

The Dynamics of Social Media Addiction: Investigating Socio-Cultural and Psychological Predictors in Southwestern Nigerian Universities

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Abstract: Social media addiction has become a significant concern globally, with increasing implications for mental health and academic performance, particularly among university students. This study investigates the socio-cultural and psychological predictors of social media addiction among undergraduates in Southwestern Nigeria. Using a multi-stage sampling technique, the study will encompass federal, state, and private universities across the six states in Southwestern Nigeria. The predictors examined include peer influence, social norms, communication styles, collective identity, impulsivity, and gratification seeking. The research will utilise established instruments such as the Peer Pressure Inventory, Social Norms Scale, Communication Styles Inventory, Collective Identity Scale, Barratt Impulsiveness Scale, and Internet Gratification Scale. Ethical approval will be obtained from the University of Ibadan Institutional Ethical Committee. By exploring these factors, the study aims to provide insights into the underlying causes of social media addiction and inform interventions to mitigate its impact on students' well-being and academic success. The findings are expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of how socio-cultural and psychological factors interact to influence social media use among Nigerian undergraduates.

Keywords: Social media addiction, Peer influence, Social norms, Communication styles

Introduction

Addiction, in its broadest sense, is a deeply ingrained and troubling behaviour that manifests in numerous ways, leading to a wide array of negative outcomes. These outcomes extend far beyond the individual, impacting not only physical health but also social relationships and psychological well-being, often resulting in long-term consequences that can be difficult to overcome (Omopo and Odedokun, 2024). Among the various forms of addiction, social media addiction stands out as a particularly prevalent issue among young people, especially students in higher education institutions, where it poses significant challenges to their academic performance, mental well-being, and social interactions (Iyanda, 2016). Social media has become an essential component of global communication, with approximately 4.9 billion users worldwide as of 2023, reflecting its vast reach and influence (Smith and Anderson, 2023). Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Tiktok, and X (formerly Twitter) have transformed how people interact, exchange information, and construct identities. Despite the benefits, the pervasive nature of social media has also led to concerns regarding its addictive potential, particularly among younger populations. Social media addiction, characterised by compulsive use that disrupts daily life, has been linked to adverse mental health outcomes such as anxiety, depression, and reduced academic performance (Kuss and Griffiths, 2017). As a result, understanding the socio-cultural and psychological factors contributing to social media addiction has become a critical area of research, especially in the context of emerging economies and diverse cultural settings.

In Africa, the rapid adoption of social media has been driven by a growing young population and increased access to mobile technologies. As of 2023, Africa had over 280 million active social media users, with a significant proportion of these users being young adults (Mugambi, 2023). The widespread use of social media across the continent has facilitated new forms of communication and social interaction, but it has also introduced challenges, including the risk of addiction. African youths, who are frequently early adopters of digital technologies, may be particularly vulnerable to the addictive properties of social media due to a combination of socio-cultural pressures and limited digital literacy (Nche, 2020). Despite the rising use of social media in Africa, there is a lack of research examining the socio-cultural and psychological determinants of social media addiction, particularly within the African context. This study seeks to address this gap by exploring these factors among Nigerian undergraduates.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, where social media has rapidly integrated into daily life, the influence of these platforms is profound, particularly among young people (Okeke, 2022). Social media in this region is often used for a range of activities, including political engagement, education, and social networking. However, the increasing reliance on social media has raised concerns about its impact on mental health, particularly regarding addiction. Nigeria, with its large and youthful population, is at the forefront of this digital transformation. Undergraduates in Nigeria, who represent a critical demographic group, are spending considerable time on social media, which has led to concerns about the potential for addiction (Akanbi, 2021). Understanding the factors that contribute to social media addiction in this context is crucial, particularly as these young adults navigate the complexities of modern digital life within a traditional socio-cultural framework.

Peer influence is a significant predictor of social media addiction among undergraduates. In Nigeria, peer groups often exert considerable influence on behaviour, including how social media is used. Undergraduates are frequently introduced to social media through their peers, who encourage regular use as a way of maintaining social bonds and group identity (Chukwuere and Chukwuere, 2017). This peer pressure to conform to group norms, such as staying connected and active on social media, can lead to excessive use. The constant need to align with peer expectations, such as being online at specific times or sharing content, can create a cycle of dependency on social media platforms, thereby increasing the risk of addiction (Obi-Ani *et al.*, 2020). Studies have demonstrated that the more individuals engage with social media due to peer influence, the greater their susceptibility to developing addictive behaviours (Balogun and Olatunde, 2020).

Social norms, the unwritten rules governing acceptable behaviour within a community, significantly impact social media use among undergraduates. In Nigerian society, where communal values and social connections are deeply ingrained, social media has become an extension of these traditional networks (Okafor and Malizu, 2021). The expectation to participate actively in online communities and adhere to the norms of these digital spaces often drives individuals to spend excessive amounts of time on social media. For instance, the prevailing norm of sharing personal milestones and achievements on platforms like Instagram, Tiktok, and X (formerly Twitter) can lead to compulsive usage, as individuals seek validation and approval from their online peers (Umeh and Usoro, 2019). This pressure to conform to social norms within the digital sphere can exacerbate the risk of addiction, as students feel compelled to engage continuously with social media to maintain their social standing.

Communication styles, which reflect how individuals express themselves and interact with others, also play a critical role in predicting social media addiction among undergraduates. In Nigeria, where interpersonal communication and social interactions are culturally valued, social media provides an alternative platform for expression that aligns with these cultural practices (Eze, 2021). The shift from traditional face-to-face interactions to digital communication allows for more frequent and immediate connections, which can be particularly appealing to undergraduates. This accessibility and convenience can lead to overreliance on social media as the primary means of communication, increasing the likelihood of addiction (Nche, 2020). Undergraduates may find it easier to express themselves online, where they can communicate more freely and anonymously, leading to heightened use and potential dependency on these platforms (Adesina *et al.*, 2021).

Collective identity, or the sense of belonging to a larger group, is another socio-cultural factor that influences social media addiction among undergraduates. In Nigerian society, collective identity is often emphasised, with social media serving as a key platform for expressing and reinforcing group affiliations (Onyeaka and Ogba, 2020). Through social media, undergraduates can connect with peers who share similar cultural backgrounds, interests, or beliefs, fostering a sense of community. However, the desire to maintain this collective identity can lead to compulsive social media use, as individuals feel the need to stay engaged with their online communities constantly (Akanbi, 2021). The fear of missing out (FOMO) on group activities or discussions can further drive addiction, as students strive to remain active participants in their digital networks (Okeke, 2022).

Impulsivity, characterised by the tendency to act without forethought, is a well-documented psychological predictor of addictive behaviours, including social media addiction. Undergraduates who exhibit higher levels of impulsivity may find it difficult to resist the instant gratification offered by social media platforms, leading to excessive use (Adewale and Akanbi, 2021). Social media provides immediate rewards, such as likes, comments, and shares, which can be particularly appealing to individuals with impulsive tendencies. This constant reinforcement can create a feedback loop, where impulsive behaviours are continuously rewarded, reinforcing the cycle of addiction (Balogun and Olatunde, 2020). In the Nigerian context, where social media is widely accessible, impulsivity can significantly contribute to the development of addictive patterns, particularly among young adults who may struggle with self-regulation.

Gratification seeking, or the pursuit of pleasure and satisfaction, is another psychological factor that plays a crucial role in social media addiction. Social media platforms are designed to provide users with a sense of gratification through interactions such as likes, comments, and shares, which can become addictive over time (Adewale and Akanbi, 2021). Undergraduates, who are often in the process of forming their identities and seeking social approval, may be particularly susceptible to the gratification offered by social media. The continuous pursuit of validation and positive reinforcement can lead to compulsive use, as individuals strive to satisfy their need for social recognition (Chukwuere and Chukwuere, 2017). In the Nigerian setting, where social media is a significant part of social life, gratification-seeking behaviours can easily translate into addiction, as students become increasingly reliant on these platforms for emotional fulfilment (Umeh and Usoro, 2019).

Statement of the Problem

Social media addiction has emerged as a significant mental health concern globally, with evidence pointing to its negative impact on academic performance, emotional well-being, and social relationships among young people (Andreassen *et al.*, 2016). In Nigeria, where social media penetration continues to rise rapidly, there is growing concern about the potential for widespread addiction, particularly among university students. Despite the increasing usage of social media, there is limited empirical research exploring

the specific socio-cultural and psychological factors that contribute to social media addiction within the Nigerian context. This gap in the literature is particularly concerning given Nigeria's unique cultural dynamics and the critical role of undergraduates in shaping the future socio-economic landscape of the country. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the socio-cultural and psychological predictors of social media addiction among undergraduates in Southwest Nigeria.

Research Objectives

The primary aim of this study is to explore the socio-cultural and psychological factors that predict social media addiction among undergraduates in Southwest Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study are:

- i. To examine the influence of peer groups on social media addiction among undergraduates.
- ii. To assess the impact of social norms on the use of social media among students.
- iii. To evaluate the relationship between communication styles and social media addiction.
- iv. To determine the role of collective identity in contributing to social media addiction.
- v. To analyse the influence of impulsivity and gratification-seeking behaviours on social media addiction among undergraduates.

Research Questions

To achieve this aim, the study will address the following research questions:

1. To what extent does peer influence predict social media addiction among undergraduates in Southwest Nigeria?
2. How do social norms influence the development of social media addiction among undergraduates in this region?
3. What role does communication style play in the addiction to social media among undergraduates?
4. How does collective identity contribute to the likelihood of social media addiction among Nigerian undergraduates?
5. In what ways do impulsivity and gratification-seeking behaviours predict social media addiction among this demographic?

Significance of the Study

This study is significant for several reasons. First, it contributes to the growing body of literature on social media addiction by providing insights into the socio-cultural and psychological factors that contribute to this phenomenon in the Nigerian context. The findings will offer a deeper understanding of how cultural dynamics and individual psychological traits interact to influence social media addiction among undergraduates, a key demographic in Nigeria.

Second, the study has practical implications for mental health practitioners, educators, and policymakers. By identifying the key predictors of social media addiction, the research can inform the development of targeted interventions aimed at reducing the risk of addiction among university students. This is particularly important in a context where social media use is rapidly increasing and where the potential negative impacts on academic performance and mental health are of growing concern.

Finally, the study's focus on undergraduates in Southwest Nigeria a region with a high concentration of tertiary institutions makes its findings relevant for educational institutions and student support services in the region. The results can guide the creation of awareness programmes, digital literacy initiatives, and mental health resources that address the specific challenges faced by students in this region.

Literature Review

The literatures around the overview of social media addiction and its connection with other variables of the study are below under the following section:

Global Overview of Social Media Addiction

Social media addiction is a behavioural addiction characterised by excessive concern with social media, an irresistible urge to use social media, and devoting so much time and effort to social media that it impairs other important life areas (Andreassen and Pallesen, 2014). Research on social media addiction has expanded rapidly, particularly as the number of social media users worldwide has surged. According to Statista (2023), over 4.9 billion people globally are active on social media, with platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok becoming integral to daily life. The compulsive use of these platforms can lead to addiction, which is associated with negative outcomes such as sleep disturbances, reduced academic performance, and mental health issues like anxiety and depression (Kuss and Griffiths, 2017; Twenge and Campbell, 2019).

Studies from different parts of the world have examined the prevalence and impact of social media addiction. For instance, a study by Kircaburun *et al.* (2020) found that social media addiction is significantly associated with higher levels of depression and anxiety

among young adults in the United States. Similarly, a study in South Korea by Bae *et al.* (2021) highlighted the role of social media addiction in exacerbating loneliness and social anxiety among adolescents. These studies underscore the global relevance of understanding the factors contributing to social media addiction, especially in diverse cultural contexts.

Social Media Addiction in Africa

In Africa, the rapid penetration of mobile technology and the internet has led to an increase in social media usage, particularly among the youth (Mugambi, 2023). Social media platforms have become crucial for communication, entertainment, and information-sharing across the continent. However, the growing reliance on social media has raised concerns about the potential for addiction. Research on social media addiction in Africa is still emerging, but existing studies suggest that the problem is becoming increasingly prevalent.

A study by Olatunde *et al.* (2022) in Kenya found that 25% of university students exhibited signs of social media addiction, with higher rates among those who used social media for more than four hours daily. Similarly, a study in South Africa by Mpiganjira (2018) reported that social media addiction was associated with poor academic performance among university students. These findings indicate that social media addiction is a significant issue in Africa, mirroring trends observed in other parts of the world.

Social Media Addiction in Nigeria

Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, has witnessed a significant increase in social media usage, particularly among young people. As of 2023, Nigeria had over 33 million active social media users, with platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram being the most popular (Statista, 2023). This widespread use has led to concerns about the potential for addiction, especially among university students who are the most active demographic on social media (Nche, 2020).

Studies on social media addiction in Nigeria are limited but growing. Akanbi (2021) found that 30% of Nigerian university students exhibited moderate to severe symptoms of social media addiction, with significant associations with poor academic performance and mental health issues. Another study by Umeh and Uoro (2019) highlighted that social media addiction among Nigerian youths was linked to high levels of gratification-seeking behaviour and impulsivity. These studies suggest that social media addiction is a pressing issue among Nigerian undergraduates, warranting further investigation into its socio-cultural and psychological predictors.

Peer Influence and Social Media Addiction

Peer influence is one of the most significant predictors of social media addiction, particularly among young people. Peer groups often shape behaviour by establishing norms and expectations regarding social media use. In Nigeria, where peer relationships are highly valued, the influence of peers on social media behaviour is particularly strong (Obi-Ani *et al.*, 2020). Peers can encourage frequent social media use by reinforcing the idea that staying connected online is essential for maintaining social ties and social status.

Research has shown that peer influence significantly contributes to the development of social media addiction. For example, a study by Chukwuere and Chukwuere (2017) found that Nigerian university students were more likely to develop addictive behaviours on social media when their peers also engaged in excessive use. This aligns with findings from Yang *et al.* (2022), who reported that peer influence was a strong predictor of social media addiction among university students in China and Nigeria, highlighting the cross-cultural relevance of this factor.

Social Norms and Social Media Addiction

Social norms, or the shared expectations about how individuals should behave in a society, play a crucial role in shaping social media use and potential addiction. In many cultures, including Nigeria, social norms dictate that individuals should remain active on social media to maintain social connections and stay informed (Okafor and Malizu, 2021). This societal pressure can lead to excessive use of social media platforms, contributing to addiction.

A study by Przybylski *et al.* (2021) highlighted the role of social norms in predicting social media addiction among young adults in the United States, showing that those who perceived a strong social expectation to be online were more likely to develop addictive behaviours. In the Nigerian context, Okeke (2022) found that social norms around sharing personal achievements and staying connected online were significant predictors of social media addiction among university students. These findings suggest that social norms are a critical factor in understanding the development of social media addiction in Nigeria.

Communication Styles and Social Media Addiction

Communication styles refer to the ways in which individuals express themselves and interact with others. Social media provides a platform for diverse communication styles, often allowing more frequent and less inhibited interactions than face-to-face

communication (Eze, 2021). In Nigeria, where interpersonal communication is a central aspect of culture, social media has become an important tool for maintaining social relationships, especially among university students.

Research indicates that communication styles can influence the likelihood of developing social media addiction. Eze (2021) found that Nigerian students who preferred more expressive and immediate communication were more likely to become addicted to social media, as these platforms facilitated their communication preferences. Similarly, Nche (2020) reported that students who were more comfortable with digital communication than face-to-face interactions were at higher risk of social media addiction. These studies underscore the importance of considering communication styles when examining social media addiction in Nigeria.

Collective Identity and Social Media Addiction

Collective identity, or the sense of belonging to a larger group, is another socio-cultural factor that influences social media addiction. In Nigerian society, where collective identity is often emphasised, social media serves as a key platform for expressing and reinforcing group affiliations (Onyeaka and Ogba, 2020). For university students, maintaining a sense of belonging to peer groups or communities online can be a significant driver of social media use.

Studies have shown that the need to maintain collective identity can contribute to social media addiction. Akanbi (2021) found that Nigerian students who felt a strong sense of belonging to online communities were more likely to exhibit addictive behaviours on social media. This is consistent with findings from Okeke (2022), who reported that students' desire to stay connected with their peer groups online was a significant predictor of social media addiction. These results highlight the role of collective identity in driving social media addiction among Nigerian undergraduates.

Impulsivity and Social Media Addiction

Impulsivity, characterised by the tendency to act without thinking, has been widely recognised as a psychological predictor of addiction, including social media addiction (Billieux *et al.*, 2015). Impulsive individuals may find it difficult to resist the instant gratification provided by social media, such as receiving likes, comments, and messages.

In Nigeria, impulsivity has been linked to social media addiction among university students. Adewale and Akanbi (2021) found that students with higher levels of impulsivity were more likely to develop addictive behaviours on social media, as they were more prone to engage in frequent, unplanned social media use. This aligns with international research, such as a study by Kircaburun *et al.* (2020) that found a significant relationship between impulsivity and social media addiction among young adults in Turkey. These findings suggest that impulsivity is a critical factor in understanding social media addiction in Nigeria.

Gratification Seeking and Social Media Addiction

Gratification seeking, or the pursuit of pleasure and satisfaction, is another psychological factor that plays a crucial role in social media addiction. Social media platforms are designed to provide users with immediate gratification through interactions such as likes, comments, and shares, which can become addictive over time (Griffiths, 2018).

In the Nigerian context, Umeh and Usoro (2019) found that gratification-seeking behaviours were significantly associated with social media addiction among university students. Students who frequently sought social approval and validation through social media interactions were more likely to develop addictive behaviours. This is consistent with findings from international research, such as a study by Turel and Serenko (2012) that highlighted the role of gratification-seeking in social media addiction among young adults in North America. These studies underscore the importance of considering gratification-seeking as a key factor in understanding social media addiction among Nigerian undergraduates.

Methodology

Research Design

This study will employ a descriptive research design to explore the socio-cultural and psychological predictors of social media addiction among undergraduates in Southwest Nigeria. The descriptive design is chosen to provide a detailed account of the factors influencing social media addiction without manipulating the study environment.

Population

The study's target population comprises undergraduates from federal, state, and private universities in the six states of Southwest Nigeria: Oyo, Osun, Ogun, Ondo, Ekiti, and Lagos. This diverse population ensures that the findings reflect the varying contexts and environments of higher education institutions across the region.

Sampling Procedure

To ensure a representative sample and minimise bias, a multi-stage sampling approach will be used:

- **Stage One:** The six states in Southwest Nigeria will be selected through total enumeration sampling, ensuring all states are included.
- **Stage Two:** In each state, one federal, one state, and one private university will be randomly selected using simple random sampling.
- **Stage Three:** Within each selected university, purposive sampling will be used to select faculties that are common across the institutions. This approach ensures homogeneity in the faculties being studied.
- **Stage Four:** Purposive sampling will again be employed to select departments within the chosen faculties. This ensures that the sample is representative of departments that are prevalent across the universities.
- **Stage Five:** A stratified proportionate sampling technique will be used to determine 30% of the students in each selected department. The 30% will then be selected using simple random sampling, ensuring that every student has an equal chance of being chosen.

Instruments of Data Collection

Several standardised instruments will be used to measure the variables of interest:

- **Peer Influence:** The Peer Pressure Inventory (PPI) by Steinberg and Monahan (2007) will assess the extent of peer influence on students' behaviours. It includes 10 items rated on a Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree), with Cronbach's alpha typically ranging from 0.76 to 0.89.
- **Social Norms:** The Social Norms Scale (SNS) by Perkins and Berkowitz (1986) will measure perceived social norms. The scale comprises 14 items, with responses on a Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree). Cronbach's alpha values typically range from 0.70 to 0.85.
- **Communication Styles:** The Communication Styles Inventory (CSI) by Norton (1978) will assess students' communication styles across four dimensions: dominant, dramatic, contentious, and attentive. The 14-item scale uses a Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree), with reliability coefficients ranging from 0.76 to 0.90.
- **Collective Identity:** The Collective Identity Scale by Doosje, Ellemers, and Spears (1995) will measure students' identification with their social groups. The 11-item scale uses a Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree), with Cronbach's alpha typically between 0.70 and 0.85.
- **Impulsivity:** The Barratt Impulsiveness Scale (BIS) by Patton, Stanford, and Barratt (1995) will assess impulsivity. The 15-item scale includes items such as "I plan tasks carefully" (reverse-scored), and uses a Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree), with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.76 to 0.88.
- **Gratification Seeking:** The Internet Gratification Scale (IGS) by LaRose, Lin, and Eastin (2003) will measure gratification-seeking behaviours related to internet use. The scale includes items on social interaction, information seeking, entertainment, and escapism, with responses on a Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree). Reliability coefficients typically range from 0.74 to 0.91.

Data Collection Procedure

Data will be collected using structured questionnaires administered to the selected students in each university. Research assistants will be trained to distribute and collect the questionnaires, ensuring that participants understand the items and provide accurate responses.

Data Analysis

Data will be analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequency distributions, means, and standard deviations. Inferential statistics such as multiple regression analysis will be conducted to determine the predictive strength of each socio-cultural and psychological factor on social media addiction. The data analysis will be performed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software.

Ethical Considerations

In conducting this research on socio-cultural and psychological predictors of social media addiction among undergraduates in Southwest Nigeria, ethical considerations will be meticulously observed. Informed consent will be obtained from all participants, ensuring they are fully aware of the study's purpose, procedures, and their right to withdraw at any time. Participants' confidentiality and anonymity will be protected by removing personal identifiers from the data, securely storing it, and restricting access to the research team. Efforts will be made to minimise harm, including providing options to skip questions or withdraw if needed, and

offering support resources for any distress caused. Data handling will follow strict security protocols, with encrypted electronic data and locked physical copies, and will be retained only as long as necessary before secure destruction. The study will receive ethical approval from the University of Ibadan Institutional Ethical Committee, ensuring compliance with ethical research standards.

Preliminary Findings and Discussion

The following are the preliminary investigations of this study:

Preliminary Findings

Although the study is still in the proposal phase, based on recent literature and theoretical frameworks, several anticipated insights can be outlined:

1. **Peer Influence:** Recent studies highlight the significant role of peer influence in social media behaviours. For instance, research shows that peer pressure can strongly correlate with increased social media use and related addictive behaviours (Ellison *et al.*, 2022). We anticipate a similar pattern among undergraduates, where peer influence might predict higher levels of social media addiction.
2. **Social Norms:** Research indicates that perceived social norms significantly impact behaviour. Studies have demonstrated that students' perceptions of what is considered normal behaviour in their peer groups can influence their own social media habits (Mesch, 2020). We expect that undergraduates' social norms regarding social media use will contribute to their engagement patterns.
3. **Communication Styles:** Communication styles are expected to play a role in social media addiction. Recent research suggests that individuals with specific communication styles, such as those who are more expressive or assertive, may exhibit different social media usage patterns compared to those with less dominant styles (Hargittai *et al.*, 2021). We hypothesise that communication styles will influence addiction levels among students.
4. **Collective Identity:** Collective identity has been linked to social media use in recent studies. A strong sense of belonging to a group or community may affect social media behaviours, as individuals with strong collective identities might engage more with social media platforms to maintain group connections (Hofstede *et al.*, 2021). We expect to see a correlation between collective identity and social media addiction.
5. **Impulsivity:** Impulsivity has been identified as a key predictor of addictive behaviours, including social media addiction. Recent research supports this link, indicating that higher levels of impulsivity are associated with increased social media use and addiction (Sánchez *et al.*, 2023). We anticipate that impulsivity will be positively correlated with social media addiction among undergraduates.
6. **Gratification Seeking:** The motivations behind social media use, such as social interaction, information seeking, and escapism, are expected to vary. Recent studies suggest that these gratification-seeking behaviours can significantly impact the extent of social media addiction (Kim *et al.*, 2022). We expect to find that different types of gratifications sought from social media will correlate with varying levels of addiction.

Discussion

The anticipated findings reflect a complex interplay of socio-cultural and psychological factors influencing social media addiction among undergraduates. Peer influence and social norms are likely to be significant predictors, as recent research underscores their role in shaping social media behaviours (Ellison *et al.*, 2022; Mesch, 2020). Peer pressure, especially in a university setting, can exacerbate social media use, as students may conform to the online behaviours of their social circles. Social norms around social media can create expectations that drive usage patterns, leading to higher addiction rates. Understanding these dynamics can help in designing interventions that address the influence of peers and societal expectations on social media behaviour.

Communication styles are expected to impact social media engagement, with recent studies suggesting that expressive or assertive communicators might display different addiction patterns (Hargittai *et al.*, 2021). Individuals with dominant or dramatic communication styles may use social media as a platform to assert their presence or maintain visibility, potentially leading to increased usage and addiction. Conversely, those with more reserved styles might engage differently, possibly using social media less frequently or in less addictive ways. This variation highlights the need to tailor interventions based on individual communication styles to more effectively address social media addiction.

Collective identity is also anticipated to play a role, with stronger group affiliations potentially leading to higher social media engagement (Hofstede *et al.*, 2021). Students with a strong sense of collective identity might use social media to reinforce their connection with their group, sharing content and engaging in discussions that reflect their collective values. This increased engagement can contribute to higher levels of addiction if it becomes a primary means of maintaining group bonds. Recognising the influence of collective identity can inform strategies that leverage group dynamics to promote healthier social media habits.

Impulsivity remains a key factor, consistent with recent findings linking higher impulsivity to increased social media addiction (Sánchez *et al.*, 2023). Impulsive individuals may be more prone to engaging in excessive social media use as a way to seek immediate gratification or cope with boredom. This tendency towards impulsive behaviour can lead to patterns of use that reinforce addiction. Addressing impulsivity through behavioural interventions or self-regulation strategies could be crucial in mitigating social media addiction among undergraduates.

Lastly, gratification-seeking motivations are likely to drive different patterns of social media use, with varying types of gratifications influencing addiction levels (Kim *et al.*, 2022). Students seeking social interaction, entertainment, or escapism may engage with social media in ways that enhance their addiction risk. For example, those seeking social validation might use social media more frequently to achieve gratification, while those using it for escapism might develop maladaptive usage patterns. Understanding these motivations can help tailor interventions to address specific gratifications sought by different student groups, potentially reducing overall addiction levels.

These preliminary insights will provide a foundation for understanding the predictors of social media addiction and guide the development of targeted interventions for university students. By addressing these factors in a nuanced manner, the study aims to contribute valuable knowledge to the field of digital mental health and inform practical strategies for managing social media use among young adults.

Conclusion

This study aims to explore the socio-cultural and psychological predictors of social media addiction among undergraduates in Southwest Nigeria, focusing on factors such as peer influence, social norms, communication styles, collective identity, impulsivity, and gratification-seeking motivations. The anticipated findings suggest that these predictors will play significant roles in shaping social media behaviours and addiction levels among students. Peer influence and social norms are expected to drive social media use, with students conforming to the behaviours of their peers and societal expectations. Communication styles and collective identity are likely to influence the extent and nature of social media engagement, potentially leading to higher addiction levels in individuals with certain styles or strong group affiliations.

Impulsivity is predicted to be a major factor, with more impulsive individuals exhibiting higher levels of social media addiction. Gratification-seeking motivations are also expected to contribute to varied patterns of social media use, influencing addiction levels based on the types of gratifications sought. Understanding these dynamics will provide a comprehensive view of the predictors of social media addiction and highlight the complex interplay of socio-cultural and psychological factors in this context.

The findings from this research will be instrumental in developing targeted interventions and strategies to manage social media use among university students. By addressing the specific factors that contribute to social media addiction, the study aims to contribute valuable insights to the field of digital mental health and support the development of effective programmes to promote healthier social media habits. Future research should continue to explore these factors in diverse contexts to enhance our understanding of social media addiction and its implications for mental health.

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