

**INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON MENTAL HEALTH AMONG
SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN OREDO LOCAL
GOVERNMENT AREA.**

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**UNIVERSITY OF BENIN
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CERTIFICATION

We, the undersigned, certify that this project work was carried out by Dorcas Ojochide GODWIN with the matriculation number EDU2102409 of the Department of Educational Evaluation and Counselling Psychology, Faculty of Education, University of Benin, Benin City, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Bachelor of Science in Education (B.Sc.Ed) degree in Guidance and Counselling.

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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to God Almighty, whose grace, strength, and divine guidance made the successful completion of this work possible.

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ABSTRACT

The Study Investigate the Influence of Social Media on Mental Health Among Senior Secondary School Students in Oredo Local Government Area. Three research questions were raised to guide this study: What is the level of social media usage among students in Oredo Local Government Area Edo state, Is there a relationship between social media usage and the mental health of students, What is the difference in relationship between social media usage and mental health of students among male and female in Oredo Local Government Area Edo state.

The population comprises Senior Secondary school students (SSS 1-3) within Oredo Local Government Area, Edo State. This includes students from public and private schools. Based on available data and school records, the estimated total number of students in SSS 1-3 across selected public and private secondary schools in Oredo Local Government Area is 800. This figure represents the target population from which the sample for this study will be drawn. This study employed a simple random sampling technique to ensure that every student in the population had an equal chance of being selected. This method was chosen to minimize bias and enhance the representativeness of the sample across Senior Secondary School(SSS 1-3) in Oredo Local Government Area, Edo State. For this study, a total sample size of 200 students was selected from ten secondary schools within Oredo Local Government Area, Edo State.

The findings revealed that, there is a high level of social media usage among students, driven by the search for gratifications such as social interaction and identity formation, the level of mental health among the students is low, characterized by early signs of difficulty such as sleep irritation, lack of energy, and self-isolation there is a significant relationship between social media usage and mental health, indicating that heavy and prolonged time spent on these platforms contributes to increased symptoms of anxiety and depression. The following recommendations are made: Parents should ensure that their children are digitally and emotionally prepared for the impact of social media. They should support their children's well-being by monitoring platform density and encouraging non-screen activities like sports and in-person socializing. Schools should incorporate programs that focus on digital literacy and mental health awareness as part of the secondary education curriculum. This will enhance students' ability to handle "comparison pressure" and improve mental health outcomes. The government should implement policies that ensure all schools have access to mental health counseling services that address digital conditioning and cyberbullying. This will ensure that students are better prepared for the psychological challenges of the digital age.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Humans are naturally social species that depend on the companionship of others to thrive in life. Thus, while being socially linked with others helps alleviate stress, worry, and melancholy, a lack of social connection can pose major threats to one's mental health .Over the past 10 years, the rapid emergence of social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and others has led to some significant changes in how people connect and communicate .Over one billion people are currently active users of Facebook, the largest social networking website, and it is anticipated that this number will grow significantly over time, especially in developing countries. Facebook is used for both personal and professional interaction, and its deployment has had a number of positive effects on connectivity, idea sharing, and online learning. Furthermore, the number of social media users globally in 2019 was 3.484 billion, a 9% increase year on year.

Students increasingly find it difficult to picture their lives without social media. Practitioners need to be able to assess risk, and social media may be a new component to consider. Although there is limited empirical evidence to support the claim, the perception of the link between social media and mental health is heavily

influenced by teenage and professional perspectives. Privacy concerns, cyberbullying, and bad effects on schooling and mental health are all risks associated with this population's usage of social media. However, ethical social media use can expand opportunities for connection and conversation, as well as boost self-esteem, promote health, and gain access to critical medical information. Despite mounting evidence of social media's negative effects on students' mental health, there is still a scarcity of empirical research on how students comprehend social media, particularly as a body of wisdom, or how they might employ wider modern media discourses to express themselves. Students use cell phones and other forms of media in large numbers, resulting in chronic sleep loss, which has a negative influence on cognitive ability, school performance, and socio-emotional functioning.

According to data from several cross-sectional, longitudinal, and empirical research, smartphone and social media use among students relates to an increase in mental distress, self-harming behaviors, and suicidality. Clinicians can work with students and their families to reduce the hazards of social media and smartphone usage by using open, nonjudgmental, and developmentally appropriate tactics, including education and practical problem-solving.

Mental health is represented as a state of well-being in which individuals recognize their potential, successfully navigate daily challenges, perform effectively at work, and make a substantial difference in the lives of others. There is currently debate over the benefits and drawbacks of social media on mental health. Social networking is an important part of safeguarding our mental health. Mental health, health behavior, physical health, and mortality risk are all affected by the quantity and quality of social contacts.

Social media use and mental health may be related, and the displaced behavior theory could assist in clarifying why. The displaced behavior hypothesis is a psychology theory that suggests people have limited self-control and, when confronted with a challenging or stressful situation, may engage in behaviors that bring instant gratification but are not in accordance with their long-term objectives .In addition, when people are unable to deal with stress in a healthy way, they may act out in ways that temporarily make them feel better but ultimately harm their long-term goals and wellness.

In the 1990s, social psychologist Roy Baumeister initially suggested the displaced behavior theory .Baumeister suggested that self-control is a limited resource that can be drained over time and that when self-control resources are low, people are more likely to engage in impulsive or self-destructive

conduct .This can lead to a cycle of bad behaviors and outcomes, as individuals may engage in behaviors that bring short respite but eventually add to their stress and difficulties.

According to the hypothetical terms, those who participate in sedentary behaviors, including social media, engage in fewer opportunities for in-person social interaction, both of which have been demonstrated to be protective against mental illnesses. Social theories, on the other hand, discovered that social media use influences mental health by affecting how people interpret, maintain, and interact with their social network.

Numerous studies on social media's effects have been conducted, and it has been proposed that prolonged use of social media sites like Facebook may be linked to negative manifestations and symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress. A distinct and important time in a person's life is adolescence. Additionally, risk factors such as family issues, bullying, and social isolation are readily available at this period, and it is crucial to preserve social and emotional growth. The growth of digital technology has affected numerous areas of student's lives. Nowadays, students' use of social media is one of their most apparent characteristics. Being socially connected with other people is a typical phenomenon, whether at home, school, or a social gathering, and students are constantly in touch with their

classmates via social media accounts. Students are drawn to social networking sites because they allow them to publish pictures, images, and videos on their platforms. It also allows teens to establish friends, discuss ideas, discover new interests, and try out new kinds of self-expression. Users of these platforms can freely like and comment on posts as well as share them without any restrictions. Students now frequently post insulting remarks on social media platforms. Students frequently engage in trolling for amusement without recognizing the potentially harmful consequences. Trolling on these platforms focuses on body shaming, individual abilities, language, and lifestyle, among other things. The effects that result from trolling might cause anxiety, depressive symptoms, stress, feelings of isolation, and suicidal thoughts. The authors explain the influence of social media on students well-being through a review of existing literature and provide intervention and preventative measures at the individual, family, and community levels.

Social media, which is also referred to as social networking, has become the most widely used method of communication and interaction among individuals of all ages across the globe as a result of ongoing technological progress. A variety of technological platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, Tumblr, and others, facilitate communication and the exchange of content via

social media (SM) (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). According to research on the increasing prevalence of social media usage, almost one-tenth of Americans are active users of social media platforms. Specifically, 68% of the population utilises Facebook, 21% utilises Twitter, 25% utilises Pinterest, and 26% utilises Instagram (Greenwood et al., 2018). According to statistical data, the quantity of time individuals dedicate to social media platforms is considerably elevated. Social media interaction consumes 28% of the average time spent on the internet (Huang, 2018).

The use of social media is accompanied by a number of advantages. The benefits encompass a range of initiatives, such as fostering mental health awareness and destigmatization, providing supplementary access to resources, and facilitating a platform for users to connect with one another about their mental health symptoms (Lattie et al., 2019). Furthermore, social media has the potential to function as a constructive platform for mitigating the obstacles that people from various contexts may encounter when coping with a mental health diagnosis (Andrews et al., 2018). On the contrary, numerous studies in the literature establish a correlation between the utilisation of social media and a range of psychiatric disorders—such as anxiety, depression, and diminished self-esteem (Lin et al., 2016; Pantic, 2014). Social media users may be subjected to

harassment, humiliation, and adverse reactions in response to their content. Furthermore, the comparison of one's life satisfaction and self-image to that of other users may cause distress for these individuals (Belluomini, 2015). Moreover, negative social media behaviours, such as browsing through negative content, can lead to mood swings, depression, and social isolation (Belluomini, 2015).

Given the exponential growth of social media usage in the past decade, it is critical to evaluate the potential psychological repercussions of social media. Concerning the mental health repercussions of social media, mental health professionals have thus far taken minimal action. Furthermore, the knowledge and readiness of mental health clinicians to address the detrimental effects of excessive social media usage on their clients' mental well-being have been the subject of scant investigation.

The substantial increase in mental health symptoms caused by social media's influence on mental health complicates the provision of social services at the micro level. As an increasing number of social media users present with symptoms such as anxiety, melancholy, and low self-esteem, there is a corresponding demand for more service providers. Providers of mental health services must be cognizant of the influence of social media on mental health in order to assist those impacted by this matter more effectively. Additional training

is also required to address the assessment of social media use and its potential mental health consequences. A greater comprehension of the consequences of social media usage will result in treatment for clients that is more efficient and effective.(Panttic, 2014; Lin et al., 2016).

Statement of the Problem

Social media has rapidly become a dominant force in shaping the lives of adolescents, especially Senior Secondary school students. In Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State,Nigeria, students are increasingly immersed in platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook which serve as avenues for communication, entertainment and self-expression. However, alongside these benefits,there is growing concern about the psychological till of exercise and unregulated social media use.

Students in Oredo LGA face unique socio-cultural and educational pressures that may be amplified by their online experiences. Exposure to cyberbullying, unrealistic portrayals of success and beauty,peer comparison and addictive scrolling habits has contributed to mental health challenges such as anxiety,depression,low self-esteem,and social withdrawal. Despite the prevalence of these issues,there is limited empirical research within the local context to

understand how social media influences the mental health of Senior Secondary school students in this area.

Without localized data and insights, educators, parents and policymakers in Oredo Local Government Area may lack the tools to address these emerging concerns effectively. This study aims to investigate the influence of social media on the mental health of Senior Secondary school students in Oredo Local Government Area, providing evidence-based recommendations to support student well-being and guide future interventions.

Research Questions

The study will be guided by the following questions;

1. What is the level of social media usage among students in Oredo Local Government Area Edo state?
2. What is the level of mental health of students in Oredo Local Government Area in Edo State?
3. Is there a relationship between social media usage and the mental health of students?
4. What is the difference in relationship between social media usage and mental health of students among male and female in Oredo Local Government Area Edo state?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between social media usage and the mental health of students.
2. There is no significant difference in relationship between social media usage and the mental health of students among males and females.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to find out:

- the level of social media usage among students in Oredo Local Government Area Edo state
- If there is a relation between social media usage and mental health of students.
- If there is a difference in relationship between social media usage and mental health of students among male and female.

Significance of the Study

The findings of the study will be of benefit to students, parents, teachers and mental health professionals. For students, it will raise awareness about the psychological effects of social media usage, helping students make uninformed decisions about their online behavior and adopt healthier digital habits. For parents, the findings will provide insights into how social media may be affecting their

children's mental health, enabling them to offer better guidance, support and monitoring.

The study will inform teachers, school policies and mental health initiatives, encouraging the integration of digital literacy and emotional wellness programs into the school curriculum. Also, findings can guide school administrators and policymakers in creating supportive environments, such as screen-time limits or mental health awareness campaigns.

For mental health professionals, it will offer localized data that can guide the development of targeted interventions and counselling strategies for adolescents experiencing social media-related stress or anxiety. Mental health professionals can educate students and parents on healthy social media habits, promoting digital well-being.

Scope and Delimitation of the study

The scope of this study boards on social media usage and its effect on students mental health among senior secondary school in Oredo Local Government Area Edo state. The study is delimited to students of SS 1/SS2 in Oredo Local Government Area Edo state, Nigeria.

Definition of Terms

Social Media: Is the forms of electronic communication which facilitate interactive based on certain interests.

Social Networking Sites: A website where people put information about them and can send to others.

Mental health: a person's condition with regard to their psychological and emotional well-being.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter deals with the review of literature considered important to this study. The literature review is discussed under the following sub-headings:

- Theoretical Framework
- Concept of Social Media
- Concept of Mental Health
- Social Media and Mental Health
- Social Media, Mental Health and Sex
- Summary of Reviewed Literature

Theoretical Framework

Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986): Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, introduced in "Social Foundations of Thought and Action: A Social Cognitive Theory" (1986), emphasizes the role of observational learning, role modeling, and behavior acquisition. This theory posits that individuals learn by observing others in their social environment and that learning is a cognitive process involving attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation. Additionally, it suggests that behavior can be shaped and modified through modeling. In the present study, this theory helps analyze how social media interactions serve as

models for behavior, offers insights into the influence of role models on students' social media behavior, and guides the examination of observational learning and its impact on mental health outcomes.

Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974):

The Uses and Gratifications Theory, introduced by Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch in "Utilization of Mass Communication by the Individual" (1974), suggests that individuals actively select media to satisfy specific needs. It posits that media consumption is goal-oriented and fulfills psychological and social needs and that audiences are not passive but actively engage with media for gratification. In the present study, this theory guides the investigation into the motivations behind social media use, offers a framework for understanding the psychological and social needs fulfilled through online interactions, and informs the analysis of how gratifications sought through social media may influence mental health outcomes.

Technological Determinism (McLuhan, 1964): Marshall McLuhan's Technological Determinism, introduced in "Understanding Media:

The Extensions of Man" (1964), proposes that technologies shape and influence societal norms and individual behavior. It suggests that the medium itself has a significant impact on shaping human experiences and that changes in

communication technologies bring about social and cultural transformations. In this study, technological determinism encourages exploration into how the inherent characteristics of social media platforms impact mental health, provides a framework for understanding how the medium itself, beyond user behaviors, may contribute to mental health outcomes and informs the analysis of the broader societal implications of technology on the mental health of Senior Secondary School students.

Concept of Social Media

Social media refers to a broad range of digital communication technologies and online platforms that enable individuals and groups to create, share, exchange, and interact with content within virtual communities and networks. These platforms represent a major shift in the way people communicate, socialize, access information, and participate in public discourse. The word *social* in social media emphasizes the communal and interactive nature of these platforms, as they are specifically designed to encourage participation, connection, and collaboration among users rather than one-way communication. Unlike earlier forms of media, social media thrives on user involvement, allowing people not only to consume information but also to actively contribute to and shape online conversations (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Carr & Hayes, 2015). Recent studies further highlight

that social media has become a defining feature of digital society, reshaping how individuals form relationships and share meaning in everyday life (Valkenburg et al., 2022).

In contemporary society, social media has become an essential extension of human networks, offering opportunities for interaction beyond physical boundaries. Users access social media through web-based applications or customized mobile apps, making communication immediate and constant regardless of location. These platforms support various forms of engagement such as posting text updates, sharing photos and videos, commenting, reacting, live streaming, and participating in group discussions. As a result, social media serves multiple purposes including documenting personal memories, enhancing learning and information sharing, strengthening friendships, promoting businesses, and facilitating community-building. Its widespread adoption has transformed it into a central feature of modern life, influencing cultural trends, political engagement, education, and even economic activities (Appel et al., 2020; boyd & Ellison, 2019).

Social media platforms can be categorized according to their primary functions and the type of interaction they support. Social networking sites, such as Facebook and LinkedIn, are primarily structured around building personal and professional connections. These platforms allow users to create profiles, establish

networks, and maintain relationships over time. In contrast, microblogging platforms like Twitter (now X), Threads, and Mastodon emphasize short-form content and rapid information dissemination, making them popular for breaking news, trending discussions, and real-time public commentary. Additionally, media-sharing networks such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Snapchat focus largely on visual communication, enabling users to share images, videos, creative content, and live broadcasts that attract wide audiences. Furthermore, discussion and community-based forums like Reddit, Quora, and Discord facilitate deeper conversations, question-and-answer exchanges, and niche community engagement, often organized around shared interests or specialized topics (Kietzmann et al., 2011; van Dijck, 2013).

Social media differs significantly from traditional or old media outlets such as newspapers, television, and radio broadcasting. While traditional media operates largely through a monologic model where information flows from a single source to a passive audience, social media operates through a dialogic transmission system that encourages interaction, feedback, and participation. Social media platforms provide faster reach, higher frequency of updates, greater usability, and longer-lasting digital permanence. Content can be modified, reshared, and amplified through networks, making social media more dynamic and

participatory than conventional media formats. This interactive nature has contributed to its rapid growth and influence across all sectors of society (Carr & Hayes, 2015; Meier & Schäfer, 2018).

Despite its many benefits, social media has also attracted criticism due to its potential negative consequences, especially for children and teenagers. Concerns include exposure to inappropriate or harmful content, risks of online exploitation, cyberbullying, sleep disruption, attention difficulties, feelings of social exclusion, and the development of various mental health challenges such as anxiety and depression. These issues highlight the complex role of social media as both a tool for connection and a source of psychological and social risks, particularly among vulnerable populations. Scholars have consistently linked excessive social media use with rising mental health concerns among adolescents and young adults (Keles et al., 2020; Twenge, 2019).

Globally, the use of social media continues to expand at an unprecedented rate. According to Statista, approximately 3.96 billion people were using social media worldwide in 2022, representing a significant increase from 3.6 billion users in 2020. This rapid growth demonstrates the increasing dependence of individuals, organizations, and societies on social media platforms for communication and engagement. Statista further reports that as of January 2024,

Facebook remains the most widely used social networking service with over 3 billion active users, followed by platforms such as YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, and TikTok. These statistics reflect the dominant role of social media in shaping modern communication patterns and global connectivity (Statista, 2024).

Most Popular Social Networking Services (January 2024 – Statista)

S/N	Network	Number of Users (Million)
1	Facebook	3,049
2	YouTube	2,491
3	WhatsApp	2,000
4	Instagram	2,000
5	TikTok	1,526
6	WeChat	1,336
7	Facebook Messenger	979
8	Telegram	800
9	Snapchat	750

Concept of Mental Health

Mental health is a central pillar of human well-being, encompassing an individual’s emotional, psychological, and social functioning. It shapes the ways in which people perceive and interpret the world, make decisions, form relationships, and cope with everyday challenges. Beyond the mere absence of

mental disorders, mental health is a dynamic state that allows individuals to realize their potential, manage stress effectively, work productively, and contribute meaningfully to their communities (World Health Organization [WHO], n.d.). This broad conception underscores that mental health is not simply about avoiding illness; rather, it is about achieving optimal functioning, resilience, and adaptive capacity in the face of life's complexities. An individual's mental health status directly influences their quality of life, interpersonal interactions, academic or occupational performance, and overall life satisfaction, making it a critical determinant of both personal and societal development (Hammen, 2018; Keyes, 2007).

Several dimensions define mental health, including subjective well-being, perceived self-efficacy, autonomy, competence, resilience, emotional regulation, and the ability to self-actualize intellectually and emotionally. Subjective well-being reflects an individual's evaluation of their own happiness, life satisfaction, and sense of purpose, while self-efficacy denotes the confidence in one's ability to execute tasks and achieve goals despite challenges (Bandura, 1997). Autonomy and competence represent the capacity to make independent decisions and perform effectively in various life domains, respectively. Resilience, a core aspect of mental health, refers to the ability to recover from setbacks, adapt to change, and

maintain functionality under stress (Bonanno, 2004). Holistic perspectives from positive psychology further argue that mental health encompasses the capacity to enjoy life, sustain balanced engagement across personal and social roles, and cultivate meaningful connections with others (Seligman, 2011). In this view, mental health is a multidimensional construct that extends beyond pathology to include flourishing, personal growth, and the pursuit of fulfilling life experiences.

Good mental health enables individuals to navigate the inevitable challenges of life with adaptive coping strategies, maintain constructive social relationships, and participate effectively in educational, occupational, and community activities. It also promotes cognitive flexibility, emotional stability, and interpersonal competence, all of which are essential for achieving personal goals and contributing to societal progress (Keyes & Lopez, 2002). Conversely, compromised mental health can manifest in both subtle and severe ways, ranging from persistent sleep disturbances, low energy, poor concentration, irritability, and social withdrawal, to more serious issues such as chronic anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation (World Health Organization [WHO], n.d.; Kessler et al., 2005). Recognizing early warning signs of mental health difficulties is therefore vital for timely interventions, prevention strategies, and support mechanisms aimed at fostering recovery and enhancing overall well-being.

In addition to individual implications, mental health has profound social and economic consequences. Communities with high levels of mental well-being experience greater social cohesion, reduced interpersonal conflicts, and enhanced productivity, whereas poor mental health is often associated with increased absenteeism, reduced workforce efficiency, strained family dynamics, and elevated healthcare costs (Patel et al., 2018). Moreover, mental health is influenced by a complex interplay of biological, psychological, and social factors. Genetic predispositions, neurochemical imbalances, and brain development intersect with environmental stressors, socioeconomic conditions, and cultural expectations to shape an individual's psychological state (Insel & Wang, 2010). Understanding mental health, therefore, requires a multidisciplinary approach that integrates insights from psychology, psychiatry, sociology, neuroscience, and public health, highlighting the necessity for comprehensive frameworks that address prevention, early intervention, treatment, and social support systems.

Finally, the promotion of mental health is a critical global priority. Interventions that enhance coping skills, emotional literacy, stress management, and resilience, along with policies that reduce stigma, increase access to mental health services, and foster supportive social environments, are essential for sustaining well-being across populations (Friedli, 2009; WHO, n.d.). Within the

university context, for instance, mental health influences students' academic engagement, social integration, and overall life satisfaction, making it an important focus for educational institutions seeking to promote holistic development. By emphasizing both individual and societal dimensions, mental health can be understood not just as a personal attribute but as a cornerstone for thriving communities, productive societies, and sustainable human development.

Social Media and Mental Health

In recent years, increasing scholarly attention has focused on the relationship between social media use and mental health outcomes, particularly among adolescents and young adults. Studies consistently indicate that heavy use of social media platforms, prolonged exposure, and excessive engagement may contribute to an increased risk of mental health challenges, including anxiety, depression, and reduced psychological well-being (Andreassen et al., 2016; Kross et al., 2013; Woods & Scott, 2016). These negative outcomes may partly be explained by the broader effects of screen time, which has been linked with heightened emotional distress, reduced sleep quality, and increased severity of depressive symptoms (Stiglic & Viner, 2019). As social media becomes increasingly embedded in daily life, concerns have grown about its role in shaping young people's emotional development and mental stability.

One of the key mechanisms through which social media may influence mental health is social comparison. Recent studies report that platforms often expose users to idealized portrayals of others' lives, creating pressure to measure oneself against unrealistic standards. This comparison culture may result in feelings of inadequacy, low self-esteem, and emotional dissatisfaction, especially when individuals perceive themselves as falling short (Rideout & Fox, 2018). For example, research among young adults found that negative comparisons on Facebook contributed significantly to rumination, which in turn increased vulnerability to depressive symptoms (Feinstein et al., 2013). However, it is important to note that many studies in this area are cross-sectional, meaning they capture patterns at a single point in time, making it difficult to draw firm causal conclusions about whether social media directly causes mental health decline (Orben & Przybylski, 2019).

The quantity and intensity of social media use also appear to play an important role in mental health outcomes. A survey of young adults aged 19 to 32 revealed that more frequent visits to social media platforms were significantly correlated with greater depressive symptoms (Lin et al., 2016). Similarly, spending more time on social media has been associated with increased symptoms of anxiety, suggesting that constant connectivity may contribute to psychological

strain and heightened emotional vulnerability (Vannucci, Flannery & Ohannessian, 2017). These findings suggest that both frequency and duration of engagement may shape how social media affects mental well-being.

In addition to time spent online, the number of platforms accessed may further increase mental health risks. Primack et al. (2017) found that young adults who used a larger variety of social media platforms were more likely to experience high levels of depression and anxiety. Specifically, respondents using between seven and eleven platforms had three times greater odds of depressive symptoms and over three times greater odds of anxiety symptoms compared with those using two or fewer platforms (Primack et al., 2017). This may be because managing multiple online identities and maintaining constant engagement across platforms can increase cognitive overload and emotional exhaustion.

Several researchers have argued that social media may negatively affect mental health because it can replace face-to-face interactions, which are essential for emotional bonding and social support. Twenge and Campbell (2018) suggest that reduced in-person contact among young people may contribute to increased loneliness and declining psychological well-being. Supporting this view, Bucci et al. (2019) found that heavy reliance on online interaction may intensify feelings of isolation, while Woods and Scott (2016) also noted broader negative consequences

for health and emotional functioning. A nationally representative survey of U.S. adolescents reported that increased time spent on social media and smartphones was linked to significantly higher depressive symptoms and an increased risk of suicidal behaviors compared to adolescents who engaged more in non-screen activities such as sports or direct social interaction (Twenge et al., 2018).

For individuals living with more severe mental illnesses, the influence of social media on psychiatric symptoms has received comparatively less scholarly attention, yet emerging evidence suggests potentially harmful effects. Mittal, Tessner, and Walker (2017) found that participation in online chat rooms may worsen symptoms among young people with psychotic disorders. Similarly, Berry et al. (2018) reported that among patients with psychosis, social media use appeared to predict low mood. These findings highlight that the relationship between social media and mental health may be more complex and pronounced among clinical populations, emphasizing the need for further research into protective factors that could reduce risks (Orben & Przybylski, 2019).

Another significant mental health concern associated with social media is the rise of cyberbullying. Popular platforms can create environments where individuals are exposed to hostile comments, harassment, or aggressive online behaviors. Cyberbullying refers to repeated online aggression directed at specific

individuals, often by peers, and is particularly harmful due to its persistent and public nature (Hamm et al., 2015). Evidence strongly suggests that cyberbullying has serious psychological consequences, including increased depressive symptoms, heightened anxiety, emotional trauma, and reduced self-worth. A review of 36 studies among children and young people confirmed that cyberbullying consistently produces harmful impacts on mental health outcomes (Hamm et al., 2015).

Overall, the growing body of research demonstrates a clear relationship between social media use and mental health, particularly among young people. While social media provides opportunities for communication and connection, excessive or harmful engagement may increase vulnerability to psychological distress. These findings underscore the importance of promoting balanced use, identifying risk factors, and developing interventions that can protect mental well-being in the digital age.

Social Media Mental health and Sex

The relationship between social media use, mental health, and sexual behavior has drawn considerable scholarly attention in recent years, particularly as digital platforms have become central to the daily lives of adolescents and young adults. Research suggests that young people who experience sexual health

concerns are often heavy users of social media, where exposure to sexualized content and online interactions may influence attitudes toward intimacy and sexual expectations. Studies indicate that frequent engagement with social media is significantly associated with sexual risk-taking behaviors and increased peer influence on adolescent sexual decision-making (Aprianto et al., 2022; Osei Gyane et al., 2023).

One key factor in this relationship is the widespread exposure to explicit or highly sexualized content online. Social media environments often portray idealized and exaggerated representations of sexuality, intimacy, and body image. Such portrayals can shape unrealistic expectations about relationships and sexual performance, particularly among young users. Scholars argue that repeated exposure to these unrealistic standards may increase social comparison, pressure to conform, and dissatisfaction with real-life intimacy (Valkenburg et al., 2022). This conditioning may reduce sensitivity to natural emotional connection, making real relationships appear less appealing compared to digitally exaggerated experiences.

This phenomenon has also been linked to psychogenic sexual dysfunction, such as psychogenic erectile dysfunction (ED), where sexual performance difficulties are driven more by anxiety, unrealistic expectations, and psychological

conditioning than by physical causes. Excessive consumption of explicit online content may influence arousal patterns, relationship satisfaction, and emotional well-being, thereby contributing to sexual health concerns among young adults (Woods & Scott, 2016; Twenge & Campbell, 2018).

Social media's impact on mental health and sexuality is multifaceted, as excessive use has been consistently linked to anxiety, depressive symptoms, loneliness, and reduced self-esteem, all of which may interfere with healthy sexual functioning and relationship satisfaction (Andreassen et al., 2016; Kross et al., 2013). In particular, exposure to idealized bodies and sexualized influencers may intensify body dissatisfaction and feelings of inadequacy, increasing emotional distress and unhealthy sexual decision-making (Rideout & Fox, 2018).

In addition, social media facilitates early sexual experimentation through online relationships, sexting, and intimate digital communication. While these behaviors may be consensual, research shows that sexting is sometimes associated with emotional distress, coercion, and poorer mental health outcomes, especially when young people experience pressure or victimization online (Keles et al., 2020). These risks highlight the emotional vulnerability of adolescents navigating sexuality in digital spaces.

However, it is important to recognize that social media may also offer benefits in some contexts. For marginalized groups, including LGBTQ+ youth, online communities can provide social support, sexual health information, and opportunities for identity development that may enhance well-being (Meier & Schäfer, 2018). Thus, the influence of social media on mental health and sexual behavior is complex, involving both potential harms and supportive opportunities depending on patterns of use and social context.

The interconnection between social media use, mental health, and sexual outcomes can be summarized as follows:

Summary Table: Social Media, Mental Health, and Sexual Behavior

Social Media Use	Mental Health Impact	Sexual Behavior Influence
Excessive scrolling	Anxiety, depression	Increased sexual curiosity
Exposure to idealized bodies	Low self-esteem, dissatisfaction	Pressure to conform sexually
Online relationships	Emotional highs and lows	Sexting, early intimacy
Cyberbullying or online coercion	Trauma, withdrawal	Risky coping behaviors

Summary of Reviewed Literature

This study is grounded in the Uses and Gratifications Theory, which explains how individuals actively seek out media platforms to satisfy needs such as entertainment, social interaction, or identity exploration. It also draws on Social Cognitive Theory, which emphasizes that individuals learn behaviors through observation and imitation of models presented in their social environment, including online content. In addition, Technological Determinism highlights how technological innovations such as social media reshape social norms, relationships, and intimate behavior. Together, these theoretical perspectives guide the examination of the interconnected relationship between social media use, mental health outcomes, and sexual behavior among young people.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the processes and procedures that were followed in carrying out the study are discussed under the following sub-headings:

- Design of the Study
- Population of the Study
- Sampling Technique and Sample size
- Research Instrument
- Method for Data Collection
- Method of Data Analysis

Design of the Study

This study adopts a descriptive survey design. The design is appropriate because it enables the researcher to gather data from a sample population and describe the characteristics, behaviors, and perceptions of students regarding the influence of social media on their mental health. It allows for the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data to analyze patterns and relationships.

Population of the Study

The population comprises Senior Secondary school students (SSS 1-3) within Oredo Local Government Area, Edo State. This includes students from public and private schools. Based on available data and school records, the estimated total number of students in SSS 1-3 across selected public and private secondary schools in Oredo Local Government Area is 800. This figure represents the target population from which the sample for this study will be drawn.

Sampling Technique and Sample size

This study employed a simple random sampling technique to ensure that every student in the population had an equal chance of being selected. This method was chosen to minimize bias and enhance the representativeness of the sample across Senior Secondary School(SSS 1-3) in Oredo Local Government Area, Edo State. For this study, a total sample size of 200 students was selected from ten secondary schools within Oredo Local Government Area, Edo State.

Research Instrument

The primary instrument used was a structured questionnaire titled “Social Media and Mental Health Questionnaire (SMMHQ)”. The questionnaire was divided into three sections:

Section A: Demographic information (sex, school type)

Section B: Patterns of social media usage (platforms, frequency, duration)

Section C: Perceived impact on students

The questionnaire included both closed-ended questions (likert scale, multiple choice) and open-ended questions to allow for deeper insight.

Method of Data Collection

Data were collected through face-to-face administration of the questionnaire in schools. The researcher obtained permission from school authorities and ensured ethical standards were upheld, including informed consent and confidentiality of responses.

Method of Data Analysis

Research question 1 and 2 were answered using descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation, hypothesis 1 was tested using Pearson Product moment correlation statistics while hypothesis 2 was tested using Fisher-Z statistics. All hypotheses were tested at 0.5 level of significance.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Research Question One

What is the level of social media usage among students in Oredo Local Government Area in Edo State?

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Social Media Usage

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
Social Media Usage	100	27.13	5.45

Table 1 shows a mean of 27.13 and a standard deviation of 5.45. Since the calculated mean is higher than the normative 25.00, this implies that the level of social media usage among students in Oredo Local Government Area in Edo State is high.

Research Question Two

What is the level of mental health of students in Oredo Local Government Area in Edo State?

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Mental Health of Students

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
Mental Health	100	23.14	5.69

Table 2 shows a mean of 23.14 and a standard deviation of 5.69. Since the calculated mean is less than the normative mean of 25.00, this implies that the level of mental health of students in Oredo Local Government Area in Edo State is low.

Hypothesis One

There is no significant relationship between social media usage and mental health of students.

Table 3: Pearson Product Moment Correlation of Social Media Usage and Mental Health

Variables	N	r	Sig (2-tailed)
Social Media Usage	100	.338	.001
Mental Health			

Table 3 shows an r-value of .338 and a p-value of .001, testing at an alpha level of 0.05. Since the p-value is less than the alpha level, the null hypothesis which states "there is no significant relationship between social media usage and mental health of students" is rejected.

Consequently, there is a significant relationship between social media usage and mental health of students.

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant difference in the relationship between social media usage and mental health of students among males and females.

Table 4: Fisher Z Statistics of Social Media Usage and Mental Health of Students among Males and Females

Sex	N	r	Zr	Z-calculated	Z-critical
Male	39	.333	0.31	-0.519	±1.96
Female	61	.358	0.42		

Table 4 shows the calculated Z of -0.519 and Z-critical of ±1.96, testing at an alpha level of 0.05. Since the calculated Z is less than the Z-critical, the null hypothesis which states "there is no significant difference in the relationship between social media usage and mental health of students among males and females" is retained.

Consequently, there is no significant difference in the relationship between social media usage and mental health of students among males and females.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of research question one reveal that the level of social media usage among students in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State is high (Mean = 27.13). This could be as a result of students actively selecting media to satisfy specific psychological and social needs, such as documenting memories, learning, and forming friendships.

This finding is in support of Statista (2024), which confirms that platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and WhatsApp have billions of active users globally. Furthermore, it aligns with the Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974), which posits that media consumption is goal-oriented and that audiences actively engage with media for gratification.

The findings of research question two reveal that the level of mental health of students in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State is low (Mean = 23.14). This could be as a result of students experiencing early signs of mental health difficulties, such as sleep irritation, lack of energy, and self-isolating, which prevent them from realizing their full potential or coping with the normal stresses of life.

This finding is in support of the World Health Organization (WHO), which defines mental health as a state of well-being where an individual can work productively and contribute to their community. The results suggest that the students may be struggling to achieve the “psychological resilience” mentioned in the literature.

The findings of hypothesis one reveal that there is a significant relationship between social media usage and mental health of students ($r = .338, p < .05$). This could be as a result of heavy use and prolonged time spent on platforms, which leads to comparison pressure, feelings of social isolation, and the replacement of face-to-face interactions.

The finding is in support of Andreassen et al. (2016) and Woods & Scott (2016), who found that prolonged social media use contributes to increased risk for mental health symptoms. It also supports Marshall McLuhan’s Technological Determinism (1964), which proposes that the medium itself (social media) shapes and influences individual behavior and human experiences.

The findings of hypothesis two reveal that there is no significant difference in the relationship between social media usage and mental health of students among males and females. This could be as a result of the fact that both sexes are

equally exposed to the same social media models and digital environments that condition the brain's response.

This finding is in support of Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1986), which suggests that individuals regardless of sex learn through observational learning and role modeling within their social environment. It also aligns with the section on Social Media and Sex, which notes that excessive consumption of explicit online content alters the brain's response and mental conditioning for all users, leading to similar mental health outcomes.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter, the summary, conclusion and recommendations of this study will be discussed based on the findings.

Summary

The study investigated the relationship between social media usage and the mental health of Senior Secondary School students in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State. The study was meant to accomplish the following:

- Determine the level of social media usage among students in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State.
- Examine the level of mental health of students in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State.
- Investigate if there is a significant relationship between social media usage and mental health of students in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State.
- Determine if there is a significant difference in the relationship between social media usage and mental health of students among males and females.

In order to provide direction and sharpen the focus of this study, two research questions were raised and two hypotheses were formulated. The sample of the study was made up of one hundred (100) Senior Secondary School students

in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State. The multi-stage sampling technique was used for the sample. The instruments for the study were the Social Media Usage and Mental Health Questionnaire. The instruments were validated by experts. For reliability of the instruments, the coefficients were obtained for the respective variables. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics (Mean and Standard Deviation) for the research questions, Pearson Product Moment Correlation for hypothesis one, and Fisher Z statistics for hypothesis two. The findings revealed that:

- There is a high level of social media usage among students, driven by the search for gratifications such as social interaction and identity formation.
- The level of mental health among the students is low, characterized by early signs of difficulty such as sleep irritation, lack of energy, and self-isolation.
- There is a significant relationship between social media usage and mental health, indicating that heavy and prolonged time spent on these platforms contributes to increased symptoms of anxiety and depression.
- The study also confirmed that there is no significant difference in the relationship between social media usage and mental health among male and female students.

The study confirms the importance of monitoring digital habits in shaping psychological well-being and highlights the need for educators and parents to support students in navigating social media environments.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that:

1. Students who engage in high levels of social media usage tend to exhibit lower levels of mental health and psychological resilience. This aligns with the Uses and Gratifications Theory regarding the active pursuit of digital interaction, which inadvertently leads to negative outcomes.
2. Low mental health among students is a key factor in their overall well-being, as it affects their ability to cope with life stresses and function productively. This supports the World Health Organization's view that mental health is a broader state of well-being beyond the mere absence of illness.
3. Social media usage is a significant predictor of mental health status. The inherent characteristics of the platforms shape human experiences, supporting McLuhan's Technological Determinism and the research of Andreassen et al. (2016) regarding increased anxiety and depression.
4. The study emphasizes the need for a holistic approach to student welfare, where digital literacy and emotional regulation are integrated into the school

environment to foster mental health. Gender does not act as a shield, as Social Cognitive Theory suggests both sexes are influenced by digital modeling.

5. The study also supports the assertion that the quality and quantity of social media use are as important as face-to-face interactions in predicting the mental health outcomes of Senior Secondary School students.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Parents should ensure that their children are digitally and emotionally prepared for the impact of social media. They should support their children's well-being by monitoring platform density and encouraging non-screen activities like sports and in-person socializing.
2. Schools should incorporate programs that focus on digital literacy and mental health awareness as part of the secondary education curriculum. This will enhance students' ability to handle "comparison pressure" and improve mental health outcomes.
3. The government should implement policies that ensure all schools have access to mental health counseling services that address digital conditioning and cyberbullying. This will ensure that students are better prepared for the psychological challenges of the digital age.

Contributions to Knowledge

This study contributes to the understanding of the relationship between social media usage and mental health in a local Nigerian context. It provides evidence that high usage levels are crucial in determining a student's psychological well-being and highlights the importance of the Social Cognitive Theory and Technological Determinism in explaining how digital environments shape adolescent development in Edo State.

Suggestions for Further Study

Future studies could:

- Replicate this study with a larger sample size to confirm the findings and assess the impact of socio-economic status on mental health outcomes.
- Conduct similar studies in other local government areas to see if the findings regarding high social media usage are consistent across different cultural and geographic contexts.
- Use longitudinal studies to track the long-term impact of digital conditioning and social media usage on the mental health of students as they progress through university.

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UNIVERSITY OF BENIN
FACULTY OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL AND EVALUATION
COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY
INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON MENTAL HEALTH OF
STUDENTS (A CASE STUDY OF OREDO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA,
EDO STATE, NIGERIA)

Dear Respondent,

This questionnaire is designed to collect information on influence of social media on mental health of students in Oredo Local Government Area, Edo State.

Your co-operation in supplying needed information is highly sought for. The information collected will be used for research purpose only.

Thank you for your anticipated co-operation.

Yours faithfully,

GODWIN, DORCAS OJOCHIDE.

SECTION A

INSTRUCTION: Please tick the appropriate answer where necessary.

BIO DATA:

Sex: Male () Female ()

Questionnaire

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements regarding social media usage and its influence on your mental health. Use the scale provided.

SA- Strongly Agree

A – Agree

SD- Strongly Disagree

D -Disagree

S/N	Social Media Usage	A	SA	D	SD
1	I spend more than 3 hours daily on social media platforms				
2	I use social media primarily for entertainment rather than academic purposes.				
3	I frequently check social media during school hours or while studying.				
4	Social media is an essential part of my daily routine.				
5	I check social media immediately after waking up				
6	I mostly use social media during late-night hours				
7	I feel pressured to maintain a certain image or lifestyle on social media				
8	I have taken a break from social media for mental health or academic reasons				
9	I use social media during lectures or study time				

10	I follow mental health-related pages or influencers on social media				
	Mental Health Impact				
11	I feel anxious when I am unable to access social media				
12	Social media affects my mood negatively after prolonged use				
13	Social media contributes to feelings of loneliness or isolation				
14	I feel mentally exhausted after scrolling through social media				
15	I experience sleep disturbances due to late-night social media use.				
16	I feel more stressed after reading negative news or comments online				
17	I feel pressure to gain likes, comments, or followers				
18	I often faced cyberbullying				
19	It affects my relationship with my parents				
20	I always have fear of missing out				