

Peer Influence and Social Networking as Correlates of Internet Use among Undergraduate Students: Evidence from Enugu State, South East Nigeria

Ngozi H. Chinweuba¹, Jonathan E. Ogbuabor², Anthony Orji^{3*}

¹Department of Educational Foundations, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria

²Department of Economics, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria

³Department of Economics, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria

*Correspondence

Abstract

This study examined peer influence and social networking as correlates of internet use among undergraduate students in Enugu State, South East Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to determine the relationship between: peer influence and internet use among undergraduates; and social networking and internet use among undergraduates. To achieve these objectives, the study adopted correlation survey design. The population of the study consisted of 44,152 undergraduates, while a sample of 1,199 undergraduates was used for the study. Two researcher developed questionnaires were used for data collection. The instruments were face validated by experts in the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, while their internal consistency was established using Cronbach Alpha. The findings indicate that there is significant positive relationship between the abovementioned social factors and internet use among undergraduate students. Based on these findings, the study made some policy recommendations, among which are that lecturers should discharge their duties as academic advisers and counsellors effectively while parents should monitor their children closely to ensure that they are not exposed to excessive internet use arising from the aforementioned social factors.

Key words: Peer influence; Social networking; Internet use; Undergraduate students; Correlation survey

1. Introduction

The advent of internet marked the beginning of an era of global technological revolution, which has stealthily and intricately enmeshed all facets of our lives. The present generation, which is sometimes called “the internet generation”, relies heavily on internet, and its usage has become quite indispensable even in developing countries like Nigeria. The internet is an information super highway that connects people, data and other computers (Potosky, 2007). Indeed, numerous descriptions of the internet that abound in the literature are consistent with this definition. For instance, Alio and Aneke (2015) characterized the internet as an international network or an information superhighway which connects computers from different geographic locations to share information and resources. Sometimes, the internet is simply called “the Net”

to underline the fact that it is a worldwide system of computer networks, a network of networks in which users at any one computer can, if they have permission, get information from any other computer and sometimes talk directly to users at other computers (Rouse, 2018).

The foregoing descriptions of the internet indicate that it is a worldwide, publicly accessible network of thousands of computers and computer networks, and that through interconnected computer networks, the internet enables individuals and organizations to share information, resources, and services. The internet is not owned or operated by any single individual or institution. It is a public, voluntary, and cooperative effort between the connected individuals and institutions. It was originally developed in 1973 by an American computer scientist, Vinton Cerf, as part of a project sponsored by the United States Department of Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA). It began as a computer network of ARPA (also known as the ARPAnet) that linked computer networks at several universities and research laboratories in the United States (Rouse, 2018). Presently, it provides a new communication system or medium that enables access to vast amounts of information across a wide variety of dimensions (Esen, Aktas & Tuncer, 2013). In fact, the last two decades have witnessed explosive growth in internet use worldwide and this trend is expected to continue for the foreseeable future as the present generation relies heavily on the use of the internet, and this is rapidly increasing even in the less developed countries.

The population of internet users has grown tremendously across the globe in the last two decades, especially in developing countries like Nigeria where the internet was virtually non-existent in the early 1990s. The World Development Indicators published annually by the World Bank documents the statistics of internet users from all locations across the globe (World Bank, 2024). The statistics indicate that there were 120 million users of the internet in the world as of 1997, accounting for 2.04 percent of world population. However, from 2012 to 2022, the number of people using the internet had rapidly increased from 2.39 billion to 5.12 billion, representing 33.5 and 64.4 percent of world population, respectively. In Nigeria, this World Bank statistics indicate that 19 thousand people were using the internet in 1997, accounting for 0.02 percent of the country's population. However, from 2012 to 2022, the number of people accessing the internet in Nigeria had swiftly risen from 27.38 million to 77.48 million, representing 16.1 and 35.46 percent of the population, respectively. Clearly, these statistics indicate that the number of internet users in Nigeria has risen greatly, particularly in the last decade.

The foregoing statistics indicates that the internet is a widely used technological development in Nigeria. Nigerians use the internet through computers, mobile phones, personal digital assistants, games machines, digital televisions, and other electronic devices. Studies have shown that Nigerians frequently use the internet to chat on real-time basis, send and receive emails, shop for goods and services, complete school work, play games, listen to music, watch movies and other entertainment materials, build social networks, carry out research, search for information in all areas of human endeavour, and perform numerous business transactions such as online banking, hotel and air ticket reservation, and job seeking and application (Alio & Aneke, 2015; Adiele & Olatokun, 2014; Alabi, 2013; Adegoke, 2013; Hunley, Evans, Delgado-Hachey, Krise, Rich & Schell, 2005). Thus, the internet has increasingly become an indispensable part of everyday life for both old and young in the society, and it has relatively become more accessible in homes, offices and schools as personal computers, mobile phones and other electronic devices have increasingly become more affordable (Choi & DiNitto, 2013).

Undergraduate students refer to university students who are still studying to earn their first degree (Oyeboade, 2017; Alabi, 2013). This study recognizes that certain social factors may predispose undergraduate students to the use of the internet. Mileti and Peek (2002) defined social factors of an individual as the distinctive demographic, interpersonal, geographic, and/or socio-economic attributes of the individual which characterize and make the individual more or less likely to behave in a given way. Here, social factors refer to those interpersonal attributes of undergraduate students which characterize the students and predispose them to the use of the internet. Such factors include peer influence and social networking. For instance, undergraduate students spend a reasonable part of their social lives with their peer group. As such, peer influence is important in their social, emotional and cognitive development. These students usually see their peers as role models. More often than not, the self image of these students is influenced by the characteristics and standards of their peer group. Thus, an undergraduate student whose peers use the internet for various purposes will likely be an internet user as well. Hence, peer influence may be an important social factor to predict internet use among undergraduate students.

Social networking may be another reason why undergraduate students spend a lot of time on the internet. Social networking is the act of reaching out and connecting to others with whom relationships are maintained (Boyd, 2008). Undergraduate students are always networking, that

is, they usually find themselves in various relationships that connect them to other people. Examples of such relationships include family relationships with parents, siblings, uncles, aunts, etc; friendships with classmates and other people; and mentoring relationships with lecturers and other professionals. Maintaining these relationships usually involve the use of social networking sites that provide modern channels for interpersonal communication. Studies like Meşe and Aydın (2019) and Eke, Omekwu and Odoh (2014) have shown that undergraduate students use social networking sites such as Facebook, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, MySpace, and Friendster, to connect with classmates, lecturers, family members and friends. Hence, social networking may be another important social factor in predicting internet use among undergraduate students.

Overall, the internet is expected to confer immense social and educational benefits on undergraduate students. For instance, the internet is supposed to offer the students access to information across a wide variety of topics and disciplines. By so doing, the students will be able to obtain current and relevant study materials in their various areas of study. Furthermore, the internet is expected to provide the students with the means of communication and interaction with their lecturers and classmates. Through emails, WhatsApp groups, Facebook groups, and other internet-based groups and media, students should also be able to interact and collaborate among themselves and with their lecturers for enhanced social and educational development. Clearly, the social and educational benefits of the internet technology to undergraduate students cannot be overstressed.

However, uncontrolled, excessive and addicted internet use by undergraduate students could also have negative consequences on their social, educational, moral, psychological, and indeed, overall development. For instance, some of these undergraduate students spend invaluable time surfing the internet at the expense of their school work. During lectures, some students use their phones to engage in online chatting instead of concentrating on their lectures. Some of these students presently come to school to snap pictures and make videos, which they share on various internet-based platforms like Facebook and Instagram. Besides, some students use the internet to engage in antisocial and immoral activities such as pornography, fraud, hacking, gambling, and blackmail, thereby exposing themselves to internet addiction. Avoiding the negative consequences of inordinate internet use by university students requires evidence-based policies.

Unfortunately, the extant literature is yet to specifically account for peer influence and social networking as correlates of internet use among undergraduate students in most developing economies, particularly Nigeria. This leaves an important gap in the literature because a study of social factors as correlates of internet use among these undergraduate students is very vital as it will provide the required evidence that will enable parents/guardians, lecturers, university administrations, regulators like the Nigerian Universities Commission, Ministries of Education, and other stakeholders in the university system to understand and characterize the pattern of internet use by these students. This will in turn enable them to formulate and implement policies that will guard against the potential negative influences associated with unbridled internet use by these students. This study therefore investigates peer influence and social networking as correlates of internet use among undergraduate students in both federal and state universities in Enugu State, South East Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to determine the relationship between: peer influence and internet use among undergraduate students; and social networking and internet use among undergraduate students.

2. An Overview of the Policy Environment

This study was conducted in the federal and state universities in Enugu State, South East Nigeria. Enugu State is home to a federal university known as University of Nigeria, Nsukka (henceforth UNN) and a state university known as Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu (henceforth ESUT). UNN has three campuses in Nsukka, Enugu, and Ituku-Ozalla. It is the first full-fledged indigenous and/or autonomous university in the whole of Nigeria, with undergraduate student population of twenty eight thousand and forty seven (28,047) as of 2016/2017 academic session. In keeping with its motto, which is 'to restore the dignity of man', and driven by the desire to create a smart university, UNN hosts Roar Nigeria Hub, which is one of the full-fledged university embedded information and communication technology (ICT) hub in West Africa. This initiative, together with other numerous innovations, such as the establishment of MTN Digital Library, distribution of laptops to undergraduate students, creation of wireless local area network within the campuses of the University, and creation of Staff Browsing Room at the UNN ICT Access Bank Building, ensures that both staff and students maintain easy and affordable access to the internet. For instance, course registration and checking of results by students are done online. In addition, end of semester examinations for courses with undergraduate student population of up to 250, especially first

year and second year courses, are administered using computer-based test procedure (Ogungbe, 2017; University of Nigeria Nsukka, 2011).

ESUT has two campuses in Agbani (which is the permanent site of the University) and Enugu City. It is a foremost state university of science and technology in Nigeria, with student population of sixteen thousand, one hundred and five (16,105) as of 2016/2017 academic session. In line with its motto, which is 'technology for service', and propelled by the desire to become a leading ICT compliant university in Nigeria, the University has taken various steps to ensure that both staff and students take advantage of the internet in teaching, learning and research. In June 2016, the University organized Google Digital Skill Training Workshop for both staff and students. The University's library has a Virtual Library unit which allows users access to the internet. In addition, the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND) has also undertaken several intervention projects in the areas of ICT resource provisioning, computerization of the University, and virtual library infrastructure. The University's ICT infrastructure presently ensures online payment of fees and upload of programs online, as well as continuous sale of admission forms online for graduate programs. These initiatives ensure that both staff and students maintain access to the internet easily and inexpensively (ESUT, 2014, 2016).

The foregoing paragraphs indicate that the federal and state universities in Enugu State provide enabling environment for undergraduate students to access the internet easily and in more affordable ways. Beyond the facilities available in these universities, it has also been observed that undergraduate students in Nigerian universities commonly access the internet through their smart mobile phones, ipads, and other hand-held devices. Presently, there is hardly any undergraduate student in Nigeria who does not maintain social media presence, the most common platforms being Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram and Twitter. Furthermore, the use of these internet-based media may be propelled by some social factors associated with these young minds such as peer influence and social networking. Thus, this study is primarily aimed at investigating the interactions between these social factors and the internet use of undergraduates.

3. Literature Review

3.1. Theoretical Literature: Some educational theories are relevant to the ensuing analysis. These theories include: the Uses and Gratifications Theory propounded by Katz, Blumler and

Gurevitch (1973); the Social Learning Theory propounded by Bandura (1977); and the Social Development Theory propounded by Vygotsky (1978). The Uses and Gratifications theory postulates that media is a highly available product and the audiences are the consumers of the same product. The driving question of the theory is: why do people use media and what do they use them for? The theory therefore discusses how users deliberately choose media that will satisfy or gratify given needs such as knowledge acquisition, relaxation, and social interactions/companionship. In other words, the theory is concerned with the gratifications or benefits that attract and hold audiences to various types of media and the types of content that satisfy their social and educational needs. The theory is directly related to this study because undergraduate students use the internet to meet their social, educational and other personal needs due to high level of personal satisfaction (or gratification) they expect to derive from doing so. Specifically, some of these students may be using the internet as a result of peer influence, while others may be using it as a medium for social networking.

Bandura's Social Learning Theory lays emphasis on the importance of observing, imitating, and modeling behaviour, attitudes and emotional reactions of others. The theorist postulated that most human behaviour is learned observationally through modelling. Bandura postulated that children observe, imitate and identify with those who are similar to them (such as their peers) and those that are influential. Through the process of observation, imitation and identification, children model either the positive or negative behaviours of others. The theorist therefore opined that individuals especially children learn different behaviours from observing others either personally or through the media or environment (especially on the internet). This theory is relevant to this study because adolescents and youths watch what is obtainable in their environment and copy them. In fact, with digitalization, they may be in the remotest part of Nigeria and still imitate whoever they want to imitate through the use of the internet.

The Social Development Theory is focused on the connections between people and the socio-cultural context in which they act and interact in shared experiences. According to the theory, humans use tools that develop from a culture, such as speech and writing, to mediate their social environments. Initially learners develop these tools to serve solely as social functions, ways to communicate needs. The theorist believes that the internalization of these tools leads to higher thinking skills, and hence argues that social interaction precedes development; that consciousness and cognition is the end product of socialization and social behavior. The internet is perceived as a community of people with relevant information. Communication with this society of invincible audience promotes social interaction as posited by the theorist. The

theory is relevant to this study because the social life and educational development of undergraduates rests substantially on what they learn from the internet. This is to say that the internet plays a major role in their social development, and in today's education system, the internet is a necessity. The findings of this study will therefore show whether (or otherwise) internet use by undergraduate students is enhancing their social characteristics. More specifically, the study will show the relationship between internet use of undergraduate students and their social factors such as peer influence and social networking.

3.2. Empirical Literature

3.2.1 Studies Linking Peer Influence and Internet Use of Students: Faradiba, Sutatminingsih and Nasution (2024) studied the impact of family functioning and peer attachment on tendencies towards cyberbullying behavior among 251 adolescents from SMP Negeri, Medan, Indonesia. The study found that family functioning and peer attachment have a significant negative correlation with tendencies towards cyberbullying behavior. In other words, adolescents with feeling supported by family and having supportive mutual relationships with peers can reduce the tendency for cyberbullying behavior. Amponsah et al. (2022) investigated internet usage and its impact on the academic performance of Senior High School (SHS) students in the Cape Coast Metropolis of Ghana. The study found that the students access the internet through mobile phones, school ICT labs, internet facilities for families, and public internet cafes. The study also found that students with internet access achieved higher improvement in academic performance than those without internet access. However, different internet use did not exhibit significant impact on academic performance, while the presence of several sources of internet connectivity does not also guarantee immediate access to all of them.

Yahaya et al. (2022) observed that following the widespread use of the internet in teaching and learning, an emerging area of concern is the internet use and addiction of the students. Hence, the study investigated the influences of parenting styles, peers, and teachers on internet usage and addiction among secondary school students in Johor, Malaysia. The study adopted a quantitative approach using 200 students aged 13 to 17, who were randomly selected. The findings showed that parenting styles, peers, and teachers are good predictors of internet usage and addiction among secondary school students. Ibrahim and Vi (2021) explained that adolescents in different countries of the world are increasingly being exposed to the use of the internet and various kinds of cyberbullying and online harms. However, not much is known

about the implications of gender and peer influence in secondary school adolescents' involvement in cyberbullying in Nigeria. The study therefore investigated the internet use pattern and peer victimization among 992 secondary school adolescents in the fourth to sixth (senior) grades (age ranging from 15 to 17 years; males = 55.9 %). The study found an alarmingly high incidence level (76 %) and that more male adolescents were involved in cyber victimisation and more female adolescents in cyber predation. The study underscored the importance of gender difference, peer influence and the degree of internet use as potential risk factors of cyberbullying among secondary school adolescents in Nigeria.

Lawrence (2021) investigated the mediating role of social internet use on the correlation of parental efficacy, peer influence and social functioning of adolescents. A sample of 496 adolescents (Male = 18.5%; Female = 81.5%, $M_{age} = 15.9$), were used to test the hypothesis that the relationship between parental efficacy, peer influence and social functioning of adolescents could be influenced by the mediating power of social internet use. The study found positive and significant relationships between social functioning, social internet use ($r = .373, p < .01$), parental efficacy ($r = .153, p < .05$) and peer influence ($r = .170, p < .01$), which is consistent with the presumed hypothesis. The study introduced social internet use as a mediator to determine the strength of the relationships, the prediction of parental efficacy on social functioning increased from 2.33% variance to 13.7%, while that of peer influence improved from 2.88% to 15.23%. Overall, the study found that social internet use was a prominent construct in adolescents' developmental processes for optimal social functioning.

At this point, it has become obvious that an emerging literature has focused on the interaction between peer influence and internet use of students. Oyeboade (2017) studied peer pressure, socio-economic status and use of internet-based social media by undergraduate students at the University of Ibadan, and found that peer influence and socio-economic status jointly and significantly influence the use of social media by the undergraduates. Omotayo (2006) revealed that peer pressure influence internet use by undergraduates; while Soh, Charlton and Chew (2014) established that even though peer influence was unrelated to addiction risk, it significantly influenced internet usage with its main influence on internet usage motives being encouragement of use for social interaction. Gera and Kaur (2014) investigated peer relationships and internet usage of adolescents in India, and found that peer relationships have significant correlation with total internet usage and time spent online.

Contrary to the foregoing studies, Ballarotto, Volpi, Marzilli and Tambelli (2018) found that adolescents' attachment to parents, but not to peers, influenced internet use/abuse. This

suggests that the relationship between peer influence and internet use of students is somewhat an unresolved issue in the literature. Festl, Scharnow, and Quandt (2013) observed that social reference groups like classmates, friend, and family members can influence adolescents' attitudes and behavior, especially in the era of increasing use of the internet. Hence, the study investigated the forms of peer influence on cyberbullying behavior among high school students in Germany. Specifically, the study examined the impact of close friends and more distant peers in the school class on perpetrator and victim roles, and found that the class context is highly relevant for cyberbullying. In fact, the study established that for perpetration and victimization, the number of cyberbullies within a school class plays an important role in predicting individual behavior, and that cyberbullying is strongly related to the use of social networking sites, while the risk of victimization increases with the time spent on the internet.

3.2.2 Studies Linking Social Networking and Internet Use of Students:

Hylkilä et al. (2024) conducted a systematic review of studies that offer evidence on the association between problematic social networking site use (PSNSU) and social well-being and predictors of PSNSU among young adults aged from 18 to 35 years. Following the review of twenty-one studies, it was established that there were associations between PSNSU and different social well-being factors. For instance, associations were found between PSNSU and social and parasocial relationships on social networking sites and social media anxiety. The study also found some predictive factors. Hashemi et al. (2022) explained that higher education students are heavy users of the internet for various reasons, including social networking sites. Hence, the study examined the various purposes of internet use among undergraduate university students, and how different categories of such activities are related to social networking sites addiction. Data from a sample of 420 undergraduates indicate that the most common purposes for using the internet were online social networking and information seeking, followed by entertainment activities like listening to music or watching movies, as well as learning, relaxing, using email for educational needs, and reading socio-political news. Rahman et al. (2020) observed that the internet has become an indispensable tool for communication, academic research, information and entertainment, especially among university students. Nonetheless, extensive use of the internet can lead to social isolation. Hence, the study investigated the pattern of internet use and factors affecting problematic internet use among university students, using a sample of 463 students and hierarchical binary logistic regression. The study found that social networking, age of the students, duration of

daily internet use and year of study are important predictors of problematic internet use among students. Tayo, Adebola and Yahya (2019) studied how social media use is influencing the studies of undergraduate students in Nigeria, using a descriptive survey research design. Undergraduate students of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife Nigeria made up the population of the study. The study established that undergraduate students use various social media platforms, such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google Plus, Snapchat, and Skype. The study also found that undergraduate students averagely spend 2 to 3 hours on social media daily, and the purposes of their social media use are mainly for socialization, information, academic, business and entertainment. The study also found some evidence of internet addiction, distraction, anti-social behaviour, cyberbullying, and writing and spelling skills deficiency among the students.

Meşe and Aydın (2019) observed that social networks have been widely used by young people for various purposes like sharing content, having fun, communicating, creating community, and learning. The study emphasized that there was need to understand students' social networking usage purposes and the reasons that may affect them. Hence, the study examined the variables that determine the purpose of using social network by undergraduate students, using cross-sectional survey approach. The sample included 549 undergraduate students from various faculties of a public university. The findings indicate that WhatsApp and Instagram are the most widely used social networks, while undergraduate students use social networks mainly to share contents. Nwokedi (2019) investigated the use of social networking sites by undergraduate students of the Department of Theater and Film Arts, Faculty of Arts, University of Jos, Nigeria. The study adopted survey research approach and the sample included 348 first year students of the Department. The findings showed that the students access social networking sites from their mobile phones, and that they access these sites in their hostels and lecture halls. However, their main purposes for using these sites were to maintaining social networks of friends/relatives and for academic purposes. The main social networking sites used by the students were Facebook and WhatsApp.

Eneogu, Ejimonye and Ejimonye (2018) studied the use of social networking sites by undergraduate students in enhancing their learning of Economics in the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The study used descriptive survey approach and covered the 54 undergraduate students of Economics Education in the Department of Social Science Education. The study found that students use social networking sites mainly for non-academic purposes, and that the mostly used social networking sites is Facebook. The study established that lack of ICT skills

limited the use of social networking sites by the students for academic purposes. Indeed, the literature on the interaction between social networking and internet use among students is an emerging aspect of interest to researchers. Apuke (2016) investigated the influence of internet-based social media on academic performance of undergraduates and found that students use the internet mainly for social networking, particularly chatting online, and that students who spend more time on social media are likely to perform poorly in their academic activities than those who do not. Ureigho, Oroke and Ekruyota (2006) evaluate the impact of the internet in teaching, learning and research in institutions of higher learning and found that students use the internet mainly for social networking, particularly online chatting.

Onyeka, Sajoh and Bulus (2013) investigated if frequent use of social networking sites affects the studies of students of tertiary institutions and found that the students use social networking sites mainly to keep in touch with friends and family members, and that frequent use of social networking sites has no effect on their studies. Other studies that indicate that undergraduates use the internet for social networking include Almadhoun, Lai and Dominic (2012), which examined social networking sites usage among university students in Malaysia; Talooki, Atee, Gorji and Aghaei (2017), which investigated the role of regular internet usage on social behavior of students in Iran; and Waithaka (2013), which examined internet usage among university students in Kenya. Al Musawi and Ammar (2015) observed that the use of the internet and social networking sites by students is on the increase in Arab educational environment, but little research has been done on this. Hence, the study examined the use of the internet and social networking sites by students for learning activities and games at the Omani Sultan Qaboos University. A survey questionnaire was used to obtain data for the study from 73 educational technology course students using a purposive sampling approach. The study established that the internet and e-mail are frequently used by students, while wireless connections and mobile technologies spread quickly among the students. The study also found that students use search engines for educational purposes.

3.3 Summary of Literature Review, Gaps in the Literature and Value Addition:

Two important stylized facts can be deduced from the foregoing review of the extant literature. The first is that a large literature is evolving on the internet use of undergraduates across the globe. The second fact is that peer influence and social networking are important social factors of undergraduates that may be useful in understanding the patterns of their internet use. However, none of the studies reviewed empirically explored peer influence and social

networking as correlates of internet use among undergraduate students of federal and state universities in Enugu State, South East Nigeria. This is in spite of the fact that internet use by these undergraduates may be detrimental to their social and educational development. This informed the gap the present study seeks to fill.

4. Methodology

4.1. Design of the Study: The study adopted correlation survey design. According to Nworgu (2015), correlation survey design establishes what relationship exists between two or more variables. It shows the direction and magnitude of the relationship between the variables in order to make predictions (Ezeh, 2015). This design is suitable for the study because it can indicate a predictive relationship, and hence, would be useful in establishing the relationship between the variables of interest.

4.2. Area of the Study: The study was carried out in federal and state universities in Enugu State, South East Nigeria. These universities include University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN), and Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu (ESUT). UNN is a federal university located in Nsukka, Enugu State, Nigeria. The main campus of the University is located on 871 hectares of hilly savannah in the town of Nsukka, about eighty kilometers north of Enugu, the administrative capital of Enugu State of Nigeria (National Population Commission, 2006). The Nsukka campus of the University houses the following faculties: Agriculture, Arts, Biological Sciences, Education, Engineering, Pharmaceutical Sciences, Physical Sciences, Social Sciences, Veterinary Medicine and Vocational Technical Education; while the Enugu campus of the University houses the following faculties: Basic Medical Sciences, Business Administration, Dentistry, Environmental Studies, Health Sciences and Technology, Law, and Medical Sciences. The University's teaching hospital, that is, the University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital (UNTH), is located in Ituku-Ozalla, Enugu State. Nsukka is quite easily accessible from all parts of Nigeria. There is regular road transport between Nsukka and Enugu, and the asphalted roads are in good state of repair. Nsukka has numerous shopping centres and a large market. It also hosts numerous deposit money banks, microfinance banks, hotels and hospitals. The top two telecommunication and internet service providers in Nigeria, that is MTN and Glo, have their branch offices near the main gate of the Nsukka campus of the University.

ESUT has its permanent site in Agbani, Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State (ESUT, 2016). This site has a total land mass of 803,725 hectares housing the Postgraduate

School and the following six (6) faculties: Agriculture and Natural Resources Management, Applied Natural Sciences, Education, Environmental Sciences, Law and Social Sciences. The Enugu City campus of the University houses two faculties (Management Sciences and Engineering), the Mature Student Programme (MSP), and the College of Medicine. Agbani is easily accessible from all parts of Nigeria. There is regular road transport between Agbani and Enugu, and the asphalted roads are in good state of repair. Besides, the entire 12 kilometer road network connecting the staff quarters, student hostels, academic and administrative areas within the Agbani campus of the University are tarred. The University has a fully functional medical centre in Agbani and regular bore-hole water supply. The Agbani campus also hosts several deposit money banks and telecommunication service providers.

The choice of the area of the study was informed by the fact that most undergraduate students of federal and state universities in Enugu State have been observed to be spending unnecessarily long hours surfing the internet rather than concentrating on their studies. These students stay longer hours on the internet because the university environment allows them easy and affordable access to internet. Indeed, the life style of these undergraduates, especially the use of the internet, is typical of their contemporaries across Nigeria and other Sub-Saharan African countries.

4.3. Population of the Study: The population of the study is made up of the 44,152 undergraduate students in federal and state universities in Enugu State, South East Nigeria. This population comprises 28,047 undergraduates of UNN and 16,105 undergraduates of ESUT. The statistics for UNN was obtained from the Academic Planning Unit, Office of the Vice-Chancellor, UNN, while that of ESUT was obtained from the office of the Vice-Chancellor, ESUT. Both statistics are as of the 2016/2017 academic session, which are the latest statistics available.

4.4. Sample and Sampling Technique: The target sample size of the study is one thousand two hundred (1200) undergraduate students from both selected universities. This is supported by Nwanna (2000), which recommended that “when the population runs into few hundred use 40% or more, when several hundred use 20%, when thousand use 10% and when several thousand use 5% or less”. The study adopted multi-stage sampling technique. In the first stage, purposive sampling technique was used in selecting three faculties (Faculty of Engineering, Faculty of Biological Sciences and Faculty of Physical Sciences) from UNN and three faculties (Faculty of Social Science, Faculty of Education and Faculty of Law) from ESUT. This is to ensure that both science oriented students and non-science inclined students like Law students

are equally represented. However, the researcher chose the students in Faculty of Engineering, Faculty of Biological Sciences and Faculty of Physical Sciences because they seem to be surfing the internet more compared to their counterparts in other faculties in UNN as majority of them use YouTube for demonstrations of engineering drawing and designs, and other laboratory demonstrations. Likewise, it is apparent that undergraduate students in the Faculty of Social Sciences, Faculty of Education and Faculty of Law from ESUT have similar social, psychological and academic characteristics and dispositions towards the internet as their counterparts in UNN and as such they could represent them.

In the second stage, simple random sampling technique without replacement was used to select one level (i.e. third year) out of all levels of students (i.e. first year, second year, third year, fourth year and fifth year) from each of the selected faculties in both universities. The technique was enhanced using paper cards where the researcher crafted "A", "B", "C", "D" and "E" to represent first year, second year, third year, fourth year and fifth year, respectively, and the paper cards were put in a container and shaken, and one paper card (i.e. "C") was selected. The reason for this is to give every level equal chance of being included in the sample. In the last stage, accidental sampling technique was used to sample two hundred (200) undergraduates from each of the six faculties earlier selected in the first stage. This is to ensure that only the respondents that can be reached were included in the sample.

4.5. Instruments for Data Collection: The instruments used for data collection in this study consist of two researcher developed questionnaires titled "Social Factors Questionnaire (SFQ)" and "Questionnaire on Internet Use of Students (QIUS)". The questionnaires were developed with insights from the extant literature. The SFQ was arranged in two clusters and each cluster had 15 items. Cluster A elicited information on peer influence and Cluster B sought information on social networking. The QIUS solicited information on internet use and also contained 15 items. All the items in both questionnaires were modelled on a 4-point rating scale of: Strongly Agree (SA); Agree (A); Disagree (D); and Strongly Disagree (SD) with numerical values of 4, 3, 2, and 1 point assigned to each of the responses, respectively.

4.6. Validation of the Instruments: The instruments were subjected to face validation by presenting them to three experts, one each from Guidance and Counselling, Psychology, and Measurement and Evaluation, all in the Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The validates were asked to review the items in the instruments in terms of their clarity, simplicity of vocabulary, and relevance of the items to the study. Their corrections and

recommendations were used to modify the instruments in order to produce the final instruments for the study.

4.7. Reliability of the Instruments: To establish reliability of the instruments, trial testing procedure was adopted. The instruments were administered on twenty (20) undergraduate students of the University of Abuja, Nigeria, which is outside the study area. The data collected was subjected to the test of internal consistency using Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient. For the SFQ, the reliability coefficient was 0.87 for peer influence in cluster A and 0.82 for social networking in cluster B, while the overall reliability coefficient was 0.86. For the QIUS, the reliability coefficient was 0.89. Overall, these results show that the instruments are reliable.

4.8. Method of Data Collection: The researchers administered the instruments to the respondents with the help of three research assistants. The three research assistants were adequately briefed on the questionnaires and the modalities for administering them. The use of research assistants helped to ensure that the actual respondents for whom the instruments were meant for were the ones that filled it. The questionnaires were collected immediately after the respondents completed them to avoid attrition; however, one of the questionnaires which was not properly completed by the respondent was excluded from the analysis. Thus, 1,199 respondents were used for the analysis.

4.9. Method of Data Analysis: The data collected were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and F-ratio from regression models. While the correlation coefficient aptly captures the linear correlation between two variables (for instance, peer influence and internet use of undergraduate students), the F-ratio enables us to test whether the presumed relationship is statistically significant or otherwise. The tests of significance are conducted at the conventional 5% level.

5. Empirical Results:

In what follows, the results of this study are presented and discussed according to the specific objectives of the study.

5.1. Specific Objective One: The first specific objective of this study is to determine the relationship between peer influence and internet use among undergraduate students. Table 1 reports the regression analysis of this relationship.

Table 1: Regression analysis of the relationship between peer influence and internet use among undergraduate students

Variables	R	R ²
Peer Influence and Internet use among Undergraduate Students	0.64	0.41

Source: Authors. **Notation:** (R) = Correlation Coefficient, (R²) = Coefficient of Determination

The result in Table 1 shows that the correlation coefficient between peer influence and internet use among undergraduate students was 0.64. This means that there exists a high positive relationship between peer influence and internet use among undergraduate students. Table 1 also revealed that the coefficient of determination (R²) associated with the correlation coefficient of 0.64 was 0.41, indicating that 41% of variation in internet use among undergraduate students is attributed to peer influence. To check if the relationship between peer influence and internet use among undergraduate students is significant or otherwise, we present the regression results in Table 2.

Table 2: Regression analysis testing the significance of the relationship between peer influence and internet use among undergraduate student (Dependent variable = Internet use of students)

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2.205	1	2.205	13.562	.000 ^a
	Residual	194.790	1198	.163		
	Total	196.995	1199			

a. Predictors: Constant, Peer influence

Source: Authors

The results in Table 2 show that an F-ratio of 13.562 with associated exact probability value of 0.00 was obtained. This probability value of 0.00 is highly statistically significant at the 5% level since it is less than 0.05. This means that the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between peer influence and internet use among undergraduate students is rejected. This study, therefore, concludes that there is a significant positive relationship between peer influence and internet use among undergraduate students. This finding is consistent Gera and Kaur (2014), which established that peer relationships have significant correlation with total internet usage and time spent online by adolescents in India. It is also consistent with Soh, Charlton and Chew (2014), which found that peer influence significantly influenced internet usage among school students in Malaysia. Other studies that are consistent with this finding are Oyeboade (2017)

and Omotayo (2006). Clearly, these contributions indicate that peer influence is an important social factor influencing internet use among undergraduate students. This finding is quite tenable because undergraduate students usually see their peers as role models such that undergraduates whose peers are using the internet will likely be using the internet as well.

5.2. Specific Objective Two: The second specific objective of this study is to determine the relationship between social networking and internet use among undergraduate students. Table 3 reports the regression analysis of this relationship.

Table 3: Regression analysis of the relationship between social networking and internet use among undergraduate students

Variables	R	R ²
Social Networking and Internet use among Undergraduate Students	0.73	0.53

Source: Authors. **Notation:** (R) = Correlation Coefficient, (R²) = Coefficient of Determination

The result in Table 3 shows that the correlation coefficient between social networking and internet use among undergraduate students was 0.73. This means that there exists a high positive relationship between social networking and internet use among undergraduate students. Table 3 also shows that the coefficient of determination (R²) associated with the correlation coefficient of 0.73 was 0.53, indicating that 53% of variation in internet use among undergraduate students is attributed to social networking. To check if the relationship between social networking and internet use among undergraduate students is significant or otherwise, we present the regression results in Table 4.

Table 4: Regression analysis testing the significance of the relationship between social networking and internet use among undergraduate students (Dependent variable = Internet use of students)

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	21.385	1	21.385	145.884	.000 ^a
	Residual	175.610	1198	.147		
	Total	196.995	1199			

a. Predictors: Constant, Social networking

Source: Authors.

The results in Table 4 show that an F-ratio of 145.884 with associated exact probability value of 0.00 was obtained. This probability value of 0.00 is highly statistically significant at the 5% level since it is less than 0.05. This means that the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between social networking and internet use among undergraduate students is rejected. This study, therefore, concludes that there is a significant positive relationship between social networking and internet use among undergraduate students. This finding is consistent with Waithaka (2013), which found that university students use the internet for various purposes, including social networking. The finding also agrees with Almadhoun, Lai and Dominic (2012), which established that social networking and information searching topped the purposes of social networking sites usage among university students. This finding is also consistent with Ureigho, Oroke and Ekruyota (2006), which particularly revealed that students of tertiary institutions use the internet mainly for social networking, particularly online chatting. These contributions show that social networking is an important social factor influencing internet use among undergraduate students. This may be due to the fact that undergraduates usually find themselves in various relationships that connect them to other people, such as friendships with classmates and other people, mentoring relationships with lecturers and other professionals, family relationships with parents, siblings, uncles, and aunts, to name just a few. Maintaining these relationships usually involve the use of internet-based social networking sites that provide modern channels for interpersonal communication. Examples of such social networking sites include Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Telegram, LinkedIn, and Twitter, among others.

In summary, the findings that have emerged from this study indicate that: there is a significant positive relationship between peer influence and internet use among undergraduate students; and there is a significant positive relationship between social networking and internet use among undergraduate students.

6. Concluding Remarks and Some Policy Implications and Recommendations

The internet is a widely used technological development in Nigeria, which provides undergraduate students with tremendous social and educational benefits, such as access to information across a wide variety of topics and disciplines, and means of communication and interaction with lecturers and classmates. This study investigated peer influence and social networking as social factors that may predispose these students to the use of the internet. The study found that there is a significant positive relationship between: peer influence and internet use among undergraduate students; and social networking and internet use among

undergraduate students. The study, therefore, concludes that peer influence and social networking predispose undergraduate students to the use of the internet.

Based on the findings of this study, the following policy implications and recommendations are made. First, the findings of the study indicate that there is a significant positive relationship between peer influence and internet use among undergraduate students. This implies that peer influence is an important social factor that influences internet use among undergraduate students. This requires that lecturers should discharge their duties as academic advisers and counsellors effectively so that students can avoid the negative consequences of inordinate or excessive use of the internet arising from peer influence. Parents and guardians of undergraduates should monitor the activities of their children closely to ensure that they are not exposed to addictive or excessive use of the internet as a result of peer influence. University administrators should restrict access to sexually explicit websites and anti-social websites so that undergraduate students do not have access to such sites on campus on account of peer influence. University administrators should also ensure that training and resources are made available to academic advisers and counsellors so that they can in turn play greater roles in curtailing inordinate internet use by undergraduates arising from peer influence and detecting early warning signs in this regard. Students should moderate their use of the internet in order to create a balance between their offline and online lives rather than allow themselves to become excessive users of the internet due to peer influence. Students should not allow their peers to influence them into using the internet during lectures contrary to laid down rules and regulations since such behavior could distract them from their lectures.

Second, the findings of this study also indicate that there is a significant positive relationship between social networking and internet use among undergraduate students. This implies that undergraduates use internet-based social networking sites to connect to other people in order to maintain their relationships with such people. Examples of such relationships are friendships with classmates and other people, mentoring relationships with lecturers and other professionals, and family relationships with parents and siblings. This study, therefore, recommends that students should not use the internet excessively for social networking purposes as doing so could affect their studies negatively. Parents, guardians, academic advisers and counsellors should constantly remind students about the dangers of using the internet inordinately for social networking purposes.

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