

## MENTAL HEALTH AS A PREDICTOR OF SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN ENUGU STATE, NIGERIA

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### Abstract

The study investigated mental health as a predictor of social media addiction among undergraduate students in Enugu State, Nigeria. One research question and one corresponding null hypothesis guided the study. A correlational survey research design was adopted. The population of the study consists of 1784 undergraduate students in Enugu State. A sample of 270 was used for the study. The sample was identified from school counsellors log book for the Universities visited. Data were collected using two sets of questionnaire: "Social Media Addiction Questionnaire (SMAQ)" and "Mental Health Questionnaire (MHQ)". The instruments were face-validated by three experts in the Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka the internal consistency reliability coefficient of SMDQ and MHQ were determined using cronbach alpha and reliability estimate values of 0.69 and 0.72 were obtained for SMDQ and MHQ respectively. The data collected were analyzed using coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) for research question, while linear regression was used in testing the hypothesis at  $p < 0.05$  level of significance. The result of the study indicated that mental health positively predicts social media addiction of undergraduates. The result also revealed that there is significant predictive power between mental health and social media addiction of undergraduates. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that school guidance should organize workshops on mental health and social media addiction to help improve the life of these undergraduates.

**Keywords:** Mental health and social media addiction

### Introduction

The increasing prevalence of social media addiction among undergraduates is a processing concern, particularly when considered through the lens of immeasurable negative impacts in their educational endeavours and personality. Undergraduates are especially susceptible to the effects of social media, which take a toll on their school attendance and concentration in their studies as well as their adjustment to the society they live in. Undergraduates according to Ezra (2020) are the potential future leaders and are attached to social media as against their studies. Also, Kaya (2021) noted that university students now enjoy social media, networking more than their studies. This ugly situation requires urgent attention.

Globally, the phenomenon of social media addiction has been rising exponentially, especially among undergraduates. Recent statistics indicate that 4.74 billion people were social media users as of 2024 with undergraduates accounting for 24% of large percentage of this figure. In the United States, a national survey indicated that 45 percent of teens were online almost constantly, a marked increase from 24 percent in 2023 (Anderso & Jiang, 2024). Excessive social media use has been linked to deteriorating mental health and increased vulnerability to addictive behaviours, such as drug addiction, particularly when coupled with low self-esteem (Pantic, 2022). In Enugu State, the area of this study, there are many reports of social media addiction among undergraduate students leading to decreased academic performance, increased risk of mental disorder, depression, among others. These

students are faced with a high level of peer influence, risk-taking behaviours and experimentation with drugs as undergraduates via social media sources. These push towards social media of undergraduates may be linked to poor learning environment and lack of parental support. The above situation leads to social media addiction. The undergraduates look for a way out to make themselves comfortable. In support of the above claim, Kohu (2021) found out that undergraduate students prefer networking business to their academics. Ezeodo (2021) noted that university students in Enugu State are depressed due to excessive use of social media and this has been linked to deteriorating mental health, and increasing vulnerability to addictive behaviours. Social media addiction among undergraduates in the study area is therefore on the increase and as such requires urgent attention.

Social media is good for communication but when abused, it becomes addiction and dangerous. Social media refers to digital platforms and applications that enable users to create, share and interact with content in real time (Keles et al, 2020). These platforms allow individuals, groups, and organizations to communicate and exchange information through texts, images, audios, videos, and other multimedia formats (Stenhang & Solem, 2024). The authors further noted that social media can be accessed through the use of computers, smartphones and other internet-enabled devices. Social media refers to a variety of technologies that facilitate the sharing of ideas and information among their users (Dollarhide, 2024).

Social media is good and necessary for communication, but when it is excessively used, it becomes addiction. Social media addiction is defined as excessive usage of social media platforms, which typically has a negative impact on real life interactions, academic performance and mental health (Stenhang & Solem, 2024). Social media addiction refers to a compulsive and uncontrollable engagement with social media platforms leading to a neglect of real life responsibilities and relationships (Keles, et al, 2020). In addition, Kaya, Turk, Batmaz, and Griffiths (2023) see social media addiction as a behavioural addiction characterized by an overwhelming compulsion to engage with social media platform often leading to significant disruptions in daily life and relationships. According to Ajibade, et al (2022), social media addiction is defined as a compulsive dependence on social media platforms which interferes with adolescents' social academic and emotional functioning.

Social media addiction perhaps has effect on undergraduates' personality traits and their learning. Verna (2021) showed that social media addiction is what indicates the moods and feelings of undergraduate students. Social media addiction can equally lead to guilt, decreased confidence and eventually resulting in school dropout (Burns, 2022). The negative consequences of social media addiction on university students are caused by many factors which include poor learning environment, lack of parental support and mental health (Burns, 2022). Mental health is prone to be the factor that leads to social media addiction because inability to cope with academic and other activities usually leads to dependent on social media (Magnard, 2025).

Mental health is a factor that may predict social media addiction of university students. In other words, mental health is a variable that may be associated with social media addiction of undergraduate students. According to World Health Organization (WHO, 2022), mental health was defined as a state of wellbeing in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities when coping with the normal stresses of life. Previous studies have noted that mental health has both direct and indirect effects on daily life, school completion, education attainment among undergraduate students (Magnard, 2025; Ramsdal, 2023). Mental health associated factors such as drug addiction, depression, health related issues, and mental illness have been attributed to social media addiction (Borges, 2024). Mental health refers to our

emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing (King & Bernstin, 2019). The authors further noted that mental health affects how we think, feel and act. It also helps to determine how we handle stress, relate to others and make healthy choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescents through adulthood. Mental health is a state of wellbeing in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively and fruitfully and is able to contribute to his or her community (Ramsdal, 2023). This implies that it has to do with stability of a person. Social media addiction among undergraduate students in Enugu State, Nigeria, is assuming an alarming rate. Teachers, students, parents among others have often wondered and worried that the social media addiction of undergraduate students would lead to unproductively. In spite of efforts made to reduce this ugly situation, it is still on the increase. It is based on this background that the researcher sought to investigate mental health as a predictor of social media addiction among undergraduates in Enugu State, Nigeria.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study is mental health as a predictor of social media addiction in Enugu State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. determine the predictive power of mental health on social media addiction of undergraduates.

### **Research Question**

1. What is the predictive power of mental health on social media addiction of undergraduates?

### **Hypothesis**

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant predictive power between mental health and social media addiction of undergraduates.

### **Method**

The research design used for the study was a correlational survey design. The population of the study consisted of 1784 undergraduate 2<sup>nd</sup> year students in education of Enugu State. A sample of 270 was used for the study. The sample was identified from school counsellors' log book for the Universities visited. The instruments for data collection are two sets of questionnaires titled "Mental Health Questionnaire (MHQ)" and "Social Media Addiction Questionnaire (SMAQ)". The instruments were developed by the researcher with much insight from literature reviewed and was validated by three experts in Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The internal consistency reliability coefficient of MHQ and SMAQ were determined using Cronbah Alpha Statistics and reliability estimate values of 0.68 and 0.71 were obtained for MAQ and SMAQ respectively. The data collected was analyzed using coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) for research question while linear regression was used for testing the hypothesis at  $p < 0.05$  level of significance.

**Research Question One:** What is the predictive power of mental health on social media addiction of undergraduates?

**Table 1: Regression analysis on the predictive power between mental health on social media addiction of undergraduates**

| Variable                                 | R    | $R^2$ |
|------------------------------------------|------|-------|
| Mental health and social media addiction | 0.67 | 0.82  |

( $R^2$ ) = coefficient of determination

The result on Table 1 shows that the coefficient between mental health and social media addiction was 0.67. This implies that there exists a high positive prediction between

mental health and social media addiction of undergraduates. Table 1 also revealed that the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) associated with the correlation coefficient of 0.67 was 0.82. This coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) indicates that 67% of variation in social media addiction of undergraduates is attributed to mental health. Thus, mental health predicts undergraduates' social media addiction positively.

### Discussion

The result shows that the correlation coefficient between mental health and social media addiction of undergraduates was high. This means that there exists a high positive prediction between mental health and social media addiction of undergraduates. By implication, it means that the coefficient of determination with a high percentage variation in the social media addiction of undergraduates can be attributed to mental health. It also shows that increase in mental health predicts high social media addiction of undergraduates. Further analysis of the prediction between mental health and social media addiction of undergraduates revealed that at the associated probability for the calculated value of F, is less than the level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there is a significant prediction between mental health and social media addiction of undergraduates.

The findings of this study are in agreement with the study of Maynard (2025); Ramsdal (2023) which posits that mental health has both direct and indirect effects on daily life of undergraduates. Summarily, mental health according to Borges (2024) associated factors such as drug addiction, depression, health related issues, and mental illness have been attributed to social media addiction. Equally, King and Bernstein (2019) noted that mental health affects how we think, feel and act. It also determines how we handle stress, relate to others and make healthy choices. This usually leads to failure and dissatisfaction among undergraduates and thinking of fatigue and loss of appetite which harms the extent to which it is necessary to provide counselling to undergraduates.

### Conclusion

The research emanates as a result of the need to seek solution to reduce social media addiction among university students. The study revealed among others that high positive prediction exists between mental health on social media addiction of undergraduates. Therefore, applying mental health by university students should be encouraged because it predicts to a high extent social media addiction. This will help undergraduates reduce addiction to social media.

### Implication of the Findings

The result of the study revealed among others that mental health predicts social media addiction of undergraduates. By implication, undergraduates should be encouraged to apply mental health to reduce addiction to social media.

### Recommendations

School guidance counsellors should organize workshops on mental health on social media addiction at a regular interval to encourage undergraduates to apply mental health, since it predicts high social media addiction.

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