The Systematic Review of Social Media Addiction and Mental Health of Nigerian University Students: The Good, The Bad and The Ugly

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Abstract:

The global increase in popularity and accessibility to social media platforms daily, University students in Nigeria, like their counterparts worldwide, are facing unique challenges related to their mental well-being caused by media addiction despite the fact that technology has drastically and dramatically transformed the clinical delivery of mental health services globally in the recent times. However, the relationship between this transformation- social media and the mental health among the University students in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. Therefore, this paper systematically reviewed the social media addiction and the mental health of the Nigerian University students. It further reviewed and emphasized the good aspect of social media on mental health, the negative effects it has, and the addiction (ugly) developed in the course of using social media. Studies were reviewed to juxtapose the good, bad and the ugly of the use and its influence on mental health of Nigerian students. The paper concluded that, though, social media has contributed significantly to the modern dissemination of clinical delivery but its addiction, could negatively affect the mental health of the students as many studies have established. Therefore, there is a need for a balanced approach to social media usage for this population to have and sustain better mental health because the less they are addicted to social media the better the mental health of the Nigerian students.

Keywords: Social media, addiction, mental health, Nigerian students, the good, the bad, the ugly.
Introduction

Globally, the use of social media has completely changed the social narratives of young people's realities and their social world on some of the social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Whatsapp, LinkedIn, SnapChat, YouTube, etc. (Dhammathattariya, Songkram, Visessuvanapoom & Piromsopa, 2021). This proliferation of social media addiction is born out of the recent decades in the development of information technology as a way of interpersonal communication (Smith & Anderson, 2018; Stone, & Wang, 2018), as well as the clinical delivery of mental health services (Awopetu, Anhange & Ocheibi, 2014). The degree to which students interact in online hangout spaces with friend, relations, acquaintance, share public and private information constitute a great opportunities. While these spaces to a large extent are fantastic opportunities to see and be seen (Boyd, 2010), it is also an avenue to build and expand the social networks as they connect to people nationally and internationally.

Social Media is an internet based platform that gives its users access to share personal information, documents, videos, and photos in a seamless manner. The ability to connect with anyone from anywhere on the face of the earth is a powerful feature that the social media possesses (Dollarhide, 2020). It indicates a wide range of applications and websites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Google+, LinkedIn, Pinterest, TikTok, and snapchat (Bryer & Zavattaro, 2011). It has become a community in which we get information about everything going on around the world, build relationships and shape self esteem and identity. According to Royal Society for Public health (2017), many young adults do not know the experience of living in a world without access to the internet and the social media.

Before now, Nigerian students like their counterparts of all over the world are seen studying in the library without any electronic gadgets, acquiring knowledge and pushing the frontiers of academic through informed research and other forms of academic exercises (Ayatalumo & Ukegbu, 2018). However, with the recent development and advancement in technology, there is a dramatic and drastic change in the narratives whereby we see students go about with electronic gadgets varying from one form of gadget to another. Initially, it was computers but nowadays this has graduated to smartphones of different specification and sometimes with latest laptops or portable tablets doing all manner of activities with the aid of these devices in their various institutions of learning. One of the globally activities they perform with these gadgets is the downloading and installing of social media applications popularly referred to as “Apps”. While considering the amount of valuable times in geometric progression university students spent on these platforms interacting with people on social media space, it is quiet obsessive and compulsive pathway of leading to social media addiction and capable of interfering with their mental wellness.

Just like any other addiction such as drug addiction, alcohol addiction, gambling addiction etc affect individuals, social media addiction is also a psychological disorder that is capable of affecting all age group. Though, not listed among the newly disorders in the DSM 5-TR Edition of Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders but its signs may be detected when an individual who is connected to the social network websites begins to lose track of mental status orientations in the case of students losing focus on time management, experiencing insomnia due to unlimited time surfing internet, ignoring lectures and other school assignments.

According to World Health Organization (2018), Mental health is a core part of an individual’s general wellbeing and is beyond the non-existence of mental disorders. It is a state in which the individual is productive, aware of his/her capabilities and can deal with the everyday pressures of life. Several factors including social, economic, environmental, and
biological, contribute to the mental wellbeing of an individual.

There has been concerns raised over the effects of the increased use or rate of social media on the mental health of young adults globally and in Nigeria (Adcock, 2016). Most undergraduates in Nigeria are young adults who are in the stage between childhood and adulthood. This period is a vulnerable time during which emotional and social development take place. Therefore, it is pertinent to analyze the impact of social media on the mental health of undergraduates.

According to Okereke & Oghenetega (2014), social media addiction is a major issue among young adults in Nigeria. This has been echoed and re-echoed in several studies which reported a high level of addiction among young adults in Nigeria.

The Good Aspects of Social Media Addiction and Mental Health

Most of the discussions about Social Media are usually focused on possible problems or dangers. However many studies have shown that it is not all negative when it comes to social media as they have shown evidence of improvement in mental health due to social media. According to Zsila & Reyes (2023), the use of social media significantly imparts mental health. The quality rather than the quantity of social media use is the determinant of whether the experience will enhance or deteriorate the user’s mental health (Marciano, et al. 2022). This points to the fact that social media use is not totally bad but has its benefit depending on how it is used.

The benefits of social media cannot be over emphasized especially for the undergraduate students. Most undergraduates are usually as a matter of necessity leave their family and loved ones behind to start a new life within the four walls of the university/campus life. Social media affords them the opportunity to keep in touch and still interact with family members and friends despite physical distance. According to Akintunde A (2020), social media has opened a new avenue for social experiences since the early 2000s, extending the possibility for communication and networking. Using social media offers opportunity for humour, and amusement, identity creation and creative expression among other advantages. Through social media use, many undergraduates now have a platform for showing and displaying their talents, skills, abilities with the whole wide world. Social media have also been proven to provide opportunities for to enhance the mental health of users because it facilitates social connections and peer support (Naslund, 2020)

According to Nesi, et al (2019), Social connection is one of the most well-known advantages of social media with 81% of students reporting that it increases their sense of connectedness to their peers. Prior research confirms that doing so increases people’s well being, boosts acceptability or a sense of belonging. In a study conducted on the COVID 19 pandemic, Maciano et al (2022) found out that social media acted as a stress buffer during the pandemic as it availed mutual friendships, provided rewarding social interactions and humor thereby reducing stress. Robinson and Smith (2020), listed the positives of social media as provision of emotional support and suicide prevention. In Nigeria, many echo this on a daily basis as they claim many would have died of depression due to the harsh economy if not for social media. For them, social media offers a distraction from the worries of surviving, helps to meet and create new relationships with other people of like minds, seek out resources and information that might be of help in coping with the harsh reality through engaging the diverse contents on social media. So many other findings have agreed that social media can enhance connection, increase self esteem and improve a sense of well beng. Akintunde (2020) affirmed this when he pointed out that social media helps the young adult find an outlet to express their creativity and ideas. It also gives the ability to be able to anonymously seek for emotional and mental support in tough times. Another advantage is boosting mental health as it affords uses for screening, treatment, and prevention of diseases and illnesses (Reid et al, 2016) Social media has been promoting the
possible viability of using social media to source for indications of depression or drug misuse etc (Nesi & Prinstein, 2015). Social media has also availed the unprecedented potential for awareness of mental health issues and social media based health promoting programs. Undergraduates with mental health concerns now have therapy choices thanks to social media’s immediate accessibility and wide possibilities including the chance to reach hard-to-reach locations (Treptre et al, 2015).

Social media helps to promote suicide prevention. Robinson and Smith (2020), reported that social media helps to prevent young adults who have suicidal tendencies from committing suicide. This is due to the fact that it allows them access to therapeutic interventions online without being identified or criticized. Generally, social media has brought about a great amount of creativity, learning, innovation, encouragement of small medium scale enterprises and the creation of wealth without having a physical product or shop.

The Negative Effect of Social Media Addiction and Mental Health

Since social media has become more and more vital to the social life of university students nowadays, students are at greater risk of social media addiction, which may be harmful to their mental health (Sujarwoto, Saputri & Yumarni, 2023). Social media are responsible for aggravating mental health problems (Karim, 2020) as social media has become an integral part of modern life, connecting people across the globe and transforming the way individuals communicate, share information, and build relationships. Nigerian university students are no exception to this trend, as they are increasingly reliant on social media platforms for various purposes. However, the excessive use of social media has raised concerns about its impact on mental health. According to Stabler (2021) use of social media significantly impacts mental health. It can enhance connection, increase self-esteem, and improve a sense of belonging. But it can also lead to tremendous stress, pressure to compare oneself to others, and increased sadness and isolation. Social media is a technology with a lot of wonderful benefits. It allows people to share and connect, get news and information, and even meet new people. But there can be a downside too, especially for college-aged young adults who have grown up in a world of screens. Social media use has been linked to depression, anxiety and loneliness.

Recent studies referenced by The Child Mind Institute and The National Centre for Health Research suggest people who frequently use social media feel more depressed and less happy with life than those who spend more time on non-screen-related activities. Social media is without doubt, has some good intentions: connecting to endless scrolling as almost every student now has an account on at least one social media platform. They use social media to reach out to friends, share experiences, and tell the world about themselves. However, without realizing it, they are managing an addiction. Research has shown that young adults who use social media are three times as likely to suffer from depression (World Health Organization [WHO], 2022; Hunt et.al 2018), putting a large portion of the population at risk for suicidal thoughts and behaviours. According to Karim et.al (2021) and Statista (2022) recent research, people spend 2.3 hours daily on social media such as WhatsApp, Messenger, Facebook, Tiktok, Snapchat, Instagram, YouTube and other popular social media have become increasingly popular among youth most especially university students and one-third think they spend too much time on these platforms as opined by Pew Research Centre (2023). These platforms have even been associated with anxiety and depression. The considerable time people spend on social media worldwide has directed researchers’ attention toward the potential benefits and risks. Research shows excessive use is mainly associated with lower psychological well-being (Boer et.al, 2020). However, findings also suggest that the quality rather than the quantity of social media use can determine whether the experience will enhance or deteriorate the user’s mental health (Marciano et.al, 2022) as study by Riehm et.al (2019) also noted that adolescents who spend more than 3
hours per day on social media were at significantly increased risk for mental health disorders. In the same vein, Sujarwoto, Saputri & Yumarni (2023) found that excessive social media use harms the mental health of university students in Indonesia, since students with higher social media addiction scores had a greater risk of experiencing mild depression while Haand and Shuwang (2020) study reveals that social media addiction has a positive correlation with depression among university students in the Khost province of Afghanistan. In other words, the higher the student addiction level, the greater his/her depression level is. This study also confirmed that the internet-based technological addiction positively associates with mental health problems without considering developed and least developed countries so also the addictive use of social media positively associates with depression equally in developed and in least developed societies.

Also, the findings of Ratan et.al (2021) suggested that there are consistent associations between smartphone addiction and physical and mental health, especially mental health. Social awareness campaigns about smartphone addiction and its impact on physical and mental health are needed. In reviewing literature, anxiety and depression were the most commonly measured outcome. The prominent risk factors for anxiety and depression emerging from this study comprised time spent, activity, and addiction to social media. In today’s world, anxiety is one of the basic mental health problems. People liked and commented on their uploaded photos and videos. Some teens experience anxiety from social media related to fear of loss, which causes teens to try to respond and check all their friends’ messages and messages on a regular basis. On the contrary, depression is one of the unintended significances of unnecessary use of social media. In detail, depression is limited not only to Facebooks but also to other social networking sites, which causes psychological problems. A study by Karim et.al (2020) found that individuals who are involved in social media, games, texts, mobile phones, etc. are more likely to experience depression.

In this segment, we explored the impact of social media use on mental health of Nigerian University students by providing comprehensive research perspectives on negative effects. Several studies have pointed out the potentially detrimental effects of social media use on mental health. Concerns have been raised that social media may lead to body image dissatisfaction (Harriger et.al, 2023) increase the risk of addiction and cyberbullying involvement (Naslund et.al, 2020), contribute to phubbing behaviours (Chi et.al, 2022), and negatively affects mood (Valkenburg, 2022). Excessive use has increased loneliness, fear of missing out referred to as FOMO, and decreased subjective well-being and life satisfaction (Valkenburg, 2022). Users at risk of social media addiction often report depressive symptoms and lower self-esteem (Bányai et.al, 2017)

Some findings regarding the impact of social media on mental health pointed out some essential resources for psychological well-being through rewarding online social interactions. However, there is a need to raise awareness about the possible risks associated with excessive use, which can negatively affect mental health and everyday functioning (Bányai et.al, 2017). Afe et al. (2020) explore the pervasiveness of smartphone addiction and the association between the frequency of social media use and psychological morbidity among university students in Nigeria. They concluded that smartphone addiction is prevalent and associated with psychological morbidity among male undergraduates.

As social media has become an essential part of modern society, offering everyone an easy way to communicate with others, connect with new people, and share information, it has also however, been observed that social media has many negative effects on university students as well as society in general. According to Roy (2023), Harriger et.al (2023), Chi e.t.al (2022), Valkenburg (2022), Marciano et.al (2022), Stabler (2021), Boer e.t.al (2020), Naslund e.t.al (2020) and Bányai et.al (2017) negative effects of social media on university students and society include.
Mental Health Implications
Excessive use of social media has been linked to mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and loneliness among university students.

Cyberbullying
Social media has enabled individuals to harass and bully others online. With the anonymity that social media provides, cyberbullies can harass people without facing any consequences. Nigerian university students are vulnerable to cyberbullying, which have severe psychological consequences. The victims of cyberbullying experience severe emotional stress, low self-esteem, and in some cases, even suicide. Online harassment and bullying have serious negative effects on mental health. Social media can be a platform for cyberbullying, and Nigerian students are not immune to this issue. Cyberbullying have severe psychological effects and harm mental health.

Spread of misinformation
Social media has become a breeding ground for spreading false information. With fake news and rumors easily shared across various social media platforms, people are often misguided, leading to confusion, distrust, and chaos thereby impacting individuals mental health.

Addiction
Social media addiction is a real problem that many people are facing. With easy access to social media apps and platforms, people tend to spend a lot of time online, often ignoring their real-life responsibilities. This addiction can lead to a lack of productivity, depression, and anxiety.

The decline in face-to-face communication
With the rise of social media, people are becoming less inclined to interact in person. Social media is convenient, but it can lead to a decline in social skills and emotional intelligence, making it hard for people to develop deep and meaningful relationships.

Self-esteem issues
Constant exposure to curated, idealized versions of others’ lives can lead to feelings of inadequacy and lowered self-esteem. Social media often portrays an idealized and unrealistic version of people's lives, leading to feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem. People tend to compare their lives with others and become dissatisfied with their own. This can lead to a lack of confidence and poor mental health.

Social isolation
Social media can make it easy for people to connect with others, but it can also lead to social isolation. People tend to spend more time online than in person, leading to feelings of loneliness and social disconnection thereby reducing and impacting mental well-being.

Polarization and echo chambers
Social media algorithms reinforce existing biases and create "echo chambers," where people only see content that confirms their existing beliefs. This can lead to polarization and a lack of open-mindedness, ultimately leading to an unhealthy mental health in society.

Cyberstalking and harassment
The anonymity of social media makes it easy for individuals to stalk and harass others online. Cyberstalking and harassment can be traumatizing for victims and can lead to severe legal consequences for the perpetrators.

Decrease in privacy
Inadequate privacy settings and online scams can lead to identity theft and other security issues. Social media platforms collect vast amounts of personal data, which can be sold to third-party companies or used for targeted advertising. This can lead to a decrease in privacy, and people's personal information can be misused by others.

Comparison and envy
Social media often encourages people to compare themselves with others, leading to feelings of envy and dissatisfaction. Social media can quickly trigger feelings of depression due to the constant weight of comparison leading to mental health issues. This can harm mental health and well-being and can lead to depression, anxiety, and other psychological disorders. In many cases, people will struggle with feeling that they are not as “good as” the people in their
social media feeds or the idea that they might be missing out on opportunities. That constant comparison can raise overall depression. Furthermore, the inability to get the dopamine hit associated with scrolling social media may make it much more difficult for many people to engage in everyday activities, which may not seem, at first, to offer the same level of joy. Nigerian students, like many others, may experience feelings of inadequacy when they constantly compare themselves to the seemingly perfect lives of others on social media. This can lead to self-esteem issues and increased stress thereby leading to unhealthy mental health.

Time Management
Excessive use of social media can lead to procrastination and time wastage or poor time management, affecting academic performance, personal growth, and other responsibilities and increasing stress as deadlines approach.

Fear of missing out, or FOMO
Unregulated social media leads to a constant fear of missing out, which many refer to as FOMO. As posited by Valkenburg (2022) FOMO is another reason scrolling through social media is so enticing. When your friends and classmates are using social media, you may worry about missing a message, inside joke, or other information that connects you to your peers. However, constant checking and scrolling can have a detrimental effect on schoolwork and studying. The distraction can lead to procrastination, less retention of information, and higher levels of stress. Students may also experience feelings of exclusion, loneliness or anxiety when they see posts of others enjoying a good time. Having a whole digital world at your fingertips can put a damper on getting out and having real social connections and in-person interactions (Stabler, 2021). People may feel as though others are having more fun than them, which can affect self-esteem and cause mental health issues. Individuals may compulsively check their phones at the cost of missing sleep or choose social media over in-person relationships or meetups. Additionally, prioritizing social media networking over physical and social interactions increases chances of mood disorders such as anxiety and depression (Sherrell, 2021). While some contend that social media connects the world, others argue that it feeds a culture of FOMO (fear of missing out) and an endless desire for affirmations. Experts have raised concerns about how social media use activates the reward circuits in the brain, which can cause addiction.

The Ugly Aspect of Social Media Addiction and Mental Health
According to Ortiz (2023) one of the most major problems that come with the excessive usage of social media is the tradition of comparison it stimulates among users. Social media platforms with ability to project images and videos most times showcase the most perfect, better than reality kind of people’s lives and this has led to a significant increase in anxiety, depression, and body image issues among users, especially young people, thereby leading to serious mental health for these users; this not unconnected with immense pressure from users to present a desired image of themselves based on information gathered from fellow users, predisposing users to constant cycle of comparison with others, dissatisfaction with present status, and low self-esteem. This comparison has a significant impact on mental health, leading to anxiety, depression, and suicidal thoughts. This is in addition to it significant contribution to feeling of loneliness and isolation, despite their intended purpose of bringing people together. Studies examining relationship between social media and mental health established strong relationship between networking sites and depression. Results from such studies showed that social media may well cause depression. In one of such study, researchers found that the more people used social media, the more symptoms of depression and loneliness they felt (Hunt, 2018), thus indicated a strong positive association between amount of time spent on social media and poor mental health. To establish this linkage between, the researchers created two groups comprising of 143 University of Pennsylvania students: the first group could use social media unrestricted,
while the second group were restricted to just 30 minutes on Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat combined over a three-week period. Hunt and his colleagues reported that restricted group of students on social media has fewer symptoms of depression and loneliness than they reported at the beginning of the study. Even though, it was not certain what was responsible for lesser symptoms of depression and loneliness among restricted participants on social media, Hunt and his co-researchers concluded that restricted participants were prevented from excessive exposure to contents—such as friend’s beach visitation, graduation from colleges, admission and school acceptance letter, or happy family—that could have make them feel bad about themselves unlike the group that had unrestricted access to social media. Viewing pictures and posts of social media users with almost perfect lives, which make them, feel like they do not measure up to others aggravated mental health issues.

In 2018, Lyall et al. (2018) studied 91,005 Facebook users and found out that those who logged onto Facebook before bedtime were 6 per cent likelier to have major depressive disorder and rated their happiness level 9 per cent lower than those with better sleep hygiene did. Lyall and his colleagues reported that a one-quintile reduction in relative amplitude was associated with increased risk of lifetime major depressive disorder, more likely to be lonely, unstable mood, higher neuroticism scores, lower happiness, higher health dissatisfaction, and slower reaction times was noticed among those who logged onto Facebook before bedtime. These associations were independent of demographic, lifestyle, education, and overall activity confounders. Circadian disruption is reliably associated with various adverse mental health and wellbeing outcomes, including major depressive disorder and bipolar disorder.

Recent rise in cyber-bullying such as online harassment, cyber-aggression, cyber-incivility, toxic social media interactions has occurred in tandem with the increased usage of social media across ages. Several studies have linked cyber-bullying to mental health in teenagers and adults. Greater daily social media use has been identified to be a strong predictor of heightened dispositional anxiety and an increased likelihood of meeting the clinical criteria for an anxiety disorder (Vannucci et al., 2017). Specifically, cyber-bullying victimization strongly correlated with increased depression, anxiety, and substance use in adults (Kowalski et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2017; Selkie et al. 2015; Schenk & Fremouw, 2012); cyber-bullying perpetration also correlated with increased depression and substance use (Selkie et al. 2015). These revelations are consistent with studies establishing strong correlation between cyber-bullying and mental health in children and teens (Guo, 2016; Kowalski, et al. 2014) in which cyber-bullying victimization correlated with greater depression, anxiety, drug and alcohol problems, and suicidal ideation among youth, and cyber-bullying perpetration also correlated with greater depression, anxiety, and substance use.

Social media has been found to contribute to alienation according to a report on Harvard Graduate School of Education blog. Adolescents who are yet to develop strong self-esteem and use social media basic tool for gaining popularity are often negatively affected. If a teenager already had anxiety challenges, they seem to suffer the most damaging effects of social media. When teens repeatedly visit social media, even when they repeatedly receive negative feedback, they do so because making connections with relevant others releases dopamine from the brain and dopamine creates the need to return again and again. This repeated return to social media may leads to addiction. Once teens got to this stage, they may experience withdrawal if they abruptly stop using social media, and may grow even more anxious and depressed as a result. Users who suffer from social anxiety disorders may fear rejection or humiliation in cases where others may not (Reed et al., 2017).

The negative impact of heavy social media users on mental health can be attributed to its ability to creates a distorted view of reality, since most of the users present their most appealing and exciting moments online, hidden their challenges in terms of struggles and hardships they face in
real life. Creating unmet expectations of ideal life for fellow users and invoking feeling of failure in comparison to others. Whereas everybody faces challenges and difficulties in the private space, but social media’s users selected the best and idealized portrayal of life and shared them on social media, thereby increasing the unrealistic expectations of other users with lower self-esteem.

Several studies have also identified body image dissatisfaction and eating disorder as potential danger of excessive social media use on mental health. Holland and Tiggemann (2016) studied the role of social media in relationship with body image dissatisfaction, particularly in areas of photo sharing, peer interactions and mobile technology accessibility and found significant positive relationship between social media usage, body image and disordered eating, giving credence to the assertion that social media use, with special reference to physical/appearance-based social media use, is strongly associated with increased body dissatisfaction and disordered eating.

Frequencies of comparing one’s own physical appearance to others on social media are linked to body dissatisfaction and drive for thinness among users. Jiotsa et al (2021) in a study that examined the frequency of comparing one’s physical appearance to those being followed on social media, body dissatisfaction and urge for thinness among 1138 participants from general population and 193 diagnosed for eating disorders. Jiotsa and his colleagues reported that high usage of social media among teenagers and young adults leads to body dissatisfaction and need to get thinner, considered as desirable physique based on social media comparison which has been over-exposing users to thinness as ideal physique and new reference standard. Exposure to social media, especially frequent exposure to modified and made to belief images are sources of inaccurate thought processes about body image, believing all those information on social media should be socially acceptable values, making them dangerous for users’ mental health and cognitively played an active role in development and continuation of eating disorder, particularly among young women, who are easily attracted to thinness as ideal physique by equating it to beauty and success, therefore rendering users more vulnerable to eating disorders (Blowers, 2003; Anschutz et al, 2008).

Furthermore, studies have demonstrated that women are more likely than men to compare their physique to other social media users and subsequently motivated to adapt and develop their ideal self-image. This appearance comparison on social media was also found to mediate the relationship between Facebook usage and body image dissatisfaction in women (Haferkamp et al. 2012; Fardouly & Varanian, 2015), indicating that social media use can lead to development of body image concerns, particularly among women. Hashim et al (2022) reported dissatisfaction about body image during social networking among university students, with low users exhibiting lower body image dissatisfaction when compared to extremely high users. There was also differences among male and female users, with females exhibiting higher body image dissatisfaction compared to males and therefore concluded that the longer the use of social media, particularly in photo base activities, the more dissatisfied the users are with their body image.

Bodily dissatisfaction among high social media users can be linked to negative self-perception along with other health concerns. Social media provides an opportunity for social comparison and exposure to unrealistic beauty expectations and hence body dissatisfaction will likely occur as a result of frequent use of social media (Mills et al., 2018). Highly bodily dissatisfaction among women has been a primary risk factor for the development of eating disorders and is correlated with lower self-esteem and even depression (Mills et al., 2018). Since there has been a rise in retouching and editing of images in order to misled people online, more and more people are expressing mental health issues as a result of exposure to make to belief images on social media. For instance, it has been estimated that 2/3 of photos on social media are edited and retouch in some way (Spector, 2017). The rise in retouching is having a serious impact on us and our perceptions of each other, even though,
image retouching and editing are very common, they have detrimental negative effects on an individual’s well-being. Editing selfie can lead to negative mood and facial dissatisfaction (Tiggemann et al. 2020). Social media users viewing of selfies online have also been shown to have negative impacts on mental health and self-confidence. This is so because of the importance users placed on feedback from other users with potential harmful effect on well-being and body confidence (McLean et al., 2019). Even though, these effects are most often linked to women, other studies have noted similar negative effects for men (Lonergan et al., 2019).

Frequent usage of social media can increase the risk of online sexual abuse and cyber-bullying. According to Pew Research Centre (2023) statistics, cyber-bullying can and do have devastating effects on the victims and the witness. Such victims may experience various negative emotions including sadness, anger, frustration, and humiliation. If victims have no one to turn to as source of support after experiencing these emotions, they feel isolated and lonely. Such experience may hurt victim academically or productively, as they may be scared of going to school, work or engage in any activities in order to escape being bully and in extreme cases, the victims may even consider suicide. Cyber-bullying effect can spread to those who witness it happening to someone else. They may become extremely scared, a form of anthropophobia, lose their self-esteem, helpless, and sad, particularly if they shared some characteristics with the victims. They may also have trouble sleeping and eating and may even develop anxiety and depression.

One of the ugly sides of social media was recorded on September 16, 2013, when nine teens committed suicide due to hateful anonymous messages on Ask.fm. Teens of 13 and 14 years committed suicide after receiving waves of hateful messages on Ask.fm. For instance, Erin Gallagher who hailed from Ireland had endured so much bullying on Ask.fm from anonymous user, who specifically asked her to commit suicide. She asked questions on her weight, relationships, she was accused of faking her depression, and that she lack respect for herself. In the case of Hannah Smith from United Kingdom aged 14, she received messages from users telling her to go and die pathetic, to get cancer, drink bleach, and that she is ugly, she should go die and everyone would be happy (Edwards, 2013). This site has over 65 million active users, with half of them being under 18 and using the site to hound others to death. Ask.fm appeared to be a question and answer site, once a user sign in, it automatically allows you to pose questions that anyone else can answer, or answer questions coming from other users, while it also give room for anonymous questions. In addition, this site allows users to engage each other in running battles and arguments, and to gang up on each other. A user’s account can quickly fill up with a stream of anonymous, hurtful messages that may or may not be coming from people you know (Edwards, 2013).

As people get used to social media and increases in usage, the tendency to cyber-bully is also increasing. This can make even social media platforms become a very fearful environment for victims of cyber-bullying, because in most situations the media bullying contents such as media threats, aggressive contents, offensive texts or comments, modified images might have been shared beyond the victim’s areas of control before they got to know about the messages and have chance to respond. The embarrassment this will bring about victim’s hiding online from their friends and family in real life, exposing them to feelings of isolation, depression, and anxiety. If support are not available for the victim and have a deeper knowledge of danger in keeping quiet and chose to keep this to self, such may lead to unstable mental health.

According to Ybarra and Mitchell (2004) victims of cyber-bullying are at higher risk of stress, depression, and anxiety than those who do not, in addition Ybarra and Mitchell reported that among victims of cyber-bullying 39 per cent dropped out of school, 37 per cent displayed delinquent behavior, 32 per cent got involved in frequent substance abuse, while 16 per cent experienced severe depression. Myers and Cowie (2019) reported that cyber-bullying had long term harmful effects on the victim’s psychological
development, self-esteem, and academic behaviors, thereby heightened risk of long term mental health disorder. Cyber-bullying can cause physical or emotional harm to the victims or damage the victim’s property, by creating unreasonable fear of harm, intimidating, threatening, hostile, or abusive educational/work environment for the victims. All these are parts of ugly sides that come with the innovation of social media.

Cyber-bullying can occurred as early as age 14 or even early, according to Krešić and Kaštelan (2020) during this period, children spend more time on their mobile phones and social networking sites, because teenagers spend more time on social media, it made them prone towards the ugly sides of social media. The authors estimated that between 15 per cent and 35 per cent of young people who were once a victims of cyber-bullying, 10 -20 per cent of this population admitted to having cyber-bullied others. Those who bullied others on social media enjoyed higher degree of anonymity, which is not possible in traditional bullying, while the potential exposure and embarrassment of the victim is on a larger scale since it on social media and can be seen across millions of users once uploaded online, which made it possible for one to be victimize within their own home or elsewhere at any time, and if the victims removed themselves from the site, such messages will accumulate before the victim is even aware. These are responsible for mental health problems of the victims, including depressive symptomatology, self-harm and suicidal behaviours.

Empirical support abound that the rise in suicide related-behaviour has been influence by social media and online activities (Luxton et al., 2012). Cyber-bullying and anonymity of cyber-bullers has increase suicide related behaviour linked to internet and social media mainly due to increase in exposure to graphic content. Suicide is estimated to be one of the leading causes of death worldwide and second between those aged 15-34 in US as of 2020. Cyber-bullying is a significant risk factor for suicidal behavior (Hertz, et al, 2013; Hinduja & Patchin, 2010). Rate of suicide has increased significantly since the invention of social media majorly as a result of cyber-bullying, majorly among teenagers from 2010 to 2022, making them being at higher risks of committing suicide with exposure to different kinds of pro-suicidal sites, such as message boards, chat rooms, and forums where suicide messages and methods are being promoted on social media (Curtin, 2020). These pro-suicidal sites tend to popularize suicidal videos, posts and these seem to create a famous and popular appeal to the victims, who are mostly teenagers with young and immature minds. These sites, often than not will not only reports incidence but also stages involved in suicide, particularly suicide pacts: a joint decision between two or more individuals to kill themselves at a particular time and often by the same method. This ugly role of social media in increasing rate of suicide-related behaviour is of great concern to psychologists. The role of social cognitive theory in suicide attempts is very vital in understanding the ugly side of social media in suicide. Many people’s cognition and behaviours were actively shaped through exposure to social media, those with lower self-efficacy are more likely to see and adopt models on social media and may wish to replicate the actions of the model, including suicidal thoughts or actual suicide, these victims are influenced by what they see through various processes that form into modeled behaviors. This can be shown when people post their suicide attempts online or promote suicidal behavior.

Cyber-bullying alone was found to increases suicidal thoughts by 14.5 per cent and the actual suicide attempts by 8.7 percent, while victims of cyber-bullying under the ages of 25 are more than double of likely self-harm and initiate suicidal behavior than those who are not victims (Nikolaou, 2017). Despite the availability of several suicide prevention programs and therapy, suicide continues to be a serious public health issue globally, majorly due to negative impact of social media and suicide is no more been considered as an individual occurrence alone but also as being influenced by social and environmental factors (Gvion & Apter, 2012). According to Schonfeld et al (2023) teenagers who had experienced online bullying and
attempted suicide are 14.9 and 13.6 per cent respectively in United States. The exponential growth in access and use of social media throughout the 21st century has opened various avenues for the public to connect in various forms, particularly on social media platforms such as Twitter, Youtube, Facebook, Tiktok, Snapchat, LinkedIn, Periscope, and Pinterest. The primary goals of these platforms are to remove bridges in communication irrespective of physical distance by giving rooms for people to connect virtually, irrespective of where they are, as long as they can access internet. However, these platforms can lead and have led to abuse in form of cyber-bullying, insecurity, and emotional distress, and sometimes may influence a person to attempt suicide (Hertz et al, 2013).

Social media platforms may also exert peer pressure and encourage others to take their own lives, make hero of those who have committed suicide, and initiators of suicide pacts (Aakanksha, 2022). For instance, in 2008 a pro-suicidal sites shared how people can kill themselves through hydrogen sulfide gas and within a short period of time, 220 people attempted suicide using hydrogen sulfide gas, while 208 of them were successful (Luxton et al, 2012). In supporting the ugly side of social media as it relates to pro-social sites, Biddle et al (2008) systematically reviewed Webs searching for 12 suicide-associated terms such as suicide, suicide methods, how to kill yourself, and best suicide methods among others and found out that pro-suicide sites and chat rooms that often discussed issues associated with suicide most often occurred within the first few hits of search, showing the ugly roles of on suicide and suicide methods (Davi et al, 2012).

Several cases of significant role of social media in suicide and attempted have been documented. For instance; in 2006 a 13 year old Megan Meier committed suicide in her bedroom after series of MySpace messages that came from her 18 year old friend and her mother, who posed as a teen boy named “Josh Evans” and encouraged Megan to commit suicide, which she did after severally being persuaded (Community, 2021). In 2012, Amanda Todd, a high school student in Canada hanged herself as a result of blackmail by a prowler, after being repeatedly cyber-bullied and harassed in school (Grenoble, 2012; McGuire, 2012). Later on September 7, 2012 a 9-minutes YouTube video titled “My story: Struggling, bullying, suicide, self-harm” posted by Todd documenting how she used series of flashcards to tell of her experiences of how she was bullied. The video went viral and got over 1.6million views by October 13, 2012, just three days after her death on October 10, 2012 with various websites being linked to the Youtube worldwide (Dean, 2012). Conrad Roy in 2014 also committed suicide after exchanging numerous text messages with Michelle Carter, his long-distance girlfriend, who repeatedly encouraged him to commit suicide. Roy and Carter met online and started dating, Carter at age 17 in 2014 sent several messages to Roy over a period of 14-days encouraging Roy to take his life and she will berate Roy whenever he expressed any form of hesitation, Roy finally took his life on July 12, 2014. Carter was later charged for involuntary manslaughter and sentenced to 15-month imprisonment, released after serving 11 months of her 15-month prison sentence (Nashrull, 2020).

As a result of online bullying and harassment, Sadie Riggs took her life in 2015. Sadie's aunt, contacted various social media companies, police, and Sadie's school in hopes to make the bullying stop without success before she finally took her life (NBC News, 2017). A 12 year old Gabriella Green in 2018 hanged herself after several online rumors were spread about her, she killed herself immediately after a call with one of the abusers, who told her that "If you're going to do it, just do it". Two preteens were later arrested and charged with cyber stalking after they were accused of cyber-bullying (Dearen, 2018). In 2019, Kelly Fraser, a Canadian, was found dead in her home near Winnipeg, the suicide was attributed to childhood traumas, racism, and persistent cyber-bullying. Fraser's diamonds video has been watched more than 300,000 times since her death (Elliot, 2019).

Suicide contagion, a situation in which suicide behaviour spreads quickly and spontaneously through social media users, where users of dedicate web encourage others to kill
themselves and those most susceptible to suicide contagions are those under 25 years of age (Cox et al, 2012). Repeated media coverage of suicides has been reported to significantly increase the rate of suicide, and the magnitude of the increase is related to the amount, duration, and prominence of coverage (N-AP, 2022). Dunlop et al (2011) in a study that examined possible contagion effects on suicidal behavior via the internet and social media among 719 individuals aged 14 to 24 years, reported that 79% of those sampled reported being exposed to suicide-related content through family, friends, and traditional news media such as newspapers, and 59% found such content through Internet sources.

Another booming negative use of social media is online blackmailing by using the victim’s favourite social media app, website or platform. Once the victim has a nude image or a video, the blackmailer will threaten to share it on social media platforms unless the victim meets a demand, like sending them money, made themselves available for sex, demanding marriage, access to children, exchange for value thing or send more nude images. Online blackmailing can be devastating financially and socially for the victims, extreme psychological trauma with great consequences for the victim’s mental health. Effect of online blackmail are diverse which could including tarnishing of victim’s and family’s reputation, psychological distress and in extreme cases may lead to suicide; it could stimulate feelings of anxiety, fear, depression, or social adjustment disorders that may result in social isolation and/or a fear of confronting people; for children the effects may include self-blame, invasive memories or feelings, unhappiness, low self-esteem, bad dreams, sleepless, nervousness, anxiety attacks and educational difficulties (Al- Makrami, 2015; Monaghan, 2017; Alseyah, 2011).

A case of social medial blackmailing was of one Chinedu Ezeudu, who was arrested in September, 2023 by operatives of Anambra state police command in Nigeria for picking up a victim’s memory card and allegedly shared victim, a married woman nude pictures, videos on social media and even sold same to a willing buyers for the victim’s failure to part with money. The victim lost her memory card sometime in March, 2023 and Ezeudu who pick up, later chatted up the victim and requested for huge sum as a condition for releasing the card and in order not to leak the nude videos. The victim’s couple later confronted the suspect after threatening to post the video on social media and retrieved the card from him, without knowing he had duplicated the card. The suspect went ahead and released the video of the victim on Facebook, WhatsApp and other social media platforms, and also went ahead to sell them to those who requested as cheap as #3000 (Punch, September 17, 2023).

Another cases of social media blackmailing is that of 44 years old Amarah Kennedy arrested for blackmailing two widows with nudes pictures using Facebook for failure to send him money as demanded from these women after exorting them sexually and financial for a period of time before he was finally arrested through the intervention of non-government organisations. According to one of the victim, she attempted suicide when a friend called her in early June, 2023 after viewing her nudes on Facebook, WhatsApp and conversation between Kennedy and the victim, who threatened to circulate more nudes if the woman failed to send him #100,000 before deleting the nudes permanently from his phone. It took the intervention of NGOs and security to arrest Kennedy after months of psychological traumas for the victims (Punch, 2023).

Several Nigerian celebrities’ nudes have been leaked on social media with great consequences on these celebrities’ reputation and mental health. They includes 24 years old Singer, Ikuforiji Olaitan who was trending topic on social media when his sex tape was leaked on Snapchat with an unidentified lady; Tiwa Savage, a popular singer dominated the social media space in 2021 when her sex tape was released on social media, with serious outrage among her fans as many expressed divided opinions; Salawa Abeni, another popular singer in the 80s and 90s was forced to released her nude photos in April 2020 after she was blackmailed by one Jason who threatened to release the pictures if she did
not pay him huge sum of money, Abeni refused
to give in to the demands of the blackmailer by
personally releasing her nudes which the
blackmailers were threatening to release; Cross
Okonkwo, former housemate in BBN nude
photos were uploaded on Snapchat in October
2021; Abolore Akande, popularly known as 9ice,
nude pictures and videos went viral, the singer
made a video where he apologized to his wife for
betraying her trust; Wande Coal nude photos
caused a major stir online when it was leaked
sleeping in bed with one of his numerous female
troupee; Davido’s romantic involvement with a
Ghanaian undergraduate in 2012 became
everybody’s business when she posted the
scandalous image on BBM and Twitter; Moyo
Lawal sex was leaked on social media recently,
the video captured the actress, having sex with
an unidentified man while they recorded the act.
All these social media activities have serious
consequences on the victim’s and their family’s
reputation, could mean an end to relationship
for those in serious relationship and divorce for
the married, psychological trauma on the
victims, the children, family members now and
in the nearest future and by extension a negative
effect on mental health of victims and love ones.

Human being naturally have a tendency to
compare themselves to others, a times it might
be intentionally, whereas in some situation we
carry out the comparison unintentional, which
can be on online or offline. Comparison can
serve as a medium for self-evaluation of personal
achievements, skills, personality and our
emotions. The outcome of this evaluation
determines how we see ourselves and extent to
which this will affect our mental health
depending on time spent on social media and
how much comparison we do. When we
compared ourselves on social media to people
who we are better than, it will makes us feel
better, whereas comparing ourselves to people
who are doing better than us, this will makes us
feel inferior, inadequate, dissatisfied or see
ourselves as a failure.

According to Diel et al., (2021) degree of
individual’s motivation is dependent on their
degree of social comparison being carry out,
because there is an optimal level of perceived
difference between the self and others that
maximizes the effects of social comparison.
When we compared ourselves to others on social
media and we see ourselves as being superior to
others, this may make us feel satisfied with the
present status and unmotivated to improve
because we already feel that we are in a good
position, and if the perception is negative, very
inferior to compared individuals, we will not be
motivated to improve since the goal seems too
difficult to achieve. In other words, the
researchers note, beyond or below the optimal
level of perceived difference between oneself
and another, a person no longer makes any
effort. By perceiving oneself as inferior, the
individual will experience negative emotions,
guilt and lowered pride and self-esteem. This
made social media comparisons to have great
consequences both for our behaviour, self-
estee and for our psychological well-being.
The ability of individual to share content on
various platforms, where they appeared in the
best light, has amplified the possibility of
unrealistic comparisons. Studies shows that the
more time people spend on social media, the
more they compare themselves socially. This
social comparison is linked, among other things,
to lower self-esteem and higher social anxiety.
Iang and Ngien (2020) explained that people
often post the positive moments in their lives on
social media and enhanced appearance with the
aid of filters, this often create the impression that
there is a big difference between themselves and
others and the more people looked at content
where people were sharing positive aspects of
their lives on the platform, the more likely they
were to compare themselves to others, resulting
in low self-esteem.

One of the evil of social media in today's
interconnected world is cyber-crime. Among the
various forms of online fraud, one group has
gained so much notoriety in some African
countries – Yahoo Boys in Nigeria and Sakawa
Boys in Ghana, which involved employing
sophisticated tactics to deceive and defraud
unsuspecting victims worldwide. The criminals
engage in online fraud, predominantly using
email, Facebook and messaging as their primary
means of communication and other social media
platforms such as dating websites, and online classifieds. They recruited members and victims on social media with deceptive pictures of young men or woman with lavish lifestyles, latest cars, money, and designer clothes. These criminals used social media to teach would like to be criminals how to commit fraud, templates of messages to victims, and examples of fake social media personas they can replicate, treating it as a side hustle or a full business.

There tactics and techniques include phishing to trick individuals into revealing sensitive information and pretended as legitimate business owners sending deceptive emails or creating fake websites that mimic trusted organizations or financial institutions; advance Fee by convincing victims to provide upfront fees or personal information under the pretense of a lucrative financial opportunity or inheritance; romance by exploit human emotions, particularly those who are looking for genuine and lasting relationship from western world, after establishing an emotional connection with victims, they arm-twist them into sending money or valuable gifts, sextortion—a form of blackmail in which someone is tricked into sending sexual images of themselves to abusers; may become part of the scam once victim are convinced to share their intimate pictures and the fraudsters threaten to release them into public space. Non-delivery scams is a also one of the technique being adopted by online fraudster, these criminals sell goods online pretending to be legitimate owners. Victims pay for the order, the delivery, for clearing border hurdles, and never receive what they ordered. All these activities are carried out on by creating fake profiles on dating websites on social media platform. Even though social media has made communication with others easier in today’s modern society, where we can share and connect with love ones irrespective of physical distance, know what is happening across the globe in the four corners of our room, without getting to the scene of the events. It also came with several dark and ugly sides demanding urgent attention of psychologists in order to mediate the so many negative effects on society across ages such as cyber-bulling, addiction, decline in face-to-face, which can lead to decline in social skills, impede deep and meaningful relationship, easily used for spreading fake information, impact self-esteem, social isolation, cyber stalking and harassment, decrease in privacy, comparison and envy among other negative influence of social media on our society.

The unrealistic expectations from users based on distorted view of reality that social media platforms, particularly filtered and edited contents can and had created, had negatively impacted on mental health, leading to anxiety, depression, and feelings of inadequacy. This make it important now than ever to understand these negative effects and take steps to mitigate them, ensuring a healthier and more balanced use of social media. Users should endeavor to use social media positively, reduce amount of time spent on social media and have the understanding that every users have the challenges and difficulties times, but only made available the best sides of their life on social in order to promote personal mental health and well-being, and creating a safe and healthy society.

Conclusion

In conclusion, social media addiction and its impact on the mental health of Nigerian university students is a multifaceted issue with positive, negative and ugly aspect, social media has brought many benefits to society, such as increased connectivity and access to information. However, it has also brought several negative effects that cannot be ignored. These negative effects include cyberbullying, the spread of misinformation, addiction, the decline in face-to-face communication, self-esteem issues, social isolation, polarization, and echo chambers, cyber stalking and harassment, a decrease in privacy, and comparison and envy. It is essential to understand these negative effects and take steps to mitigate them, ensuring a healthier and more balanced use of social media. Students should strive to use social media positively, promoting mental health and well-being, and creating a safe and healthy society. This systematic review has found that social
media envy can affect the level of anxiety and depression in individuals most especially university students.

**Recommendations**

Addressing this challenge requires a comprehensive approach, including research, education, and support systems to promote healthy online behaviour and safeguard the mental well-being of students. It's important to recognize that while social media has its benefits, it also comes with risks, especially if not used mindfully. Nigerian universities, along with educational institutions worldwide, should actively address the challenges associated with social media addiction and mental health to ensure their students' well-being and success.

There is neither a negative nor positive consensus regarding the effects of social media on people. However, by teaching people social media literacy, we can maximize their chances of having balanced, safe, and meaningful experiences on these platforms (American Psychological Association, 2023).

Social media provides users with a rapid means of electronic communication and content sharing. Although it has various positive effects, it can negatively affect users’ mental health. Limiting the use of social media to 30 minutes a day can reduce FOMO and, in turn, relieve the loneliness, anxiety, depression, and sleep problems associated with excessive social media use.

It is highly recommended that smartphone education and cognitive behavioural therapy should be instituted among smartphone addicts. More rational use should also be encouraged by lecturers and counsellors to enshrine good phone habits among university students.

It is recommended that students struggling with social media addiction seek for interventions on coping strategies.

Students are encouraged to take regular breaks from social media to reduce addiction and improve mental well-being.

There should be promotion of digital literacy programmes to help students navigate social media responsibly and critically. Emphases should be on importance of seeking help from counselling services and building strong support systems among peers.

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**Conflict of Interest**

No conflict of interest

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