the growth of social networking sites such as UserNet, Six Degrees, Facebook and X has made social media more common to be used and accessed. These advancements help reveal the reason behind social media's popularity and usefulness (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Jeemitha, 2019). With the aid of user-created content like Web 2.0, users are able to build websites that facilitate photo sharing and quick information accessibility. For instance, before the 1990s, one of the means of communication was in a written form (written letters), and later emails and the telegraph, telephones, and radios were invented in 1890 and 1891 respectively (Jeemitha, 2019). Jeemitha submits that, technology changed rapidly with time and the

inception of the internet saw the introduction of CompuServe and UserNet which allowed for interactions through the online space.

When computers became common, social media became more sophisticated, and with time, Six Degrees was invented. Again, before the blogging site became popular, the Six Degrees site was invented to enable users to upload profiles and make friends and communicate with other users. The rise of social networking sites in the early 2000s created conditions for the formation of additional social media platforms (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Facebook, X, and YouTube came into existence between 2000 and 2006. With approximately 1.44 billion monthly active users and 1.25 billion mobile users of which 65% were daily users with Facebook, for instance, continues to rise in usage (Protalinski, 2015). In 2010, WhatsApp gained popularity and made it possible for users to make video calls and communicate with friends virtually.

Moreover, other social networking sites such as Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok also emerged for cross-posting and person-to-person interactions (Jeesmitha, 2019). Jeesmitha (2019) further argues that, these social networking sites continue to remain the most popular in content creation and information, picture and video sharing and interactions in recent years.

Social media comes in different types and forms and each aid in sharing content, educating, creating, and posting images (Jeesmith, 2019). Social media can be categorised into traditional and social networking sites. The traditional media consist of the radio, television, newspapers, emails, magazines, and many others. Social networking site includes Facebook, WhatsApp, TikTok, Instagram, and Snapchat among others. According to Rawath and Satheesh, 2019, social networking sites are the most popular type

of social media, with a wide range of features and attributes. The contents to be posted are determined by the features, as every social media platform has a certain purpose in its creation. It makes it easier to text, communicate, share videos, record audio, publish quickly, link globally, and more. Based on statistical data, the most popular social media platforms worldwide are Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, and WhatsApp. A 2018 social media poll (cited by Rawath and Satheesh, 2019) found that the most popular platforms for content online are YouTube, Instagram, and Snapchat, with 95% of young people having access to smartphones and 45% spending at least half of their time online.

In a study by Sasu (2022), Ghana recorded 8.6 million users of Facebook in February 2021, and that of 8.8 million as total social media users in January 2022. The author further showed that, though Facebook constitute the biggest social media network on the internet, it did not surpass WhatsApp in 2021 which dominated with over 89.9% of its users followed by Instagram with 61.9%, Snapchat and X with 45.2% and TikTok with 27.3%. The study further revealed that the number of users is likely to increase due to the increasing nature of social media usage just as Instagram has gained much participation.

Social media is used for several purposes. Instagram for instance, serves as a free photo-sharing application that allows users to take and post videos and photos, and share them on a variety of other social networking services, including X, Facebook. X is an online social networking platform that enables users to post and transmit text messages up to 140 characters in length, known as "tweets." According to Jeessmitha (2019), social media

platform transmits a lot of information and has large followers; however users become victims of cyberbully, verbal abuses and all manner of immoral behaviours. Using social media, it comes with some impacts on their social and moral life vis-a-vis religious, political, business and educational life. From Rawath and Satheesh's (2019) and Njoroge (2019) view, without any proper guidelines, people are misled to engage in practices that are morally unacceptable and, in that case, affect their moral development.

When users utilise social media, they typically subscribe to any data or use mobile data to access the internet and find the information a researcher needs. In Ghana, for example, there were 5,171,993 Internet users as of June 2014, representing a 20.1% Internet penetration rate. 1,630,420 of Ghana's total Internet users were on Facebook (Internet World Statistics, 2014). This illustrates how users use Facebook to find information that is relevant to them. According to a 2015 National Communication Authority (NCA) study from Ghana as referenced by Dapaah (2015), the percentage of mobile data users in the nation has risen dramatically, reaching 59.78%. The total number of mobile data subscribers as of the end of March 2015 was 16,106,218 (NCA, 2015). According to the figures, data subscriptions rise in tandem with the number of people who use mobile phones and the internet. In reality, using a subscription to access the internet makes it easier to engage in social media usage (Dapaah, 2015).

As espoused by Barrett-Maitland and Lynch (2020), in this twenty-first century, social media is expanding quickly; this could be considered the "boom" era for social networking. As per the reports published in February 2019 by Smart Insights, the number of social media users exceeded 3.484

billion. According to the Smart Insight analysis as indicated, the number of people using social media is expected to continue expanding at a rate of 9% per year. Social media users currently make up 45% of the world's population. From the report by Smart Insight as captured by Barrett-Maitland and Lynch (2020), there are over a billion social media users around the world today and the reigning platforms are Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram. Moreover, the Pew Research Centre report (2014) also shows that social media users tend to be youngsters and these young ones spend much time online in search of videos, pictures, and posts and make comments on already posted content.

According to Dewing (2010), about 90% of adolescents in the 18 to 29 age range used social media. Dewing (2010) stated that in November 2012, Facebook declared that there were 1 billion social media users globally, with 8 million of those users residing in Canada. In June 2012, X also announced that it had 517 million users. It is projected that there will be roughly 257 million social media users in the US by 2023. Despite its own difficulties, it has emerged as the most popular social networking platform, appealing to both young and old. In this case, social media's influence on users grows with its usage, and this influence may be either beneficial or harmful. It is necessary to research on both the advantages and disadvantages of social media use on its users.

Social media and its impacts on users

Social media has gained a global acceptance and people use it daily to engage in many activities. It has been a social interactive platform that has created a lot of benefits to people in many ways, though it comes with some

form of challenges sometimes. Depending on how social media is used, it carries both positive and negative effects on the users and the society as a whole (Mageto, 2017). This is why it is imperative to look at how social media use has impacted on the lives of the individual users and the society. Some of the social media importance and consequences to look at dominate in so many areas of life. In the subsequent paragraph, it discussed some of the importance and the consequences of social media usage on its users. The study will now focus on its usage in the area of academics, religion, politics, entertainment, and social life.

Impacts of social media on users' Academic life: In the area of academics, social media has contributed to imparting the quality of knowledge on students, teachers and others who desire to better themselves in life, albeit, there are challenges. For students, it has to some level hindered the progress and enhancement of academic work affecting their grades point as most students get swayed off classroom attention and participation. This, Akram (2017) attributes to the students' addiction to social media spending much of their time on content that do not add to knowledge and the distractions of their attention to participate in learning. Notwithstanding, as students continue to feel busy online, it shifts their attention into socialising with their peers and having academic interactions with them.

Another disadvantage of social media usage especially to students is that it does not promote good writing skills and styles. According to Akram (2017), the students lack command of the English language and creativity in writing because they turn to abbreviate words which eventually affect their writing skills. For example, "How are you" is written as "hw r u" and "We

thank God” as “w t g”. Most of its kind initially started with WhatsApp and later affected other platforms’ channels of communication. Much attention is needed to salvage this canker in schools to improve the academic performance of students through social media technology as students can be educated on language usage both on social media and in formal writings.

In a positive way, social media assists students, teachers and people of learning interests to have easy access to information to add to the existing knowledge. At first, students could not find such an opportunity to connect and share knowledge with colleagues to beef up their understanding of what was taught in class. Most academic institutions currently use sites like Facebook and Zoom to engage students academically by interacting with them by sharing and explaining subject contents. On vacations, for instance, social media makes a full impact as teachers could engage with their students to learn, to do assignments and their project works. Not only is social media profitable to students but to teachers and research-oriented individuals to publish papers and other academic-related issues.

Social media has again contributed to knowledge where people in academia could easily access information online to achieve their academic excellence. Again, some students and teachers rely on Facebook and other social media related platforms to get information and news to abreast themselves in order to contribute in class and also to deliver their lectures effectively (Akram, 2017). Moreover, students search for information on social media platforms to work on their project and also exhibit their talents either in singing, playing of instrument, and recitation of poems or watch kids’ talent shows to boost their confidence.

Social Life: Social media also has had impacts on social living. The society is not an individual-base but a collection of individuals with a common identity to foster unity. Before the advent of social media, people interacted in verbal and non-verbal ways but today the means to reach out to people and interact with them is simply via social media (Jeesmitha, 2019). Far and near relatives can connect with each other through the internet on Zoom, WhatsApp video calls, or Facebook calls. In the same vein, it has given the opportunity for family, friends, mates, and loved ones to reconnect (Akram, 2017). Cultural heritage and its norms and values are promoted and that has ensured harmonious living among people in the society. This is because, the societal norms and the teachings of moral virtues such as respect for people, and loving one another, are taught and shown sometimes on social media platforms for people to participate. According to Akram (2017), social media and education enable individuals of many ethnicities, faiths, and tribes to interact and exchange cultural and religious materials, hence fostering more tolerance.

Moreover, philanthropists use social media to ask for financial assistance to support the underprivileged in the society. These groups of individuals use social media platforms like Facebook, radio stations, televisions, and WhatAapp among others to draw people's attention to their benevolent deeds to solicit for support to tender social help and support for the needy and less privileged in the society. These social-support gestures signify social harmony and it promotes social living. This event organised is advertised on the trending social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, inter alia.

Furthermore, social media tracks terrorism and criminal activity to ensure public safety and aids in the battle against crime. For instance, the security agencies use cyber security to follow terrorists and other criminals who pose a threat to the nation's peace and security. In Ghana for instance, the Criminal Investigative Department (CID) uses social media to track people who use their social media platforms to engage in wrong doings. They (CID) sometimes trace people's chats and transactions to determine their fraudulent activities of people and arrest them. Williams (2008) submits that the terrorists use social media as a tool to communicate with each other on any operational activities. He further cited Boko Haram of Nigeria and other Islamic states like Iraq, Syria, Iran, to make a case that, they report and communicate with each other on their operations. Again, the same media is used to keep the public informed and updated on any terrorist activities. In such situation, they can be tracked and arrested to ensure public safety and also ensure proper security in the society.

On the contrary, social media comes with greater disadvantages to the participants who use it. Today, we can talk about how social media has contributed to breaking the chain of unity among family and friends as they stick glue to their phones unlike the past where family life was all about doing things in common and everybody having the time to share and live closely with each other. Today, such unity seems to disappear to the extent that, you could see parents going through their phones and children busily watching contents of their choice under the same roof. The family forms one of the social institutions which brings people together but it seems social media has taken the time of the family members as they stick to their phones visiting

sites for videos, music content, and funny clips. Sometimes the time to be spent with family and relatives is no longer appreciated because attention is on their social media handles but in a society where they once lived in oneness and with common identity, the idea of individualism is not encouraged (Sarpong, 1974). The act of individualism is abhorred since it does not promote family unity and social living. The family promotes unity and harmony therefore every individual builds his or her social life from the family. (See Gyekye, 1996; African Cultural Values)

Moreover, there has been a high incidence of cybercrime and cyberbully as a result of social media use. People who are believed to have adequate knowledge hacking account chooses to use social media to bully people and steal from them either entering into their bank details or other means to defraud them and they are people who are believed to be fraudsters. Most times, the fraudsters use another account they have created to defraud people. These accounts are created with pseudo-names which cannot be traced for the reverse of the money. Some people are fond of using social media platforms to usher in abusive words, defame and insult, other people making the person a subject to mockery and vulnerable (Bannink et al., 2014). Again, one will attribute immoral behaviour of people to indiscipline, lack of parental care, and material gains but if social media is not managed properly immoral behavior will not be minimised. Social media has formed a core part of human existence as phones have become rampant necessitating high levels of crimes and suicide because of its misuse (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010).

Religion: Religion has been impacted by social media so much because people participate in online church services. Not only does it promote spiritual

enlightenment but the connection with one's object of worship. Basically, religious activities are carried out in churches but with the coming of social media, pastors preach streaming online to make the word of God spread throughout the world as people also watch from far and near. In this way, one can say that the gospel is at the doorsteps of members. That means, God is can be found online expanding the understanding of God attribute has been omnipresence. For instance, programmes like the Alpha Hour and some other churches like International Centre Gospel Church (ICGC) and Philadelphia use social media to link up with believers to participate in church service.

Balbir (2007) highlighted the importance of social media to the religious fraternity. The pastors create a link for church services and these links are shared to people through the various social media platforms. In the same vein, traditional priests and priestess advertise their shrine and the powers they possess, and the medicine for healing (medicine men) in some television channels like OB TV, Oman TV and Royal TV, all are on multimedia television. However, sometimes, these priests use the media outlets to lure people via advertisement to extort money from people.

Today religions like Christianity, Islam, and some others religions share their religious values on social media to inculcate their moral norms and values into teenagers. Recorded biblical verses and preaching are shared on Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram for believers to download and watch or listen. Dapaah (2015) and Jeemitha (2019) have given their position on the positive and negative influences that come with the use of social media on religious lives. To them, the church and other religious bodies have to make use of it as technology is available to promote religious activities in a way.

Inasmuch as social media is useful in terms of spreading and projecting religion does not mean it has no negative effects. There are repercussions associated with engaging in online religious activities, and as Dapaah (2015) and Jeemitha (2019) have observed, social media diverts people's attention from learning. This is why streaming live to partake in church service might affect the believers' participation because some contents that pop up or comment from people might not help the worshiper to focus. Similarly, while responding to messages and watching videos can attract their attention which might distract them from learning the word. This might not be conducive to the moral and spiritual development since they lack focus to listen to the sermon preached their spiritual and moral life to improve.

Politics: Another impact of social media is on political activities. Social media allows political parties to sell their policies and carry out their campaigns. Political activities become simple and, in most cases, they create awareness of their political careers. Van Gyampo (2017) posits that among the social media platforms, Facebook and WhatsApp are the most dominant means of channeling information within the Ghanaian society and the major political parties have made significant use of the social media for the past years. This seems to mean the various political parties reach out to their supporters and the Ghanaian youth who form the major users to draw their attention to the message and present their party in a more attractive way to win votes. In other words, to catch them young. Not only in Ghana would one find parties using social media to organise and mobilise members but across the globe it is a known fact. Zimbabwean women, for example, use social media to express their political views on matters pertaining to politics, the economy, and

culture. Citizens use the same platform to express their opinions and to criticise the government's implemented policies.

Although making people know the ideology of one's political party to win the vote via social media is something to be recommended, however, when it turns out to be used wrongly, one will be compelled to condemn it since it has the potential of inciting violence in the society. For instance, when leaders of a political parties engage in exchanging words which are abusive in nature, with the attention of defaming or denigrating the person, it creates bad impression and the youth might see it as normal to insult people in the name of politics. When that is done, the traditional values and norms of respect for elders, obedience, humility, etc. will gradually wane. Some of the youth might post fake news about people which might affect one's reputation and that might create wrong impression people have about the victims (Barrett-Maitland & Lynch, 2020).

Social media influence on the moral lives of the youth

Social media carries influential contents and information that mostly attract the attention of users. The belief is that social media has a direct or controlling effect on its users thus, influencing their behaviours (Baker, 2011). It sometimes dictates to people what they should think about. The manner in which social media presents and reports stories and issues have the potential of influencing users to give attention to them to make them behave in a way. For instance, when a youth flaunt flashy material like cars or houses which does not belong to him or her on social media, it has the potentials of influencing the other colleagues and compel them led to compete and that could lead to

human sacrifice for money. Some also learn and copy from what they experience on social media friends and try to live the same lifestyle.

Asare-Donkoh (2018) points out that students' lives are influenced to the highest degree when he explained that social media has lured students into watching pornographic content distracting their moral and behavioral development. The works of the Pew Research Centre support Asare-Donkoh's (2018) assertion that 90% of social media users are youth of school-going age and these youth are vulnerable to contents that affect them more negatively. This is because, these youths spend much time on social media and if there are no proper guidelines (Mageto, 2017), they turn to engage in immoral practices.

It appears social media has added to the moral woes in the world today as we witness fraud, prostitution cyber, cyber sexual harassment, corruption, etc. These happenings could be that, some of the contents posted on social media are not good enough for the youth to consume. The reason been that social media has great impacts on users. In addition, wrong usage of social media distracts teens, and expose them to bullying, rumour spreading, and unrealistic information of other people's lives (Oloyede and Oloyede, 2022).

Researchers such as Barrett-Maitland and Lynch (2020) are of the view that users of social media are more likely to share content within their social circles when they have a personal connection to the topic they are posting. In this case, users' stories may be told through the content they create, and it is only natural to want friends and the world to know about ones' accomplishments. A user can fulfil certain basic human needs in other to be

understood, heard, feel important, and emancipated by sharing information they have generated themselves.

According to Kamaku and Meria (2014), social networking platforms like Facebook, X, and others have become a fad that everyone uses these days, sometimes exhibiting unethical lifestyles. The youth adopt a lifestyle of insult and harass each other. The prevalence of drug misuse, cultism, inappropriate language and manners, sharing of nude images and films, etc. are not surprising social media is behind it. Pornographic images and movies have exacerbated sexual addiction, which has led to rampant rape and defilement in the society (Jackobs, 2014).

Oloyede and Oloyede (2022) on their part state that people have no shame for immoral deeds as they display prostitution attitudes under the guise of “hookup” on social media. Some also engage in fraud, cyberbully, verbal abuse, murder and many other unacceptable deeds in the social media space. In recent years, the youth are found of disrespecting the elderly people on social media which has influence other respectful and obedient youth to have copied such behaviours. The problem here is, one will turn to violate the right of another and this raises ethical concerns and questions.

In Nigeria for instance, X usage was banned for posting false and deceptive information. This was to control immoral behaviour on social media (Oloyede & Oloyede, 2022). In Ghana, the youth usage of social media have drawn attention which requires monitoring. To some extent, many social media users create content that misinforms and unrealistic inasmuch as they will help the users to get the attention from people.

Hence, unethical behaviours on social media can have a severe impact on one's career and personal life. Banduras (1997) and Mageto (2017) provide evidence on how the youth are been influenced by their social environment where they network and interact with friends and eventually such social lives affect their character and behaviour. People influence each other online either positively or negatively. The notable ones are the watching of pornographic content and exposing their private parts (nude pictures and videos). With reference to watching pornographic content and the exposition of nude pictures and videos, research by Anderson Jnr. and Oppong (2013) pointed out that the consumption of social media content like pornography by the youth affects their moral standards. Some of the youth later become addicted to them and turn out to engage in masturbation and prostitution. This is a result of the influence these contents have had on their moral thinking and behaviours.

Further research indicates that Ghana is the second highest pornographic content viewer nation in the world according to the Porn Hub Centre in September 2021. This report depicts that people consume sexual contents on social media and that has increased their desire to watch more which has affected their behaviour. The high consumption of social media, becomes worrisome as it could contribute to how people exhibit unethical behaviours in the Ghanaian society. Though in some instances it improves people's lives, however, Oloyede and Oloyede (2022) assert that behaviours and activities that are imitated online, which make things that previously judged immoral seem normal to young people, there is evidence of sexual promiscuity among adolescents, since sexual immorality has become a topic

of conversation. As a result, social media has negatively impacted the users' morality.

Social media is an environment for friendship, communication, and learning. At the same time, it serves as a place for making bad friends, learning a bad form of communication, and bad character and behaviour learning and adaptation. In our society today, the youths are found often using social media at any opportunity which influences their ethical lifestyles. The use of social media platforms needs a controlling effort to avoid influencing the youth's social and moral behaviour.

Again, some online behaviours performed by adolescents as classified as risky behaviours should be better classified as online challenging behaviours (Njoroge, 2013) since these online behaviours are commonly practiced by the youth today and in most cases, these behaviours are associated with negative consequences. Nonetheless, not all posts or online behaviours of people are believed to be unethical because sometimes they create online competition among themselves. Some social media space, therefore, creates room for bad manifestation of behaviours. These behavior and actions in relation to immorality are rape, robbery, murder, fornication, drug addictions, violence, bullying, sharing of naked pictures and videos, sex for money, posting fake news, and others (Abdullah et al., 2009; Dapaah, 2015 and Oloyede & Oloyede, 2022).

In Ghana, these forms of behaviours are regarded as unacceptable in the society and it attracts punishment. When someone does wrong things thus portray bad character or behavior, such an individual is sanctioned to deter others from copying. Moral decadence cannot find it way out in the Ghanaian

society society so easily because people continue to exhibit bad behaviours and it continues to reached a level that needs urgent attention. Societal values are no longer regarded. However, literature point out that, any society where the people refuse to adhere to the moral principles and standards, the society witnesses a setback (Gyekye,1992; Sarpong, 1979). The reason why we encounter these moral challenges could be because of the introduction of modern technology like the internet and wrongful emulation or inculturation. As many people patronized social media, it could aid the creation of moral crisis and in that case, the youth are the victims as they could learn different behaviour that model their behavior. The younger generation could lose their moral capacity to discriminate between right and wrong, which could cause behavioural deviations, extremism, exaggeration, terrorism, atonement, bloodshed, and violations of morality and chastity. It also became a changing factor at all levels and domains and decision making.

Bandura (1997) points out that the social environment has an influence on the character and social behaviour of the youth as they learn quickly about things around them. As the youth spend much of their time watching disturbing or bad media contents, their morality begins to worsen. The state of the youth's morality breaches the moral sanity in the society. Again, social media can also affect the youth's moral cognitive functioning which in a way cause emotional stress, psychological trauma and affecting their behavioural and character formation. To delve further, a recent study by Signed (2016), shows that Danish parents talk to their kids and gives them advice on social media usage.

According to Signed (2016), the Danish parents are sometimes afraid of sharing any offensive or sexually explicit content with their kids having knowledge of it because it could leave negative memories and immoral visualisation of it that could have long-term effects on them. Kirshner and Karpinski (2010) postulate that, using social media by young people or students could be said to demonstrate wrongful attitudes. They further argue that social media makes it easy to mimic bad behaviours, and learn many other wrong deeds. The views of Kirshner and Karpinski suggest that social media exposes bad things but people make good use of social media to make money, learn to improve their academic life and improve upon their business

One will submit that the contents people consume on social media carries an influential force on the consumers that could lead them to become addictive to its usage. Barrett-Maitland and Lynch (2020) further justifies that social media leads to a loss of privacy as many users are compelled to share information of themselves in creating a personal account. Users must know the risks and dangers associated with providing sensitive information of themselves as Njoroge (2013) suggests.

Conclusion

The chapter has discussed the concept of social media. It further highlighted on the nature of social media and its usage, the impact of social media on users, social media content and its moral outcomes on the lives of the youth. It came to light that the wrong use of social media amounts to much deviant behaviour as it exposes many worrisome contents for user's consumption. The next chapter will be dedicated to the subject of moral decadence in the Ghanaian society.

CHAPTER THREE

MORAL DECADENCE IN THE GHANAIAN SOCIETY

Introduction

This chapter is dedicated to looking at moral decadence in the Ghanaian society. It explains what moral decadence is and by so doing helps us to know how Ghanaians perceive the concept of moral decadence. Having defined moral decadence, the chapter among other things we will further reveal the reasons for the causes of moral decline in the Ghanaian society. With the help of literature, it will unearth some of the actions and behaviours considered as immoral within the Ghanaian context and their consequences. Doing so will help to intervene to correct the moral deficiencies in the Ghanaian society.

Morality

The term morality has no single definition. Scholars have given different interpretations and meanings to it making it tedious to settle on a single definition. However, morality can be viewed from the Latin word “mores” in its plural form which means “behaviour” and “customs”. In the words of Geisler (1989), morality is the study of the rightness and wrongness of an action. Meaning, morality examines the principles of human conduct and places judgment on the rightness and wrongness of the actions. Geisler (1989) further maintains that morality is essentially a social phenomenon that can only emerge from human society and its essential purpose is to oversee the peaceful coexistence and harmonious living in the society. Scholars such as Fagothey (1959) and Sarpong (1979) for instance, added the Geisler (1989) position that, morality is the code of human conduct or the existence of right

conduct or wrong conduct. The above explanation points to the fact that morality exists in human society and it forms the “dos and don’ts” of the society regulating human behaviour. For that matter, when people disobey the moral codes, they are sanctioned.

On the part of Gert (2012), morality can be defined in a descriptive and normative sense. In the normative sense, morality is a universal guide to human behaviour which every rational individual will endorse. With the descriptive one, when a group or society puts forward a code of conduct and whether such codes are distinct from law, etiquette, and religion they are known as morality. Gyekye (1996) seems to share a similar view with Sarpong (1979) on the basis that morality is a set of rules and norms purported to guide the conduct of people within the society. Gyekye (1996) further argues that the moral norms and rules in which good and wrong conduct are identified emerge from the cultural and religious beliefs of the people. What Gyekye tries to push is the idea that the cultural and religious beliefs of the Ghanaian society is the determinant of morality which every member in the society needs to obey. This raises a question because there are also some determinants of morality which might not emerge from culture. However, since the life of Ghanaians are dependent on the cultural systems, it is perceived that the cultural practices serve as the foundation of morality.

In Ghana, one is said to be moral when she or he obeys the cultural norms and values of the society (Sarpong, 1979). Again, morality is taught and passed on from one generation to the other. According to Onyema (2011), morality is a system that are handed down to us; those who act contrary to it or disagree with it are viewed as wicked, foolish, or uninformed. The increasing

blending of cultures and religions, each with its own conception of good and evil, has made morality a complex topic in modern times. From Onyema's (2011) presentation, one can surmise that, the younger generation has to learn about the values and norms of the society and the older generation becomes the main teachers of the values and norms. Again, Onyema cited Hare (1981:27) to further affirm that, "morality is a system of principles and judgments based on cultural, religious, and philosophical concepts and beliefs, by which humans determine whether given actions are right or wrong". For this reason, when the moral norms and principles that are passed from the older generation to the new generation are not protected, there will be a decline of morality in the society and the happenings in the Ghanaian society concerning the immoral behaviours are enough confirmation to this fact.

Moral Decadence

Moral decadence is a worrisome situation in the world today. Every society encourages the practice of good morals and teaches the norms and values to instill some level of moral discipline in people. The term decadence in the words of Geisler (1989) means "the decline in the acceptable way of life" in the society or among a group of people. Hence, moral decadence is the falling away of the right acts or not conforming to moral norms, rules, and regulations in the society (Geisler, 1989; Sarpong, 1979). Moral decadence simply can also be defined as the absence of right conduct (Fagothey, 1959). For this reason, ethical conduct regarded as good is rewarding while bad conduct is punishable. This is to maintain moral standards in the society. In this context, moral decadence means, identity theft, fraud, prostitution, cybersex, stealing and the use of abusive words in discourse. These unethical

behaviours persist in the Ghanaian society and for that matter, districts in Sekondi-Takoradi. Moral decadence has consequences on the lives of the people which in a way hinders societal progress, in that way, society always fights it.

The Ghanaian society sees morality as very important because it serves as the guiding principle that direct people's lives in order to live an acceptable way of life. For someone to be considered moral according to Fagothey (1959) and Geisler (1989), the person has to conform to the rules and regulations of the society he or she was born and nurtured into. In that case, when one's behaviour goes contrary to the moral norms and principles of the society, such behaviour is not tolerated. It is only a morally decadent society that could appreciate the culture of "anything goes" and in that case records higher immoral behaviours such as prostitution, insult to the elderly, stealing and fraud in that society (Odeh, 2013).

According to Odeh (2013), when we talk about moral decadent behaviour, it is the refusal of the individual to hold to the sound moral principles of the society and such an attitude is not appropriate in the Ghanaian society. Odeh made this assertion because unethical lifestyle or behaviours do not promote moral standards and that means there will be a decline of morality in the society. For example, there has been a great increase in the desire to become rich, pilfering, sexual perversion, insults to elders, fornication, nudes sharing and watching pornography in the society (Gbenga, 2009). From the position of Gbenga (2009), the underlisted deeds are abhorred in the Ghanaian society as it does not ensure societal peace and all of these practice as enlisted by Gbenga (2009) are unaccepted in Ghana. Alemu

supported Odeh (2013) who categorically stated that, it is a moral failure when people refuse to uphold sound morality in the society.

Moral decadence is not a new phenomenon. With the increasing nature of moral decadence in the society today, Fagothey (1959) argues that it is as a result of moral norms and principles that are disregarded. Fagothey (1959) suggested that only obedience to societal norms and rules is the essential tool in eradicating immorality in the society.

Moral Decadence in the Ghanaian Society

Moral decadence has been an existing situation in the world over the years. It has been an issue as old as society itself (Alemu, 2019). Moral rot and depravity are global issues that affect people in communities and countries all around the world. One could find it impossible to envision an elderly person who does not condemn or hold younger generations accountable for their unethical, immoral, or decadent behaviour (Alemu, 2019). Alemu (2019) adduces that adults in society constantly charge the younger generation of being violent, conceited and aggressive. One could argue that some young men and women acts or behaves contrary to the acceptable values and norms, but we cannot generalise that the youth are always immoral. The rationale was that since adults impart moral standards and values to younger people, they criticise young people when they exhibit behaviours that deviates from these norms, which will help mould their future. When adults attempt to correct the younger generation, they accuse them of being morally decadent.

The Ghanaian society has witnessed a moral decline over the years. There has been an effort to ensure moral discipline in the society however, despite these numerous efforts to deal with immorality; it keeps increasing in

the society. Moral decadence is manifesting in various ways and is exerting enormous harm on business, the public sector, and the Ghanaian society in general. Most at times, the society sees the younger generation to be the ones who are morally deviant. However, the older generations are also victims of immorality. Mention can be made of corruption in the government sector, theft in banks and other private institutions, students cheating in the examination and exam officials leaking examination papers for monetary gain or sexual favours. Some use the internet to engage in fraud, verbal assaults and bullying. There are many forms of moral decadence in the Ghanaian society but the few will be looked which primarily cyber fraud cybersex, drug addictions, verbal assault and gambling.

A part from gambling, people especially the youth also engage in fraudulent activities and cyber bully. According to a report published by the African Media Agency on, November 21, 2022, by Gbenga Okejimi, online transactions have been under threat. According to the report, the Cybercrime Unit of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) estimated USD\$19 million as monies Ghana lost to cybercrime (fraud) and a recorded case of over 1,097 cyberbullies. The Cyber Security Authority was established under the Cybersecurity Act, 2020 (Act 1038) to regulate cyber fraud and other related matters but it seems it has not discharged its expected duties. From indications, the youth are the most perpetrators of such immorality in the society.

Furthermore, aside using the internet to commit these crimes, some of the youth practice occultism, engage in drug competition, alcoholism and all manners of crimes. These behaviours of the youth create riots, insecurity and

disturbance in the society and also affect the peace of the society. Asare-Donkoh (2018) and Kirshner & Karpinski (2010) hold the opinion that people attempt, whether consciously or unconsciously, to transgress moral principles or standards that guarantee a decent life in society.

News and media publications about persons betting, pilfering, and other crimes in their pursuit of quick money have proliferated. For instance, there was a report on Angel FM news indicating a young man wanting to use his mother for money rituals and confessed after he failed (Angel FM evening news in September, 2023). There is also the case of drug abuse, gambling, exams malpractices, the exposition of nude pictures or videos, and many other immoral issues that have been a total concern in the Ghanaian society today. Despite all these, we have genuine people who are morally upright.

According to Hagan (2010), who referenced Boakye (2006), majority of young people who participate in immoral activities are of school-going age. Hagan (2010) listed a few of the immoral behaviours displayed by the youth, including the practise of occultism in schools, drug addiction, binge drinking, through peer pressure. This has caused panic among some Ghanaian parents as they lament the level of moral indiscipline among the youth in the society. This moral canker to some extent can be attributed to poor parenting, peer pressure, lack of proper education, and environmental influence (Hagan, 2010).

According to Gyekye (1989) and Sarpong (1979), morality is the driving force, the foundation and the backbone of every society and for that matter among the many tribes in Ghana; moral values are held in high esteem. The values of the society such as respect for the elderly, honesty, are passed

on from generation to generation and they are also taught in schools and learned through people's social interactions. Again, morality is also portrayed in the people's cultural way of life that is through their music and dance, architectural designs, and craft works. This is why Gyekye (1989) advocated that the society's solid moral rules must be enforced to ensure moral discipline, especially for those who violate such codes of conduct. For instance, Sarpong (1979) describes *bragoro* (puberty rite) as one of the cultural practices that help to preserve and ensure chastity among young people. In this way, the level of moral decadence can be minimised and will promote morality in the society, because in recent times, immorality has taken over the space of the society. For example, there has been the rise of sexual activities, the posting of nude pictures and videos, teenage pregnancies, theft, disrespect, etc.

From the example given on the rise of immoral lifestyle in the society, one will be tempted to suggest that morality has declined in the society. Sarpong's (1979) suggested "*bragoro*" as a means of ensuring chastity in the society. Is Sarpong (1979) trying to suggest that, every young girl who goes through these "*bragoro*" rituals are all chaste? Since such evidence cannot be establish, one can say that, it is a step forward to promoting chastity in the society. The cultural values are to be enforced to help ensure chastity and sexual-immorality free behaviour in the society. Some of the immoral behaviour in the Ghanaian society one can talk about in recent times are occultism, alcoholism, substance abuse, money ritual (*sakawa*), and watching pornographic contents. This could happen as a result of bad company, peer pressure and the social environment in which the youth find themselves.

People are easily carried away into exhibiting unethical lifestyles as a result of societal pressure and a lack of self-control and discipline among persons in the society.

This position make sense on the basis that the society honours people who have made it in life, and because people also want to fit into the society to be respected and honoured, they are pushed into engaging in like killing, engaging in armed robbery. In order to be part of the respected class in the society, some of the youth go to the extent of getting involved in certain immoral act like drug addictions, armed robbery and excessive drinking in the society. This could account for the rise in immoral lifestyles among people in the society. For example, some females engage in clitorride (the act of giving in to sex in exchange for payment for a ride). From the researchers' point of view, the youth should not succumb to this pressure because one does not have to go through this pressure to make it in life. There are other ways the youth can make it in life through talent identification and hard work.

Again, the Porn Hub Centre (PHC) in September 2021 reveals that majority of Ghanaians watch sexual-related contents, specifically pornographic contents on social media. This research has indicated the extent to which morality has fallen in the society and the level people patronise and get influenced on social media which needs urgent attention.

Additionally, the Ghanaian society has also witnessed cybercrimes and cyberbully in recent times. Sasu (2022) talks about how people patronise social media by estimating 8.8 million in 2022. Following Sasu's position, people use this online technology and capitalise on it to defraud others and bully them as well (Bannink et al., 2014). The Ghana Police Service through

the report published by the African Media Agency on November 21, 2022, revealed the frequent reports and complaints of cybercrimes, especially on mobile transactions. The Police Service further stated that USD\$19 million has been the money the nation has lost to cyber fraud. The Cyber Security Authority also warns citizens to desist from using social media to publish sexually explicit material and unlawful use of images for public consumption (CID publication November 16, 2023). This warning became necessary because people were using other people's naked or sexually explicit material with the aim of threatening them or exposing them to disgrace them. People also expose their nude pictures and videos to entice others for sexual engagement. We have, for example, the "hook-up" girls also known as online sex workers who use social media platforms to engage with clients, and in doing so, they share their nude pictures or nude videos to their clients.

The position of the Criminal Investigative Department (CID) under the Cyber Security Authority seems to be in the right direction as it helps to mitigate the spread of pornographic content and the sharing of nude pictures and videos on social media for public consumption. This situation of immorality results in moral decadence of the Ghanaian society and the world by extension. There is also the problem of bad social environment where people grow and live. This social environment becomes a tool for creating moral deficiencies among people. Mageto (2017) sides with Bandura (1997) who claims that social interactions affect morality and social lives since people learn from their social environment. Therefore, when the youth socially interact with each other on the social media platforms, they turn to learn from each other and they influence each other. For instance, watching porn has the

potency of destroying one's morality as he or she watches them. This is because, they become addicted to it and could arouse sexual desires and when that happens, one will attempt to satisfy his sexual desire which can lead to rape. Bandura's position seems right since the social environment serves as a free-flow arena for the exchange and spread of behaviour models, ideas and domains for decision-making, people are easily carried away with bad behaviours and, in this way, it creates a moral crisis in the society. People learn from each other therefore, in the community where they practice prostitution, stealing, abuse drugs, etc., the person living in that community or society may be influenced to practice such acts.

Another form of immorality in the society is violence. Violence has become rampant in the society today. The youth to be specific engage in peer conflict fighting each other. Much can also be said of sexual harassment and corruption which has become a normal practice and on everyday event. People seem to be interested in making quick money in recent years. Example, young girls give in to sex in exchange for money and jobs.

Causes of moral decadence in the Ghanaian society

Morality is something that society values and upholds. As a result, once morality begins to deteriorate, the society would want to know what caused the decline. We speak about an objective reality when we state that morality has fallen in the Ghanaian society, which, according Alemu (2019), is a moral failure. Failure in the sense that people have failed to uphold the moral norms in the Ghanaian society, therefore, the high rate of immoral behaviours. The fact remains that when one goes contrary to the moral values and norms it affects the entire society, and she or he is sanctioned. Society stands up against

individuals who violate moral norms (Sarpong, 1979; Fagothey, 1959) to avoid the growing nature of wrong in the society.

Moral decadence in the Ghanaian society can be attributed to several factors. Moral decadence has adverse implications on the moral lives of the individual and the society as well but this study will first delve into the causes of moral decadence. The following are some of the causes of moral decadence to be discussed; bad leadership, peer influence, materialism, poor parental control, economic reasons, poor educational system, and a bad social environment.

Bad leadership

Bad leadership is one of the challenges and causes of moral decadence in the world today. When leaders who are selected or elected do not have the welfare of the people at heart and do not have the qualities to rule, they turn to make bad laws. Authorities who make laws make them to guide human behaviour, therefore making bad laws affects the conduct and deeds of people. For example; if the leaders of Ghana pass laws to allow the practice of homosexuality, such laws will become binding on the citizens and people will be protected legally to practice the act whether it goes against the cultural and traditional practices of the society. The selection of unqualified persons and those who lack leadership skills create a leadership deficit, hence, the making of bad laws.

Once qualified leaders are not selected, it may encourage bad behaviours as the rules and regulations, norms and values may not be enforced in the society. This is because poor leadership denotes poor outcomes. Leaders are to ensure progress and development, and to do this, they are to receive

proper orientation, be committed, selfless, and be determined to ensure that all the members of the society adhere to the moral norms espoused by the society. Substance abuse, cultism, improper dressing, and bullying, are some of the various forms of immorality exhibited by people in the society once there are bad leaders (Hagan, 2010; Mensah & Kyei, 2019).

It will not be safe to go with the views of Hagan and Mensah and Kyei on the fact that there can be good leaders in the society but people will choose to act vice. Again, the parents, teachers, counsellors and religious authorities play their humanitarian role of encouraging people to adhere to the customs and norms of the society to promote peace and progress but it seems the people who are oriented turn deaf ears and engage in bad acts. Transforming behaviours and attitudes does not fall on the shoulders of only the elected leaders but every individual in the society must play his or her role in making it work, because humans do not live in isolation (Sarpong, 1989) and that makes everyone to be there to correct each other.

When leaders like the traditional authorities, religious teachers, and educational institutions who are the leading members lack the mentorship to counsel and give proper training and direction to their people, that will lead to bad deeds every day in the society (Oloyede & Oloyede, 2022). Again, in the situation where the leaders do not provide jobs to bring some level of economic relief to people, they are compared to engage in wrong deeds. For instance, some will think that since there are no jobs, they have to use what they have to get what they want and this could be the reason some women exchange sex for jobs. However, the fact that there are no jobs and one has to make ends meet does not warrant the engagement in prostitution, money

rituals and robbery. It is not always the case that bad leadership denotes substance abuse, stealing, etc. rather; it is the choice of the individuals.

Poor economic status

People become impoverished due to socio-economic challenges in the society. Being poor is likely to becoming a thief. People who are having financial difficulties may sacrifice their moral values in order to survive or get better living conditions. This could, in a sense, result in a variety of behaviours, including dishonesty, corruption, and other immoral actions. In addition, a lack of social justice contributes to the high percentage of poverty in the society, which leads people to turn to immoral acts like fraud, armed robbery, and gambling in order to feed (Chinedu et al., 2020). It is ethically wrong for a person to steal, gamble and engage in prostitution to survive on it because it is inappropriate to compromise one's morality to satisfy one's hunger. The quest for daily bread should not compel people to engage in deeds that breach the moral principles of the society.

Again, society today celebrates wealthy people and gives them more attention and respect and for that matter, people are compelled to go to the extreme to make money even if it will cost a life or involves sheering blood to get money in order to also feel important in the society. Some people could compromise on their moral principles to sacrifice their father, sister, or child for money so as to earn respect in the society. Poverty is what most people turn to avoid and as a result, engage in wrongdoings in the society.

In the Ghanaian society today, some people are jobless and therefore struggle to cater for their families. Some parents have become even more negligent due to poverty (Chinedu et al., 2020). They occasionally run out of

time to keep an eye on and check on matters in their family. Due to poor economic reasons, parents in some cases send their children, especially the girl child to sleep with men for money to feed themselves, or the parents themselves indulge in dubious means to get money to feed the family (Hagan, 2010). This attitude of parents allowing their children to engage in immoral activities could be attributed to a lack of proper parental orientation and bad moral training and formation.

Most of the time, oppression and injustice brought about by unfair social systems are the reasons why individuals become impoverished (Chinedu et al., 2020). Social injustice, for example, denies the impoverished the chance to have access to better living conditions such as food, clothes, and shelter.

One of the main factors contributing to theft, drug abuse, armed robberies, kidnappings, and social problems is poverty. Some teenage girls have turned to prostitution on the streets to make ends meet due to poverty (Hagan, 2010). However, prostitution cannot be the only way to be out of poverty or economic hardship; some people turn to it for gratification of their sex needs. Some young girls can also die from various diseases such as gonorrhea, HIV/AIDS, and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) as a result of the after effects of prostitution. This could be the cause of the fast spread of AIDS and other STDs in the population, which is meant to generate income to end poverty.

Poor parental control

The first point of social contact and influence of every individual is the home or family. The family serves as the primary source of socialisation.

Therefore, children's moral foundation starts from the home and must be taught the values of the society (the right way of life) and the guiding principles. For this reason, Sarpong (1979); Geisler (1989), and Fagothey (1959) share the view that nobody lives in isolation but belongs to a family and it is the responsibility of the family to inculcate the moral values into the child to fit well into the society. Every member of the family is guided to act in the right manner because "morality begins at home". Morality begins at home because the family is the first point of call to teach the values and norms of the society. The breakdown of the family unit could cause moral decadence. Factors such as the high rate of divorce, single parenting and absentee fathers and mothers have disrupted the traditional structure that instills moral values and discipline in children.

Moreover, this could be the reason Onyema (2011) believes that the moral system that is handed down to the new generation has become a disregarded one in modern times as people no longer pay attention to it. He therefore blamed the family for failing to ensure proper transmission of morality from one generation and the next. However, one cannot blame the family for the fall of morality because, according to Sarpong (1979), society serves as the key stakeholder in remedying the moral challenge in the society, therefore it should be a collective effort to redeem the fallen moral standards.

Some parents and families for lack of financial resources push their children into the street to hustle for daily food which eventually results in teenage pregnancy, stealing, prostitution, etc. Sometimes parents leave the house early in the morning to go to work, leaving their wards in the care of a maid or an older sister. This maid is unable to instill in the children the moral

principles and values that they need to have, the right kind of moral education. Children that grow up with inadequate parental care and direction lack fundamental morals and subsequently develop into truants, disrespectful, drug-addicted adults, among other negative traits. For all of these reasons, among others, Berson and Berson (2005) suggest that in order for children to make ethically sound decisions in life, they require adult supervision. The views of Berson and Berson (2005) seem appropriate because this supervision from the adults will help to give the children the moral guidance to become the responsible adults the society wants.

Another reason for the upsurge of moral decline among the youth in the society today is broken homes. Hagan (2010) could not deny that broken homes are also a cause of immorality in the society. To Hagan, the home is the first point of socialisation and the basis of learning, therefore, if the family system breaks down, the children will lack the needed moral training. Parents today are incapable of disciplining their kids. In addition, there is the issue of family dysfunction where it is known that substance misuse and divorce have led to mental illness in some families. People participate in behaviours that violate societal moral standards because they lack self-control and appropriate guidance.

Bad social environment

The environment one lives in affects his or her behaviour and moral life. For instance, when one lives in an environment where drug addiction is rampant such an individual may be compelled to become a drug addict. People, most importantly adolescents learn from their social environment and it continues to have a psychological and emotional influence and effects on

them. The school serves as one of the influential social environments where people meet to discuss, learn, and make friends. The kind of friends one makes influences his or her moral development as they learn from each other.

For example, associating with bad companies and friends will have its way of affecting one's academics, business, and political life. Learners sometimes learn new things and receive information that in one way or another influence them. Hagan (2010) reveals that bad associate influences each other and for that matter, they could engage in activities like alcoholism, prostitution, gambling, and many other unacceptable behaviour. The author further indicates that society must bear responsibility for the aforementioned behaviours demonstrated by those who are influenced because the society has created an avenue and a culture that values and gives special attention to those who are wealthy in the society. In these situations, people who are less wealthy but are honest, reliable, and truthful are not respected or acknowledged; as a result, those who see an opportunity to get rich in order to gain recognition engage in money rituals, fraud, and other criminal activities in order to feel respected. Due to a bad social environment, people become addicted to behaviours such that some turn to masturbation and sexual addictions. The situation of immorality in the Ghanaian society today could not be limited to the bad social environment alone but also the society.

According to Bandura (1997), society shapes people's lives and a child matures into adulthood when they are appropriately integrated into the family or community values. The child develops some sense of moral responsibility and moral uprightness and shows admirable character in the community. Morality is waning due to the exposure to a bad social environment from

which most people have learned wrong characters and behaviours. As people make friends within the community in which they find themselves, they learn from their peers. Unfortunately, if they find themselves in a bad gang or group of people with immoral behaviour, they turn to copy. More efficiently, since traditional values, culture, and norms are the very backbone of every society ensuring good moral lifestyle, according to Gyekye (1987) and Sarpong (1979), the society can turn things around by intensifying and encouraging the exhibition of morally acceptable behaviours to correct wrongs in the society. Parents have a greater responsibility to check their wards at home and to also inculcate the good values into their children.

Peer influence

In every social environment, peer pressure is not a new phenomenon. Peers turn to influence each other every day as they come into contact with each other in the society. According to Hagan (2010), when people are not properly trained in relation to the social norms and values to help shape their lives, their peers rather influence them and, in the end, they discard the moral norms and values of the society and start to practice deviant behaviours. Therefore, the sudden rampant drug abuse, alcoholism, crimes, and prostitution among people are mostly influence from their peers. Hagan (2010) further states that, there are some people in Ghana, where both adults and young ones engage in drinking and smoking which affects their health and behaviour.

To ensure an immoral-free society, moral education does not only lie in the hands of parents and the society but a collective responsibility. Social institutions have a role to play by ensuring that there is good moral practice in

the society by way of encouraging people. One of the social groups to ensure moral discipline is the various religions like Christianity, Islam and Traditional religion. These religions are to intensify their ethical teachings to aid in curbing the immoral lifestyle of people in the society.

Consequences of moral decadence in the Ghanaian society

Moral decadence is not without consequences. In a society where there is a moral decline, it suggests that the moral foundation of that society is becoming weak. According to Sarpong (1979), morality is the fundamental tenet that upholds and sustains society; as a result, when these tenets are undermined, immoral activity proliferates. There are many instances of moral indiscipline that have crippled the progress of society. Parents and other key players in the community worry about the rise of youth misconducts such as hooliganism, robbery, pilfering etc. Therefore, they try to address this menace concerning the affairs of the state (immorality) in order to teach the youth to uphold the moral principles and fulfilling their important tasks (Hagan, 2010; Mageto, 2017).

Moral decadence generates riots and devastating situations in the Ghanaian society which in the end, retards the progress of the society. The recent menace of riots and indiscipline among students in Senior High Schools (i.e., Adisadel College, Wa Technical SHS, Sirigu SHS) reflects the level of hooliganism among the youth in the Ghanaian society (report from Tv3 mid-day news in July 2023). Some students beat their teachers, insult them, harass school authorities, and engage in all sorts of recalcitrant attitudes. The level of indiscipline of people has gone a long way to affect people's good morals and their patriotic lifestyle, therefore, they have adopted behaviours that do not

reflect the acceptable moral life society cherishes. In the past, society rewards good deeds and frowns on bad deeds. It has become obvious these days, that morality in the Ghanaian society is on a decline.

The Ghanaian society frowns upon any activities related to gambling especially among young ones because it is unacceptable and was previously regarded as a taboo. However, young people are engaging in gambling across the country. This upsurge of gambling among the youth has posed moral challenge among the youth. According to research by Adjie and Mensah (2023), gambling has affected the moral life of the youth with their quest of getting money. From their presentation, majority of the youth have become lazy, engage in financial crimes (stealing) and wasting time on gaming centers. Some does not see anything wrong with betting or it been against religious beliefs or societal norms. In situations like this, it becomes difficult to educate them on gambling or shape their life to do what is right. This could also be they are addicted to the gaming activities especially in betting. This may result to many corrupt practices in the Ghanaian society, because they will become money conscious, lose focus and try to seek for money in the easiest way without seeing the need to work hard. Since the youth are our future, when they are not properly brought up, they will become a liability to the society.

Some youths have become thieves. They steal from friends and parents to gamble. Some youth go to the extent of killing themselves for losing a bet (Adjie and Mensah, 2023). The Gaming Commission of Ghana is responsible for regulating the activities of gaming in the country; however, it seems they have relaxed on their duty which has allowed many youths even those under

age to engage in gambling. Amofa as cited by Adjie and Mensah (2023) holds the same opinion that some sport bettors become addicted to the activities and end their lives when they lose a wager.

The limitation of Ghanaian youths' academic achievement is another consequence of their moral decay. The majority of young people who are students cling to their mobile devices gambling or playing games. Because losing bets puts them in a bad mood and makes it difficult for them to learn or form good relationships with others, most young people have become lethargic when it comes to their work and education (Adjie and Mensah, 2023). Many young people who wager testified to the negative effects gaming and betting have had on their academic performance. Because bettors spend their money to play games or place bets, betting has had a detrimental effect on their lives. Some youth who are parents does not cater for their homes, and some also lend monies from friends to stake bet. Youth must receive proper training if they are society's future leaders; else, moral ramifications will befall the entire community. In such scenario, a lot of negative behaviors and lifestyles like rape, theft, rioting, anarchy, etc. will be recorded in society.

Conclusion

This chapter considered moral decadence in the Ghanaian society. In the study, some behaviours Ghanaian society considers immoral and abhorred were discussed with the help of literature. When that was established, the causes and effects of the moral decline among people in the society were discussed. Again, some recommendations to resolve such menace were spelt out. It was established that the Ghanaian society has witnessed series of immoral behaviour and lifestyles and that has affected the moral fabrics of the

society. The next chapter will focus on the data presentation from the field work and its analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Introduction

This chapter present the data collected from the fieldwork with an analysis of the results. This chapter employs a thematic approach in analysing the data from the participants' discussions on the matter.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The emerging themes for the analysis include the participants' views on social media and sites they mostly visit, reasons for visiting the sites of interest, contents and reasons for consumption, the influence of social media on their lives and the contributions of social media in the decline of morality among the youth in Effia-Kwesimintsim District.

Views on social media and choice of sites

To ascertain the views of the participants on the subject under study, the participants were asked to briefly describe what social media means. One of the participants, explained that social media is a platform to socialise and participate in other activities. To the participant, social media participants learn new things (ideas), socialise and exhibit their talent either by cooking, sowing or creating comic content to entertain people. From this view, the participant tried to suggest that social media is open to any form of activities that can be practiced there and these activities could be a bad one or good one. This calls for a concern since one cannot tell what the individual does with his or her social media handle.

Another participant also explained that;

social media comes from the word “social” which means a place where a lot of people meet to interact with each other because, no human being is an island. We all relate with one another and the internet makes it possible through social media to have that relationship with people we know both close and far away, so we do not need the physical presence of people because social media makes it available and possible to interact with them (Personal Communication with Participant #11 in an interview on 11th September, 2023).

From participant #11’s submission, he seems to have given details of social media, and it could be the case that he is an active user. Explaining further, ten (10) of the participants claimed that social media is a very useful tool in this current dispensation. For participant #16, who is a counsellor, *since we are in a technological world where information is disseminated through electronic means, one of the electronic means we know is social media* (Personal Communication with Participant #16 on 30th August 2023). As a youth, participant #16 seems to have an idea about social media, probably because he uses it and understands it properly.

During the focus group discussions, three (3) of the participants agreed that, social media is an entertaining and informative platform by which to them, one can be relived of stress and at the same time get information around the world. However, another participant shared a contrary view that, *social media has broader branches were depending on how the person sees it will inform the person’s choice of definition* (Personal Communication with Participants # 14 on 13th September, 2023). Here, the participant seems to

share similar view with Dewing (2010) and Carr and Hayes (2014) who intimate that social media is made of diverse arrays of platforms and that makes it difficult to give a singular definition to it and this implies that, social media can be defined in almost all disciplines. For instance, it can be defined in business, politics, religion, and many other field one can think of. Social media not having a singular definition as posited by Dewing (2014) and Carr and Hayes (2014) raises the concern of how it may create a diverse avenue for people to interpret it in the way they understand it and, in that case, all the participants are in a way right in giving out their definition of social media from different perspectives.

Additionally, eight (8) of the participants also stated that social media is a place where one gets information vis-à-vis interacting with friends from far and near since one cannot go to their end. In the words of a participant # 12, *social media is to exchange ideas and share with people who have the same code, vision, goals and pleasure we subscribe to* (Personal Communication with Participant #12 on 14th September, 2023). Participant # 12 seems to suggest that people who are inter-linked on social media are those who share friendship vibes. However, participant #18 though uses social media but thinks it wastes one's time. This position of the participant points to the way the youth devote their energy and time on social media.

Another participant believes that social media is for information sharing and connecting with relatives and friends. Using social media to interact and send information are some of the functions social media carries, and most of its users enjoy it. This position seems not to be different from Asare-Donkoh (2019), who reveals that in terms of circulating information,

connecting with people and using it to improve good relationships with business partners and institutions, social media serves that purpose and does it better. Through the functioning process of social media, there are myriads of sources of information and interactive engagement between people around the world. For instance, it is easy to interact with someone in Canada while in Ghana, and you can get more information about social issues from social media platforms.

Furthermore, when the participants were asked of what social media sites they mostly visit, majority of the participants mentioned Whatsapp, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Tinder, and TikTok as the social media sites they use. There was one participant who claimed that she does not use Tinder. The participant who, for some reason, does not show interest in Tinder explain that the site is meant for dating and relationship which makes her lose interest. One of the participants visit only WhatsApp and listens to radio (news). From the participants submission, there are various sites she can visit but limited herself to only WhatsApp and the traditional media (radio). This seems that the participant has no interest in the other media platforms or perhaps because she finds only WhatsApp useful. For instance, he stated that *social media is essential in the world today as we use to our advantage but people are using it more wrongly than the expected advantage one will anticipate* (Personal Communication with Participants #20 and # 27 on 30th August, 2023).

Reason for Visiting Social Media Sites (Interest)

In probing further to have information on reasons for visiting social media, the participants revealed many reasons for visiting some of the social media site(s). One of the youths (#2) responded that social media offers a lot

to people in the world; he visits WhatsApp to read messages and information placed there. “Sometimes relatives and friends send messages to check up on me and they post things of interest like religious quotation for people’s consumption” (A response by Participant # 2 during the focus group discussion on 8th September, 2023). He later revealed that apart from WhatsApp, he visits Facebook and TikTok for movies and watch funny videos to entertain himself. To the participant, her source of happiness is watching funny videos. Other participants also added that, *the movies serve as a lesson to learn from and sometimes, when I feel bored, I watch the funny videos on TikTok to release stress* (response by Participants # 28, # 26 and #4 during the focus group discussions on 13th October, 2023).

On the contrary, one of the participants commented that *I do not understand why people have interest in such contents on social media especially TikTok and Instagram where people twerk, exposes their sensitive part of their bodies and influencing youth on sexual issues* (Personal Communication in an interview with Participant #7 on 10th September, 2023). Participant #7 does not agree with participant #2 mainly because of the things she sees in the social media site she visits. Participant #7 thinks of the negative usage of Tiktok and Instagram without considering the benefit people get for using social media. On the other hand, inasmuch as participant #7 is not interested in TikTok, Instagram or any other social media platforms does not mean that the youths who use them are immoral or that it is wrong to use them.

Another participant added that due to the easy connectivity of social media, one does not need to worry about coming into contact with others. Speaking to the issue, he said that *we are related to one another and the social*

media makes it possible to develop a relationship with people both close and far without the need of the physical presence (Personal Communication with Participant # 12 and # 19 on 13th August, 2023).

In the focus group discussion session, three (3) of the participants shared that they visit and consumes Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat because they can learn trading and training skills. They claimed that there are many things someone can learn on social media like bead making, ladies' wigs, dresses sewing in the comfort of their own home. One of them categorically stated that, *I have learned how to make beads, anklets, cook and sew from watching how it is done on TikTok and Instagram. If I tell you what I can do with my hands now, you will marvel and it is through social media* (Personal Communication with Participant #9 on 14th September, 2023). This position corresponds to Mageto (2017) and Oloyede and Oloyede (2022), who also reveal that social media comes with several pieces of information and content that might seem good to learn although it has greater influence on the user which in their view could be positive or negative influence depending on the usage. According to the above scholar's submission, any bad content or wrong usage of social media could affect the individual.

Furthermore, in responding to the research questions on why they visit the aforementioned sites, some of them mentioned that, they visit to search for funny videos and comedies. This is because *some of the content give room for entertainment* (Personal Communication with Participant #1 in an interview on 20th September, 2023). When the participants were asked **what does the funny and comic videos do for them?** They responded that, sometimes, you feel bored, so it helps to release stress. One of the participants during the focus

group discussion contended that, not all the time that social media kills boredom; it also gives bad impressions about someone or something, which will make one develop deep hatred or dislike for the person or that thing. Participant #6 gave an instance that, when a female youth is found twerking and smoking shisha or weed (Indian hemp) on social media, such a video does not appear funny rather, an act that creates bad moral impression about that girl as espoused by Mageto (2017).

In addition, five of the participants were of the view that, social media expose the youth to bad contents like going for body enhancement, and breast enlargement. Speaking on the matter, as a youth herself, she noted that, *I nearly got influenced into enlarging my buttocks* (Personal Communication with Participant # 8 on 13th September, 2023). The participant again cited a short video she watched on Facebook where a young lady tried to commit suicide. Commenting on this, she stated that, the video carries a psychological influence where someone may watch and think one can end his or her life in that manner or that it is the normal way of dealing with challenges in life, and so to her, such a video is not the best kind to watch. This indicates that social media easily influence people especially the youth into exhibiting bad characters and behaviours.

Another participant also said that, *social media premiers most of the movies of my choice on Facebook and Instagram so I go there to download some of them and watch them later* (Personal Communication with Participant #22 on 13th August, 2023). Importantly, not all the time the movies shown are bad, some also teach good values and good behavioural practice. Some of them also serves as motivation and lesson to others. *Of course, some pass*

funny comments under the movies comments section which sometimes are fun but sometimes carries the weight of insults (Personal Communication with Participant #21 in an interview on 8th September, 2023). It seems the participant believe that such insulting words could affect her speech and utterance in communicating with others.

Participant #4 for example, accused her brother of learning bad language on the net. She claims her brother mostly is heard using “f” words like “fuck you” on people and herself as a sister. The participant accused her brother to have learned the “f” word from his use of social media.

Another participant said, *for me, I visit Opera and Facebook to search for trending news in the media space. Sometimes, I listen to news on Facebook and I search for information myself using Opera mini or Google. This information may be faith-related messages where the word of God is preached and that helps me to learn the word and improve upon my spiritual life* (Personal interaction with participant #5 on 20th September, 2023). Another participant claims to be enjoying only trending news and retrieve information from the nets. His love for the word of God may be because of his faith and that could affect his choice of the platforms he visits.

According to twelve (12) of the participants interviewed, social media platforms are useful for obtaining information electronically, which enables them to watch, retrieve and learn about things around their surroundings. For example, listening to news facilitates information gathering on topics related to oneself and others, as well as for study purposes. On the other hand, some of the participants (6) did not take into consideration how some of the information retrieved electronically has some challenges. This is why the

participants opinion is in contention with Allcott and Gentzkow (2016), who point out that some of the information on the internet are fake. Social media scammers post fake news and advertise fake products to get people to patronise them. Allcott and Gentzkow cited the 2016 United States presidential election to make the case that fake publication of the election affected the outcomes and people's opinions about the election. This suggests that fake news and fake publications have a rippling effect on those who consume them. This could in a way lead to political violence or electoral violence in the States, which might have had an implication on people's lives and affect global peace.

In the same vein, Vosoughi et al. (2018) emphasised how misinformation and lies have influenced public opinion, as well as the extent to which political and religious actions and ideas are shaped. On the part of participants #5, #1 and #20, when one wants to know things around him or her and learn new career skills, social media is the platform she or he must rely on. She or he can learn all these from friends and career builders by relying on linking up online with them. One of the participants, who is a counsellor, admitted that *some of the youth visit social media sites that are more informative or academical* (Personal Communication with Participant #12 in an interview on 13th September, 2013). He cited some JHS and SHS students of ages 15 and 18 whom he knows to make a case that they use their phones to learn and take part in online studies on Zoom and Facebook. Junco and Cotton (2012) and Rosen et al. (2013) also find a correlation between social media use and poorer academic performance which refute the view of the participant #12 that social media is useful for learning as the youth devote their time to

social media consumption which does not add value to their academic lives. There are a lot of factors that contribute to the poor academic performance of students, which might not necessarily be social media usage, as Rosen et al. (2013) claimed. Poor parental guidance, unqualified teachers and school administrators and bad educational system can affect the academic performance of the students as well.

Moreover, it will be quite appropriate to also take into consideration what Rawath and Satheesh (2019) have shared that, there is a need for the youth to be guided to avoid consuming any contents on social media in order to avoid being misled into doing the wrong things. Rawath and Satheesh's view suggest that the youth might lose their moral values from using social media as they watch images and videos like funny videos, movies, pictures, etc and learn from them. Affirming the position of Rawath and Satheesh (2019), some of the participants, for example, believed that social media is a platform where people learn wrong deeds like smoking, indecent dresses, following occultic groups, etc, which does not promote a healthy lifestyle. For instance, one of the participants testified that *we gather on social media platforms to learn or watch those who have shared their nude pictures and videos to discuss with friends and most especially the place where normally we get pornographic pictures and videos* (Personal Communication with Participant # 22 on 15th September, 2023). As the youth watch these contents, they are likely to be enticed and influenced to practice what they see on the social media space and that could affect them psychologically and also affect their decision-making process. Social media itself has influential capabilities on the users which its controlling effect is greater on the user's behaviour

(Baker, 2011), therefore, once people constantly watch, their good character and behaviours become affected.

Responding further to the question on the reasons for visiting the social media sites, some of them (Participants #2, #8, #15, #17, and #20) unanimously shared that they visit sites like Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat to make friends and interact with them. By making friends, one of them explained how they exchange friend requests and continued that, once the person accepts the friend request, the friendship starts from there. Participant #15, in the group discussion, made an emphatic statement that she was able to meet her old friend through Facebook, and they were able to exchange contact. Making friends on social media is easy, but it is possible that one might end up falling into the arms of an online fraudsters and unhealthy contents.

Participant #16, a counsellor and a teacher, affirms that most of the youth are interested in making friends on social media, and in doing so, they turn to associate themselves with bad groups or gangs, and they end up becoming occult, armed robbers or weed smokers. The perception is that most of the bad behaviours of the youth, like smoking, medicine for protection, prostitution and pilfering in the district, is mostly influenced by the kind of friends they make on social media. Participant #16 is a bit hesitant in concluding that social media is solely the causal factor but believes it plays a major role in that regard. The kind of friends the youth make lures them into the practices of alcoholism, drug abuse, and these friends in some instances learn these behaviours from watching such contents on social media and try to convince other friends into practicing same behaviours.

Contents and reasons for consumption

To achieve the research objective 2, the participants were asked to tell which of the social media contents they mostly consume and the reason for consuming it. In answering this question, one of the participants pointed out that she watches movie contents. In other words, she consumes video contents that are movie based because any movie she wants she gets on Facebook. In her words, she said, *social media like Facebook premieres most of the movies of my choice so I go there to download some and watch them later* (Personal Communication with Participant # 9 on 14th September, 2023). Justifying her reason for choosing movie content, she stated that the movies she watches give inspiration. To her, the movies are sometimes shown in its complete version and others in short version, but she watches all. This view suggests that, the participant finds interest in movies and that has informed her choice of movie contents.

In addition, she said, *sometimes, the movies try to teach about the realities of life or have catchy contents that have a reflection of people's past experience so people share their personal thought and opinions and that helps someone to appreciate life* (Personal Communication with Participant # 9 on 14th September, 2023). The participant tries to point out that all the contents she consumes are of lessons-learning contents therefore, it is good to watch. Participant #9 does not only watch the movie content but shares interest in the comments made under each movie. This is quite time consuming and it support the view of one of the participants who was against the youth spending much time on social media which he called "*time wasting*" (Participant #17 in an interview on 13th October, 2023) and Damota (2019)

who thinks that the youth spending a lot of time on social media could affect their moral development. The participant might say this mainly because she does not see any usefulness in social media therefore, assumes that it wastes the youth's time and energy. This perception would not help to make use of social media to the advantage of the society and the various individuals who use them for their daily activities.

Another participant mentioned that one of the things that makes social media so exciting is the video component, where young girls twerk and some hilarious remarks some of the youth make online. This content serves as an entertainment platform for many people looking at how the participant was fascinated in the twerking part. For participant #3, she contended that, there is no moral sense in shaking one's buttocks to the public. To the participant, once the moral norms and values of the Ghanaian society does not encourage that, she finds nothing good in doing that on social media. The participant believes that any individual who adheres to the moral principles of the Ghanaian society will not engage in such practices and that to her is not the right way of life.

Again, eighteen (18) of the participants noted that the act of twerking and the use of some abusive remarks are not practices that are acceptable in the Ghanaian society. There is a saying in the local parlance, "*w'ano kasa yi wo ka*," meaning "your choice of words ends you in trouble." What this proverb tries to mean is that those who use abusive words shows disrespect and are punished; therefore, it is expected of one to use appropriate words in their communication with others. When the youth show interest in profane and abusive or insulting words, it affects their form of communication with the

elderly and peers, and that becomes a problem. Like Sarpong (1979), any action that flaunts societal norms and values is condemned because it does not promote harmony and societal development and the society frowns at it.

During the interview, two of the participants acknowledged that they watch foreign and drug like movie contents. *There are plenty of such movies on Facebook and other social media platforms I visit* (Personal Communication with Participant #3 on 18th October, 2023). Following the discussions and the views of the participants, the question one may ask is whether the content of the movies and videos have something unique to transform them or they consume them for consuming sake? The responses of participant # 11, suggests that the youth's social media consumption comes with behavioral changes and moral consequences. He stated that he counseled one of the youths at the age of 25 who was brought up by his parents and has become addicted to drugs. Expressing his shock, he narrated what the young man told him, and he quoted, *"I watched how people smoke weed (marijuana) and cocaine and become smart, Sharpe, high and active on Facebook so I decided to do same and that resulted in my addiction"* (Personal Communication by Participant # 11 on 13th August, 2023).

From the counsellor's position, he has no choice but to work on the youths. The addictive condition of the youth depicts the nature of social media as it mostly influences people which the youth in particular are the affected ones (Damota's, 2019). More so, one could blame the parents for not performing their parental duties or role by monitoring their son and the way he uses social media platforms; however, the youth sometimes turn to be hiding things from their parents which might occur at the blindside of them. *The*

youth keep hiding things from their parents so it becomes difficult to monitor what they do online. Sometimes, they do their immoral acts at night when the parents are asleep (Personal Communication with Participants #2 and # 24 during the focus group discussion on 20th August, 2023). Participant #2 tried to point out most of the immoral behavioural contents the youth in the district consume are nude pictures and videos, pornographic videos and drugs, etc.

Another participant #24 stated that she watches nudes and sexual related contents. She claims that she finds interest in watching it and further pointed out that it is common in Tinder, TikTok and sometimes circulating via WhatsApp. She claims to know a friend who uses Tinder to do prostitution because she watches some of these contents. She added that her friend posts her semi-nudes' pictures and place her contact details on an account she has created for hook-upping. In the interview, she confessed that she entered into the act but later realised the danger and managed to stop. The participant seemed to stand on her feet not to be influenced into engaging in any acts that will affect her moral life, therefore, she quickly abstained from it.

Three participants #3, #4, #12 were of the view that they use TikTok, Snapchat and Instagram to watch personality videos that teach about the realities of life. In the interview, one of the participants (Participant #4 on 8th September, 2023) purposely mentioned personality videos by alluding that they are people who have vision and they share their visions for people's consumption, and it gives life testimonies, so such videos are the ones the youth should be interested in. From this perspective, it seems that participant #4 seems not to be interested in any other contents apart from personality contents. One of the participants also added that, *I consume Facebook and*

WhatsApp content because of the interesting message of advice and encouragement which helps in life (Personal Communication with participant # 5 during the focus group discussion on 8th September, 2023). The response from the participants depicts that not everybody shows interest in any contents.

Adding to the views on the content and reason for consuming it, some of the participants (4) revealed that religious content on social media is what they consume. Addressing the question, one of the participants stated that, *I mostly visit WhatsApp, Facebook and TikTok. I visit them especially Facebook and WhatsApp for more motivational information. For me, the first thing I do when I wake up is to pick up my phone, start going through my messages and look for morning devotional quotations and motivational messages from my pastor* (Personal Communication with Participant # 14 on 30th August, 2023). The participant seems to be interested in faith related content because the participant is a Christian and she tries to show faith biases by revealing that she consumes only religious content but there could be other contents she consumes which because it is not religious base, she felt reluctant to talk about or reveal.

Another content the participants usually consume are betting contents. Speaking on the issue of betting, one participant intimated that *I got influenced into betting through my friends who taught me to understand how to stake* (Participant #17 in an interview on 10th August, 2023). Narrating his story, he pointed out that he learned more and understood staking bets on Facebook, Telegram and Instagram after he followed some Nigerians who are experts in staking bets and got addicted to it. The participant assumed that, his friends

who introduced him into betting could have learned them probably from the same sites (Facebook, Telegram or Instagram). On the other hand, participant #13 shared that friends influence each other on social media. He cited a neighbour friend who was influenced into betting by a colleague. To him, anytime these two friends contact each other via video call, WhatsApp or normal texting, they discuss betting. He made this statement because his friend send him his chats. It is imperative to note that, one could be influenced into betting by his or her social environment not necessarily social media.

Additionally, participant #23, who is an active participant in betting confirmed during the interview that he sometimes stole from his parents and friends or borrowed from them to stake his bet. Stealing on the part of the participant is not acceptable in the Ghanaian society and according to Sarpong (1979) and Gyekye (1996) such behaviour is punishable as he has flawed societal value and norms of stealing in the name of staking bets.

Another participant, who is a counsellor on her part, reveals how she talks to some of the youth, especially her students, who confide in her to desist from betting because, to her, the majority of the youth in the district are unemployed and one of the means of getting money to stake a bet is to steal. She was not surprised to hear complaints of theft in the district. *Many youths come to me to share their betting experiences with me and I know of many of the youth in the district who are addicted to betting. You can go to the betting centers and you will see more of the youth* (Personal Communication with participant # 12 on 13th September, 2023). All the betting companies like Safari bet, Sporty bet, Alfa bet, operate within the age restriction, which is those above 18 years, but even those who are at the age group of 15, 16 and 17

years who do not fall within the age bracket of the betting companies' laws find their way partaking in betting. It is assumed that those under the age group in the district have already been influenced by some of the youth in the district. This will have future implications for the district as the next set of youth in the district will be more betting addicted.

Few comments were made concerning occultist content. Interestingly, one of the participants shared his experience that he was nearly lured into freemasonry. According to him, he overcame it by the fact that he was a pastor and had the resilient power; otherwise, he would have ended up in one of such groups. In his words he stated; *I watched a video about freemasonry brotherhood (cult) and I nearly registered as a member. They contain catchy contents* (Personal Communication with participant # 11 on 30th August, 2023). Even though he was a pastor and if he was influenced into becoming a member of the freemason brotherhood, then what will happen to the youth in the district who are possibly unemployed and face societal pressure?

During the focus group discussions, one of the participants claimed he consumes content that is business-oriented. He participates using WhatsApp to sell his merchandise, such as shirts, sneakers, boxer shorts and singlets. He highlighted his interest on the basis that it sells, meaning people patronise his merchandise the way he wants it. Since social media is an open environment for people, online sales are not difficult to operate because, provided they are posted on any of the social networking sites like Facebook or WhatsApp, people will patronise, unlike in the past, when people carried their things on their heads, rooming the neighborhood to be sold. Today, social media can sell for you in your comfort zone.

Highlighting the content, they consume, participants #20 and #23 in the focus group discussion shared their opinion that the recent social media trending sites and platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and Snapchat are the leading sites for business. They may be right; however, there are other social media platforms like Facebook, which is still relevant and active and can be used to do business, but the participants seem to trust only TikTok, Instagram and Snapchat as the only platforms for business. The reason for their claim is that more of the youth in the district have turned their attention to these sites; therefore, doing business on any of these sites reaches out to many clients. This view corresponds to Jeessmitha (2019), who argues that the youth take advantage of the popularity of social media to sell their merchandise. He made this view because social media is a social-oriented site where business people take chances to enhance their market and reach out to customers. Another participant said, *my friend use to sell her dresses and ladies wear and the ones she has sowed herself on Facebook, TikTok and Instagram to attract customers. Mostly, she advertises them on Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram and TikTok* (Personal Communication with participant #21 on 8th September, 2023). This shows how social media has been useful to the youth who are business-minded. Their views seem to support what was said that the effective nature of social media allows business owners and directors to use the platforms to convey, inform and engage with customers and employees for a successful business (Kaplan & Haenlein (2010). By this the youth make money out of their established business and they are able to grow their business via social media.

However, some of the participants held different schools of thought on the effectiveness of social media business. Participant #10's expressed her worries concerning the bad advertisements on social media platforms. She mentioned the issue of fake advertisement and how to make quick money, etc. All these business advertisements for her are not healthy for the youth's consumption, as they may be deceived into doing what is morally unacceptable in pursuit of money. In addition to Participant #10's view, some of the participants stated that sometimes the content that pops up, like betting, occultic groups and the lottery, is/are all "misleading", misleading in the sense that it does not give people a positive motivation to realise the importance of hard work. For instance, one participant intimated; *I opened my Facebook account and pornographic content, freemason and betting adverts popped up and they were very misleading and alarming. I have to restrain myself sometimes and it becomes difficult sometimes to take your eyes off these things (advert). Again, it has been the avenue for gays and lesbians to lure people into the act* (Personal Communication with Participant #12 in an interview with him on 13th September, 2023). It is worrying even to some parents and Pastors in the district who wish that the youth will come to the realisation of the need to resist and desist from certain contents that do not promote their moral growth and personal development.

Again, even though, social media is used to do business, however, online businesses sometimes face so many risk factors like fraud, fake products and synthetic items. Most of the youth who normally engage in online trade attested to the fact that they are most at times scammed by fraudsters. One of the participants reported that he has been involved in online

business on several occasions and he has been scammed. He noted that, *I saw an item (a pair of shoes) on Facebook and I paid for it online to be delivered to me. When I called the seller, he told me he has given it to a car to be delivered to me. When I called back in five minutes time the line was off and till now the person has not delivered the item to me* (Personal confession by Participant #4 during the focus group discussion on 13th September, 2023). People will begin to ask and raise questions about trustworthiness, confidentiality and genuineness on the part of the online sellers, which might result in losing the youth who like patronising online when the trust is no longer there. The participants' concerns correspond with Allcott and Gentzkow's (2016) view, who see a reduction in investor and online business patronage, and for some online buyers, because most people (could be youth) advertise fake products and fake advertisements to defraud them, they lose interest in engaging in the online market. Again, once there is no more trust, market sustainability becomes a challenge and creates a huge problem in the online market space. This view does not also take away the fact that there are still genuine youth who know customer service and deliver on their mandate.

While other participants were sharing their thoughts on the content they consume, other participants during the focus group interaction reacted that those platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, or any other site that emerges, they must participate because they need to explore. This shows how the youth have shown much interest in using social media, especially the current social networking sites like TikTok, Twitter, Instagram, etc. It is also to show that the reasons for the youth visiting or using social media sites differ in many ways. On the same research objective 2, fourteen

(14) of the youth claimed that they consume social interactive content. Platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook and many others are the platforms most of the youth establish friendship links and share this link for others to join. *These friendship sites at least will bring back memories and serves as a bond for them* (Personal Communication with Participant #13 who is a counselor in an interview on 14th September, 2023). For instance, in an interaction with participant #12 who is a counselor and pastor, he said, *my son normally visits Facebook and when I asked him of what he is doing on Facebook, he replied that he is getting in touch with his old friends, especially the ones who for a very long time he has lost contact with and has reconnected with them.* He added that you most often see the youth always engaging with each other on the social media platforms and their interest is to build social connections.

Social media has created a new form of connection where the youth socialise with friends in the world today, social media has created a common medium of communication and togetherness for the young generation. By this, the youth in the district utilise the platforms to connect, communicate and build a close bond among themselves. Out of this bond, they turn to influence each other either in the positive way or negative way. Similarly, participant #7 in an interview narrated that:

“All my friends are not around me so I keep in touch with them through video calls, WhatsApp chat and Zoom meet any available time and we have been enjoying good company though you would not feel the sense of deep connection as you may want but it’s cool, it does not make us lose contact and friendship. We create memories and we try to share our individual experiences

and things about our lives. We create jokes, have fun and that ends it.”

(Personal Communication with Participant # 7 on 13th August, 2023).

The WhatsApp platforms seem to be used by the youth to relate with their friends and families. For participant # 3, he makes use of only WhatsApp to check up on colleagues and family members. One of the participants in reacting to the view of participant # 3, participant # 4 claimed that #3 does not seem to know the importance of social media usage or probably because it is the cheapest platform as compared to the other sites like Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat or because he wanted to limit himself to only WhatsApp. Another participant # 5 in the discussion referred to participant # 3 that *He seems not to be current on how social media helps the youth to socialise with friends from distant areas and even close relatives. You need to know things around you and social media just does that* (Personal Communication with Participant #4 on 13th September, 2023).

Majority of the participants (5) responded that, they consume love content sites. To ascertain more information on the love content sites they mentioned, they were asked to explain further. Participants # 21, #22 and #14 in an interview openly mentioned that the love contents they consume are from love movie contents. One of them said *“there are some movies that show only love contents and that makes you learn how to make love with your partner”* (Participants #22 shared view during personal interview on 8th September, 2023). The participant # 22 was asked if such content is not a pornographic content which she consumes. She replied *“no” and further explained that, we have pornographic content and the content that shows love. When you watch love making content, it does not mean you are watching*

pornographic content but there are times some of the youth watch both pornographic contents and love movies contents. She was further asked; what do you make of the love content you consume? In response, she said; *as a youth and a lady, these things help you to grow in terms of knowing much about love and know how to show love to your partner.* she might not take into consideration its effect on her or possibly the future consequences of becoming addicted to it.

There were other youth who revealed that they have platforms for girls alone who share their thoughts on love issues and that of guys who also discuss their matters. For we girls, *we discuss issues of relationship, love making and how to lure a man into loving us* (Personal Communication with Participant # 23 on 14th September, 2023). This view shared by the participant #13 seem to have some relation to that of Mageto (2017), who states that social media as an environment for learning and socialisation sometimes influences the youth and affects their moral development as they learn wrong behaviours from their peers. In this way, since the youth join platforms that discuss issues of love and sex and watch sex-related movies, they are easily compelled to exhibit such behaviours, and in that case, their morality will be affected. Dewing (2010) also shares the same view with Mageto (2017) on how social media contributes to an immoral lifestyle among the youth who watch them because it aids in the posting and sharing of contents such as nude pictures, sexual-related content, etc. In this way, as the youth participate in watching love-making content and discussing sexual-related contents, they are likely to show pictures and videos of them for their consumption, and this could affect them morally. Akram's (2017) however, contested the views of

Dewing and Mageto supporting the position of participant # 23 and stated that social media has exposed students to academic contents and has promoted cultural heritage, which are all good. He also highlighted some of the help social media has given to people by reaching out to their friends and relatives and establish more friendship links with others.

Although social media serves as a social interactive platform, when the youth who visit these platforms do not socialise with the right people (youth), they are likely to be influenced into engaging in bad practices like prostitution, smoking, etc. According to one of the counsellors, some young girls she knows started to show some unusual characters and behaviours, so she drew closer to them, and to her surprise, these students were engaging in prostitution (hook-upping). The counsellor revealed a statement made by of the girls that; *my friends (names coded) introduced me to a sugar daddy via Tinder account that he will give me plenty money after I asked money from them. The man gave her the money after the sexual intercourse and that was how she ended up been a hook up girl* (Personal Communication with Participant #13 during an exclusive interview on 14th September, 2023). Participant #11 suggested that *the youth need to be selective of the content they consume in other not to be affected negatively*. With the above view, I can see that the participant # 11 tries to provide way to guide the youth who are active social media users to avoid encountering contents of that nature.

One of the contents that came up in the interview was phonographic content. Two of the participants, narrated their position on the matter of the content they consume. They narrated that they watch pornographic content sometimes. They created the awareness that they have been constantly

watching it in the comfort of their rooms. From their expressions, one could notice their addiction to the content they consume and their inability to stop consuming the contents. Highlighting the consumption of social media content, two of the counsellors submitted that the youth involve in pornographic consumption and that has actually affected them badly. From participant #13:

I encountered one gentleman who came to seek counselling and from his narrations said that, he has lost focus and attention. I asked him why? And he confessed that he has been masturbating for some years now and he finds it difficult to stop. Enquiring from him the possible cause for such act, he mentioned that, he watched a pornographic content one day as he went through his phone and it has been a consistent practice so he needs assistance. After narrating his story, I had no option than to counsel him. I did my best to counsel him and prayed for him. I later asked him to delete the apps that leads him to the site which he did right in front of me. I also advised him not to open any link that pops up on his phone. From there, I send him quotations and the word of God every day to keep him in touch with God's words. I later took him as my friend and we call each other (Participant #13 revealed his encounter with a youth during the interview on 13th September, 2023).

One will feel worried about the youth's eagerness to practice what they see on social media and take things for granted. This is where Baker (2011) comes in to say that social media has controlling and influential effects on the user's behaviour, and for that matter, once the youth constantly consume the content, they are likely influenced to practice what they see. This also corroborates with the work of Anderson and Oppong (2013) that the youth's

consumption of social media contents, like pornographic content, has affected their moral standards. As a result, some of them become addicted to masturbation, develop strong sexual desires and engage in prostitution. These acts in the past were not accepted in the society, but today, it seems the introduction of social media technology has exposed certain lifestyles to overshadow some of the moral norms and values within the Ghanaian society. Everybody seems to be comfortable consuming any content on social media, as well as looking at and taking things for granted (normal), even when such conduct conflicts with our moral norms and values. For Gyekye (1989) and Sarpong (1979), actions and practices such as prostitution and masturbation as narrated by the participants are abominable acts in society that attract punishment on the victims. The scholars (Gyekye and Sarpong) try to link the present to the past, saying that things were not condoned; however, it seems not to be so today as people, especially the youth, turn to demonstrate the moral freedom they enjoy in society, especially as societal sanctions are not strictly applicable today unlike in the past.

Another contents consumption the participants talked about was “meet your role model” contents. The participants shared that via social media like TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat, etc. they come to meet people they look up to as their role models and learn from them. According to one of the participants, “some social media personalities share their life stories and it becomes a motivation for you” (Personal Communication with Participant # 1 in an interview on 8th September, 2023).

Notably, not all active participants of social media pick the right people as their role model. *In the youth’s status and on their social media*

handles, they post people who they claim are their role models and there is nothing good about them to be learned by the youth (Personal Communication with participant #14 in an interview on 13th September, 2023). It will therefore be right picking out those who positively influence one's life and one can learn positive things about them. The youth of today do not diligently choose the right personalities to learn from, however, they copy the wrong things about their mentors. Currently, the youth are fond tattooing their whole bodies, multiple piercing of their ears both males and females, males wearing many rings on their fingers, dying of hairs etc. and these youth sometimes learned these behaviours from their supposed role models. According to one of the counselors (Participant # 11), because the youth do not choose the right characters as their role models and learn from them, their lifestyle looks no different from their supposed role models or mentors. Justifying her position, she avers that;

The youth pick their supposed role models and emulate them. You will see a youth who has pierced his ears and for the ladies, she has made multiple piercing of the ears and when you ask, they will tell you they learned from their idol. According to her, in the situation where the youth does not pick the right person as a role model, he or she is likely to practice immoral behaviour; for example, piercing ears, tattoos, wearing of transparent clothes exposing sensitive parts of their bodies with their trousers worn down to their knees etc. She also cited those personalities like musicians, actors and actresses, footballers etc are the ones the youth emulate and some of these celebrities do not portray good character on social media.

This view of the participant gives an impression that the youth learn or copy most of the bad deeds from their supposed role models on social media which are not good and that affects them morally. However, hastily concluding on that note also seems that every personality who is chosen as role models on social media exhibits bad characters for the youth to copy. There are some personalities who influence people in a positive way thus inspiring people and changing lives. Like participant # 6 “only those who could influence my life are the ones I pick as my motivators, like Jackie Appiah, Nana Ama Mcbrown”. She always picks those who influence her positive as her role model. The youth have to take into consideration whom they choose as role model so as to desist from some of the immoral behaviour they portray in the society today.

Furthermore, few of the participants consume religious content. This could be as a result of their religious background. Participant #14 and #16 for instance indicated that he takes the chance to listen to the word of God via Facebook and WhatsApp. He claims he watches and reads some motivational quotes and messages from pastors for his spiritual growth. These two participants seem to have interest in the same contents and it could be due to their quest for faith related content as Christians. Again, one of the participants, who was a priest added his voice that:

I use Facebook and WhatsApp to teach about the Catholic faith and also use the opportunity to counsel the youth who fall out of the right track. As a counsellor and a youth chaplain, I visit the platforms to fetch out the youth's interest to abreast myself with what goes on in social media in order to guide the youth who are often fond on social media to use it rightly. For instance, I

counseling a young guy who was addicted to online sexual contents thus watching pornographic content which has ended him into masturbation and strong sexual feelings (Priest sharing his experience with a youth in the district during the interview on September 11, 2023).

He concludes that, if he did not know how social media impacts users, he would not have understood the young man and corrected him as such. From his view, it seems the practice of masturbation and the use of social media is causing harm and increasing rapidly. Since social media according to Damota (2019) and Baker (2011) causes moral changes and affect moral development, its influencing nature might have induced the youth in the district to indulge in such behaviour and character.

To acquire more information about the subject under research, the participants were further asked what they make of the content they consumed on social media platforms. Out of the twenty-five (25) youth interviewed, ten (10) of them shared that social media is an important avenue to enjoy moments of life at all times as well as lessons and experiences. The rest find nothing good about social media especially on morality. For participant #7, she cited content where friends poison their colleague friend for doing well than them. She learned a lesson not to socialise or trust friends. This shows the extent the participant has been affected psychologically with such a piece of content and lessons learned from the experiences on social media. Some also defended that people live fake lives on social media. For participant # 12, *some use pseudo-names to create accounts and be posting and flaunting material things online claiming to be owners of them but they are all not for them; it is a fake lifestyle they are living* (Personal Communication with

Participant #12 on 13th September, 2023). Such a life sometimes put pressure on others to live as their friends portray on social media. Participants #20 and #19 shared that they nearly become hook-ups (online prostitutes) because their friend was giving them pressure. They rented an apartment for themselves and bought expensive dresses. They fell for it joined their friends but later stopped after one attempt because of the difficulties in it.

The awareness of the influence of social media on the youth's Lives

To achieve the third research objective, the participants were to share some of the impacts social media has had on their lives. In the group discussion, some of them stated that social media has had influenced on their lives either positively or negatively. It was revealed that social media has influential magic so much that before one could realise, she or he has been misled by the contents he or she consumes. Some of the negative things the participants were aware about social media consumption was that; it has influenced many of them into practicing immoral acts. One of the participants, # 3, pointed out that once social media is a learning platform, the youth are exposed to many morally questionable contents or witness behaviour that the youth try to emulate. As the youth encounter these contents on several occasions, psychologically, it affects them and it models their behaviour and attitudes. One of them shared that “Snapchat and TikTok contents are attractive in their nature, and you are always tempted to do some” (Personal Communication with Participant #1 in a focus group discussion on 8th September, 2023). In this case, with constant watching and participating in TikTok or SnapChart contents, there is a likelihood of joining or practicing, or you are tempted to behave the same way people do on the social media

platform. If it is a bad behaviour, you also exhibit same, and morally you are affected.

For instance, one participant cited that when a youth sees how their friends have dressed up, they are influenced to do same. Once someone has worn it and it looks good on the person and it is a trend, the youth rush and buys into such lifestyle. She added that *“irrespective of your religious background, you may be influenced because a morally good person has been influenced before to become a morally bad person”* (Personal communication with Participant #2 in a focus group discussion on 8th September, 2023). These are all the harm the consumption of social media contents brings to the youth. Considering how social media influences human behaviour and their moral lives, Bandura (1997) rightly explains that when individuals link up with or learn from their social environment through observation and imitation, they are eager to feel part, and that is where it causes the sudden change of morality in the individual. In this case, the youth become easily carried away through their social environment and they exhibit immoral lifestyle.

To participant #25, *social media has exposed many youths into making money by alluding to the fact that some of the youth indulge in sharing of blood to enrich themselves. Some also share their nude pictures and video for money and the more people like and share the more the chances of getting money. These monies are gotten from the number of viewers who will view the content posted on Instagram, Facebook, etc* (Personal Communication with Participant #25 in an interview on 5th October, 2023). Other participants # 2, #22, # 17 and # 3 also highlighted on the speed at which social media is aiding in destroying the moral life of the youth in the district by saying that, majority

of the youth engages in cybersex, alcoholism and gambling. Participant # 2 and #17 cited the betting centers to be always full with the youth for betting. One of them alluded to the fact that young guys smoke and misbehave on the streets. This confirmed the earlier position of participant #12 who revealed that he has to counsel a young guy who was fond addicted to smoking.

Moreover, he also spoke about the youth wearing of rings on their fingers for spiritual protections and multiple piercing of ears (both males and females). He believes the youth are lured into such acts from the content they consume on social media. His position corroborates with Rawath and Satheesh (2015) and Asare-Donkoh (2018) who believe spending time to consume online content affects moral behaviours, and for that matter, the youth in the district might be influenced by their frequent use and consumption of social media contents. On the issue of morality, one of the participants remarked that:

I do not watch the contents that pop up on social media because it does not reflect my Christian lifestyle. You can be tempted to watch them, so I have limited myself to only WhatsApp for now at least I could read messages and send some messages to friends and families. Images like nude pictures, freemasonry advert, sika aduro, penis medicines, etc. appears on my phone anytime I try to visit any of the platforms. I have been influenced to watch pornographic videos and I started masturbating, it took God's intervention (Personal Communication with Participant #3 during the focus group discussion on 14th September, 2023).

Participant # 12 added to the earlier submission of participant #3 that when you look at social media from afar, you may think that social media is

all good, but the negatives seem to outweigh the positives in recent years, looking at the way some of the bad contents like pornography, sexual-related contents, Freemason brotherhood advert, etc. that pop up on the social media sites someone wants to visit. On the part of participant #3, for the sake of the pornographic and nude pictures and videos that pop up on Facebook, Snapchat and Tiktok, he has decided to use only WhatsApp so that he will not be lured into watching such contents like the other youth. He has limited himself to only WhatsApp, probably because he does not want to be tempted, however, these bad contents participant #3 want to avoid on the sites cannot be controlled; they pop up unexpectedly.

Again, establishing on the influence of social media on the youth moral lives, it was pointed out that whatever people consume on social media affects their choice of words and their way of having decent conversations with others. One participant #8 shared that her brother nowadays uses “F” words more often, and from her observation, it looks like the TikTok and Instagram contents he consumes have affected him. Some of the youth insult their parents and elderly people without any sense of regret because that is what they know trending. Adding to the earlier submission, another participant, #24 added that the youth could insult anyone anyhow. When one tries to correct them, they will say, *Ooh!)y3 normal things*, he concluded. In the past, one cannot use such words or insult the elderly but today, it is termed as normal and that is a situation the district should be worried about.

Some of the participants posited that the youth who are active users of social media fall prey to profane songs and words. For instance, one of the participants who was a teacher claimed a female student wrote a song in her

exercise book and when he looked at the words she has written, he asked her whether she could sing the song in front of her parents and she said no. To the participant, the song was full of profane words. The words of the song could affect her in her communication with friends. When she was asked, she claimed she learned the lyrics from TikTok. *This supposed student has gone to learn the lyrics of the song which contains profane words, and truth be told, the student will become use to those words and start using them in her speech (communication). This for me, does not promote good morals and she could have influenced other youth to behave the same* (Personal Communication with Participant # 15 in an interview on 14th September, 2023). This assertion support participant #8 who shared that her brother is influence in using the “f” word in his communication which she believes he learned it from Tiktok and Instagram. They will later develop the habit of using abusive words while talking to friends and the elderly, which in the past was abhorred in the society.

Some of the participants also highlighted that they are aware of social influence as one makes friends on social media. The social influence here means the youth indulge in criminal activities, form bad friends and live an indecent life by way of learning from their friends they socialise or live with. In responding to these social issues, ten (10) of the participants affirmed that the things the youth learn on social media have affected their social lives and that has posed social danger to the society. The consumption of social media contents lures the youth to form or join gangs that may introduce them to deviant behaviours like alcoholism, smoking, stealing, prostitution etc. Adding to the above submission, one of the participants said, *cybercrime is a battling*

social issue in the society. Cybercrimes and bullying have taken center stage in the social media space (Personal Communication with Participant # 4 during the focus group discussion on 18th September, 2023). Contributing to the increasing nature of cyber-crimes and bully in the society, participant # 23 shared that *when you are not smart enough, hackers will hack your account and these fraudsters will withdraw your money*. He shared his experience to confirm his statement that fraudster scammed him while he wanted to buy shoes from Facebook, he paid for the item but the item has never been delivered to him. These social issues are more or less psychological where the fraudster play around the psychology of the victim and when they realise the person is weak; they use the opportunity to scam you. Again, because the youth are money conscious, when they see money advert on Facebook or any social media handles, they follow it. One of the youths reacted that the various advertisement on occultism, Freemason brotherhood turn to affect the youth psychologically. *The youth turn to express their desire for money more than hard work* (Personal Communication with Participant #10 on 6th September, 2023). Because of social media's influential nature, it makes the youth join social groups and later find themselves being occultists and ritualists.

Adding to the above submission, twelve (12) of the participants submitted that some of the youth use social media to create or portray fake identity and live fake lives. Some of the youth flaunt their borrowed cars and rented houses as if they own them. They mostly watch these fake stories on Facebook, Instagram or TikTok and they copy them. Participant # 22 said; *this fake lives of the youth on social media have some level of psychological influence on the rest of the youth who consume the content, because they are*

tempted to look down on themselves and start to follow bad social groups to live “expensive” lifestyle. As the youth follow television adverts and adverts from the social networking sites like Facebook, TikTok and Instagram such as freemasonry, sika gari, money brotherhoods etc., they are tempted to venture into that social group to make money.

Because these acts of making money also involves sharing killing and taking human parts, that might have resulted in recent reports in the media space concerning killings and removal of people’s body parts in the country. It seems that the youth are the ones blamed for such practices, which in reality, some adults also engage in killing people and removing their body parts for money rituals for quick money.

Participant # 19 seems to share similar thoughts with participant #3 who earlier spoke on fake identity. To participant #3, *when people put fake things or identities on social media platforms, people are unable to determine which of the information and personal details are correct so people use that as a yardstick to mislead people to tell lies about themselves and their families.* Speaking vehemently on this, he stretched that social media practitioners do not take into consideration the content for the consumer but post anything at all just to make money or get some fame. The challenge here is, social media is unable to sieve morally favourable contents, so many information posted there for consumption are mostly fake ones.

Another social issue the participants spoke about is the level of indecent dressing among the youth. A participant said; *social media has contributed to influencing the wearing and putting of indecent dressing thus exposing sensitive parts of the body* (Personal Communication with Participant

7 in an interview on 16th September, 2013). The type of dresses the youth put on is not the right form of dressing in the Ghanaian society. This dressing style raised by the participant # 7 has become a new form of fashion that possibly the youth learned from the social media platforms they visit and because it does not reflect the accepted form of dressing in the Ghanaian society, that might have generated this concern on the part of the participant. Another participant supported that *the youth get some of these dresses on social media platforms like TikTok, WhatsApp, Instagram and Facebook* (Personal Communication with Participant # 9 on 13th September, 2023). Again, participant # 13 who is a counsellor expressed his worry stating that in the past, *the appearance of someone revealed his or her cultural background and the home the person come from but today, the situation has changed. It is obvious that social media is pushing it gradually. We seem to be silent and do not care about the new form of dresses trending. Ladies wear dresses exposing their sensitive parts and guys wear their trousers below their waist.* The participant was emphatic that social media is the cause of indecent dressing because the youths can learn these fashion dresses from their supposed role models on social media. The mere mentioning of role models as the reason for the youth to wear indecent dresses presupposes that there are no other ways that can make the youth live such indecent lifestyle thus wearing of indecent dresses except social media which cannot solely be the case.

Again, participant #20 also disagrees with participant #13 in her submission that indecent dressing is caused by social media and role models. In her position, one can decide to wear dresses without necessarily learning from social media or been influenced by any personality. In her words; *you*

can get role models and learn good things from them. Not all role models exhibit indecent lifestyle (Personal Communication with Participant #20 during a focus group discussion on 9th August, 2023). From the submission of the participants, the learning from one's role model could be a bad one that does not reflect the moral standards of the Ghanaian society, and at the same time the person can learn good things as well from the supposed role models. It is mostly dependent on the youth who learn from their supposed role models because choosing the right personality will influence one's life positively and vice versa.

Again, most of the participants spoke against the state of indecent dressing of the youth currently. One participant touched on ladies' dressing styles which they take to the street. The participant was emphatic that the ladies wear sexy and transparent dresses and it does not reflect the culturally acceptable way of dressing. To the participant *it does not reflect the culture and norms of the society for which she said "obaa kata wo ho sie" in a literal translation meaning as a lady you must cover your body* (Personal Communication with Participant #2 during the focus group discussion on 18th September, 2023). Some of these traditional moral values taught people about the need to put on a decent dress to meet the demands of the society. The loss of these traditional values could be because we have thrown away of cultural values and has accepted foreign culture or way of life. This could also be easily learned via social media as the youth have embraced it.

Some of the participants also shared the positive experiences of social media. According to participants, #17, more usage of social media on the part of students makes them addictive to it, and it affects their learning

performance both positively and negatively. Highlighting the importance of social media, one of the participants, who was a student, mentioned using Facebook and Instagram to learn how to cook by watching cooking practical videos for better understanding. Students learn a lot from social media and that helps them to grasp the concept and topics taught by their teachers, and that enhances their learning skills and performance. Teachers also sometimes use these social media platforms to teach their students for better understanding or refer them to use a particular social media platform to search for a particular topic to aid in their learning. One of the social media sites that aids in discussion is AI, which also helps students form learning groups to discuss academic issues.

Most of the time, students take part in teaching through Zoom, and make video calls to discuss topics without being physically present in the classroom. Learning takes two forms; it can be positive or negative and social media can influence students in any of these forms. This is because to Berson and Berson (2005), the threat and effect that comes with the use of social media which when the youth fall victim to it will ruin their learning performance. According to Tamir and Mitchell (2013), the adolescent brains and learning capabilities capture or absorb things so quickly and faster. This view might be the reason why the youth quickly learn things they see on social media,

Moreover, some of the youth stated that the consumption of social media contents has influenced their academics. One of them pointed out that the youth participate in online stuffs than classroom activities. Although the importance of education cannot be underestimated, however, the more people

become addicted to social media usage the more it affects their creativity and writing skills. For instance, it makes students addicted to writing short hands in formal writing. Teachers always worry about the level of poor academic performance and writing skills of students. *Social media is affecting the writing skills and creativity of students' youth and as a teacher, it feels worrying about the future of the country's education. Students' youth are now unable to write a complete sentence without short hands. Where they are to put capital "T" they make it small "i" when beginning a sentence and sometimes "YOUR" they put "UR" in short-hand form and this is a result of social media* (Personal Communication with Participant #12 during personal interview on 13th September, 2023). The participant shares similar view with Akram (2017) who says that social media usage in using short hands affect students writing skills and creativity therefore, it is not surprising that some teachers complain that students cannot write a complete sentence without abbreviation like "how are you" as "h r u", "we thank God" as "wtg". He cited WhatsApp as one of the places where the youth write short hands sentence. He added that instead of the youth devoting their time to studies, they spend their time on social media picking some people as their role models and they end up copying them blindly.

Adding to the woes of poor academic performance of students due to their usage of social media, one of the counsellors (Participant #11) revealed her encounter with one brilliant student whose academic performance drastically went down due to time wasting on WhatsApp chatting and Facebook friendship interactions. The confession the student made shows that he does not learn; he only sticks to his phone in the house, betting or watching videos

and chatting with friends. The fact still remains that the student did not use social media appropriately, as other students, like participant #14, who made use of it to learn how to cook. Right now, social media is aiding in doing assignments and academic work so easily that students must take advantage of it. An example is the AI app, which makes learning easier than before.

The contribution of social media and the decline of morality among the youth in Effia- Kwesimintsim District.

To achieve the research objective 4, the participants were asked, in what way(s) has social media contributed to the decline of morality among the youth in the district? Out of the 28 participants, 17 of them shared that there is moral decadence in the society which is mostly linked to their frequent consumption of social media and their addiction to it usage. One of them reacted that as they constantly consume social media contents, they are influenced into practicing what they see in the social media space. For example, if they see dresses online, they are eager to buy. In the words of the participant; *once someone has worn it and it looks good on the person and it trends, the youth rush into sowing or buying such dresses to also look good. Sometimes, they mostly get influenced by their supposed role models they pick on Facebook* (Personal Communication with Participant #2 in a focus group discussion on 9th August, 2023). The participants were further asked how does this influence occur. In response, 13 of them reacted that, “social media content is catchy and attractive so you would be pushed or want to do it”. This seems that the influential power of social media as posited by Akram (2017), Mageto (2017) and Jeemitha (2019) comes to play as it sometimes influences the youth’s level of thinking, moral development and decision making. The

youth are influenced psychologically from what they watch or see from the social media and that they are lured into doing what they have seen from the platform.

One of the participants shared her worry about the nature of adverts shown on social media. She believes what they as youth see is what they fall for. She claimed:

Adverts such as hard drugs, betting, malam's advertising for quick monies, freemason, etc. are not healthy for their moral growth as youth. When they (youth) are introduced to such acts, it simply leads to deviant behaviour in the society. They become vulnerable to such contents and are likely to go into them. The media is so influential today in our society unlike the past where good people were the influential ones (Personal Communication with Participant # 10 in an interview on 5th October, 2023).

The participant seems to be interested in only the adverts shown on social media which to her is a bad content because of its influence. Some of the contents the youth enjoy most are platforms like Facebook, Instagram, etc. and these contents (adverts) are shown online and such adverts attract them into practicing these immoral behaviours like doing drugs, joining occult groups and engaging in money rituals.

Three of the participants added to the earlier view of participant # 10 that, social media gives room for them as youth to have a desire for quick money. Some of them (youth) engage in betting to make money and which result in pilfering. One of them revealed that when a youth get attractive to things on social media, they are unable to have the resistance spirit to avoid doing it. When a colleague flaunts their fake wealth on social media, they feel

pressured and try to compete with their friends. The youth are money conscious these days and they force their way in making money. Some of the youth make money out of posting their nude pictures and videos for more viewers. The more they get viewers on TikTok, Facebook or Instagram, the more they make money. Others also engage in fraudulent activities by hacking into people's personal account. In justifying this, one of the participants #22 claimed that once you take advantage of the social media platforms like TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, etc. you can make a lot of money. This according to her puts pressure on the youth to learn from them in trying to use TikTok or Instagram to create contents and post in order to become famous or make money from it. This is the point where a lot of them expose nude pictures or videos for more likes and share and subscribe to it. These attitudes destroy the moral fabrics as indicated by Geisler (1989) and Sarpong (1979) when the youth actions and behaviours do not conform to the moral norms and values.

In addressing the issue about how social media contributed to the decline of morality among the youth in the district, fifteen (15) participants confirmed that social media has played a key role. Those who hold this school of thought explained that the rate of immorality in the district is relatively high and they believe the youth's exploration of the internet via social media more frequently has influenced their lifestyle and moral behaviours. In an interview, one of the participants admitted that *morality is on the low side not only because immoral behaviours have been with us but social media is fueling it and the speed at which it is going is the point. This is because it transmits information faster and we the youth are at risk since we have become addicted*

to it (Personal Communication with Participant # 12 in an interview on 6th September, 2023). The participants blaming social media might be because of the rate of the effect of its consumption by the youth and the moral bad outcomes emanating from their conducts in the district. The participants are convinced that they (youth) are sometimes carried away by what they consume on social media which have negative impact on their moral lives.

Some of the participants (5) mentioned girls wearing short skirts or underwear and braziers exposing their breasts and part of their bodies walking through the street. Their conviction is that social media consumption exposes these dresses for them to buy as they see them on social media. One will contest the views of these participants who think that the wearing of short skirt and transparent clothes are caused by social media consumption, however, such dressing people wear has been part of us long before the coming of social media. Social media could not be the only means by which people wear bad dresses as espoused by the participants. However, the participants tried to compare the past living experience to the current existence and concluded that one could not wear such transparent dresses, but these days it seems common. *If not social media, then what else?* (Personal Communication with Participant #3 during the interview section on 13th September, 2023). They added that “the youth take things they see on social media as a fashion and do not consider how it affects their moral living”. To the participant, the youth try to copy what others are doing. Adding to the earlier submission, participant # 2 mentioned a place in the district called Krobo line where young women engage in harlotry and she is of the conviction that most of these girls are hook-up girls who use social media to do the prostitution (Personal

Communication with Participant #2 on 18th September, 2023). To the participants, watching pornographic materials are catchy and you easily fall for it.

Two of the Participants #3 and #4 for instance reacted that, more sites pop up whiles trying to visit any of the handles (mobile device) and when you click on it, it leads you to an unknown site which contains pornographic contents. Sometimes, the videos that pop up are pornographic in nature and we are curious to watch it and we eventually become addicted to it. In an interview, one of the participants, #4 confirmed that, *Sometimes, as I go through my social media pages, I encounter group pages inviting me to join and when I joined, it led me to another group that contains upgrades of nude pictures, pornography, how to make quick money etc. especially on telegram, Facebook and Tinder. This pushed me to follow and I became addicted* (Personal Communication with Participant #4 in an interview on 23rd September, 2023).

In the view of participant #11, *social media generally has negatively impacted the moral life of the youth. There is no way social media has developed the youth's moral lives positively looking at the trend of immorality in our society today* (Personal Communication with Participant # 11 in an interview). The participant was alluding to the fact that, looking at the rise of immoral behaviour on the side of the youth and their constant consumption of social media contents, the youth moral lives or behaviours are influenced by it. Taking into consideration the view of the participant, she seems to condemn social media totally, but we cannot be quick to conclude that social media usage has not brought any positives, because to Jeessmitha (2019), there is

business growth and academic improvement (Asare-Donkoh, 2018), religious activities (Balbir, 2017) and political advancement (Gyampo, 2017). With the view shared by participant # 11, it becomes an alarming situation considering the immoral behaviours like prostitution, exposing of nude pictures and watching pornographic contents the youth exhibit in the district as a result of the believe that they engage too much on social media.

Supporting the view of participant #11, participant #12 revealed instances where some youths were influenced by the contents, they consume from Facebook who ended up in smoking and drug addiction. In the narration, he observed that, *the young men of age 19 -24 learn this behaviour of smoking and taking of tramadol from Facebook to be precise in the comfort of their homes. This time, the youth do not need physical contact with their friends to influence them to engage in immoral acts, everything is on social media* (Personal Communication in an interview with Participant #12 on 13th September, 2023). One of the district officials (name withheld) supported that the youth get information on sexual acts from social media. In the interview, he stated that there are dysfunctional drugs like viagra, tiger spray advertises on Facebook, TikTok, etc. So, the youth are lured to take them to engage in sexual activities with girls. He claims that these drugs are marketed on social media and the youth search for it to buy them, example; viagra pills, dragon spray and pills etc. Some of the youth supported that they take those drugs to boost their libido and last long in bed. One of the consequences taking these drugs is likely to cause long lasting effect on their sexual life. For instance, one's penis can be enlarged or blood continues to circulate through their veins even after sex and this might result into rape or sexual addiction.

Participant #24 mentioned drugs like virgina libido pills and virgina oil sold in pharmacies they buy which she got to know of through TikTok. The participant confessed that *I have used some before and I read about it from the net and sometimes, people explain it on TikTok and snapchat for me to know which type is good for sex. I have friends who send me more details on these sex drugs via WhatsApp to use* (Personal Communication with Participant #24 on 14th October, 2023). This is in support of the response by the Public Relations Officer (P.R.O) of the district in an interview on the rise of teenage pregnancies and prostitution in the district. He reiterated that the district faces challenges of girls' prostitution which the district assembly is trying to eradicate. Touching of the level of girl's prostitution in the district, he blamed the use of social media without any proper regulations and monitoring.

In probing further on how social media has caused the decline of the youth's morality, one of the participants mentioned the rise of hook upping in the district. Hook up is a new way of doing prostitution online. Those who claim they know some youth who engage in prostitution but refused to mention their names confirm that they were introduced by their friends. The young girls create social media platforms like "sexy girls' corner" or Tinder for men to contact them to engage in sexual intercourse in exchange of money. Some of the old women also recruit some of these young girls to work for them by engaging in prostitution via these handles to make money. They post their pictures with price tag and contact, any man who want to have sex with them has to an order. The numerous reportages on some radio stations website concerning prostitution in the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis such as Sky FM ([https://: skypower.com.gh](https://skypower.com.gh)) and Beach FM [online.com](https://beachfm.com) confirm the state of

prostitution among the youths. In an interaction with one of the participants, she confirmed that those who use social media for such acts are young girls. She elicited that the “prostitution work is lucrative”, lucrative in the sense that they get enough money to take care of themselves and rent their apartments (Participant # 19 in an interview on 13th September, 2023).

Betting alone is one form of activity that may affect people’s moral lives due to its addictive nature. The youth learn and get betting odds and stake betting codes placed on social media sites by a supposed betting expert. Participant #21 revealed that, *the way people discuss betting on Telegram and Facebook made me join a betting group. They winners show their winning trophies and the amount of money won with little amount of money used to stake, I was pushed to learn and stake some. From the first time I won, I have been betting since* (Participant #21 during an interview on 13th September, 2023). Betting affects one’s moral life because, sometimes, the youth who bet steal from either friends or parents. One of the participants confessed that he steals from his parents to stake a bet. The fact that he stakes bet does not warrant that it is right to steal money because it is unethical. The confession made by the participant suggests the level of his addiction to betting and why he has been stealing from his parents to stake bet. One of the district officers attributed the youth betting to “lack of employment”. The position of the District Officer on the lack of employment causing many youths to engage in betting is reflected in the social intervention plan of the District Assembly where they try to find lasting solutions to the problem. Participant #19 disagrees with the district officer that there are youth who work but still bet. Betting is addictive and not only have those who are unemployed staked it.

According to participant #19, people stake bet to make money and not that they are unemployed though he believes it can lead to money pilfering.

The participants who consume sexual contents online narrate that, they became addicted to sex and sex contents and that arouse their sexual feelings. As a result, they engage in masturbation especially when they watch these sex contents without practicing it with the opposite sex. They take videos of themselves while having sexual intercourse to watch them later. *My phone is full of sexual materials so I do not give it out to friends. Sometimes, I watch sex videos with my girlfriend before sex. We have done this for three years now and anytime we meet, we watch them. When my girlfriend is not around, I watch our previous sex and I masturbate* (Participant # 7, # 6 and # 25 sharing his view in an interview on 13th September, 2023). Like Balbir (2017) view, the youth send and watch their nude pictures and videos with their supposed lovers with the notion of expressing and making love with them. Participant #12 believe that, since these practices are going on in the society, it is definitely social media making it available for the youth to be exhibiting such behaviours. The participant #12 seem to be biased in attributing these behaviours of the youth to only social media because there might be other possible reason for doing that. The reason could be lack of proper regulation by the society. Onyema's (2011) therefore support the position of participant #12 that lack of moral discipline and the inability to transmit the moral norms and values to the youth from the beginning has also contributed to these immoral behaviours portrayed by the youth.

Many other literatures have supported the works of Onyema (2011) on how the youth have been swerved away from exhibiting good behaviours.

Moreover, Hagan (2010) cited Soteriads and Difranza (2003) to support the claim of Onyema (2011) that some parents, for poverty's sake, lack the controlling power to train their children with the right social and moral way in order to behave well. The youth devote a lot of time making friends on social media like WhatsApp, Tiktok and Facebook, and they adopt bad behaviour because there is no proper monitoring.

Speaking on the level of the decline of morality among the youth, participant # 14 clearly stated that, these unaccepted sexual misconducts on the part of the youth in the district are influenced by what they consume on social media. The youth are mostly found online and they consume series of social media content which by its influential power drag the youth into practicing what they see on the social media platforms. Some scholars like Hagan (2010) and Dapaah (2015) have highlighted the circulation of naked pictures believed to have been posted by the youth themselves seeing nothing wrong with it. The youth are believed to know where to find those content for their consumption and they hide them from their parents. Participant #13, #18 and #21 in an interview explained that, *we the youth know more of social media than our parents. They have the free moment to go through all the content on social media and that is where they turn to learn bad character and attitudes* (Personal Communication with Participant #13, #18 and #21 during an interview on 13th September, 2023).

Participant #15 added that, the problem today in the society aiding in the decline of the youth's morality is on the bases that social media provides the avenue to share, learn and adopt conduct and behaviour which affect moral standards. Other participants however stated that, social media has provided

space to consume bad contents, such as cyber fraud. To further provide evidence to the earlier submission, the participant shared that he had an encounter with a young man who is a fraudster who make money for defrauding people. He has accomplice he works with and he wanted to introduce me. I later found out that he has moved to Accra and I could not reach out to him. They normally pick people's contact on Facebook and visit any of your social media handles and if they get some few details of you, the fellow you and scam you. From the evidence provided by the participant #15, one would believe that social media without doubt has caused the moral mess among the youth in the district.

Again, a counsellor disclosed in an interview that parents brought their son for counselling for engaging in drugs. The young man confessed that he learned how to smoke from Facebook. He watched the way people smoked and high and the strength they used to work and he decided to test it to see its effectiveness, and they led him to become drug addict. To the counsellor, he was shocked to hear such a statement from the young man because he could not believe one can learn smoking from Facebook. Such an unimaginable situation should not have happened to the young man but he was found in the trap on social media by watching it on Facebook. From indication, the affected youth got influenced through constant viewing of the content and developed the urge to practice it. This shows that people, especially the youth, could easily be led into practicing bad acts since social media serves as a place of learning. Due to the gratification nature of social media use, the youth do not choose the right content to consume and, in that case, fall victim to content addiction.

While some of the youth engage in drugs, others twerk, smoke shisha and strip at clubs and post on social media. For me, *I watched twerking and smoking of shisha on TikTok and Instagram but I could allow myself to be influenced. The truth is that once you watch them, you will be tempted to try and that is dangerous* (Personal Communication with Participant #24 in an interview on 13th September, 2023). This is why participant # 11 for instance has the conviction that, some of the youth learn how to pierce their ears, pierce their clitoris, nipples from their suppose influencers on social media. Much of the youth immoral behaviours could be attributed to social media influencers.

Furthermore, participant #21 stated that, they have learned using abusive words and disrespect elders. He shared that if social media is not responsible, how could a student set a camera of himself or herself and insult leaders like the president and chiefs of the country? The youth do this because they see and hear people insulting elderly people on social media, and such personalities may be the so-called role models, and they copy them. He has no doubt at all that the morality of most of the youth in the district has declined. People utter profane words publicly, and the youth learn them and use them as well in their interactions with peers.

One of the counsellors revealed that *when the youth see their favourite role models like media personalities, actors or actresses, or footballer they learn from them even if they do immoral things. Today, young men behave the same way as their favourite personalities do* (Personal Communication with Participant #11 in an interview on 20th September, 2023). The participant proposed that the society needs to restore moral sanity by bringing back the moral order of the society to reshape the youth's moral lifestyles. Another

participant #13 testified in an interview; *a student of age 17 and his three friends saw an advert on Facebook about making quick money and fraud, so they decided to go to the malam for money ritual and protection but the materials the malam demanded for the rituals scared him so he could not pursue it again* (Personal Communication with Participant #13 on 13th September, 2023). The student could have considered doing it if it was favourable the difficulties pushed him away from performing any rituals.

Conclusion

The study has presented the data from the field work and analysed it based on the emerging themes. The study gave brief background of the participants and the district. Also, the study further considered the various themes that emerged from the data which includes; the views on social media and sites mostly visited, the reason for visiting social media sites, the contents and the reasons why the youth frequently visit such contents. Knowing the reasons for consuming the contents has helped to know how social media contents consumption has affected the moral lives of the youth in the district. The study finally looked at social media contents consumption and how it has contributed to the decline of the morality of the youth in the Effia-Kwasimintsim District. Having worked on the data presented from the field work and it's analyzed, the next chapter presents the summary, conclusion and recommendations

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter summarises the research. It highlights the various key findings.

Summary of the findings

The study investigated how social media contents consumption has contributed to the decline of morality among the youth in Effia-Kwasimintsim district. To obtain suitable data, the study used qualitative method where it employed focus group discussion and interview as the research instrument to gather data from the fieldwork. The method provided an in-depth knowledge of the research under study and the data obtained from the field study were analysed thematically. The study was organised into five chapters where chapter one dealt with the introduction and other salient works that helped identify the problem at stake and how the problem can be tackled. Chapter two and three looked at social media, and moral decadence in the Ghanaian society where some of the lifestyle referred to in the Ghanaian society as immoral were discussed with some consequences that come with its usage. Again, chapter four worked on the data collected from the field work which was discussed and analysed. Chapter five is devoted to the summary, conclusion and some recommendations.

The study revealed that, social media consumption has impacts on users which can be positive or negative depending on how it is used. From the literature, social media has played a significant role in shaping lives and it has become a positive agent of change in the world. It has encouraged social networking and easy connections even in distant locations. It was reckoned

that, social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Snapchat, TikTok, etc. have helped people to create memories, share ideas and experiences and information.

From the research, social media has become a technology that has influenced human lives in diverse ways. From literature, social media has gained much recognition and its usage has been relevant, however, its contents consumption has also affected moral standards of the individual (users). The data identified that the content on social media the youth consume like sexual-related contents, fraud and cybersex contents have contributed to the moral decline among the youth in the district under study. The data justified that as the youth consume the content on social media, they were tempted to practice same and that has affected or lowered their moral standards in the district.

While we boast of social media's usefulness to humanity, we also looked at the threat it has posed to one's moral life as well. The findings suggested that social media has an influential power that has forced the youth into exhibiting unethical lifestyles like insulting and using abusive words on others, stealing from friends and learning how to smoke. Again, the youth use social media to stake bets and lures others to stake bets which earn them stealing from friends and relatives. The participants specifically mentioned Telegram, Instagram, Facebook and WhatsApp as the most common medium through which the youth learn betting tips. It was revealed that most of the youth who bet have been stealing from friends or parents to support their betting activities.

It was also established that via social media consumption, the youths have learned how to smoke and engage in hard drugs without necessarily their

peers influencing them. Some of the participants revealed how their friends got addicted to watching smoking contents on social media and ended up smoking weed and becoming drug addicts. A participant narrated how he counseled a youth who learned smoking from watching such contents on Facebook. Five (5) of the participants revealed how the youth learned the tricks in using social media to engage in cyber crimes to defraud people. These youth who engage in cyber fraud have acquired many wealth and that has lured many other youths into defrauding people to make it. Other fraudsters also post fake products to deceive people who want to buy from them and making payment, they do not deliver the items. They create pseudonyms to engage in such fraudulent acts in order to escape any form of trace.

The data further indicated that the youths' exposure to freemasonry and quick money adverts have pushed many youths into joining bad groups. The youth are also fond of wearing strange rings on their fingers with strange symbols which catches attention. Few participants stated that, it is juju ring for protection.

Furthermore, it was established that, there is an increase in the number of online sexual activities or hook-upping (online prostitution) among the youth in Effia-Kwesiminstim district. The youth are mostly fond of recording their sexual acts and some also send their nudes to their boyfriends and girlfriends to express their deep love for them. Some youth became addicted to watching sex videos from their self-recorded videos to get sexual satisfaction. Three (3) participants mentioned that they watch the video of themselves and their girlfriends and they masturbate to get sexual satisfaction. Only two (2) of the participants takes videos of themselves and watch later with their

girlfriends and delete them. In hook-upping, it came out that girls for instance create an account on Tinder, sexy-corner and place their contact, post their nude pictures and videos on their social media handles to get clients. The supposed hook up girls post their nude pictures and videos so that men or suitors will contact them if interested. The data revealed that, girls who engage in prostitution no longer stand on the streets but do them on social media where they will be booked for sexual intercourse. The youth continued watching of pornographic and sexual-related contents has affected them. It was established that the curious youth who are interested in sexual-related contents and posting their semi-nude pictures encounter online bully. One participant revealed that some youth (guys) threaten to circulate their semi-nude pictures and use it as a yardstick to demand for sex from them. Those girls who could not stand the threat gave in for sex with the guys to escape disgrace but for her, she was not bordered. Due to the high consumption of social media contents, the youth enjoy watching pornographic content which has lured many to developed strong sexual urges. They watch the pornographic video to get sexual satisfaction.

The data again proved that, social media has affected the youth and has lowered the standards of morality in the district. Many views and literature justified that the society is not free from immoral behaviours especially with social media influencing the behaviours and lifestyles of many people especially the youth. Social media has shown more obvious the characters, attitudes and behaviours the youth demonstrate in the media space and it has been normalised these days. For this reason, the literature and the data point that, had it not been for social media, people would not have had the

opportunity to post or share their nude pictures and videos publicly or engage in online sexual advertisement (hook-upping). There would not have been cases of cyber fraud, cybersex, posting of fake products, twerking and other related immoral attitudes exhibited by the youth.

Social media adverts like quick money and freemasonry have increased the youth quest for quick money. Majority of the youth have been lured to go after these malams who show their advert and sometimes send messages for quick money and some youth also go for rings and beads for spiritual protection.

The study further revealed that social media has reduced the cherished moral norms and values that ensures good moral lifestyles among young people in the society due to social media influence. This has made the youth to no longer show respect, obedience and honesty in their daily lives in the society. When these moral norms and values of the society are relegated to the background, it affects the society and also affects the moral development of the youth in the Ghanaian society. When that happens, there will be much moral decadence in the society.

Conclusion

The research has investigated the interplay between social media and moral decadence among the youth in Ghana with particular reference to Effia-Kwesimintsim district. This work has amply demonstrated that the use of social media has contributed to moral decadence among the youth in the district. The youths are lured into engaging in immoral act via social media influence. Through social media, the youth engage in watching pornographic materials (contents) which turn to arouse their sexual feelings. They use some

of the social media handles like Tinder to do hook upping also known as online prostitution and engaging in cybersex which is online sexual love making. Others also use social media to engage in fraud. People's accounts (bank account and WhatsApp account) are hacked to dupe and defraud people. There is also the case of gambling which has made many to steal from friends and parents. These immoral deeds of the youth suggest that, they learn using social media while others also learn from colleagues they associate with on social media. Notwithstanding this negative influence of social media, we have also brought to the fore the positive impact of social media in the life of the youth. In a bid to turn the tide of moral decadence among the youth as a result of the use of social media, it is important that all stakeholders dialogue to find better ways of helping the youth to take advantage of the social media to build up their capacity to enhance nation building and their own personal development rather than declining their morality.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made for consideration and further studies.

- The study revealed that social media is aiding the decline of morality among the youth. Once the youth cannot be denied of social media accessibility, it recommends that, the government should make laws and intensify its enforcement to ban negative contents for public consumption.
- Parents need to guide their children on the possible risks of using social media and ensure proper monitoring of their children on the

contents they consume since it can contribute to more decline of morality.

- The traditional authorities who serve as the custodians and protectors of traditions should help guide the growth of the youth in upholding the cherished values and norms of the society. They could engage with experts or collaborate with the National Council for Civic Education (NCCE) to educate the youth on the proper use of social media and caution them against the consequences of using social media inappropriately.
- It is recommended that; further studies can be conducted on whether social media has contributed in declining the morality of the youth in Ghana by paying attention to the use of mixed method approach.
- Again, since it raises ethical concerns, research can be conducted on the role of service providers in putting measures in place to check how social media usage negatively affect the youths in order to ameliorate it.

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Appendix II

In-Depth Interview Guide (interview)

Hello, Good Morning/Good Afternoon/ Good Evening. I am from the University of Cape Coast and from the Department of Religion and Human Values. I am conducting research on how social media has contributed to the decline of the youth's morality in the district. The aim of this research is to investigate how social media has cause the fall of morality in the Effia Kwasimintsim District. I would greatly appreciate your time to interview you or join a focus group discussion on the topic. I assure you that any information given will be treated confidentially. Please feel free to share your views to the best of your knowledge. The discussion may last about 45 minutes to 1hour 30 minutes. Thank you for agreeing to participate.

SECTION (A): personal Profile

Could you please tell me something about yourself (probes: name, age, gender, religion and educational level)?

SECTION (B): preferred social media sites

What do you understand by social media?

What are some of the social media sites you know?

Which of them do you visit and find most interesting?

SECTION C: content consumption

Which of the social media content do you mostly consume?

Why do you consume such content?

What makes the content you consume interesting?

SECTION (C): Views on the impacts of social media

1. Are you aware social media has impacts on users?
2. What are some of the impacts social media has had on you?
3. Kindly tell me how it has negatively affected your live(s)?
4. In what way does it also affect your live(s) positively?

SECTION (D): social media and moral decadence

1. What is your take on moral decadence among the youth in the district?
2. Per the level of moral decadence among the youths in the district, would you attribute it to social media and why?
3. What are some of the immoral things the youth use social media to do?
4. Are there any instances to justify that social media content consumption has contributed to the fall of the youth's moral standards in the district?

SECTION (E): recommendations

1. What do you have to say in addition to your previous submission if any?

Thanks for your time and participation

I will come to you later when appropriate for further clarity, justifications and input