Influence of Social Media Addiction on Interpersonal Relationships, Depression and Stress among Undergraduates in Ekiti State

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ABSTRACT

Youths commonly use social media, and it has motivated this study to investigate social media addiction among undergraduates to uncover the effect on interpersonal relationships, depression and stress among undergraduates. Engaging a cross-sectional survey design, 400 undergraduates were purposively sampled from Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Federal University, Oye-Ekiti, Federal Polytechnic, Ado-Ekiti and Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti. Results from the hypothesis revealed that there is a low prevalence of social media addiction among undergraduates in Ekiti State. However, social media addiction influences interpersonal relationships, depression and stress among undergraduates, and sex differences do not influence social media addiction. It is therefore recommended that the undergraduate students should be enlightened by their university counselling unit on the impact that addiction to social media could have on their academics, interpersonal relationships and their mental health.

Keywords: Social Media, Addiction, Interpersonal Relationships, Depression, Stress, Undergraduate Students

INTRODUCTION

There is a consistent shift from traditional forms of social interaction, such as face-to-face interactions, group talks and usual day-to-day interaction with family and friends, to online interaction. Social interaction occurs over the internet while chatting, sending emails, participating in video calls, or being active on social media platforms. Social media is noteworthy for its interpersonal interaction and provides information, and individuals share their opinions and information about their lives, interests, and knowledge (Kwahk & Park, 2016). It has been revolutionary considering the changes in social networking it has occasioned globally. This has erupted in social interactions and people's daily activities, communication, interpersonal relationships, work-related or business activities, intellectual engagement and leisure purposes.

Daily, an average of 2 hours and 24 minutes is spent on social media (Dean, 2021). Also, it has been asserted that the world's internet users total 4.021 billion, with social media users regularly amounting to 3.96 billion, with an average user having eight social media accounts (WeAreSocial, 2018; Dean, 2021). According to Statista (2021), there will be 44.63 million social network users in Nigeria by 2025, up from approximately 24.59 million in 2019. Young adults in Nigeria are notable users of social media to maintain or form relationships, agitate for change, sell a product, pass across information or create content to entertain, among others. According to Nigeria's former Minister of Communication, Shittu Adebayo, "roughly 75% of Nigeria's population, mostly youths who use the internet, are on social media" (Ogunkola, 2018). It follows that a significant portion of the social, emotional, and even mental development of these youths occurs online (Ononogbu & Chiroma, 2018).

The rapid increase of internet-facilitated social media platforms such as Facebook, WeChat, and Instagram has dramatically changed interpersonal communication (Smith & Anderson, 2018). This has brought about social media addiction. Social media usage in Nigeria has increased in recent years, whether to follow friends, family, acquaintances, or actors and people in the art and entertainment industry. The primary goal of most users is to stay in touch with close relationships, and WhatsApp is the most popular social media platform in the country,

especially among the youth. Statista (2024) estimated that, as of the third quarter of 2023, over 95 per cent of Nigeria's internet users used WhatsApp, which is an instant messaging and voice-over-IP platform, while Facebook was the most popular platform for most people who accessed the news on social media.

However, the irrational and excessive use of social media interferes with other aspects of daily life, such as daily chores, relations with close friends and family, formal interpersonal communications and other school and work assignments (Griffiths, 2012). It is associated with emotional, relational, health, and performance problems (Echeburua & de Corral, 2010; Kuss & Griffiths, 2011). Understanding how social media shapes interpersonal relationships, depression, and stress among undergraduates in Ekiti State is then of paramount importance.

The sheer pressure on social media has compelled youths who are significant users of social media to live up to some standards, creating for them mental health plagues such as anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation. According to Islam and Sikder (2020, p.285), "addiction towards social media may lead to lower self-esteem and, in effect, reduced mental health". Students in Bangladesh were found to be dependent on social media, and this leads to a loss of self-esteem and self-worth. Karim et al. (2020) demonstrated that highly intense social media users are most likely to experience a certain level of depression. However, this is likely caused by the specific activities and time spent on social media (Keles et al., 2019). Students in Nigeria have been found to have different levels of social media addiction, which can negatively impact interpersonal relationships, leading to increased loneliness and social anxiety, and can also contribute to depression, stress, and sleep disruptions (Nwafor, Ugwu, Okoye,& Ofoma, 2023; .Onyeizu, Nancy, Samuel, Binta, & Michelle, 2022; Doofan, Veronica, Kwasedoo, Audu, & Dookeghen, 2021).

This study, therefore, examines the influence of social media addiction on interpersonal relationships, depression and stress among undergraduate students in Ekiti State. The research participants consisted of 400 undergraduates from Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti, Federal Polytechnic, Ado-Ekiti and Federal University, Oye-Ekiti. Over the years, social media usage among students has become a norm, which has raised concerns about its impact on mental health.

To achieve the aim of this study, the following objectives were developed:

1. Find out whether social media addiction is prevalent among undergraduates

2. Find out whether or not social media addiction has an effect on interpersonal relationships, depression and stress among undergraduates

3. Discover whether or not a sex difference influences social media addiction

Consequently, to achieve the objectives highlighted above, the following hypotheses were arrived at:

H_0: Social media addiction is not prevalent among undergraduates.

H_0: Social media addiction has no significant influence on interpersonal relationships among undergraduates.

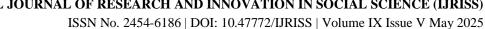H_0: Social media addiction has no significant influence on depression among undergraduates.

H_0: Social media addiction has no significant influence on stress among undergraduates.

H_0: There is no significant difference of sex difference on social media addiction among undergraduates.

METHOD

Design

Descriptive-correlation research was used to describe the characteristics of the participants of the study and to explore the relationship between social media addiction as the independent variable between interpersonal relationship, depression and stress, which are the dependent variables in the study. For two or more variables occurring at several levels in a single group, such as undergraduates, this type of research design is a non-

experimental design that only examines the relationship between two or more variables without testing the cause-and-effect relationship.

Participants

The participants of this study were drawn from the population of undergraduates from Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Federal University, Oye-Ekiti, Federal Polytechnic, Ado-Ekiti and Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti.

Sampling

Since almost all the undergraduates of Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Federal University, Oye-Ekiti, Federal Polytechnic, Ado-Ekiti and Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti, identified as internet subscribers could not be represented in this study, the purposive sampling technique was used to select 400 undergraduates who are users of social media platforms, and 400 questionnaires were distributed among them. However, the researchers obtained an ethical permit to conduct the study from the Department of Psychology, Ekiti State University. Out of 400 questionnaires administered, only 381 were retrieved, while 329 were properly completed and used for final analysis.

Instruments

The variables of this study include the independent variable (social media addiction) and the dependent variables (interpersonal relationships, depression and stress). Four instruments were used in this study to measure each variable:;

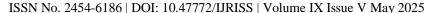### (a) Social Media Addiction Scale - Student Form

Social Media Addiction Scale -Students Form, developed by Cengiz Sahin in 2018, is a 5-point Likert-type scale consisting of 29 items grouped under 4 factors (virtual tolerance, virtual communication, virtual problem and virtual information). Findings on the scale show that the data are appropriate for factor analysis. Peer-to-peer correlations were calculated as .83; the Spearman-Brown reliability coefficient was calculated as .91; the Guttmann Split-Half value was calculated as .90, and the Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient was calculated as .93. The Internal validity was found to be .93 for the whole scale and at values ranging from .81 to .86 for the sub-factors. It is a 5-point Likert-type scale which consists of 29 items and 4 sub-dimensions. 1-5 items are within the virtual tolerance sub-dimension; 6-14 items are within the virtual communication sub-dimension, 15-23 items are under the virtual problem sub-dimension, and 24-29 items are under the virtual information sub-dimension. All of the items in the scale are positive. The highest point that can be scored on the scale is 145, and the lowest one is 29. The higher scores indicate that the person perceives himself as a "social media addict".

(b) Revised Adult Attachment Scale: Close Relationship Version

The revised adult attachment scale, a close relationship version developed by Nancy L. Collins in 1996, is an 18-item questionnaire which rates participants on their feelings about close relationships on a 5-point Likert scale, yielding three dimensions: closeness, dependence and anxiety. The Cronbach's Alpha value was calculated to be .78, and the content validity was calculated to be .68. The Revised Adult Attachment rates the degree to which the item reflects the participant's preferred way of relating to other people on a 5-point Likert scale. (1= Not at all like me and 5= Very like me). The dimensional scores for the subscales (close, depend and anxiety) can be obtained by computing the mean ratings of the items for each subscale.

(c) Beck's Depression Inventory: 2nd Edition

Beck Depression Inventory 2nd Edition (BDI-II), developed by Aaron Beck in 1996, is a popular measure intended to assess the existence and severity of symptoms of depression according to the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders Fourth Edition (DSM-IV). Regarding the reliability of the measure, the internal consistency reliability was high on the original manual with a Cronbach's α of 0.92 for the outpatient population and .93 for the college students. The content validity of the scale's total

score of (r=-0.60). The BDI-II is scored by summing the highest ratings for each of the 21 symptoms. Items are organised according to the severity of the content of alternative statements, and each symptom is rated on a 4-point scale ranging from 0 (not) to 3 (severe), which covers cognitive, emotional/affective and somatic/vegetative symptoms with no sub-scale and total scores can range from 0 to 63. The scoring is criterion-referenced and performed by hand with scores 0-13 indicating minimal range, 14-19 mild depression, 20-28 moderate depression and 29-63 severe depression.

(d) Perceived Stress Scale

The Perceived Stress Scale was originally developed by Sheldon Cohen in 1983 as a 14-item scale that assesses the perception of stressful experiences by asking the respondent to rate the frequency of his/her feelings and thoughts related to events and situations that occurred over the previous month. Seven out of the fourteen items of PSS-14 were considered negative (1, 2, 3, 8, 11, 12, 14), and the remaining seven were considered positive (4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 13), representing perceived helplessness and self-efficacy, respectively. The average inter-item correlations (coefficient alpha values) for the negative subscale were 0.79 for PSS-14, and the positive subscales were 0.77. Convergent validity was examined by the correlation of corresponding subscale PSS-14, which was highly correlated with the subscale of DASS-21 for stress (coefficient $r = .644$), depression ($r = 0.606$), and anxiety ($r = 0.542$) subscales. Each item was rated on a five-point Likert-type scale (0 = never to 4 = very often). Total scores are calculated after reversing positive items' scores and then summing up all scores. Total scores for PSS-14 range from 0 to 56. A higher score indicates greater stress.

Data Analysis

Data obtained from the participants was cleaned and was input into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), which is software designed for the analysis of social science research data to translate the raw data into frequency counts, simple percentages and standard deviations in tables and charts. Pearson's Correlation Coefficient (R) was used to test the strength and direction of the relationship between the variables at ($r = -0.47$, $p < 0.05$).

RESULTS

Table 1: Demographic Information of Participants based on Sex

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	133	40.4	40.4	40.4
	Female	196	59.6	59.6	100.0
	Total	329	100.0	100.0	

From Table 1, it is shown that 40.4% of participants were males while 59.6% were females. This implies there is a gender balance among the undergraduates selected to participate in this study.

Table 2: Correlation Summary table showing the Relationship Between all variables

		SMA	IR	Depression	Stress	Close	Depend	Anxiety
SMA	Pearson Correlation	1						
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.					
	N	329						
IR	Pearson Correlation	.360**	1					

	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000					
	N	329	329				
Depression	Pearson Correlation	.184**	.128*	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.020				
	N	329	329	329			
Stress	Pearson Correlation	.188**	.075	.328**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.176	.000			
	N	329	329	329	329		
Close	Pearson Correlation	-.013	.484**	-.147**	-.169**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.811	.000	.008	.002		
	N	329	329	329	329	329	
Depend	Pearson Correlation	.152**	.567**	-.047	-.107	.268**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006	.000	.392	.052	.000	
	N	329	329	329	329	329	329
Anxiety	Pearson Correlation	.374**	.565**	.298**	.289**	-.233**	-.130*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.018	
	N	329	329	329	329	329	329	329
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).							
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).							

From Table 2, the result showed that there is a significant positive relationship between SMA and Interpersonal Relationship (r=.36, p<.01); a significant positive relationship between SMA and Depression (r=.18, p<.001); a significant positive relationship between SMA and Stress (r=.19, p<.001); no significant relationship between SMA and Close dimension (r=-.01, p=.811); a significant positive relationship between SMA and Depend dimension r=.15, p=.006) and a significant positive relationship between SMA and Anxiety dimension (r=.37, p<.01). Furthermore, there is a significant positive relationship between Interpersonal Relationship and Depression (r=.13, p=.020); no significant relationship between Interpersonal Relationship and Stress (r=.08, p=.176); a significant positive relationship between Interpersonal Relationship and Close dimension (r=.48, p<.01); a significant positive relationship between Interpersonal Relationship and Depend dimension (r=.57, p<.01) and a significant positive relationship between Interpersonal Relationship and Anxiety dimension (r=.57, p<.01). Also, there was a significant positive relationship between Depression and Stress (r=.33, p<.01); a significant negative relationship between Depression and Close dimension (r=-.15, p=.008); no significant relationship between Depression and Depend dimension (r=-.05, p=.392) and a significant positive relationship between Depression and Anxiety dimension (r=.29, p<.01). Also, there was a significant negative relationship between Stress and Close dimension (r=-.17, p=.002); no significant relationship between Stress and Depend (r=-.11, p=.052) and a significant positive relationship between Stress and Anxiety dimension (r=.29, p<.01). Furthermore, there was a significant positive relationship between Close dimension and Depend dimension

(r=.27, p<.01) and a significant negative relationship between Close dimension and Anxiety dimension (r=-.23, p<.01). Finally, there was a significant negative relationship between Depend dimension and Anxiety dimension (r=-.13, p=.018).

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics Showing the Prevalence of Social Media Addiction

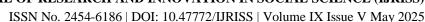|		Frequency	Percent	Mean	SD
SMA	High	149	45.3	107.2081	14.50362
	Low	180	54.7	70.9667	11.05138
	Total	329	100.0		

From Table 3, the result showed that those who scored higher than the mean (M=107.21, SD=14.50) are less than those who scored lower than the mean (M=70.97, SD=11.05). This implies that there is a low prevalence of social media addiction among undergraduates. Therefore, the hypothesis which stated that social media addiction is not prevalent among undergraduates was rejected in the study.

Table 4: Independent t-test table Comparing Categories of High and Low Social Media Addiction on Interpersonal Relationships

	SMA	N	Mean	SD	df	t	p
IR	High	146	53.1918	7.91185	327	5.750	<.01
	Low	183	48.2951	7.47967			
Close	High	146	3.1425	.67157	327	-.409	.68
	Low	183	3.1749	.74540			
Depend	High	146	2.7192	.67776	327	2.613	<.01
	Low	183	2.5180	.70598			
Anxiety	High	146	3.0007	1.06599	327	6.003	<.01
	Low	183	2.3503	.89853			

From Table 4, the result showed that those who scored high on social media addiction (M=53.19, SD=7.91) were significantly higher on interpersonal relationships than those who scored low (M=48.30, SD=7.48) at df (327) =5.750, p<.01. The result also showed that those who scored high on social media addiction (M=3.14, SD=.67) were significantly lower on the close dimension than those who scored low (M=3.17, SD=.75) at df (327) =-.409, p=.68 The result also showed that those who scored high on social media addiction (M=2.72, SD=.68) were significantly higher on the depend dimension than those who scored low (M=2.52, SD=.71) at df (327) =2.613, p<.01. The result also showed that those who scored high on social media addiction (M=3.00, SD=1.07) were significantly higher on anxiety dimension than those who scored low (M=2.35, SD=.90) at df (327) =6.003, p<.01. This implies that social media addiction significantly influences interpersonal relationships. Those who scored higher on social media addiction are anxious and dependent in their interpersonal relationships, while those who scored lower on social media addiction are closer in their interpersonal relationships. Therefore, the hypothesis, which stated that there is no significant influence of social media addiction on interpersonal relationships among undergraduates, was rejected in this study.

Table 5: Independent t-test table Comparing Categories of High and Low Social Media Addiction on Depression

	SMA	N	Mean	SD	Df	t	P
Depression	High	146	15.3219	10.33170	327	2.052	.04
	Low	183	12.9727	10.30386			

From Table 5, the result showed that those who scored high on social media addiction (M=15.32, SD=10.33) were significantly higher on depression than those who scored low (M=12.97, SD=10.30) at df (327) =2.052, p=.04. This implies that social media addiction significantly influences depression. Therefore, the hypothesis, which stated that there is no significant influence of social media addiction on depression among undergraduates, was rejected in this study.

Table 6: Independent t-test table Comparing Categories of High and Low Social Media Addiction on Stress

	SMA	N	Mean	SD	df	t	p
Stress	High	146	28.9727	5.49929	327	2.450	.02
	Low	183	27.0820	6.61989			

From Table 6, the result showed that those who scored high on social media addiction (M=28.97, SD=5.50) were significantly higher on stress than those who scored low (M=27.08, SD=6.62) at df (327) =2.450, p=.02 This implies that social media addiction significantly influences stress. Therefore, the hypothesis, which stated that there is no significant influence of social media addiction on stress among undergraduates, was rejected in this study.

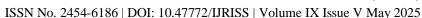Table 7: Independent t-test table Comparing Males and Females on Social Media Addiction

	Sex	N	Mean	SD	Df	t	P
SMA	Male	133	89.8346	22.18250	327	1.665	.10
	Female	196	85.7143	21.92856			

From Table 7, the result showed that Males (M=89.83, SD=22.18) and females (M=85.71, SD=21.93) do not differ significantly on social media addiction at df (327) =1.665, p=.10. This implies that sex difference has no significant influence on social media addiction. Therefore, the hypothesis which stated that sex differences will not significantly influence social media addiction among undergraduates was accepted in the study.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the study were discussed in line with the hypothesis raised and tested in the study. Hypothesis one tested that there is a low prevalence of social media addiction among undergraduates. The finding is consistent with the findings of Akua (2015), who discovered that there is a low level of social media addiction among undergraduates at the University of Ghana. The findings also align with Alabi (2012), whose study revealed a low level of addiction among undergraduates.

The second hypothesis implies that social media addiction significantly influences interpersonal relationships. Those who were addicted to social media were more anxious and dependent in their interpersonal relationships and found it hard to form close relationships, while those who were low in addiction were closer in their interpersonal relationships. This result is in agreement with Christensen (2018), who discovered in the study that the more time a person spends on social media, the more likely their interpersonal relationships will be affected negatively. The findings also agree with Mwangi (2013), who found that social media has made teenagers unable to build close interpersonal relationships with their peers.

The third hypothesis asserted that social media addiction significantly influences depression. This implies that undergraduates who are addicted to social media are more likely to be depressed than those who are not addicted. This can be because undergraduates tend to see the positive impressions of their friends and mates on social media, such as their lavish lifestyle, wonderful grades and incredible social life, which could lead to comparing their lives and evoking a feeling of failure and therefore, depression. This is in accord with Sean (2018), who tested that there is a significant positive relationship between social media and depression.
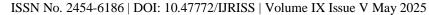
The fourth hypothesis, which states that social media addiction significantly influences stress, implies that undergraduates who are addicted to social media are more likely to be stressed than those who are not addicted. This could be linked to the fact that undergraduates who are addicted to social media tend to spend a lot more time on social media, most especially at night, resulting in less sleep due to the blue light emitted from their gadgets. Also, the pressure to keep up with the latest trends on social media could lead to increased stress in an undergraduate. The findings agree with Dogan & Ozan (2017) who determined that social media usage increases students' stress levels. The findings also agree with Sean (2018), who found that there was a significant positive correlation between social media and stress. The fifth hypothesis tested that sex differences of undergraduates do not significantly influence social media addiction, implying that males and females do not differ significantly in social media addiction, which is consistent with Kirik (2015), who also discovered that gender made no significant difference in social media addiction.

CONCLUSION

Although there is a low prevalence of social media addiction among undergraduates, it influences interpersonal relationships, depression and stress among undergraduates in Ekiti State, but sex differences do not influence social media addiction. It is therefore recommended that university counselling and therapy services should prioritise counselling and educating undergraduates on the impact of social media addiction on their interpersonal relationships and mental health. Furthermore, efforts should be made to ensure that undergraduates are in sync with the university culture that encourages intellectualism and student engagement, rather than relying on social media for social networking. Lastly, further research should delve into how media addiction influences academic performance, work productivity, family cohesiveness, marital relationships, and brain development.

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