

A Survey of Facebook Addiction Level among Selected Nigerian University Undergraduates

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Abstract

The undesirable consequences emanating from excessive internet usage on individual lives has been described as Internet Spectrum Addiction Disorder. Also, the potential clinical relevance of Facebook Addiction has also been conceptualized under Internet Spectrum Addiction Disorder. Observation have shown that many young adults in Nigeria are undiscerning users of Social network sites with many already tending toward excessive usage or are already entrapped in the 'web' of addictions. This fact remains hazy and needs empirical investigation. This study therefore surveyed the level of addiction to Facebook among selected Nigerian University undergraduates. Stratified and purposive sampling techniques were employed in selecting 1000 undergraduates from four universities in South-west, Nigeria. Data were generated with Facebook Addiction Symptoms Scale (FASS). FASS, developed and validated by the researcher yielded reliability co-efficient of 0.73 (Cronbach Alpha). Data were analyzed with simple percentages, cross tabulation and t-test. Findings show 'meeting people' and 'chatting' as the most frequent activities of undergraduates on Facebook. 'Facebook chat', 'Wall post', and 'Picture uploading' were features used most. Many undergraduates access Facebook account every passing hour, every two hours and every day. The study reveals low level addiction (1.6%) particularly among university undergraduates in private universities. Although the study observed low level of addiction, this result may be due to the low level of internet access generally in Nigeria. The study therefore suggests that stake holders must do something to prevent rampancy of Facebook addiction in particular and internet addiction in general among Nigerian youths.

Key words: Social media, Facebook addiction, Internet, University undergraduate

INTRODUCTION

The advent of Social Network Sites (SNS) such as Myspace and Facebook and others have added greater dimension to the World Wide Web. As described by Boyd and Ellison (2007), Social network site is an online service for users to create a public or semi-public profile, build a network with other users with whom they share a common links, and navigate other users' profiles and networks. With the social network sites, we have communities and groups of people with shared interests who stay more 'connected'. There is no doubt that social medium such as Facebook has a great ability to instantaneously spread messages to the masses, unrestricted by time and space (Harlow, 2012). Social network sites, Facebook in particular, has proved to be a tool for social activism and a potent instrument for sparking, stirring and setting in motion social movements in the recent times.

Social network site usage has become a global phenomenon. Today, more than 500 million users are active participants in the communities (Facebook, 2011). A study by Kuss and Griffiths (2011) suggests that between 55% and 82% of teenagers and young adults use Facebook on regular basis. The exponential increase in the regular social media usage over the last few years lends support to the availability hypothesis that postulates that where there is increased access and opportunity, there is always an increase in the number of people who engage in such activity (Griffiths, 2003). Functional approach to mass communication theory also emphasizes the functionality of social media usage in relation to its users. As identified by Nyland et al (2007), the five motives of using social media include: meeting new people, entertainment, maintaining relationships, social events and; media creation. According to Ellison et al (2007), recent empirical researches have shown a significantly strong relationship between college students' Facebook usage and their bridging social capital. Social capital is a construct that describes potential cumulated resources and benefits embedded in relationships with other people. Coleman, cited in Lin, Weipeng, Sung Yeun Kim and Robert LaRose (2012) outlined such benefits to include: emotional support, useful information or functional assistance. Putman (2000) identified two types of social capital: 'bridging' social capital and 'bonding' social capital. While bridging social capital consists of loose relationship, (which serves as bridge connecting a person to a different network) bonding social capital provides emotional support through strong relationship. Wellman et al (1996) observed that computer-assisted social networks sustain strong, intermediate and weak ties that

provide information and social support in both specialized and broadly-based relationships. As noted by Ferlander (2003), Internet is capable of creating and maintaining various types of social capital.

Amidst growing explosion of social network sites comes an observation of internet addiction and social network addiction as a psychological disorder becoming rampant all over the world. The mass appeal of social networks on the internet could potentially be a cause for concern, especially considering the amount of time adolescents and young adults spend online. According to Young (2009), from psychological perspective, it may be plausible to speak of Facebook Addiction Disorder because addiction criteria such as neglect of personal life, mental preoccupation, mood modifying experiences, tolerance and concealing the addiction behavior appear to be present in some people who use social network sites excessively. The potential clinical relevance of Facebook addiction has been conceptualized under Internet Spectrum Addiction Disorder (Karauskos et al, 2010). Young (1998) defined internet-related disorder as “Problematic Internet Use (PIU). As stipulated by this definition, for an individual to qualify as internet addict, he or she must meet up with at least five of the following eight criteria: Preoccupation with internet, need for longer amount of time online, repeated attempt to reduce internet use, withdrawal when reducing internet use, time management issues, environmental distress (family, school, work, friends), deception around time spent online, and; mood modification through internet use. Evidences from past researches have shown that internet use had interfered with addicts’ academic work, professional performance or their social lives. (Louis and Paul, 2012)

Although internet access can still be regarded considerably limited in Africa, particularly, in the Sub-Sahara Africa, the advent of global system of mobile communication (GSM) has made internet reachable to many young adults. In particular, the availability of GSM services and mobile phones with internet facility has made social network site (Facebook) accessible and common. Many university undergraduates in Nigeria who do not have access to internet via computer now do so through mobile phones, and do have Facebook accounts and are active users. With this development, tendencies toward ‘problematic use’ of Facebook, to wit, addiction tendencies could be present in varying degrees among Nigerian youths.

Social Network Sites and Social Malady

Social media include web-based and mobile technologies used to turn communication into interactive dialogue. It is a group of internet-based applications that build on ideological and technological foundations of web 2.0 and that allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Kaplan and Haenlein ,2010) Kaplan and Haenlein, noted that a striking feature of social media is that it goes beyond users being able to retrieve information, but that users are able to create and consume information themselves. Social media applications such as Facebook (a network that allows users create profile, add friends and exchange messages), Twitter (a social network and micro-blogging site that allows users to send and read text-based posts); YouTube (a video sharing website that allows users upload, share and view videos), LinkedIn (a business related social network site that allows users share pictures) and many others exist and have become popular among internet users. According to Botha, Farshid and Pitt (2012), every minute, 24 hours of video content are uploaded to YouTube servers and the number of Facebook users surpasses some of the world’s population.

Online users engaging in social media interaction are generally motivated by similar factors which are both intrinsic and extrinsic in nature depending on their geographical location. These factors, as suggested by Amarasinghe (2010) include: altruism, curiosity, sense of efficacy, pleasure of sharing, reciprocity, affiliation, power, collaboration, reward and recognition.

Social network sites have become extremely and increasingly popular among youths and professional individuals. Its pervasive influence is almost irresistible. Particularly, the human network of young adult is more concerned with ‘reading’ and ‘watching’ than they are about their own safety. In short, a condition that can be described as social media malady has resulted from the fallout of a growing popularity of social networks and the benefits it brings. According to Deragon (2011), Social media maladies are conditions affecting productivity of human networks. It is often construed to be a social condition associated with specific symptoms and signs. It may be caused by external factors such as influence of technology/social media or, simply using technology/ social media in the wrong way and for wrong purposes. The internal factors include: a lack of knowledge and / or wisdom by individuals or groups in the use of social media. The pandemic is all about the production and consumption of meaningless and insignificant things that do not enhance progressive continuation of human network. With so many social network sites displayed on the internet, students are tempted to abandon their homework and reading times in preference for chatting online with friends and many are already getting addicted to the online rave of the moment- Facebook and Twitter. Lakshmi (2011) observed that some features of Facebook have become so addictive that sometimes students

forget that it is just a virtual world and that they have actual life waiting for them where lots of chores are yet to be accomplished.

In Nigeria, irrespective of age, most university undergraduates now start the day by checking their Facebook accounts. This trend of obsession, if left unchecked can engender serious academic problem. The frenzy is gradually tending toward addiction as some students cannot do without accessing their Facebook accounts within every passing hour. They like to stay up-to-date with the current trends and events in the virtual world of Facebook. The time and attention that undergraduates are giving to this social network site is becoming increasingly alarming because students can access their Facebook accounts on their mobile phones. Often, when lectures are going on, students still find time to chat with friends online or respond to Facebook notifications at the detriment of their academic pursuit. The scenario described above can be located within the non-medical term called Facebook Addiction Disorder (FAD). According to Larkshmi (2011), the term was introduced by a U.S psychologist for those who are addicted to Facebook and their lives are really affected by their uncontrolled activities on Facebook. As further explicated, the following is the checklist for Facebook addiction disorder:

- The first thing you do in the morning is to check your Facebook account.
- Whenever you are not online, you day-dream of the comments and status updates that have been received.
- You spend hours or waste a lot of precious time on Facebook.
- Your day ends only after a last check of your Facebook account and wishing everyone 'good night' as status update.

Problematic Internet Use and Facebook Addiction

The advancement in information technology and the existence of interactive social media have occasioned research interest in the area of problematic use of the new forms of communication and media. Internet Addiction was a coinage of Goldberg (1996) to describe the undesirable consequences emanating from excessive internet usage on individual lives. Internet addiction shares certain degree of similarity with substance addiction where addicts suffer mentally and physically. As observed by Kandell 1998, Griffiths, 2000), this non-substance addiction is however viewed as severe psychological dependency and behavioural addiction to internet.

The concept of addiction follows the medical model. Addiction, in the medical model relates with bodily and psychological dependence on a physical substance and not on behavioural pattern. Lemon (2002), Byun et al (2009) and Griffiths (1996) argued that addiction should be widened to cover a broader range of behavior. These researchers proposed a subset of behavioural addiction- the concept of technological addiction. Young (1998) presented a definition of internet-related disorder called 'Problematic Internet Use (PIU) and noted that internet use interfered with addicts' academic work, social lives and professional performance. Probing further the researcher identified skipping sleep, ignoring family responsibilities, and showing up late for work as some attendant outcomes. These are evidences of psychological disorder which meet up with the criteria for impulse control disorder, mental illness characterized by an uncontrollable desire to perform behaviour (Louis Loung and Paul S.N. Lee (2012)

Various dimensions of internet addiction have been investigated. Griffiths (2000) studied five cases of excessive internet uses and hoped to find the cues for the existence of internet addiction. Young and Rodgers (1998) investigated personality traits of those considered dependent users of internet and discovered that self-reliant individual has the highest potential in developing problematic internet uses. Sung, LaRose et al (2004) drew fresh conceptualization of gratification specific to problematic internet uses to uncovered seven gratification factors. Chen et al (2004) studied the possibility of the non-detrimental effects of internet dependency and suggested an instrument to measure positive and negative internet dependency. Arguing with the cognitive-behavioural theory, Davis (2001) indicated that both cognitive and behavioural processes work together to develop negative consequences associated with problematic internet usage. Assessing the relationship between Facebook usage and academic performance, Kirschner and Karpinski (2010) discovered that Facebook users had lower grades and spent less time studying than students who did not use social network sites. In a study, Echeburna and deCorral (2010) observed that those people addicted to using social media experience symptoms similar to those experienced by people suffering from addiction to substances or other behaviours. Investigating some aspects of the addictive potential of social networking sites, Pelling and White (2010) surveyed 233 teenage students and discovered that addictive tendencies with regard to social network site were significantly predicted by self-identity and belongingness. This means that teenagers who identified themselves as social network sites users and those who looked for a sense of belongingness on social sites appeared to be at risk of developing an addiction to social network sites. Wilson, Fornasier and White (2010) also indicated in their study that teenagers with high extroversion and low conscientiousness scores predicted addictive

tendencies and frequencies in the time spend on social network sites. They suggested that using social network sites satisfies the extroverts' need to socialize. Discussing how powerful the influence of Facebook can be on sub-consciousness of the users to the point that they don't even realize their behaviour and amount of time they are spending on it. Fenichel (2009) submitted that Facebook Addiction Disorder (FAD) appears to have the most ingrained and self-reinforcing of all scenarios, reinforcing through immediacy, acclamation, intimacy, shared experience, shared creativity and the ability to be the complete and total captain of the ship of one's Facebook homepage.

Theoretical Framework

The study is based on two theories- Uses and gratification and media dependency. Uses and gratification is concerned with what people (audiences) do with the media. The theory posits that people are not passive receivers of media messages but active influencers of the message effect. That is, the consumers of media messages have the freewill to decide how they will use the media and how it will affect them. As actively influencing the effect process, media audiences selectively choose, attend to, perceive and retain media messages. The focus is thus, not on media production and transmission functions, but, on media consumption functions. Rather than asking "what kinds of effects occur, under what conditions?" the question becomes "who uses which content, from which media, under which condition, and; for what reasons?" Uses and gratification theory indicates a positive relationship between social media usage and the level of gratification derived from such activity. Generally, users of social media are motivated by similar intrinsic and extrinsic factors (Amarasinghe, 2010). Nyland et al listed five motives of using social media as: meeting new people, entertainment, social events, maintaining relationships, and; media creation.

Media dependency theory attempts to explain the relationship between the content of the mass media, the nature of the society, and the communication behavior of audiences. The theory postulates that people are dependent on the mass media for information needs. Now that social media has become part of people's daily life, addiction to it has become the resultant effect of over-dependency on it for information, sensation, entertainment, satisfaction etc. Besides, there seems to be a relationship between the desire for gratification and dependency. As submitted by Sung and LaRose et al (2004) internet addictions in general are "habits" that begin when the "gratification sought", become a conditioned response to negative effect, then such behavior then becomes a goal in itself, thus leading to preoccupation with it.

The Problem

The avalanche of social media in Nigeria socio-cultural environment, particularly, among young adults is incontrovertible. The use of social network sites is an ever growing phenomenon among university students in Nigeria. Observations have shown that many of these young adults are undiscerning users of social network sites with many already tending toward excessive usage or are already entrapped in the 'web' of addiction. This fact remains hazy as there is dearth of empirical investigations in this area in Nigeria.

As Facebook attains its growing popularity among young adults in Nigeria, its users keep surging daily amidst growing concern over youths' over-dependence or addiction tendencies. Are Nigerian university undergraduates addicted or are at the verge of getting addicted to Facebook? This is the question that constitutes the focal point of this research effort.

Based on the foregoing, the study addresses five research questions and tests on hypothesis.

Research Questions

1. What are the activities of Nigerian university undergraduates on Facebook?
2. What are the Facebook features used most by Nigerian undergraduates?
3. How frequent do Nigerian university undergraduates access their Facebook account?
4. What is the level of addiction tendencies to Facebook among Nigerian university undergraduates?
5. What is the distribution of Nigerian university undergraduates in private and public universities across levels of addiction?

Hypothesis

H₀ : There will be no significant difference in the level of addiction to Facebook between students in private and public universities.

Method

The Survey method was employed in this study. The subjects of the investigation were drawn from four (4) universities. The selected universities fall within two strata- private and public universities. Public and Private strata were used for comparability. While the University of Ibadan and the Lagos State University were the public

universities selected; Caleb university in Lagos and Ajayi Crowther university in Oyo were selected, thus reflecting two public universities, one in Lagos state and one in Oyo state; two private universities, one in Lagos and one in Oyo state, Nigeria. From each of the schools, a total of 250 (two hundred and fifty) undergraduate students were purposively selected. To fall within the selection criteria, every respondent must be a regular internet user and must have a Facebook account. A total of 1000 respondents were selected but only 994 copies of the questionnaire were adequately filled and returned. While 496 copies of the questionnaire were retrieved from respondents in the private universities, 498 were retrieved from students in private universities.

Data were generated with 'Facebook Addiction Symptoms Scale (FASS). FASS, developed and validated by the researcher is a 15- item scale fashioned after the content categories in Young's (1998) Internet Addiction Scale. FASS is an instrument with three sections. The first section is aimed at capturing the demographic information of the respondents. The second section is in form of dichotomous response format. Section three is in four-point Likert - scale format of 'Very regular', 'Regular', 'Occasional' and 'Not at all' scored from 4 (for very regular) to 1 (for Not at all). Section three of the instrument contains 3 items each under the following categories developed by Young (1998): Preference for social Network site, Loss of control, Preoccupation, Negative life consequences, and; Withdrawal. The instrument was trial tested and validated. A test of reliability with Cronbach Alpha yielded reliability co-efficient of 0.73. This indicates that the instrument is internally consistent and reliable.

Data were analyzed with simple frequency count, percentage, and cross tabulation while the only hypothesis for the study was tested with t-test. Dichotomous responses were scored 1 for 'yes' responses and 2 for 'No' responses. The Likert-Scale responses were scored 4 (for very regular) to 1 (for Not at all). The respondents' scores in the 15-items were taken to be proportionate to their levels of Facebook addiction. Compute and recode functions in the Statistical Package for Social Sciences were used in computing the scores with the maximum score of 60 and minimum score of 15. The scores were categorized into three. Respondents within upper quartile (scores of 41 and above) were regarded as 'High addiction'. Those within the lower quartile (scores below 30) were categorized as 'Low addiction' while respondents whose scores on the scale fall 30 and 40 were categorized as 'Moderate addiction,

RESULTS

Research question 1: What are the activities of Nigerian University undergraduates on Facebook?

Table 1: Distribution of Nigerian University Undergraduates' frequent activities on Facebook

Facebook Activities	Frequency	Percentage
School work	149	15.0
Dating	134	13.5
Meeting people	220	22.1
Uploading	113	11.4
Chatting	194	19.5
Uploading Pictures	69	6.9
Messaging	82	8.2
Celebrity follow-up	33	3.3
Total	994	100.0

Table1 above shows the activities of 994 Nigerian university undergraduates on Facebook. The table shows 'Meeting people' with the highest percentage (22.1%), followed by 'Chatting' (19.5%) as the most frequent activities of undergraduates on Facebook. 149 (15.0%) claimed to look for help on their school work on Facebook while, 134 (13.5%) are involved in online dating through Facebook. This result is further illustrated in figure 1 below.

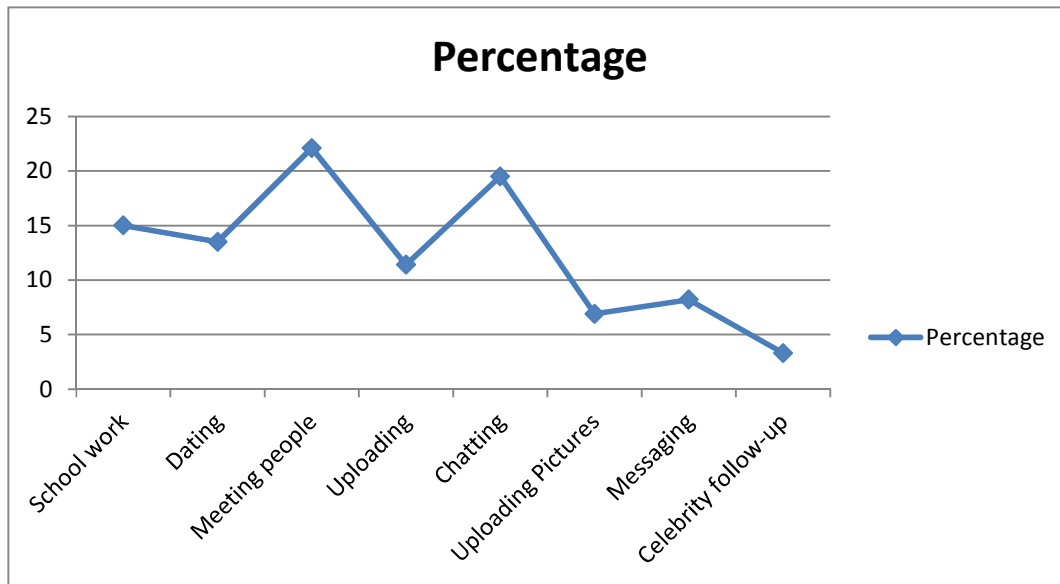


Fig. 1: Chart showing University students activities on Facebook.

Research question 2: What are the Facebook features used most by Nigerian University undergraduates?

Table 2: Distribution of Facebook features used by Nigerian University Undergraduates

Features	Frequency	Percentage
Facebook chat	318	32.0
Wall post	313	31.5
Pictures	209	21.0
E-mail	69	6.9
Games	30	3.0
Groups	31	3.1
Events	24	2.4
TOTAL	994	100.0

As evident in Table 2 above, 'Facebook chat' was the most used feature of Facebook with the highest score of 318 (32.0%) This was closely followed by 'Wall post' with 313 (31.5%) and 'Picture' uploading with 209 (21.0%). This means that as students meet people (make friends) online, the engage in activities such as chatting, posting on their walls and uploading and exchanging new pictures. Figure 2 illustrates the result further.

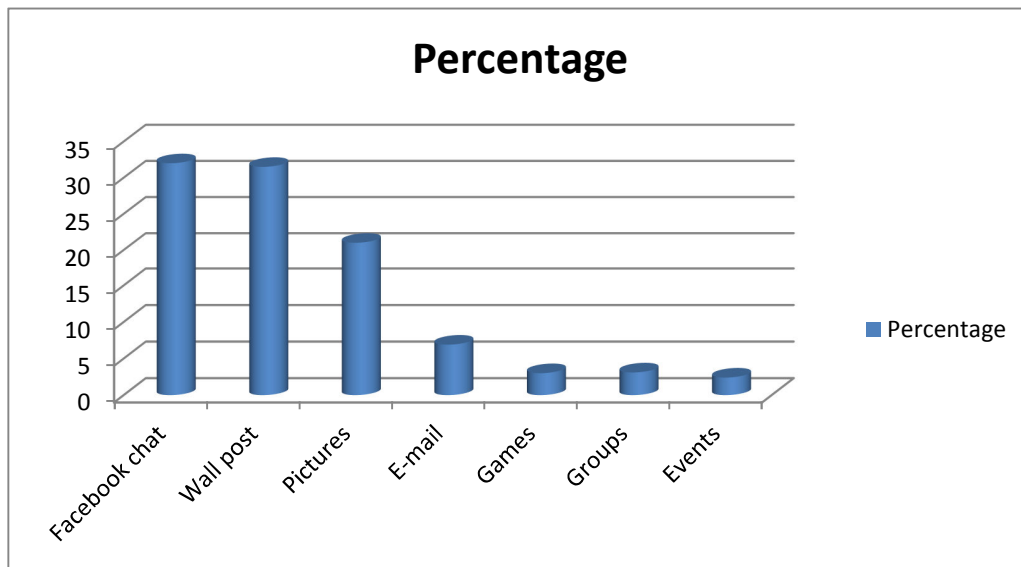


Fig. 2: Facebook features used by Undergraduates

Research question 3: How frequent do Nigerian University undergraduates access their Facebook account?

Table 3: Frequency of Facebook account access by University Undergraduates

	Frequency	Percentage
Within the hour	308	31.0
2 hours interval	222	22.3
Everyday	219	22.0
2 days interval	92	9.3
Weekly	153	15.4
Total	994	100.0

Table 3 shows that 308 (31.0%) of the respondents access their Facebook account every passing hour. 222(22.3%) access their account every two hours and 219 (22.0%) access their account every day, while only 153 (15.4%) access their account weekly. The table shows the tendencies of over-dependence on Facebook by the respondents. The chart below further illustrates the result presented above.

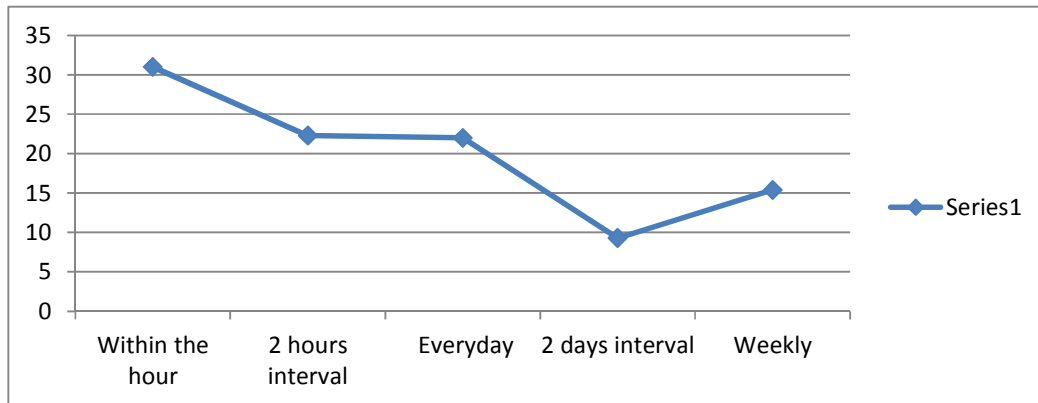


Fig. 3: Frequency of Facebook account access

Research question 4: What is the level of Facebook addiction among Nigerian University Undergraduates?

Level of Addiction	Frequency	Percentage
High	16	1.6
Moderate	216	21.7
Low	762	76.7
Total	994	100.0

Table 4 indicates that 762 (76.7%) of undergraduates can be categorized as having low addiction to Facebook, 216 (21.7%) are moderately addicted while only 16 (1.6%) have high addiction to Facebook. The result shows that only 1.6% of the sampled university undergraduates can be regarded as having high addiction to Facebook. This is a clear indication of very low prevalence of Facebook addiction among Nigerian undergraduates. The chart below illustrates the result further.

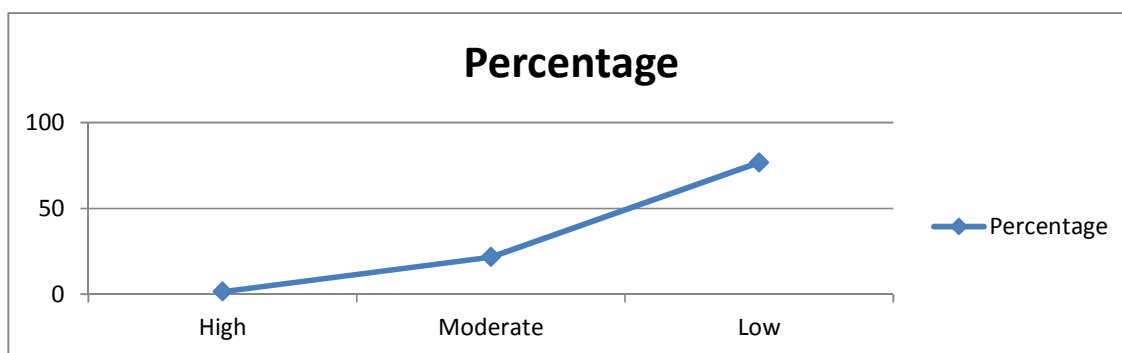


Fig. 4: Levels of Facebook addiction among University undergraduates in Nigeria

Research question 5: What is the distribution of University undergraduates in public and private universities across levels of addiction?

Table 5: Type of institution by level of addiction Cross tabulation

			level of addiction			Total
			High	Moderate	Low	
Type of institution	Private	Count	16	138	342	496
		% within Type of institution	3.2%	27.8%	69.0%	100.0%
		% of Total	1.6%	13.9%	34.4%	49.9%
Type of institution	Public	Count	0	78	420	498
		% within Type of institution	.0%	15.7%	84.3%	100.0%
		% of Total	.0%	7.8%	42.3%	50.1%
Total	Count		16	216	762	994
	% within Type of institution		1.6%	21.7%	76.7%	100.0%
	% of Total		1.6%	21.7%	76.7%	100.0%

Table 5 shows the distribution of undergraduates in both private and public universities across levels of addiction. As revealed by the cross tabulation, all the 16 students, constituting 1.6% of students having high addiction tendencies to Facebook are from the private universities. While 138 (13.9%) of the total respondents who belong to the level of moderate addiction users are from private universities, only 78 (7.8%) are from public universities. The number of low addiction tendencies users is higher in public universities as reflected in the number- 420 (42.3%) against 342 (34.4%) in private universities.

Hypothesis

Ho : There will be no significant statistical difference in the level of addiction to Facebook between private and public university students

Table 6: T-test table indicating difference in Facebook addiction tendencies among Public and Private University Undergraduates

Type of Institution	N	Mean	SD	T-cal	Df	p-value	Remarks
Private	498	2.8434	.53886	-6.384	992	.000	S**
Public	496	2.6573	.36381	-6.379			

Sig. at 0.05 level of significance

Table 6 above shows a significant difference in the level of addiction to Facebook among public and private university students. With the hypothesis tested at 0.05 level of significance, the result shows a higher level of Facebook addiction among students in private than in public universities.

Discussion of findings

From the findings of this study, it can be concluded that Nigerian University undergraduates are active users of Facebook. Their activities on Facebook include: Meeting people, Chatting and School work. These findings confirm the functionality of social media which includes: meeting new people, entertainment, maintaining relationships, social events and media creation. Also, the fact that University undergraduates are active users of Facebook is supported by ‘availability hypothesis. According to Griffiths (2003) availability hypothesis states that increased access and opportunity naturally brings increase in the number of people who engage in such activities. Even though

Nigeria can still be rated as one of the countries with low internet access in Sub-Sahara Africa, availability of phones with internet access has greatly increased the access of young adults to various social media.

A x-ray of the features of Facebook that Nigerian undergraduates use show that 'Chatting' took the highest percentage(32.0%) followed by 'Wall post' (31.5%) and 'Picture uploading'(21.0%). This is in line with the position of scholars that young people use social media to build social capital. Earlier study by Ellison et al (2007) found a strong relationship between college students' Facebook usage and their bridging social capital. As further revealed by the findings of this study, 31.0% of the subjects of this study access their Facebook account every passing hour of their wakening moment, 22.3% do so at least two hour interval while 22.0% never allow a day to pass without accessing their Facebook account. Even though further analysis shows only 1.6% in the realm high addiction users, 21.7% as moderate addiction users and majority (76.7%) as low addiction users, there is clear indication from the results that there are tendencies toward high addiction among Nigerian university undergraduate Facebook users. Furthermore, the revelation of a statistically significant difference in the level of addiction to Facebook between private and public university students in favour of private university students is expected. In Africa, economic factor remains a strong variable in adoption and diffusion of technology. Since many of the students in private universities are from strong socio-economic backgrounds where there is almost a limitless access to internet, it is not out of place to have higher level of Facebook addiction tendencies among them.

Conclusions and recommendations

It is a known fact that the whole world revolves on the pivot of technological advancement, particularly, information and communication technology. Every technological advance comes with its negative side, most especially when misused or abused. This is the case with the interactive media, social media in particular. Although the advent of social media has increased the level of international connectivity and social interaction, it has also engendered social upheavals in many countries, the so called 'Arab spring' for example. Problematic internet use, generically referred to as 'Internet Spectrum Addiction' has been recognized by social media researchers as a growing global problem that requires proactive measure to tackle. This research effort has clearly shown that Nigeria is not lagging behind among other social media users, limited internet facilities notwithstanding. As such, there is the need to act fast in the direction of fighting and preventing social network addiction the same way we confront substance addiction. In view of research findings on the negative effect of Facebook addiction on human productivity (Young, 1998; Kirschner and Karpinski, 2010) measures must be put in place to nib this development in the bud. As shown in the study, there is growing tendencies of Facebook addiction among undergraduates in the private universities than it is in Public universities. This finding is not accidental when one considers the fact that many of the students in private universities are from wealthy homes where internet access and facilities are not a problem. This naturally shows the direction to which campaigns against social media addiction in general, Facebook addiction in particular, should be concentrated.

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