

**SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION AND CYBER-BULLYING AMONG
UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN UNIVERSITY OF BENIN**

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BENIN CITY

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**BEING A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND
ANTHROPOLOGY, FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN,
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AWARD OF BACHELOR OF SCIENCE (B.Sc.) DEGREE IN SOCIOLOGY AND
ANTHROPOLOGY**

OCTOBER, 2025

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this study was carried out by MOSAKU RACHAEL OREOLUWA with Mat. No: SSC2105948, a student of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Benin, Benin city, Edo State.

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Date

DEDICATION

This research work is dedicated to Almighty God, the author and finisher of our faith who by his help have made this journey a success. And also to my loving parents Mr and Mrs Mosaku and also to my dear Uncle Rotimi Oladipo and my dear Granny Mrs Beatrice Oladipo.

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I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who contributed to the successful completion of this project.

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on investigating social media addiction and cyberbullying among undergraduate students of the University of Benin. Three research questions were asked to find out the most commonly used social media platforms, investigate the forms of cyberbullying and to find out the impact of cyberbullying on undergraduate students of University of Benin.

Qualitative research design was adopted for this study while making use of an in-depth interview guide as an instrument to gather information from twenty (20) undergraduate students selected from various departments within the Faculty of Social Sciences. The data collected was analysed using thematic analysis.

The study findings concludes that platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and Snapchat are the most frequently used social media platforms among students. It was also revealed that prolonged engagement on these platforms increases the likelihood of addiction, which in turn heightens exposure to cyberbullying. The study recommended the implementation of digital awareness programs, guidance and counseling services, and strict online conduct policies to promote healthy and responsible use of social media among university students.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of The Study

In the last ten years of the twenty-first century, especially in Nigeria, technology has changed the way people interact and this has brought about the emergence of an open social platform. Such platforms as social media that allow people to connect with each other and enhance social interaction to meet the needs of people based on technology in the world of today (George & Dellasega, 2011). Social media has become an important part of modern life, particularly among undergraduate students, who rely on social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok for communication, entertainment, and academic purposes. While social media offers numerous benefits, excessive use can lead to addiction, affecting students' mental health, academic performance, and social interactions.

Social media is regarded as an application tool that allowed users to exchange and interact with one another; provided a means to create, edit and share new forms of visual, textual, and audio content; and a platform to categorize, label and recommend existing forms of content (Selwyn 2012). It is an online arena where people can interact, share, communicate, establish and maintain connections with others for different reasons.

Boyd & Ellison (2008) define social network sites as web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system; articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and; view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. Social media is a social network that allows individuals to have a public and semi-public profile also aiding shared connection between people. Social media has become a new way for people to meet their need for connections. It helps users keep in touch with loved ones, meet new people, and join different online communities. Social media

is a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010)

The rapid evolution of technology has revolutionized the world, resulting in the use of technology as the ideal medium for exploring a wide range of information. Humanity is exposed to a better method of doing things as a result of technological advancements. The emergence of the Internet in the 1990s brought in significant changes in communication, leading in the formation of social networking sites (SNSs). Twitter, Facebook, Whatsapp, Messenger, Skype, Google Talk, Google Messenger, iPhones and Androids are examples of social networking sites. Most people use these social networking sites to engage with acquaintances, both in person and online (Asemah and Edegoh, 2012). People may quickly generate, share, bookmark and network content via social media, which has grown as a genre of online conversation (Jha and Bhardwaj, 2012). This has removed the barrier of communication that previously caused people to rely solely on their ears.

We now use social media on a regular basis. If used correctly, social media can assist students and youths in gaining knowledge that can be used to improve their academic performances, develop new skills and promote businesses and products. But the pervasive use of the Internet and social media has presented significant challenges. One of the most concerning issues is the rise of addiction as well as cyberbullying.

Social media addiction is a behavioral addiction that is characterized as being overly careful about social media, drive-by an uncontrollable urge to log on or to use social media (Andreassen & Pallesen, 2014). Social media addiction is defined as excessive and compulsive use of social networking sites that interferes with daily activities and well-being (Ryan, Chester, Reece, &

Xenos, 2014). It is a condition where social media users find it hard to stop using social media, even when it affects their studies, health, sleep, or relationships. It is not just spending too much time on social media, it also includes always feeling the need to check updates, feeling agitated when not online, and relying on comments, likes and replies for self worth.

Kuss & Griffiths (2017) describe social media addiction as a behavioral addiction that is characterized by excessive concern about social media, an increasing amount of time spent on social media, and an inability to control its use despite negative consequences. The problem of social media addiction is growing rapidly in Nigeria because smartphones and internet access are now easier and cheaper to get. Many students use social media several times a day, sometimes even during class or late at night. While some students use it to get useful information, many others spend hours watching reels, following trends or chatting. Over time, this can reduce their focus, cause poor academic performance, lead to low self esteem and also affect mental health.

Undoubtedly, sharing, exhibiting and experiencing are actions that enrich the human being, but excessive exposure to the sweetened lives of other people in social networking sites (Back, et. al, 2010) can cause users to feel dissatisfied with their own realities. Such as active social contributions correlate with neuroticism, social loneliness and exhibitionism (Petrocchi, 2015)

Over time, they may use social media more, and their feelings of disappointment may increase to the point of even becoming addicted to these platforms. Social comparison occurring on social media creates a dissonance between the self being presented and the real self, leading to depression and worsening mental health (Lee, 2020) Excessive use and time play a determining role not only in addiction to social networks (Brailovskaia, et. al, 2019) but also in the emergence of psychological disorders such as anxiety (Lu. et. al, 2018). More specifically, it

could be argued that when Internet use interferes with the individuals' everyday and daily activities (Beard & Wolf, 2001), it can cause psychological, physical and social problems.

Cyberbullying is defined as aggression sent by electronic communication technologies that is used to inflict harm on others (Mehari et al., 2014; Tokunaga, 2010). Cyberbullying has become prevalent partly with the rise of social media (Craig et al., 2020; Zhu et al., 2021). Unlike traditional bullying, which takes place face-to-face, Cyberbullying happens anytime and reaches a mass audience within seconds. Cyberbullying can be carried out directly by way of threats or verbal assaults, or indirectly through methods such as posting an inappropriate picture of the victim online without their consent. Many factors contribute to the relative ease of cyberbullying perpetration, such as anonymity and not having to face the victim directly (Kircaburun et al., 2018). The victim of cyberbullying may not know who the attacker is, especially if the bully hides behind a fake profile. This makes it even more painful and confusing for victims and makes it easier for the perpetrator because he or she does not have to face the victim or reveal their identity.

Both cyberbullying perpetrators and victims have been shown to experience associated mental health symptoms. Amongst victims, cyberbullying has been associated with increases in generalized anxiety, social anxiety, and suicidal ideation (Sampasa-Kanyinga et al., 2014; Hatchel et al., 2018; Lee, 2020; Coelho et al., 2022; Gong et al., 2022; Wright et al., 2022). Perpetrators have also been shown to have significant associations with increased aggression and suicidal thoughts (Schenk et al., 2013) as well as increased depressive symptoms (Lee, 2020). Unfortunately, due to the stigma placed on mental health in Nigeria and the lack of proper awareness, many people or victims do not speak up or get help when being bullied online. At the same time, some young Nigerians engage in cyberbullying without fully understanding the

damage it can cause. Making fun of people online, posting embarrassing contents, spreading false information may seem like a joke to them, but the effects can be long lasting and deeply harmful.

Social media addiction and cyberbullying among undergraduate students at the University of Benin is a challenge that demands immediate attention. The widespread use of social media platforms among students has created a pattern of excessive dependency, leading to disruptions in academic performance, mental health, and social interactions. This addiction often manifests in compulsive behaviors, such as prolonged screen time and lesser engagement in offline activities, which can aggravate the feelings of isolation and anxiety.

Simultaneously, the widespread cyberbullying within the university community has come into view as a noticeable concern. The anonymity and accessibility of social media platforms has helped to bring out harmful behaviors, including harassment, intimidation, and the dissemination of defamatory content. Victims of cyberbullying often experience profound psychological distress, social withdrawal, and, in severe cases, self-harm or suicidal thoughts.

1.2 Statement of The Problem

The Internet today is the most essential source of information, and the growing importance of social media use among students cannot be overlooked. Youths in Nigeria, particularly university students, are heavy users of this communication technology and so suffer the negative consequences. The use of social media and cyberbullying appear to be interconnected.

In recent years, the harmful impact of social media on students has become a difficult and troubling topic in most colleges. Social media may have an adverse effect on human behavior because of gratification derived from its use and studies in other parts of the world have shown that it is potentially addictive. There is a divided attention between social media activities and

their academic work. Students devoted more time and attention to social media than they do to their studies, and this makes them vulnerable and prone to cyberbullying. This study therefore aims to examine social media addiction and cyberbullying among undergraduate students of the university of Benin.

1.3 Objectives of The Study

The main objective of this study is to examine social media addiction and cyberbullying among undergraduate students in University of Benin, while the specific objectives are:

1. To identify the most commonly used social media platforms among undergraduate students in University of Benin
2. To investigate the forms of cyberbullying experienced by Undergraduate students in University of Benin
3. To examine the impact of cyberbullying among undergraduate students in University of Benin.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What are the most commonly used social media platforms among undergraduate students in University of Benin
2. What are the forms of cyberbullying experienced by Undergraduate students in University of Benin
3. What are the impact of cyberbullying among undergraduate students in University of Benin

1.5 Significance of The Study

The use of social media has now become one of the activities of people. Accordingly, there is an increasing interest in research on social media addiction and cyberbullying by scholars around the world. However there is little literature on all aspects of social media addiction and cyberbullying with respect to Nigeria. Most of the literature that the researcher came across that was related to Nigeria in this field were non-scholarly articles, mostly blogs posts and opinion pieces without empirical studies backing conclusions that were made. A number of studies has been carried out in other countries which have looked deeply into social media addiction and also cyberbullying but little has been done in Nigeria. Therefore, the findings of this Study will be of great importance to students, teachers, educational planners and researchers. The study will help researchers with more information on the addiction of social media and cyberbullying on social science students of university of Benin. It will provide relevant materials for students and other researchers undertaking similar research.

1.6 Scope Of The Study

The essence of this research is to primarily study the social media addiction and cyberbullying among undergraduate students of the university of Benin. The research intends to focus on students of faculty of Social Sciences, University of Benin.

1.7 Conceptual Clarification

SOCIAL MEDIA- Interactive forms of media that allows users to interact with and publish to each other, generally by means of the Internet.

ADDICTION- refers to not having control over doing, taking or using something to the point where it could be harmful to you.

CYBERBULLING- Acts in cyberspace intended to make life unpleasant for another person.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Communication with friends and family is very necessary because humans are social animals. This is now made possible thanks to technological advancement. The advancement in technologies has now created a new means and style of communication. The growth in technology led to the emergence of social media which has introduced a new pattern of social interaction and transformed people's lifestyle.

Nowadays people interact with one another by using social media outlets like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Whatsapp, Snapchat, Tiktok, etc to post information about themselves, to post their pictures, message friends and family about upcoming events.

2.2.1 Concept of Social Media

Jacka and Scott (2011) argued “there is no single recognized definition for social media”. However, over the years, some scholars have defined it from various perspectives.

According to Boateng and Amankwaa (2016), social media is an application that allows users to converse and interact with one another. It is an online space where people can connect, share, communicate, establish or maintain connections with others for a variety of reasons. It is an online platform that allows individuals to form social relationships with others of similar goals, interest, activities, or background. In another definition given by (Manning, 2014) Social media is a form of media that includes digital platforms and interactive participation. It includes forms

such as email, text, blogs, message boards, connection sites (online dating), games and entertainment.

According to Kaplan and Helein (2010), Social media is a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content. Social media refers to websites and applications that aid communication, interactions, content sharing and collaboration between individuals. Whatever definition you use, it is unquestionably a medium for interaction. Interaction is the main key feature that differentiate modern social media technologies from traditional mass media (Eveland, 2003). Users can either be both the sources and receivers at the same time in some cases.

Modern media changes the previous inactive receivers into full-blown communicators by empowering users of these digital communicative technologies to shape, customize, and guide online communications, increasing control, self efficiency and personal agency (Sundar, 2013). People can bond with technology as it provides more personal outlets.

Unlike traditional media, which provides for different audiences, social media sites cater to communities of like-minded people, which provides easy and frequent access to others who share their interests (Amichi-Hamburger, 2007). The following are most of the commonly used social media platforms around the world: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, etc.

The first recognized social media network (SixDegrees) was launched in the late 1990s. It allows users to create profiles and make friends. Several community tools like Asian Avenue, Black Planet, and MiGente began supporting various combinations of profiles and publicly articulated friends from 1997 to 2001 (Boyd, Danah, Ellison and Nicole, 2007). Ever since, there has been a great advancement and today there are countless social networking sites designed for local,

specific purposes or international use. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) divided social media into six(6) categories:

1. Collaborative project (Wikipedia)
2. Blogs and Micro blogs (Twitter)
3. Content communities (YouTube)
4. Social networking sites (Facebook)
5. Virtual game world (World of Warcraft)
6. Virtual second world (second life).

This classification of social media has helped different scholars and individuals to easily identify and study specific social media types, but due to widespread emergence of social media, it may be difficult to determine which group a newly developed social media type belongs to. Social media is the most rapidly growing web application in the twenty-first century and its rapid growth is fueled by technological advancements. Humanity has enormously benefitted from social media and still continues to do so, and as a result the importance of social media in terms of communication cannot be overstated.

2.2.2 Types of Social Media

1. Facebook

Facebook was launched on February 4, 2004, by Mark Zuckerberg and his Harvard University roommates. It is one of the most influential social networking platforms in the world (Carlson, 2010). Initially Facebook was restricted to Harvard students, then rapidly it expanded to other universities and later to the general public, becoming a global social media giant. The platform allows users to create personal profiles, connect with friends, share multimedia content, and

engage in social interactions online (Kietzmann et al., 2011). By 2008, it had surpassed MySpace in unique global visitors (Needham & Company, 2008), and by 2012, it reached 1 billion users, making it the largest social network globally (Facebook, 2012). In 2021, Facebook rebranded its parent company as Meta Platforms Inc., reflecting a strategic shift toward the development of the "metaverse", a virtual reality space intended for deeper social interaction (Isaac, 2021). Facebook's impact on communication, politics, marketing, and personal relationships cannot be underrated. It has transformed digital interaction and reshaped the way individuals and institutions share information. Today, Facebook is the largest social media network on the Internet both in terms of total number of users and name recognition.

2. Twitter (X)

Twitter is a microblogging social media platform launched in 2006 by Jack Dorsey and others. It allows users to post short messages up to 140 characters which are called tweets and has played a major role in real-time communication and public discussions. Twitter is widely used for news sharing, political activism, marketing, and social interaction (Murthy, 2013). Twitter, as a social network, contributes to global communication by allowing users to share information and connect with others through the creation of a profile that may include a personal web page and a blog. (Jonah, 2013) claims that Twitter affects behavior by causing psychological disorders as a result of addiction to the social network's access. Twitter also has an impact on behavior because it is a public network (Jaclyn, 2011). In 2022, Twitter was bought by Elon Musk and later rebranded as X in 2023, marking a shift toward building a multifunctional app (Isaac, 2023).

3. Instagram

Instagram is a photo and video-sharing social media platform launched in 2010 by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger. Instagram allows its users to upload visual content, use filters, share stories, and engage with others through likes, comments, and direct messages (Hu et al., 2014).

In 2012, Instagram was acquired by Facebook (now Meta), which helped expand its features, including Instagram Stories, Reels, and IGTV. These updates made it a strong competitor in visual communication and influencer marketing (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016). Instagram plays a key role in shaping online identity, trends, and brand engagement. It is widely used by individuals, businesses, and public figures for self-presentation, advertisement, and community building.

4. Whatsapp

Whatsapp is a smartphone application created in 2009 by Jan Koum and Brian Acton. It allows its users to send and receive text messages, voice notes, images, videos, and make voice or video calls over the internet. Unlike traditional SMS, WhatsApp uses data networks, making it cost-effective and accessible globally (Church & de Oliveira, 2013).

Mistar & Embi (2016) postulate that with the fact that Whatsapp has many benefits to students, it also allows enhancement of students' learning performance in the way of promoting an active learning involvement in Whatsapp conversation or discussion. They explain that through this application, the learning process will be student-centered. Whatsapp can be viewed as a social network that allows people to access a great deal of information rapidly. Whatsapp enables communication with anyone who possesses a smartphone, has an active Internet connection and has installed the application (Sayan, 2016).

5. Snapchat

Snapchat was developed by Evan Spiegel, Bobby Murphy, and Reggie Brown, and officially launched in 2011. It is a multimedia messaging app that became popular for the unique features of sending photos and videos that disappear after being viewed, promoting spontaneous and temporary communication (Bayer et al., 2016).

It also has other features like Stories (a 24-hour visual diary), filters, augmented reality lenses, and Snap Map. These features appeal especially to younger audiences and promote playful, visual interaction (Vaterlaus et al., 2016).

6. Tiktok

TikTok is a video-sharing app owned by the Chinese tech company ByteDance. Tiktok hosts a variety of short form user videos, from genres like pranks, stunts, tricks, jokes, dance and entertainment (Bailey 2020) with duration of 15 to 60 seconds (Schwedel, 2018).

The platform has become a social space for entertainment, self-expression, influencer marketing, and even digital activism through hashtags and challenges. TikTok continues to influence global culture and shape new forms of social interaction online.

7. Telegram

Telegram is a messaging app launched in 2013 by Pavel Durov. Telegram allows its users to send end-to-end encrypted text messages, voice notes, files, and media, as well as create large groups and broadcast channels (Anderson, 2021). It was launched for iOS 14 August 2013 and Android on 20 October 2013. The servers of Telegram are distributed worldwide with five data centres in different parts of the world, while the operational center is based in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

8. YouTube

YouTube is the largest and well known video-based online networking site which was launched in 2005 by Steve Chen, Chad Hurley, and Jawed Karim. It allows users to upload, watch, comment on, and share videos across various categories such as entertainment, education, news, and personal vlogs (Burgess & Green, 2018). In 2006, YouTube was acquired by Google for \$1.65 billion.

2.2.3 The Use of Social Media By Students In The Nigerian University

The use of social media as a channel of communication is a growing trend in Nigeria now, and in almost all parts of the world. In Nigeria, almost everyone including university students make use of social media. According to Punch Newspaper (2017) 75% of Nigeria's online population uses social media. This is because of the quest of people for information and their willingness to interact via an online community that is full of opportunities.

According to a recent study, use of social media among university students in Nigeria has increased significantly. Social media Platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, and Telegram have become an important means of communication, entertainment, and academic purposes. With the increase in the use of smartphones and increased access to the internet, students now spend a significant portion of their time engaging with digital platforms (Ogunbodede et al., 2020). While social media presents opportunities for learning and collaboration, its misuse has also raised concerns about its effects on students' academic performance, concentration, and overall well-being (Unachukwu et al., 2023).

While social media is usually seen as a tool for entertainment, Nigerian university students have increasingly used it for academic purposes and resource sharing. Students form WhatsApp or Telegram groups for class discussions, assignment distribution, and examination preparation (Olowu & Seri, 2012; Okoro et al., 2021). Access to lectures, practical demonstrations, and

academic conferences are available on Platforms like YouTube, which enables students to learn beyond the confines of the classroom. Similarly, LinkedIn is also used by some students to build professional networks, seek internship opportunities, and access career development resources (Adebayo & Oyedele, 2019). Many professionals, including teachers and school administrators encourage students to use social networking sites like Facebook because they allow them to connect with one another and discuss school related issues (Alexander & Salas, 2008). Junco and colleagues (2011) discovered that Students in the Twitter group had a higher GPAs and higher levels of engagement than Students in the control group. Gao, Luo, and Zhang (2012) conducted a review of Twitter-related literature published between 2008 and 2011. They concluded that Twitter allowed Students to interact with one another in class (back channel) and continue discussions outside of class. Students can use social media platforms to form online communities to plan projects, have group discussions about class materials.

Facebook serves as an important educational tool because it allows the integration of multimodal content, such as student-created photographs and videos, as well as URLs to other texts, in a platform that many students are already familiar with, and it allows for both asynchronous and synchronous, open dialogue through a familiar and frequently accessed medium. Further, it allows students to ask minor questions that they might not have felt motivated to ask if they had to go to a professor's office hours in person (Moody 2010). It gives room for students to manage their own privacy settings which they frequently combine with the privacy settings they already have as registered users.

Adegboji and Toyo (2006), found that social media contributed meaningfully to the ease of research through online materials in their analysis on the effects of social media on research. It is

commonly believed that researchers and students in Nigeria Higher Education Institutions are battling with the problem of inadequate and out-of-date materials.

Social media is also a primary source of news and information for university students. Many students rely on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram for updates on national issues, university announcements, and global trends (Oloruntola, 2020). The speed and immediacy of social media platforms mean that students often receive information before it appears on traditional media channels. This has made social media an important tool for civic engagement, particularly during national events such as elections, protests, and policy changes affecting education.

One of the most important uses of social media by university students is for maintaining and expanding social relationships. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat allow students to keep in touch with family and friends, meet new people, and participate in interest-based online communities (Amadi & Azubuike, 2019). Social media also helps students connect with alumni, lecturers, and professionals in their fields, thereby extending their academic and professional networks

2.2.4 Positive Effect of Social Media On Students.

Social media has become an important part of students' daily lives, offering several positive impacts on their personal development. Some of the positive effects include;

1. Socialization

Man is a social animal. And an important part of growing up is socializing and making friends. Social media is an important tool of Socialization because it allows individuals to exchange ideas and learn new things. This will invariably result in them becoming more confident in life.

2. Enhances Communication And Group work

Social media helps students to communicate with their peers globally and also aids group work through the use of some social media Platforms like WhatsApp, Reddit, etc.

3. Access to Educational Resources

Students now have easy access to educational resources through social media platforms like YouTube where there are tutorial videos, and also Facebook where there are educational groups where students can learn or get help with school work. And also students can now offer courses online even while in school through social media.

4. Skill Development

Using social media can improve digital literacy which is essential nowadays. Students can also learn

5. Sharing Knowledge

Social media provides an effective and easy way in which students can share knowledge. They can simply access information, study, transform, and share ideas. Hence, the flow of knowledge becomes smooth.

6. Updating Oneself

Social media helps in updating oneself. They will have the capability to know new things as and when it happens. This helps them to refresh their own particular information base.

7. Preparation For The Future

Social media showcases recent trends around the world. Students can set up a plan of what might be expected out of them in the future by observing the changes that are being updated, shared, discussed, or spoken about on the social media Platforms.

8. Sharing Feelings And Thoughts

students in frequent times don't have the right stage to share their feelings and thoughts. Through social media they are given the chance to sound their thoughts. If students were given the opportunity to share what they feel or think then it becomes simple for them to decide what is good and what is bad.

2.2.5 Negative Effects Of Social Media On Education.

Source Of Distraction

Social media can be a distraction. Students might check their phones during class or even while studying and this can cut off their concentration. Many of them spend a lot of time on social media platforms rather than studying or doing anything productive.

1. Reduction in Real Human Contact

The more time students spend on social media, the less time they spend associating with people one-on-one. This decreases their relational abilities and communication skills. They won't have the capacity to mingle face to face with others. The business sector is increasingly getting unsatisfied with the relational abilities of the new graduates because of this reason.

2. Reduction in Critical Thinking and Language Use

Students now rely on quick answers from social media rather than deep thinking. Social media makes it hard for students to think, rather they will go to their social media Platforms to get this information. And also, they utilize slang words or abbreviated types of words on long range interpersonal communication locales. They now depend on auto correct on phones and PCs to construct a good sentence. Social media decreases their charge over language use and their thinking capability.

3. Time wastage

Students, while seeking and concentrating on the web, get pulled in to utilizing online networking locales and once in a while they overlook why they are using the Internet. Sometimes students are not able to deliver their work in the specified timeframe as they waste their time on social media.

4. Low Grades

Multitasking between social media and studies can reduce the quality of their work. Students get low evaluations in school because of absence of the coveted data and composing abilities.

5. Loss of motivation in Students

Social media has an addictive nature which can result in procrastination. Instead of completing assignments or preparing for exams, students may choose to scroll through feeds, watch videos, or engage in online conversations which leads to reduction in academic performance and interest in schoolwork in general.

6. Reduced learning and research capabilities

Students now depend more on the information easily reachable on these social networking sites and websites. This reduces their learning and research capabilities.

2.2.6 Effects Of Social Media On Health.

Our health is affected by social media in both the good and bad ways. While social media helps us to stay connected and learn more, its abuse can also cause problems.

The abuse of social media has an impact on the physical and psychological wellness of students. One of the effects on mental health is anxiety and sadness. This happens when students spend too much time on social Media, they end up comparing themselves to others and end up getting depressed, sad and anxious. Some students find it hard to stay away from social media. They

check their phones all the time, which can make it hard to focus on school or other tasks. The misuse of social media encourages a sedentary lifestyle in students. They spend a lot of time on social media which leads to reduced physical activity. This sedentary behavior can contribute to weight gain, obesity, poor posture, and related health issues like back pain.

2.3 Social Media Addiction

Scholars from different parts of the world have begun to give attention to Internet based addiction phenomenon (social media addiction) and have undertaken different studies in this aspect in recent years. However, most of these studies focus on addiction in relation to psychology with introductory ones mainly assessing whether Internet addiction truly exists (Nauert, 2010) and subsequent ones looking into other forms of Internet addiction such as social media addiction. Communication scholars also have started giving attention to this area of study. However, the attention of some researchers in Nigeria has been caught and a few studies could be found from there.

In a study titled “The Facebook Addiction Test: A New Tool to Study Facebook Usage” the researcher sought to find out the impact of Facebook obsession on its users. They chose to focus only on Facebook because Facebook was the leading social media site according to the 2010 edition of “The Economist” magazine. Their study was built on Dr. Kimberly Young’s work on Internet addiction, but with a difference. For instance, they were only focused on identifying Facebook consumers and those who were obsessed with its usage and also to explore how this obsession has impacted their behavior on Facebook rather than the diagnosis of addiction in a clinic context. They developed and used the Facebook Addiction Test (FAT) to carry out their research which was an adaptation of Young's Internet Addiction Test (IAT) (1998). A total number of 1,438 people were surveyed for this research on their usage of this social media site.

Invitation of participation was sent via email and consumers completed the survey online. To help increase the generalization of results, probability sampling was used. The findings of the Study shows that Facebook addiction is different from Internet addiction. However, like Internet addiction, Facebook addiction appears to be closely linked to interactivity and the ease of interaction. They also found that FAT is able to classify consumers with different usage profiles but most importantly, the FAT can be used to identify consumers with different attitudes and usage of Facebook.

In another study, Alabi (2012) sought to find out the level of Facebook addiction among selected Nigerian University Undergraduates. The level of addiction to Facebook among selected Undergraduate students of these universities was surveyed. Stratified and purposive techniques were used in selecting 1000 Undergraduate students from four universities in South-western Nigeria. Two private institutions and two public institutions. Data was collected using the Facebook Addiction Symptoms Scale (FASS) in the form of a questionnaire. Findings from the study showed that Just 1.6% of respondents met the criteria for Facebook addiction which is considered low, possibly due to limited internet access in Nigeria at the time.

Dau (2015), also investigated the impact of social media addiction among the students of tertiary institutions in Northern Nigeria and the level of the students' addiction. Also, he examined the various social media sites used by students and the frequency at which they use them using the survey method. Five tertiary institutions in Katsina State were selected out of which 800 students were sampled. Data gathered was analysed using frequency count and simple percentages. Findings from the study shows that the majority of the respondents use almost all popular social media platforms with Facebook having the largest number of users. 55.5% of respondents were classified as strongly addicted to social networking sites, 28.4% were moderately addicted, while

16.1% showed no signs of addiction. He also found out that the majority of the respondents use these social media platforms mainly for social needs such as friendship and dating.

Another study by Al-menayes (2015) also aimed to study the dimensions of social media addiction in university students in Kuwait. The study was based on the Internet addiction scale developed by Young in 1998 from which a questionnaire was designed and distributed to 1,327 Undergraduate students. Cross-sectional survey methodology was adopted by the researcher. Findings from the data gathered showed that social media addiction has three independent dimensions i.e the users experience with social media, time spent using the social media and satisfaction derived from using social media. He also found out that social media was a negative predictor of academic performance as measured by a student's GPA.

Cabral (2011) studied Generation Y's addiction to social media with focus on Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and Myspace. She categorized generation "Y" as people who have grown up understanding the power of the Internet. Addiction was interpreted using Griffith's six components of behavioral addiction: salience, mood modification, tolerance, withdrawal, conflict and relapse". The aim of the Study was to determine if Generation Y was addicted to social media because of their need to maintain relationships with their peers. Results from this study pointed out that Generation Y suffers from three out of the six components identified by Griffith and they are tolerance, salience and relapse. The limitation of the Study was the use of convenience sample rather than random sampling method which could not allow for generalization of findings.

All the above literature review suggests that social media addiction exists. However, most of the studies carried out on social media addiction have mostly used Facebook in its analysis and not much has been done on other social media platforms.

2.4.1 Cyber Bullying

Beebe et al. (2010) conducted a study on cyber bullying among 202 college students in the United States to explore the occurrence of cyber bullying within higher education settings. The findings of the Study showed that 50.7% which is more than half of the participants had experienced cyber bullying at least once, with 36.3% which is over a one-third experiencing such incidence on a monthly basis. Social media platforms like Facebook were identified as the most common channel through which cyber bullying occurred and also through instant messaging applications. The perpetrators were often individuals within the students' social circles such as peers, classmates, or former partners, as well as anonymous users. Victims of cyberbullying reported emotional challenges including anxiety, withdrawal, and sadness, with some indicating that their academic performance was negatively affected as a result of these experiences.

Pradhan et al. (2023) conducted a study among Undergraduate nursing and medical students in India found that cyber bullying among youth in tertiary institutions was widespread. Among the 213 participants which consist of nursing and medical students, over 60% reported being victims of cyber bullying, while nearly 58% agreed to have cyber-bullied others. Close to half of the respondents have experienced being the victim as well as the perpetrator. The psychological impact of cyber bullying on victims was significant as many reported increased levels of depression, anxiety and stress as measured by DASS-21 scale. In addition, self-esteem scores, assessed through the Rosenberg scale, showed that cyberbullying had a negative effect on students' emotional well-being. These findings emphasize the dual role students play in cyberbullying dynamics and the urgent need for awareness and support systems within university settings.

Adomi et. al (2016) investigated cyberbullying among Library & Information Science students at Delta State University. The respondents were all third-year undergraduate students from the Department of Library and Information Science at Delta State University, selected through simple random sampling. The majority of the respondents, that is 80% were both aware of and had personally experienced cyberbullying firsthand. The most commonly reported type of cyberbullying was harassment via Facebook (about 41%). The perpetrators were often friends, ex-lovers, or anonymous users. Victims of cyber bullying have reported emotional effects such as anger, low self-esteem, and depression, along with negative academic impacts. The study emphasized the seriousness of cyberbullying in Nigerian universities and called for increased awareness and intervention.

Another study by Adebayo et.al (2019), studied 200 University undergraduate students from three institutions in Kwara State shows that the frequent use of social media significantly predicted involvement in cyberbullying behaviors. The study used a researcher-developed questionnaire (FSMECQ) to measure engagement and bullying activities. Results from the study showed consistent affirmation that frequent use leads to abusive online behaviors, regardless of demographic differences. The researcher recommends incorporating counseling programs focused on electronic bullying into student support services to curb its emotional and psychological consequences.

In another study of 416 undergraduate students across two Ibadan tertiary institutions, Uye et al. (2023) found out that some specific personality traits such as extraversion, neuroticism, openness, and conscientiousness were important predictors of cyberbullying behavior. Aggressive behavior further increased the chances of involving in online bullying, and male students had a higher percentage of participation rates than their female counterparts. These findings show how

individual psychological views can influence the chances of engaging in cyberbullying within Nigerian university contexts.

The above studies show that cyberbullying is a widespread phenomenon in Nigerian universities, with the use of social media playing a noticeable role. Victims of cyber bullying often experience emotional and academic effects, as seen in Delta, Kwara, and Ibadan-based studies. These findings call for quick institutional strategies to address digital abuse.

2.4.2 Types Of Cyberbullying Among Undergraduate Students.

1.Harassment

This refers to the sending of offensive, derogatory or threatening messages to a target repeatedly, which is intended to intimidate or cause distress. Among undergraduate students harassment may occur through group chats, direct messaging, or public comment threads, and may include name-calling, insults, and derogatory jokes (Tokunaga, 2010). This type of cyber-bullying is common because it can easily be executed through smartphones and social networking sites.

2. Impersonation

impersonation occurs when the perpetrator pretends to be another person online, either by hacking into the victims account or creating a fake social media profile. This form of bullying is particularly harmful as it can involve spreading false information, sending offensive messages to others, or damaging the victim's reputation (Willard, 2007). Impersonation is often linked to jealousy, interpersonal conflict or revenge among undergraduate students.

3. Flaming

Flaming involves the posting of hostile, angry, or vulgar comments during online arguments, which is often in public spaces such as group forums, comment sections, or online communities.

Though these incidents may be short, the magnitude and public nature of the attacks can cause significant embarrassment and emotional harm to the victim (Kowalski et al., 2014).

4. Outing

This involves publicly sharing someone's private, sensitive, or embarrassing information, images, or videos without their consent. This can lead to severe humiliation and social stigma (Bauman, 2013).

5. Exclusion

It is the intentional act of leaving someone out of online groups, chats, or social media circles. This type of cyber-bullying can significantly affect the victims sense of belonging and self-esteem (Slonje & Smith, 2008).

6. Denigration

it involves spreading false or harmful information about someone online with the intention of damaging their reputation. This could include gossip, edited images, or fabricated posts (Willard, 2007). In a university setting, denigration can lead to academic isolation and strained peer relationships.

7. Cyber-stalking

It is the persistent and unwanted monitoring of an individual online, which can increase into threats and real-life danger. It often causes victims to feel unsafe both online and offline (Tokunaga, 2010). Among undergraduate students, cyberstalking is sometimes linked to failed relationships or obsessive peer behavior.

2.4.3 Gender Differences In Victimization And Perpetration

Gender plays an important role both in the experience (victimization) and execution (perpetration) of cyber-bullying among undergraduate students. Research shows that while both male and

female students engage in and experience cyber-bullying, the forms, frequency, and underlying motivations often vary between genders (Barlett & Coyne, 2014; Smith et al., 2019).

Victimization

Research has found that female students are most likely to report being victims of cyberbullying in indirect or relational forms like outing, exclusion, and denigration, which usually focus on social connections and reputation (Kowalski et al., 2014). According to Wright (2017), women could also be more vulnerable to discrimination online based on gender, body shaming, and harassment involving appearance-related insults.

On the other hand, often related to competitive or confrontational online interactions (Barlett & Coyne, 2014), male students often face more direct and blatant forms of cyberbullying like flaming and explicit threats. (Olweus 2013) notes that social stigma or cultural norms linking vulnerability with weakness could lead men to underreport victimization

Perpetration

When it comes to perpetration, research findings are somewhat mixed. Some studies show that male undergraduates are more likely to engage in direct, aggressive cyber-bullying behaviors such as threats, flaming, and cyberstalking (Slonje & Smith, 2008). This may be related to higher tendencies toward overt aggression and impulsivity in online communication (Barlett & Coyne, 2014).

In contrast, female undergraduates are more likely to engage in indirect or relational cyber-bullying, such as spreading rumors, social exclusion, and subtle character defamation (Kowalski et al., 2014). These behaviors align with the pattern of relational aggression commonly reported among females in both offline and online contexts (Wright, 2017).

2.4.4 Influence Of Cultural And Social Contexts

Cultural norms and societal gender expectations influences how cyber-bullying is both committed and reported. In many developing countries, including Nigeria, female students may face greater social consequences when targeted online, particularly if incidents involve moral or sexual rumors (Okorie & Odoemelam, 2020). Males, on the other hand, may be more willing to engage in public online confrontations due to social norms that reward confidence and dominance.

2.4.5 Causes Of Cyber-bullying Among Undergraduate Students

Cyberbullying is not an isolated phenomenon; rather, it is shaped by several individual, social, technological, and cultural elements that provide an atmosphere fit for such actions to flourish. Among undergraduate students, the reasons reflecting both personal attitudes and the particular dynamics of higher education settings are often complicated and interrelated (Tokunaga, 2010; Kowalski et al., 2014).

1. Anonymity

One of the main causes of cyberbullying is the online platform's anonymity. Being able to hide one's identity helps to lower the anxiety of being discovered and inspires people to participate in risky activities free of instant repercussions (Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008). Many offenders think that digital interactions are less real and hence more acceptable for violence (Barlett et al., 2016).

2. Peer Pressure And Social Competition

To fit in, become well-liked, or claim dominance in peer groups, undergraduates frequently face great social pressure. Peer pressure can motivate kids to participate in cyberbullying either to

impress friends or to avoid being victimized themselves (Hinduja & Patchin, 2015). Online abuse may also stem from rivalries over leaders roles, academic achievement, or love connections.

3. Social Media Addiction and Excessive Screen Time

The prolonged and excessive use of social media platforms increases both the opportunity and vulnerability to cyber-bullying. Students who have high levels of social media engagement are most likely to encounter conflicts, engage in impulsive posting, or misinterpret online communication, which can lead to aggression (Kircaburun et al., 2019).

4. Interpersonal Conflict And Revenge

Personal disagreements that started offline such as misunderstandings, breakups, or competition often spill over into the digital space, where they can escalate due to the speed and permanence of online messages. In some cases, cyber-bullying is used as a tool for retaliation (Bauman, 2013).

5. Weak Institutional Policies And Enforcement

When universities fail to enforce existing regulations against online harassment, perpetrators may feel encouraged. The absence of formal reporting channels and inadequate disciplinary measures can perpetuate a culture of impunity (Slonje & Smith, 2008).

6. Lack Of Digital Literacy And Emotional Regulation

Some undergraduates may lack the emotional intelligence or digital literacy skills to control online disagreements constructively. Misinterpretation of tone, impulsive responses, and poor conflict resolution abilities can lead to aggressive exchanges (Livingstone & Smith, 2014).

2.4.6 Psychological And Social Impacts Of Cyber-bullying On Undergraduate Students.

Cyber-bullying has different impact on undergraduate students, not only on their mental health but also on their academic performance. The persistent nature of online harassment where content can be shared widely, remain permanently accessible, and occur at any time often intensifies the harm compared to traditional bullying (Tokunaga, 2010; Kowalski et al., 2014).

Psychological Impacts

a. Anxiety and Depression

Victims of cyber-bullying often experience high levels of anxiety, stress, and depression. These emotional responses can be as a result of constant exposure to hurtful messages, fear of public humiliation, and uncertainty about when the next attack will occur (Bauman, 2013). Studies have linked cyber-bullying victimization to symptoms such as sleep disturbances, panic attacks, and feelings of hopelessness (Wright, 2017).

b. Low Self-esteem

Openness to online ridicule, insults, or exclusion can have a major decline on a student's self-confidence. Repeated denigration and public shaming can lead students to internalize negative labels, resulting in long-term self-worth issues (Patchin & Hinduja, 2018).

c. Suicidal thoughts

In severe cases, victims of cyber-bullying has been associated with suicidal thoughts and attempts, especially when combined with other stressors such as academic failure or family conflict (Kowalski et al., 2014). The anonymity of online perpetrators may worsen the sense of helplessness victims feel.

Social Impacts

a. Social Isolation and Withdrawal

Victims of cyber-bullying may avoid social interactions both online and offline to escape from further harassment. This withdrawal can result in loss of friendships, limited peer support, and reduced participation in campus activities (Slonje & Smith, 2008).

b. Distrust in Peer Relationships

Repeated betrayal through outing, impersonation, or rumor-spreading can lead to distrust in peers. Students may become cautious about sharing personal information, which can hinder the development of healthy interpersonal relationships (Okorie & Odoemelam, 2020).

c. Negative Impact on Academic Performance

Cyber-bullying can reduce student's interest or motivation to attend lectures, participate in group work, or engage in academic discussions particularly if the harassment is related to their academic performance or occurs in academic group chats (Livingstone & Smith, 2014). Poor concentration, absenteeism, and declining grades are frequently reported among victims.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

This study will be based on two theories which are; the Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) and General Aggression Model (GAM).

Uses And Gratification Theory (Ugt).

The Uses and Gratification Theory was developed by Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1973). It is one of the most popular theories for understanding media use. The uses and Gratification Theory posits that media audiences are active users who engage with media content to satisfy specific needs and desires, such as social interaction, entertainment, information seeking, escapism, and identity expression (Katz et al., 1973; Rubin, 2009). Unlike earlier media theories that argued that audiences are passive recipients of messages, Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) emphasizes how individuals actively use and interpret media content for their personal gratifications.

The theory basically has to do with what audiences do with the media. It explains users' motivation in choosing media content and the behavior associated with it. For instance it explains why undergraduate students are drawn to media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, TikTok, and X. We can say it's because of the immediate and diverse gratifications gotten from its use. These benefits include: connecting with peers, staying informed, expressing personal identity, and alleviating boredom. Over time, the repeated use for these purposes can transform from voluntary engagement into habitual and compulsive patterns of use. When gratification-seeking becomes constant and unregulated, it can develop into social media addiction, characterized by preoccupation, withdrawal symptoms, and a loss of control over usage (Andreassen et al., 2012).

For this study, Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) is important because it provides a basis for understanding why undergraduates might become deeply engaged with social media to the extent of addiction. This framework helps explain how students' need for certain rewards from social media can lead to overuse and possible negative effects.

General Aggression Model (Gam)

The General Aggression Model (GAM), was developed by Anderson and Bushman (2002), it brings together different ideas about why people act aggressively. It shows that both personal traits (like personality, beliefs, and past experiences) and outside circumstances (like being provoked, seeing violent content, or feeling anonymous) can affect someone's emotions, thoughts, and physical reactions which result in making them more likely to act aggressively (Anderson & Bushman, 2002; DeWall et al., 2011).

In online spaces (social media), certain conditions like not having to face people directly, having an audience, or getting support from peers can increase the chances of someone reacting aggressively (Barlett et al., 2014). For example, a student who spends a lot of time online because of social media addiction might come across upsetting content or arguments. If they're already feeling angry or thinking negatively, they're more likely to engage in cyberbullying, such as sending mean messages, spreading rumors, or posting offensive things (Wright, 2017).

In this study, GAM is important because it helps explain how spending too much time online, especially due to social media addiction, can lead to aggressive behavior. By looking at how thoughts, emotions, and situations work together, the model shows how social media addiction can increase the risk of cyberbullying among university students.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0. Introduction

This chapter describes the research design, population study, sample size, technique instrumentation and method of data collection used for this study.

3.1 Research Design

This study made use of qualitative research design. Specifically the in-depth interview method to explore social media addiction and cyberbullying among undergraduate students in University of Benin. The qualitative approach is better suited for this study because it allows the researcher to gain a detailed and deep insight into students' lived experiences, perceptions, and coping strategies regarding these phenomena (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

3.2 Population of The Study

The population of this study encompass all undergraduate students in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Benin. The total number of undergraduate students within the Social Sciences faculty exceeds 4,000 individuals, across different departments and academic years.

3.3 Sample Size

The sample size considered for this study was 20 undergraduate students chosen from the total population of students in the faculty of social sciences in the University of Benin.

3.4 Sampling Technique

The study adopted the purposive sampling technique. Participants were deliberately selected based on specific criteria which are important to the study, for instance the respondents must be an undergraduate student in the Faculty of Social Sciences. This method was appropriate because it allows the researcher to focus on respondents who possess the characteristics and experiences necessary to provide meaningful information on social media addiction and cyberbullying.

3.5 Research Instrument

The study adopted the use of interview guide. The interview guide was designed to collect detailed information from undergraduate students on their use of social media and their experiences with cyberbullying.

The semi-structured interview guide was divided into four (4) sections:

1. Demographic information – age, sex, year of study, preferred platforms.
2. Social media use – frequency, purpose, and signs of addiction.
3. Cyberbullying – experiences, effects, and coping strategies.
4. Solutions – suggestions on how to reduce social media addiction and cyberbullying.

3.6 Method of Data Collection

For this study, data was collected through in-depth interviews with the 20 undergraduate students of the faculty of social sciences in University of Benin. Each interview lasted up to 15 minutes, followed the prepared interview guide. With the participants approval, interviews was recorded to ensure accuracy. In addition field notes was taken to capture other observations.

3.7 Method of Data Analysis

The data collected from the interviews was analyzed using thematic analysis. After transcribing the audio recordings, the researcher carefully read through the responses to identify recurring themes, patterns, and concepts.

These were grouped into themes and sub-themes that reflect the main research objectives, such as social media usage, addiction signs, experiences of cyberbullying, and suggested solutions.

The method was appropriate because it allows the researcher to organize and interpret detailed qualitative data, providing meaningful insights into the experiences of undergraduate students.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the data collected and analyzed in line with the objectives of the study, which explored social media addiction and cyberbullying among undergraduate students in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Benin. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with 20 purposively selected undergraduate students, as described in Chapter Three.

The responses were transcribed, organized, and analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns, concepts, and experiences related to social media use, signs of addiction, experiences of cyberbullying, coping strategies, and suggested solutions. This qualitative approach provides a rich, detailed understanding of the participants' lived experiences.

4.2 Data Presentation

Table 1: Demographic Data Analysis

Social demographic characteristics	Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	8	40
	Female	12	60
	Total	20	100
Age	18 – 20 years	6	30
	21 – 23 years	9	45
	24 – 25 years	5	25
	Total	20	100
Religion	Christianity	14	70
	Islam	6	30
	ATR	-	-
	Total	20	100
Preferred Platform	WhatsApp	7	35
	Twitter	3	15
	TikTok	4	20
	Instagram	3	15
	Facebook	3	15
	Total	20	100
Year of Study	100 Level	5	25
	200 Level	6	30
	300 Level	4	20
	400 Level	5	25
	Total	20	100

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The above table shows that 8 numbers of participants, representing 40% were males while 12 numbers of participants representing 60% were female, indicating a slightly higher representation of female students. Also, 6 of the respondents were between the ages of 18-25 which represents 30%, 9 respondents were between ages 21-23 years which represents 45% and 5 were between the ages 24-25 which represents 25% of the total respondents. This suggests that

most participants fall within the typical age range of undergraduate students. In terms of religion 14 of the participants identified as Christians which represents 70%, while 6 identified as Muslims which represents 30% of the respondents. The data on preferred social media platforms shows that WhatsApp was the most widely used platform among respondents which was used by 7 respondents which represents 35%, Twitter was used by 3 participants which represents 15%, TikTok was used by 4 participants which represents 20%, Instagram was used by 3 participants which represents 15% and Facebook was used by 3 participants which represents 15%. This implies that instant messaging and short-form video content platforms are more popular among the students. Finally, the distribution by year of study indicates 6 of the respondents are in 200 level which represents 30%, 4 of the respondents were in 300 level which represents 20% while 5 respondents were in 100 and 400 level respectively which represents 25% of the total population, demonstrating a fair spread of participants across different stages of study in the Faculty of Social Sciences.

4.2.2 Findings

Social Media Use

The information gathered from the participants revealed several patterns regarding preferred platforms, daily usage, and reasons for engagement. When asked about the platforms they use most often, respondents mentioned WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and X/Twitter. A majority of participants indicated using multiple platforms daily, reflecting the pervasive role of social media in their academic and social lives.

And when asked they responded thus: *" My preferred platform is Instagram. The social media platforms I usually use are WhatsApp and Instagram. I check messages and updates from*

friends several times a day. I spend about 4 hours daily on social media, mainly in the evenings".
(Alice/ 200 level/ Social work)

Another participant has this to say, "*The social media platform I prefer is TikTok. I spend most of my time on Instagram and TikTok. I enjoy watching short videos and keeping up with trends. I spend almost around 5 hours, sometimes more if I have free time. I mostly use it for entertainment and relaxation, especially after lectures*". (Brian/ 300 level/; public administration)

One of the participants states that, "*I prefer using whatsapp. WhatsApp is my main platform, but I also use Facebook sometimes, especially for group discussions and connecting with classmates. Mostly I spend 3 hours per day, mostly on WhatsApp for academic discussions and chatting with classmates in study groups*". (Chinedu/ 300 level/ sociology)

Another participant stated that, "*TikTok is the platform I prefer using. Mostly use TikTok and Instagram because I enjoy entertainment videos and following current trends, and Whatsapp for class updates. Usually I use 6 hours, because I watch videos and chat with friends. I mostly use it for entertainment and following trends online*" (Deborah/ 300 level/ sociology)

Adding to this, another respondent shared that, "*I love using Instagram. I mostly use WhatsApp, Instagram, and TikTok regularly to chat with friends and watch entertaining content. I can't really say, but it should be up to 5 hours a day on average, splitting time between TikTok, WhatsApp, and Instagram. I use social media for chatting, academics, and watching funny videos for relaxation*". (Emeka/ 300 level/ Economics)

A respondent said that, '*My preferred platform is Facebook. Facebook and WhatsApp are the platforms I use the most. I mainly use them to stay connected with friends and family. I spend about 4 hours, mostly on Facebook and WhatsApp. I use them for academic purposes and to keep in touch with friends*". (Funke/ 400 level/ public administration)

A participant noted that, *"Twitter is the social media platform I prefer using. Instagram and X/Twitter are my main social media platforms. I follow news updates and interact with friends. On average I spend 6 hours daily, especially in the evenings after lectures. Mostly, I use them for entertainment, following news updates, and chatting with peers"*. (George/ 300 level/ Political science)

Another participant has this to say, *"I will say I prefer using Instagram. I use WhatsApp and Instagram mostly, and sometimes I scroll through TikTok for fun after lectures. Roughly, I spend 5 hours, sometimes more when I am bored. I use it for Chatting with friends, relaxation, and watching TikTok videos after lectures"*. (Hannah/ 200 level/ Political science)

As expressed by one participant, *"My preferred platform will be Facebook. Facebook and Instagram are where I spend most of my time. I use them to chat and for entertainment. I spend about 6 hours, mainly for chatting and checking updates. I also use social media for academics and entertainment"*. (Ibrahim/ 300 level/ sociology)

One of the participants stated that, *"I prefer using TikTok. Mostly, I use TikTok and Instagram. I enjoy watching funny and trending videos. That should be around 7 hours every day, mostly TikTok and Instagram. I use them for entertainment and business"*. (Joy/ 200 level/ social work)

A participant expressed that, *"Whatsapp is the social media platform I prefer. WhatsApp and X/Twitter are the social media I mostly use. I check them throughout the day to keep in touch with friends and follow news. I can say I spend 6 hours daily, checking messages and news updates. I use them for academic purposes and chatting with friends online"*. (Kemi/ 400 level/ Sociology)

One of the participants stated that, *"TikTok is my preferred platform. I mostly use Instagram and TikTok. Even when I have assignments to do, I find myself opening them without realizing how much time has passed. I spend 6 hours on average, and sometimes late into the night. I use them for entertainment and relaxation, especially when stressed"*.(Lekan/ 400 level/ Sociology)

According to another respondent, *"Whatsapp is my most preferred platform. WhatsApp and Facebook are my daily platforms. I use them for chatting and social connection. I use it for about 4 hours per day, mainly WhatsApp and Facebook. I use them for academic purposes and for social connection"*. (Mary/ 300 level/ Political science).

A participant explained that, *"The social media platform I prefer using is whatsapp. I use Instagram and Whatsapp a lot, mostly for entertainment and relaxation after lectures. I spend around 5 hours, mostly in the evenings. I use them for entertainment and stress relief"*. (Nkechi/ 200 level/ Political science).

Another participant mentioned that, *"WhatsApp is my preferred platform. WhatsApp and X/Twitter are my most used platforms. I chat with friends and sometimes follow trending news. I spend up to 4 hours, chatting and browsing content. I will say I mostly use social media for chatting and checking news updates"*. (Olu/ 300 level/ Sociology)

Another participant said that, *"I prefer using Twitter. TikTok and Twitter are the social media platforms I use mostly. I enjoy socializing online and watching entertaining videos. I spend about 5 hours daily, mostly on TikTok and Instagram. I use them for entertainment and socializing with peers online"*. (Patience/ 400 level/ political science).

A respondent stated that, *"My preferred platform is Whatsapp. I mostly use WhatsApp and Facebook. I use them to stay in touch with friends and classmates. I spend 4 hours, mainly using*

WhatsApp and Facebook. I use them for my academics and also chatting with classmates".
(Queen/ 200 level/ Sociology).

One respondent explained that, *"My preferred social media platform is Twitter. Twitter and TikTok are my go-to platforms for fun and relaxation. I spend 6 hours on average on Instagram and TikTok. I use these platforms for entertainment, relaxation, getting the latest information and for my business. I'm an online vendor".* (Rita/ 300 level/ social work)

According to another respondent, *"Whatsapp is my preferred platform. WhatsApp and Instagram are my mostly used social media. I spend time chatting and connecting with friends. The Average hours I spend on social media is 5 hours daily, mostly chatting and browsing posts".*
(Samuel/ 400 level/ Sociology)

This respondent expressed that, *" Facebook is my preferred social media platform. I spend most of my time on Whatsapp and Facebook. I watch videos and follow trending topics. At most I spend 6 hours daily on TikTok and X/Twitter. I use these platforms for entertainment and following news updates".* (Tola/ 200 level/ Economics)

The responses show that **Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp dominate students' social media use**, with daily engagement ranging from 3 to 6 hours. Reasons for use include **communication, entertainment, business and academic purposes**, highlighting both the benefits and potential risks of prolonged social media engagement.

4.2.3 Forms of Cyberbullying

The finding of the study also revealed that participants experiences cyberbullying when using these social media platforms. Here are the responses from the respondents:

A. Insult And Fake Accounts

One of the participants stated that, *"Insults in comment sections and fake accounts seem to be the most common forms of cyberbullying. I witnessed this on Instagram when a coursemate was being insulted in the comments section by people using fake accounts. She felt very anxious and stressed after seeing the hurtful comments about her online. It affected her concentration in class for a few days"*. (Alice/ 200 level/ Social work)

According to another respondent, *"Creating fake accounts to impersonate or spread false information are very common forms of cyberbullying. I have not experienced cyberbullying first-hand but I have seen fake accounts created on X/Twitter to spread false information about others"*. (George/ 300 level/ Political Science).

A participant explained that, *"Fake accounts and targeting rumors are common forms of cyberbullying among students. I experienced cyberbullying once when someone made a fake account and pretended to be me. This person kept sending messages to my friends and families asking for money. When I became aware I was shocked"*. (Kemi/ 400 level/ Sociology)

B. Threats and insults

Another participant mentioned that, *"Threats and insults are the forms of cyberbullying I have seen the most. I experienced cyberbullying once. Someone posted a picture of mine on X/Twitter without my permission and added a rude and derogatory caption"* (Brian/ 300 level/ Public administration)

One participant stated that, *"I have not experienced cyberbullying first-hand but I have seen classmates being threatened via WhatsApp messages and they were scared to report it. Students often receive threatening messages or hurtful texts in group chats which I think is the common form of cyberbullying"*. (Chinedu/ 400 level/ Sociology)

A respondent remarked that, *"Insults and hurtful messages in private chats are typical forms of cyberbullying. I experienced cyberbullying on WhatsApp when some classmates were sending hurtful messages about my personal life. They said it was for fun but I knew I was being bullied"*. (Hannah/ 200 level/ Political Science)

Another respondent observed that, *"Threats and insulting messages on social media are common forms of cyberbullying. Students are often threatened via X/Twitter or WhatsApp. I personally had to block someone who was sending abusive messages to me"*. (Lekan/ 400 level/ Sociology)

A respondent remarked that, *"Insults and threats in group chats are common forms of cyberbullying among students. I once experienced it on Facebook. This was in my secondary school days when some classmates insulted me in a private chat and shared it with others the next day. I was really affected by it at that time"*. (Olu/ 300 level/ Sociology)

"Threats and insults are common forms of cyberbullying. I experienced cyberbullying when I was threatened and insulted which are common on social media platforms, especially on Instagram and X/Twitter. I blocked the people involved immediately to hinder further bullying". (Rita/ 300 level/ social work)

C. Insult and rumors

This respondent expressed that, *"I will say Insults and rumours on social media are common forms of cyberbullying. I once experienced cyberbullying on TikTok after I posted a video of mine on my account and people started insulting and body shaming me in the comment section"*. (Deborah/ 300 level/ Sociology)

Another participant mentioned that, *"Mostly mocking comments in group chats and posts on social media are very common forms of cyberbullying. I haven't experienced cyberbullying but*

I've witnessed it on Facebook, where a student's opinion was mocked repeatedly in a group chat". (Emeka/ 300 level/ Economics)

One of the participants stated that, "I think the common forms of cyberbullying is insulting comments on social media platforms. I experienced being bullied on TikTok by people leaving offensive comments under my post". (Patience/ 400 level/ Political Science)

A participant noted that, "For me I'll say abusive messages on social media platforms is a common form of cyberbullying. I experienced this on WhatsApp at a time. Some classmates sent me abusive messages because of a disagreement we had in class". (Samuel/ 400 level/ Sociology)

A respondent remarked that, *"Spreading rumours and insults on social media are common forms of cyberbullying. I tend to wonder if these culprit knows that what they're doing is bullying. I once witnessed cyberbullying when a rumours was spread about my cousin on Instagram. It might have been intended to be a harmless joke but the outcome was not something expected".* (Joy/ 200 level/ social work)

Another respondent observed that, *"Spreading rumours and false informations are common forms of cyberbullying among students. I have not experienced cyberbullying but a close friend of mine did. Rumours were spread about via WhatsApp messages. It caused a lot of tension between her and her classmates".* (Queen/ 200 level/ Sociology)

Similarly, another respondent emphasized that, *"Insults and rumors are forms of cyberbullying common among students. I've witnessed people being bullied online, mostly through insults and spreading false rumours. This is common on social media platforms like Instagram".* (Tola/ 200 level/ Economics)

D. Threats

A participant noted that, *"The common form of cyberbullying I know is threats from unknown people online which happens quite often. I've experienced it once. I received threatening messages on Instagram from someone I didn't know, after a disagreement online"*. (Funke/ 400 level/ public administration)

Similarly, another respondent emphasized that, *"Insults, threats, and spreading rumours are the forms of cyberbullying I have seen. I have witnessed students being insulted in group chats and on social media posts. It often starts with small jokes and escalates quickly"*. (Ibrahim/ 300 level/ Sociology)

One of the participants stated that, *"Insults, threats, and mocking posts are frequent forms of cyberbullying on social media. I have witnessed cyberbullying through insults and threats on social media. Some classmates were also bullied when they got insulted because of their opinions on the class group"* (Mary/ 300 level/ Political Science)

E. Fake Accounts And Rumors

As shared by one of the respondent, *"The common forms of cyberbullying I know of are Fake accounts and spreading false rumors. I witnessed this when a classmate was bullied on Instagram. Fake account was used to post false information about her"*. (Nkechi/ 200 level/ Political Science)

The findings reveal that **insults, fake accounts, threats, and rumours are the dominant forms of cyberbullying** among undergraduate students. Each participants has either experienced or witnessed one or more of this forms of cyberbullying.

4.2.4 Impacts of Cyberbullying

Participants shared a range of emotional, social, and academic impacts resulting from cyberbullying, highlighting the profound effect it can have on students' well-being and daily lives.

A. Social and Academic impacts

One of the participants stated that, *"She felt very anxious and stressed after seeing hurtful comments about her online. It affected her concentration in class for a few days."* (Alice/ 200 level/ Social work)

As shared by one respondent, *"Getting bullied online made me withdraw from group chats and avoid social interactions for a while."* (Brian/ 300 level/ Public administration)

One of the respondents reported that, *"I became very cautious about my online presence. It affected my mood and my class participation"*. (Ibrahim/ 300 level/ Sociology)

A respondent stated that, *"I felt reluctant to participate in academic and social activities"* (Olu/ 300 level/ Sociology).

A respondent recounted that, *"I became worried and stressed. It affected both my academic focus and social interactions with peers."* (Samuel/ 400 level/ Sociology)

B. Social and Emotional impact

A respondent articulated that, *"Many of them got worried about attending lectures because they fear running into the people who bullied them and also they feel embarrassed in front of classmates."* (Chinedu/ 400 level/ Sociology).

One of the respondents reported that, *"When it happened I felt anxious and sad. I was also reluctant to post anything online for fear of being targeted again"*. (Funke/ 400 level/ Public administration).

A respondent stated that, *"It affected my self-confidence and made me withdraw socially. I also felt embarrassed when classmates talked about the incident"* (Hannah/ 200 level/ Political Science).

One of the respondent pointed out that, *"It caused anxiety and made me avoid interacting online. I also felt isolated from friends for some days"*. (Kemi/ 400 level/ Sociology).

As one respondent described, *She felt very anxious and unsafe online. She also avoided group discussions and social interactions for a while*. (Nkechi/ 200 level/ Political Science).

According to a participant's account, *"I felt distressed and socially withdrawn. I also became hesitant to interact with classmates online"* (Patience/ 400 level/ Political Science).

As narrated by one interview participant, *"After the experience I felt embarrassed and anxious, and it made me avoid posting anything online for some time"*. (Queen/ 200 level/ Sociology).

In the words of a respondent, *"I felt embarrassed and anxious, and it made me avoid posting anything on social media"* (Rita/ 300 level/ social work)

C. Emotional and Academic impacts

One respondent recalled that, *"After this experience I became upset and demotivated academically. I couldn't focus on my assignments for a few days because I kept thinking about the harsh words and comments"*. (Deborah/ 300 level/ Sociology).

A participant succinctly expressed that, *"I felt isolated. I didn't want to engage with classmates or participate in online discussions for some time."* (Emeka/ 300 level/ Economics).

A respondent observed that, *"The girl felt hurt and betrayed, especially because the bullies were people she knew. It also distracted her from her academic work".* (Joy/ 200 level/ social work)

In the words of a respondent, *"I was upset and stressed, which affected my ability to focus on lectures and assignments"* (Lekan/ 400 level/ Sociology)

One respondent recalled that, *"I felt hurt and upset, and because of this I avoided social media and also missed some group study sessions because of the stress".* (Tola/ 200 level/ Economics)

D. Didn't experience

Another respondent observed that, *"Like I said earlier I didn't experience it so I don't know what effect it had on this person"* (George/ 300 level/ Political Science).

In the words of a respondent, *"I can't really say it's effect because I didn't experience it"* (Mary/300 level/ Political Science)

The responses show that cyberbullying has **emotional, social, and academic consequences** for undergraduate students. Most participants reported **stress, anxiety, embarrassment, social withdrawal, and temporary distraction from academic activities**, emphasizing the urgent need for effective strategies to prevent and address cyberbullying in the university environment.

4.3 Discussion of Findings

The study set out to examine social media addiction and cyberbullying among undergraduate students in University of Benin. The analysis of the in-depth interview revealed several significant patterns in social media use, experiences of cyberbullying and its impact.

A. Social Media Use

The findings revealed that social media has become deeply integrated into the daily routines of undergraduate students. Participants reported frequent engagement with platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and X /Twitter), spending an average of three to six hours daily on these sites. For many students, social media serves as a vital tool for communication, entertainment, relaxation, and academic interaction.

B. Forms of Cyberbullying

The analysis further revealed that cyberbullying is a widespread experience among undergraduate students. Most participants had either witnessed or personally experienced one or more forms of online harassment. The common forms of cyberbullying identified included insults, impersonation through fake accounts, threats, hacking of personal accounts, and spreading of false information or rumours. These actions often took place across platforms like Instagram, WhatsApp groups, and Twitter, where anonymity and public visibility make it easy for perpetrators to target others.

C. Impacts of Cyberbullying

The study revealed that cyberbullying had emotional, social, and academic consequences for students. Participants reported feelings of anxiety, stress, embarrassment, social withdrawal, and temporary distraction from academic tasks. These outcomes underline the serious impact of cyberbullying on students' mental well-being and academic engagement.

In summary, the findings of this study reveal that while social media plays an important role in students' communication, learning, and entertainment, it also poses significant risks in terms of addiction and exposure to cyberbullying. The data show that excessive usage contributes to

dependency behaviors, while cyberbullying undermines students' mental health, social confidence, and academic productivity.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

The study examined social media addiction and cyberbullying among undergraduate students in the University of Benin. Findings from the in-depth interviews revealed that social media has become an important part of students' everyday lives, serving as a major channel for communication, entertainment, academic engagement, and relaxation. The most frequently used platforms include WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and X (Twitter), with students spending an average of three to six hours daily on these platforms.

However, the study also revealed that cyberbullying is a common experience among students. Many respondents reported having either witnessed or personally experienced various forms of online harassment, such as insults, threats, fake account and the spread of false information or rumours. These incidents mostly occurred on platforms like Instagram, WhatsApp groups, and Twitter, where anonymity and public exposure make it easier for perpetrators to target victims. The findings further showed that cyberbullying has serious emotional, social, and academic impacts on students. Victims often experienced anxiety, stress, embarrassment, low self-esteem,

social withdrawal, and loss of academic concentration. These effects highlight the negative influence of social media misuse on students' mental health and academic productivity.

In conclusion, the findings demonstrate that while social media offers valuable opportunities for learning, connection, and recreation, its excessive use leads to addictive tendencies, and its misuse fosters cyberbullying, both of which pose significant threats to the well-being, social relationships, and academic performance of undergraduate students at the University of Benin.

5.2 Conclusion

The study concludes that social media plays a central role in the academic and social lives of undergraduate students, yet excessive usage can lead to addictive behaviors. Cyberbullying is prevalent among students, taking forms such as insults, threats, fake accounts, and the spreading of rumours, and it negatively affects their emotional, social, and academic experiences.

The findings demonstrate that students are aware of the risks and often take steps to protect themselves; however, more structured and institutional support is required. Effective mitigation of social media addiction and cyberbullying requires a combination of awareness, counselling, proactive monitoring, and education on responsible online behavior.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. The university management and government agencies should use social media platforms for educational awareness and digital sensitization campaigns. These campaigns should educate students on the responsible use of social media, emphasizing the importance of time management, privacy protection, and content moderation.

2. Students should also be encouraged to prioritize academic and productive use of social media, such as for research, networking, and knowledge sharing, rather than using it solely for entertainment or unproductive activities. Parents and guardians should further monitor and guide their wards to ensure they use social media positively and moderately.
3. The university should strengthen its disciplinary measures against perpetrators of cyberbullying and conduct regular sensitization programs to help students identify, prevent, and respond to acts of online harassment.
4. The government should enact and enforce stricter cybercrime laws and penalties to discourage online abuse among young people. Students should also be taught the importance of digital empathy, respect, and ethical online communication, while parents or guardians should maintain open communication with their wards about their online experiences.
5. It is recommended that the university counseling unit should provide psychological support and intervention programs for victims of online abuse.
6. The university management and lecturers should also pay attention to students showing signs of distress or sudden withdrawal, offering support where necessary.
7. The government and private organizations should fund mental health awareness programs across campuses, while students themselves should be encouraged to seek help early when affected by cyberbullying and avoid retaliatory online behavior.

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APPENDIX

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY

UNIVERSITY OF BENIN

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE

Project Title: Social Media Addiction and Cyberbullying among Undergraduate Students in
University of Benin

Hello, and thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. The purpose of this discussion is to explore students' experiences with social media use, addiction, and cyberbullying. There are no right or wrong answers. Please share your honest opinions. Your responses will remain confidential.

May I record this interview for accuracy?

Section 1: Demographic Information.

Can you tell me about yourself? (Age, Sex, Year of study and department, preferred platform)

Section 2: Social Media Use

1. Which social media platforms do you use most often? (e.g., WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, X/Twitter, Snapchat, Telegram)
2. How many hours do you spend on social media daily?
3. What are your main reasons for using social media (e.g., academics, entertainment, chatting, business)?

Section 3: Forms of Cyberbullying

4. Have you ever experienced or witnessed cyberbullying? If yes, can you describe what happened?
5. What forms of cyberbullying are most common among students (e.g., insults, fake accounts, threats, spreading rumours)?
6. How did you respond to these incidents?

Section 4: Impacts of Cyberbullying

7. What emotional, social, or academic impact did cyber-bullying have on you?

Section 5: Suggestion

8. What steps can the University of Benin take to address social media addiction and cyberbullying?
9. What advice would you give a student who feels addicted to social media or is being bullied online?

Closing

Thank you for sharing your experiences and opinions. Is there anything else you would like to add about social media use, addiction, or cyberbullying that we have not discussed?