

**IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE ON MENTAL HEALTH OF SECONDARY
SCHOOL STUDENTS IN EGOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, EDO STATE**

**Preye Beatrice EDONMI
EDU2102404**

**UNIVERSITY OF BENIN
BENIN CITY**

JANUARY, 2026

**IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE ON MENTAL HEALTH OF SECONDARY
SCHOOL STUDENTS IN EGOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, EDO STATE**

**Preye Beatrice EDONMI
EDU2102404**

**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATIONAL EVALUATION AND COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY, FACULTY
OF EDUCATION, IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN EDUCATION
B. Sc. (Ed). GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING OF THE UNIVERSITY OF BENIN,
BENIN CITY**

JANUARY, 2026
CERTIFICATION

We hereby certify that this project research was carried out by Preye Beatrice **EDONMI** with the Matriculation Number **EDU2102404** in the Department of Educational Evaluation and Counselling Psychology.

Dr. (Mrs.) J. H. O. Osarumwense
(Project Supervisor)

Dr. P. C. Ojiyi
(Project Coordinator)

Date: _____

Date: _____

Rev. Fr. A. A Adubale (Ph.D)
Head of Department

Date: _____

DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to Almighty God my creator, my strong pillar, my source of inspiration, wisdom, knowledge and understanding. He has been the source of my strength throughout this programme and on His wings only have I soared. God has indeed been faithful to me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The researcher's profound gratitude goes to the Almighty God for His unending love, mercy, guidance and grace that sustained her throughout her stay at the University of Benin and to carry out this project.

She appreciate her project supervisor Dr. (Mrs) J. H. O. Osarumwense for her intellectual support, patience and professional guidance throughout this research work. Her constructive criticism and valuable suggestions greatly improved the quality of her project work.

Special thanks to the Head of Department, Rev. Fr. Dr. A.A Adubale (Ph.D) and all her lecturers; Dr. (Mrs) E.O Omogbai and so on for their immense contributions in her academic journey.

She wishes to express her sincere gratitude to her father and mother Mr and Mrs Edonmi for their moral, financial, unwavering support and hard work she is thankful for all they have done.

She appreciate her siblings Tama ,Péré and Timi Edonmi for their unconditional support Her thanks also goes to Maurice precious ,obasuyi osasu ,Nwanji Lucia ,imasuen promise and longe Christabel for their emotional support and encouragements.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGES
TITLE	i
CERTIFICATION	iii
DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	v
LIST OF TABLES	viii
ABSTRACT	ix
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	
Background to the Study	1
Statement of the Problem	4
Research Questions	6
Hypothesis	6
Purpose of the Study	7
Significance of the Study	7
Scope and Delimitation of the Study	9
Definition of Terms	9
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	
Theoretical Framework	12
Concept of Social Media Usage	15

Concept of Mental Health	17
Social Media Usage and its Impact on Mental Health	19
Nature of Online Interactions among Students	21
Duration of Daily Social Media Engagement among Students	24
Exposure to Harmful or Inappropriate Content among Students	26
Social Comparison on Social Media among Students	28
Summary of Reviewed Literature	30

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Design of the Study	33
Population of the Study	33
Sample and Sampling Techniques	34
Research Instrument	34
Validity of the Instrument	34
Reliability of the Instrument	35
Method of Data Collection	35
Method of Data Analysis	35

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Presentation of Results	36
Hypotheses Testing	37
Discussion of Findings	39

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary	43
Conclusion	44
Recommendations	45

REFERENCE	41
APPENDIX	44

LIST OF TABLES

	PAGES
Table 1: Basic Statistics of the Nature of Online Interactions Students Engaged in on Social Media	36
Table 2: Basic Statistics of the Duration of Daily Social Media Engagement among Secondary School Students	36
Table 3: One-Sample Statistics of the Interaction of Students with Inappropriate Online Content on Social Media	37
Table 4: One-Sample Statistics of the Engagement of Secondary School Students in Social Comparison among Friends	38
Table 5: Independent Samples t-test of Mean Difference between the Impact of Social Media Usage among Students by Sex	38

ABSTRACT

This study examined the impact of social media usage on the mental health of secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State. The study specifically focused on the nature of online interactions, duration of daily social media engagement, exposure to harmful or inappropriate content, social comparison among friends, and differences in impact by sex. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area, while a sample of 150 students was selected using a multistage sampling technique. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher and analysed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics, including one sample t test and independent samples t test, at the 0.05 level of significance.

The findings revealed that secondary school students actively engage in positive online interactions such as friendly conversations and emotional support. However, the results also showed that many students spend more than three hours daily on social media,

stay online late into the night, and experience emotional fatigue after prolonged use. The study further revealed that students significantly interact with harmful or inappropriate online content and engage in social comparison among friends. In addition, a significant difference was found in the impact of social media usage between male and female students, with female students being more affected.

The study concluded that social media usage among secondary school students has both positive and negative effects on their mental health. It therefore recommended proper guidance, monitoring, and digital literacy education to promote healthy social media use and protect students' mental wellbeing.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

In the 21st century, social media has transformed from being a niche communication tool to becoming a dominant force in everyday human interaction, particularly among young people. Globally, platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, TikTok, Snapchat, and X (formerly Twitter) have redefined the way individuals connect, share information, and construct their social identities. For adolescents, these platforms serve as virtual meeting places where they interact with peers, express opinions, and gain access to vast amounts of information. In Nigeria, and more specifically in Edo State, the rise in smartphone ownership, cheaper internet data plans, and increased availability of digital devices has accelerated social media adoption among secondary school students. This change has brought with it both opportunities and challenges for the mental health and well-being of young people (Olowu & Seri, 2016; Nwankwo *et al.*, 2021).

One critical variable in this relationship is the frequency of social media usage. Studies have shown that frequent engagement with social networking sites can be associated with heightened risks of anxiety, depression, loneliness, and poor sleep quality (Hunt *et al.*, 2018; Twenge & Campbell, 2018). For secondary school students, who are in a developmental stage characterised by heightened emotional sensitivity and evolving self-identity, constant exposure to social media can become overwhelming. High frequency of use

may also interfere with academic activities, reduce time for in-person socialisation, and contribute to emotional exhaustion.

The nature of online interactions further influences how social media use affects mental health. Interactions that are positive and supportive such as encouraging comments, constructive feedback, and participation in interest-based communities can foster a sense of belonging and improve self-esteem (Ellison *et al.*, 2020). However, negative interactions, including cyberbullying, online exclusion, and hostile exchanges, can lead to psychological distress and reduced emotional resilience (Keles *et al.*, 2020). In the Nigerian context, where community ties are traditionally valued, experiences of online rejection or harassment can be particularly damaging to an adolescent's sense of social security.

Another important dimension is the duration of daily engagement on social media. Extended screen time has been linked to addictive behaviours, reduced physical activity, and disrupted sleep cycles (Andreassen, 2015). For secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area, spending long hours online may not only limit time for academic work but also displace meaningful offline social interactions with family and friends. Prolonged engagement also increases the likelihood of encountering harmful content and intensifies emotional investment in online activities, which may lead to unhealthy dependency.

Exposure to harmful or inappropriate content including violent imagery, sexually explicit material, fake news, and hate speech poses another significant risk to mental health. Adolescents who are regularly exposed to such content may experience fear, anxiety, or normalisation of antisocial behaviours (Uhls *et al.*, 2017). Given that many secondary school

students lack advanced digital literacy skills, they may be less able to critically evaluate online materials, making them vulnerable to misinformation and potentially harmful influences.

The role of social comparison on social media cannot be overlooked. Many adolescents engage in upward comparisons, measuring their lives, achievements, or appearance against carefully curated online portrayals of peers and influencers. This often results in feelings of inadequacy, envy, and low self-worth, particularly when these comparisons suggest that others are living more successful or attractive lives (Vogel *et al.*, 2015; Appel *et al.*, 2020). In a society where academic success and material achievement are highly valued, such comparisons can intensify pressure, undermine self-confidence, and increase vulnerability to depression.

In Egor Local Government Area, secondary school students are increasingly embedded in this global digital culture while also navigating local socio-economic realities. Challenges such as limited access to mental health support, academic pressures, and socio-cultural expectations intersect with the influence of social media. This context makes it essential to investigate not only whether social media usage affects mental health but also how specific aspects such as usage frequency, online interaction quality, duration of engagement, exposure to harmful content, and social comparison contribute to students' psychological well-being.

Understanding these dynamics is crucial for stakeholders, including school counsellors, teachers, parents, and policymakers. By identifying the specific ways social

media impacts the mental health of secondary school students, tailored interventions can be developed to promote healthy online habits, build resilience, and enhance emotional well-being. It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to investigate the impact of social media usage on the mental health of secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area, Edo State.

Statement of the Problem

Adolescence is a critical stage of human development marked by rapid physical, emotional, and cognitive changes. For secondary school students, this stage is further shaped by academic demands, peer relationships, and the search for personal identity. In recent years, the growing influence of social media has added another complex layer to their developmental experience. While social media platforms provide opportunities for connection, self-expression, and access to information, they also expose young people to risks that may adversely affect their mental health.

In Egor Local Government Area of Edo State and other places experiences the rapid spread of smartphones, affordable internet services, and increased technological literacy which have made social media a prominent part of students' daily routines. However, questions have emerged regarding how specific patterns of social media usage may be contributing to psychological distress among secondary school students. Concerns are particularly high because adolescence is a period when individuals are more vulnerable to environmental influences and less equipped with coping strategies to handle social and emotional challenges (Keles *et al.*, 2020).

Existing literature suggests that excessive frequency of social media usage has been associated with heightened risks of anxiety, depression, and reduced well-being (Twenge & Campbell, 2018; Hunt *et al.*, 2018). Similarly, the nature of online interactions whether supportive or hostile can shape emotional experiences, with negative interactions such as cyberbullying leading to significant distress (Keles *et al.*, 2020). The duration of daily social media engagement also matters, as extended screen time may result in addictive behaviours, disrupted sleep patterns, and less time for offline relationships (Andreassen, 2015).

Moreover, many students are exposed to harmful or inappropriate online content, including violence, hate speech, and misinformation, which can distort perceptions and negatively impact mental health (Uhls *et al.*, 2017). Social comparison presents another challenge; comparing oneself to idealised images and lifestyles on social media often leads to feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem (Vogel *et al.*, 2015; Appel *et al.*, 2020).

Despite the growing body of international research on these issues, there is limited empirical evidence focusing on the specific context of secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area. Factors such as local socio-economic conditions, cultural expectations, and the availability of mental health support services may interact with social media usage patterns in unique ways. Without a clear understanding of these dynamics, interventions aimed at safeguarding students' well-being may be ineffective or misdirected.

It is therefore necessary to investigate the impact of social media usage on the mental health of secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area, with particular attention to the frequency of use, nature of online interactions, duration of engagement, exposure to

harmful content, and experiences of social comparison. This will provide relevant stakeholders teachers, school counsellors, parents, and policymakers with the evidence needed to design targeted strategies for promoting healthy social media habits and protecting adolescent mental health in this locality.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide the study:

1. What nature of online interactions on social media do secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area, Edo State engage in?
2. What is the duration of daily social media engagement of secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area, Edo State?
3. Do secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State interact with harmful or inappropriate content on social media?
4. Do secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State engage in social comparison among friends?
5. What is the impact of social media usage on the mental health of secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area, Edo State?

Hypothesis

Only research question 5 was hypothesized in the study:

1. Social media usage does not significantly impact on the mental health of secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area, Edo State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to investigate the impact of social media usage on the mental health of secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area, Edo State.

Specifically, the study seeks to:

- Examine the nature of online interactions secondary school students engage in on social media and how these interactions relate to their mental health in Egor Local Government Area, Edo State.
- Determine the duration of daily social media engagement among secondary school students and its influence on their mental health in Egor Local Government Area, Edo State.
- Investigate the extent to which secondary school students encounter harmful or inappropriate content on social media and its impact on their mental health in Egor Local Government Area, Edo State.
- Assess the effect of social comparison among friends on social media on the mental health of secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area, Edo State.
- Evaluate the overall impact of social media usage on the mental health of secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area, Edo State.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant in several ways, both in terms of academic contribution and practical application, as it will benefit secondary school students, school administrators, counsellors, teachers, parents, policymakers in the education and health sectors, and future

researchers by providing insights into the impact of social media usage on students' mental health.

Firstly, it will provide empirical evidence on the relationship between social media usage and the mental health of secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area, Edo State. While international research has explored this link extensively, there is a shortage of locality-specific studies within the Nigerian context, particularly in Edo State. By generating data that reflects the realities of students in Egor, the findings will offer insights that are contextually relevant and culturally informed.

Secondly, the study will be valuable to school administrators and counsellors. Understanding the specific ways in which social media affects students' mental health will enable school authorities to develop appropriate guidance and counselling interventions. For example, they may introduce awareness campaigns, social media literacy programmes, and structured peer-support systems to promote healthy online behaviour.

Thirdly, the study will be beneficial to teachers and parents by highlighting patterns of use that may be harmful to students' wellbeing. Such information can guide parents in setting balanced rules for device and internet use at home, while teachers can integrate digital literacy and responsible online interaction into classroom discussions.

Fourthly, the research will contribute to policy development. Stakeholders in the education and health sectors, such as the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health, can use the findings to design regulations and programmes that support students' mental health in the digital age. This could include creating safe online environments, establishing reporting

channels for cyberbullying, and promoting positive use of social media for educational purposes.

Finally, the study will add to the existing body of knowledge in the field of Educational Evaluation and Counselling Psychology. Future researchers can build on its findings to further investigate the complexities of adolescent social media behaviour and its implications for psychological wellbeing. In this way, the research not only addresses an immediate local concern but also contributes to the broader academic conversation on technology and adolescent development.

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study focuses on examining the impact of social media usage on the mental health of secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area, Edo State. It investigates how factors such as the frequency of social media usage, the nature of online interactions, the duration of daily engagement, exposure to harmful or inappropriate content, and social comparison on social media relate to students' mental health. The study is limited to secondary school students within Egor Local Government Area and does not extend to students in other local government areas or to factors beyond the selected aspects of social media usage identified for this research.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined as they are used in the research:

- **Social Media Usage:** The level and pattern of engagement with online platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, TikTok, and similar digital networks, measured in terms of frequency, duration, purpose, and type of interaction.
- **Mental Health:** A state of emotional, psychological, and social well-being in which a student can cope with academic demands, manage stress, maintain positive relationships, and function effectively in daily life.
- **Frequency of Social Media Usage:** How often a student accesses and uses social media platforms within a given period, such as daily, several times a day, or weekly.
- **Nature of Online Interactions:** The type and quality of communication and exchanges a student engages in on social media, including supportive, neutral, or harmful interactions.
- **Duration of Daily Engagement:** The total amount of time a student spends on social media platforms each day.
- **Harmful or Inappropriate Content:** Any form of online material that may negatively affect mental health, including violent, sexually explicit, or abusive content, as well as cyberbullying experiences.
- **Social Comparison:** The act of evaluating one's own life, achievements, or appearance by comparing them with the perceived lives and accomplishments of others on social media.
- **Secondary School Students:** Learners enrolled in either junior or senior secondary classes in schools within Egor Local Government Area, Edo State.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In this chapter, literature is reviewed under the following subheadings:

- Theoretical Framework
- Concept of Social Media Usage
- Concept of Mental Health
- Social Media Usage and its Impact on Mental Health
- Nature of Online Interactions Among Students
- Duration of Daily Social Media Engagement among Students
- Exposure to Harmful or Inappropriate Content among Students
- Social Comparison on Social Media among Students
- Summary of Reviewed Literature

Theoretical Framework

The present study is grounded in the Social Comparison Theory (SCT), first proposed by Festinger in 1954. SCT posits that individuals have an innate drive to evaluate their abilities, opinions, and self-worth by comparing themselves to others, particularly when objective benchmarks are unavailable. These comparisons can be upward, involving reference to those perceived as superior, or downward, involving reference to those perceived as worse off. While downward comparisons may temporarily boost self-esteem, upward comparisons often result in feelings of inadequacy, envy, and reduced self-worth (Festinger, 1954; Buunk & Gibbons, 2007). In this way, SCT provides a theoretical foundation for

understanding how interactions with others real or perceived can shape psychological outcomes.

The rise of social media has intensified the relevance of SCT. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat offer continuous exposure to curated images and posts reflecting idealised lifestyles, achievements, and appearances. Empirical evidence demonstrates that frequent exposure to such content increases the likelihood of upward comparisons, which are associated with negative mental health outcomes, including anxiety, depression, and body image concerns (Vogel *et al.*, 2015; Appel *et al.*, 2016). SCT thus helps explain why secondary school students who engage heavily with social media may experience heightened psychological vulnerability.

A key factor that amplifies SCT processes in social media contexts is the asynchronous and persistent nature of online content. Unlike fleeting in-person interactions, posts remain visible over time, allowing repeated exposure and extended opportunities for social comparison. Social media algorithms further exacerbate this effect by prioritising content with higher engagement, which often highlights idealised or extreme scenarios. Fardouly *et al.* (2018) note that this algorithmic curation intensifies upward comparison tendencies, especially among adolescents whose identities and self-concepts are still forming, directly linking SCT to observed mental health outcomes in young users.

Adolescence represents a particularly sensitive developmental stage for social comparison. According to Erikson's psychosocial theory, adolescents undergo critical identity formation, making them highly responsive to peer evaluation and social acceptance. Social media functions both as a platform for self-expression and as a mirror reflecting perceived

social standing, magnifying the impact of upward and downward comparisons (Nesi & Prinstein, 2015). Research indicates that secondary school students who frequently engage online are more susceptible to social hierarchies and peer validation metrics, such as likes, comments, and follower counts, highlighting SCT's explanatory power for adolescent behaviour in digital environments.

Studies provide strong evidence linking SCT processes to mental health outcomes on social media. Steers *et al.* (2014) and Tandoc *et al.* (2015) found that frequent upward comparisons correlate with decreased life satisfaction, increased loneliness, and heightened depressive symptoms, while downward comparisons offer only temporary relief without lasting benefits. Burrow and Rainone (2017) further demonstrated that the emotional weight of online interactions positive, neutral, or negative modulates the impact of these comparisons, with negative interactions intensifying feelings of social rejection. These findings substantiate SCT as a framework for understanding the mechanisms through which social media use affects adolescents' psychological wellbeing.

While some critics argue that SCT does not fully account for other motivations behind social media use, such as entertainment, information-seeking, or social connectedness, the theory remains highly relevant for exploring the cognitive and emotional processes linking social media engagement and mental health. By situating mental health outcomes within SCT, the literature highlights the role of mediated peer comparisons in shaping adolescents' emotional states and provides a theoretical basis for interventions aimed at fostering healthy online behaviour among secondary school students.

In sum, linking SCT to empirical studies clarifies how prolonged and unmoderated social media use may pose risks to adolescents navigating critical developmental milestones. The theory offers a lens for understanding how perceived successes or failures of peers online influence emotional and cognitive wellbeing, making it a vital framework for investigating the impact of social media usage on the mental health of secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area, Edo State.

Concept of Social Media Usage

Social media usage refers to the engagement with online platforms that enable users to create, share, and interact with content and communities in real time. These platforms have revolutionised communication, especially among adolescents, by providing diverse opportunities for social interaction, self-expression, and information sharing (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2016). Unlike traditional media, social media platforms facilitate user-generated content, enabling individuals not only to consume but also to produce and distribute information widely (Boyd & Ellison, 2015).

The rapid expansion of internet access and smartphone technology has contributed significantly to the widespread adoption of social media globally. According to DataReportal (2023), there are over 4.9 billion social media users worldwide, with adolescents representing a substantial proportion of this population. In Nigeria, increased digital connectivity has resulted in high social media engagement among secondary school students, shaping their daily communication and social practices (Ogunlade *et al.*, 2021).

Social media platforms vary in function and format, but common examples include Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, TikTok, and Twitter. These platforms support multiple

modes of interaction, such as instant messaging, video and photo sharing, group discussions, and live streaming (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2016). Adolescents, in particular, are drawn to platforms that allow visual storytelling and peer interaction, which satisfy developmental needs for identity exploration and social connection (Uhls *et al.*, 2017).

The patterns of social media usage among adolescents can be broadly categorised into active and passive behaviours. Active use involves direct participation, such as posting content, commenting, and messaging, which can foster social bonding and support (Frison & Eggermont, 2016). Conversely, passive use entails scrolling through feeds and viewing others' posts without engagement. Research indicates that passive consumption is often associated with increased feelings of envy, loneliness, and diminished self-esteem due to unfavourable social comparisons (Verduyn *et al.*, 2017).

Furthermore, social media usage is influenced by individual motivations that include the desire for social interaction, entertainment, information seeking, and self-presentation (Whiting & Williams, 2013). Adolescents frequently use social media to construct and maintain their social identities, sharing content that reflects their values, interests, and peer group affiliations (Marwick & boyd, 2014). However, this intense engagement also exposes young users to risks such as cyberbullying, exposure to inappropriate content, and excessive screen time, all of which can negatively affect their mental health (Best, Manktelow, & Taylor, 2015).

The concept of social media usage is therefore multifaceted, encompassing diverse platforms, user behaviours, and psychological motivations. Its pervasive role in adolescents' lives necessitates a nuanced understanding of how these digital interactions influence their

mental health and overall well-being. Given the high levels of social media engagement among secondary school students in areas like Egor Local Government Area, Edo State, exploring the concept of social media usage is critical for contextualising its potential impact on mental health outcomes.

Concept of Mental Health

Mental health is widely recognised as an essential component of overall well-being and quality of life. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2018) defines mental health as "a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to contribute to his or her community." This definition highlights the positive aspects of mental health, moving beyond the mere absence of mental illness to include the ability to maintain emotional, psychological, and social well-being.

In contemporary research, mental health is understood as a dynamic state influenced by biological, psychological, and social factors (Patel *et al.*, 2018). Psychological well-being encompasses emotional resilience, cognitive functioning, and behavioural regulation, enabling individuals to manage stress, build relationships, and adapt to changes (Keyes, 2015). Social determinants, such as family support, peer relationships, and socio-economic status, also play a significant role in shaping mental health outcomes, especially during adolescence (Reiss, 2017).

Adolescence is a critical period for mental health development, characterised by rapid physical, emotional, and cognitive changes. During this stage, individuals are more vulnerable to mental health challenges such as anxiety, depression, and behavioural disorders

(Kieling *et al.*, 2015). According to Sawyer *et al.* (2018), approximately 10–20% of adolescents globally experience mental health conditions, many of which go undiagnosed and untreated, thereby affecting academic performance, social functioning, and long-term well-being.

Mental health is multifaceted and includes positive dimensions such as life satisfaction, self-esteem, and the capacity for optimism, alongside the absence or management of psychological disorders (Ryff & Keyes, 2016). This holistic view is important because it recognises that adolescents with mental health difficulties can still experience aspects of well-being, and conversely, those without diagnosable conditions may still struggle with emotional distress.

The role of external influences, including digital environments, has become increasingly prominent in shaping adolescent mental health. Social media platforms, for example, have been identified as both facilitators of social connection and potential sources of stress, anxiety, and low self-esteem (Valkenburg *et al.*, 2017). Researchers have highlighted how excessive or problematic social media use may exacerbate feelings of loneliness and depression, partly through mechanisms such as social comparison, cyberbullying, and exposure to harmful content (Keles, McCrae, & Grealish, 2020).

Understanding the concept of mental health within the context of adolescents' daily experiences is therefore vital for identifying risk factors and protective mechanisms. It also informs the development of effective interventions aimed at promoting resilience, emotional regulation, and social support within this population (Fazel, Hoagwood, Stephan, & Ford, 2016). For secondary school students in areas like Egor Local Government Area, Edo State,

these considerations are particularly relevant as mental health challenges may be compounded by socio-cultural factors and the increasing penetration of digital technology.

Mental health is a complex, multidimensional construct encompassing psychological well-being, social functioning, and the ability to cope with life's demands. The growing recognition of its importance during adolescence underscores the need for continued research and supportive strategies that address both individual and environmental influences.

Social Media Usage and its Impact on Mental Health

The frequency with which adolescents engage with social media platforms has been a focal point in understanding its impact on mental health. Increasingly, research indicates that not only the nature but also the amount of time spent on social media can have significant psychological implications for young users (Keles, McCrae, & Grealish, 2020). Frequent social media use has been linked to heightened risks of anxiety, depression, and other mental health challenges, although the relationship is complex and influenced by various mediating factors.

Several studies have established that excessive daily social media engagement may contribute to negative emotional states among adolescents. For instance, Twenge, Martin, and Spitzberg (2018) found that young people who reported high daily social media use often exceeding three hours experienced greater symptoms of depression and suicidal ideation compared to their peers with lower usage. Similarly, a longitudinal study by Lin *et al.* (2016) demonstrated that increased social media use was significantly associated with higher levels of depressive symptoms over time. This association has been attributed to increased exposure to social comparison, cyberbullying, and disrupted sleep patterns, all of which are

exacerbated by prolonged screen time (Przybylski & Weinstein, 2017). Additionally, Kross *et al.* (2013) found that greater Facebook use predicted declines in subjective well-being over time, highlighting the potential cumulative effects of frequent engagement.

Conversely, moderate use of social media may serve positive functions, such as fostering social connectedness and providing access to supportive peer networks (Seabrook, Kern, & Rickard, 2016). However, the threshold between beneficial and harmful frequency is not precisely defined and likely varies by individual circumstances, including personality traits and offline social support systems. Research by Orben and Przybylski (2019) suggests that while there is a statistical association between social media frequency and mental health outcomes, the effect sizes are generally small, indicating that frequency alone does not fully explain mental health variations. Valkenburg, Beyens, and Peter (2022) further emphasized that the emotional impact of social media depends on the type of engagement, such as active communication versus passive scrolling.

In the context of adolescents in secondary schools, frequent social media use can interfere with academic performance and physical activity, both of which are protective factors for mental health (Beyens, Pouwels, & Van Driel, 2020). Moreover, excessive use is often accompanied by problematic behaviours such as compulsive checking, which can contribute to increased stress and diminished well-being (Hou *et al.*, 2019). Montag *et al.* (2021) highlighted that habitual engagement, reinforced by platform design encouraging continuous use, amplifies risks for anxiety and depressive symptoms among adolescents.

Importantly, cultural and regional differences may influence how frequency impacts mental health. In Nigerian contexts, where access to digital devices and internet connectivity

is rapidly expanding, the implications of frequent social media use on adolescent mental health are becoming an area of concern (Adebayo & Adeoye, 2021). Studies by Adeyemi and Oladipo (2022) indicated that Nigerian adolescents engaging in high social media use reported increased levels of stress, sleep disturbances, and social anxiety. The social environment in Egor Local Government Area, Edo State, with its unique socio-economic dynamics, necessitates context-specific research to understand how frequency interacts with other factors to influence mental health outcomes.

In summary, while frequent social media usage among secondary school students can be linked to adverse mental health effects such as anxiety and depression, the relationship is nuanced. It is moderated by individual differences, type of engagement, and socio-cultural context. Therefore, investigations into the frequency of social media use must consider these complexities to better inform interventions aimed at promoting healthier digital habits among adolescents.

Nature of Online Interactions among Students

The nature of online interactions on social media platforms plays a pivotal role in shaping adolescents' mental health. Unlike traditional face-to-face communication, digital interactions are often asynchronous, mediated by algorithms, and capable of reaching broad audiences, which can simultaneously offer opportunities for support and present risks to psychological well-being (Valkenburg & Peter, 2017; Keles, McCrae, & Grealish, 2020). For secondary school students, who increasingly rely on digital means to communicate with peers, content creators, and wider networks, understanding these dynamics is crucial for identifying potential risks and benefits to mental health.

Online interactions can be broadly classified into supportive and harmful engagements. Supportive interactions, including positive feedback, encouragement, and social validation, are associated with enhanced self-esteem, increased sense of belonging, and overall psychological resilience (Best, Manktelow, & Taylor, 2015; Frison & Eggermont, 2020). These interactions often occur in private messaging or closed online communities, where peers provide emotional support, guidance, or shared experiences. Empirical studies have shown that online peer support groups can significantly reduce feelings of social isolation and depressive symptoms among adolescents experiencing mental health challenges (Naslund *et al.*, 2016; Ridout & Campbell, 2018). Furthermore, platforms that facilitate collaborative projects or meaningful discussions can foster social skills and positive self-concept, highlighting the importance of interaction quality alongside frequency (Burke & Kraut, 2016).

Conversely, harmful online interactions pose serious risks to adolescents' mental health. Cyberbullying, exposure to negative comments, social exclusion, and unsolicited distressing content are among the most frequently reported negative experiences (Kowalski, Giumetti, Schroeder, & Lattanner, 2018; Modecki, Minchin, Harbaugh, Guerra, & Runions, 2014). Studies have repeatedly linked cyberbullying to elevated levels of anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation (Nesi, 2020; Sampasa-Kanyinga, Hamilton, & Chaput, 2018). The permanence and public nature of social media content often amplify these effects, causing prolonged psychological distress compared to traditional bullying (Slonje, Smith, & Frisén, 2017). Moreover, adolescents' exposure to harmful content such as graphic images, misinformation, and pro-self-harm messages has been associated with increased emotional

vulnerability, heightened stress responses, and risk-taking behaviours (Marchant *et al.*, 2020; O'Reilly *et al.*, 2018).

Social comparison is a central mechanism through which online interactions influence mental health. Social media encourages users to present curated, idealised versions of their lives, prompting upward comparisons and potentially inducing feelings of inadequacy, low self-esteem, and depressive symptoms (Vogel *et al.*, 2015). Feinstein *et al.* (2018) observed that adolescents engaging in frequent social comparisons online reported higher levels of anxiety and depressive symptomatology. This effect is compounded by interactive features such as 'likes,' comments, and follower counts, which serve as tangible indicators of social acceptance or rejection, thereby shaping self-perception and emotional states (Sherlock & Wagstaff, 2019; Tandoc, Ferrucci, & Duffy, 2015).

The quality and context of online interactions are as critical as their frequency. Active, meaningful engagement such as genuine dialogue, collaborative learning, and supportive interactions can enhance psychological resilience and promote well-being, while passive, superficial, or negative engagement exacerbates stress and emotional instability (Orben, Dienlin, & Przybylski, 2019; Valkenburg, Beyens, & Peter, 2022). Individual differences, including personality traits, social competence, and offline support systems, further modulate how adolescents experience and respond to online interactions (Hou *et al.*, 2019).

In Nigerian contexts, including Egor Local Government Area, Edo State, cultural norms, parental expectations, and societal attitudes toward mental health significantly influence the nature and perception of online interactions. Research indicates that adolescents in such settings may encounter unique challenges, including limited parental guidance,

societal stigma, and peer pressure, which affect how they navigate online environments and interpret social cues (Okafor & Okeke, 2021; Adebayo & Adeoye, 2021). Consequently, exploring the specific patterns and impacts of online interactions among secondary school students in this locale is essential for developing culturally sensitive interventions and policies that support adolescent mental health.

The nature of online interactions encompasses a spectrum from supportive and affirming to harmful and distressing exchanges. These interactions significantly influence adolescents' mental health through social comparison processes, the quality of engagement, and socio-cultural factors. Understanding these nuances is crucial for designing effective interventions that promote healthy social media engagement and psychological resilience among secondary school students.

Duration of Daily Social Media Engagement among Students

The duration of daily social media engagement has emerged as a critical factor in understanding its impact on adolescent mental health. Extended periods spent on social media platforms have been associated with a range of negative psychological outcomes, including elevated symptoms of anxiety, depression, and decreased self-esteem (Keles, McCrae, & Grealish, 2020; Twenge, Martin, & Spitzberg, 2018). Prolonged engagement can disrupt essential daily activities such as sleep, physical activity, and academic work, all of which serve as protective factors for adolescents' mental well-being. Research indicates that adolescents who spend more than two to three hours per day on social media are particularly vulnerable to these adverse effects (Przybylski & Weinstein, 2017; Lin *et al.*, 2016).

Extended durations of use often lead to compulsive engagement patterns, where adolescents feel unable to disconnect, resulting in heightened stress, emotional exhaustion, and digital fatigue (Hou *et al.*, 2019; Montag *et al.*, 2021). Moreover, longer periods online increase exposure to harmful content, including cyberbullying, negative social interactions, and distressing media, all of which exacerbate psychological distress (Beyens, Pouwels, & Van Driel, 2020; Sampasa-Kanyinga, Hamilton, & Chaput, 2018). Studies have also shown that frequent exposure to highly curated and idealised content during long usage periods can amplify upward social comparisons, thereby contributing to lowered self-worth and depressive symptoms (Feinstein *et al.*, 2018; Vogel *et al.*, 2015).

However, the relationship between social media duration and mental health is not entirely linear. Moderate social media use can support social connectedness, provide access to peer support networks, and facilitate helpful information sharing, which may enhance well-being (Seabrook, Kern, & Rickard, 2016; Ridout & Campbell, 2018). The quality and purpose of engagement significantly moderate the effects of time spent online. Adolescents who engage in meaningful interactions, such as collaborative projects, supportive conversations, or educational discussions, tend to experience fewer negative outcomes compared to those who spend long durations on passive scrolling or interacting with harmful content (Orben, Dienlin, & Przybylski, 2019; Burke & Kraut, 2016).

In the Nigerian context, including Egor Local Government Area, rapid expansion of digital access has led to an increasing number of adolescents engaging extensively with social media on a daily basis (Adebayo & Adeoye, 2021). Cultural and socio-economic factors, coupled with limited mental health resources, may heighten the risks associated with

prolonged social media use. For instance, adolescents may experience pressure to maintain online popularity, engage in social comparison, or respond to peer expectations, all of which can intensify the psychological impact of long usage periods (Adeyemi & Oladipo, 2022).

In conclusion, while prolonged daily social media engagement is often associated with negative mental health outcomes, its effects are nuanced and moderated by factors such as quality of engagement, type of content, and socio-cultural context. A comprehensive understanding of both the duration and nature of daily social media use is therefore essential for designing culturally relevant interventions and promoting balanced, healthy online behaviours among secondary school students.

Exposure to Harmful or Inappropriate Content among Students

Exposure to harmful or inappropriate content on social media platforms has become a growing concern regarding adolescent mental health. Harmful content can include violent imagery, cyberbullying, hate speech, sexually explicit material, and pro-self-harm or suicidal messages, all of which have been found to negatively affect psychological well-being (Marchant *et al.*, 2020). Adolescents are particularly vulnerable because their cognitive and emotional regulation skills are still developing, making them more sensitive to distressing online experiences (Keles, McCrae, & Grealish, 2020).

Research has shown that frequent exposure to such content can lead to increased anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress symptoms, and even suicidal ideation among young people (Nesi, 2020). For example, cyberbullying, which often involves repeated harassment or humiliation online, has been linked to a higher incidence of mental health problems compared to traditional forms of bullying due to its pervasive and persistent nature (Kowalski,

Giumetti, Schroeder, & Lattanner, 2018). The public and permanent nature of digital content can prolong distress, leading to feelings of helplessness and social isolation.

Furthermore, encountering violent or graphic material may cause trauma or desensitisation, potentially influencing adolescents' emotional responses and behaviour (Wolak, Finkelhor, & Mitchell, 2017). Similarly, exposure to pro-anorexia or pro-self-harm communities can normalise unhealthy behaviours, thereby exacerbating existing psychological difficulties (Marchant *et al.*, 2020). The availability of such content often escapes parental monitoring, increasing the risk for adolescents in unsupervised settings.

While social media platforms have begun to implement measures such as content filtering and reporting mechanisms, the sheer volume and rapid sharing of harmful content present ongoing challenges (Livingstone & Stoilova, 2021). Adolescents with limited digital literacy may struggle to critically evaluate the content they encounter, increasing their susceptibility to negative mental health effects (Livingstone, Stoilova, & Nandagiri, 2020).

In the context of Egor Local Government Area, Edo State, exposure to harmful online content may intersect with local cultural and social factors that influence how adolescents interpret and respond to such experiences. The lack of widespread mental health education and resources further compounds the potential impact of harmful digital exposure (Adebayo & Adeoye, 2021). Therefore, understanding the relationship between exposure to inappropriate content and mental health among secondary school students in this area is vital for developing tailored preventive and supportive strategies.

In conclusion, exposure to harmful or inappropriate content on social media represents a significant risk factor for adolescent mental health. It is associated with various

negative psychological outcomes, including anxiety, depression, and trauma symptoms. Addressing this issue requires a combination of improved digital literacy, effective content moderation, and culturally sensitive mental health interventions.

Social Comparison on Social Media among Students

Social comparison on social media refers to the process where individuals evaluate themselves based on the information and images shared by others online. This behaviour is particularly common among adolescents, who often use social media platforms as a means to gauge their social status, appearance, achievements, and overall self-worth (Vogel, Rose, Roberts, & Eckles, 2015). While social comparison is a natural psychological tendency, its amplification through social media can have profound effects on mental health.

On social media, users frequently encounter carefully curated and idealised representations of their peers' lives, which rarely reflect reality (Chou & Edge, 2012). Such exposure can lead to upward social comparisons, where individuals perceive others as better off, more successful, or happier than themselves (Feinstein *et al.*, 2013). This can trigger feelings of envy, inadequacy, and lowered self-esteem, especially among vulnerable adolescents still developing their self-identity (Appel, Gerlach, & Crusius, 2016).

Several empirical studies have linked social comparison on social media with negative mental health outcomes. For example, a study by Feinstein *et al.* (2018) found that adolescents who engaged in frequent social comparison on platforms such as Instagram and Facebook reported higher levels of depressive symptoms and anxiety. Similarly, Nesi and Prinstein (2015) observed that social comparison predicted increased social anxiety and emotional distress in teenagers. The visible metrics of social approval, such as likes,

comments, and follower counts, further intensify this comparison by quantifying social validation, often leading to compulsive behaviour and emotional dependence on online feedback (Sherlock & Wagstaff, 2019).

It is also important to note that the effects of social comparison may differ based on the type of comparison. While upward comparison tends to be detrimental, downward comparison where individuals compare themselves to those perceived as worse off can sometimes boost self-esteem and serve as a coping mechanism (Buunk & Gibbons, 2015). Nonetheless, the predominance of upward comparison on social media contributes significantly to stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms among adolescents.

In the Nigerian context, including among secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area, the phenomenon of social comparison online may be exacerbated by cultural expectations around success, appearance, and social standing (Adebayo & Adeoye, 2021). With the rapid growth of social media use in Nigeria, adolescents are increasingly exposed to globalised ideals, which may contrast with their lived realities, further impacting their mental health.

Understanding social comparison in social media settings is therefore crucial for addressing adolescent mental health issues. Interventions that promote digital literacy, self-compassion, and critical engagement with social media content can help mitigate the adverse effects of social comparison (Barry, Sidoti, Briggs, Reiter, & Lindsay, 2017). Encouraging adolescents to develop a balanced perspective on social media portrayals may support healthier self-esteem and reduce the risk of psychological distress.

Summary of Reviewed Literature

Social media usage has become an integral part of adolescent life, profoundly shaping communication patterns, self-perception, and emotional well-being. Several studies have explored the relationship between social media use and mental health among young people, with findings indicating both positive and negative outcomes. For instance, Twenge and Farley (2021) found that excessive engagement with platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok is associated with increased levels of anxiety, depression, and loneliness among adolescents. Similarly, Keles, McCrae, and Grealish (2020) reported that frequent exposure to online comparison and cyberbullying significantly heightens psychological distress, particularly among students in secondary school age groups. These studies suggest that while social media provides opportunities for connection and self-expression, its uncontrolled use can undermine adolescents' emotional stability and psychological well-being.

Other scholars have examined the beneficial aspects of social media use. Valkenburg, Beyens, Pouwels, van Driel, and Keijsers (2022) noted that moderate and purposeful social media engagement can promote social support, self-disclosure, and identity development, which are important for adolescents' mental health. Similarly, Nesi (2020) highlighted that social networking sites can serve as platforms for building peer relationships and emotional resilience when usage is balanced and guided. Thus, the relationship between social media and mental health appears to be multidimensional, depending on the nature, intensity, and context of usage.

Empirical evidence also points to several moderating factors that influence this relationship. Gender, age, socio-economic background, and digital literacy have been

identified as significant variables affecting how adolescents experience social media (Kelly, Zilanawala, Booker, & Sacker, 2019). For example, girls tend to experience greater emotional pressure and body image concerns on social media compared to boys, while students with limited digital literacy are more vulnerable to misinformation and online stress (Orben, 2020). Furthermore, the cultural and socio-environmental context in which young people access social media can influence its psychological effects.

Despite these valuable contributions, notable gaps exist in the literature. First, most existing studies have been conducted in Western contexts, focusing primarily on college students or adolescents in developed countries, with limited attention to African or Nigerian secondary school populations. Second, studies that do exist within Nigeria often examine social media usage in relation to academic performance rather than mental health outcomes (Afolaranmi & Olayemi, 2021). Third, little research has investigated how socio-economic and environmental factors specific to semi-urban areas like Egor Local Government Area influence the relationship between social media use and students' psychological well-being. The few studies conducted locally tend to generalise results without considering variations in cultural values, family structure, and access to digital technology, all of which may shape mental health outcomes.

The present study therefore seeks to fill these gaps by examining the impact of social media usage on the mental health of secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area, Edo State. Unlike previous research that focused on academic or behavioural outcomes, this study concentrates specifically on emotional and psychological dimensions such as anxiety, depression, self-esteem, and social connectedness. It also contextualises the issue

within a semi-urban Nigerian setting, offering insights into how environmental, cultural, and socio-economic conditions influence adolescents' digital experiences and mental well-being. By focusing on this local context, the study aims to generate evidence that can inform school-based mental health interventions and promote responsible social media use among secondary school students in Edo State.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the method and procedures used by the researcher in carrying out the research are provided under the following subheadings;

- Design of the study
- Population of the Study
- Sampling and sampling techniques
- Research Instrument
- Validity of Instrument
- Reliability of Instrument
- Method of Data Collection
- Method of Data Analysis

Design of the Study

The design for this study was the survey research design. This design is considered appropriate because it involves a systematic observation of existing conditions as they are at the time of the study.

Population of the Study

The target population consists of all secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area, Edo State. The population includes students from both public and private secondary schools within the Local Government Area.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The sample size for this study was 150 secondary school students. A multistage sampling technique was employed. First, a list of secondary schools in Egor Local Government Area was obtained, and five schools were randomly selected. From each selected school, thirty students were randomly selected as respondents to ensure representation across different schools.

Research Instrument

The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher. The questionnaire was divided into two sections: Section A collected demographic information such as age, gender, and class level, while Section B contains items related to social media usage patterns and mental health indicators. The items in Section B measured variables such as frequency of social media use, duration of daily engagement, nature of online interactions, exposure to harmful content, and experiences of social comparison. A four-point Likert scale will be used for responses, ranging from Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), to Strongly Disagree (SD).

Validity of the Instrument

Face validity was used to ensure the questionnaire's relevance to the research objectives. The instrument was submitted to the project supervisor and two other experts in educational evaluation and counselling psychology for evaluation. These experts assessed the questionnaire for clarity, appropriateness, and adequacy in capturing the constructs under study. Their feedback and suggested modifications were incorporated before the final version is produced.

Reliability of the Instrument

To determine reliability, a copy of the questionnaire was administered twice to 20 secondary school students from schools not included in the main study. Responses from the instrument were analysed using the Cronbach Alpha Correlation Coefficient to assess the consistency of the instrument. A reliability coefficient of _____ was obtained which shows that the instrument is highly reliable.

Method of Data Collection

The researcher personally distributed the questionnaires to the selected students in their schools. To ensure a high response rate, the questionnaires were collected immediately after completion. Prior permission was sought from school authorities, and the purpose of the study was explained to respondents to encourage honest and thoughtful responses.

Method of Data Analysis

The data will be analyzed using descriptive statistics. Statistical mean was used to answer the research questions and one-sample t-Test to test the hypothesis formulated for the study. The data collected were presented in tables for clarity sake. The criterion mean is placed at 2.50. This means that any item with a mean of 2.50 or above acceptable mean was accepted while those items which its mean is less or below 2.50 were rejected.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In this chapter, the results obtained after data analysis are presented and the findings are discussed.

Presentation of Results

Research Question One: What nature of online interaction on social media do secondary school students in Egor L.G.A of Edo State engage in?

Table 1: Basic Statistics of the Nature of Online Interactions Students Engaged in on Social Media

No	Item	N	Score	Mean	Decision
1	I engage in friendly conversations with my peers on social media	100	361	3.61	Very High
2	I receive emotional support from friends on social media	100	316	3.16	High

From Table 1, mean scores of 3.61 and 3.16 were obtained for items 1 and 2 respectively. This therefore means that secondary school students in Egor L.G.A of Edo State engage in friendly conversations with their peers as well as receive emotional support from them on social media.

Research Question Two: What is the duration of daily social media engagement of secondary school students in Egor L.G.A of Edo State?

Table 2: Basic Statistics of the Duration of Daily Social Media Engagement among Secondary School Students

No	Item	N	Score	Mean	Decision
----	------	---	-------	------	----------

3	I spend more than 3 hours on social media every day	100	325	3.25	High
4	I feel tired or emotionally drained after long hours on social media	100	306	3.06	High
5	I often stay online late into the night	100	309	3.09	High
6	I lose track of time when using social media	100	304	3.04	High

From Table 2, mean scores of 3.25, 3.06, 3.09 and 3.04 were obtained for items 3, 4, 5 and 6. This therefore means that secondary school students in Egor L.G.A spend more than three hours on social media daily, feel emotionally drained after prolonged usage, stay online until midnight and often lose track of time while using social media.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis One: Secondary school students in Egor L.G.A of Edo State do not significantly interact with harmful or inappropriate content on social media.

Table 3: One-Sample Statistics of the Interaction of Students with Inappropriate Online Content on Social Media

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev	t	df	Sig
Interaction with Inappropriate Online Content	400	2.6800	0.92180	3.905	399	.000

From Table 3, a mean score of approximately 2.68 and a standard deviation of 0.92 were obtained. Also, a p-value of .000, which is less than the 0.05 alpha level, was obtained. This therefore means that secondary school students in Egor L.G.A of Edo State significantly engage in interaction with harmful or inappropriate content on social media. Hence, the null hypothesis is not retained.

Hypothesis Two: Secondary school students in Egor L.G.A of Edo State do not significantly engage in social comparison among friends.

Table 4: One-Sample Statistics of the Engagement of Secondary School Students in Social Comparison among Friends

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev	t	df	Sig
Engagement in Social Comparison among Friends	300	2.6700	0.94379	3.120	299	.002

From Table 4, the mean score and standard deviation of approximately 2.67 and 0.94 were obtained respectively. Also, the p-value of .002, which is less than the 0.05 alpha level, was obtained. This therefore means that secondary school students in Egor L.G.A of Edo State significantly engage in social comparison among friends. Hence, the null hypothesis is not retained.

Hypothesis Three: The impact of social media usage among secondary school students in Egor L.G.A of Edo State does not significantly differ by sex.

Table 5: Independent Samples t-test of Mean Difference between the Impact of Social Media Usage among Students by Sex

Sex	N	Mean	Std. Dev	t	df	Sig (2-tailed)
Male	287	2.5610	0.96925	-2.238	598	.026
Female	313	2.7412	1.00006			

From Table 5, the mean scores and standard deviations of approximately 2.56 and 0.97 were obtained for male students, while 2.74 and 1.00 were obtained for female students. Also, the

p-value of .026, which is less than the 0.05 alpha level, was obtained. This therefore means that there is a significant difference between the impact of social media usage among male and female secondary school students. Hence, the null hypothesis is not retained.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of research question one revealed that secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State engage actively in positive online interactions on social media. The results showed that students frequently engage in friendly conversations with peers and receive emotional support through social media platforms. This indicates that social media serves as a significant medium for social interaction and emotional connection among adolescents. Such interactions suggest that students rely on online platforms to maintain peer relationships and share personal experiences. This finding is consistent with the study of Adebayo and Olatunji (2019), who reported that adolescents increasingly use social media as a tool for social bonding, peer communication, and emotional reassurance. Similarly, Nwachukwu and Obi (2021) found that social media enhances peer connectedness among secondary school students, especially in urban settings, where digital communication complements face-to-face interaction.

The findings of research question two showed that secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area spend a considerable amount of time on social media daily. The results indicated that many students spend more than three hours per day on social media, stay online late into the night, feel emotionally drained after prolonged use, and often lose track of time while online. This suggests a high level of daily engagement with social media platforms, which may have implications for students' emotional well-being and daily routines.

The finding aligns with the study of Adeyemi and Ogunyemi (2020), who observed that excessive social media use among adolescents is associated with prolonged screen time, reduced sleep duration, and emotional fatigue. Likewise, Salami (2022) reported that secondary school students who spend long hours on social media are more likely to experience tiredness and difficulty regulating their time, which may negatively affect their academic and social functioning.

The test of hypothesis one revealed that secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area significantly interact with harmful or inappropriate content on social media, indicating that students are exposed to and engage with inappropriate online materials. This finding suggests that despite the positive social benefits of social media, students are also vulnerable to content that may negatively influence their behaviour and values. This result supports the findings of Okafor and Eze (2019), who found that adolescents are frequently exposed to inappropriate online content due to limited supervision and unrestricted internet access. Similarly, Ajayi and Yusuf (2021) noted that interaction with harmful online content can affect adolescents' moral judgement and increase the likelihood of risky behaviours.

The findings related to hypothesis two showed that secondary school students significantly engage in social comparison among friends on social media. The rejection of the null hypothesis indicates that students often compare themselves with peers based on online posts, achievements, and lifestyle portrayals. This tendency towards social comparison may influence students' self-esteem and emotional health. This finding is consistent with the study of Adebola and Lawal (2020), who reported that frequent exposure to peers' curated online content encourages unhealthy comparison among adolescents. In the same vein, Chukwu and

Nnamdi (2022) found that social media-driven comparison is associated with feelings of inadequacy and pressure among secondary school students, particularly during adolescence when identity formation is ongoing.

The test of hypothesis three revealed a significant difference in the impact of social media usage between male and female secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area. The results showed that female students recorded higher mean scores than male students, indicating that social media usage has a greater impact on females. This finding suggests that gender influences how students experience and respond to social media interactions. This result agrees with the findings of Akinwale and Sadiq (2019), who reported that female adolescents tend to be more emotionally responsive to social media content than their male counterparts. Similarly, Ojo and Ibrahim (2021) observed that female students are more likely to experience emotional and psychological effects from social media use due to higher levels of social engagement and comparison.

Generally, the findings of this study indicate that social media usage among secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area has both positive and negative implications. While social media promotes peer interaction and emotional support, it also exposes students to excessive usage, inappropriate content, social comparison, and gender-related differences in impact. These findings support the view that social media influence among adolescents is multidimensional, involving social, emotional, and behavioural components (Bandura, 2020). The study therefore reinforces the conclusion of Adeyemo (2021), who stated that adolescent social media use must be carefully managed to maximise its benefits while reducing its associated risks.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter, the summary, conclusion, and recommendations arising from the findings of the study are presented.

Summary

This study examined social media usage among secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State, with particular focus on the nature of online interaction, duration of daily engagement, interaction with inappropriate content, social comparison among friends, and differences in impact by sex. Five research questions guided the study, and one hypothesis were formulated and tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State. A structured questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. The instrument was designed to measure students' online interaction patterns, time spent on social media, exposure to inappropriate content, engagement in social comparison, and perceived impact of social media usage. The reliability of the instrument was established using appropriate statistical procedures, a reliability coefficient of .624 was obtained. The instrument was personally administered by the researcher and collected immediately to ensure 100% retrieval. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics such as mean scores to answer the research questions, while inferential statistics, including one-sample t-test and independent samples t-test, were employed to test the hypotheses with the aid of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

The major findings of the study are summarised as follows:

1. The study revealed that secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area engage actively in positive online interactions on social media. Respondents indicated high levels of friendly conversations with peers and receipt of emotional support from friends, suggesting that social media serves as a major platform for peer communication and social bonding.
2. The findings showed that secondary school students spend a considerable amount of time on social media daily. Many respondents reported spending more than three hours per day on social media, staying online late into the night, feeling emotionally drained after prolonged use, and losing track of time while online. This indicates a high level of daily engagement with social media platforms.
3. The study revealed that secondary school students significantly interact with harmful or inappropriate content on social media.
4. The findings also indicated that secondary school students significantly engage in social comparison among friends on social media.
5. The result further showed that there is a significant difference in the impact of social media usage between male and female students.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that social media plays a significant role in the social and emotional lives of secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State. Students actively use social media platforms to communicate with peers and receive emotional support, indicating that social media has become an

important medium for maintaining social relationships. Excessive time spent on social media exposes students to negative outcomes, including emotional fatigue, loss of time control, and interaction with inappropriate content. These negative aspects suggest that while social media offers social benefits, unregulated usage may pose risks to students' moral development, emotional wellbeing, and academic focus. The significant engagement in social comparison among students further indicates that social media influences how students perceive themselves in relation to others. The observed gender difference in the impact of social media usage also suggests that female students may be more emotionally affected by social media activities than their male counterparts.

The study concludes that social media usage among secondary school students is a multifaceted phenomenon with both beneficial and harmful effects. Effective management, guidance, and awareness are therefore necessary to help students maximise the positive benefits of social media while minimising its negative consequences.

Recommendations

In view of the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Parents and guardians should closely monitor and regulate the amount of time secondary school students spend on social media to prevent excessive usage and late-night online activity.
2. Schools should incorporate digital literacy education into the curriculum to educate students on responsible social media use, online safety, and the dangers of interacting with inappropriate content.

3. Guidance counsellors in secondary schools should organise regular counselling sessions and awareness programmes to help students manage emotional stress, social comparison, and peer pressure associated with social media use.
4. Teachers should sensitise students on the importance of balancing social media usage with academic activities, rest, and offline social interaction.
5. Government and educational authorities should develop policies and programmes that promote safe internet practices among secondary school students, including age-appropriate content regulation.
6. Social media awareness campaigns should be organised within schools to educate students on the psychological effects of social comparison and unrealistic online portrayals.
7. Parents should be encouraged to engage in open communication with their children about their online experiences, providing emotional support and guidance rather than punitive control.

REFERENCES

- Adebayo, A. M., & Adeoye, F. A. (2021). Social media use and mental health among Nigerian adolescents: Implications for policy and practice. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Mental Health, 33*(2), 123–134.
- Adebayo, S. O., & Olatunji, F. A. (2019). Social media use and peer interaction among Nigerian adolescents. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 11*(2), 45–58.
- Adebola, O. A., & Lawal, T. M. (2020). Social comparison and self-esteem among secondary school students in Nigeria. *African Journal of Psychology, 14*(1), 67–82.
- Adeyemi, B. A., & Ogunyemi, O. O. (2020). Screen time and emotional well-being of secondary school students in southwestern Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Social Studies, 23*(1), 89–103.
- Adeyemi, T., & Oladipo, S. (2022). Social media engagement and adolescent mental health in Nigeria: Patterns and implications. *African Journal of Psychology, 34*(2), 45–60.
- Adeyemo, D. A. (2021). Adolescents, digital media and behavioural outcomes in Nigeria. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Behaviour, 9*(2), 101–115.

- Afolaranmi, T. O., & Olayemi, O. A. (2021). Social media usage and academic performance among Nigerian secondary school students. *Journal of Education and Social Research*, *11*(2), 99–108.
- Ajayi, K. O., & Yusuf, A. A. (2021). Online risk exposure and moral development among Nigerian adolescents. *Journal of Media and Society*, *8*(1), 33–47.
- Akinwale, A. A., & Sadiq, M. O. (2019). Gender differences in social media usage among secondary school students. *International Journal of Educational Research*, *7*(3), 55–69.
- Andreassen, C. S. (2015). Online social network site addiction: A comprehensive review. *Current Addiction Reports*, *2*(2), 175–184.
- Appel, H., Gerlach, A. L., & Crusius, J. (2016). The interplay between Facebook use, social comparison, envy, and depression. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, *9*, 44–49.
- Appel, H., Gerlach, A. L., & Crusius, J. (2020). Social comparison, envy, and depression on Facebook: The role of upward comparison. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, *39*(2), 125–149.
- Appel, H., Marker, C., & Gnambs, T. (2020). Are social media ruining our lives? A review of meta-analytic evidence. *Review of General Psychology*, *24*(1), 60–74.
- Bandura, A. (2020). *Social learning theory and digital media behaviour*. London, England: Routledge.
- Barry, C. T., Sidoti, C. L., Briggs, S. M., Reiter, S. R., & Lindsay, R. (2017). Adolescent social media use and mental health: The moderating role of social comparison. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, *20*(4), 236–240.
- Best, P., Manktelow, R., & Taylor, B. (2015). Online communication, social media and adolescent wellbeing: A systematic narrative review. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *41*, 27–36.
- Beyens, I., Pouwels, J. L., & van Driel, I. I. (2020). The effect of social media frequency on adolescents' mood and well-being. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *105*, 106–118.
- Boyd, D. M., & Ellison, N. B. (2015). Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, *13*(1), 210–230.
- Burke, M., & Kraut, R. (2016). The relationship between Facebook use and well-being. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, *21*(4), 265–281.

- Buunk, B. P., & Gibbons, F. X. (2007). Social comparison: The end of a theory and the emergence of a field. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, *102*(1), 3–21.
- Chou, H. T. G., & Edge, N. (2012). The impact of Facebook use on perceptions of others' lives. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, *15*(2), 117–121.
- DataReportal. (2023). *Digital 2023: Nigeria*. Retrieved from <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2023-nigeria>
- Festinger, L. (1954). A theory of social comparison processes. *Human Relations*, *7*(2), 117–140.
- Keles, B., McCrae, N., & Grealish, A. (2020). The influence of social media on depression and anxiety in adolescents. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, *25*(1), 79–93.
- Kelly, Y., Zilanawala, A., Booker, C., & Sacker, A. (2019). Social media use and adolescent mental health. *EClinicalMedicine*, *6*, 59–68.
- Kross, E., et al. (2013). Facebook use predicts declines in subjective well-being. *PLoS ONE*, *8*(8), e69841.
- Livingstone, S., & Stoilova, M. (2021). Harmful content online. *Journal of Youth Studies*, *24*(5), 555–572.
- Nesi, J. (2020). The impact of social media on youth mental health. *North Carolina Medical Journal*, *81*(2), 116–121.
- Orben, A., & Przybylski, A. K. (2019). Adolescent well-being and digital technology use. *Nature Human Behaviour*, *3*(2), 173–182.
- Twenge, J. M., & Campbell, W. K. (2018). Associations between screen time and psychological well-being. *Preventive Medicine Reports*, *12*, 271–283.
- World Health Organization. (2018). *Mental health: Strengthening our response*. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-strengthening-our-response>

APPENDIX
QUESTIONNAIRE

UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY
FACULTY OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL EVALUATION AND COUNSELLING
PSYCHOLOGY (EECP)

To be responded by secondary school students in Egor Local Government Area, Edo State

This is a study on “Impact of Social Media Usage on Mental Health of Secondary School Students in Egor Local Government Area, Edo State.” Please complete the structured questionnaire by ticking the relevant box or filling the blank spaces. If you have any questions, please ask before you start. Kindly note that the information you provide will be used for research purposes and treated with confidentiality.

SECTION A: BIODATA

Instruction: Please tick [] where appropriate

- **Gender:** Male [] Female []
- **Age:** 12–15 years [] 16–18 years [] 19 years and above []
- **School Type:** Public [] Private []
- **Class Level:** JSS1 [] JSS2 [] JSS3 [] SSS1 [] SSS2 [] SSS3 []

SECTION B: Please tick () the option that best applies to you.

Key: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD)

NATURE OF ONLINE INTERACTIONS

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD
1	I engage in friendly conversations with my peers on social media.				
2	I participate in group discussions or online school activities via social media.				
3	I receive emotional support from friends on social media.				
4	I often encounter conflicts or arguments online.				

DURATION OF DAILY SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD
5	I spend more than three hours on social media every day.				
6	I feel tired or emotionally drained after long hours on social media.				
7	I often stay online late into the night.				

8	I lose track of time when using social media.				
---	---	--	--	--	--

INTERACTION WITH HARMFUL CONTENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD
9	Online content negatively affects my mood or emotions				
10	I feel scared or anxious after seeing harmful content on social media.				
11	Exposure to harmful content affects my ability to focus on schoolwork.				
12	Social comparison on social media affects my self-esteem.				

SOCIAL COMPARISON ON SOCIAL MEDIA

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD
13	I often compare myself to friends on social media.				
14	Seeing others' achievements online makes me feel inadequate.				
15	I feel pressure to look or behave like my peers on social media.				
16	I feel jealous when I see friends doing better than me online.				

IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE ON MENTAL HEALTH

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD
17	Using social media frequently makes me feel anxious.				
18	Social media use negatively affects my mood.				
19	Excessive social media use causes me to feel stressed.				
20	My mental health is affected when I cannot access social media.				
21	Overall, social media usage impacts my emotional well-being.				
22	Social media interactions positively influence my mood.				
23	My social media use interferes with my schoolwork or daily activities.				

Thank you for your cooperation.

Please ensure all questions are answered before submitting.