



## POVERTY-INDUCED STRESS AS PREDISPOSING FACTOR TO SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION AMONG STUDENTS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN LAGOS STATE.

Ayodeji. O. Badejo & Oriade, Modupeola Deborah

Department of Educational Foundations and Counselling Psychology, Faculty of Education,  
Lagos State University, Ojo, Nigeria

### Abstract

Social media is a collective term for applications which focus on communication and interaction among people. It has been discovered that some young people use social media as a way of escape from poverty-induced stress. Social media could be overused, thereby leading to its addiction with its attendant unpleasant consequences. Therefore, this paper examined poverty-induced stress as predisposing factor to social media addiction among secondary schools' students. The study adopted descriptive survey with one research question and two hypotheses. The sample consisted of 155 students randomly drawn from four senior secondary schools in Lagos State. A 35-item questionnaire, "Poverty-induced Stress and Social Media Addiction Questionnaire" (PSSMAQ) was used for data collection, with Cronbach Alpha reliability index of 0.87. Data analysis was carried out with the use of percentages, t-test and ANOVA. The first hypothesis was rejected while the second one was not rejected. Results showed that the level of poverty-induced stress of most students was very high; that poverty-induced stress greatly influences social media addiction among them and that their addiction is not age-specific. It is therefore, recommended that there is a need for counsellors to make use of some appropriate therapies and follow up in order to prevent relapse. Conclusively, Counsellors are expected to assist students reduce their poverty-induced stress, so that their tendency to be addicted to social media could be minimized.

**Keywords:** Poverty-induced Stress, Predisposing Factor, Social Media Addiction, Students

**Word count:** 198

**Corresponding Author Email:** [oriademodupeola@gmail.com](mailto:oriademodupeola@gmail.com)

**How to cite:** Badejo, A.O. & Oriade, M.D. (2024). Poverty-induced Stress as Predisposing Factor to Social Media Addiction among students in secondary schools in Lagos State. *Educational Perspectives*, 10(1), 57-67.



## Introduction

One of the defining moments of the 21st century is internet penetration and has largely open the space for a lot of technological advancement such as social media. Social media is a collective term for applications which focus on communication, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration. Many individual use social media to stay in touch and interact with friends and family, while businesses and organizations use social media as a way to promote their products (Rouse, 2020). It encompasses applications such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, Telegram, Skype, You tube, etc. Hudson (2020) stated that its affordability, portability, and ability to share opinions makes it a readymade tool in the hands of young people; with most of them use it to evade or relieve their poverty-induced stress. Habitually, this makes some of them use it excessively which could lead to its addiction.

Social media addiction is a behaviour that is characterized by an overwhelming urge to use social media for a very long period of time (Hilliard, 2020). It is devoting too much time and effort to social media that it impairs other important life areas. According to Glowiak (2019), social media addiction is a problematic use in which an individual is compulsively preoccupied with social media. It is any form of addiction, where individuals exhibit a compulsion to use social media to excess and individuals with social media addiction are often overly concerned about by an intense urge to log on to and use social media (Andreassen & Pallesen, 2014). In fact, psychologists estimate that as many as 5% to 10% of Americans meet the criteria for social media addiction today. Addictive social media look much like that of any other substance use disorder (Hilliard, 2020).

In their recent study, Shahnawaz & Rehman (2020) discovered that social networking is the new norm of the society as many people remain “online” 24/7 and that its excessive use would result in social networking addiction. Valencia-Ortiz & Castaño Garrido (2019), discovered that the abusive and problematic use of a variety of technologies has led to the development of research focusing on the study of addiction to such technologies and the consequences this brings. Also, a study by Subair, Solomon & Yahya (2019) shows that students’ perceived purposes of social media usage include: socialisation (83%), information (74%), academic (73%) and entertainment (61%). The results highlight internet addiction (45%), distraction (32%), anti-social behaviour (6%), cyber bullying (4%), and writing and spelling skills deficiency (24%).

It is very instructive to note that there is a key distinction between normal over-engagement in social media usage that may be occasionally experienced by many and social media addiction; and that the latter is associated with unfavorable consequences when online social networking becomes uncontrollable and compulsive (Andreassen, 2015). Therefore, when social media usage affects daily functioning, when it impede optimum performance and when it becomes problematic, then addiction is present. Hilliard (2020) stated that social media addiction look much like that any other substance use disorder. Symptoms of social media addiction can be in mood, cognition, physical and emotional reactions, and interpersonal and psychological problems (Tang, Chen, Yang, Chung, & Lee, 2016). It has been reported that the addiction affects approximately 12% of users across social networking sites (Alabi, 2012).



Corroborating this Cherney (2020), stated that some possible downsides of social media include: low self-esteem, which may be prompted by incorrect perceptions that others' lives are "better", increased isolation and loneliness. It can also lead to general anxiety, depression, social anxiety disorder and a persistent fear of missing out (FOMO). Lending credence to this, Hou, Xiong, Jiang, Song & Wang (2019), in their study found that social media addiction is negatively associated with the students' mental health and academic performance. Also, Ajike and Nwakoby (2016) in their study discovered that for most people, social networking sites are harmful, distractive platforms which have caused a great deal of moral decadence among our teenage students. The study shows that, incessant social media addiction problem among young people could be accentuated by their desire to escape reality, overcome loneliness, alleviate mental ill-health issues, unburden concealed frustration or relieve them of poverty-induced stress.

Generally, stress is described as psychological and physiological reaction to an event or condition that is considered a threat or challenge. It is simply a feeling of being overwhelmed (Waters, 2022). Stress is any type of change that causes physical, emotional, or psychological strain. Stress is body's response to anything that requires attention or action. Everyone experiences stress to some degree (Scott, 2022). It is bodily processes created by circumstances that place physical or psychological demands on an individual and it has been viewed as a response, a stimulus, and a transaction (Walinga, 2015). It could arise as a result of unmet desire, anxiety, fear, loneliness, want, loss, deprivation of basic needs of life, lack or poverty.

Poverty-induced stress connotes inability of parents, adults and Students to meet financial obligations. Some situations that might cause this kind of stress include: inability to pay bills, increasing debt or rising cost of living (Waters, 2022). According to Scott (2022), feeling stressed over a relationship, living situation, or lack of money, which is known as poverty-induced stress can create physical health issues. Everybody, including student have concerns about finances. They worry about how they will pay for classes, how their parents they will repay loans, how they will pay for textbooks, and other necessities while living on very little income.

In addition, Allen (2022) stated that poverty, which is typically measured by economic well-being or deprivation, is the result of systemic flaws that adversely impact multiple dimensions of well-being. The specific stressors that unduly impact low-income individuals are called poverty-based stressors, and include multiple categories of risk such as physical, psychosocial, and financial risks. Poverty is a chronic stressor that can lead to poor physical and mental health. In other words, stress and mental health are both closely linked to poverty (Vos et al., 2015). And this is what makes poverty-induced stress a serious psychological issue.

On the effect of poverty-induced stress on an individual, Blair & Raver (2018) stated that one of the mechanisms through which poverty affects the health and well-being of children and adults is through the toxic effects of stress on the brain. Studies from low-income



countries have revealed a link between poor mental health and socioeconomic status indicators such as education, food insecurity, housing, social class, and financial stress. The stress arisen from poverty explains the link between lack and increased risk for depression (Tsai et al., 2016).

Taken together, financial strain or poverty-induced stress is associated with recurrent mental ill-health and exposure to violence (Gooding et al., 2015). Studies have shown that poverty-related stress has been directly related to anxious and depressed symptoms, as well as social problems (Santiago, Wadsworth, & Stump, 2011). In a nutshell, poverty-induced stress can negatively impair peoples' mental and physical health (Richardson et al., 2020). Research indicates poverty and poverty-based stressors can present in an individual, especially in children and adolescents through internalizing symptoms (Wadsworth et. al., 2016); which could lead to higher levels of social problems, attention problems, anxiety and depression-related symptoms (Santiago, Wadsworth, & Stump, 2011). In order to overcome all the risks associated with poverty-induced stress, some adolescents do engage in some activities such as excessive social media use which could lead to its addiction.

Hilliard (2020) observed that social media use becomes problematic when someone, especially young people view social networking sites as an important coping mechanism to relieve loneliness, depression and most importantly poverty-induced stress. According to Sriwalai & Charoensukmongkol (2015), social media is commonly used as a coping skill to deal with stress, yet it ends up creating more anxiety in the future. Psychological disruption has been observed with the employment of social media as a negative coping skill and using social media as a coping skill for poverty-induced stress is one fastest way that could lead to addiction.

Shensa et al. (2017), discovered that when stressed and looking for an outlet, an increasing number of adolescents are turning to social media browsing and posting. While this is certainly a form of distraction, it is taking away the idea of stress by creating a pseudo-refuge. When social media is used as a coping mechanism for poverty-induced stress, such could lead people to long-term anxiety. Therefore, this study examined poverty-induced stress as predisposing factor to social media addiction among Senior Secondary Schools' Students in Lagos State and the need for counselling against this additive behaviour. One research question and two hypotheses were raised and tested in this study. They are:

### **Research Question**

What is the level of poverty-induced stress among senior secondary schools' students in Lagos state?

### **Hypotheses**

1. There is no significant effect of poverty-induced stress as predisposing factor to Social Media Addiction among senior secondary schools' students in Lagos state.



2. There is no significant age difference in the Social Media Addiction among Senior secondary schools’ students in Lagos State.

**Method**

The study used the descriptive design to obtain useful data on poverty-induced stress as predisposing factor to social media addiction among senior secondary schools’ students in Lagos State. The sample for the study consisted of 155 senior secondary schools’ students randomly selected from all secondary schools in Lagos State. The researchers used a self-designed, 35-item questionnaire titled “Poverty-induced Stress and Social Media Addiction Questionnaire (PSSMAQ) which consisted of three sections: A, B & C.

Section A sought information on students’ biographical data, section B was on poverty-induced stress, while section C was on Social Media Addiction. Three psychometrics experts validated the instrument and its reliability coefficient Cronbach’s Alpha reliability index was 0.87. The researchers administered the questionnaire on individual basis and data obtained was analyzed using percentage, t-test and ANOVA to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

**Result**

**Research Question:** What is the level of poverty-induced stress among senior secondary schools’ students in Lagos state?

**Table 1: Frequency & Percentage of level of poverty-induced stress of Senior secondary schools’ students in Lagos State**

Stress Level	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Low Stress	57	36.8	36.8
Valid High Stress	98	63.2	100.0
Total	155	100.0	

From Table 1, the frequency count and percentage of level of poverty-induced stress among participants are: low stress 36.8 % which correspond to 57 participants while those with high stress level is 63.2 which also corresponds to 98 participants. This finding shows that the poverty-induced stress level of a lot of participants is very high.

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant effect of poverty-induced stress as predisposing factor to social media addiction among students in Lagos State.

**Table 2: Group Statistics of mean & standard deviation of effect of poverty-induced stress as predisposing factor to Social Media Addiction among students**

	Stress level	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Social Media Addiction	Low Stress	57	32.32	6.364	.843
	High Stress	98	74.32	7.155	.723

Table 2 shows that the mean and standard deviation of effect of poverty-induced stress as predisposing factor to social media addiction are: low stress mean = 32.32 & S D = 6.364 and

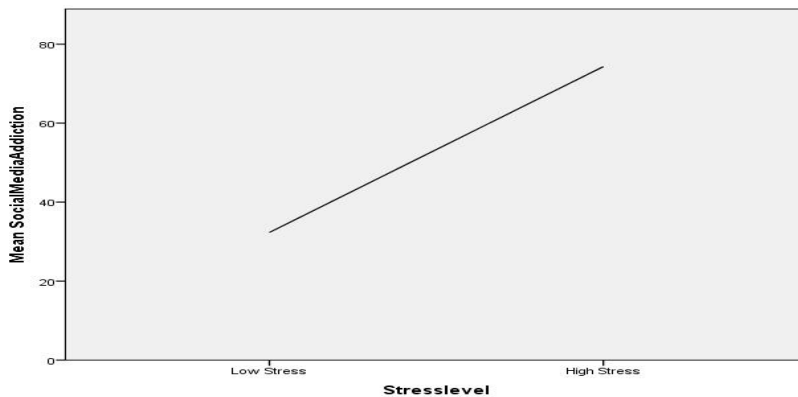


high stress mean = 74.32 & S D = 7.155. This shows that there is a wide difference between the means of the two levels of poverty-induced stress. To know if the difference in means was significant or not, t-test was performed on the data as displayed in table 3.

**Table 3: Independent Samples Test of effect of poverty-induced stress as predisposing factor to Social Media Addiction among students in senior secondary schools in Lagos State**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig.(2-tailed)	Mean Diff.
Social Media Addiction	Equal variances assumed	.887	.348	-36.670	153	.000	-42.001
	Equal variances not assumed			-37.825	128.498	.000	-42.001

Table 3 shows that the independent t-test conducted revealed that  $df = 153$ ,  $F = 0.887$  and  $p = 0.000$ . This result showed that there is statistically significant difference between the variables. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected. In other words, there is significant difference in the effect of poverty-induced stress as predisposing factor to Social Media Addiction among Senior secondary schools' students in Lagos State. Figure 1 shows where the effect lies.



**Figure 1: Effect of stress as predisposing factor to Social Media Addiction**

Figure 1 shows that participants with high level of poverty-induced stress also have high social media addiction while those with low poverty-induced stress level have low addiction. That is, participants with high level of poverty-induced stress are more addicted to social media than their counterpart with low poverty-induced stress. Hence, poverty-induced stress could be seen as predisposing factor to social media addiction among students in senior secondary schools.



**Hypothesis 2.** There is no significant age difference in the social media addiction among Senior secondary schools’ students in Lagos State.

**Table 4 : Group Statistics of mean & standard deviation of age difference in the Social Media Addiction among students**

Age Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
14-15 years	63	58.89	21.648	2.727
16-17 years	64	60.33	20.926	2.616
Above 17 years	28	55.50	22.535	4.259
Total	155	58.87	21.443	1.722

Table 4 shows that the mean and Standard deviation of age difference in the social media addiction are: 14-15 years mean = 58.89 & S D = 21.648, 16-17 years mean = 60.33 & S D = 20.926 while those that are above 17 years mean = 55.50 & S D = 22.535. This shows that their means are very close. To know if the difference in means was significant or not, ANOVA was performed on the data as displayed in table 5.

**Table 5: ANOVA of age difference in the Social Media Addiction**

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	454.088	2	227.044	.491	.613
Within Groups	70353.332	152	462.851		
Total	70807.419	154			

Table 4 shows that  $F_{(2, 152)} = 0.491$  and that  $p > 0.05$ . This result then reveals that there is no statistically significant difference between the variables. Hence, the null hypothesis was not rejected. That is, there is no significant age difference in the Social Media Addiction among Senior secondary schools’ students in Lagos state. They are all addicted irrespective of their ages.

**Discussion**

This study investigated poverty-induced stress as predisposing factor to social media addiction among senior secondary schools’ Students in Lagos State and the need for counselling against addictive behaviour. Findings from the study revealed that the poverty-induced stress level of a lot of students in senior secondary schools in Lagos State is very high. This is in agreement with Hilliard (2020) who opined that social media use becomes problematic when someone, especially young people view social networking sites as an important coping mechanism to relieve loneliness, depression and most importantly stress. For these people, social media use provides continuous rewards that they’re not receiving in real life, and end up engaging in the activity more and more. This then causes a lot of people to engage in the social networking behaviour even more as a way of relieving dysphoric mood states.

The first hypothesis which stated that there is no significant effect of poverty-induced stress as predisposing factor to social media addiction among Senior secondary schools’ students in



Lagos state was rejected. In other words, there is significant effect of poverty-induced stress as predisposing factor to social media addiction among Senior secondary schools' students and that students with high level of poverty-induced stress are more addicted to social media than their counterpart with low poverty-induced stress. This is agreement with the submission of Shensa et al. (2017) who stated that when stressed and looking for an outlet, an increasing number of adolescents are turning to social media browsing and posting. While this is certainly a form of distraction, it is taking away the idea of stress by creating a pseudo-refuge. When social media is used as a stress-reducing coping mechanism, it is show in studies to prime people for long-term anxiety.

The second hypothesis which stated that there no significant age difference in the social media addiction among Senior secondary schools' students in Lagos State was not rejected. That is, students irrespective of their age could be addicted to social media. This is in agreement with the findings of Junco (2012), who discovered that a large sample survey conducted in the United States found that the time students, irrespective of their demographic variables such as gender, age, colour or language, spent on Facebook was negatively associated with total GPAs.

### **Conclusion**

From this study, stress has been identified as one of the predisposing factors to social media addiction among senior secondary schools' Students in Lagos State. Students must be willing to stop and never engage in social media addiction while parent, school authorities and counsellors should in monitoring them in order to guard against this against unethical behaviour. They should encourage to devise strategies or ways of reducing stress so that they will not resort to excessive usage of social media as a coping strategy. This will assist them to live heather and perform credibly well in their daily routine and in their academics.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings from this study, it was recommended that:

There is a need for employment of qualified Counsellors in all secondary schools in Lagos State. Also, there is a need for total monitoring of this students and there must be rules and regulations that must be followed in using social media especially during school hours.

### **Counselling against Poverty and Addictive Behaviour**

It has been observed that the excessive and unrestricted use of the social media by young people, especially students is an unhealthy and addictive behaviour. Poverty-induced stress was seen as one of the predisposing factors accentuating this behaviour, which could negatively affect their mental health, relationship, emotional life as well as their academic performance. There is therefore an urgent the need for counselling against this addictive practice. Counsellors have a great task of ensuring that students are mentally and physically fit and are also free from poverty-induced stress that could lead them to engage in social media addiction.

Counsellors could assist them to take some of these steps:





- Keep a positive attitude at all times.
- Learn to manage their little money/finances more effectively.
- They must always set boundaries on all occasions
- Teach students on some poverty alleviation strategies.
- They could learn and practice relaxation techniques, such as meditation, mindfulness
- Students should be contented and learn the art of self-control
- Parents/G should always guard against childhood/adolescence poverty
- They must learn to say no to requests that would create more burden for them,
- They must get enough rest and sleep so that body can recover from stressful events.
- Need for the use of some appropriate therapies and follow up in order to prevent relapse.



## References

- Ajike, A. K. and Nwakoby, N. P. (2016). The Impact of Social Networking Sites on Teenagers in Nigeria. *International Journal of Public Policy and Administrative Studies*, 11(1):35-64. [https:// www.ansrd.org](https://www.ansrd.org)
- Alabi, O.O. (2013). A survey of facebook addiction level among selected Nigerian University undergraduates. *New Media and Mass Communication*. 10, 70-80. <https://www.iiste.org/Journals/index.php>
- Allen, Brianna N., (2022). "Development of A New Measure to Assess for Poverty-Based Stress: The Poverty-Based Stressor Scale (PBSS)" . *Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. 2204. <https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/etd/2204>
- Andreassen, C. S. (2015). Online social network site addiction: A comprehensive review. *Current Addiction Reports*, 2, 175–184. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40429-0>
- Andreassen, C. S., & Pallesen, S. (2014). Social network site addiction-an overview. *Current Pharmaceutical Design*, 20, 4053–4061 [https:// doi.org/ 10. 2174/ 13816128113199990616](https://doi.org/10.13816128113199990616)
- Blair, C. & Raver, C. C. (2018). Poverty, Stress, and Brain Development: New Directions for Prevention and Intervention. *Academy of Pediatrics*; 16(3 Suppl): S30–S36. [https://www.doi: 10.1016/j.acap.2016.01.010](https://www.doi:10.1016/j.acap.2016.01.010), PMID: PMC5765853
- Cherney, K. (2020). *What Is Social Media Addiction?* <https://www.healthline.com>
- Glowiak , M. (2019). *Social media addiction*. <https://www.choosingtherapy.com>
- Gooding, H. C., Milliren, C. E., Austin, S. B., Sheridan, M. A., & McLaughlin, K. A. (2015). Child abuse, resting blood pressure, and blood pressure reactivity to psychosocial stress. *Journal of pediatric psychology*, 41(1), 5-14.
- Hilliard, J. (2020). *What Is Social Media Addiction?* <https://www.addictioncentre.com>
- Hou, Y., Xiong, D., Jiang, T., Song, L., & Wang, Q. (2019). Social media addiction: Its impact, mediation, and intervention. *Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace*, 13(1), Article 4. <https://doi.org/10.5817/CP2019-1-4>
- Hudson, M. (2020). *What Is Social Media?* <https://www.thebalancesmb.com>
- Junco, R. (2012). The relationship between frequency of Facebook use, participation in Facebook activities, and student engagement. *Computers & Education*, 58, 162–171. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2011.08.004>
- Richardson, J., Mitchell, B. C., Meier, H., Lynch, E., Edlebi, J., Nelson, R. K., & Madron, J. M. (2020). Redlining and neighborhood health " NCRC. <https://ncrc.org/holc-health/>
- Rouse, M. (2020). *Social media*. <https://www.techtarget.com>.
- Santiago, C. D., Wadsworth, M. E., & Stump, J. (2011). Socioeconomic status, neighborhood disadvantage, and poverty-related stress: Prospective effects on



- psychological syndromes among diverse low-income families. *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 32(2), 218-230
- Scott, E. (2022). What Is Stress? *Your body's response to a situation that requires attention or action*. <https://www.verywellmind.com>
- Shahnawaz, M. G. & Rehman, U. (2020). Social Networking Addiction Scale. *Cogent psychology* 7 (1), <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311908.2020.1832032>
- Shensa, A., Escobar-Viera, C. G., Sidani, J. E., Bowman, N. D., Marshal, M. P., & Primack, B. A. (2017). Problematic social media use and depressive symptoms among U.S. young adults: A nationally-representative study. *Social Science & Medicine*, 182, 150-157.
- Sriwilai, K., & Charoensukmongkol, P. (2015). Face it, dont Facebook it: Impacts of Social Media Addiction on Mindfulness, Psychological treatments and the Consequence on Emotional Exhaustion. *Stress and Health*, 32(4), 427-434.
- Subair S. T, Solomon, T. A. & Yahya, D. O. (2019). Social Media: Usage and Influence on Studies in Nigerian Universities. *International Journal of Education and Development using Information and Communication Technology (IJEDICT)*, 15 (3), 53-62
- Tang, J. H., Chen, M. C., Yang, C. Y., Chung, T. Y., & Lee, Y. A. (2016). Personality traits, interpersonal relationships, online social support, and Facebook addiction. *Telematics and Informatics*, 33, 102–108. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.06>.
- Tsai A.C., Tomlinson, M, Comulada, W S & Rotheram-Borus, M. J. (2016). Food insufficiency, depression, and the modifying role of social support: evidence from a population-based, prospective cohort of pregnant women in peri-urban South Africa *Social Science Med.*, 151, 69-77
- Valencia-Ortiz, R. & Castaño Garrido, C. (2019). Use and abuse of social media by adolescents: a study in Mexico. *Pixel-Bit. Revista de Medios y Educación*, 54, 7-28. <https://doi.org/10.12795/pixelbit.2019.i54.01>
- Vos, T, Barber, B. Bell, A. Bertozzi-Villa, S. Biryukov, I. & Bolliger, A. (2015). Global, regional, and national incidence, prevalence, and years lived with disability: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study . *Lancet*, 386. 743-800
- Wadsworth et al (2016). Poverty and the Development of Pschopathology. <https://psycriet.apc.org>
- Walinga, J. (2015). *Chapter 12. Stress, Health, and Coping- Introduction to Psychology* <https://www.openpress.usask.ca>