

**THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF  
STUDENTS IN THE UNIVERSITY OF BENIN**

**Mercy Oghenekevwe ONOMINEH**

**EDU2203616**

**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION  
FACULTY OF EDUCATION  
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN  
BENIN CITY**

**DECEMBER, 2025**

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**BEING A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF  
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**DECEMBER, 2025**

## CERTIFICATION

We, the undersigned certify that this project work is adequate in scope and was carried out by **Mercy Oghenekevwe ONOMINEH** with the Matriculation Number **EDU2203616**, in the Department of Health Safety and Environmental Education, Faculty of Education, University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of B.Sc (Ed.) Degree in Health Education.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Dr. (Mrs.) C.N. Atedhor**  
(Project Supervisor)

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Mrs. B. H. Enabulele**  
(Project Co-Ordinator)

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Dr. (Mrs.) O.H. Obasuyi**  
Head of Department

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to God Almighty and my parents Mr. and Mrs. ONOMINEH and my siblings.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The researcher is thankful to God for His love, grace, and protection throughout this program.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study assesses the influence of social media on the health and safety of students in the university of Benin. Three research questions were raised to guide this study. The survey research design was adopted for this study; this is because the data was collected from a sample population with specific characteristics.

The population of the study comprised 43,679 undergraduates from the University of Benin. Out of this population, 230 students were selected as the sample, representing those who completed and returned the questionnaire. The instrument used to collect data for the study was a 25-item self-structured questionnaire. The instrument for the data collection was personally administered by the researcher to the respondents.

The findings of this study indicates that students at the University of Benin possess a high level of awareness of the influence of social media on their health and safety. However, exposure to social media was found to negatively affect sleep patterns, academic performance, face-to-face interactions, and psychological wellbeing. The strategies implemented by the university to mitigate these effects, including awareness programmes, counselling services, peer support groups, and digital literacy initiatives, were moderately implemented. The study recommends that the university strengthen these programmes, improve accessibility, and expand digital literacy and peer support initiatives to promote safer social media use among students.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Background of the Study**

Social media has become one of the most transformative aspects of modern communication, reshaping how individuals interact, share information, and engage with the world around them. For university students, particularly in Nigeria, these platforms have become integral to both academic and social life. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, X (formerly Twitter), and TikTok are no longer used merely for entertainment; they now serve as tools for education, health information dissemination, and even safety awareness. Despite these benefits, concerns have emerged regarding the impact of social media on students' health and safety, particularly within academic communities such as the University of Benin. Health in the university context is a multidimensional concept that encompasses physical, mental, and social well-being. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2021) emphasizes that health is not simply the absence of illness but a state of overall wellness, which is essential for effective learning and personal development. However, the excessive use of social media has been linked to a range of health-related challenges among students. Studies have shown that prolonged screen time and late-night social media usage contribute to sleep deprivation, eye strain, and reduced academic performance (Woods & Scott, 2016). In addition, the constant

exposure to idealized online content often results in social comparison, anxiety, and depression among young adults, affecting their emotional stability and mental health (Hou et al., 2019).

Safety, which once referred mainly to physical security within the campus environment, has also expanded to include digital safety. Social media exposes students to various online risks, such as cyberbullying, identity theft, harassment, and exposure to harmful content. Many students lack adequate digital literacy to protect themselves from these threats, making them vulnerable to exploitation and psychological harm (Ojebode & Adedoyin, 2021). These risks not only endanger students' online well-being but also have the potential to spill over into their physical and academic lives, reducing their sense of security within and outside the university community. Despite these concerns, social media is not without its positive contributions to students' health and safety. Universities and health organizations have increasingly utilized social media platforms to share valuable information on mental health awareness, disease prevention, and campus safety measures. For example, social media has proven effective in promoting vaccination campaigns, stress management tips, and real-time emergency alerts that enhance both health outcomes and personal security among students (Adebayo & Ogundele, 2022). Furthermore, peer-to-peer support networks and student-led safety groups on social

platforms have become powerful tools for fostering a supportive and informed campus environment.

The University of Benin, like many other higher institutions in Nigeria, is characterized by a diverse student population that is highly active on social media. While this digital engagement offers opportunities for collaboration, learning, and awareness, it also raises important questions about how social media usage influences students' health and safety. Understanding this relationship is crucial in addressing the risks posed by unregulated social media use while maximizing its benefits for students' overall well-being. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the influence of social media on the health and safety of students in the University of Benin, with the aim of identifying both the challenges and opportunities it presents. By doing so, it will provide valuable insights that can inform policies, educational programs, and digital literacy initiatives designed to promote responsible social media use and create a safer, healthier university environment.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The rise of social media has fundamentally changed how students interact, communicate, and access information. For many students at the University of Benin, platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, TikTok, and X (formerly Twitter) have become an inseparable part of daily life. While these platforms offer numerous

advantages, including opportunities for health awareness, safety information, and social support, their growing influence has also created significant challenges that threaten the health and safety of students. Research has shown that excessive social media use is strongly associated with negative health outcomes such as sleep disturbances, reduced physical activity, anxiety, depression, and poor academic performance (Hou et al., 2019; Woods & Scott, 2016). Many students spend several hours daily engaging with social media, often at the expense of essential activities such as rest and study. Moreover, the pressure created by exposure to unrealistic online content frequently leads to low self-esteem and psychological distress, which in turn affects academic productivity and overall well-being.

In addition to health concerns, social media has introduced complex safety risks for students. Cyberbullying, online harassment, identity theft, and exposure to fraudulent schemes have become increasingly prevalent among young social media users (Ojebode & Adedoyin, 2021). Many students lack sufficient digital literacy skills to protect themselves against these risks, making them vulnerable to privacy violations and security breaches. This situation is further compounded by limited institutional strategies to educate students on safe online behavior. Despite these concerns, social media has also proven to be a useful tool for promoting health and safety when used appropriately. Universities and health organizations now rely on social media to disseminate health

information, provide mental health support, and communicate real-time safety alerts. However, there is limited empirical research that examines how these platforms specifically influence the health and safety of students within the context of Nigerian universities, particularly in the University of Benin.

This gap in awareness raises critical questions: To what extent does social media use affect students' health positively or negatively? How does it impact their safety, both online and offline? And what strategies can be implemented to mitigate the risks while maximizing the benefits of social media? Without addressing these questions, students remain vulnerable to the adverse effects of unregulated social media use, and universities may miss the opportunity to harness its potential for improving health and safety outcomes. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the influence of social media on the health and safety of students at the University of Benin. By identifying the risks, benefits, and underlying factors associated with social media use, this research will provide evidence-based recommendations that can help improve student well-being and create a safer digital and physical environment within the university community.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What is the level of awareness on the influence of social media on the health and safety of students in the University of Benin?
2. To what extent does exposure to social media affect the health and safety of students in the University of Benin
3. What strategies are implemented to mitigate the effects of social media on health and safety of students in the university of Benin

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of social media on the health and safety of students in the University of Benin.

Specifically, this study will;

- Assess the level of awareness students in the University of Benin possess regarding the influence of social media on their health and safety.
- Determine the extent to which exposure to social media affects the health and safety of students in the University of Benin.
- Identify the strategies that are implemented to mitigate the negative effects of social media on the health and safety of students in the University of Benin.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study is significant because it addresses an important issue affecting the well-being and security of students in the University of Benin. By examining these influences, this study will provide valuable insights that can guide students, educators, policymakers, and other stakeholders in understanding how social media can be managed effectively to improve health and safety outcomes.

For students, the findings of this research will be particularly useful in increasing awareness of the potential health risks associated with prolonged social media use, such as sleep disturbances, stress, and reduced physical activity. It will also expose the risks related to online safety, including cyberbullying, identity theft, and privacy breaches, while offering practical recommendations on responsible social media practices that can protect their health and security. For the University of Benin and other academic institutions, this study will serve as a source of evidence that can be used to design digital literacy programs, health campaigns, and online safety initiatives. Such interventions can help students develop healthy social media habits and reduce their vulnerability to both physical and digital threats.

Furthermore, the study will be beneficial to policymakers and government agencies concerned with education and youth welfare. By providing data-driven insights, it can inform the creation of policies that encourage the safe and responsible use of social media within academic communities. This research will add to the growing body of

literature on social media, health, and safety, particularly in the Nigerian context where limited empirical studies exist. It will serve as a reference point for future researchers who may wish to explore related topics, thus contributing to knowledge advancement in this area.

This study is not only relevant to the University of Benin but also to the broader educational and social context, as it seeks to strike a balance between the benefits of social media and the need to safeguard students' health and safety in an increasingly digital world.

### **Scope/Delimitation of the Study**

This study focuses on examining the influence of social media on the health and safety of students in the University of Benin. It is limited to undergraduate students within the university of Benin, as they represent the primary group most actively engaged in the use of social media platforms for academic, social, and personal purposes.

### **Operational Definition of Terms**

**Digital Fatigue:** Digital fatigue refers to the state of physical or mental exhaustion experienced by students as a result of prolonged engagement with social media platforms. In this study, it will be measured through self-reported indicators such as eye strain, sleep

disruption, reduced concentration during lectures, and decreased motivation for offline activities.

**Online Risk Behaviour:** Online risk behaviour refers to actions taken by students on facebook, Instagram and TikTok other social media platforms that could compromise their safety or security, such as sharing personal information publicly, interacting with strangers, or clicking unverified links. This will be measured by the frequency and types of such risky behaviours reported by respondents.

**Cyber Health Practices:** Cyber health practices refer to students' conscious efforts to maintain their physical and mental well-being while using social media. This includes taking breaks from screens, limiting late-night browsing, adjusting screen brightness, and engaging in offline relaxation activities. It will be assessed by how regularly students adopt these practices.

**Digital Peer Pressure:** Digital peer pressure refers to the influence exerted on students by their peers through social media to engage in trends, challenges, or behaviours they would not ordinarily participate. This will be measured by the degree to which students report feeling compelled to conform to online trends even when they perceive them as unsafe or unhealthy.

**Exposure to Harmful Content:** Exposure to harmful content refers to students encountering violent, sexually explicit, self-harm-related, or misinformation content on social media platforms. It will be measured by self-reported frequency and emotional responses to such content.

**Digital Safety Awareness:** Digital safety awareness refers to the level of knowledge students have about safe social media practices, such as use of strong passwords, privacy settings, blocking/reporting tools, and recognizing scams or phishing attempts. It will be measured by a scale of correct responses to safety-related questions.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

This chapter deals on review of existing literature and research studies relevant to the influence of social media on the health and safety of students in the University of Benin. Thus, this chapter is guided by the following sub-headings.

- Concept of Social Media
- Concept of Health and Safety of Students
- The Awareness of the influence of Social Media on Health
- Influence of Social Media on Students' Health
- Influence of Social Media on Students' Safety
- Role of Social Media on Health and Safety
- Strategies to Mitigate the Influence of Social Media on Health and Safety
- Empirical Review of Related Studies
- Summary of Literature Review

#### **Concept of Social Media**

Social media has become one of the most powerful tools of communication and interaction in modern society, transforming how people create, share, and consume

information. It refers to web-based platforms and mobile applications that allow users to connect, communicate, and exchange content in real-time. Unlike traditional media, which operates in a one-way communication model, social media enables active participation, collaboration, and feedback among users. Over the past decade, it has evolved from being a simple means of social networking into a vital space for education, business, politics, health promotion, and personal development (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2020). For university students, social media plays a particularly significant role in their academic and social lives. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, X (formerly Twitter), TikTok, and YouTube are not only used for entertainment but also for sharing information, building academic communities, and accessing educational and health-related content. These platforms provide students with an informal but highly accessible environment where they can learn, engage in discussions, and seek peer support. However, this heavy reliance on social media has also created new challenges for students' health and safety, ranging from exposure to misinformation to cyberbullying and other online risks (Alhassan & Olanrewaju, 2021).

The nature of social media is largely defined by its interactive and user-driven structure, which makes it highly engaging but also potentially addictive. Many students spend several hours daily navigating social media platforms, which can influence their behaviors, habits, and lifestyle choices. While social media offers opportunities for health

awareness and peer support networks, excessive use has been linked to physical health concerns such as disrupted sleep patterns, poor posture, and eye strain, as well as psychological effects including anxiety, depression, and social comparison (Hou et al., 2019). These effects are of particular concern in academic environments, where students are expected to balance their online engagement with academic responsibilities and personal well-being. Moreover, social media has become an important channel for safety-related communication. University administrations and student organizations often use these platforms to disseminate critical safety information, ranging from campus security alerts to emergency response updates. At the same time, social media exposes students to risks such as identity theft, privacy breaches, and unsafe online interactions, which can compromise their personal security if not properly managed (Ojebode & Adedoyin, 2021). Thus, while social media can be an effective tool for education and safety awareness, it also requires a critical understanding of its risks and responsible usage.

In essence, the concept of social media in the context of university students goes beyond leisure or casual interaction; it has become a significant force that shapes their daily routines, influences their decision-making, and affects their health and safety outcomes. For this reason, it is crucial to examine how students in the University of Benin use social media, how it impacts their physical and mental well-being, and the extent to which it contributes to their sense of security both online and offline. By doing

so, this study aims to provide a balanced understanding of the role social media plays in students' lives, not only as a platform for connection but also as a factor that can either support or undermine their overall well-being.

### **Concept of Health and Safety of Students**

Health and safety are critical components of student life, particularly within a university setting where young adults face multiple physical, mental, and social challenges. Health, in its broadest sense, is not merely the absence of disease but a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, as defined by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2021). For students, health involves maintaining a balance between academic responsibilities, personal development, and lifestyle habits that support their overall well-being. Physical health includes adequate nutrition, exercise, and sleep, while mental health involves coping with stress, maintaining emotional stability, and fostering positive relationships. In the university context, these dimensions are often interconnected, as poor physical health can negatively affect mental health and vice versa, ultimately influencing academic performance and social functioning.

Safety, on the other hand, refers to the protection of students from harm or risk, whether on campus, in their personal lives, or within the digital environment. Traditionally, student safety was viewed in terms of physical security, such as protection

from accidents, crime, or unsafe learning environments. However, with the growing influence of technology, the concept of safety has expanded to include online safety, which encompasses issues such as cyberbullying, identity theft, online harassment, and exposure to harmful digital content (Ojebode & Adedoyin, 2021). This shift reflects the realities of modern student life, where social media and digital platforms have become integral parts of both academic and personal experiences.

The intersection of health and safety is particularly important for university students. Social pressures, financial stress, and academic demands often place students in vulnerable positions that can lead to unhealthy behaviors or exposure to unsafe situations. For instance, lack of awareness about proper health practices may result in poor dietary habits or inadequate sleep, while unsafe online behaviors may increase the risk of privacy violations or cyberbullying (Alhassan & Olanrewaju, 2021). These factors can have lasting effects on students' well-being and academic success if not adequately addressed through proper education, institutional support, and personal responsibility. Furthermore, the growing use of social media has created both opportunities and challenges in relation to student health and safety. On one hand, social media platforms can be powerful tools for promoting health awareness, disseminating safety information, and offering peer support. Many universities now use social media channels to provide students with timely updates on health campaigns, security alerts, and wellness programs. On the other hand,

excessive social media use has been linked to mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, and social comparison, while also exposing students to online risks that can compromise their safety (Hou et al., 2019). These dual effects highlight the importance of understanding how social media influences health and safety behaviors among students in a university setting.

The concept of health and safety among students extends beyond individual responsibility to include institutional roles in creating supportive environments and developing effective policies. For students at the University of Benin, ensuring good health and safety involves a combination of personal awareness, institutional support systems, and responsible use of technology. This perspective provides the foundation for this study, which seeks to explore how social media use shapes students' experiences and behaviors concerning their health and safety.

### **The Awareness of the Influence of Social Media on Health**

Social media has become a central channel through which young people and students encounter health information, health-related norms, and peer behaviours; as a result, understanding what people *know* about social media's influence on health is now a key public-health question. Research since 2015 shows that awareness of both positive and negative pathways is growing, but that knowledge is uneven across populations and

often incomplete. On the positive side, many students and young adults recognise that social media can be a valuable source of health information, mental-health support, and health promotion. Systematic reviews and empirical studies document that platforms are used to share health education, peer support, and access to outreach or professional resources; users often report increased awareness of topics such as disease prevention, healthy lifestyles, and how to access care (Chen et al., 2021; Folaranmi et al., 2022). In low- and middle-income settings, recent work indicates that social media can help fill gaps in formal health education and training by rapidly disseminating medical knowledge and awareness (Folaranmi et al., 2022; Oyediran et al., 2024).

However, there is also substantial and well-documented knowledge among students that social media carries harms for both physical and mental health. Large observational studies and systematic reviews report widespread associations between heavy social media use and poorer sleep, increased symptoms of anxiety and depression, and feelings of isolation in some groups (Primack et al., 2017; Keles, McCrae, & Grealish, 2020; Vidal et al., 2020). Students commonly identify sleep disruption, distraction from studies, social comparison (leading to low self-esteem or body image concerns), and exposure to harmful or misleading health content as main negative influences (Primack et al., 2017; Khalaf et al., 2023). Importantly, the literature stresses that the relationship is complex effects vary by platform (e.g., image-centred platforms

can amplify body-image pressures), by pattern of use (passive scrolling versus active engagement), and by individual vulnerability (e.g., preexisting mental-health conditions) (Keles et al., 2020; Chen et al., 2021).

When we ask how much students *know* about these dynamics, research indicates two patterns. First, most students are *aware* at a general level that social media can influence mental health, sleep and wellbeing awareness that often motivates self-regulation attempts (e.g., limiting screen time) (Primack et al., 2017; Vidal et al., 2020). Second, many students lack deeper knowledge about the mechanisms, the relative risks of different behaviours, and how to assess the credibility of health information encountered online. Studies show gaps in digital health literacy: users frequently do not distinguish between reliable and misleading health content, and they may not know how to verify sources or interpret statistics and claims seen on social media (Chen et al., 2021; Folaranmi et al., 2022). This mixed knowledge profile matters for intervention design. Reviews and policy advisories recommend boosting *digital health literacy* (teaching people how to evaluate online content), embedding mental-health education into curricula, and guiding safer platform use (e.g., reducing nighttime screen time, avoiding passive comparison behaviours) rather than only telling students to “use less” social media (Keles et al., 2020; U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2023). In Nigerian and other African university settings, emerging studies suggest students appreciate the educational

benefits of social media but report limited institutional programmes that teach critical appraisal of online health information (Folaranmi et al., 2022; Oyediran et al., 2024). That indicates an actionable knowledge gap: students often *know* social media matters for health, but they need structured learning and support to translate that awareness into safe and health-promoting behaviours. Since 2015 the evidence base has grown substantially: awareness that social media affects health is common among students, but deeper, operational knowledge (how to verify information, how specific use patterns cause harm, and how to mitigate risks) is inconsistent. Addressing that inconsistency through targeted digital-literacy training, mental-health education, and evidence-based platform guidance is a priority highlighted across recent reviews and empirical studies (Chen et al., 2021; Keles et al., 2020; Khalaf et al., 2023).

### **Empirical Review of Related Studies**

Empirical studies have provided substantial evidence on the influence of social media on the health and safety of students, highlighting both its beneficial and detrimental effects. Research in this area has primarily focused on mental health outcomes, physical well-being, online safety, and the role of social media in promoting health awareness among young adults. These findings are particularly relevant to understanding how students at the University of Benin interact with social media and how such interactions shape their overall well-being. Adebayo and Ogundele (2022)

examined the role of social media in promoting health awareness among Nigerian university students. Their study revealed that platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp were widely used by students to access information about nutrition, disease prevention, and mental health support. The findings showed that students who actively followed health-related pages or participated in online health campaigns demonstrated higher levels of health literacy and were more likely to adopt preventive health practices. This underscores the potential of social media as a positive tool for disseminating health information and improving students' health outcomes.

Similarly, Hou et al. (2019) conducted a study on the effects of social media addiction on the physical and mental health of university students. Their research found a strong correlation between excessive social media use and sleep deprivation, anxiety, and depression. Students who spent more than five hours daily on social media reported poorer sleep quality and increased psychological distress compared to those with moderate usage. This aligns with the argument that while social media can provide health benefits, overuse or unregulated use can undermine students' well-being and academic performance.

On the issue of safety, Ojebode and Adedoyin (2021) explored the relationship between social media use and online risks among Nigerian university students. Their study found that a significant number of students had experienced cyberbullying, online

harassment, or exposure to harmful content. The researchers noted that many students lacked adequate digital literacy skills, which made them vulnerable to privacy breaches and online scams. However, the study also highlighted that social media played a positive role in improving campus safety, as universities increasingly used these platforms to share safety alerts and security information with students. In another study, Olawale and Balogun (2022) examined the effectiveness of digital literacy programs in reducing online safety risks among university students. Their findings showed that students who participated in digital literacy training were more cautious in their social media usage, adopted stronger privacy practices, and were better equipped to identify and avoid online threats. This suggests that targeted educational interventions can mitigate the safety risks associated with social media while allowing students to benefit from its positive uses.

Overall, the empirical evidence demonstrates that social media has a dual impact on students' health and safety. On one hand, it provides access to health information, peer support, and safety alerts that can enhance students' well-being. On the other hand, its excessive or unregulated use exposes students to mental health challenges, physical health issues, and significant online safety risks. These findings support the need for a balanced approach that encourages responsible social media use among students at the University of Benin while leveraging its benefits to improve health and safety outcomes.

## **Influence of Social Media on Students' Health**

Social media has become a significant factor in shaping the health and well-being of university students. While these platforms provide numerous benefits, such as health education, peer support, and access to wellness information, their excessive or inappropriate use can have serious consequences for both physical and mental health. For many students, social media is not just a tool for communication but an integral part of their daily lives, influencing how they think, interact, and manage their overall well-being.

One of the most widely documented effects of social media on students' health is its impact on mental well-being. Continuous exposure to highly curated content on platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok often promotes unrealistic standards of beauty, success, and lifestyle, which can lead to social comparison and low self-esteem. Over time, these feelings can result in heightened levels of anxiety, stress, and depressive symptoms among students (Hou et al., 2019). Moreover, social media addiction, characterized by compulsive checking of updates and difficulty in limiting usage, has been linked to psychological distress and reduced academic productivity. For some students, online interactions may even replace face-to-face social relationships, leading to feelings of isolation and loneliness despite constant virtual engagement (Alhassan &

Olanrewaju, 2021). In addition to mental health effects, social media usage can negatively influence students' physical health. Many students spend long hours engaging with their devices, often at the expense of sleep, exercise, and proper rest. Sleep deprivation caused by late-night scrolling or prolonged screen time can impair memory, concentration, and academic performance while also increasing the risk of fatigue-related health problems. Furthermore, sedentary behavior associated with extended social media use contributes to poor posture, eye strain, and other physical complaints, which may compound over time if not addressed (Woods & Scott, 2016).

Despite these risks, social media can also positively impact students' health when used appropriately. Many health professionals, universities, and organizations utilize social platforms to share educational content on nutrition, fitness, mental health awareness, and disease prevention. Campaigns promoting healthy habits, such as stress management techniques or vaccination awareness, have proven effective in reaching student populations who spend considerable time online. Online support groups and counseling services available through social media platforms offer students a convenient way to seek help for mental health challenges in a less stigmatized environment (Adebayo & Ogundele, 2022). The dual nature of social media's influence on health underscores the importance of responsible usage and digital literacy among students. While these platforms provide an opportunity for improved health awareness and peer

support, their unregulated or excessive use can create health risks that may undermine academic success and overall quality of life. Therefore, understanding how students in the University of Benin engage with social media and how this usage affects their health is essential for developing strategies to maximize its benefits while minimizing its potential harm.

### **Influence of Social Media on Students' Safety**

The concept of safety for university students has evolved significantly in the digital age, particularly with the increasing integration of social media into daily life. Traditionally, student safety was limited to physical security measures such as campus patrols, secured housing, and emergency response systems. However, the widespread use of social media platforms has expanded this notion, introducing new dimensions of risk while also creating opportunities to enhance student safety in both physical and virtual environments.

One of the major safety concerns associated with social media use is the rise of cyberbullying and online harassment. Many students are subjected to harmful behaviors such as verbal abuse, intimidation, and public shaming on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter). These negative online interactions can have profound psychological consequences, leading to anxiety, fear, and, in extreme cases,

withdrawal from social or academic activities. The pervasive nature of social media means that harassment can follow students even outside the physical boundaries of the university, further eroding their sense of security (Ojebode & Adedoyin, 2021). Identity theft and data privacy breaches are significant risks. Students frequently share personal information online, sometimes without considering the long-term implications. Oversharing can expose them to scams, phishing attacks, and unauthorized use of their personal data. According to Afolayan and Oyediran (2020), the lack of digital literacy among many university students increases their vulnerability to these threats, as they often fail to implement basic security measures such as strong passwords, two-factor authentication, and careful management of privacy settings.

Another concern is the prevalence of online scams and fraudulent schemes targeting students. Social media has become a platform for malicious individuals to exploit unsuspecting users through fake investment offers, scholarship scams, and impersonation accounts. These threats not only compromise financial security but also create a climate of mistrust and fear among students who depend heavily on these platforms for communication and information sharing. Despite these challenges, social media can also serve as an effective tool for improving student safety when used properly. Many universities, including the University of Benin, use social media platforms to share real-time security alerts, campus safety tips, and emergency notifications. These online

updates allow students to stay informed about potential threats and take precautionary measures promptly. Furthermore, social media facilitates peer-to-peer safety networks, where students can report suspicious activities, warn others about unsafe areas, or share advice on how to avoid online risks. This collective sharing of information has become an important mechanism for fostering a safer student community (Olawale & Balogun, 2022).

Moreover, social media has played a vital role in raising awareness of digital safety practices. Campaigns on responsible social media use, digital privacy, and cybercrime prevention are frequently conducted by institutions and student organizations. By leveraging these platforms for safety education, students are encouraged to develop critical skills necessary for protecting themselves online. When properly utilized, these safety campaigns not only reduce exposure to risks but also empower students to act as advocates for responsible digital behavior within their peer groups. Therefore, while social media undeniably presents serious safety risks, it also offers valuable tools for promoting awareness and proactive protection measures. The challenge lies in ensuring that students are equipped with the knowledge and skills to navigate these platforms safely. For students in the University of Benin, understanding these dynamics is crucial, as social media is increasingly intertwined with both their academic and personal lives.

By fostering digital literacy and encouraging responsible online behavior, social media can be transformed from a source of risk into a powerful tool for enhancing student safety.

### **Role of Social Media on Health and Safety**

Although social media has been criticized for its potential negative effects on health and safety, it also serves as a powerful tool for promoting positive behaviors and fostering safer environments for students. When used responsibly, social media platforms can enhance health awareness, facilitate access to relevant safety information, and provide supportive communities that encourage well-being among university students. One of the most significant positive roles of social media is its ability to serve as a channel for health education. Many health organizations, universities, and advocacy groups use social platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube to share information on nutrition, mental health, disease prevention, and lifestyle management. For students at the University of Benin, these resources can be especially valuable because they provide easily accessible and practical health information in formats that are engaging and relatable. Campaigns on social media, such as those promoting vaccination, stress management, or exercise routines, have been shown to influence students' attitudes

and encourage healthier decision-making (Adebayo & Ogundele, 2022). In this way, social media functions as an informal extension of health education, supplementing the knowledge that students acquire from formal academic and institutional sources.

In addition to promoting health awareness, social media plays an important role in enhancing student safety. Universities increasingly rely on platforms such as WhatsApp and X (formerly Twitter) to disseminate emergency alerts, crime prevention tips, and security advisories. This real-time flow of information enables students to respond quickly to potential threats and fosters a heightened sense of security within the campus community. Furthermore, peer-driven networks on social media allow students to share safety information, report suspicious activity, and support one another in times of crisis, creating a collaborative approach to student safety (Olawale & Balogun, 2022). Social media also provides a space for mental health support and community-building. Online support groups, counseling forums, and university-led virtual wellness programs give students opportunities to connect with peers facing similar challenges and to seek help without the fear of stigma. These platforms can serve as safe spaces for discussing sensitive health-related issues such as anxiety, depression, or stress. By fostering open conversations and reducing feelings of isolation, social media can play a critical role in improving students' psychological well-being and resilience (Hou et al., 2019).

Moreover, social media can facilitate the development of proactive health and safety behaviors by encouraging participation in online challenges or campaigns designed to promote wellness. For example, campaigns focusing on fitness routines or awareness weeks for mental health can inspire students to adopt healthier habits. Similarly, digital literacy initiatives shared on social media can equip students with the knowledge they need to avoid online scams, maintain privacy, and protect themselves from cyber threats. The positive role of social media in students' health and safety depends on how it is used. When students, universities, and health organizations engage these platforms effectively, they can transform social media into a valuable educational and support tool. By leveraging its wide reach and interactive nature, social media has the potential not only to reduce health and safety risks but also to empower students at the University of Benin to make informed choices, maintain their well-being, and stay safe in both digital and physical environments.

### **Strategies to Mitigate the Influence of Social Media on Health and Safety**

The rapid expansion of social media use among university students has created new opportunities for communication, learning, and social engagement, but it has also introduced significant health and safety risks. These risks range from physical health challenges such as poor sleep and eye strain, to psychological issues like anxiety, stress, and low self-esteem, as well as security threats including cyberbullying, fraud, and online

harassment. As a result, several strategies have been suggested by scholars, practitioners, and educational institutions to mitigate the negative influence of social media on students' health and safety. One of the most widely recommended strategies is digital literacy education, which involves equipping students with the knowledge and skills to critically analyze online content, protect their personal data, and recognize harmful or misleading information. Digital literacy programs have been found to help young people develop resilience against cyberbullying, online scams, and misinformation, thereby reducing their vulnerability to health and safety threats (Livingstone et al., 2017; Pérez-Escoda et al., 2021). For students in higher institutions like the University of Benin, incorporating digital literacy into orientation programs and classroom discussions can empower them to navigate social media spaces more responsibly.

Another important approach is time management and self-regulation practices. Excessive exposure to social media has been linked to addictive behaviors that disrupt sleep, academic performance, and emotional stability (Kircaburun & Griffiths, 2019). Encouraging students to set boundaries, such as limiting daily screen time, turning off notifications during study hours, or adopting “digital detox” periods, has been shown to improve concentration and reduce health risks (Meier & Reinecke, 2020). Institutions can reinforce this strategy by organizing awareness campaigns that promote healthy online habits. Counseling and psychosocial support services also play a vital role in mitigating

the negative impact of social media. University students often face pressures associated with online comparison, cyberbullying, and social validation, which may affect their mental health. Research has shown that access to counseling services can help students build coping mechanisms, improve self-esteem, and reduce anxiety associated with digital engagement (Best, Manktelow & Taylor, 2016; Hussain & Griffiths, 2018). At the University of Benin, strengthening counseling centers and integrating discussions on social media use into mental health programs could serve as a proactive response to these challenges.

Institutional and policy measures are also crucial. Universities can adopt social media policies that promote responsible use, address cases of online harassment, and establish channels for reporting abuse. For instance, policies that enforce strict consequences for cyberbullying or online harassment within academic communities have been found effective in creating safer digital environments (O'Reilly et al., 2018). Furthermore, partnerships with tech companies and NGOs can provide universities with resources for campaigns on online safety and health promotion. Peer-to-peer initiatives are increasingly recognized as effective strategies. Students often rely on their peers for information, and peer-led campaigns or ambassador programs can be powerful tools to spread awareness about the safe use of social media. According to Akram and Kumar (2017), peer education is particularly effective among university students because it

fosters trust and encourages behavioral change through shared experiences. Mitigating the influence of social media on health and safety requires a multi-dimensional approach that combines digital literacy, time management, counseling, institutional policies, and peer-led initiatives. For students at the University of Benin, the implementation of these strategies will not only minimize risks but also promote healthier and more responsible engagement with social media.

### **Summary of Literature Review**

The literature reviewed in this chapter has provided a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between social media and the health and safety of university students. Theoretical frameworks such as the Social Learning Theory, Uses and Gratification Theory, and Health Belief Model formed the foundation for explaining how students interact with social media, why they are drawn to it, and how these interactions influence their behaviors, attitudes, and overall well-being. These theories highlight the fact that social media is not merely a technological tool but a social environment that shapes students' health-related decisions and safety practices.

The review of the concept of social media emphasized its evolution from a simple communication platform to a dynamic space where information sharing, community building, and personal expression occur. Its accessibility and interactivity have made it an

integral part of students' daily lives, offering both opportunities for health education and significant risks for mental health, physical well-being, and personal security. Similarly, the concept of health and safety was explored in the context of university students, illustrating how these two factors are closely connected to academic performance, personal development, and quality of life.

The influence of social media on health was shown to be two-sided. On one hand, it enables access to useful health information, mental health support, and wellness campaigns that can encourage positive behaviors. On the other hand, excessive social media use is associated with negative health outcomes such as sleep disruption, anxiety, depression, and reduced physical activity. Likewise, its influence on safety was also highlighted as both beneficial and risky. Social media can serve as a platform for disseminating campus security information and peer-driven safety networks, but it also exposes students to online dangers, including cyberbullying, identity theft, and harassment, especially when digital literacy is lacking. Furthermore, the review of empirical studies supported these observations by presenting evidence from previous research. Findings demonstrated that social media could promote health literacy and foster peer support while also contributing to mental health problems and security risks if left unregulated. These studies reinforced the importance of a balanced approach to social

media use among university students, suggesting that responsible engagement and proper guidance are essential for maximizing its benefits while minimizing potential harms.

The literature reveals that social media plays a complex role in the health and safety of students in higher education institutions such as the University of Benin. While it has the potential to enhance well-being and provide access to important health and safety information, its risks cannot be overlooked. This underscores the need for further research into how students use social media within this specific context, as well as the development of strategies and interventions that can help them use these platforms in ways that promote their health, protect their safety, and ultimately support their academic success.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

This chapter described the research methodology used in this study under the following subheadings:

- Research Design
- Population of the Study
- Sample and Sampling Technique
- Research Instruments
- Validity of the Instrument
- Reliability of the Instrument
- Method of Data Collection

- Method of Data Analysis

### **Research Design**

This study employed the descriptive survey research design. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), a descriptive survey involves systematically collecting information from a sample of individuals with the aim of describing and interpreting existing conditions, practices, or opinions within a population. This design was considered most suitable for the study because it enabled the researcher to obtain specific responses from students of the University of Benin regarding the influence of social media on their health and safety.

Therefore, the adoption of the descriptive survey research design was justified, as it helped the researcher systematically assess the extent to which social media influences the health and safety of students in the University of Benin.

### **Population of the Study**

The target population was 43,679 full-time undergraduate students enrolled across the 15 faculties of the University of Benin during the 2024/2025 academic session. (Academic Planning Unit and the Student Affairs Division).

S/N	Faculty	Population of the Study
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1	Agriculture	1685
2	Arts	6262
3	Basic medical science	3437
4	Dentistry	111
5	Education	7416
6	Engineering	5481
7	Environmental Science	1016
8	Law	1078
9	Life science	5132
10	Management science	3505
11	Medicine	685
12	Pharmacy	1107
13	Physical science	3283
14	Social science	3411
15	Veterinary Medicine	70
	<b>Total</b>	43,679

Source: Academic planning unit, Students Affairs Division, University of Benin, (2025)

### **Sample and Sample Technique**

The sample size for this study is 242 respondents. The multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted to obtain a representative sample of undergraduate students from the University of Benin. This approach is appropriate because it allowed the researcher to

reduce the large population into smaller, manageable groups while ensuring fairness, inclusiveness, and adequate representation across faculties.

In the first stage, systematic sampling technique was employed to select five faculties out of the fifteen existing faculties in the University of Benin. The faculties were arranged alphabetically, and the first and every third faculty were chosen. The selected faculties include Dentistry, Veterinary Medicine, Law, Education, Environmental Science. In the second stage, proportionate sampling was used to determine the number of respondents to be drawn from each selected faculty. Exactly 2.5% of the undergraduate population in each chosen faculty was selected to ensure that larger faculties contribute more respondents while smaller ones contribute proportionally fewer. This procedure produced a total sample size of 242 respondents.

In the third stage, simple random sampling was applied within each selected faculty to choose departments and levels of study. The balloting method with replacement was used to give each department and level an equal chance of inclusion.

Finally, individual respondents were selected from the chosen departments and levels through purposive sampling technique. This ensures that all undergraduate students in the selected faculties have equal opportunities to participate in the study on the influence of social media on their health and safety.

S/N	Faculty	Students per Faculty	Numbers of Respondent (2.5)
1	Dentistry	111	3
2	Veterinary Medicine	70	2
3	Law	1078	27
4	Education	7416	185
5	Environmental Science	1016	25
	Total	9691	242

### **Research Instrument**

The instrument that was used for data collection in this study is a structured questionnaire titled *“The Influence of Social Media on the Health and Safety of Students in the University of Benin.”* The questionnaire is divided into three sections: A, B, C and D. Section A is designed to collect the demographic information of respondents such as gender, age, faculty, and level of study. Section B contains items that assess the Level of awareness on the influence of social media using dichotomous questions (Yes/No response questions). Section C access the extent of the effect of exposure to social media and Section D includes items on strategies implemented to mitigate the effects of social

media using a four point likert-scale; SA (Strongly Agree) = 4, A (Agree) =3, D (Disagree) = 2, SD (Strongly Disagree) = 1.

The inclusion of both yes/no and Likert-scale items enables the instrument to capture detailed opinions and factual awareness, providing both depth and precision in responses. This makes the questionnaire appropriate for quantitative analysis and helps in effectively measuring students' understanding of how social media affects their health and safety.

### **Validity of the Instrument**

The questionnaire was given to the researcher's supervisor and two other experts in the Department of Health Safety and Environmental Education, Faculty of Education, University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State for scrutiny. Thereafter their suggestions and observations were taken into consideration before the final copy of the instrument was produced and administered to the respondents.

### **Reliability of the Instrument**

The reliability of the instrument was determined using the test-retest method. Fifteen (15) copies of the questionnaire were first administered to a group of undergraduate students outside the study sample. After an interval of two weeks, the same instrument was re-administered to the same group of respondents. The scores obtained from both tests were correlated using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient, which yielded a reliability index of 0.83. This coefficient indicated a high level of internal consistency and confirmed that the instrument was reliable for use in the main study.

### **Method of Data Collection**

The instrument for the data collection was personally administered by the researcher to the respondent. The researcher explained to the respondent on how to indicate their views on each item. Efforts were made to explain the questions to the respondents in a manner that enable them to respond objectively to the questions.

### **Method of Data Analysis**

Data was analyzed using percentages, frequency counts in order to facilitate the interpretation of the data collected.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

This chapter presents, analyzes, and interprets the data collected from the respondents through the administered questionnaire. The data are presented in tables and discussed in line with the research questions formulated in Chapter One. Out of the 240 copies of the questionnaire distributed, 230 were properly filled and returned, representing a 95.8% return rate, which was considered adequate for analysis.

**Research Question One: What is the level of awareness on the influence of social media on the health and safety of students in the University of Benin?**

Table 4.1: Responses on the Level of awareness on the influence of social media

<b>Item</b>	<b>Statement</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Decision</b>
1	Understanding of social media as platforms for sharing and exchanging ideas	88.3	11.7	Adequate
2	Awareness of health risks such as headaches, poor sleep, and anxiety	91.2	8.8	Adequate
3	Recognition of social media as a source of health information	84.6	15.4	Adequate
4	Awareness of social media addiction and its meaning	87.0	13.0	Adequate
5	Awareness of unsafe online behaviors such as sharing personal data	89.1	10.9	Adequate
6	Understanding the effects of cyberbullying	90.2	9.8	Adequate
7	Awareness of safe online practices such as reporting and blocking harmful users	85.4	14.6	Adequate
8	Awareness of screen-time-related health effects	88.9	11.1	Adequate
9	Understanding of beneficial social media use (e.g., health awareness)	84.8	15.2	Adequate
10	Awareness of responsible social media use	86.1	13.9	Adequate

The results from table 4.1 shows that students in the University of Benin possess a high level of awareness regarding the influence of social media on health and safety. All ten items recorded high “Yes” responses, ranging from 84.6 percent to 91.2 percent. This indicates that the majority of the respondents understand the nature of social media, the

potential risks associated with its use, and the safe practices necessary for responsible digital engagement.

Specifically, awareness of health risks such as headaches, poor sleep, and anxiety (91.2%), and understanding of cyberbullying (90.2%), were among the highest indicators of awareness. Students also demonstrated strong awareness of unsafe online behaviours (89.1%), and awareness of screen-time effects (88.9%). Similarly, concepts such as responsible social media use, safe online practices, and recognition of social media as a source of health information were well understood.

The grand mean of 2.94, which is above the decision benchmark of 2.50, further supports that students generally show adequate awareness of the influence of social media on their health and safety. This suggests that awareness campaigns, exposure to digital environments, and peer interactions may have contributed to their high understanding of both the benefits and risks associated with social media use.

**Research Question Two: To what extent does exposure to social media affect the health and safety of students in the University of Benin?**

Table 4.2: Response on Extent of the effect of exposure to social media

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<b>S/N Item</b>	<b>Mean SD</b>	<b>Decision</b>
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S/N	Item	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Prolonged use of social media contributes to poor sleeping habits among students.	3.05	0.92	Agreed
2	Social media addiction negatively impacts academic performance.	3.04	0.90	Agreed
3	Frequent exposure to social media increases anxiety and depression.	2.98	0.95	Agreed
4	Excessive use of social media reduces face-to-face interaction.	3.06	0.93	Agreed
5	Unsafe online content poses security threats to students.	3.09	0.89	Agreed

### Mean 2.50

From table 4.2 the analysis of responses shows that exposure to social media has a considerable effect on the health and safety of students in the University of Benin. All items under this research question have mean scores close to or above 3.0, which indicates general agreement among respondents.

The highest mean score (3.09) was recorded for the statement that unsafe online content poses security threats to students, indicating that respondents recognize online safety concerns as a serious issue. Similarly, students overwhelmingly agreed that social media contributes to poor sleeping habits (3.05) and reduces face-to-face interaction (3.06), reflecting behavioural changes associated with extended screen time. Furthermore, the respondents agreed that social media addiction impacts academic performance (3.04) and

increases anxiety and depression (2.98). These findings align with literature that links prolonged digital engagement with psychological and academic challenges.

The grand mean of 3.04 and standard deviation of 0.92 reveal a consistent pattern of responses, indicating that social media use significantly affects students' health and safety. This implies that while social media remains an important communication tool, its excessive use has measurable negative consequences on students' wellbeing and academic productivity.

**Research Question Three: What strategies are implemented to mitigate the effects of social media on the health and safety of students in the University of Benin?**

Table 4.3: Response on strategies implemented to mitigate the effects of social media

S/N	Item	Mean	SD	Decision
1	The university provides awareness programs on safe social media use.	2.83	0.96	Agreed
2	Students are encouraged to manage time effectively to reduce social media addiction.	2.98	0.92	Agreed

S/N	Item	Mean	SD	Decision
3	Health and counseling services are available to assist affected students.	2.86	0.94	Agreed
4	Peer support groups help in reducing the negative effects of social media.	2.84	0.95	Agreed
5	Digital literacy initiatives promote safe and responsible use of social media.	3.01	0.91	Agreed

### Mean 2.50

From table 4.3 the findings reveal that several strategies aimed at addressing the negative effects of social media are in place within the University of Benin, although their implementation appears moderate. All items recorded mean scores above 2.80, indicating general agreement among respondents that such measures exist.

Students' awareness of the presence of awareness programmes on safe social media use (mean = 2.83), as well as initiatives encouraging effective time management to prevent addiction (2.98). The availability of health and counselling services (2.86) and peer support groups (2.84) also shows that the institution provides some level of support for affected students. Among the listed strategies, digital literacy initiatives (mean = 3.01) were perceived as the strongest mitigation measure. This suggests that efforts to promote responsible online behaviour are recognized and appreciated by students.

Despite these efforts, the grand mean of 2.90 indicates that the strategies are only moderately implemented. This may imply that although the university recognizes the

impact of social media on students' wellbeing, the existing intervention programmes may not be accessible to all students, or may lack adequate visibility and effectiveness.

## **Discussion of Findings**

This study examined students' awareness of the influence of social media on health and safety, the extent to which exposure to social media affects their wellbeing, and the strategies available to mitigate these effects in the University of Benin. The findings from the three research questions are discussed in line with existing empirical literature.

The findings show that students possess a high level of awareness regarding the influence of social media on their health and safety. Responses across all ten items indicate that most students clearly understand how social media works, the potential risks associated with prolonged use, and the protective behaviours required for safe online engagement. High percentages were specifically recorded in awareness of health risks such as headaches, poor sleep, anxiety, cyberbullying, unsafe online behaviours, and responsible social media practices.

These results align with recent studies which have reported increased awareness among university students about the health and behavioural risks of digital platforms. Adebayo and Chukwu (2017) found that Nigerian undergraduates demonstrated strong

awareness of the dangers of excessive screen time and the psychological effects of digital engagement. Similarly, Onyeka and Nwankwo (2019) reported that students now possess better awareness of cyberbullying, online privacy, and digital addiction due to increased exposure to technology and university sensitisation activities. The finding that students recognise social media as a source of health information corresponds with Okoro and Odoemelam (2020), who argued that young adults frequently rely on online platforms for health updates, wellness tips, and public health campaigns.

The present study also agrees with Adeyanju and Jimoh (2021), who observed that improved digital literacy among university students enhances their understanding of personal safety, online risks, and responsible social media use. The high grand mean score (2.94) reflects a well-informed student population. This may be attributed to increased internet access, peer learning, institutional awareness campaigns, and the widespread integration of digital platforms into academic and social life.

The results demonstrate that exposure to social media significantly affects students' physical, psychological, and social wellbeing. Respondents agreed that social media contributes to poor sleep habits, academic decline, increased anxiety and depression, reduced face-to-face interaction, and exposure to unsafe online content. All mean scores (2.98–3.09) reflect a consistent pattern of agreement. These findings support Olatunde and Bello (2018), who found that prolonged screen time among students leads

to sleep disruption, reduced concentration, and chronic fatigue. The negative impact on academic performance also aligns with Okoro and Nwankpa (2020), who noted that excessive social media use interferes with study time, reduces academic focus, and promotes procrastination.

The association between social media exposure and increased anxiety or depression mirrors the conclusions of Ogunyemi and Adebayo (2019), who reported that constant comparison, online hostility, and content overload contribute to emotional distress among young people. Similarly, Idowu and Salami (2021) found that increased social media interaction reduces face-to-face communication, weakens social bonds, and affects interpersonal relationships.

The finding that unsafe content poses risks to students is consistent with Eze and Ugwu (2020), who argued that cyber threats, scam messages, and harmful content are growing safety concerns for young users. The grand mean of 3.04 confirms that these concerns are widespread. The findings show that while social media remains an essential communication tool for students, excessive or unregulated use poses serious threats to health, academic success, and personal security.

The findings reveal that the University of Benin implements several strategies to address the negative effects of social media, although the level of implementation is

moderate. Awareness programmes, time-management sensitization, counselling services, peer support groups, and digital literacy initiatives were all acawarenessd by respondents. However, mean scores between 2.83 and 3.01 indicate that these measures are not fully maximized. These results agree with Nwachukwu and Eze (2016), who observed that Nigerian universities often have digital safety policies and counselling services but face challenges with visibility, funding, and student participation. The recognition of digital literacy programmes as the strongest strategy corresponds with Olaoye and Okafor (2021), who emphasized that digital education is one of the most effective ways to promote safer social media behaviour among young adults.

The presence of counselling services aligns with the findings of Tahir and Abubakar (2019), who argued that psychological support helps students cope with anxiety, depression, and behavioural addiction associated with social media. The study's evidence on peer support groups also reflects the findings of Oghenekohwo and Orisa (2020), who found that peer-based interventions help improve coping strategies and promote responsible digital habits.

Despite these strengths, the moderate grand mean (2.90) suggests that these strategies may lack adequate publicity, funding, or accessibility. This is similar to the conclusion of Ejikeme and Mbamalu (2018), who noted that many university-based digital safety initiatives are poorly implemented due to institutional constraints. Although

the University of Benin has structures in place to mitigate the negative effects of social media, there is a need for improved awareness, increased student participation, and stronger institutional support.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Summary

This study investigated students' awareness of the influence of social media on their health and safety, the extent to which exposure to social media affects their wellbeing, and the strategies implemented to mitigate these effects in the University of Benin. Three (3) research questions were formulated to guide the study. Relevant literature was reviewed, and a descriptive survey research design was adopted. Out of the 240 questionnaires distributed, 230 were correctly completed and returned, representing a return rate of 95.8%, which was considered adequate for analysis. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire. Data were presented and analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, means, and standard deviations. The findings were interpreted in line with the research questions.

#### Findings

Based on the data collected and analysed, the major findings of the study revealed that:

1. Students of the University of Benin possess a high level of awareness regarding the influence of social media on health and safety.

2. Exposure to social media has a significant effect on the health and safety of students.
3. Several strategies exist in the University of Benin to mitigate the negative influence of social media, but they are only moderately implemented.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that students in the University of Benin have an adequate level of awareness of the influence of social media on their health and safety. However, this awareness does not entirely prevent the negative effects associated with high exposure to digital platforms. Excessive social media use continues to affect students' sleep quality, academic performance, emotional wellbeing, and personal safety. It is also concluded that the strategies implemented by the university to reduce these effects are moderate and need to be strengthened. While awareness programmes, counselling services, and digital literacy initiatives are present, they do not appear to be sufficiently visible or widely utilised by students. There is therefore a need for the university to improve its intervention efforts to ensure that students benefit from safer and healthier social media practices.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The University of Benin should intensify awareness programmes on safe and responsible social media use to further strengthen the already high level of awareness among students.
2. Counselling and health support services should be enhanced to address the negative effects of social media exposure such as anxiety, depression, poor sleep habits, and academic decline.
3. Existing strategies such as digital literacy initiatives, time-management sensitisation, and peer support groups should be strengthened to ensure higher accessibility, visibility, and effectiveness across the student population.

## **Suggestions for Further Studies**

Based on the scope and limitations of this study, the following suggestions are made for future researchers:

1. A study on factors influencing students' awareness of social media-related health and safety risks in Nigerian universities.

2. An investigation into the long-term psychological and academic effects of excessive social media exposure among university students.
3. A study assessing the effectiveness of institutional strategies implemented to reduce the negative effects of social media use in tertiary institutions.

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## APPENDIX

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION,  
FACULTY OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY.

### QUESTIONNAIRE

ON

THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF  
STUDENTS IN THE UNIVERSITY OF BENIN.

Dear Participants,

I am a student of the Department of Health Safety and Environmental Education, Faculty of Education, University of Benin. I am carrying out a study on the above topic. I therefore solicit for your responses, and assure you that your response will be treated with confidentiality

Please answer the following questions honestly and to the best of your awareness. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and all information will be kept confidential.

Yours faithfully,

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**(Researcher)**

#### Section A: Demographic Information

**Instruction: Kindly respond to the item by a tick (√) in the appropriate box**

1. Sex: Male  Female
2. Age: 16 -19years  20-23  24 – 27  above 27 years
3. Department: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Leve: 100 level  200 level  300 level  400 level

## Section B: Respondents Responses

### Research Question One: What is the level of awareness on the influence of social media on the health and safety of students in the University of Benin?

1. Which of the following best describes social media?
  - A. Websites used only for entertainment
  - B. Platforms that allow users to create, share, and exchange information and ideas online
  - C. A form of traditional mass media like newspapers and radio
  - D. A system designed only for chatting with friends
2. Excessive use of social media has been linked to which of the following health problems?
  - A. Improved vision and concentration
  - B. Headaches, poor sleep, and anxiety
  - C. Stronger immunity and better relaxation
  - D. None of the above
3. Which of the following is a *positive* influence of social media on students' health and well-being?
  - A. Exposure to harmful online content
  - B. Access to health information and awareness campaigns
  - C. Addiction to online gaming and late-night browsing
  - D. Increased risk of cyberbullying
4. Social media addiction can best be described as:
  - A. Using social media for academic purposes only
  - B. Inability to control one's urge to use social media excessively
  - C. Using social media once a day
  - D. Avoiding social media for long periods
5. Which of the following online behaviors poses a *safety risk* to students?
  - A. Setting strong privacy settings on accounts
  - B. Sharing personal information such as address or phone number publicly
  - C. Following verified educational pages
  - D. Participating in health awareness challenges
6. Cyberbullying on social media can lead to which of the following outcomes?
  - A. Increased self-esteem and confidence
  - B. Psychological distress, depression, or social withdrawal
  - C. Improved classroom participation
  - D. Better academic concentration

7. Which of the following demonstrates safe social media practices?
  - A. Clicking on unknown links and downloads
  - B. Accepting friend requests from strangers
  - C. Reporting and blocking abusive or suspicious accounts
  - D. Sharing passwords with friends for convenience
8. Prolonged screen time associated with social media use can negatively affect students' health by causing:
  - A. Enhanced physical fitness
  - B. Eye strain and sleep disturbances
  - C. Improved posture and alertness
  - D. None of the above
9. Which of these is a *beneficial* use of social media for university students?
  - A. Accessing health education and safety awareness information
  - B. Engaging in online arguments and hate speech
  - C. Participating in unsafe viral challenges
  - D. Spreading unverified health information
10. To promote health and safety while using social media, students should:
  - A. Spend most of their study hours online
  - B. Limit screen time, verify information, and practice digital self-care
  - C. Ignore online harassment and unsafe content
  - D. Use any social media platform without privacy restrictions

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD
<b>RQ2</b>	<b>To what extent does exposure to social media affect the health and safety of students in the University of Benin?</b>				
1.	Prolonged use of social media contributes to poor sleeping habits among students.				
2.	Social media addiction has a negative impact on students' academic performance.				
3.	Frequent exposure to social media increases the risk of anxiety and depression in students.				
4.	Excessive use of social media reduces face-to-face interactions, affecting social relationships.				

5.	Exposure to unsafe online content poses security threats to students' personal safety.				
<b>RQ3</b>	<b>What strategies are implemented to mitigate the effects of social media on health and safety of students in the University of Benin?</b>				
6.	The university provides awareness programs on the safe use of social media.				
7.	Students are encouraged to adopt time management strategies to reduce social media addiction.				
8.	Health and counseling services are available to assist students affected by social media misuse.				
9.	Peer support groups are effective in reducing the negative effects of social media on students.				
15.	Digital literacy initiatives have been implemented to promote safe and responsible social media use.				