

SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION: A STUDY OF USAGE PATTERNS AND MENTAL HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

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Abstract

Social media addition has become a growing Concern in recent years with millions of people worldwide spending excessive amount of time on social media platforms. This study investigates the usage patterns and mental health implications of social media addiction such as increase feelings of anxiety, depression and loneliness. This study anchored on uses and gratification theory of mass media. The study adopts a Survey research design and the instrument of data Collection is questionnaire. Findings show that social media addiction is a growing concern, with significant number of people experiencing addiction. The findings also shows that excessive social media use associated with negative mental health outcomes, such as depression, anxiety and loneliness. From the findings, the study highlights the need for intervention strategies to prevent and treat social media addiction as well as to promote healthy social media use habits. Social media addiction, can have negative effects on daily life, such as decreased productivity, decreased face to face social interactions and decreased physical activity.

Keywords: social media addiction, usage patterns, mental health implications, depression, anxiety, loneliness.

INTRODUCTION

Social media which refers to Facebook, Whatsapp, Tiktok, Instagram, Snapchat to mention but few is a Cankanworm which has eaten deep into the lives of our youths. Youths spend reasonable amount of time posting, chatting and being connected with the happenings in the world on social media. The point is, people who spend a lot of time on Social media tends to be addicted and Cut off from physical interactions with friends and families, personal daily activities and miss out recreational activities.

Studies have shown that the advent of social media has significantly altered the way individuals Communicate, share information and interact, particularly among youths (Manju shrestha and Subash Adhikari 2024). Habitual use of social media platforms presents both opportunities and challenges especially concerning mental health. Inasmuch as social media

helps us to connect with people far and near, it can also lead to feeling of loneliness, anxiety, depression and fear of missing out.

Social media addiction is characterized by excessive use, difficulty in controlling usage, and reliance on these platforms to cope with emotions or stress. This behavior has been linked to patterns such as disrupted sleep, reduced productivity, and a decline in face-to-face interactions. Additionally, exposure to created content often fosters unrealistic comparisons, mood swings, and feelings of inadequacy, which contribute to mental health issues like anxiety, depression, and loneliness.

This study explores the usage patterns of social media and examines its mental health implications, aiming to provide insight into the extent of addiction and its effects. By understanding these dynamics, we can promote healthier usage habits and raise awareness of the need for a balanced relationship with social media in the digital age.

Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the type of social media platforms used.
2. To analyze the frequency and duration of social media use that can contribute to addiction.
3. To find out the effect of social media addiction and mental health implications on youths.
4. To investigate the relationship between social media addiction and symptoms of depression, anxiety, loneliness and other mental health concerns.

Research Questions

1. What is the type of social media platforms used?
2. What is the effect of Social media addiction and mental health implications on youths?
3. What is the frequency and duration of Social media use that contribute to addiction?
4. What is the relationship between social media addiction and symptoms of depression, anxiety, Loneliness and other mental health concerns?

Literature Review

Sadia Khan, Saeed Ullah, Muhammad Mansoon Abbas, Muhammad Akhar, Muhammad Faisal Kaleem, Rashid Ali (2024), investigate the effect of social media usage patterns on the academic performance and psychological well-being of undergraduate students. The research employed a causal-comparative research design, also known as ex post facto research, with the objective of revealing causal relationships between variables. Employing a simple random sampling technique, 455 students were randomly selected as a sample. Respondents filled out a standardized questionnaire in order to assess their social media patterns. To assess the pupils' psychological well-being, a psychological well-being questionnaire was utilized. Regression analysis and the Pearson correlation coefficient were used to analyze the data. The findings of the study indicate a strong negative relationship between psychological well-being, academic performance, and social media usage patterns. The findings also indicate that social media usage patterns significantly impact students' academic performance and psychological well-being. These findings make a substantial contribution to the current body of knowledge and have implications for educational institutions.

Furthermore, Onyeizu, A. O., Nancy, N. O., Samuel, O., Binta, O. D., & Michelle, N. (2022). Investigated the influence of social media on the mental health of Afe Babalola University undergraduates. The survey design with a sample of 382 was chosen from the population of 8,500 students. The study adopted the purposive sampling technique as respondents were chosen based on their usage of social media. It was discovered that increased use of social media leads to deeper social life suffering in the sense that addicted users interact more and value social media friends more than real-life interactions with family and friends. The study also revealed a moderate correlation between the increase in social media addiction and the increase in the mental health of users. Thus, social media significantly influences the mental health of undergraduates in the university. The study concluded that social media addiction has a moderate impact on youth mental health and thus recommends that more awareness be raised about the negative effects of social media in order for people to self-regulate their social media use and limit the extent of comparison with the ostentatious lifestyle portrayed on social media.

Manju Shrestha and Subash Adhikari (2024). toured the same path with other authors by exploring the impact of social media usage on the mental health of college students, focusing on usage patterns and psychological effects. A descriptive research design was employed, with a sample size of 121 respondents selected through stratified random sampling. Data was gathered using a closed-ended questionnaire featuring a 5-point Likert scale. The findings reveal that social media consumption varies significantly among students, with a majority experiencing mood changes and potential addiction. Furthermore, the analysis highlights the influence of social media on daily activities, sleep patterns, and overall mental well-being. The study provides valuable insights into the relationship between social media usage and mental health, offering a foundation for future research on mitigating negative psychological impacts among students.

Theoretical Framework

This paper adopted the Uses and Gratification theory to further explain Social Media Addiction: A study of Usage Patterns and Mental Health Implications. Dennis McQuail (2010) defined a theory as a set of an idea of varying status and origin, which seeks to explain or interpret some phenomenon.

Uses and Gratification Theory

McQuail (2010) states that the uses and gratifications approach is quite suitable for new media studies, especially in terms of comparison and definition, and that studies in this direction are following an increasing trend. Therefore, these studies result in the addition of new gratifications to explain how individuals use social media.

Propounded by Katz et al. (1974), the Uses and Gratification theory is a sociological theory that describes the reason behind an individual's selection and use of media to satisfy specific needs. The theory of uses and gratification sees the use of communication tools as a process of need satisfaction and tension and accepts the audience as individuals who are active, rational, resistant to influence, and making choices according to their wishes (Erzurum, 2022, p. 112). In the context of the research,

Social Media Addiction: A study of Usage Patterns and Mental Health Implications, youth use social media to gratify their social desires and wants without taking into cognizance of the implications that may follow.

Methodology

This study made use of survey research design. University of Nigeria Nsukka students constitute the population of this study and has a population of about 36, 000 students. The figures were affirmed by the Academic Planning Unit, University of Nigeria Nsukka

A population of 35, 129 is indeed a large number to study within the time frame of this research. Given this, a presentation of the population in small groups becomes necessary. The study adopted the multistage sampling technique. The sample size is 380 and was generated using the Australian calculator. For this study, questionnaire was used for instrument for data collection.. Frequency tables and percentages were used to analyze the questionnaire responses.

Data analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: Respondents response to the question: What social media platforms do you use?

S/N	Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Facebook	200	52.63
2	WhatsApp	300	78.95
3	Instagram	250	39.47
4	Tiktok	100	26.32
	Total	380	200.00

Table 1: Shows that majority of the respondents 78.95% use WhatsApp as one of the social media platforms to interact with one another on the online space. Followed by those who use Facebook which constitutes 52.63% of the respondents. Then Instagram which is used by the 39.47% of the respondents and tiktok which is used by 26.32% of the respondents.

Table 2: Respondents response to the question: Do you feel anxious or uneasy when you are unable to access your Social media accounts?

S/N	Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Yes	151	39.74
2	No	119	31.32
3	Sometimes	110	28.95
—	Total	380	100.00

Table 2: Shows that 39.74% of respondents feel anxious or uneasy when they are unable to access their social media accounts, showing a significant emotional impact and potential addiction. Also 31.32% do not feel anxious when they are unable to access their social media accounts. Suggesting resilience to dependency. Lastly 28.95% feels anxious sometimes when they are unable to access their social media accounts.

Table 3: Respondents response to the question: Do you spend more time on social media than you intended to?

S/N	Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Yes	175	46.05
2	No	90	23.68
3	Sometimes	115	30.26
—	Total	380	100.00

Table 3: Shows that 46.05% of the respondents admit to spending more time on social media than intended, which highlights a prevalent issue of self regulation challenge in social media use.

30.26% sometimes experience this, indicating occasional lack of control but less consistent usage patterns. While 23.68% do not face this issue, showing they are better at managing their social media habits

Table 4: Respondents response to the question: Have you experienced any of the following mental health symptoms in the past month?

S/N	Mental health symptoms	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Feeling sad or depressed	140	36.84
2	Feeling anxious or worried	160	42.11
3	Feeling lonely or isolated	110	28.95
4	Difficulty sleeping	90	23.68
—	Total	380	100

Table 4: Shows that feeling anxious or worried is the most reported symptom with 42.11%, indicating that a significant number of respondents experience anxiety, potentially linked to social media addiction. Secondly, feeling sad or depressed is the second most reported symptom with 36.84%, highlighting the emotional toll of excessive or unhealthy social media use. Lastly, feeling lonely or isolated and difficulty sleeping reveals additional mental and physical health impacts with 28.95% and 23.68% respectively.

Table 5: Respondents' response to the questions: Do you think social media use contributed to any of the mental health symptoms experienced?

S/N	Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Yes	191	50.26
2	No	97	25.53
3	Unsure	92	24.21
—	Total	380	100.00

Table 5: Shows that 50.26% of the respondents believe social media contributed to their mental health symptoms, showing that the majority perceive a strong connection between social media use and emotional challenges. 25.53% of the respondents do not attribute their mental health symptoms to social media, suggesting that some find alternative causes to their mental health symptoms other than social media. 24.21% are unsure, highlighting that some respondents may not yet fully understand the impact of social media on their mental health.

Table 6: Respondents' response to the question: How many hours do you spend on social media daily?

S/N	Daily usage	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Less than 1 hour	85	22.37
2	1-2 hours	100	26.32
3	2-3 hours	95	25.00
4	More than 3 hours	100	26.32
—	Total	380	100.00

Table 6: Shows that 26.32% of the respondents spend more than 3 hours daily on social media, indicating a high risk group of social media addiction and its mental health consequences. Another 25.00% spend 2-3 hours daily, which suggests a moderate level of engagement but still significant time allocation. 26.32% of the respondents spend 1-2 hours daily, reflecting a more balanced usage pattern. 22.37% of the respondents spend less than an hour on social media daily, representing the group least likely to face the risks of overuse.

Table 7: Respondents response to the question: What time of the day do you usually use social media?

S/N	Time of Social Media use	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Morning	80	21.05
2	Afternoon/Evening	150	39.47
3	Through out the day	150	39.47
—	Total	380	100.00

Table 7: Shows that 39.47 of the respondents use social media throughout the day, which is a potential sign of addictive behavior, as frequent checking or prolonged usage can disrupt daily routines and lead to mental health issues like stress or reduced productivity.

Another 39.47% of the respondents use social media in the afternoon or evening, which may reflect patterns of unwinding or habitual scrolling after work or school.

Then 21.05% use social media in the morning possibly as part of their morning routine or to start their day.

Table 8: Respondents' response to the question: 9. Social media use interferes with my normal day at work, School or recreational activities?

S/N	Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Yes	161	42.37
2	No	99	26.05
3	Sometimes	120	31.58
—	Total	380	100.00

Table 8: Shows that 42.37% of the respondents reported that social media interferes with their normal daily activities, indicating a significant group that may be at risk of social media addiction and associated challenges like stress and poor time management.

31.58% of the respondents experience interference sometimes, suggesting periodic struggles with balancing social media and daily responsibilities.

26.05% reported no interference, indicating they have better control over their social media habits.

Table 9: Respondents' response to the question: Social media affects my ability to sleep?

S/N	Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Yes	123	32.37
2	No	115	30.26
3	Sometimes	142	37.37
–	Total	380	100.00

Table 9: Shows that 32.37% of the respondents believe social media negatively affects their sleep, indicating a significant group experiencing sleep disruption, which is often linked to late night scrolling or overuse. 37.37% of the respondents sometimes face sleep issues due to social media, reflecting a group at risk of occasional disruption that could develop into consistent problem if not managed. 30.26% of the respondents don't feel their sleep is affected by social media. Suggesting they may practice healthier usage habits, such as limiting screen time before bed.

Table 10: Respondents' response to the question: 11. Socializing face to face is happening less since I joined social media?

S/N	Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Yes	150	39.47%
2	No	120	31.58%
3	Sometimes	110	28.95%
–	Total	380	100.00

Table 10: Shows that 39.47% of the respondents believe social media has reduced their face to face socialization, indicating a strong link between social media usage and decreased in person interactions, which may result in loneliness or weakened social skill. Also 28.95% of the respondents feel this happens sometimes, reflecting a group that occasionally struggles to balance online and offline interactions.

31.58% of the respondents do not feel their personal interactions have decreased, showing they are able to maintain traditional social connection despite social media use.

Table 11: Respondents' response to the question: Could you Consider yourself addicted to social media?

S/N	Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Yes	135	35.53
2	No	140	36.84
3	Sometimes	105	27.63
–	Total	380	100.00

Table 11: Shows that 35.53% of the respondents perceive themselves as addicted to social media, reflecting a substantial group at risk of negative mental health implications like anxiety, stress or diminished productivity. 27.63% of the respondents admit they sometimes feel addicted, indicating occasional overuse but not consistently. This group could be on the borderline and may require intervention to prevent full addiction. Lastly, 36.84% of the respondents do not consider themselves addicted, showing that a significant portion of respondents believes they have control over their social media usage

Table 12: Respondents' response to the question: I use social media to escape from negative emotions and stress.

S/N	Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Yes	135	38.26
2	No	140	34.21
3	Sometimes	105	27.63
—	Total	380	100.00

Table 12: Shows that, 38.16% of respondents use social media as an escape from negative emotions or stress, which indicates a significant group at risk of developing dependency on social media as an emotional crutch. Also 34.21% report doing so sometimes, suggesting a group that might rely on social media occasionally but not habitually. Lastly, 27.63% do not use social media for this purpose, indicating a healthier approach to managing stress and emotions.

Conclusion

Social media addiction has emerged as a significant concern in today's digital age, impacting usage patterns and mental health in profound ways. The findings of this study reveal that excessive engagement with social media can lead to various mental health challenges, including anxiety, stress, loneliness, and diminished self-esteem. Many individuals use social media as an escape from negative emotions, compare themselves to others, and experience mood changes based on the content they consume, further highlighting the emotional dependency that characterizes addiction.

Social media offers benefits like connectivity and entertainment, the negative implications of overuse cannot be ignored. Key issues such as disrupted sleep patterns, interference with daily activities, and reduced face-to-face socializing point to a growing need for healthier digital habits. Addressing these challenges requires raising awareness about the risks of addiction, promoting balanced usage, and encouraging the adoption of coping strategies that do not rely solely on social media.

This study underscores the importance of fostering mindfulness, self-regulation, and digital literacy to mitigate the adverse effects of social media addiction. By striking a balance between online and offline interactions, individuals can better protect their mental health and maintain a healthier relationship with technology.

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