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# **Role of Perceived Anonymity and Distance of Computer-Mediated Communication on Social Inhibitions among Youths**

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## ***Abstract***

*The study examined the role perceived anonymity and distance of computer mediated communication on social inhibition among youths. A total of 200 students (males = 84; female = 116) of Psychology Department with mean age 25years participated in the study. It was hypothesized that perceived anonymity will not significantly influence social inhibition among youths and computer mediated communication will not significantly influence social inhibition among youths. Perceived Anonymity Scale, Computer Mediated Communication Competence Scale and Behavioural Avoidance/Inhibition (BAS/BIS) were used to elicit responses from the participants. Linear regression was used to analyze the data. The result revealed that perceived anonymity did not significantly predict social inhibition which confirmed the first hypothesis but computer mediated communication negatively predicted social inhibition ( $F_{1,192} = 12.15, p = .001$ ) Implications, limitations and suggestions for further studies were highlighted.*

**Keywords:** perceived anonymity, distance of computer mediated communication, social inhibition, youths.

## **Introduction**

Social inhibition is a conscious or subconscious avoidance of a situation or social interaction. With a high level of social inhibition, situations are avoided because of the possibility of others disapproving of their feelings or expressions. Social inhibition is a behaviour, appearance, social interactions, or a subject matter for discussion. Related processes that deal with social inhibition are social evaluation concerns, anxiety in social interaction, social avoidance, and withdrawal.

Also related are components such as cognitive brain patterns, anxious apprehension during social interactions, and internalizing problems. It also describes those who suppress anger, restrict social behaviour, withdraw in the face of novelty, and have a long latency to interact with strangers (Denpllet, 2013; Miller, 2013)

Most times, being in the presence of other can positively or negatively contribute to the person performance. When being influenced positively, it is said to be, social facilitation and when influenced negatively, it is either said to be social anxiety, social phobia, social loafing or social inhibition. The social inhibition on its own is one of the interesting aspects of being among the group. It has been shown to occur most frequently when tasks are complex, involve novel stimuli, require the suppression of dominant responses, and require the detection and correction of errors (Wagstaff, 2008).

Social inhibition is a term used to describe the behavioural or performance restraint or lack of restraint person displays in the presence of other people. A mild level of social inhibition might not cause much notice, and may even be considered normal. If an individual's level of inhibition is too high or too low, however, social situation and relationship may prove difficult. For example, a person who restrains himself too much might seem withdrawn and have difficulty participating in conversations and social events. A person who is too uninhibited, on the other hand, may behave in a way that alienates others and make it hard for others to appreciate his/her company.

Maintaining normal level of social inhibition may help people keep their behaviour within the realm of what is considered acceptable. A person with a normal level of inhibition might feel confident enough to carry on a conversation in a social setting, but would avoid behaving in a frowned upon manner e.g., he/she may appear open, friendly and willing to talk about range of subjects, but would refrain from making crude jokes to people who are unlikely to find them funny or touching others in a manner that is considered inappropriate.

Social inhibition is caused by fear of being judged and criticized harshly by others around, not confident in one's abilities to perform well, especially with others watching. Feeling of inadequacy, or not matching up to the skill level of other group members, and shyness or natural avoidance of large crowds and audiences. Individuals can also have a low level of social inhibition, but certain situations may generally cause people to be more or less inhibited. Social inhibition can be reduced by the use of drugs including alcohol. Major signs of social inhibition in children

are cessation of play, long latencies to approaching the unfamiliar person, signs of fear and negative affect, and security seeking (Billesm, Jane, & Riba, 2013). Also, in high level cases of social inhibition, other social disorders can emerge through development, such as social anxiety disorder and social phobia (Levis-Morsrity, Degnam, Chronis, Rudin, Cheah, & Fox, 2012).

Social inhibition can range from normal reactions to social situations to a pathological level, associated with psychological disorders like social anxiety or social phobia. Life events are important and are related to well-being and inhibition levels (Cable, Reis, & Eliot, 2000). Expression can be inhibited or suppressed because of anxiety to social situations or simple display rules. Yarczower and Daruns (2005) defined inhibition of expression as a suppression of one's facial behaviour in the presences of someone or a perceived anxious situation. They addressed the display rules people learn as children; people are told what expressions are suitable for what situations. Then, as age increases people are socialized into not expressing strong facial emotions.

Although social inhibition is a common part of life, individuals can also have high levels of inhibition. Social Inhibition on higher levels can sometimes be a precursor to disorders such as social anxiety disorder. Essex, Klein, Slittary, Goldsmith, & Kalin, (2010) found that some early risk factors may play a role in having chronically high inhibition. In this study, mothers, teachers, and the child reported on the child's behavioural inhibition. The factors that were found to be contributors to social inhibition were female gender, exposure to maternal stress during infancy and the preschool period, and early manifestation of behavioural inhibition (Essex, Klein, Slittary, Goldsmith, & Kalin, 2010). In severe cases, clinical treatment, such as therapy, may be necessary to help with social inhibition or the manifesting social disorder (Essex, Klein, Slittary, Goldsmith & Kalin, 2010). Children can be withdrawn, adolescents can have anxiety to social situations, and adults may have a hard time adjusting to social situations which they have to initiate on their own. To be inhibited can change and be different for many. In many cases, inhibition can lead to other social disorders and phobias (Lewis-MoratyDegnan, Chronix, Pine, & Fox, 2012). According to Suzanne and Hornbuckle (2010), a number of factors have great impact and role to play on social inhibition and such factors included: The characteristics of the actor, environmental stressor, material characteristic stressor, material characteristic, depression and anxiety, lack of warmth, inflexibility and even perceived anonymity.

Perceived anonymity was defined in two facets by Whelan and Thompson (2008) as: (a) The perception of the relative non-identifiability of a respondent and/or (b) how likely a respondent feels his or her personal information can be traced back to that individual for identification. Anonymity, adjective "anonymous", is derived from the Greek word  $\alpha$ , *anonymia* meaning "without a name" or "namelessness" (Mathews & Steve, 2010). In colloquial use, "anonymous" is used to describe situations where the acting person's name is unknown. It has been argued that namelessness, though technically correct, does not capture what is more centrally at stake in contexts of anonymity. The important idea here is that a person be non-identifiable, unreachable, or untrackable. Anonymity is seen as a technique, or a way of realizing, certain other values, such as privacy, or liberty. An important example for anonymity being not only protected, but enforced by law is probably the vote in free elections. In many other situations (like conversation between strangers, buying some product or service in a shop), anonymity is traditionally accepted as natural. There are also various situations in which a person might choose to withhold their identity. Acts of charity have been performed anonymously when benefactors do not wish to be acknowledged. A person who feels threatened might attempt to mitigate that threat through anonymity. A witness to a crime might seek to avoid retribution, for example, by anonymously calling a crime tipline. Criminals might proceed anonymously to conceal their participation in a crime. Anonymity may also be created unintentionally, through the loss of identifying information due to the passage of time or a destructive event (Nissanbaum, 1999).

In certain situations, however, it may be illegal to remain anonymous. In the United States, 24 States have "stop and identify" statutes that require persons detained to self-identify when requested by a law enforcement officer (Scotg, 2005). In Germany, people have to indicate their names at the door of their homes. The term "anonymous message" typically refers to a message that does not reveal its sender. In many countries, anonymous letters are protected by law and must be delivered as regular letters. In mathematics, in reference to an arbitrary element (e.g., a human, an object, a computer), within a well-defined set (called the "anonymity set"), "anonymity" of that element refers to the property of that element of not being identifiable within this set. If it is not identifiable, then the element is said to be "anonymous."

Anonymity may reduce the accountability one perceives to have for their actions, and removes the impact these actions might otherwise have on their reputation. This can have dramatic effects, both

useful and harmful to various parties and/or entities involved, relatively. Thus, it may be used for psychological tactics involving any respective party to purport and/or support and/or discredit any sort of activity or belief (Wallace, 1999).

In conversational settings, anonymity may allow people to reveal personal history and feelings without fear of later embarrassment. Electronic conversational media can provide physical isolation, in addition to anonymity. This prevents physical retaliation for remarks, and prevents negative or taboo behaviour or discussion from tarnishing the reputation of the speaker. This can be beneficial when discussing very private matters, or taboo subjects or expressing views or revealing facts that may put someone in physical, financial, or legal danger (such as illegal activity, or unpopular, or outlawed political views).

In work settings, the three most common forms of anonymous communication are traditional suggestion boxes, written feedback, and Caller ID blocking. Additionally, the appropriateness of anonymous organizational communication varies depending on the use, with organizational surveys and/or assessments typically perceived as highly appropriate and firing perceived as highly inappropriate. Anonymity use and appropriateness have also been found to be significantly related to the quality of relationships with key others at work (Scotte, 2005).

With few perceived negative consequences, anonymous or semi-anonymous forums often provide a soapbox for disruptive conversational behaviour. The term "troll" is sometimes used to refer to those who do this online. Relative anonymity is often enjoyed in large crowds. Different people have different psychological and philosophical reactions to this development, especially as a modern phenomenon. This anonymity is an important factor in crowd psychology, and behaviour in situations such as a riot. This perceived anonymity can be compromised by technologies such as photography. Anonymity has also permitted highly trained professionals such as judges to freely express themselves regarding the strategies they employ to perform their jobs objectively (Carbonell, & Rache, 2016).

Attempts at anonymity are not always met with support from society. Anonymity sometimes clashes with the policies and procedures of governments or private organizations. In the United States, disclosure of identity is required to be able to vote though the secret ballot prevents disclosure of how individuals voted. In airports in most countries, passengers are not allowed to board flights unless they have identified themselves to some sort of airline or transportation

security personnel, typically in the form of the presentation of an identification card. And anonymity can in many cases be desirable for one person and not desirable for another person. A company may, for example, not like an employee to divulge information about improper practices within the company, but society as a whole may find it important that such improper practices are publicly exposed. Good purposes of anonymity.

People dependent on an organization, or afraid of revenge, may divulge serious misuse, which should be revealed. Anonymous tips can be used as an information source by newspapers, as well as by police departments, soliciting tips aimed at catching criminals. Everyone will not regard such anonymous communication as good. For example, message boards established outside companies, but for employees of such companies to vent their opinions on their employer, have sometimes been used in ways that at least the companies themselves were not happy about (Abelson, 2001). Police use of anonymity is a complex issue, since the police often will want to know the identity of the tipper in order to get more information, evaluate the reliability or get the tipper as a witness. Is it ethical for police to identify the tipper if it has opened up an anonymous tipping hotline? People in a country with a repressive political regime may use anonymity (for example Internet-based anonymity servers in other countries) to avoid persecution for their political opinions. Note that even in democratic countries, some people claim, rightly or wrongly, that certain political opinions are persecuted. Wallace (1999) gives an overview of uses of anonymity to protect political speech. Every country has a limit on which political opinions are allowed, and there are always people who want to express forbidden opinions, like racial agitation in most democratic countries.

People may openly discuss personal stuff which would be embarrassing to tell many people about, such as sexual problems. Research shows that anonymous participants disclose significantly more information about themselves (Joinson, 2001). The two importance of anonymity when people are not socially inhibited include that they may get more objective evaluation of their messages, by not showing their real name and that they are more equal in anonymous discussions, factors like status, gender, etc., will not influence the evaluation of what they say.

Anonymity has also a dark side. It can be used to protect a criminal performing many different crimes, for example slander, distribution of child pornography, illegal threats, racial agitation, fraud, intentional damage such as distribution of computer viruses, etc (Jacob, 2005; Schwartz,

Shalom & Gottlieb, 2016). Anonymity can be used to seek contacts for performing illegal acts (especially when they will be socially inhibited and so they will hide their identity), like a pedophile searching for children to abuse or a swindler searching for people to rip off. Even when the act is not illegal, anonymity can be used for offensive or disruptive communication. For example, some people use anonymity in order to say nasty things about other people when the society will inhibit them.

Anonymous is a loosely associated international network of activists and hacktivists entities (Kelly, 2012). A website nominally associated with the group describes it as "an internet gathering" with "a very loose and decentralized command structure that operates on ideas rather than directives". The group became known for a series of well-publicized publicity stunts and distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks on government, religious, and corporate websites (Kelly, 2012). An image commonly associated with anonymous is the "man without a head" represents leaderless organization and anonymity (Kelly, 2012). This concept of anonymity will be more appreciated when it is linked with computer mediated communication.

Computer mediated communication (CMC) is defined as any human communication that occurs through, the use of two or more electronics devices (MCQuall, 2005). It is simply defined as the communication that occurs through computer-mediated formats. For example, instant messaging, email, chat rooms, online, forums, and other social network services. It has also been applied to other forums or text-based interaction such as text messaging (**law, Lergel, & Tonic, 2004**).

Scholars from a variety of fields study phenomena that can be described under the umbrella term of computer mediated communication (CMC) and may likely take a socio-psychological approach to computer mediated communication (CMC) by examining how human use computer to manage interpersonal interaction, form impression and maintain relationship (Walther, 1996) These studies have often focus on the differences between online and offline interaction, though contemporary research is moving towards the view that CMC should be studied as embedded in everyday life (Haythornthwaite, & Wellman, 2002).

The way humans communicate in professional social and educational setting varies widely depending upon not only the environment but also the method of communication in which the communication occurs, which in this case is through computers or other information and communication technologies (ICT). Popular forms of computer mediated communication (CMC)



includes e-mail, video, audio or text chat. They are changing rapidly with the development of other technologies (Haythornthwaite, & Wellman, 2002). Communication occurring within a computer-mediated format has also an effect on many different aspects of an interaction. Some of these that have received attention in the scholarly literature include impression formation, deception, group dynamics, disclosure reciprocity, disinhibition and especially relationship formation (Clauss & Blackford, 2012; Silvia, Guilia, & Scott, 2015).

Computer mediated communication (CMC) is examined and compared with other communication media through a number of aspects thought to be universal to all forms of communication including synchronicity, persistence or record-ability and anonymity (Mcquail, 2005). The association of these aspects with different forms of communication varies widely. For example, instant messaging is intrinsically synchronous but not persistence, since one loses all the content when one closes the dialog box unless one has a message log set up or has manually copy –pasted the conversation. E-mail and message boards, on other hand, are low in synchronicity since message sent and received are saved properties that separate computer mediated communication (CMC) from other media also include transience, its multimodal nature and its relative lack of governing codes of conducts (Mcquail, 2005). Computer mediated communication (CMC) can overcome physical and social limitations of other forms of communication that allow the interaction of people who are not physically sharing the same space. The medium in which people choose to communicate influences the extent to which people disinhibited in the communication. Computer mediated communication (CMC) is marked with higher level of self-disclosure with less likelihood of social inhibition in conversation as opposed to face-to-face interactions (Jiang, Bazarava, & Hencock, 2011).

The nature of Computer mediated communication (CMC) is such that it is easier for individual to engage in communication with others regardless of time or location with less fear or tendency of being socially inhibited unlike in the face-to-face interaction (Warschauer, 2006). In addition, computer mediated communication (CMC) can also be useful for allowing individuals who might be intimidated due to factors like character or disabilities to participate in communication. It thus lowers the tendency of social inhibition irrespective of location where the individual might be communicating from even with minimal stress (Warschauer, 2006) as well as whether or not the individual is physically challenged.

Aside making an individual comfortable, computer mediated communication (CMC) also plays a role in self-disclosure simply because there is less feeling of the sense of social inhibition, which allows a communicative partner to open up more easily and be more expressive when communicating through an electronic medium. Individuals are less likely to engage in stereotyping and are less self-conscious about physical characteristics. The role that anonymity plays in online communication helps some users to be less defensive, less reserved and form relationships with others more rapidly (Schouten, Valkenburg, & Peter, 2005). Thus, social inhibition is not mostly thought of during CMC with anonymity as its major characteristics.

It is very common that youth withdraw from some face-to-face social interaction more easily than the CMC platform. In the same vein, most youth are not assertive and express themselves with much limitations and cautions; perhaps for the fear of being socially reprimanded, inhibited, and cajoled. These, among many other factors could have led youth into more face-to-face withdrawal from social interaction and other activities than the CMC platforms. Other factors that could make them withdraw include social anxiety disorder, stage fright, class, status, any form of physical challenge and some other social interaction disorder (Warschauer, 2006; Clauss & Blackford, 2012). In CMC fortunately, such factors are neither noticed nor seen. In fact, CMC seem to have given the youth an expressive or communicative coverage and shield through which they could air their voices and minds without fear of any kind. It is against this backdrop that we went into understanding why most youth withdraw more from face-to-face social interaction. Therefore, the objectives of the study were to examine whether perceived anonymity and computer mediated communication could predict social inhibition. To that effect, we hypothesized that perceived anonymity would not significantly predict social inhibition among youths and computer mediated communication would not significantly predict social inhibition among youths. This study is unique as it may likely be novel in this part of the continent.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

Participants were 350 consisting [191(54.6%) female and 159 (45.4%) male] Undergraduate students of Psychology Department, University of Nigeria Nsukka. They were sampled using

convenience sampling method from Year two, three and four. Their age ranged between 18-32 years with mean age 25 years.

## Instruments

Three instruments were used in the study. They were: The 10- items Perceived Anonymity Scale developed by Hite, Voelker and Reberrison (2014), the Computer Mediated Communication Competence Scale developed by Spitzberg, (2006) and Behavioral Avoidance / Inhibition (BAS/BIS) Scale developed by Carver and White (2013).

### *Perceived Anonymity Scale*

Perceived Anonymity Scale was developed by Hite, Voelker and Reberrison (2014) and consists of 10 items designed to assess perception of anonymity and behaviours, These item were scored on a 5 points likert scale with “1” being a strongly agree” and “5” being strongly disagree. Five Items out of the 10 items are scored in reverse format so that higher scored would reflect a more positive and less perceived anonymity. Examples of the items are 6= I am easily identified as an individual than others, 7= Others are likely to know who I am and 8= my personal identity is unknown to others. Hite, Voelker and Roberrison (2014) reported a reliability index of ( $\alpha=.82$ ) and a test-retest reliability ( $r=.90$ ). The scale was pilot tested for reliability and the result showed Cronbach’s alpha .63.

### *Computer Mediated Communication Competence (CMC) Scale*

The 15 items of Computer Mediated Communication Competence (CMC) Scale was developed by Spitzberg (2006) to measure computer – mediated communications in three dimensions which includes **motivation**, item (1, 4, 7, 10 and 13), example 1= “I enjoy communication using computer media”, 4= “I am never nervous about using the computer to communicate with others”. Items 2, 5, 8, 11 and 14 estimate the **knowledge** of computer mediated competence (CMC), Example 2=”I am very knowledgeable about how to communicate through computer”, 5= “I am never at a loss for something to say in computer mediated competence (CMC)”. And items 3, 6, 9, 12 and 15 see how an individual tend to rate in some **skills** that are relevant to computer mediated competence (CMC) Example 3= “I manage the give and take of CMC interaction skillfully”, 6= “I can show compassion and empathy through the way that I write massages”. Its response ranges

from '1' (Not at all true of me), '2' (Mostly not true of me), '3' (Neither true nor untrue of me), '4' Mostly true of me and '5' (very true of me) in 5-points likert scale. Spitzberg, (2006) Reported a reliability index of .91. However, the scale was pilot tested for reliability and the result showed Cronbach's alpha .76 and scores were summed and used as a composite score in data analysis.

### *Social Inhibition Scale*

Behaviour Avoidance/ Inhibition Scale was developed by Carver and White (2013). It consists of 24 items designed to assess different aspect of behaviour on a 5-point likert scale ranging from option of "1" (very true of me) to "4" (very false for me). On each item, respondents reported the extend (on a scale of 1-4, with 1=very true for me, 2 = somewhat true form me, 3= somewhat false for me, 4= very false for me) on how their social behaviour is been inhibited. A total number of 7items (2, 8, 13, 16, 19, 22 & 24) assess behaviour inhibition features, example 2= "Even if something bad is about to happen to me, I rarely experience fear or nervousness" , 8= "Criticism or scolding hurts me quite a bit". 4items (3, 9, 12 & 21) assess behaviour avoidance drive, Example 3= "I go out of my way to get things I want", 9= "when I want something I usually go out to get it". 4items (5, 10, 15 & 20) assess fun seeking behaviour, example 5= "I am always willing to try something new if I think it will be fun", 10= "I will often do things for no other reason than that they might be fun". 5 items (4, 7, 14, 18 & 23) assess reward responsivity, example 4= when I am doing well at something I love to keep at it, 18= When good thing happen to me it affects me strongly. While 4 items (1, 6, 11, &17) are the fillers Example 1= A person's family is the most important thing in life, 6= How I dress is important to me. Carver and White (2013) reported a reliability index of ( $\alpha=.86$ ). The scale was pilot tested for reliability and the result showed Cronbach's alpha .59.

### *Procedure*

The questionnaires were distributed to students in their various class rooms. Before administering the questionnaire, the researchers introduced themselves to the students, explained the objectives of the study and told them why there is need that they respond honestly to all items on the questionnaire. A total of 350 questionnaires were administered to the participants by the researchers and a research assistant and participants were verbally appreciated. All the 350 hundred copies were properly filled and collected.

### *Design/Statistics*

Cross sectional survey design was employed in this study and Linear regression was used to analyze the data. Each of the predictor variables (Perceived anonymity and Computer Mediated Communication) was regressed on the criterion variable (social inhibition) using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS 20.0).

## Results

### Descriptive statistics

The correlation and the descriptive statistics of all the study variables are shown in Table 1 below. As can be seen from Table 1, educational level was significantly related to age. Perceived anonymity was significantly related to religion. On the other hand, computer mediated communication CMC was significantly related to perceived anonymity. Social inhibition had a negative significant relationship with gender, and CMC.

**Table 1: Descriptive and correlation statistics of the variables**

Variable	Mean(SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Gender		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2. Age		-.14	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3. Religion		.02	-.02	-	-	-	-	-	-
4. Educa.Lev		.12	.41**	.05	-	-	-	-	-
5. Mar. Stat		.08	.12	-.01	.04	-	-	-	-
6. PA	24(4.23)	.09	.01	.21**	-.04	.02	-	-	-
7. CMC	41(8.94)	.14	-.00	.06	-.12	.03	.36**	-	-
8. SI	54(8.01)	-.25**	.13	.07	.04	.03	.07-	-.22**	-

: \* =  $p < .05$ ; \*\* =  $p < .01$ ; SD = Standard Deviation; PA = Perceived Anonymity; CMC = Computer Mediated

Communication; SI = Social Inhibition

### Regression analysis

In order to clearly test the hypotheses, the study variables were submitted to a regression analyses.

In the regression, the demographic variables of gender, age, religion, educational level, and marital status were first included in the analysis in order to control for their possible effect on social inhibition. This group of variables formed the Model 1 in the analysis. Thereafter, perceived anonymity was included in the regression, and this formed Model 2 of the analysis. Afterwards, computer mediated communication CMC was included in the analysis, and this formed the Model 3 as shown in Table 2.

Model 1, which involved only the demographic variables revealed significant relation result,  $R = .29$  ( $R^2 = .08$ ),  $F(5, 194) = 3.40$ ,  $p = .05$ . Model 2 did not show a significant result,  $R = .30$  ( $R^2 = .09$ ),  $F(1, 193) = 1.14$ ,  $p = .29$ . Model 3 also yielded a significant result,  $R = .38$  ( $R^2 = .14$ ),  $F(1, 192) = 12.15$ ,  $p = .001$ .

As can be seen in Table 2, gender was a consistent significant predictor of social inhibitor across all the three models. Because males were coded with 0 and females were coded with 1, the negative sign indicates that male respondents were more likely than female respondents to engage in social inhibition. Perceived anonymity failed to significantly predict social inhibition. However, CMC negatively predicted social inhibition in the direction that higher levels of CMC were related to lower levels of social inhibition.

**Table 2: Regression analysis of perceived anonymity and CMC on social inhibition**

Variable	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	B(se)	t	B(Se)	t	B(Se)	t
1. Gender	-4.04(1.15)	-3.50**	-4.16(1.16)	-3.59**	3.60(1.14)	-3.17**
2. Age	.29(.26)	1.08	.26(.26)	1.01	.32(.25)	.09
3. Religion	6.27(5.54)	1.13	4.97(5.67)	.88	4.96(5.51)	.90
4. Edu_Level	.50(1.50)	.34	.68(1.49)	.42	.08(1.46)	-.05
5. Mar_Status	4.53(7.90)	.57	4.44(7.89)	.56	4.56(7.67)	.59
6. PA			.14(.13)	1.07	.31(.14)	2.22
7. CMC					-.23(.07)	-3.49**

\* =  $p < .05$ ; \*\* =  $p < .01$ ; B = Unstandardised Regression coefficient; t = t-test of the regression coefficient.

## Discussion

The study investigated the role of perceived anonymity and computer mediated communication on social inhibitions among youths. Two hypotheses were postulated in this study. The first hypothesis stated that perceived anonymity would not predict social inhibition among youth and the hypothesis was confirmed. The result indicated that perceived anonymity did not predict social inhibition. Youth who feels their identity is undisclosed are usually assertive, unreserved, and have less fear in expressing themselves. Some scholars have reported similar (lause, & Blackford, 2010; Schwartz, Sholom, & Gottlieb, 2016) that no correlation between perceived anonymity and social inhibition. And Schwartz et al, (2016) added that there is no impact of perceived anonymity on

social inhibition among undergraduate. Thus, anonymity shields individuals in social interaction and allows for expression of oneself without fear of subjugation, and inhibition. This accounts why most organizations use anonymity (e.g., suggestion box) to obtain the exact fact about their organization or an issue. Anonymity had been used as an information source by newspapers, as well as by police departments, soliciting tips aimed at catching criminals (Abelson, 2001). Police uses this anonymity to assure the people of safety. Even in research, certain private and sensitive information are often elicited from participants when they feel uninhibited in doing so.

The second hypothesis which stated that computer mediated communication would not significantly predict social inhibition among youths and was not supported. That is, distance of computer mediated communication significantly predicts social inhibition among youths. The result showed that youth who use CMC are less likely going to be socially inhibited. CMC provides a fair playground for individuals to express oneself irrespective personal factors like character, disabilities of any sort, class, status, etc (Jiang, Bazarava, & Hencock, 2011). It influences the extent to which individuals self-disclose (Jiang, Bazarava, & Hencock, 2011; Mcquail, 2005). Our finding had shown consistence with findings of studies like (Xio, Jeff, & More, 2016; Silvia Guilia & Scott, 2015). According to Silvia et al (2015) the more communication takes place through electronic device the less the level of social inhibition, and the less communication is done through electronic device the more the level of social inhibition among students.

### **Implications of the study**

The study explains that perceived anonymity could not predict social inhibition among youths. Implicatively, feelings of non-identifiability have nothing to do with social inhibition among youths. The study also explain that computer mediated communication predict social inhibition among youths. The more communication takes place through electronic device, the lesser the level of social inhibition among youths. One can actually hide under the umbrella of CMC to get socially uninhibited, unreproached from his/her conversations/utterances. Globally, youths currently use the instruments of CMC through social media in protests to express displeasure and disagreement as well as driving down their desires.

### **Limitation of the study**

In the process of conducting this research, the researchers encountered some limitations, one of the limitations is that the study was carried out within one geographical area, secondly, the sample size was not relatively large enough. A total number of two hundred (350) participants

were not enough to be used to generalize the entire population. Finally, the use of only students from university of Nigeria, Nsuka has its own limitation in the study.

### **Suggestion for further research**

Future researchers are encouraged to extend the scope of this study beyond youths. They should also include adults and the aged once in other to boost the general ability of the findings. Also, they should go beyond Enugu State in other to get enough participants that could help them generalize their findings. They should also use interview if possible to get concrete response because lack of understanding the questionnaire could affect the result.

### **Conclusions**

Whether or not people hide their identity in social interactions, they are often assertive and expressive but are more when they communicate through computer mediated channels. CMC therefore offers them some kind of expressive shield without fear of subjugation, intimidation and perhaps inhibition. Anonymity and CMC has given the youths a platform through which their voices are heard without fear of being reproached, intimidated, and inhibited.

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