



EFFECTIVENESS OF COGNITIVE BEHAVIOUR THERAPY IN REDUCING SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS OF SOKOTO STATE UNIVERSITY, SOKOTO, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the effectiveness of Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) in reducing social media addiction among undergraduate students of Sokoto State University, Nigeria. Guided by two research questions, objectives, and hypotheses, it adopted a quasi-experimental design with pre-test, post-test, and control groups. From a population of 1,271 UG III students across three faculties—Education, Arts, and Social and Management Sciences—50 students with the highest addiction scores were purposively selected and assigned to experimental and control groups for eight weeks of counselling intervention. Two instruments were used: the Social Media Addiction Scale—Students Form (SMAS-SF, reliability = 0.89) for baseline assessment and the adapted Social Media Addiction Questionnaire (SMAQ, reliability = 0.88) for pre- and post-testing. Data were analyzed using t-test and ANCOVA via SPSS version 27. Results showed that CBT significantly reduced social media addiction (mean difference = 1.71; $t(24) = 12.76$; $p < .000$), with no significant gender difference ($F(1,22) = 3.659$; $p = .069$; $\eta^2 = .143$). The study concluded that CBT is effective in reducing social media addiction and recommended its adoption for undergraduate counselling interventions.

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INTRODUCTION

The recent development of science and technology, especially social media, has made communication easier and has significantly assisted students in various academic activities, particularly in sharing



reading materials. Ayatalumo and Ukegbu (2018) revealed that in the past, students were usually seen going to libraries to read with little or no electronic gadgets, acquiring knowledge and pushing the frontiers of academics through informed research and other forms of academic exercises. Conversely, in recent times, students move about with electronic gadgets ranging from computers to smartphones, engaging in numerous activities with the aid of these devices within their institutions. One of the foremost activities they engage in is the use of social media applications (apps). The amount of time students spend on these platforms has increased in geometric proportions, a situation capable of leading to social media addiction and reduced academic performance among the affected students.

Social media can be regarded as revolutionary because it has changed the world in many significant ways. It influences the way people think and act, both positively and negatively, depending on the nature and extent of its use and interactivity. Social media refers to platforms where people can connect and interact with each other. These platforms have become an integral part of modern life, with an increasing number of individuals, including university students, engaging with them extensively (Behera & Gartia, 2022).

The term addiction can be described as a psychological dependence on something, such as drugs, the internet, social networks, or social media, that an individual finds difficult to stop. Therefore, social media addiction refers to an overdependence or excessive use of social media platforms. Addiction is a complex, chronic brain condition influenced by genetic and environmental factors and is characterized by compulsive actions that continue despite harmful consequences (Hartney, 2022). Social media addiction can thus be described as the compulsive use of social media sites that manifests itself through behavioral addiction symptoms. These symptoms, according to Idiedo and Omamomo (2023) include the following:

1. **Tolerance:** this involves an increase in the amount of time spent on social media;
2. **Conflict:** this arises when usage interferes with physical, social, vocational, or academic obligations;
3. **Withdrawal:** this is characterized by feelings of distress when unable to access social media platforms.
4. **Relapse:** this involves an inability to control usage time or decide when to stop, as well as mood regulation challenges.

Beck was the founder of cognitive therapy (CT), the father figure of the cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) movement, creator of the Beck Depression Inventory, and a major proponent of manualized



treatment protocols that helped maintain psychotherapy's relevance in the era of pharmacotherapy and randomized clinical trials. He also served as an inspiration behind the U.K.'s National Health Service Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) programme (Rosner, 2022). Chinweuba and Frank (2023) defined cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) as an umbrella term that generally refers to a group of related therapies with theoretical roots in behavioristic learning and cognitive psychology, all scientifically derived from these models. Similarly, Dozois and Martins (as cited in Chinweuba & Frank, 2023) defined CBT as a form of psychotherapy that teaches patients how to recognise and modify unhelpful or distressing thought patterns that negatively affect their behaviours and emotions. The foundation of CBT lies in the belief that dysfunctional cognitions and maladaptive behaviours mediate psychological problems.

Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) has been found to significantly reduce social media addiction among tertiary institution students. For instance, a study in Taraba State revealed that CBT not only reduced the level of social media addiction but also helped restructure students' perceptions regarding their excessive social media use (Garba, Sababa, & Aji, 2023). Based on these findings, it is evident that CBT is an effective treatment for social media addiction, and it was recommended that counselling psychologists apply CBT to address students' addictive behaviours toward social media.

Similarly, research conducted in Morocco examined the effects of cognitive-behavioural group therapy (CBGT) on controlling Internet addictive behaviours and improving mental health among nursing students. The findings showed that CBGT significantly reduced Internet addiction, depression, anxiety, and stress levels (Ksiksou, Maskour, & Alaoui, 2023). In another study, cognitive-behavioural therapy was found to reduce depression, anxiety, and stress levels among Iranian males with addiction. The researchers concluded that CBT is effective in alleviating these psychological challenges among addicted individuals (Alamdarloo, Khorasani, Najafi, Jabbari, & Shojaee, 2019).

Theoretical Framework

Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT)

The study is based on Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT), propounded by Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch in 1974. The theory proposes that individuals actively choose and use particular media forms to satisfy specific needs and obtain desired gratifications. According to Vinney (2022), UGT posits that people's media consumption patterns are guided by the expectations and gratifications they seek, such as entertainment, information, or social interaction. In the context of this study, UGT helps explain students' motivations for engaging with social media and the resulting behavioural patterns that may lead to addiction.



Principles of Uses and Gratifications Theory

Blumler and Katz (as cited in Think Insights, 2024) presented five core elements of the Uses and Gratifications Theory as follows:

1. **Active Audience:** Media users are active participants who choose media based on their individual needs and interests, rather than being passive recipients of content.
2. **Goal-Oriented Media Use:** Audiences use media purposefully to satisfy specific needs such as information, entertainment, or personal identity.
3. **Media Competition:** Different media and content types compete to satisfy the same needs of the audience; individuals select whichever source best meets their goals.
4. **Audience Awareness of Needs:** Users are generally aware of their motives and the gratifications they seek, guiding their media choices accordingly.
5. **Value of Media Content:** The value of a medium or its content lies in its ability to fulfill the user's specific gratifications, not in the medium itself.

Assumptions of Uses and Gratifications Theory

Vinney (2024) explained the major assumptions of the Uses and Gratifications Theory as outlined below:

1. The theory emphasizes the power of the individual over the power of the media.
2. Individual characteristics, such as personality, background, and needs, mediate the relationship between media and their effects.
3. Media effects are influenced as much by the media user as by the media content itself.
4. Even when people are exposed to the same media message, they are not affected in the same way.
5. People use media purposefully, seeking to fulfill specific needs, motivations, or gratifications.
6. Media consumption is a motivated and active process rather than a passive one.



Relevance of the Theory

The uses and gratifications theory is relevant to the study because there is a rapid increase in the overuse of social media platforms in this era. However, the uses and gratifications theory is more essential than ever before, as it explains more about why people spend a lot of time on social media. Media use is motivated and goal-oriented. People always have a reason for consuming media, even if it is simply a habit or entertainment.

Statement of the Problem

Excessive use of social media is directly connected with the availability of smartphones and computers, researcher observed an increase in problems of social media addiction in higher institutions of learning. The effects of social media addiction were therefore defined as problems experienced in universities, colleges, and society due to an inability of students to control the use of social media platforms. There were many risk factors associated with social media addiction and numerous negative consequences resulting from this problem. Some of these risk factors include social, psychological, socio-demographic, and mental factors. This phenomenon has necessitated further studies among researchers and medical professionals.

In Sokoto state, the researcher observed that undergraduate students exhibit major signs and symptoms of social media addiction, and the problem of social media addiction is drastically increasing, likewise its effects on teaching and learning processes. Lecturers are complaining about students' low grades, poor performance in the tests and examinations, spelling mistakes while writing tests or examinations due to familiarity with short forms or abbreviations of words in social media chats and a strong attachment to smartphones even during lectures. Despite all the efforts made by parents and lecturers to stop the menace yet the problem persists. The prevalence rate is said to be higher in higher institutions of learning in Sokoto and in support of this Jamilu, Sadiq and Bala, (2022) revealed that social media has become a great concern among Sokoto State University undergraduates whereby they become reluctant readers and addicted to social media because they no longer see reading and writing as a pleasure, they prefer to watch events on the screen rather than read about them on the pages of paper. This problem seems to be because of the embrace of social media and interaction with new information technologies, that Undergraduates may make it difficult to patronise the library. The problem of this study is to examine the effect of Cognitive Behaviour in reducing social media addiction among undergraduate students of Sokoto State University, Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. To guide the conduct of this study, the following research questions were formulated:

Effectiveness of Cognitive Behaviour Therapy in Reducing Social Media Addiction among Undergraduate Students of Sokoto State University, Sokoto, Nigeria



2. Is there any effect of cognitive behaviour therapy in reducing social media addiction levels among undergraduate students of Sokoto State University, Nigeria, exposed to CBT?
3. What is the differential effect of cognitive behaviour therapy in reducing social media addiction among male and female undergraduate students of Sokoto State University, Nigeria, exposed to CBT?

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the present study are to examine:

1. Effect of cognitive behaviour therapy in reducing social media addiction among Undergraduate students exposed to CBT.
2. Effect of cognitive behaviour therapy in reducing social media addiction level among male and female Undergraduate students exposed to CBT.

Null Hypotheses

Based on the research questions, the following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at a 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test mean scores of social media addiction among Undergraduate students exposed to Cognitive Behaviour Therapy.
2. There is no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test mean scores of social media addiction among male and female Undergraduate students exposed to Cognitive Behaviour Therapy.

Research Design

The study employed a quasi-experimental design with pre-test, post-test and a control group. Quasi-experimental research is usually conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of a treatment, therapy, or educational intervention. Quasi-experiments are likely to be conducted in field settings in which random assignment is difficult (Paul, Rajiv & I-Chant, 2015). They are mostly conducted to examine the effectiveness of a treatment thus, a type of psychotherapy or an educational intervention. This type of research design was regarded as a true experimental design in education because it controls most of the threats to the internal validity of an experiment. It is a design that attempts to achieve experimental isolation, asking for the laboratory isolation achieved by the natural sciences (Sambo, 2008). This type



of design required that the participants be tested with the same instrument before and after treatment (Tsagem, 2014).

Population and Sample

The population of the study comprised of 1271 UG III Sokoto State University students the reason for choosing the UG III undergraduate students of Sokoto State University Nigeria ranged from the fact that they are regarded as vulnerable and Susceptible to social media addiction category of students found to be more attached to smartphones and social network platforms (Aliyu, Abubakar & Muhammad, 2023). Purposive sampling technique was used to select faculties of Education, Arts, social and management sciences. The subjects were identified after the scoring of the pretest, which was administered to UG III students across the faculties. The samples 50 students with higher social media addiction were drawn from the faculty of education, faculty of arts, faculty of social and management sciences and were purposively assigned to CBT treatment and control groups. The justification for assigning respondents in this order was that it was found very difficult to merge the students at the same time in one group to give them treatment, because of the nature of their lecture timetables. Furthermore, it was agreed that the researcher would meet with the C.B.T. group every Thursday. (See Table 1 below).

Table 1: Sample of social media-addicted students for the study

Name of Faculty	Male	Female	Sample	Group	Treatment
Faculty of Education	14	11	25	Experimental group	CBT
Faculty of Arts/Social and Management Sciences	13	12	25	Control group	No treatment
Total	27	23	50		

Source: Fieldwork 2024

Instrumentation

Two research instruments were used for this research as follows:

Adapted Social Media Addiction Scale-Students Form (SMAS-SF), Sahin (2018). The instrument was validated by experts from the Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education and Extension Services of Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto. Furthermore, to establish the reliability of the instrument, a test-retest was conducted on UG III students at Kebbi State University of Science and Technology, Aliero, at intervals of three weeks, and a reliability index of 0.89 was obtained. It was used as a checklist to create a baseline and identify different levels of social media addiction. The highest and lowest scale totals are 120 points ($30 \times 4 = 120$) and 30 points ($30 \times 1 = 30$), respectively. Similarly, the

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range of the scores (0-30) was classified as a low level of social media addiction, (30-59) was classified as moderate (60-89) was classified as a high level of social media addiction and (90-120) regarded as a very high or severe level of social media addiction indicating the extent to which they have social media addiction, and such students need treatment intervention but scores 0-30 points indicate that the students are coping. This range was obtained using the adapted social media addiction scale-students form (Sahin, 2018).

Adapted Shahnawaz & Rehman, 2020). Social Media Addiction Questionnaire (SMAQ). It was used in the pre-test and post-test to ascertain the effectiveness of CBT treatments. The validity and reliability of the instrument was ensured by the original owner. To ensure its validity for the current study, the instrument was revalidated. Thus the modified instrument, was scrutinized by experts in the Faculty of Education and Extension Services, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto. The 30 items of the instrument were examined in terms of clarity of language usage and proper item construction to ensure that it measures what it is meant to measure. Five items were removed, while four items were modified, giving rise to a total of 25 items satisfied to be adequate for the study. The researcher subjected the instrument to the test-retest method of obtaining reliability. The instrument was administered twice to UG III students at Kebbi State University of Science and Technology, Aliero, at intervals of three weeks. The two sets of results were correlated using Cronbach Alpha. A correlation coefficient 'r' of 0.88 was obtained. The coefficient was considered high enough and deemed to be reliable.

Procedures for Treatment

This study was carried out in three phases. These are the pre-treatment Phases. Treatment Phase Post-Treatment Phase. Pre-treatment phase: The two groups in the study were exposed to a pre-test by administering the social media addiction levels using a social media addiction questionnaire, and the scores were kept for future reference at the end of the study. The participants were assigned to the following groups: one treatment group and one control group (CBT and CG).

- i. Group One-Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (X1).
- ii. Group Three-Control (CG).

Treatment Phase:

Treatments were given to those participants in group X1. Each group had eight counselling sessions, which lasted for about 40 minutes. There was one session a week. A Description of CBT treatment sessions is stated below:

Cognitive Behaviour Therapy- Group X1

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Session One: General Introductions, orientation and preliminary activities based on Cognitive Behaviour Therapy.

Session Two: Basic terms and concepts and nature of social media addiction, and its effects.

Session Three: Basic terms and concepts in cognitive behaviour therapy.

Session Four: Identification of participants' problems and information on the meaning and symptoms of social media addiction.

Session Five: Overcoming social media addiction disorder using principles of Cognitive Behaviour therapy.

Session Six: Continuation of the therapeutic intervention of Cognitive Behaviour Therapy

Session Seven: Emphasis on the benefits of Behaviour therapy for adequate restoration of expected behaviour outcome.

Session Eight: General evaluation of the Cognitive Behaviour Therapy skills training. Followed by a wrap-up and post-test administration.

Post-treatment phase:

After the completion of the treatment intervention, the post-test was administered to all the participants. The pre-treatment scores and the post-treatment scores obtained here were subjected to appropriate statistical analysis.

Data Analysis

The data collected was analysed using inferential statistical methods. Hypothesis number one was analysed using paired sample t-tests, and Ho2 two was analysed using analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) at a 0.05 level of significance.

Results

This section presents the results of two tested hypotheses, as well as the interpretations of the data analyzed. The hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance. The items were accepted considering the value obtained. The mean of acceptance used by the researcher in this study was 2.50.



Hypotheses Testing

1. *There is no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test mean scores of social media addiction among Undergraduate students exposed to Cognitive Behaviour Therapy.*

This hypothesis was tested by subjecting the pre-test and post-test mean scores of the students to the paired samples t-test analysis. The data was analysed electronically using SPSS software version 27. The result is presented in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Summary of Paired Samples T-Test on the Effectiveness of CBT in Reducing Social Media Addiction.

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Mean difference	Df	t-Cal	p-Value	Decision
CBT Pre-test	25	3.44	.433		24	12.76	.000	H02
CBT Post-test	25	1.74	.473	1.71				Rejected

Source: Fieldwork (2025)

Table 2 shows paired samples t-test statistics conducted to determine the effect of cognitive behaviour therapy on social media addiction. The analysis revealed that there was a statistically significant effect of CBT in reducing social media addiction among undergraduate students of Sokoto State University, Nigeria. Furthermore, the scores were significantly lower for the post-test mean scores (M = 1.74, SD = .473) than the pre-test mean scores (M = 3.44, SD = .433) with a mean difference of 1.71, (t (24) = 12.76; p < .000. Therefore, since the p-Value of .000 is significantly less than the 0.05 level of significant. The null hypothesis, which states that “There is no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test mean scores of social media addiction among Undergraduate students exposed to Cognitive Behaviour Therapy.” is rejected. Hence, CBT is effective in reducing social media addiction levels among undergraduate Students of Sokoto State University, Nigeria.

2. *There is no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test mean scores of social media addiction among male and female Undergraduate students exposed to Cognitive Behaviour Therapy.*

This hypothesis was analyzed by Tests of the Between-Subjects Effect of Gender on the effectiveness of CBT in reducing the social media addiction between pre-test and post-test CBT mean scores. The data was analyzed electronically using SPSS software version 27. The result is presented in Table 3 below:



Table 3: Effectiveness of CBT in reducing the level of social media addiction based on gender.

CBT Post-test mean scores						
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	p-Value	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	.600 ^a	2	.300	2.604	.097	.191
Intercept	.627	1	.627	5.451	.029	.199
CBT Pre-test mean scores	.100	1	.100	.865	.362	.038
Gender	.421	1	.421	3.659	.069	.143
Error	2.532	22	.115			
Total	100.430	25				
Corrected Total	3.132	24				

a. R Squared = .191 (Adjusted R Squared = .118)

Source: Fieldwork (2025)

Results from Table 3 show a one-way between-groups analysis of covariance to compare the level of social media addiction of male and female students in CBT treatment. After adjusting for the pretest scores. It was discovered that there is no significant difference in the effect of CBT in reducing social media addiction based on gender among undergraduate students of Sokoto State University, Nigeria, exposed to CBT pre-test and post-test; $F(1,22) = 3.659, p = .069$. The effect size (eta squared = (.143) shows that only 14.3% of the variance in the level of social media addiction of the students is associated with the gender of the students. Thus, the hypothesis which states that “There is no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test mean scores of social media addiction among male and female Undergraduate students exposed to Cognitive Behaviour Therapy” is therefore accepted. Hence, there is no differential effect of CBT in reducing the social media addiction based on gender.

Summary of Findings

The following findings were made based on the outcome of a research question and hypotheses tested.

1. Cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) was found to be significantly effective in reducing social media addiction levels among undergraduate Students of Sokoto State University, Nigeria.
2. Gender does not significantly influence the effectiveness of CBT in reducing the level of social media addiction among undergraduate students of Sokoto State University, Nigeria, in the CBT pre-test and post-test mean scores.



Discussions

The first finding revealed that Cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) was effective in reducing social media addiction levels among undergraduate Students of Sokoto State University, Nigeria. To support this finding, Garba, Sababa and Aji (2023) investigate the effect of Cognitive behavioural therapy on Social Media Addiction among tertiary institution students in Taraba State. They revealed that CBT has a significant effect in reducing the level of social media addiction among tertiary institution students in Taraba State. It also helped in restructuring the students' minds regarding their reasons for excessive use of social media. On the same vein, Ksiksou, Maskour and Alaoui, (2023). Conducted a study on the effects of cognitive-behavioural group therapy (CBGT) on controlling Internet addictive behaviours and improving levels of depression, anxiety, and stress among nursing students in Morocco. The results showed that CBGT is effective in the reduction of internet addiction ($P < 0.05$), depression ($P < 0.05$), anxiety ($P < 0.05$), and stress ($P < 0.05$) scores.

The second finding revealed that gender does not influence the effectiveness of CBT in reducing the social media addiction among undergraduate students of Sokoto State University, Nigeria, exposed to CBT treatment. In support of this, Garba, Sababa and Aji (2023) asserted that the effect of CBT didn't vary with gender in all results. Based on the findings, it is evident that CBT is an effective treatment for social media addiction.

Conclusion

Conclusively, the cognitive behaviour therapy employed in this study has been proven to be effective in reducing or managing social media addiction levels among undergraduate students of Sokoto State University, Nigeria. This was evident in the significant difference in the levels of social media addiction among students after the CBT treatment. The mean scores of the students showed that the students had lower levels of social media addiction after the treatments with the CBT counselling approach. Therefore, CBT treatment contributed significantly to the reduction of social media addiction. Hence, a need for parents, teachers, guidance and counselling officers and school administration to make use of CBT in the treatment of social media addicts.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- Students with social media addiction should go for counselling, as it reduces the level of social media addiction.



- School guidance and counselling officers should endeavour to employ cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) to manage social media addiction. Seminars and workshops should be organized to create awareness of the danger of social media addiction.

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