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Relationship between Social Media and Loneliness among Students of Federal University Otuoke, Nigeria

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Abstract:

The study examine the relationship between Social Media Addiction and Loneliness among students in Federal University Otuoke, Bayelsa State, One Hundred and Thirty-four participants randomly drawn from the University campus was used for the study. The study used the UCLA loneliness scale to get measures for loneliness while a specific time range was used to get measures for Social Media addiction. After subjecting the data using the independent t test and the Anova analysis the study found out that social media addiction has a significant influence on loneliness. ($t(132) = 4.731, p < .05$) also study revealed that age does not have a significant influence on loneliness ($F(5, 128) = 1.697, p > .05$) moreover there is no significant difference of gender on loneliness. ($t(132) = .703, p > .05$) and there is a significant influence of average hour spent on social media on loneliness. Subsequently the study recommended that mental health experts should Double up efforts in raising awareness about the increase in social media addiction in the society and make effort to mitigate the trend. Ensure that they provide intervention therapy to help people overcome any form of maladjustment. and individuals should also strive to ensure that they moderate the use of social media.

Keywords: Social Media use, loneliness

1. Introduction

According to Statista (2015), social networks have grown rapidly over the last ten years and there are currently 1.96 billion social network users in the world. This is predicted to increase to 2.44 billion users by 2018 (Statista, 2015). Nigeria is not left alone in this trend. A number of factors have made the use of social media to be on a high increase in Nigeria. First is the advent of internet in 2000, recently the Nigeria Communications Commission released a report that states that over 50 millions Nigerians now have access to internet in Nigeria. Secondly our desire for social connections seems so strong that some authors have suggested that humans have a basic need to belong (Baumeister & Leary 1995). Social relationships subtly embrace us in the warmth of self-affirmation, the whispers of encouragement, and the meaningfulness of belonging. They are fundamental to our emotional fulfillment, behavioral adjustment, and cognitive function. Disruption or absence of stable social relationships blasts our minds and biology like few other events. The social media presents a platform for social interaction people crave for, hence the increase in its usage in Nigeria.

In the same vein, Barton (2003) opined that a feeling of social belonging is a fundamental human need. People are likely to form social attachments readily, while being loathe to break them, therefore a need to belong, that is, a need to form and maintain at least a minimum quantity of interpersonal relationships, is innately prepared (and hence nearly universal) among human beings. Similarly, overall wellbeing has been found to be fostered by social relationships (Segrin & Taylor, 2007). Thus, individuals could be using these social media websites as an effort to get the social interaction that was suggested by Baumeister and Leary

Hence in a bid to form the social interaction that was suggested by Baumeister & Leary (1995) it is now common to see persons using several hours of the day glued to their phone and tablets, which most times takes an addictive pattern. As asserted by Harris, Nagy & Vardaxis, (2014). Uncontrollable habits or practices are referred to as addiction, more so Andreassen, Torsheim, Brunborg and Pallesen, 2012; Şahin & Yağcı, 2017) have investigated social media in the context of behavioral addiction and are gaining importance along with developing technology.

For the purpose of the present study, Social media would be seen as any online platform where social interactions occur through chatting, picture representation or video representation. These will include Facebook, Instagram, Webchat, Telegraph, Twitter among other social networking sites known.

Social media addiction is considered as a kind of internet addiction (Kuss & Griffiths, 2012). Individuals who spend too much time on social media have a desire to be notified of anything immediately, which can cause virtual tolerance, virtual communication and virtual problem. Behaviors that force the person into these actions can be explained as social media addiction (Sahin 2018).

Scholars have also attempted to establish a link between Social Media addiction and some mental health issues, for instance (Xu & Tan, 2012) found out that the transition from normal to problematic social media use is seen as an important mechanism to alleviate stress, loneliness or depression for the individual, so they become more active with more social media. This ultimately leads to many problems and exacerbates the unwanted mental states of the individual. The researchers conducted in different countries revealed that internet usage addiction is not limited to university students, but also includes secondary school and high school students (Al-Menayes, 2015). Individuals who spend 8.5 to 21.5 hours online per week are considered to be addicted (Yang & Tung, 2007).

Loneliness is another factor that would be considered in the present study, Human beings are social animals, which are constantly seeking some form of inter/intra personal relationship, which social media presents. However, subjective interpretations of social relationships are likely to be key to understanding the impact of social connections on well-being. When one's intimate and social needs are not adequately met, a complex set of feelings termed *loneliness* occurs that motivates one to seek the fulfillment of these needs (Baumeister and Leary 1995; Weiss 1973). The core experience is being isolated socially and absent both relationally and collectively connectedness (Russell, Peplau, and Cutrona 1980; Hawkley et al. 2004). There is now substantial evidence that loneliness is a core part of a constellation of socioemotional states including self-esteem, mood, anxiety, anger, optimism, fear of negative evaluation, shyness, social skills, social support, dysphoria, and sociability (Berscheid and Reis 1998; Shaver and Brennan 1991). Feelings of loneliness are not synonymous with being alone but instead involve feelings of isolation, feelings of disconnectedness, and feelings of not belonging. These feelings in turn are thought to reflect the discrepancy between one's desired and one's actual relationships (Peplau and Perlman 1982).

In light of the above, the aim of the present study would be to examine the correlation between Social Media addiction and Loneliness.

2. Review of Literature

Studies on Social Media use have attempted to examine the function which it serves and the studies show that their social functions and effects vary depending on users' individual characteristics, such as age, gender, and personality factors (Forest & Wood, 2012; Orr et al., 2009), and network characteristics, such as network size, density, and composition (Southwell, 2013).

Studies also examine Social Media use in correlation with some variables, and the studies showed that 65% of online adults in the 50–64 age group and 46% of online adults in the 65 years and older age group use social network sites (Smith, 2014). Moreover, individual differences associated with life position are important predictors of communication needs and media use as applied to traditional media (Rubin & Rubin, 1982) and the Internet as a whole (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000), but the effects of age and developmental processes across the lifespan remain largely unexplored in online social networking.

Studies have examined the motivation why people engage in the use of social Media. Fareeha, Beate & Nontuthuzelo (2017) cited in their work that Internet users worldwide spend 101.4 minutes of their day using social networks (Statista, 2015). Global Web Index (2015) lists the top ten motivations of why people use social networks as: To stay in touch with friends, to stay up-to-date with news and current events, to use up spare time, to find funny and entertaining articles and videos, to share their opinion, to share photos and videos with others, because their friends are on the social network, to network professionally with other people, to meet new people and to share details of their daily lives.

Kim, Lee and Elias (2015:291) state that social networks have become an essential source of news and information for users and Bazarova and Choi (2014)

According to Rauniar *et al.*, (2014:20), perceived ease of use is determined by the user believing that the social network is flexible to interact with, they find it easy to get the social network to do what they want, they find it easy to become skilful at using the social network, they find the social network easy to use and their interaction with the social network is clear and understandable. Similarly, Kim *et al.*, (2015) determined that users who understand how to use social networks and are able to easily learn advanced features of social networks, have a high level of perceived ease of use of social networks.

2.1. Theoretical Framework

The study of Turne & Serenko (2012) would serve as the theoretical explanation for the present study. They have identified three notionally different perspectives to explain the formation of social network addiction: Cognitive-behavioral model; this model emphasizes that 'abnormal' social networking arises from maladaptive cognitions and is amplified by various environmental factors, and eventually leads to compulsive and/or addictive social networking. Social skill model; this model emphasizes that 'abnormal' social networking arises because people lack self-presentational skills and prefer virtual communication to face-to-face interactions, and it eventually leads to compulsive and/or addictive use of social networking. Socio-cognitive model; this model emphasizes that 'abnormal' social networking arises due to the expectation of positive outcomes, combined with internet self-efficacy and deficient internet self-regulation eventually leads to compulsive and/or addictive social networking behavior (Griffiths, 2013).

3. Objective of the Study

- To examine if hours spent on Social Media has significant effect on loneliness
- To investigate if age, gender have effect on loneliness

- To find out if average hour spent on Social Media has effect on Loneliness.

4. Method

4.1. Sample

Students of the Department of Sociology & Anthropology of the Federal University Otuoke, Bayelsa State Nigeria were used for the study. These consists of students from the first Year to the fourth year, they were randomly selected to give everyone equal chance of being selected for the study. A total number of One Hundred and Thirty Four participants were used; Sixty one were males, while the rest Seventy Three were females. The data was collected by giving the questionnaires, directly to the participants, which was retrieved from them immediately after completion.

4.2. Measures

4.2.1. Loneliness

A 20-item scale designed to measure one's subjective feelings of loneliness as well as feelings of social isolation. Participants rate each item as O ("I often feel this way"), S ("I sometimes feel this way"), R ("I rarely feel this way"), N ("I never feel this way"). The measure has been revised two times since its first publication; once to create reverse scored items, and once to simplify the wording. The scale has the reliability coefficient of 0.72

4.2.2. Social Media Addiction

Was measured in accordance with the assertion of Yang & Tung (2007), any individual who spends 8.5 to 21.5 hours online per week is considered to be a social media addict.

4.3. Statistical Analysis

The study adopted the Anova Design and Independent t -test as Statistical tool for analysis of the data collected for the purpose of the study.

5. Result

Group Statistics								
	Social Media addiction	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	df	t	p
Loneliness	High	73	38.2740	7.75181	.90728	132	4.731	<.05
	Low	61	32.5246	5.98778	.76666			

Table 1: Independent T-Test Summary Table Showing the Influence of Social Media Addiction on Loneliness

Table 1 revealed that social media addiction has a significant influence on loneliness. ($t(132) = 4.731$ $p < .05$)

ANOVA Loneliness					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	470.918	5	94.184	1.697	0.14
Within Groups	7105.291	128	55.51		
Total	7576.209	133			

Table 2: One Way Anova Showing the Influence of Age On Loneliness

Table 2 above revealed that age does not have a significant influence on loneliness ($F(5, 128) = 1.697$ $p > .05$)

Group Statistics								
	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	df	t	p
Loneliness	Male	60	36.1667	7.8247	1.01016	132	0.703	>.05
	Female	74	35.2432	7.34252	0.85355			

Table 3: Independent T-Test Summary Table Showing the Differences of Gender on Loneliness

Table 3 above revealed that there is no significant difference of gender on loneliness. ($t(132) = .703$ $p > .05$)

ANOVA Loneliness					
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1161.264	14	82.947	1.539	.008
Within Groups	6414.945	119	53.907		
Total	7576.209	133			

Table 4: One Way ANOVA Showing Influence of Average Hour Spent on Social Media on Loneliness

Table 4 above revealed that there is a significant influence of average hour spent on social media on loneliness

6. Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendation

After subjecting the collected data to analysis, using adequate statistical tool, result revealed several interesting facts, for instance. After using independent t test, result revealed that social media addiction has a significant influence on loneliness. ($t(132) = 4.731, p < .05$). A number of factors might be responsible for the outcome of this result, human are naturally social animals, they tend to look for every means to socialize because it fosters psychological wellbeing Segrin & Taylor, 2007, hence most persons continually turn to social media space to achieve that, this is done at the expense of one on one communication. As times goes by, social media socialization becomes monotonous, but even at that people loathe to break the social media attachment (Barton 2003), and because one on one communication is practically not in existence, it exacerbates feelings of loneliness in individuals. This assertion was further given credence to in the works of Xu & Tan, (2012), they found a link between the constant use of social media and some form mental health issues, with loneliness coming tops in the mix.

Moreover, loneliness occurs when human social needs are not fulfilled, and as earlier asserted people most times turn mostly to social media for that the fulfillment of such social needs, but because social media is such a toxic place where there exist lots of negative factors though along positive things (depending on its application) people do not get to meet the psychological pleasure they seek on social media. In Nigeria, its common to see pictures of violent scene, especially of accidents and killings in the North Central and North West and lots of social media news that you do not even subscribe for .and this explains the fight why the Nigeria government is sponsoring some bills to fight this trend which they term fake news. All these goes a long way further exacerbating lots of psychological dysfunction in human even beyond loneliness. Nigeria is a country that is dangerously divided along religious and ethnic divide and its toxic effect is evident on the social media space, seeking for company there could bring about mental issues including loneliness.

Result also showed at ($F(5, 128) = 1.697, p > .05$) that age does not have a significant influence on loneliness, result further shows there is no significant difference of gender on loneliness. ($t(132) = .703, p > .05$), The outcome of the current study negates previous works that have being done. For instance (Henderson, Scott, and Kay1986). Tornstam (1992)(Fees, Martin, and Poon 1999) all found degree of significance between loneliness and age, this completely negates the outcome of the current study, the reason for the outcome could be that, the present study examine other variable (social addiction) alongside the variable (age) which is not the case with studies of (Henderson, Scott, and Kay1986). Tornstam (1992)(Fees, Martin, and Poon 1999). More so, the differences in the sample population could be a reason for the outcome. And lastly, the study shows that there is a significant influence of average hour spent on social media on loneliness, this assertion is in tandem with the assertion of Barton (2013).

7. Conclusion

- Social Media addiction has a significant influence on loneliness
- Age does not have a significant influence on loneliness
- There is no significant difference of gender on loneliness
- There is a significant influence of average hour spent on social media on loneliness

8. Recommendation

Based on the outcome of the study, the following is recommended for Mental Health Experts

- Double up efforts in raising awareness about the increase in social media addiction in the society and make effort to mitigate the trend.
- Ensure that they provide intervention therapy to help people overcome any form of maladjustment.

Based on the outcome of the study, the following is recommended for Government

- Legislation should be to streamline the usage of social media, especially on what should be posted there.

Based on the outcome of the study, the following is recommended for Individuals

- Strive to ensure that they moderate the use of social media.

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