

PSYCHOLOGICAL PREDICTORS OF SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION AMONG UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATES IN RIVERS STATE

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate the psychological predictors of social media addiction among undergraduates in Rivers state, in terms of some variables such as depression, and loneliness. Survey method was used in the study. The population of the study was 13,810 comprising 5649 (University of Port Harcourt undergraduate), 3650 (Rivers State University undergraduate), and 4511 (Ignatius Ajuru University undergraduates). A sample 389 undergraduate students were used for the study. The sample was drawn using multi-stage sampling procedure. A validated instrument titled social media usage scale (SMUS) with a reliability coefficient of 0.87 was used for data collection. Simple linear regression coefficients, mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while ANOVA associated with simple linear regression and independent sample z-test were used for testing the null hypotheses. The study found that depression and loneliness independently predicts social media addiction. It was therefore concluded that social media addiction is a psychological behavioural problem that need to betackle by all academic stakeholders. And are positively predicted by loneliness and depression. The study recommended among others that; school authorities should endeavor to regulate the level of utilization of social networking sites as well as encourage positive use of social networking sites by students; government school authorities and parents should endeavor to health behaviours that reduces depression and loneliness among the students; and students should rather engage in social healthy relationship than become engrossed in the use of social media sites which retards their academic progress.

Keywords: Social Media, Addiction, Loneliness, Depression and Undergraduates.

Introduction

Social media are interactive computer-mediated technologies that help to create or share information, ideas, career interest's politics and other ways of expression through vital networks, and communities. It can also be a way of sharing contacts quickly and efficiently. Social media also helps people to share their photos, opinions, and event. Indeed social media has really transformed the

way peoples live, do business, interact and others. Social media has also helped in creating awareness on information that may be useful to man's, health, academic research, religion, security to mention but a few. Social media is also a technology which helps to speed up the sharing of information and so many other forms of interaction through different platform or sites. Some features of social media may

also be to share data that is generated through various online interactions. These are the real life blood of social media.

Addiction can be defined as a state of enslavement to one habit or the other which can be a connection to psychological and physical disorder mentalhelp.net American addiction center, described it as a repeated participation in the use of substance, because of the pleasure it gives to the undergraduates not minding the harm it may cause to the person's physical or psychological well being. Addiction becomes evident when someone is not able to control the limit of activities to something, due to the level of pleasure the person is deriving from the use.

The new information society still relies on some basic non-technological competencies that undergraduates need to develop: good communication skills, the ability to solve problems, thinking deeply. Thinking creatively and having positive attitude. However, how young people pursue these competencies is being challenged and extended in ways and at a speed unknown to previous generations. The internet is the core computer mediated communication. The internet system is worldwide and connects thousands of computer networks. Providing an incredible array of information undergraduates can access. In many cases, the internet has more current, up-to-date information than books. In 2003 nearly 100 percent of public schools in the United States were connected to the internet and 93 percent of instructional classrooms had internet connected computers (National

Center for Education Statistics, 2005). Youths all over the world are increasingly using the internet despite substantial variation in use in different countries around the world and in socio-economic groups (Anderson, 2002). Among 15-17years old, one third uses the internet for 6 hours a week or more. 24 percent use it for 3 to 5 hours a week and 20 percent use it for 1 hour a week or less (Woodard, 2000).

Social media sites like Facebook, Whatsapp, Instagram and others, has become a global phenomenon and being one of the greatest important means of communication. Today, more than 68.5% of undergraduates use social media on a regular basis (Kuss and Griffiths, 2011). Facebook was developed in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg, Who was a Harvard University undergraduate at that time, originally, membership was limited to Harvard students (2009) among whom the adoption rate was quite high (between 85 and 96%) (Lampe, Ellison, and Steinfield, 2006; Salaway, Caruso and Nelson, 2008; Stutzman, 2009) Tufekci, 2008). However, by 2006, the platform was opened up to the world, and anyone aged 13 or older, with a valid email address, was allowed to join. Facebook is basically and online social network site in which users can share thoughts, ideas, pictures and other content with friends and family members, and to connect with either former or new friends, making the platform very popular with university students. Facebook is estimated to have more than 500 million members, (Facebook, 2013), with the average user spending more than 20 minutes a day on

the site (Cassidy, 2006; Needham & company, 2007), and ranks as the most used site among university students to the degree that it would be difficult to find students who were not Facebook addict

Social media addiction is a term that is often used to refer to someone who spends so much time on social media. As a result, it affects the person's daily life. Although, there is no official medical recognition on social media addiction as a disease, the negative habits of excessive use of social media have become a source of much discussion on research.

There are different factors that create emotional and psychological problems for students. This is because of the misuse of academic environment freedom that tertiary educational institutions provide for individual learners. The situation where no adult advises them on what to do right causes serious concerns and difficulties, such as fear of failure in examination, resistance to the pressure of over ambitious parents, changing dependency status, feeling of inferiority and not having interest in the course of study (Esere, 2004). Others are demand on time and crowded school time table, peer pressure, sensation seeking, depression, difficulty in participating in group activities, addiction to social media usage upon the psyche of the student (Adeoye, 2004) which is the case study for this research work.

The first decade of the 21st century was for most countries in the world a period of dramatic change in the means of communication. Online communication is rapid and takes place in platforms such as

social networking sites (SNS), instant messaging (IM), Chatrooms, blogs and forums. These social media gadgets have been consumed by virtually every individual but the undergraduates are the largest consumers. According to the EU Kids Online study of 2010, social networking site is the most popular activity among all the online activities that undergraduates undertake and is the first choice among online communication tools with 7 in 10 adolescents networking on the social media daily and 9 in 10 adolescents reported having at least one social network site account. However, among the social networking sites the most popular and well patronized in most counties are Facebook and Whatsapp. According to Jafarkarimi, Sim, Saadtoost, &Hee (2016), Facebook and Whatsapp has become the most popular social networking site with more than 2.2 billion users.

Alabi (2013) reported that in Nigeria, most undergraduates now start the day by checking their Facebook, while some cannot do without accessing their Facebook, Whatsapp, Instagram, and other accounts within every passing hour. Consequently, Adesokan (2013) opined that many of the university students regularly comes in late to morning classes due to late-night log-ins and most times when lectures are going on, students are fond of playing online games, checking mails and chatting with friends online.

Also, Karaiskos, Tzavellas, Balta & Paparrigopoulos, (2010) noted the case of a 21 year, old female part time student who also work to mention her studies,

operates social media at least 5 hours a day, which later resulted to the loss of her job. Nigeria is in the technology inclined era where new communication platforms are on the increase daily; and the use of smart phones for internet activities is the order of the day. Hardly would people be seen, most especially youths and undergraduates without smart phones in public transport, classes, Social gatherings, restaurants, meetings, seminars, and conferences for communicating, documenting, processing information, online gaming and gambling; and social networking. Facebook and Whatsapp, are the most common and popular means of communicating in the present millennium among adolescents and students.

Loneliness relates to reduced interpersonal interaction and increased social media use. Leung (2001), we have emotional loneliness which produces negative predictions of social media and social loneliness which produces the positive prediction of social media.

The present study attempts to uncover an underlining process to explain how social and psychological variables, specifically loneliness might predict social media addiction among university undergraduates and its related behaviours. In this study, we look into the things that drivers or motivates these undergraduates first to social media addiction. For an undergraduate whose real life maybe troubled by unsatisfactory personal relations or lack of social support, social media may provide a safe and secure interaction. The so-called freedom to recreate or to obscure some aspects of self-

online allows the exploration and expression of multiple and fragmented selves of human existence.

Social media provides people with fluid identity, anonymity disinhibition and invisibility.

The study attended to find predictors of preference of social media loneliness. The loneliness which is experienced by some of psychological distress starts in broad terms; loneliness therefore is defined as a sense of deprivation in one's social relationship (Murphy & Kupshik, (1992). Lonely people are predicted to spend more time on social media network communication; they prefer internet communication to face to face communication and enjoy the anonymity and harking more than others do. Increased pro-social behaviours in social media activity to modulate negative and mood associated with loneliness. Lonely people are predicted to report disturbance in their life because of losing face to face interaction of real life. Loneliness has long been associated with the use of social network site; early studies indicated that lonely undergraduates turned first to internet and then social network site Shotten (1991).

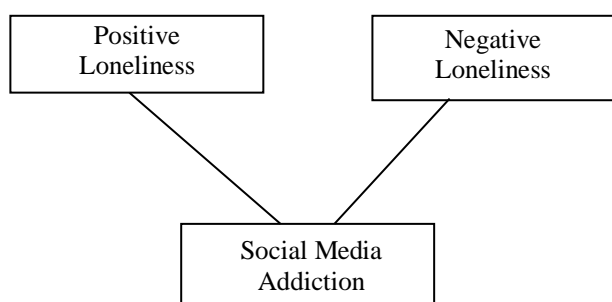
There are some significant problems that can be developed by lonely undergraduates in relation to social media addiction in their daily functions which includes interference with real life socialisation.

Although, social media network is widely used to communicate with others, loneliness has been associated with use of social media; lonely individuals have reported feeling less competent

psychologically. Leung, (2001), Monahan Martin and Schumacher, 9, (2003), found that lonely people are more likely to use internet and email for emotional support than others. Many turned to social media activities to escape from the so-called pressure and discomfort of their lives.

Instead of relieving their original distress, individuals who are lonely could develop

strong compulsive internet use behaviours resulting in negative life outcomes, Kim, La Rose and Penny,(2009). Blinka & Simahel, (2009), explain that social media activities allow lonely undergraduates to embrace their identity more easily and intensively, thus the freedom to experiment with self-expression is attractive to them.



Source: The researcher

Depression according to Collins (2003), English dictionary is a medical condition in which a person feels very sad and anxious and often has physical symptoms such as been unable to sleep. It may also be described as a situation where by an individual have no feelings of pleasure which can lead him or her into trouble, sleeping or no sleep, inappropriate manner having recurrent thought of suicide, or losing significant weight. It is a situation that may put one into a mental health issues.

While on the surface, it appears social networking brings people together across the Internet, in a larger sense it may create social isolation which leads to depression. As people spend increasing amounts of time on social networks, they experience less face-to-face interaction. Social media has changed the way people interact. Scientists have evaluated social isolation

in many studies, and have determined that it can lead to a host of mental, psychological, emotional and physical problems including depression, anxiety, somatic complaints and many others. In fact, a University of Illinois at Chicago School of Medicine animal study showed social isolation impaired brain hormones, which is the likely reason socially isolated people experience tremendous levels of stress, aggression, anxiety that leads to depression and other mental issues. (Carter, 2014, Frazier, 2014).

Perusing social media, sending rapid-fire text messages, and tweeting back and forth with friends and celebrities alike might not be the best academic strategy, it turns out. A new study released by researchers at the *Miriam Hospital's Centers for Behavioral and Preventive Medicine* shows a link between social media use and poor academic performance. The study wasn't

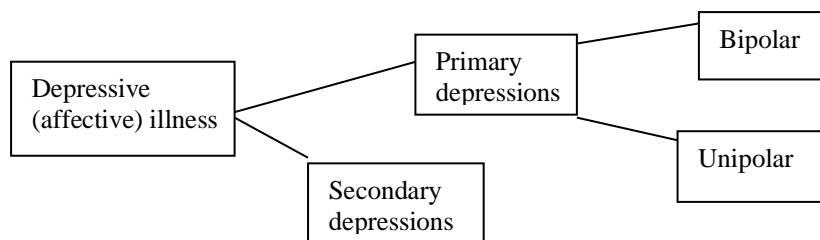
limited to usage of traditional social media outlets like Whatsapp and Facebook, but instead included popular social technology like texting (Carter, 2014).

Depression, once thought to be singular adult problem, is a regular state for many undergraduates. There is no doubt that so many undergraduates suffer depression which may come from strong feelings of unhappiness and despair which may be as a result of academic tension, family issues, health issues or relationship issues. It is a complex and dangerous condition that often seems to defy description and definition. There are two types of depression according to a psychologist. John white, in his book, 'the mask of melancholy' which are, which are primary

and secondary depression. Secondary depression occurs in the course of some other illness such as alcoholism while primary depression are mood disorders which are not associated with any other form of mental or physical illness.

1. Primary depression can also be categorized in two ways, namely bipolar and unipolar depressions.
2. Bipolar depression which can also be referred to as a manic-depressive psychosis is characterized by alternating moods of sadness and happiness.
3. Unipolar depression by contrast is a plunge into emotional darkness relieved (if at all) only by restoring a normal mood.

Fig. 2: (From mask of melancholy)



Source: Researcher

Undergraduates depression can also be hard to recognize because it can be often mistaken for or accompanied by other pubertal issues like pre-menstrual syndrome P.M.S in girls. Social media activities as has been found to be a source of relief in the life of undergraduates during an experienced depression as it serves as a companion or guide to them to search and google for a solution to their depressant situation.

Statement of the Problem

The addiction of social media has become a source of worry. It is no longer strange that most undergraduates spend almost all their time manipulating one platform of social media or the other. Most of these undergraduates do not use the medium for something that will benefit them in their studies or moral lives, but something that will be a source of destruction to their future. It has become a habit that some of these undergraduates can spend the entire day visiting one social media sites or the

other and abandon their academic activities. The researcher has also observed that most undergraduates have become victims of cyber-crime which in most cases leads them to jail. Social media addiction leads them to pass out with low CGP in examination; it leads them to

health implications like vision experiment and psychological disorder, steeling to maintain the affordability of data for browsing, and other implications. In most cases social media addiction makes them to be withdrawn from social activities, spiritual exercise and others. The problem therefore is what are the psychological variables that predict addiction of social media among undergraduates in Rivers state?

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to investigate the social and psychological variables that predict addiction of social media among undergraduate students in Rivers-state. In specific terms; the study intends to;

1. Find out the extent to which depression predicts addiction to social media among Rivers State undergraduates.
2. Examine the extent to which loneliness of undergraduates predicts addiction to social media among Rivers State undergraduates.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the researcher in the course of the study.

1. To what extent does depression predict addiction to social media among undergraduates in Rivers State?

2. To what extent does Loneliness predict social media addiction among undergraduates in Rivers state?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses tested at 0.05 level of significant were formulated to guide the study.

1. Depression does not significantly predict social media addiction among undergraduates in Rivers State.
2. Loneliness does not significantly predict social media addiction among undergraduates in Rivers state.

The Concept of Social Media/Social Media Addiction

Really, before the deregulation of the Nigerian telecommunication sector, fewer Nigerians had access to computers while the lack of sufficient technological infrastructure such as the internet and mobile phones constrained communication within the Society. However, with the deregulation of the telecommunication sector, social network spread like wild fire in Nigeria. Today, all classes of Nigerians now have unlimited access to the social media. The youth, however, remains the most prominent users of the social media. This, of course, is not surprising as the digital age is widely believed to belong to the youth. These social media sites are web-based services that permit individuals to construct a public profile within a bounded system to be able to hook up with anyone they are in connection with. (Boyd and Ellison, 2007), the connection can only be possible with the link of Facebook,

Whatsapp, Twitter, 2go to mention but a few, in other to make available the information about yourself to other participants, especially those of the same interest with you and are also in connection with you. The social media network consists of online technologies, practicing activities or societies that people use to generate content and share thoughts, visions, experiences and view- points with each other. Television Bureau of Advertising (2009). Social networking allows individuals to express their thoughts to other users. Social networking is the leader in promoting digital journalism (Thuseenthan, & Vasanthappriyan, (2014). Social media socializing sites via the internet has become an increasingly important part of young adult life (Gemmill & Peterson, 2006).

Social media according to Encranta dictionary (2009) is described as those various means of mass communication considered as a whole, which includes television, magazines, radio and newspapers. It is also used to facilitate interaction based on certain interests which includes web and mobile technology (internet data). Social media can also be defined as a group of internet-based application that all the creation and exchange of user's generated content (Kaplan & Helen, 2010).

Therefore, social media addiction is a term that is often used to refer to someone who spends so much time on social media. As a result, it affects the person's daily life. Although, there is no official medical recognition on social media addiction as a

disease, the negative habits of excessive use of social media have become a source of much discussion on research. Addiction is generally evaluated in terms of using substance like alcohol, drugs, and tobacco. Recently, it is argued that such behaviours as gambling, eating and sleeping cause addiction too. Faidan, (2016)

The undergraduate's academic motivational level reduces due to the use of these social networking sites. Their sponsors make the situation more complicated by providing them with sophisticated handsets, all in the way of showcasing their high financial standard of living. They rely on the virtual environment instead of gaining practical knowledge from the real world (Keen, 2014).

Methodology

The design for this study was the correlational research design. The population of the study was 13,810 undergraduate students made up of undergraduate students in the faculties of education in the three universities in Rivers State (University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State University, and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education). The total number of students in the three universities was 5649, 3650, and 4511 for the University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education respectively. A sample of three hundred and eighty-nine (389) undergraduate students was used for the study. The sample was drawn using multi-stage sampling procedure. First, Taro Yammane formulae was used to draw the sample size. non – proportionate stratified

random sampling technique was also employed.

A validated instrument titled social media usage scale (SMUS) with a reliability coefficient of 0.87 was used for data collection. The instrument which consisted of 15-items was developed by the researcher focused on assessing the level of social media addiction among undergraduate students in Rivers state. The instrument was constructed using a four-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree, Agreed, Disagreed and Strongly Disagreed which were scored as 4, 3, 2, and 1 point respectively. Simple linear regression coefficients, mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions, while ANOVA associated with simple linear regression and independent sample z-test were used for testing the null hypotheses.

Result

Research Question One: To what extent does depression predict social media addiction among undergraduate students in Rivers State?

Hypothesis One: There is no significant prediction of depression on social media addiction among undergraduate students in Rivers State?

In order to answer research question two and test the associated null hypotheses, the scores of respondents on depression was subjected to simple linear regression analysis on social media addiction, which yielded an adjusted regression coefficient for answering the research question. To test the significant of the coefficient obtained, an ANOVA associated with linear regression was conducted. The results for the answer to the research question and the testing of the hypothesis are presented in table 2.

Table 1: Simple regression coefficient of depression on social media addiction of undergraduate students

Model	R	R ²	Adj R ²	Std. Error of Estimates		
	0.399	0.159	0.155	3.496		
Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)						
Model	Sum of Squares		Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	538.454		1	538.454	44.034	0.0005
Residual	2849.138		388	12.228		
Total	3387.591		389			

From table 1, it can be observed that when undergraduate students' response on depression were regressed on their scores social media addiction, an R-value of 0.399 was obtained, while an R² of 0.159 and adjusted R² of 0.155 were also gotten. From this result, it was suggested that

depression independently predicted 15.5% of the variation in social media addiction among undergraduate students in Rivers State. Furthermore, an ANOVA analysis testing the significance of this value showed that an F-value of 44.034 was gotten at 1 and 233 degrees of freedom

which yielded an associated p-value of 0.0005. Since the p-value obtained was lesser than 0.05, it therefore indicates that depression has a significant independent relationship social media addiction among undergraduate students in Rivers State. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected.

Research Question Two: To what extent does loneliness predicts social media addiction among undergraduate students in Rivers State?

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant prediction of loneliness on social media addiction among undergraduate students in River State?

For answering research question three and testing the corresponding null hypotheses, the scores of respondents on loneliness from the Social-Psychological Correlates of Social Media Inventory (SPCSMI) were subjected to simple linear regression analysis on social media addiction, which yielded an adjusted regression coefficient. To test the significance of the coefficient obtained, an ANOVA associated with linear regression was conducted. The results for the answer to the research question and the testing of the hypothesis are presented in table 3.

Table 2: Simple regression coefficient of loneliness on undergraduates' social media addiction

Model	R	R ²	Adj R ²	Std. Error of Estimates		
	0.384	0.147	0.144	3.520		
Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)						
Model	Sum of Squares		Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	499.054		1	499.054	40.255	0.000
Residual	2888.538		388	12.397		
Total	3387.591		389			

Analysis of research question three revealed that when from regressing students' responses from the section on loneliness to determine their predictive power on social media addiction, an R-value of 0.384 was obtained, an R² of 0.147 and adjusted R² of 0.144 were also gotten.

From this result, it therefore means that loneliness predicted about 14.4% of the variation in social media addiction among undergraduate students in Rivers State. Furthermore, an ANOVA analysis testing the significance of this value yielded an F-

value of 40.255 at 1 and 233 degrees of freedom with an associated p-value of 0.0005. As can be observed, the p-value obtained was lesser than the chosen alpha of 0.05 which therefore indicates that loneliness has a significant independent relationship with social media addiction of undergraduate students in Rivers State. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected.

Depression has a Significant Prediction on Social Media Addiction

A test was conducted on the extent to which depression predicts social media addiction amongst undergraduate students

in Rivers State using simple regression. The result showed regression coefficient $R = 0.399$, $R^2 = 0.159$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.155$ and standard error = 3.496. From the result it can be deduced that depression independently predicts 15.5% of the variance in social media addiction amongst undergraduate's students in Rivers State. The study was further subjected to hypothesis testing using ANOVA associated with simple regression and the result showed an F – value of 44.034 at a significant value of 0.0005. Hence, since the sig value ($p = 0.0005 < 0.05$) is lesser than 0.05 alpha therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected meaning that depression has significant independent relationship with social media addiction. Selfhout, Barnje, Delsing, Bogt, & Meeus (2009).

Loneliness has a Significant Prediction on Social Media Addiction

A test was conducted on the extent to which depression predicts social media addiction amongst undergraduate students in Rivers State using simple regression. The result showed regression coefficient $R = 0.384$, $R^2 = 0.147$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.144$ and standard error = 3.520. From the result it can be deduced that loneliness independently predicts 14.3% of the variance in social media addiction amongst undergraduate's students in Rivers State. The study was further subjected to hypothesis testing using ANOVA associated with simple regression and the result showed an F – value of 40.255 at a significant value of 0.0005. Hence, since the sig value ($p = 0.0005 < 0.05$) is lesser than 0.05 alpha therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected meaning that

loneliness has significant independent relationship with social media addiction.

Conclusion

Social media usage is a welcome development including the proliferation of its utilization among the students. However, being addicted to it especially in terms of using social media sites for trivalent purposes is not ideal. Therefore, social media addiction is a socially and psychologically behavioural problem that needs to tackle by all academic stakeholders. The study however shows that social media edition positively predicts loneliness and depression among university under-graduates in Rivers State.

Recommendations

Overall, this study demonstrates increase understanding of loneliness and depression on social media addiction among undergraduates in rivers state.

School authorities should endeavor to regulate the level of utilization of social networking sites as well as encourage positive use of social networking sites by students

Government school authorities and parents should endeavor to health behaviours that reduces depression and loneliness among the students; and

Students should rather engage in social healthy relationship than become engrossed in the use of social networking sites which retards their academic progress.

There should be adequate orientation on social media utilization and addiction among university undergraduates not only

in Rivers state but in the entire country by the school counsellors. This will further encourage regular use of social media among undergraduates.

The parents, councilors and managements of the universities should make sure that there is regular touch of guidance and counseling services being put in place for the undergraduates to guide against excessive use of social media to avoid addiction among their wards.

Counselling Implications

Since students, with high level of depression and loneliness are more at risk of social media addiction, designing and implementing counseling programs to promote mental health is recommended for them.

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