

Experiences of Online Opportunities and Risks: Examining Internet Use and Digital Literacy of Young People in Nigeria

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Abstract : Research on Internet use has often approached beneficial uses (online opportunities) of the Internet as separate from the risky encounters (online risks) of young people online. However, empirical evidence from diverse contexts appears to increasingly support the fusion of the two sets of online activities. Hence, the current research investigates the correlation between Internet use (IU) and digital literacy (DL) with online opportunities (OP) and risks (OR), using data from a Nigerian context, where there appears a paucity of research and literature on integrating opportunities and risks in the same study. A web-based data collection method was used to administer a survey to 335 undergraduate students in Northeastern Nigeria. Underpinned to Livingstone and Helsper model, findings are largely consistent with existing literature; IU and DL influence OP ($R^2 = 0.791$, $SE = 0.265$, $F\text{-Stats} = 626.566$, $P\text{-value} < .001$), equally IU and DL influence OR as well ($R^2 = 0.343$, $SE = 0.465$, $F\text{-Stats} = 86.671$, $P\text{-value} < .001$). OP and OR were found to strongly correlate positively ($r = .667$, $n = 335$, $p < 0.01$). This study has provided buttressing evidence from a Nigerian context of the fusion of benefits and risks of the Internet among young people. It has also upheld the argument for improved literacy as strategy for minimizing risks/harm rather than restricting use. Other theoretical and policy implications of the findings have been discussed in line with local and global debates about the Internet and its attendant effects.

Keywords : digital, internet, literacy, opportunities, risks

Conference Title : ICJMC 2023 : International Conference on Journalism and Mass Communication

Conference Location : Lagos, Nigeria

Conference Dates : August 03-04, 2023