



Religious Engagement among Nigerian Youths: Does Pinging Obsession and Gender Make a Difference?

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Abstract

Objective The rate with which youths are obsessed to the use of phones (and other internet access devices) to interact on social media and do other things seems to have caused more harm than good. It has been observed that youths ping while church services/mass and other activities are going on and this seems to have impinged on their religious engagement. It is for this purpose that present study examined the association of pinging obsession with religious engagement and explored gender differences in religious engagement and pinging obsession association among Nigerian youths. Method participants were 348 youths drawn from church denominations from in eastern Nigeria. Data was collected by means of self-report measured translated into the local dialect of the youths. The result indicated that high addiction was negatively related to religious engagement. It also indicated that females were positively related to religious engagement and being more associated with pinging obsession.

Keywords: Obsession; Pinging; Religious Engagement; Gender; Youth; Nigeria

Introduction

Religious engagement comprises of a number of interrelated components that make up its definition. It refers to as professing religious affiliation (e.g. claiming membership in a religious body), asserting the importance of religious and spiritual beliefs or values (e.g. affirming the importance of integrating spirituality in one's life), and actively participating in religious and spiritual practices (e.g. attending religious services or taking part in devotional activities). It follows that one may hold a religious or spiritual belief/values before belonging to a religious denomination where he/she thinks his/her religious belief/values could be enhanced and strengthened. On the other hand, a number of youth just belonged to a certain religious denomination for personal reasons and whatever reason it is, holding a belief/value precedes belonging to a particular religious denomination. It is the actual participation in religious activities that consolidates religious engagement and identifies one as belonging to a religious denomination. Religious engagement could be perceived by two latent constructs, one measuring intensity of involvement in religious activities, and the other measuring intensity of religious beliefs and values. Three continuous dependent variables measured different aspects of deepened religious engagement are (a) strengthening of religious beliefs, (b) increase in religious activities, and (c) increase in devotional practices more specifically, religious engagement according to Lugo [1] involves external and internal measures. External aspects represents the behavioral counterpart to religious commitment, such as attending religious services, praying, religious singing/chanting, and reading sacred texts.

Pinging Obsession according to Nweze et al. [2] refers to the fondling of various types of phones for one or all of the subsequent reasons: Chatting, gaming, selection of music and movies downloaded in the phones, searching of Bible vs. and dictionary meaning (s) of words or browsing. The most prevalent amongst these criteria seems to be chatting followed by gaming [2]. Most times, some fondle their phones for no just reason. Kwan [3] noted the use of the transitive verb "ping" to mean "send email to". Therefore, pinging connotes the process of sending messages to people probably to know their locations, their welfare and some other vital information one may wish to know about a friend, relation or colleague. Besides sending of messages, phone users fondle their phone for the sake of shuffling in between downloaded music folder, movie files of all sorts and these

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added functions have contributed in no little measure to this fondling of phones. In other words, pinging could be seen as a social media interaction where friends, relations or colleagues chat and share ideas, emotions and passions [4]. Fondling of phones for whatever reason seems to be on the increase amongst youths [5].

Pinging encompasses cognitive, behavioral and emotional dimensions. Cognitive pinging is the degree to which youths are interested in and curious about fondling with their phones for whatever reason(s) and behavioral engagement reflects youths' actual involvement in socio-media interaction through fondling of phones irrespective of their situation and its consequences. Emotional dimensions entail the irresistible urge to always fondle with phones [6]. Emotional and cognitive dimensions are interwoven and apparently inseparable [6].

Obsessions are recurrent and persistent thoughts, impulses, or images that cause distressing emotions such as anxiety or disgust. Individuals with obsession recognize that the thoughts, impulses, or images are a product of their mind and are excessive or unreasonable. Yet these intrusive thoughts cannot be settled by logic or reasoning. Most people with obsession try to ignore or suppress such obsessions or offset them with some other thought or action. Typical obsessions include excessive concerns about contamination or harm, the need for symmetry or exactness, or forbidden sexual or religious thoughts. Obsessions as defined by APA [7] criteria

1. Recurrent and persistent thoughts, impulses, or images that are experienced, at some time during the disturbance, as intrusive and inappropriate and that cause marked anxiety or distress.
2. The thoughts, impulses, or images are not simply excessive worries about real-life problems.
3. The person attempts to ignore or suppress such thoughts, impulses, or images, or to neutralize them with some other thought or action the person recognizes that the obsession thoughts, impulses, or images are a product of his or her own mind (not imposed from without as in thought insertion) [4,7].

Obsession to pinging has a significant negative effect of distraction. This distractive consequence permeates through spheres where obsession to pinging is viewed. For instance, on academics, it has punctuated academic concentration and engagement and thus affected academic performance; it is a huge distracter for it has led to dereliction of academic duty by youth because of the seemingly resistive urge (cognitive domain) to ping irrespective of location and time; in as much as it saves time, it is also time consuming [8,9]. US survey study has indicated that time spent chatting on PC (Personal Computer) and internet access mobile devices increased from 37% to 121 billion minutes in July 2012 compared to 88 billion minutes in July 2011 [10]; poor understanding of English and creative writing are other problem created by pinging through the short-worded text messaging style [11,12]; it has indicated to aided sexual abuse and promotes laziness [13]; Uduikhue [14] stressed on the youths' criminal intentions in engaging in the act, engage in pornography and other unwholesome activities (such as prostituting, pilfering) as against academic purposes of researches; there are record of innumerable pinging-induced casualties and ugly death incidents of addiction to pinging on the road and in the society [8,9,11].

In religious aspects, distraction due to addiction to pinging may be observed in the places of worship. Individuals including youths

make or answer call during church services. They are observed walking in and out of church to either make or receive/answer calls. They interact with their friends through pinging while religious activities are ongoing. In addition, the possibility of downloading Bible, religious hymn and other liturgy into the phones has facilitated pinging. It has been observed that while religious activities or rituals may be going on in the church, calls do come in and this poses a huge distraction to not only the individuals, but also to other congregation. It is for this reason that most churches in eastern part of Nigeria now inscribe boldly on the walls and pillars of churches that phones be switched off. Are phones/iPods brought to churches or places of worship eventually switched off? It could be for this obsession to pinging that phones are not switched off in t places of worship.

In addition, obsession to pinging has been proven to have cognitive, emotional and behavioral undertone and so do religious engagement. One may wonder how one could engage to two different emotionally, cognitively and behaviorally laden activities at the same time and not be distracted. This is practically impossible. It is either one is deeply engrossed by pinging or religious engagement. Could this engagement between religiosity and obsession to pinging vary across gender? Males and females attend one religion or the other depending on one's religious faith, choice and interest. It was once argued that females are more religiously engaged than males, number of researches have also shown that women are more religiously engaged than males [15,16]. Besides, the American Religious Identification Survey (2003) observed that young girls are more religious than males even though this variation may depend on situation and personality. This research tends to find out if there are gender differences in religious engagement as well as obsession to pinging. South Source (2013) found that females are more obsessed to pinging than the males. If females are more obsessed to pinging than males, is it possible that this females' obsession to pinging has also influenced their religious engagement than that of the males' religious engagement? Thus, it is therefore hypothesized that obsession to pinging will significantly predict religious engagement. In the same vein, the study will also test the hypothesis that gender will significantly predict religious engagement among youth.

Materials and Methods

Participants were 348 youths (32.6% males and 67.4% females; Age range = 17 to 29 years, Mage =23 years) drawn from Pentecostal denominations (N=164 (40%)) and orthodox denominations (N=184 (60%)) in eastern Nigeria, using a convenient sampling technique. data was collected by means of questionnaires in the local dialect of the youths. Translation and back translation of the questionnaires from English to Igbo language was done by three expert translators. The experts, the researchers and five youths who were native of Igbo speakers with good knowledge of English engaged in a discussion to resolve semantic problems arises by the translation into Igbo. Following ethical approval by the Pastoral Council of the churches, youths were approached by trained research assistant (Youth Leaders) during youth meetings and asked to participate in the study. The purpose and procedure of the study, the kinds of questions that would be asked, confidentiality of data, and participants' right were explained to them. Participants who gave informed consent were recruited for the study. It took approximately 10 mins to answer the questionnaire. Fifteen participants whose date were missing for >25% of items within any of the scales were not included in the analysis, giving rise to a final sample of 348 youths.

Measures

Data was collected using two self-reported measures, namely, Addiction to Pinging Scale (APS) and Religious Engagement Scale (RES). Data on Participants' age and gender were provided on the questionnaire. To assess Obsession to pinging, we used 17-item Addiction to Pinging Scale (APS) [2]. APS has been shown to be reliable, in terms of internal consistency ($\alpha=0.89$) and three weeks test retest reliability of 0.78. In the current study, we obtained a α of 0.71.

To measure religious engagement, Religious Engagement Scale (RES) developed by researchers were used. The (RES) was designed by the researchers to measure the youth's religious engagement as reflected in their profession of religious affiliation (e.g. claiming membership in a religious body), asserting the importance of religious and spiritual beliefs or values (e.g. affirming the importance of integrating spirituality in one's life), and participating in religious and spiritual practices (e.g. attending religious services or taking part in devotional activities). The 20 items of RES were scored in a four-point response scale of: Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Agree (3), Strongly Agree (4). 19 items of RES are directly scored except item 10 that is reverse scored. RES is scored by summing up the total responses and the higher the score, the more engaged is the respondent. The RES has shown to be reliable with internal consistency of $\alpha=0.78$, one month test retest of 0.70.

Statistical analysis

The design for the study was cross-sectional design. Multiple regressions were used in the study in other to predict the values of obsession to pinging and gender on religious engagement.

Results and Discussion

The result of the correlation matrix presented in Table 1 indicated that high obsession is negatively related to religious engagement ($r=-0.036$, $p<0.05$). Youths who has high pinging obsession engages less in religious activities. Also, females was found to be significant but positively related to religious engagement ($r=0.563$, $p<0.05$). This implied that being a female was more associated with religious engagement. The result also indicated that females are found to be significant but positively related to high pinging addiction ($r=0.030$, $P<0.001$). This implies that being a female was more associated with pinging obsession.

The study showed that high pinging obsession has positive relationship with religious engagement while low pinging obsession has negative relationship with religious engagement. Gender was also significantly related to religious engagement, with females indicating a positive relationship with religious engagement. The findings of this study indicate that pinging obsession (high and low levels) had some relationship with religious engagement. The result of this study indicates that the more youths are addicted low in pinging, the higher the individual will experience psychological distress. The correlation analysis showed that high pinging obsession significantly correlated with religious engagement ($r=0.36$, $p<0.05$). Linear regression analysis further confirmed the significant correlation between addiction to pinging and religious engagement ($R=0.467$, $p<0.05$) as shown in Table. Thus, the religious engagement components of religious beliefs, devotional practices, and dynamic religious activities are punctuated by addiction to pinging. This conclusion drawn from the result of the study could be true because both variables (religious engagement and addiction to pinging) shared the determinants as components: Behavioral, cognitive and emotional).

Table 1: Correlation of low pinging obsession/high pinging obsession, gender and religious engagement among youths.

	Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1	Religious eng	-				
2	Low ping obsession	-2.03*	-			
3	High ping obsession	.036*	0.043	-		
4	Males	0.236	0.51	0.121	-	
5	Females	0.563*	0.896	0.030**	0.628	-

Note: * $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.001$

It was stated in the second hypothesis that gender will significantly predict religious engagement. This hypothesis was however accepted ($\beta=0.30$, $t=0.62$, $p<0.05$). This result means that there are gender differences in religious engagement. This result is in consistent with the observations made by the American Religious Identification Survey, ARIS (2003) as well as the findings of Holts et al. [16]. Gender, like addiction to pinging, highly correlated significantly with religious engagement ($r=0.99$, $p<0.05$) whereas in the linear regression summary model, both variables (addiction to pinging and gender) jointly predicted religious engagement ($R=0.46$, $p<0.05$). In corollary of the above, Nweze et al. [2], findings supported result of the present study and added that females are more addicted to pinging than males.

As gender difference is will engage in religious activities. Also the higher in pinging obsession youths are, the less the individual will be religiously engaged. This finding is consistent with previous studies who reported blackberry addiction to be a source of distraction to its users irrespective of location and time [9,7,2]. Apparently, individuals who engage in a multitask may not accomplish the tasks at the same time because of the attention switching ability of the brain. The result also shows that gender significantly predicted religious engagement among youths with females indicating a positive relationship with religious engagement. The result of the study indicates that as the youths tend to be females, they will engage more in religious activities. This finding is in line with McClendon (2016) report that women are more likely than men to attend worship services among American citizens. This could be as a result of females deriving emotional and tangible support from the church. The study is limited to obsession to pinging and gender and did not include the overall factors that can influence religious engagement, furthermore; some of the test materials administered was not completed appropriately. This however, reduced the range of generalization of the findings.

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