

# Social Media Addiction among Selected Nigerian Adolescents' University Undergraduates

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## Abstract

*This study investigated the level of addiction to social media among some selected Nigerian adolescents' university undergraduates. Descriptive Survey method was used in this study. The participants of the study were drawn from four Universities in Nigeria which include two private and two public universities. The two public universities are: University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Kwara State, University of Lagos, Lagos state while the private universities are: Lead City University, Ibadan, Oyo State and Bowen University Iwo, Osun State. From each of the universities, a total of fifty adolescents' undergraduate were purposively selected. The selection criteria used in the study is that every participant must be a regular internet user and must have a social media account. A total of 200 adolescents' undergraduate participated in the study. Data were analyzed with simple percentages and t-test. Result obtained from the study revealed meeting people and chatting as the most frequent activities of adolescents' undergraduates on social media while Whatsapp, Facebook and Instagram were social media mostly used by adolescents' undergraduates. Moreover, many undergraduates access social media every passing hour and every two to six hours. Also, adolescents spent one to six hours on the social media network site at each log in. The result of the study showed moderate level of social media addiction (6%) particularly among adolescent males in Nigerian universities. The study therefore suggests that government and policy makers should put in place measures and policies that could check problematic social media use. Developmental and counselling psychologists should design intervention that could be used for managing social media addiction among adolescents.*

**Key words:** Social media addiction, Adolescent, Gender, University undergraduate

## Introduction

In the contemporary world, social media network has become an important and growing part of the lives of the vast majority of the global population and most especially in the younger generation. Social media sites are forms of electronic communication through which users share information, personal messages, express self, gather ideas and information, and other contents such as videos, music online. Thus, social media platforms are used for entertainment, communication, information sharing, building online relationships with relatives, friends, and colleagues without boundaries of distance and time constraints. Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, Snap Chat, YouTube and so on exists in the social media space. However, despite the significance, the social media network aided by technology-induced anonymity, unlimited access, convenience, low cost, visual simulation and autonomy seem to be at best easily overused and at worst, addicted to (Greenfield, 1999).

Social network addiction is one of the emerging issues in the Nigerian cyberspace. An observation of what is happening with the use of smart phones among adolescents, youths and Nigerian university students is an indication that addictive use of social media is on alarming increase. From time to time, prominent cases of addictive use of smart phone for social networking have been observed on different university campuses. For instance, Adesokan (2013) observed that some Nigerian university students are connected to the internet as long as they are awake. Most undergraduates start the day by checking their Facebook account and as well make use of other social

network sites for exchanging messages, downloading music and video, updating their profiles and sharing pictures all through the day.

Consequently, Ogannah (2007) noted that many of the university students regularly come in late to early morning classes due to late-night log-ins and most times when lectures are going on, students are found playing games online, checking mails and chatting with friends online. On the other hand, Adeniyi (2014) reported a case of 17 years old boy who was on his Smartphone all through the day and woke up the next day with complain of fatigue, eyestrain and backache. Moreover, Karaiskos, Tzavellas, Balta and Pappargopoulos (2010) reported a case of a 21 years old female who used Facebook at least 5 hours on daily basis which later resulted to the loss of her job.

There are an estimated 4.20 billion social media users around the world, equivalent to 53.6 percent of the world's total population (Afcan and Ozbek, 2019). 70 % of adolescents use social media at least once a day (Cheak, Goh and Chin, 2012) and there are 175 million young people aged 6–18 who are active users in China (Wang, Wang, Wu, Xie, Wang and Zhao, 2018). The popularity of the social media made it irresistible for even non-users and those who have no idea what it is to begin to be attracted to it, as friends will introduce it to them. This is due to the fact that it costs nothing to register. Additionally, Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe (2007) reported a strong relationship between college students' Facebook usage and their bridging social capital. Social capital is a construct that describes potential cumulated resources and benefits embedded in relationships with other people.



It is worthy to note that Social media presents users with a broad spectrum of activities, ranging from maintenance of real life relationships through chats and calls, sharing one's own or others' creative content and opinions, partaking in communities, playing games and passing time looking through the activities of other users. (Ebrahimipour, Rajabali, Yazdanfar, Azarbad, Nodeh and Siamian, 2016), yet it poses threat on the psychological well-being of adolescents. These negative outcomes include procrastination, depression, maladaptive outcomes, fear of missing out, low-self-esteem, irrational procrastination and poor academic performance (Tsitsika, Tzavela, Janikian, Ólafsson, Iordache and Schoenmakers, 2014 and Wang, Wang, Wu, Xie, Wang and Zhao, 2018).

It is against this backdrop that a study was carried out on social media addiction among adolescents' undergraduates in relation to gender. This study would contribute immensely to existing knowledge and guide for further studies on social media network among Nigerian adolescents. Moreover, the outcome of this study would provide valid evidence that should benefit developmental and counselling psychologists in designing effective intervention that could help to reduce mental health issues emanating from problematic social media use among adolescents. Furthermore, finding of the study may also inform national policy on measures to put in place for effective and responsible use of social media in order to mitigate associated risks of social media use among Nigerian adolescents.

Social networking sites (SNS) addiction has become a social problem among adolescents and youth worldwide. Internet addiction leads to social network addiction and has been regarded as a psychological disorder around the world (Karaiskos, Tzavellas, Balta and Paparigopoulos (2010). Consequently, Adolescents' social network addiction could be influenced by age, gender, marital status, educational qualification, socio-economic status and course of study (Adeagbo, 2011). Additionally, social network addiction is associated with some variables which includes; self-esteem, sensation-seeking, emotional intelligence (Ojo, 2016) parental support and gender (Lin and Tsai, 2002; Ko, Yen, Chen, Chen and Yen, 2005). In this study, social network addiction in relation to gender would be examined. Cherlin (1999) construed gender as the social and cultural characteristics that distinguish girls and boys in the society. Also, Colman (2003) suggest that gender is non-technically synonym for sex.

A study was conducted by Kircaburun (2016) on the effect of gender and personality differences on Twitter addiction among Turkish undergraduates. Participants of the study are 365 undergraduates; female (233) and male (132) at the State University in Western region of Black Sea. The result of the study showed that male students were found to be significantly more addicted to Twitter than females. In another research done by Bhuvanewari (2019) on social media addiction among high school students in

India using 231 high school students. Participants include; 102 males and 129 females with age range between 12 and 16 years. The finding of the study is that male and female students do not have significant difference in their social media addiction. Moreover, Afcan and Ozbek (2019) carried out a study among 596 high schools students in Turkey on social media addiction. However, 304 females and 292 males participated in the study. The result obtained from the study revealed that male students are more addicted to social media than female students.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main aim of this study is to investigate social media addiction among adolescents' undergraduates. In order to achieve this, the following research questions were addressed and null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the social media network sites used by Nigerian Adolescents' undergraduates?
2. What are the activities of Nigerian Adolescents' undergraduates on the social media network?
3. How frequent do Nigerian Adolescents' undergraduates access the social media network?
4. What is the duration of time spent on the social media network site at each log in by Nigerian Adolescents' undergraduates?
5. What is the level of social media addiction of Nigerian Adolescents' undergraduates?

### **Research Hypothesis**

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant difference between the social media addiction level of male and female adolescents' undergraduates.

### **Methodology**

Descriptive Survey method was used in this study. The participants of the study were drawn from four Universities in Nigeria. The selected universities include two private and two public universities. The two public universities are: University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Kwara State, University of Lagos, Lagos state while the private universities are: Lead City University, Ibadan, Oyo State and Bowen University Iwo, Osun State. From each of the universities, a total of fifty adolescents' undergraduate were purposively selected. The selection criteria used in the study is that every participant must be a regular internet user and must have a social media account. A total of 200 adolescents' undergraduate participated in the study. The researchers obtained permission from the Universities management. Thereafter, the purpose of the study was explained to the students and the questionnaire was administered by the researchers and two trained research assistants.



**Measures**

An instrument titled “Social Media Addiction Scale for Adolescents (SMASA)” was developed by the researchers. It consists of two sections; the first section entails the demographic information of the participants while the Section two is the *Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale* developed by Andreassen, Torsheim, Brunborg, and Pallesen (2012). This scale was adopted for use in the study. The scale has six items and is being graded on a five-Likert scale (1=’Never’-5=’Very often’). Typical Item found on the scale include; “I spend a lot of time thinking of social media or planning what to do there”; “I becomes restless or anxious when unable to access social media”. Scoring ranges from 6–30, with 19 or above indicating problematic use of social media. For the purpose of the study, the scale was re- validated and yielded a Cronbach alpha of 0.67. This is an indication that the instrument is internally consistent and reliable.

**Methods of Data Analysis**

The data obtained were analyzed using simple frequency count, percentage and the T-test statistics was used to analyze the hypothesis. The research hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used in computing scores for the level of social media addiction. The five-likert scale was scored. For each, answer: (1) very rarely, (2) rarely, (3) sometimes, (4) often, or (5) very often. The scores were categorized into three. Participants' scores that is 19 above is regarded as “High addiction”, scores below 12 is “Low addiction” while scores 13-18 is regarded as “Moderate Addiction”.

**Result**

Research Question 1: What are the social media network sites used by Nigerian Adolescents' undergraduates?

**Table 1:** Distribution of social media network sites used by Nigerian Adolescents' undergraduates

Social network sites	Frequency	Percent (%)
Twitter	4	2.0
TikTok	9	4.5
Instagram	17	8.5
Facebook	27	13.5
WhatsApp	143	71.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 1 shows that 4(2.0%) of the respondents use twitter, 9(4.5%) use TikTok, 17(8.5%) use Instagram, 27(13.5%) of the respondents use Facebook while more than half 143(71.5%) of the respondents use WhatsApp. This implies that majority of the respondents frequently use WhatsApp.

**Research 2:** What are the activities of Nigerian Adolescents' undergraduates on the social media network?

**Table 2:** Distribution of the activities of Nigerian Adolescents' undergraduates on the social media network

Activities on social media network	Frequency	Percent (%)
Dating	1	0.5
Messaging	1	0.5
Uploading Pictures	19	9.5
Chatting	67	33.5
Meeting People	112	56.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 2 indicates that 1(0.5%) of the respondents use social media for dating, 1(0.5%) use social media for messaging, 19(9.5%) of the respondents use social media for uploading pictures, 67(33.5) of the respondent use social media for chatting while more than half 112(56.0%) of the respondents use social media for meeting people. This means that

majority of the respondents use social media for meeting people.

**Research Question 3:** How frequent does Nigerian Adolescents' undergraduates access the social media network?

**Table 3:** Distribution of Frequency of access to social media network of Nigerian Adolescents' undergraduates

Frequency of access to social media network	Frequency	Percent (%)
Within the hour	22	11.0
2 hours interval	96	48.0
5 hours interval	64	32.0
8 hours interval	14	7.0
12 hours interval	4	2.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 3 reveals that 22(11.0%) of the respondents access the social media within the hour, 96(48%) of the respondents access the social media at 2 hours interval, 64 (32%) of the respondent access the social media at 5 hours interval, 14(7%) of the respondents access the social media at 8 hours interval while 4(2%) of the respondent access the social media

at 12 hours interval. This is a clear indication that majority of the respondents do access social media at 2 hours interval.

**Research Question 4:** What is the duration of time spent on the social media at each log in by Nigerian Adolescents' undergraduates?

**Table 4:** Distribution of duration of time spent on the social media network site at each log in by Nigerian Adolescents' undergraduates

Time spent on social media	Frequency	Percent (%)
Less than one hour	36	18.0
1 - 2 hours	141	70.5
3 - 4 hours	12	6.0
5- 6 hours	9	4.5
6 hours and above	2	1.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 4 indicates that 36 (18.0%) of respondents spent less than one hour at each log in to social media network site, 141(70.5%) of respondents spent 1-2 hours at each log in to social media network site, 12(6%) of respondents 3-4 hours at each log in to social media network site , 9(4.5%) of respondents spent 5-6 hours at each log in to social media network site while 2(1%) of

respondents spent 6 hours and above at each log in to social media network site. This implies that majority of the respondents spent 1-2 hours at each log in to social media network site.

**Research Question 5:** What is the level of social media addiction of Nigerian Adolescents' undergraduates

**Table 5:** Level of social media addiction of Nigerian Adolescents' undergraduates

Level of Social Media Addiction	Frequency	Percent
Low	144	72.0
Moderate	44	22.0
High	12	6.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 5 indicates that 144 (72.0%) of adolescents' undergraduates can be categorized as having low social media addiction, 44 (22.0%) are moderately addicted to social media while only 12 (6.0%) have high social media addiction .The result shows that only 6% of

the sampled adolescents' university undergraduates can be regarded as having high social media addiction. This is a clear indication of moderate prevalence of social media addiction among Nigerian adolescents' undergraduates.



**Table 6:** T-test of difference in the male and female social media addiction level

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	SD	df.	t-value	P
Social media addiction level	Male	119	15.27	6.582	198	12.96	0.00 (p<0.5) Significant
	Female	81	12.07	6.370			
	Total	200					

Table 6 indicates a significant difference in the level of social media addiction among male and female adolescents' undergraduates (t=12.96, N=200, p<0.5). The result rejected the null hypothesis and accept alternative which states there is significant difference between male and female adolescents' undergraduate social media addiction.

**Discussion of Findings**

From the finding of this study, adolescents' Nigerian University undergraduates are actively involved in social media use. They frequently use Whatsapp, Facebook and Instagram. Their activities on social media include: Meeting people, Chatting and uploading pictures. This finding corroborates the submission of Ebrahimpour, Rajabali, Yazdanfar, Azarbad, Nodeh and Siamian, (2016) as regards the functionality of social media network. The activities of adolescents on social media identified in this study are in line with the assertion of Ellison Steinfield and Lampe (2007) that adolescents use social media for bridging social capital.

Moreover, the result of this study indicates that 70.5% of the adolescent spent 1-2 hours, 6% spent 3-4 hours, 4.5% spent 5-6 hours at each log in to social media network site while further analysis reveals that 72.0% of adolescents' undergraduates can be categorized as having low social media addiction, 22.0% are moderately addicted to social media while 6.0% have high social media addiction. This is an eye opener that moderate prevalence of social media addiction exists among Nigerian adolescents' undergraduates. This finding substantiates the earlier discovery of Ogannah (2007); Adesokan (2013); Adeniyi (2014) and Karaiskos, Tzavellas, Balta and Paparigopoulos (2010)

Furthermore, this study discovered a statistically significant difference in the level of social media addiction between male and female adolescents' university students. This is consistent with the finding of Kircaburun (2016) that male students are significantly more addicted to Twitter than females. Moreover, this finding corroborates the discovery of Afcan and Ozbek (2019) that male students are more addicted to social media than female students. However, the result of this study contradicts the finding of Bhuvanawari (2019) that male and female students do not have significant difference in their social media addiction. Possible reason for this finding may be because female participated more in his study than male. However, male students use social media for other activities such as gaming, gambling, betting and so on than their female counterparts, this might have led

to problematic use of social media among adolescent boys.

**Conclusion**

The present study investigated social media addiction among adolescents' undergraduates in relation to gender. The study revealed that adolescents are active users of social media and a moderate social media addiction was found among them. Moreover, adolescent males were discovered to have high social media addiction compared to their female counterparts. Based on this, due cognizance should be given to minimizing the level of social media addiction among adolescents and most especially boys.

**Recommendation**

1. Parents should put in more effort to minimize time spent on social media. This could be done through proper monitoring and caution in buying sophisticated technology to access internet for adolescents and especially for males.
2. Government and Policy makers should put in place measures and policies that could check problematic social media use.
3. Developmental and counselling psychologists should design intervention that could be used for managing social media addiction and promoting mental health. Gender should be put into consideration when developing such psychotherapies.
4. University counsellors should organize seminars for students on healthy usage of social media and counselling programmes geared towards mental health of adolescents.

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