

# **Role of Social Networking Sites on Depression among Nigerian Young Adults**

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## ABSTRACT

Social Networking Sites have continued to play significant roles in the transformation of human lives and system. SNS have been ascribed as platforms that causes depression among youth most especially due to the level of its use. Therefore, the overall objective of the study is to find out what acts on social media cause depression among Nigerian Young Adults.

Using a qualitative design, this study helps to provide an in-depth understanding of 21 respondents who are Nigerians with regards to their experience in SNS use and depression. The questions were targeted at helping to achieve certain purposes and make useful findings. The study was carried out in Fall 2018, in Lagos, Nigeria. The study used triangulation method in collecting its data (interviews, field notes, and observation) which were analyzed thematically.

Findings indicate that SNS platforms contribute to depression among Nigerian youths in many ways. The research has been able to find out that there exists a relationship between the use of SNS and the high level of depression experienced by youth in this generation. In addition, findings have been able to attenuate that SNS though facilitates depression, it has also served as an effective tool in creating awareness or campaigning about the causes of depression among the Nigerian youths.

**Keywords:** sns, depression, Nigerians, social media, third person, U&G

## ÖZ

Sosyal Paylaşım Siteleri, insan hayatlarının dönüşümünde önemli bir rol oynamaya devam etmektedir. Özellikle Sosyal Paylaşım Siteleri, kullanım oranlarından ötürü gençler arasında depresyona yol açan platformlar olarak ayrılmaktadır. Bu çalışmanın amacı Sosyal Paylaşım Siteleri üzerinde hangi davranışların Nijeryalı genç yetişkinler arasında depresyona sebep olduğunu bulmaktır. Kuramsal çerçevede Kullanımlar ve Doyumlar ve Üçüncü Kişi Etkisi Kuramı kullanılmıştır.

Nitel Metot kullanarak bu çalışma, depresyon ve Sosyal Paylaşım Sitesi deneyimleri bakımından Nijeryalı 21 katılımcının anlaşılmasına yardımcı olur. Sorular, kullanışlı bulgular için ve belirti amaçların başarılmasında yardımcı olmayı hedeflemektedir. Çalışma 2018 yaz ayında Lagos, Nijerya'da gerçekleşmiştir. Bu çalışma, konularına göre analiz edilen, veri toplamasında (röportajlar, saha notları ve gözlemler) üçleme metodu kullanılmıştır.

Bulgular, Sosyal Paylaşım Platformlarının Nijeryalı gençleri arasında depresyona katkı yaptığını göstermektedir. Ayrıca, bulgular günümüzün neslinde yüksek oranda depresyona giren gençler ve sosyal paylaşım sitesi kullanımı arasında bir ilişki ileri sürmektedir. Buna ilaveten bulgular Sosyal Paylaşım Sitelerinin depresyona olanak sağlamasına rağmen, Nijeryalı gençler arasında depresyon sebeplerine karşı mücadelede ve farkındalık yaratmakta etkili bir araç olarak hizmet etmektedir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Üçüncü Kişi Etki Kuramı, Kullanım ve Doyumlar, depresyon, sosyal medya, Nijeryalılar.

# **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to God Almighty and my family.

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The task of carrying out this work is obviously not an easy one; therefore, I wish to appreciate God for giving me the strength and wherewithal to complete this task. I am indebted to my supervisor, Associate Professor Dr. Bahire Efe Özad for her effort, thoroughness, and contributions in making sure I complete the task in due time. I wish to categorically say that your contributions to my success cannot be forgotten in a hurry.

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# Chapter 1

## INTRODUCTION

Currently, Social Networking Sites (SNS) have become part of everyday life. These platforms serve as means through which people communicate, make new friends and update themselves about the various day to day activities. This research seeks to explore the uses and influence of SNS on how it causes depression on the Nigerian youth in summer 2018.

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

The discovery of the World Wide Web facilitated the dynamic improvements and success recorded in the area of Information and Communication Technology globally (Capriotti & Herrero, 2017). This discovery, however, did not only broaden the scope of communication but, it also had a significant impact on marketing, politics, insurance, health, and agricultural sector. For instance, ICT and WWW ushered in a significant improvement in the way medical practitioners attend to their patients and upgraded the way and manner through which they communicate. Technology also improved the education sector as students and instructors are able to access information and as well educate citizens through the online platform.

The advent of technological innovations has brought about a new twist to the way and means through which human beings function. Information and communication technology began with the invention of Web 1.0, which brought about a new way of disseminating information (Wei, Willna, & Shao, 2012). Web 1.0 heralded a new

platform through which citizens can access information at any time and place. For example, Web 1.0 provided a platform for newspaper and magazine organizations to build websites and allow citizens access news on the web, while radio and television stations began the innovation of online podcasts of their pre-recorded programmes.

As time went by, “the integration of sophisticated tools and new applications associated with Web 2.0 reached the mainstream on the World Wide Web in 2007/8” (Lilleker, et al., 2011, p. 196). Prominent in among these features is its ability to facilitate interaction among various users. Web 2.0 created a platform where users can interact from one end to another through text, voice notes, and videos. This further broadened the scope of WWW; thereby establishing a communication chain whereby feedback could be immediately accessed. For example, radio and television stations over time also embraced the idea as it facilitated accessing feedbacks by these stations as well as creating an opportunity for the sender of the message to interact with the receiver immediately without delay or interference.

Indeed with Web 2.0, the digital space has become more lively, interactive and diverse (Schweitzer, 2011). Web 2.0 has facilitated the world to become more united in terms of sharing and receiving information. For instance, with the click of a button, information is sent and received from any part of the world. This has facilitated developments in society, provided more jobs especially with the rise of technical entrepreneurs, and also created a global platform where information sharing can enhance development.

The interactivity on the internet has also facilitated what is now known as citizen journalism (Lee, 2012). This is a platform, which allows individuals to produce and

report news events by themselves thereby encourages the invention of news blogs and web blogs. More technological innovations have sprung up with the development of Web 2.0, as such the creation of SNS platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat among others (Wen, 2014). These SNS platforms have further enhanced how citizens communicate and interact among themselves.

To further buttress the fact that Web 2.0 has eased the global communication system Elwell (2014) asserts that the era of Web 2.0 has also brought about a wireless society as communication now takes place in the cloud stating that;

In the early days of the Internet, the era of Web 1.0, you had to ‘go online’. It was an involved process. Often a landline telephone had to be unplugged and the line rerouted to a computer for the pings and hisses of a dial-up connection (p. 234).

Today, technology has taken off various forms of business, commercial, and political campaigns off the street to online platforms (Marcinkowski & Metag, 2013). This has further expanded the scope and outreach to the people, thereby increasing potentials (Koc-Michalska, Lilleker, Smith, & Weissmann, 2016).

Web 2.0 and indeed the current state of technological developments have been referred to as platforms that are established for the people (Levy, 2009). This is because of its incorporation of interactivity and connectivity. Web 2.0 has also established different forms of functioning as it has helped in the establishment of blogs, social interactivity platforms, communication platforms as well as platforms that created a means for effective global communication. Today, web 2.0 has created an upgraded form of the global village of sharing and receiving information, thereby facilitating a more concise and focused society (Alonso, Pérez, Cabrerizo, & Herrera-Viedma, 2013).

Web 2.0 technologies and other internet platforms have also added value to the mode and pattern of educational developments in the society (Ajjan & Hartshorne, 2008). It has enhanced interactivity between teachers and students as well as brought about a new revolution in the ways instructions are passed from teacher to student and student to student.

## **1.2 Motivation for the Study**

Over time, I had heard of the phenomenon under study (depression), but I never paid so much attention to the issue because I did not have any direct or indirect dealings with anyone neither did I have or know of anyone who had or is currently having depression. During my 2<sup>nd</sup> semester courses, the issue of depression became a trending topic among peers as well as on the various media platforms.

Unfortunately, I was also told that a friend of mine came down with the symptoms of depression and eventually had to see the doctor. After several months the issue of depression became a daily phenomenon most especially among the youths in Nigeria, some even passed away due to complications from depression. Depression became an issue my friends and I talked about always and we continued to hear about many of friends and Nigerians coming down with depression. One thing struck my mind always, the majority of these people initially developed depression from activities on SNS. Also, not many academic works exist on this study most especially in qualitative research.

This then prompted me to investigate further on the causes of depression due to SNS use, as well as how the issue is being handled in terms of awareness and sensitization.

### **1.3 Research Aims and Objectives**

The ultimate aim of the present study is to explore young Nigerians' attitude towards SNS's influence on young Nigerians as far as depression is concerned. This study was conducted in Lagos State, Nigeria, in summer 2018 and is focused on young adults who particularly use SNS. The overall objective of the study is to find out what acts on SNS cause depression among Nigerian Young Adults.

In order to reach this end, the study seeks to find answers to the following;

- **Objective 1:** SNS use influence depression among Nigerian young adults.
- **Objective 2:** SNS is used to create awareness about causes of depression among Nigerian young adults.
- **Objective 3:** SNS is used to create awareness about preventing depression among Nigerian young adults.

### **1.4 Problem Statement**

There are quite a number of ground breaking research that have been carried out on the uses and effects of Social Networking Sites SNS. Also, scientists have conducted a number of clinical studies on the causes and effects of depression among various groups of audience. However, only a limited number of studies exists on SNS and depression as a field. This thereby creates a gap for the basis of this study. Psychologist have made attempts to measure some of the psychological implications of SNS use, however, there is no substantial number of studies that examine SNS and depression. This is, therefore, the gap in the literature this research focuses on. The research will investigate the psychological implications of SNS use most especially among youths and more specifically Nigerian youths. This research will contribute to existing literature on the subject matter and will further propel more studies.

## **1.5 Significance of the Study**

SNS such as Facebook, Blogs, Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat among others have become everyday media that have taken over the social activities of the youths. The platforms have become a meeting point for various activities and interaction most especially among the youth. Interestingly, the youths and adults alike have become addicted to the various SNS due to their ability to gratify some needs and desires. However, these addictive platforms also contribute to various psychological challenges such as depression etc. Though depression was not an initial problem for the users of SNS, however, over time it has become a serious issue. The youths today want to be seen as flashy and classy and employ fake ways to portray themselves. In addition, a few of the existing research that are partly related to the focus of this research are largely quantitative studies, as such this study is quite significant as it adopts a qualitative approach which will help provide in depth understanding of the subject matter. This study, therefore, intends to understand how individuals develop various degrees of depression due to SNS use. It is important to state that the study is new based on the fact that no literature has examined SNS use and depression. Quite a number of other literatures have looked into depression however not on the bases of this study's focus

## **1.6 Limitations of the Study**

There is no research without its challenges. These challenges serve as various forms of limitations, which hinders the smooth and successful execution of the research. The following among others, therefore, form the limitations of this study.

**Time:** No doubt, time is one of the limitations faced in the study. This is because of the fact that the time to conduct the study was highly limited. There was insufficient

time in conducting this research and this affected the total outcome of this study. Also, because the study was carried out mainly in summer 2018, it limited the number of respondents I was able to access.

**Generalizability:** This study is conducted via qualitative methodology. One of the major limitations of this study is it's based on the fact that findings in the research are not generalizable. This is one of the characteristics of qualitative research and is based on the small number usually studied in the research. Therefore, the study will basically create an in depth understanding of how SNS affects young adults to depression which will not be generalizable.

**Location:** This research centered on youths who are based in Lagos Nigeria and was conducted in Summer 2018, however, because the researcher is not in Nigeria, getting respondents proved quite difficult, thereby bringing about a limitation.

### **1.7 Definition of Terms**

The following terms are quite important in this research as they are often mentioned in the course of putting up this research thereby for the key terms in this research.

**SNS:** these are online platforms that serve as a means of entertainment, education, information, and socialization. The platforms though limitless in number include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat among others.

**Young Adults:** These are individuals who have reached the age of maturity (between 18 and 40).



**Depression:** Depression can be described as a mental and psychological disorder which is known for frequent sad, irritable and unpleasant mood throughout the day (Yang, 2007).

## **Chapter 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter reviews the relevant literature on SNS, particularly on Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat as well as depression itself. This chapter also reviews relevant literature on the Uses and Gratifications Theory which is the main theory underlining the study.

#### **2.1 Literature on Social Networking Sites**

SNS have continued to play significant roles in the transformation of human lives and system. The platforms have become inevitable in various sectors like health, education, business, politics as well as interpersonal communication (Eguzkiza, Trigo, Martínez-Espronedada, Serrano, & Andonegui, 2015).

In a study carried out by Xue, Dong, Luo, and Mo (2018), the researchers' findings indicate that SNS use has negative influence and impact on the psychological, social and mental health of its users. For example, SNS users often use the platforms and eventually become addicted to them. This exposes them to various fake and unreal aspects of human lives. However, as a result of the frequent use and in turn addiction, such users are unable to distinguish between truth and made-up realities.

Findings in a study carried out by Park and Calamaro (2013), indicate that SNS is a good tool for medical practitioners to reach out to their clients most especially the youth. The study also indicated that nurses use SNS to interact with and counsel the

young patients who need constant monitoring and checkup. This is quite prevalent in youths who are suffering from one form of disorder or more. It is also an important tool to stay in touch with patients who are having depression or any form of mental health problems.

SNS have also been very handy in promoting healthy lifestyles (Lim, Wright, Carrotte, & Pedrana, 2016). Numerous medical practitioners and non-practitioners alike use SNS to share their experiences on the risks of living a sedentary, non-healthy, or non-hygienic lifestyle. This is done by posting tips on how to live healthy on platforms like Blogs, Facebook, Twitter and even through broadcasts on WhatsApp. Some medical practitioners also educate people on healthy living through short videos as well as conduct private counseling through chatrooms and private sessions.

Because of the nature of self-creation and individuality involved in SNS, the platform has created an opportunity where medical practitioners can create contents by themselves, thereby fostering participation from members of the society (Loss, Lindacher, & Curbach, 2014). This serves as a form of health awareness, promotion, and education for members of the global community. This is because of the global opportunity the internet has provided through SNS. Importantly, SNS has become a means of enhancing research amongst medical scholars as it has continued to facilitate a healthy relationship in the medical community (Park & Calamaro, 2013).

The role of SNS in the era of an active audience in the political space cannot be overemphasized. SNS has given the citizens the right to have their voice heard through frequent posts, tweets, retweets, and hashtags on the various platforms

(Scaramuzzino & Scaramuzzino, 2017). For example, citizens have been able to influence government decisions through active rejection of policies and programmes that they feel will not improve their lives as people. Civil society organizations have also organized mass rallies and protests through SNS. This is as a result of the ability of the platforms to reach out to all citizens and individuals concerned. Sometimes it might be because of its intrusive feature, as such, individuals might come across messages unconsciously or without any initial motive.

SNS like Twitter have been effectively used by citizens and political opponents/opposition groups to reject or oppose government plans and programmes (Lemke & Chala, 2016). The platform has also been used as a discussion forum where active individuals organize debates and discussion roundtables. However, political office holders have also based their judgments and decision-making processes on their interactions and popular demands/requests by the citizens through SNS (Ponder & Haridakis, 2015).

Markham (2016) in a study explains that though a significant instrument used in modern day politics, SNS are not an entirely new platform used by the political class. As such, it has continued to evolve and develop from time to time. However, in a study conducted by Schaffar, (2016) on the use of SNS in the political scene in Thailand, it was found out that, SNS have become a significant instrument used to promote hatred, dissatisfaction and fake news in the political atmosphere. The study also found out that the platform has also served as a means of indirect surveillance where the political class monitor one another's activities due to rivalry.

While analyzing the roles of SNS in the 2013 general elections in Kenya, Bing (2015) elucidates that SNS played a significant role in encouraging, motivating and enhancing the interests of the electorate to vote and monitor the developments in the elections. The study further concludes that ICT innovations like SNS were significant in providing updates for the people about the electoral process as well as a means of disseminating news updates. Also, Bonilla and Rosa (2015) conducted a long term study on how SNS are used as a means of protesting in the election era. Findings from the study indicated that SNS have become a powerful tool in which citizens use to protest harassment and maltreatment during and after electioneering periods. The study stated further that through hashtags, citizens are able to protest, mobilize and report unpleasant activities and harassment of security agents during election periods.

While studying how SNS are being used as a tool of a door-to-door campaign, Bennett (2012) states that SNS have become a highly important campaign tool for one-on-one communication as it gives the electorate the opportunity to have one-on-one or direct conversation with their representatives. While studying the use of SNS by young adults who are politically motivated and involve themselves in high-level political participation, Storsul (2014) explains that though SNS are being used for communication, mobilization, interpersonal, and group political meetings. Nonetheless, young adults who are politically oriented still prefer face-to-face communication when the issues being discussed are at its peak or execution stage.

Though the mainstream media platforms still remain a vital means of disseminating, mobilizing and upholding accurate and verifiable political activities, SNS are still receiving more popularity due to its durability and accessibility (Coulson, 2013). For

example, because access to the internet has increased globally, SNS have continued to gain popularity.

Today, SNS have received significant patronage from the political scene due to its roles and most importantly, its features. Quite importantly, the platform is receiving significant patronage due to its ability to ease communicating and interaction between the political class and the masses (Krzyżanowski & Tucker, 2018).

Because of its dynamism, SNS have become a tool that is relevant in the various human transaction. The platforms have facilitated and enhanced cross-cultural education including formal and informal. For example, due to the rigorous school schedule, the platform has been highly useful for university students in medical school (Wells, 2011). SNS such as Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat have also become quite effective in disseminating knowledge to a wide and large audience with optimal outreach and performance (Greenhow & Lewin, 2016). For example, an organization or company may decide to educate people about the use of a certain product or service with SNS.

According to Shafique, Anwar, and Bushra (2010) conducted in a study that sought to examine the use of SNS among university students in Bahawalpur. Findings from the study reveal that majority of the students use SNS to interact among themselves, make new friends and carry out group interactions among themselves. The study also revealed that one of the most important factors for the effective use of SNS among university students is the availability of internet access mostly within the university premises which makes communication and access easy.

While studying the influence of SNS consumption on university students, Kircaburun, Alhabash, Tosuntaş, and Griffiths (2018) found out that there is a significant relationship between the use of SNS among university students and establishing relationships, gaining popularity, and serving as a means of entertainment. As such, the study establishes the fact that SNS plays a significant role in serving as a means of establishing one's self and gaining popularity among a group of student. This verifies the use of the platforms by students during various student activities on campus.

In a study that examined the inter-cultural use of SNS by students, most especially in the travel process, Zavodna and Pospisil (2018) found out that SNS are used by students while on a trip to other places as a means of learning more about the place while serving as a tourist guide. Also, a study conducted by on the use of SNS and its effect on the performance of university students indicated that SNS negatively influence the academic performance of university students. The study which was carried out by Jacobsen and Forste (2011) stated that significantly, SNS have become a form of distraction to students as they use these platforms to socialize, interact and entertain themselves rather than for academic purposed.

According to Hussain (2012), SNS are used to develop academic activities and create educational means for which students can exchange ideas and input their opinion on various issues. Findings in the research enumerated SNS create an opportunity where students can interact with themselves from any part of the world. This obviously is a significant boost to the values and benefits of SNS.

In a study carried out by Gan, Leea, and Li (2017), they examine the use of SNS in facilitating political participation among university students. Findings indicate that based on their frequent use of SNS, the political class has been able to use the platform to attract, persuade and motivate university student into active participation in politics. In a study on the addictive nature of SNS and their effect on students' self-esteem, Hawi and Samaha (2017) found out that when students become addicted to SNS use, it lowers their self-esteem and sometimes affects their psychological well-being. However, the study also finds out that, being addicted to SNS facilitates satisfaction and gratifies various needs for the use of SNS by the youths.

One of the most interesting and significant uses that is universal is how SNS have enhanced interpersonal communication and relationship worldwide. The various SNS have provided a platform where communication and interaction can be enhanced without any form of bridge in communication (Parks, 2017).

Yang, Brown, and Braun (2014) while examining how SNS facilitates intimacy among university students, the study found out that frequent use of SNS facilitates, builds, and enhances friendship that thereafter becomes intimate among university students. For example, when two students meet on Facebook and begin to communicate as mere friends, the moment their communication becomes frequent, they are most likely to develop an intimate conversation and thereafter their friendship and relationship may transcend offline.

SNS have become very useful and efficient for opinion leaders (Song, Chob, & Kima, 2017). The platforms have provided them with more access to news, events, and happenings around them. As such, opinion leaders are adequately and effectively



informed, thereby able to guide their followers through as a result of their access to various information sources.

SNS have facilitated various forms of networking and most importantly promoted interpersonal relation and communication (Jenkins-Guarnieri, Wright, & Hudiburgh, 2012). As such, friends are able to communicate with the use of the SNS platforms while romantic partners are able to use the platforms to maintain an unbroken communication without any hindrance.

SNS have become essential commodities in the area of customer relations. For example, architectures use SNS to interact with their clients as well as use the platform as a means of achieving their past works where they can refer their perspective and future clients (Lara, Lizcano, Martínez, & Pazos, 2013). The platform has also become an inevitable tool in business promotion. Many businesses in the 21<sup>st</sup> century no longer run after looking for an appropriate location to situate their business ventures (Clemons, 2009).

Today, most of the businesses only find warehouses to store their products and radically promote their businesses through SNS (Shin, Chae, & Ko, 2018). This has helped a lot of young people to access the global market rather than a select few people within a confined location. SNS have significantly promoted e-commerce (Park & Kang, 2013). As such, electronic ways of buying and selling have become the order of the day. This has enhanced transparency, and increased competition which in turn improves quality service delivery and most importantly created more jobs for the young generation. However, this is not without its own demerits such as internet fraud, confusion in selection as well as enhanced making the wrong choice

through the false consciousness and false needs created by the SNS and media advertisements.

The use of SNS by corporate bodies and multinational organizations has facilitated increased revenue generation for companies and organizations (Enders, Hungenberg, Denker, & Mauch, 2008). Organizations can now manage their clients as well as internal and external publics through SNS. Issues can be discussed, clarifications made as well as assurances given which are in turn means of improving customer relations (Hana, Min, & Leec, 2016). In essence, SNS are essential tools when trying to build on or enhance an already established relationship between organizations and customers.

Because SNS have become an interesting part of human life and system, the platforms have been effectively used by organizations to secure, sustain and maintain cordial and constant relationships with their clients. This has also facilitated the opening of SNS by different corporate organizations. These platforms have increased interactivity and instilled confidence in the clients, in turn; it has facilitated customer satisfaction and brand loyalty (Seol, Lee, Yu, & Zo, 2016).

SNS have facilitated the Online Marketing Communication system also. It has brought about a high level of innovation in branding and marketing (Gaur, Saransomrurtai, & Herjanto, 2015). Both large and small organizations have thereby understood the effectiveness of their system of marketing and advertising. For example, insurance companies promote new programmes and innovations that will help their clients have value for their investments and use SNS to promote such innovation.

SNS has also become a major alternative to mainstream media advertisement, as many organizations now prefer to use SNS due to its wider outreach, flexibility, user-friendliness and its heterogenic characteristics (Zhou, Li, & Liu, 2010). This is because the platform could be used to pass messages across to different audience at the same time without losing its target. However, there sometimes may be information overload which may displease the audience if not properly managed

## **2.2 Facebook**

Since its establishment in 2004, Facebook as a Social Networking Platform has continued to increase due to the daily subscription by new users (Robards & Lincoln, 2016). The platform has continued to grow, for instance, in 2005, Facebook received 1.49billion users while it increased to 2billion in 2018 (Buehler, 2017). Since its creation, Facebook has continued to gain prominence as it has become a part of its users, thereby providing access to news, entertainment, education, and as well becoming an addictive platform where people escape from their daily hustles (Hong & Na, 2018).

Facebook provides timely and instant access to information and happenings as its users are prompt to update their status with news and events around them (Toma & Hancock, 2013). This has provided the platform with greater advantage to other social platforms. Facebook also serves as a means of achieving memorable events and life activities due to its special feature that creates a timely reminder of users' activities (Lev-On & Haleva-Amir, 2018).

United States, India, Brazil, and Indonesia are generally regarded as some of the top countries where Facebook have received a significant level of usage, while countries

like China and Iran have banned their citizens from accessing the platform (Kumar, 2014). This is due to the voice Facebook creates for its users and its ability to move beyond the borders.

Based on its unique features, Facebook has become one of the most sought after SNS platforms that provides its users' information, entertainment, and education (Alzougool, 2018). Facebook also provides users with a unique feature where interpersonal communication can be achieved effectively without interference, this has continued to increase its usage and subscription. For example, subscribers are opportune to make video and voice call apart from chatting with each other. Today, the features have increased as the platform now offers its users an opportunity to engage in group interactions (Sun & Wu, 2012).

Facebook also provides an opportunity to communicate with minimal internet service, and today the platform offers some of its users the opportunity to communicate online and transfer their relationship offline (Lee, 2012). Facebook is a global platform and has become addictive to millions of its users who cannot do without visiting the platform several times in a day (Good, 2012).

Though there are concerns about the use of Facebook in terms of the accuracy and trustworthiness of the information available on it, this has not stopped professionals and nonprofessionals alike in subscribing to the platform (Caers, et al., 2013). For instance, many professionals have subscribed to Facebook to provide easy and quick access to entertaining people's complaints and solving their problems. In addition, corporate organizations and bodies also use Facebook as a means of creating a direct

and one-on-one communication channel with their clients. This, in turn, builds trust within the customers and as well validates the product and service (Dijck, 2012).

Facebook has today remained more prominent, more accessible, more user-friendly, and as well less complicated than other SNS which have restricted access and are quite complicated to Facebook (Moreno, et al., 2014). Even adults are able to access and successfully manipulate Facebook as against other social platforms; this has given Facebook an edge and as well accorded it a priority status where users prefer it to others.

Though Facebook started as a strictly WWW platform, it has grown to become an application that is accessible on virtually any technologically inclined platform (Goggin, 2014). Based on its accessibility, the platform has now been taken advantage of by different small and medium scale business owners as well as other companies and organizations who are not only profit oriented but engage frequently with the people (Ellison, Gray, Lampe, & Fiore, 2014).

### **2.3 Instagram**

The advent of Instagram into the social networking world is a unique invention as it is quite different from every other social networking platform based on its features (MacDowall & Souza, 2018). While other SNS available before the invention of Instagram were a mixture of text, pictures, graphics and all with the text being the dominant tool used in networking, Instagram by using pictures as the dominant networking tool (Guidry, et al., 2018).

Instagram was officially launched in 2010 and sporadically gained the attention of SNS users due to its newness and creativity (Carah & Shaul, 2016). The social

networking platform allows its users to tell their stories and entertain their followers through pictures, videos, and graphics. This has over the time attracted a lot of users and as well become quite efficient for marketing by providing its clients and followers an opportunity to see what they are about to buy (Rodriguez & Hernandez, 2018).

Instagram rose to become a significant tool in the SNS world as it began to receive attention from all and sundry as such, the platform has become highly sought-after by politicians, organizations, and industries as it serves as an effective way of direct interaction with customers (Kohn, 2017). Today, there is almost no business or commercial outfit that does not have an Instagram handle. This is because experience has shown that Instagram is highly essential for direct marketing and customer relation.

Interestingly, Instagram has also become a political tool. Various political office holders today use Instagram to relate with their supporters as well as use it as a platform to inform their followers about their daily activities (Filimonov, Russmann, & Svensson, 2016). The platform has also become a converging platform where people from all works of life meet, network and interact. Political office holders have taken advantage of this platform to persuade the people as well as create an ideology in their minds (Filimonov, Russmann, & Svensson, 2016). This is through the frequent use of the platform and consistent posting of various contents (Lalancette & Raynauld, 2017).

One of the features of Instagram that further gives the platform credibility is the hashtag signs (Cortese, et al., 2018). Some of the examples of the hashtag signs

include #depression, #sad, #depressed, #anxiety, #suicide #depressionawareness, #depressionhurts, #depressionsurviva, #faceofdepression, #depressiontherapy. When users post contents on the platform with hashtags, it further boosts their visibility and creates an opportunity for such post to be accessed and viewed by all Instagram users no matter their location. Instagram has also been used by the youths to become influencers in the society (Abidin, 2016). For example, the more followers a user has, the more likely his credibility or status in the society. This then creates an opportunity for such user to use the platform to create a brand as well as voice opinion and ideas about national and international issues (Taleb, Laestadius, Asfar, Primack, & Maziak, 2018).

Today, over 20 billion pictures are shared on Instagram daily due to the dynamism the platform creates (Zappavigna, 2016). Instagram affords its users an opportunity to create their own image, change its color texture, conduct polls, as well as affords users to allow other users to rate the pictures and their perception about it. Apart from sharing videos and pictures, Instagram has established an avenue for users to engage in interpersonal communication through chats and video calls. Therefore, users are not limited to liking and commenting on pictures, they can also engage in various forms of conversation including face-to-face. This has proven to be an effective platform for business owners as well as service providers, as they can have a direct conversation with their clients/customers.

However, Instagram has been attributed as one of the SNS that has contributed to the high prevalence of depression among the people (Locatelli, 2017). This is because the platform has opened up the avenue where people can live and promote “fake lifestyle” in order to impress people and create an image (Alhabash & Ma, 2017).

This might also be because the platform serves as a means of branding and an effective tool for promoting lifestyles.

This is also corroborated by the study of Akdeniz (2018) where the research found out that many SNS users create fake accounts on social media in order to portray a fake lifestyle. The study also found out that SNS users however scrutinise the platforms of individuals who send them friend request in order to be sure of the identity of their followers and friends online.

## **2.4 Snapchat**

Snapchat officially joined the SNS in 2011 after its lunch (Billings, Qiao, Conlin, & Nie, 2017). The platform became popular and widely accepted within a very short time after its release, thereby becoming the third most popular social networking platform globally. Its acceptance due to its incredible features made the platform grow within a short time and gradually became popular among students, corporate, and social communities (Bossetta, 2018).

Snapchat is an application that allows users to share short timed videos and pictures, thereby creating memories and pleasant times with friends and family. One of the most unique features of Snapchat is its filters. These filters help users change their face texture as well as include humor in taking pictures and videos. For example, according to Soffer (2016);

Thus, it seems highly symbolic that one of Snapchat's most popular features—selfie face-detection technology that enables adding real-time graphics effects—concentrates on the mouth. The dog Snapchat lens, for example, is activated when the user opens his or her mouth while taking a selfie, at which point a dog's tongue comes out of the user's mouth and licks the screen (p. 2).



With over 150 million daily users, Snapchat has continued to become highly subscribed, thereby overcoming other SNS platforms that were in existence before it (Billings, Qiao, Conlin, & Nie, 2017). Snapchat has today become a part of the life of many of its users as they are always quick to use the platform on their mobile phone whenever an event needs to be documented, or when they are about to share a pleasant moment with the world.

The platform has continued to grow with the sporadic number of daily users (Spinda & Puckette, 2017). Snapchat allows its users to compile various snaps into one and share such with their users thereby calling it 'story'. These stories are unique moments users want to share simultaneously with their fans and friends. For instance, celebrities are usually quick at sharing their daily activities with their friends and fans. Such activity retains their existence in the memories of other users as well as continues to help them maintain relevance in the society.

Though there are other prominent SNS platforms like Facebook and Instagram, Snapchat remains prominent and widely subscribed to. However, Snapchat has also been stated to encourage users to live fake life so as to create a perception in the minds of their followers (Alhabash & Ma, 2017).

## **2.5 Depression**

Depression can be described as a mental and psychological disorder which is known for frequent sad, irritable and unpleasant mood throughout the day (Yang, 2007). Individuals that come down with depression withdraw from their daily activities and avoid association with friends, associates and family members (Klein, 2010). In most cases, they like to stay on their own. As such, events and activities they usually

engage in and become excited about no longer appeal to their sense of excitement and pleasure. According to Kangas (2001); depression can be described in a psychiatry and psychology perspective,

on the one hand, a neurophysiological disorder caused by chemical imbalance of the brain, and on the other hand, a psychological disorder caused by mental vulnerability factors and provoking agents, is operationalized in dual treatment strategies (p. 78).

Depression has over time become a major challenge especially for students and young adults generally (Roy, Parker, Mitchell, & Wilhe, 2001). Initially, it starts by the person having withdrawal syndrome, as he/she will not be as accommodating as before thereby not finding the usual activities pleasant (Fleischer, 2015). This continues for about 2 or 3 weeks before it becomes quite severe. However, this depression may be quite mild in children and is generally referred to as dysthymic disorder; this sometimes lasts for about a year or more.

Scientists have stated that depression is beyond not ordinarily feeling happy, or not in the mood or just wanting to be alone, stating that depression is quite intense and affects the mental health of the patient (Gordon, Tonge, & Melvin, 2012). Kivelä and Pahkala (1988) state that there are quite a number of signs of depression which include but not limited to the following:

1. A person who is suffering from depression will most of the time argue about issues either necessary or not. This is uncontrollable as the person does not just agree with opposing ideas
2. A person who is depressed becomes irritable about anything or everything. This is because he is just not in tune with everything around him/her.
3. A depressed person will perceive everything he has been into or the ones he is currently into with so much negativity.

4. A person who is depressed will continue to make negative and unpleasant comments about him/herself. This is as a result of the fact that he does not see hope or believe in any positivity.
5. Someone who is depressed will mostly want to be on his own and not associate with anyone. This is due to the fact that he feels being rejected by everyone and everything around him.

In a study conducted by Kangas (2001) where he interviewed depressed people to find out about their experience of depression in their society. Findings in the study reveal that individuals may either suffer from psychiatry and psychological depression, which significantly affects them and their activities. While conducting an investigation into the experience of older adults in depression Switzer, Wittink, Karsch, and Barg (2006) found out in his study that older adults struggle very hard to move out of depression and mostly do not have it easy. The study stated further that depression is a very common phenomenon among older adults and this affects their life span.

Enumerated that depression facilitates a significant or total withdrawal of the individual from the society (Cooke & Tucker, 2001). This is because such individual will experience no form of motivation or drive towards interacting or having social relations.

## **2.6 Uses and Gratifications Theory**

The Uses and Gratifications Theory (U&G) states that the media audience is active and have the ability to choose what platform to access and at what time (Katz, Haas, & Gurevitch, 1973). Being one of the most sought-after media theories, the Uses and

Gratifications Theory has become even more relevant due to technological innovations and the new media (Dunne, Lawlor, & Rowley, 2010). This implies that the role of the media is no longer dominant, as such, indicating an active audience role by the user (Korhan & Ersoy, 2016). The user is thereby able to select which platform to use depending on the needs and wants. Based on the ability of the audience to select, media control and manipulation has been limited (Baran & Davis, 2012).

Uses and Gratification Theory is a popular theory in the field of communication and media studies and as well quite prominent in studies that are related to SNS or SNS (Puri & Pugliese, 2012). It has a high referral to the media audience as active and as such wants them to be recognized as people who can make use of the media platforms (mainstream and SNS) for whatever they wish as well as the time they desire (Stannard & Sanders, 2015). Therefore, the audience of the media can make use of the media to gratify their desires and needs.

The Uses and Gratifications Theory explains further the flexibility the user gains in the use of their choice media (Katz, 1957). The user is opportune to use the media at any convenient time, for a desired and specific purpose. (Katz, 1987). The user is also able to select a preferred platform and retrieve messages. For example, in order to find out the activities of friends and associates, a user may go through the profile of such individual or celebrity to find out which pictures their the celebrity like, comment on, and with whom they interact. However, due to frequent exposure to certain phenomena, there is an opportunity to become influenced by media content.

U&G Theory hypothesizes that the use of the media is purposeful and goal-oriented. 'U&G explains how the active audience (or user) would seek out a computer-mediated medium to gratify a psychological need' (Chen, 2011, p. 757).

It is further important to state that while consumers use the media to gratify their desires, media literacy is an essential part of what must be taken into account. This means, users must endeavor to understand, digest and dissect information and general content they consume on the different SNS platform (Stannard & Sanders, 2015)..

Because of the lack of appropriate media literacy, and due to the users' inability to dissect the messages they receive on the media, they are unconscious of the fact that the messages affect their psychology negatively, thereby leading to depression. As such, media literacy is quite essential in the understanding of various media messages

### **2.6.1 Research into Uses and Gratifications and SNS in EMU**

Though Uses and Gratifications Theory is a popular theory and is widely used, however, there are quite a number of studies done on UGT and SNS in EMU. In EMU, numerous research have been conducted in relation to the use of SNS in general and application in particular, however, most of the studies revolve around Facebook. For instance, Sevük (2013) studied the influence of Facebook on interpersonal communication among 200 students who study at the Faculty of Communication and Media Studies at the Eastern Mediterranean University. According to findings in the study, indicate that SNS users do not desire further need

to engage in face-to-face communication as long as they are able to communicate on Facebook.

Another study by Enumah (2015) which sought to investigate EMU faculty of Communication and Engineering students experience and understanding of conflict in real life and strategy employed in conflict resolution when on Facebook. The study found out that FCMS and FE students“ ensure all parties in involved in a conflict issue are satisfied there by employing a WIN-WIN strategy to resolve conflicts on Facebook.

Also, Yıldız (2015) in a study, which sought to investigate personal constructs tertiary students adopt with respect to Johari window on Facebook pages. Findings in the study stat that people mostly share their interests and likes on Facebook while hiding their personal information and relationship status participants show difference in the personal constructs they adopt according to 4 areas of the Johari Window in real and virtual life.

Teke (2011) studied a comparison of Facebook addiction between social and hard sciences' students found out that the students of the both faculties use Facebook for communication in general in order to meet some of their social and human needs. In addition, Taiwo (2014) conducted a comparative analysis on the attitudes of tertiary students towards multitasking on Facebook. Findings in the study indicate that while some students use SNS for academic purposes, others use it to gratify personal fulfilments. Sevük (2013) investigated the influence of Facebook on interpersonal communication, the study found out that SNS users are more in tune with virtual

communication to one on one communication. The findings is also inline with the findings of Oloo (2013).

Therefore, this research breaks new grounds because it includes depression as a concept. This therefore, helps bring about the newness of this research. For instance, this research focuses on SNS and depression among Nigerian students, which has not been studied by anyone yet. This study is also new because of the methodological approach; this is because it is using a qualitative methodology in investigating the subject matter.

Also, because this research is a study by a student of EMU it is quite important to state that no research currently exists and is focused on how SNS use gratifies certain desires of young adults thereby causing some depressive symptoms in them. This also creates a form of newness in this research.

## **2.7 Third Person Effect Theory**

The third person effect has been defined as “occurring when an individual believes that mass media content has a greater influence on other people than on himself or herself, a belief that often leads to subsequent action” (Park & Salmon, 2005, p.26).

The theory which is widely known takes a position that media users are usually assumptive that they have control over how media influence them. However, they are unconscious that the media has a powerful and significant way of affecting their psychological wellbeing. Researchers have now transcended beyond understanding the modes and patterns of the third person effect, today, what researchers seek to understand is the extent to which the third person effect influence media users.

For example, this study is based on understanding how SNS affect its users thereby causing depression. In applying the third person theory to this study, one will understand that a significant number of SNS users are unaware that SNS plays a significant but indirect role in influencing their psychological wellbeing due to what they consume online. However, many of the users are unaware of the influence.

While looking into the study of Jang and Kim (2018) who studied the third person effect of news media on its audience. The study looked at how fake news influence voters decision during electioneering campaigns. Findings state that there is a strong third person effect in the way social media news affect voters during elections. The study also explained that users with higher level of third person effects are more likely going to advocate media literacy among the populace.

Isik, Set, Khan, Avsar, Cansever, and Acemoglu (2013) examined the risks of cultural behaviors on individuals in Turkey, this is to understand how the third person effect affects certain individual's behavioral patterns. Findings in the study state that there is a statistical significant difference between individuals who are affected by various health challenges and those who are not conscious of such health challenges.

Though there are different arguments on the bases of the third person effect as some scholars refer to the theory as a media theory while some say it is rooted in psychology. Golan and Banning (2008) further emphasize that "the third-person effect encompasses two components, perceptual and behavioral. The perceptual



focuses on gaps in perceptions of media effects on self and others, whereas the behavioral focuses on how people act on these third-person perceptions” (p. 209).

While studying the effect of social media use on individuals as well as its impacts, Antonopoulos, Veglis, Gardikiotis, Kotsakis, and Kalliris, (2015) found out that age is a significant factor in determining how social media affects individuals and its effect on them. This means individuals may sometimes be conscious of the third person effects, however, their age will most likely affect how the media impacts on them

Leung and Lo (2015) studied the third person perspectives to online messages most especially online messages that campaign against drug abuse and trafficking. Findings in the study shed more light on the applicability and the different effect of the third person theory on individuals.

### **2.7.1 Research into Third Person Effect and SNS in EMU**

Though there are quite a number of studies on the third person effect and some other phenominon, there is a gap in research into the third person effect examining how SNS affects the psychological wellbeing of users there by causing depression. Therefore, this study is new as it examines on one hand how SNS users react to various actions on social media in various ways.

Balyemez (2014) studied the effect of negative effect of Facebook use between high school and college students putting into consideration the third person effect. The study explored how individuals perceived Facebook affects the psychology of other users than the individual using it. Findings in the study indicates that students

significantly believe that SNS has more effects on others than them. The study also affirms that there is also a tendency of SNS users to get addicted to the platforms due to frequent use. As such, there will be high level of exposure and use of SNS thereby increasing their chances of coming across various SNS contents. This therefore, may affect their psychological stability thereby causing depression

All these studies have instigated various topics relating to the third person effect, however, none of them have looked into the phenomenon being examined in this research which is primarily SNS and depression among youths. This obviously creates a gap for this research to fill.

## **Chapter 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This chapter focuses on the research methodology used in the study as well as other important approaches adopted. As such, the discussions will be focused on the following. Research methodology, design, context, population and sampling, data collection procedure and instrument, as well as ethical issues.

#### **3.1 Research Methodology**

This study adopts qualitative methodology as the main plan of attack in the research and the appropriate analytical processes to be followed. The qualitative methodology allows the researcher the opportunity of using quality of participants sampled to evaluate and interpret research results (Neuman, 2014).

Cohen and Manion (1980) elucidate that in qualitative research, attention is not given to numbers, but rather, the focus of the study is based on the quality of the sample and the richness of the content. The qualitative process in research conducts thorough investigation most especially with the use of interviews or observations of phenomenal issues being researched upon.

Qualitative studies, though not generalizable, they provide in-depth understanding due to the richness in data and its thoroughness in its content. Over time, qualitative research has proven to be quite reliable and provides in-depth content for the subject

matter. Qualitative studies have also been described as providing a holistic understanding of a phenomenon.

### **3.2 Research Design**

This research is a case study of young Nigerian adults who use SNS in their daily activities. The study is focused on youths who are based in Lagos state which is Nigeria's commercial center. Using a qualitative study in the design of this study helps to provide an in-depth understanding of these young Nigerians with regards to their experience in SNS use and depression.

### **3.3 Population and Sample**

As at the last population census in Nigeria, the total population in Nigeria was around 160,000,000 (Okolomike, 2017). However, I based the study in Lagos, the former capital of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. This is because Lagos is the most populated city in not only in Nigeria but also in Africa, and the state with the presence of citizens from all states in Nigeria.

Due to the various advantages and most importantly its population, Lagos state has become the most economically stable city in Nigeria as well as the city with the highest GDP.

When considering the population in research of this nature, we can refer to the population as all defined members of a study or a number where a sample could be selected (Ross, 2005). This research is a Nigerian based study and its intent is to understand, evaluate and analyze the effects of SNS as a tool of depression among Nigerian youth.

To determine the population, I consider the entire population of Nigerians which according to reports is over one hundred and seventy million. I also understand the fact that not all Nigerians make use of SNS, but conveniently those who currently fall within 18 and 40 years would either be categorized as digital natives or digital migrants defined by Prensky (2001).

In other words, I narrow my population to Lagos State Nigeria and use purposive sampling. This is because the participants have to be youths and must use SNS, also 21 participants were selected for the study. Participants were selected using snowball approach. However, all of the participants are SNS users.

### **3.4 Data Collection Methods**

Interview participant observation and field notes were used in the study. Interview is a form of data collection in research that seeks to permit respondents to give their opinion or narrate their experience on a particular phenomenon (King, 2004). However, interviews are data collection methods that could seem confusing and challenging if not professionally and strategically handled by the researcher. One of the first procedure of using the interview as a data collection method is to ensure bracketing. This is a process where the researcher assumes a position of avoiding the injection of his personal opinion or bias in the phenomenon under study (Peters & Halcomb, 2015).

Though recruiting participants was quite taxing and intense, I successfully ensured that all those recruited for interview met the criteria for the study so as to ensure objectivity and also facilitate appropriate responses. Though interviews could be conducted face-to-face, online, or through telephone, I conducted my interviews with

the participants face-to-face (Novick, 2008). This helped me ask follow up questions, notice the mood of the respondents, and also ensure the participants were in the right frame of mind and ready to answer the questions.

Notes were also taken during the interview process in order to ensure vital points were not missed during analysis and the entire research (Burnard, 1991). Quite importantly in the data collection process, I used triangulation i.e. interviews, observations and field notes (See 3.7).

With regards to observation, I took time to observe various young adults and their use of SNS. The observations were in form of participant observation and they played significant roles in understanding the phenomenon as well as the analysis.

Field notes were taken at every direct and indirect observations I made. Each time, I was on the field to observe, I carefully the activities and made time-to-time jottings. These jottings were in order to facilitate proper analysis, provide in-depth analysis and facilitate a well-researched work.

Table 1: Breakdown of Interviewed Participants

S/N	Name	Age	Gender	Marital Status	Occupation	The frequency of SM Use	SM Platform Frequently Used
1.	James	27	Male	Single	Entrepreneur	Very Often	Facebook
2.	Femi	20	Male	Single	Filmmaker	Very Often	Facebook
3.	Tola	37	Female	Married	Business Woman	Often	Facebook
4.	Linda	19	Female	In a Relationship	Student	Very Often	Instagram.
5.	Smart	33	Male	Single	Software Engineer	Very Often	Facebook
6.	Uju	32	Female	Married	Documentation Analyst	Very Often	Instagram
7.	Arian	22	Male	Single	Student	Very Often	Instagram
8.	Benjamin	27	Male	Married	Broadcaster	Very Often	Facebook
9.	Lydia	18	Female	Single	Student	Often	Facebook
10.	Cason	22	Male	Single	I.T personnel.	Often	Facebook
11.	Madison	27	Female	Married	Communications Agency	Very Often	Twitter
12.	Alexander	23	Male	Single	Student	Very Often	Instagram
13.	Damon	25	Male	Married	Corps Member	Very Often	Snapchat
14.	Dexter	22	Male	Single	Software Developer	Often	Snapchat
15.	Maximus	25	Male	In a relationship	Masters' Degree Student	Often	Instagram
16.	Hannah	22	Female	Single	Student	Very Often	Facebook
17.	Waldo	21	Male	Single	Accounting Student	Very Often	Instagram
18.	Abigail	19	Female	Single	Student	Very Often	Instagram
19.	Isabella	22	Female	Single	Student	Very Often	Facebook
20.	Ashley	24	Female	Single	Student	Very Often	Instagram
21.	Kemi	30	Female	Single	Professional Councillor	Often	Facebook

### **3.5 Data Collection Procedures**

The method of data collection was through interview and participants were determined judgmentally. They were first identified as Nigerians and were asked if they have ever suffered any form of minor or major depression. Only those who responded yes were selected. Participants were also asked if they use SNS platforms and which platform they use most often. These prelude questions helped us determine appropriate respondents for the study.

Interviews were conducted over a period of three weeks and ranged between 20 to 25 minutes each. The interviews were guided by a semi-structured interview sheet and the questions were drafted in accordance with the research objectives and questions. Follow up questions were also asked. I ensured the interviews were conducted in a conducive environment where there would be no form of distractions and was conducted in English.

I interviewed 21 respondents for the study. The interviews were recorded with a recording midget after which they were carefully transcribed. I carefully went over the transcriptions one after the other. After ensuring the interviews were correctly transcribed, I sought the help of 3 senior colleagues who also looked through the transcripts and coded them. The coding and opinions were corrected and properly looked into. This process, though challenging, facilitated appropriateness and ensured standards were met.

Throughout the study, I observed the people around me as part of the means of gathering data for the study, I also kept field notes which guided my analysis in the study.



### **3.6 Ethical Issues**

Ethical issues were taken into serious consideration during the study. I ensured I got approval for the study from the ethical committee before the commencement of the interview. In addition, the identity of all participants are protected in this study as they are all given pseudonym.

### **3.7 Triangulation**

The research made use of triangulation in order to ensure in-depth analysis and understanding. I carefully observed the youths and had some informal discussions with them on their SNS use and how it causes depression. During the period, notes were also taken. Then interviews were conducted with the respondents in order to provide a detailed explanation of their experience. Therefore, to ensure triangulation, observation, field notes and interviews were used.

## **Chapter 4**

### **ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS**

In this session, I provide the thematic analysis as well as the findings of the study. In order to conduct a thorough analysis of this study, I made use of triangulation. This involves the use of interviews, field notes and the observations we made on how these students make use of SNS. Also, nicknames are used to replace the original names of the respondents.

#### **4.1 Analysis**

In this part of this research, I used thematic analysis in order to group all the similar responses from the participants. This provides a clear insight into the most frequent words and answers provided by the respondents.

##### **4.1.1 Experiencing Depression**

There are various beliefs and perspectives on depression. While some believe it is real, others believe it is not much of a problem to be worried about. Almost all of the respondents stated they have experienced depression at one stage of their life or the other. However, some say they have only experienced mild depression, which may be attributed to the low moments in their lives, or times things are not going as planned. This they say every human experience at one point of their lives or the other.

While stating her level of belief and acceptance of the reality of depression, Linda says;

I have not personally experienced what depression is but I have close allies and friends who have suffered from depression at different times. I believe it is real somehow. Nevertheless, for me, I do not think I have ever been in that situation.

Alexander said, "Of course, depression is real, very real and you never can tell when it will come or control it except you make frantic efforts at preventing it". Femi said;

I have sometimes suffered from depression. Making films for example now, you know it is not everything you have access to. It is not everything you want that will be done. Therefore, the fact that you are not getting what you want to be done, most times, gets me depressed

Hannah said, "Yes of course depression is real. I have passed through it also. I have passed through it in certain stages of my life". Linda said;

I do not think I have experienced what real depression is. However, I think what influences a person's actions will go a long way affecting our thoughts and emotions. So, depression among Nigerian youths is as a result of attaching priorities on the wrong phenomenon and aspects of their lives.

Madison said, "You know when are broke like this, when you don't have money, it makes me very sad and family issues and all". However, Waldo said; "Well, maybe mild depression not too elaborate but yes, mild depression. I think everybody has that very low moment in his or her lives and I have had friends who suffered from very serious depression".

In conclusion, most of them admit that SNS may cause depression. This may be somewhat regarded as a third person effect of the media on its audience. Therefore, it may be concluded that depression is a global phenomenon which may be caused by SNS. These responses are quite in tandem with the observations I made as well as some other aspect of my field notes.

#### **4.1.2 SNS Acts and Depression**

Acts and actions on SNS that facilitate depression are of various forms. These acts have significantly contributed to the increasing number of depression recorded. Based on the freedom on SNS, no one can, therefore, be accused or sued for causing depression due to the post on SNS.

Linda says;

Our priorities about the use of SNS could facilitate depression. This is about what we produce for online users as well as what we consume online. The SNS contents we consume online, probably the images of houses, luxuries, and everything. If you are not in the best situation to handle such pressure like you want to get to that position as quickly as possible, even when you know you are not capable or you are not even close to being there yet.

Linda further explained that;

Then, you will begin to put yourself under pressure in fact before you know it, you are weighed down by unnecessary situations then, we call it frivolities and all of that. So, before you know, you are already putting yourself in someone else's shoes and in that situation, you are already getting depressed like you are wishing you are there and you are not there yet.

While explaining his perceptions about the acts on SNS that causes depression,

Benjamin said;

What causes depression most is when you see your leaders and their kids' spending money while you sit and watch their unholy activities online? You will be wondering in most cases why they have so much luxurious life and they enjoy every bit of their lives while other citizens wallow in poverty. It is one of the biggest things we see on SNS that causes depression, in most cases, they do not even care about the feelings of other citizens. Seeing those kinds of acts facilitates depression and makes people sad.

Alexander further explained that

Depression can cause many other health complications, and there is a need for us to ensure we do not get depressed with other people's fake

life. Also, what I think is that many celebrities especially those that flaunt their perfect bodies and curves on SNS making young adults envy them and feel less of themselves are some of the major problems. Some of them have nothing but only make many young girls lose focus with their fake lives on SNS.

Femi said;

When people flaunt their wealth, it just makes you depressed. For instance, when you go online and you see “Cardi B” and other artists throwing money carelessly on SNS, you just become depressed because you do not even have enough money to take care of your three daily meals

Femi further explained that;

It doesn't mean if you have SNS accounts, you have processed the freedom to insult other users. A number of people get depressed due to the insults and backlashes they received from other SNS users. For instance, if a famous person does not agree with the popular view and expresses him/herself online, there may be an invasion of insightful and negative comments about such person that is why we sometimes hear a person committed suicide for no reasons. It may be due to the unnecessary SNS insults.

Arian said, there are various forms of cyberbullying online and it has shown that cyberbullying facilitates depression among many Nigerian young adults;

I believe when we go on SNS and we see lifestyles that other people live and in real life, we feel like we are better than those people and it could tend to cause a kind of depression in us.

Uju said;

I think SNS contains a wealth of information that is easily accessible and since you can link up with so many people, and you can see so many things happening at the same time, if you are not careful, this can cause some sort of information overload, which if not properly handled, may lead to depression.

Hannah enumerated;

There are quite some few things I discovered causes depression over time. For example, when I just joined Facebook, I saw many of my secondary school mates have gone far in life than me with their achievements. Some of them have their pictures, which indicated they

have relocated to better countries; some of them are having a good life and all. Such pictures made me depressed. Therefore, I was seeing myself as if I have not even taken a step.

Alexander said, “Personally, I think the excessive attention to affluence amongst youths and too much attention to female sexual body parts”. Alexander explains further that;

Self-esteem is very important and if you have low self-esteem, it is very easy for you to fall into depression. Because you would always want to be someone else and if you try to be someone else on a normal day, it tends to bring you lower until you become the shadow of the other person.

Linda also corroborate Alexander as she says;

That is one of the things that cause depression so when you have low self-esteem naturally, and you surf your phone in most cases you begin to see many people and the kind of comfort they enjoy, then you may begin to get depressed. Therefore, I believe low self-esteem is the number one cause of depression on SNS.

Madison says many people leave fake lives on SNS and many unsuspecting users fall victim of their dubious acts. She said;

People are actually putting out fake status about themselves. It gives you that impression when you look at them, you feel you have nothing to show in your life and you are filled with lots of negative thoughts. But basically, people put up images, pictures, messages of who they are not needs careful analysis so as not to desire such unrealistic and fake life as well. Some SNS contents may get you depressed because you are trying to think, you are trying to see yourself in that position, and you are not there.

Dexter says;

I will still hamper on control since there are not so much control measures and there is no proper gatekeeping. I feel there is a great need for control. You can also add awareness to tell people how to actually work on your depression because if you think there's a control measure like taking drugs it's just for a moment, it will still reoccur. We are talking about a long-term solution. So, the same way SNS are putting a lot of depression in people, I feel in the same manner we should look out for what we can preach, how we can help people not get depressed.

Waldo said;

I would say a lifestyle where people fantasize on how they live or what they eat or where they go, has been a major cause of depression among Nigerian young adults. This does not actually depict what they are doing in real life. Therefore, I think it causes some kind of mix up between youths.

Waldo further explained that;

I think one needs to understand that on SNS platforms, most people live their lives there. It is just as if they fantasize their lives on SNS. Therefore, once you understand that it is all fantasy, I think you should be able to control yourself so that you will not have low self-esteem. So, for you to have low self-esteem that means you actually believe everything you see on SNS.

Benjamin said; “trolling, cyberbullying, sarcastic comments that come off a bit more personal than the person commenting probably intended, the pressure to live up to expectation and everybody trying to show off that at so age”. Benjamin said further that;

Seeing someone post a picture online and maybe she thought that was her best picture then, a random user comes online to analyze everything in the picture and ends up insulting her. However, that person may already be suffering from low self-esteem and with that comment, you will make the person’s condition worse, especially when such message is coming from a random person, it can destabilize the person and lead to a series of issues.

James said, “Personally, whenever I see people spending money lavishly online, that's what makes me depressed because I know I don't have that money”. James explained that;

I think SNS is a place where everybody can post what he or she wants to post about his or her lives. For example, if you are someone that follows the SNS platforms of the top politicians and artists, you'd begin to see their posts as they are driving cars and living their lives even when some acts are untrue. I think SNS is connecting them to those of us that do not have the financial wherewithal. So, I feel such things contribute to depression.

Uju said; the comments by many users is a major cause of depression on its own;

Probably comments. When you are going through some comments, they sound really embarrassing and annoying. When it comes to issues on issues religion, you know this thing is very right maybe when they are insulting somebody, probably your own religion says this and the other person is contradicting what you are saying, you may become depressed.

Arian said;

As good as SNS are in connecting people, it also saves a lot of way for people who know how to make other people feel bad. It could just be their fancy lifestyle. For instance, Instagram, people have a perfect life on there, so if you are having a difficulty somewhere, you might look at the person having a fancy lifestyle and you might feel depressed.

Benjamin said;

Just display of things people have on SNS like people's posts and all that. Like if a big person sees a very slim fine girl maybe in a bikini, you begin to feel depressed because you are not looking that way; you do not feel happy with yourself again. So, the kind of posts on SNS makes a lot of impact on affecting people psychologically.

Benjamin also explained that;

Cyberbullying is very important in making people depressed. Many people are trying to live to impress for the SNS so, in that sense, some people are trying to live up to expectation more than their means. In that sense, you would just desire to have what you do not have the financial capability for and at the end of the day paying back your debt may become an issue thereby affecting you psychologically.

In summary, findings from the investigation from the respondents indicate that various acts such as undue display of lifestyle, fake life and other societal acts contribute to the development of various forms of mental disorder such as depression. This also very similar with the observations I made. For instance, in one of my observations, I found out that some of these youths always feel sad whenever they come across SNS posts that attracts them and unfortunately, they cannot afford such luxury. This may also be related to the third person effect.



#### **4.1.3 Use of SNS in Creating Awareness about Depression**

Though SNS has been attributed to causing a significant number of depression cases due to what people consume on the platforms, however, the platforms have also been used as avenues for campaigns on cautioning what and how users consume contents on the platforms to prevent depression. SNS platforms have also served as a means of providing general advice and guidance on how to prevent, manage, and reduce the cases of hypertension among citizens.

A significant number of participants enumerate that SNS users pose the first and the best instruments for reducing how the platforms facilitate depression. Alexander said;

What you choose to see or what you choose to watch on SNS would determine what your orientation or what you pursue. For some people, what they copy is inspirational posts, they choose to pick that to motivate, inspire and push themselves to greatness. For some people, they go through images and things that entertain them. That is also their choice because it defines their purpose for the use of SNS. However, for those that pick up posts that inspire, they could transfer the lessons learned to other members of the community. Importantly, it depends on what content you view on SNS. The content you consume will determine the level of awareness you receive on SNS and other platforms. If you read important messages, you are likely going to be influenced, but if you only scroll through pictures, you will also get what you desire.

According to James, the need for SNS to exhibit a high level of self-belief and motivation as this will help prevent the negative influence of SNS content as well depression. James states further that;

For someone that has low self-esteem and feels he cannot make it in life and you see people doing well on SNS, you tend to pull yourself back emotionally. In that case, you would feel these people are way beyond where you think you are and you just cannot match with the standard. With low self-esteem and the different unrealistic/fake posts many users display on SNS, it is very easy for someone who use SNS very often to come down with depression.

Alexander said SNS has been on the other hand very instrumental to educating people on how to manage their lives and activities to prevent depression or manage it. He elaborates as;

Most times, you see celebrities coming out to say they are depressed, it shows that no one is immune to experiencing depression no matter your financial capabilities. SNS is used most times by celebrities to educate the citizens that depression is real even when they have their desires; they get depressed especially when they begin to compare their life achievements to other users. Therefore, it is real. They tell us everything and it is a way of communicating with everybody and tell them that depression is actually real.

Hannah said;

Low self-esteem is one of the major causes of depression. When you see people having what you don't have or when people do things to you that you don't want. You understand. You see your friend who is SNS inclined inline and you feel threatened by what they display which may not necessarily be real.

Uju speaks further on creating awareness on SNS depression among Nigerian youth;

How we naturally create awareness here in Nigeria is by posting on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. In Nigeria for instance, we do not tend to mind our business especially when we are online. We can do more important things on SNS such as making money, creating a business or brand. For example, if you see a celebrity now posting a picture and the celebrities and there is a little issue with some part of the celebrity's body or physic, you will begin to see people body shaming or making unpleasant comments about such person in the comment section, forgetting that a celebrity is a human too. That celebrity may begin to have low self-esteem and thereby lead to depression.

Benjamin said;

A significant part of the problems associated with SNS is can be traced to the youths. If we can learn not to intrude into other people's privacy as well as appreciate people while motivating them to be better people, we will have a society with fewer cases of depression cases.

Madison is of the opinion that SNS is not used to create awareness about depression, rather it is contributing to the scourge. Madison said;

I don't think SNS is being used as a means to create awareness about depression but ways by which it can be done is also using celebrities, icons that young adults look up to so they can talk to them one on one. People that are more educated about the causes and prevention depression most especially medical practitioners and psychologist will be of great online help to many users.

Madison states further that;

We have heard of so many cases of depression in the society, some jump into the river, some starve him or herself, take poisonous drinks and substances while some physically harm themselves. I think many of us need experienced people to counsel and nurture us in order to prevent depression and suicide eventually.

Dexter says;

I believe that when people go on SNS platforms and they see the lives that other people live because they do not have a sense of identity of who they actually are, they allow the lifestyle they see there to actually convince them to form a defining picture of what they are not. This ultimately affects their lives negatively because they are unable to maintain such a lifestyle.

Ashley explicates about SNS as a tool for creating awareness about depression;

Practically almost nothing, except very few on Facebook probably. I am not frequently on Facebook so I cannot really tell you about that but on the platform I use which is Instagram pictures and graphics are used more often. For example, there are many beautifully designed graphics and some short videos that are targeted at helping people triumph over trying and emotionally disturbing times.

Uju said there is quite a lot to do in terms of enhancing communication, however, there are valuable efforts. She explains further;

You know there is always the good and the bad side. However. It is quite interesting that people make awareness day by day on SNS. Every time you go online, you see people talk about the realness of depression and the need for people to stay and counsel others who may be suffering from depression. There are hotlines on many platforms as well as websites where people can talk to one another, this serves as a viable way of talking people through their pains.

Waldo said; “SNS is the vast now. The media is vast, it reaches different many people so, if you post whatever on SNS, and everyone will see it”. He enumerates about the use of SNS in creating awareness about depression. She points out that;

I think people need to speak out more about SNS like what mental health I think its initiative on Twitter is doing and using hashtags like #mentalhealthawareness #depressionisreal thinks like that. Nigerian youths can come out and talk about how they faced depression, stories of people who are currently going through depression and what they think can be done.

Benjamin said;

I do not really see much awareness about depression on SNS but then I feel celebrities and few people notice it because mostly in Nigeria, some people still do not believe in depression. However, people actually do suffer from depression. “You don't have to have a car, you don't have to look a certain way, and you are all beautiful”. If everybody realizes that and post it, that's that will serve as a form of awareness and boost people’s self-worth and confidence.

Damon said “For me, I have not really noticed that SNS is actually helping to reduce depression” he, however, said there are various ways SNS can help and he looks forward to seeing such;

You can use SNS to post some stuff so that people can know depression is real, and they should go get help. You can remind people to go to the hospital and talk to someone, you can remind people that everything will be all right and provide them with various forms of motivation.

In conclusion, the findings derived from this research indicate that SNS is a very important tool in creating awareness about how to prevent depression among the youths. For example, I observed that many of the youths get quite attracted to many of the inspirational quotes they read on the different platforms. These quotes also serve as a form of motivation for them. This has contributed significantly to reducing the spread of depression among the youth.

#### **4.1.4 Suggestions for Preventing SNS Depression**

The use of SNS by individuals has been attributed to facilitating various forms and degrees of depression. A significant number of participants narrate their experience on how SNS facilitate depression. According to James, the main motive and purpose of SNS use by individuals determine what they get as an outcome. He further states that;

For someone like me, I know what I want. I know what I am after, so when I am on SNS, I like to know what are my main intention or purpose for using the platform. Sometimes, it may be to escape, to relieve stress, news updates, entertainment or gossip stories and many more. Therefore, it is not really about using SNS it is how people use SNS and for what purpose they use the platform.

While enumerating the various ways SNS influence its users, Femi, draws our attention to the fact that;

SNS is a platform, you could put yourself out there, market yourself on SNS. Therefore, it is not just about the negative influence of SNS, the platforms also play significant roles in influencing us positively. It is not SNS that influence or facilitate negativities that cause depression in us; it is the people behind the platform, how they use it and what we seek on the platforms as well.

Linda, says a significant number of SNS are fake and unreal as users only portray the good or glossy sides of their lives to the public based on how they want other users to perceive them. Linda stated further that;

If you try to live a fake life because it is not everything you see on SNS that is actually real. It is just painted and you just feel that is a good life. People have their own issues they are passing through. You try to picture yourself in their shoes definitely, you are trying to put yourself under pressure. Negativity is a thing of the mind. If you work on the negative, definitely nothing good is actually going to work out. The negativities that we exhibit are the most significant causes of depression in many users.

Tola, also stated further that;

SNS causes a lot because people live fake lives on SNS. You that you feel you are living an ordinary life, you see people on SNS and those people look very good as if they have no issues or challenges. If you do

not tread with caution, you may begin to have low self-esteem and you may start thinking why do not have a smooth and trouble-free life such that you begin to gradually have depression symptoms. It just tells you how much SNS influences depression in our lives.

According to Smart, if SNS users are conscious of how much they use SNS and make the glamorous contents therein less attractive, it will go a long way on reducing how much SNS influences depression in their lives. Smart extends;

The only thing we can do is by minding our business on whatever we consume online. That is the major thing that depression due to what we consume online. You see someone will post something now and people will go to the comment section and start dropping things that are not important or relevant. Therefore, I think the only thing we can do, as Nigerian youth is to go on hustling with whatever we are doing and mind our business. We should leave everybody to their lives but I think that may be highly impossible and this is because the ultimate aim of some people's SNS posts is for other users to post nice and pleasant comments about whatever they have posted.

Uju, said; depression is not an easy phenomenon to deal with. She said even when one is through that depression, people hardly believe that with one's personality and social influence one is immune to such. She states that;

What I know is that many people go through depression out there. Celebrities, footballers all those people that we feel their lives are perfect, they go through depression. I've seen Janet Jackson coming out to say she has been depressed, fighting with depression, that's one. I think celebrities need to come clean for people to know that the life we live is not as we think. It's not as Instagram-like, what I mean is when you see people looking like a million dollars like they don't have pimples, they don't have stretch marks, they don't have those kinds of things and you that you are fat and you have those kinds of things and you start wondering, How did God create me like this? Depression has started. You start thinking about your life.

Uju emphasized further on the pattern and philosophy to follow when establishing awareness pattern for curbing SNS depression

The thing is I feel for the awareness to begin, the awareness should not just come from we telling people, it should come from the celebrities themselves as we ones we look up to, the ones you are always checking

through their pages, the ones that would be like, me too I go through depression, I'm a human being.

Arian said; depression has become very popular in society today and there is a need for Nigerian youth to focus on knowing themselves and establishing a purpose for their lives. Stated further that the best thing SNS does is to paint a picture in which the user wants to. Arian stated further that many SNS users use the platform to paint a picture of what they are not, most especially celebrities, thereby leaving users who are not critical to fall for the fake life.

Arian further explained that through SNS has its good parts many users still use it to portray fake lifestyles. Arian points out that;

The most important thing is for people to know that not everything is gold on SNS, besides most celebrities and politicians only posts good things about themselves. They do not post their flaws; they only post what makes them happy. Many people look into the lives of other SNS users, they look at the celebrities wish for their kind of lifestyle but they do not really know what that person is going through. They just believe when the person wears clothes, buy cars and believing everything they post is actual, truthful and real. Many people make comments without thinking about what the consequences. In fact, some of the fake things not only cause depression, but it also pushes many into crime and illegal activities. I think young adults should be more focused on their own happiness.

Benjamin said; SNS has a significant influence on its users because there is a minimal way of controlling what people post on their platforms. He stated further that;

I don't know if that is even possible for SNS not to facilitate depression because you can't really control what people post on platforms like Facebook, Instagram And Snapchat except there's a policy somewhere that you have to watch what you post and if you post pictures of your car, you may be barred from using the platform. Except there is something like that which I know may not be possible. I just think people be careful and be sensitive about what they post online so they do not make people depressed.

Lydia says; SNS users need to stand for whom they are and allow less influence of other SNS users affect their lifestyle. She stated further that if people are excited about whom they represent as a person, depression as a result of SNS will be drastically reduced. She further explains that;

I think every individual should have a very strong sense of identity. They should know who they are, they should know where they are going, they should have their own set goals, and they should not live their lives according to what they see in other people. I believe once you have this, the question of low self-esteem or depression will not arise.

In his own opinion, Cason ascribes a significant role on the government on regulating SNS use and the content so as to reduce the negative influence on many users. He said;

Nigerian adults cannot just do it because the SNS has gone haywire a lot and I think it rests in the government to create policies that would oversee that would relate to the content that we post of SNS or share on SNS.

Madison points out that; SNS users have unconsciously become slaves to technological advancements and that has significantly affected their lives and the society generally.

Alexander said;

Many people out there are weak when it comes to how they control their use of SNS. They are also not strong enough to handle this sort of depression when it comes, so, people should learn to put up things that are healthy and significant on SNS. Our SNS posts should be healthy and relevant. Be it pictures or videos, we should stop putting things that would make some persons feel very bad because not everyone can handle the things they see online.

Kemi, explains on posting appropriate content on SNS in order to avoid depression.

She says;



The right things ranging from information, the kind of information you put but like we have been preaching, let's avoid hate speeches because they also make people depressed also. It is not only pictures that make people depressed, using wrong words against their personality or character also facilitate depression. It goes a long way, you don't just put up anything on SNS like that. People should avoid hate speeches and learn to put up more interesting and motivational contents like videos, music, and graphics that will inspire others and motivate them.

Damon explains further that positivity on SNS is highly significant and essential. He puts;

We may not be able to naturally just take away the negativity on SNS. It would come but when the negativities are coming, let us have the positive to be able to wipe it off, to be able to take it off. As I said, it's SNS, and it is open to anything. Any kind of thing but let us be careful because a whole lot of people out there cannot handle the sort of thing that you put online. It is a big medium; you have WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and a whole lot.

Dexter, says many SNS users are unable to use the platforms effectively for their main purposes

Many people are using some of these SNS tools to spread a different kind of information, and activities. For me, I use more of my WhatsApp and Facebook because they are quick and prompt. I ensure I post relevant things that will change people's lives positively and not engage in fake lives. I put up motivational contents because I do not know the lives I am touching. Therefore, in essence, what I am trying to say here is that, let us put up things that will help the next person.

Uju, says; SNS users need to learn how to live an independent life where they can identify what is ideal, real, and fake. She asserts;

Everybody should believe the reality not what is on SNS. For instance, if you are someone that when you see other people progressing and you feel sad that you are not also progressing at the same pace, then it is important for you to caution your frequency on SNS because many people only post the successful part of their lives online. People post it when they buy new cars, new phones or build new houses.

Kemi, emphasizes the need for more and intensive awareness on SNS use to reduce the negative influence of the platforms stating that; "I think more awareness needs to

be created and everybody needs to understand that what's on SNS most of the time may not be real". In his own opinion Arian says;

I think if you see someone who is cyberbullying somebody, speak out as experience has shown that cyberbullying is a major cause of depression. Many people are being harassed and psychologically molested online and are unable to speak out or seek help. It is affecting our society significantly.

Arian explains further that;

You know, Nigerian youths have this thing that when they know you are wrong, once one person speaks up every other person will agree with you especially when it is obvious that the person correcting is in the wrong. They just need one person to stand up and every one of us can be that one person that stands up. In addition, for your personal safety, you see people who are always or regularly trolling you or bullying you or they are just posting negative comments, it is your personal page. Block them and live a happy life.

Hannah, also enumerated some issues to be considered when trying to reduce the influence of SNS in causing depression. She says;

The major thing we should consider is to know our capability and capacity. For instance, in Nigeria, we like to hope, we like to dream, nobody wants to be poor, everybody wants to hustle to get whatever he or she wants. Therefore, I think Nigerians naturally should face their goals, should face their dreams and forget about those things on SNS.

James further explains that;

They should stop posting everything they do with their lives on SNS because probably some people's life activities are on SNS for 24 hours. When the cook, what they wore for the day, their location, their personal and public activities, that should be reduced.

While expressing her opinion, Linda says to reduce the influence of SNS depression in the society, citizens have to exhibit a significant level of confidence and satisfaction. She says; "You should just be confident of yourself, don't lose your self-worth, and uphold your own values. Stick to what you know, also don't make other people feel inferior because what goes around comes around".

Benjamin says;

They should know that basically, most things online are not real, they are not as real as it seems, we all try to show the best parts of our lives on SNS for sure. Therefore, if you think everybody out there is perfect, you are going to be depressed and have it in mind that nobody wants to give his/her worst to the public. With that in mind, I don't think you'd be depressed because of a lot of all these people that might want to make you feel depressed because of the way they live, the clothes they wear and many others.

Kemi, says that not all those who post on SNS intend to make other users depressed.

She said;

We can prevent it by talking to ourselves, by teaching one another how to control our use of the media, by reminding one another that depression is actually real and like telling one another to get help and not making it worse by neglecting people that are suffering from depression.

Cason says “I think that depends on the people you follow. Try to follow the right people, people that motivate you and help you achieve your goals”.

Hannah, said;

I think by knowing that people are living at a different pace and if things are not working out for you right now does not mean things will not work out for you later. We should stop bullying people on SNS. Sometimes, somebody will just post a beautiful picture of herself and inspire themselves with different comments like “I love myself” then you will see some cyberbullies making sure he or she bring the person down. We should encourage others and not bring them down without unpleasant comments on SNS.

Findings from data collected from the study suggests that Nigerian young adults are influenced by SNS and the contents of the posts there most especially with individuals with low self-esteem. Findings also show that they sometimes have low self-esteem get influenced by different SNS managers. They also feel envious about what people say online. Findings also indicate that some of the depression may be so

severe that it may end up in death. Participants suggest that people should be careful about what they share and consume on SNS.

## **Chapter 5**

### **CONCLUSION**

This chapter seeks to draw the study to a conclusion. The information included in the chapter covers some of the conclusions drawn from the study and suggestions for further research.

#### **5.1 Summary of the Study**

The ultimate aim of this study is focused on finding our roles of SNS on depression among Nigerian young adults. This is to open the gap between SNS use and its negative effects, especially among the young Nigerians.

The research uses qualitative methodology to investigate the phenomenon. This was done using an in-depth interview, personal observations, and field notes to look into how Nigerian youth are affected by the contents they see on SNS. A total number of 21 participants were interviewed in the study and consisted of various categories of respondents who use SNS platforms and may have sometimes been exposed to depression.

Through the interviews, the study carefully answers all the research questions as well as presents in-depth information about depression and the use of SNS amongst Nigerian youths. The participant observation and field notes I kept throughout the study were very useful in analyzing and bringing the study to a valuable conclusion.

## **5.2 Conclusions Drawn from the Study**

After carefully conducting the research, the following are the conclusions drawn from the study. These conclusions serve as answers to the aims and objectives. The conclusions are also able to create better understanding of the Uses and Gratifications Theory as well as the Third Person Effect Theory

### **To find out what acts on SNS cause depression among Nigerian Young Adults.**

Findings according to participants in the study indicate that SNS platforms contribute to depression among Nigerian youths in many ways. For example, youths may become depressed because of using SNS due to some of the contents they are exposed to. Some users may be generally exposed to images of luxury houses, cars and many other contents, which may eventually be unreal.

Sometimes, youth also may become depressed because of the activities of their leaders and their children especially when they are exposed to their flamboyant and expensive lifestyles and activities. The research also found out that some of the SNS acts of celebrities and popular members of society may cause depression among the youth.

As such, the research has been able to find out that most of the activities on SNS that cause depression among youths in Nigeria are largely man-made and most significantly due to show-offs which may sometimes be intended to boast of a certain procession of wealth or material things. This is why either political office holders or celebrities who are assumed to have enough wealth cause majority of these activities.

**To find out if SNS use influences depression among Nigerian Young Adults.** The research has been able to find out that there exists a relationship between the use of SNS and the high level of depression being experienced by youth in this generation. For example, responses from the participants indicated that when they use SNS quite frequently, they are more likely to be exposed to quite a lot of unpleasant contents on SNS, which may cause depression. Sometimes, they may be exposed to particular content on almost all the SNS platforms, thereby appealing to their psychological and emotional wellbeing, thereby increasing the chances of getting depressed or unhappy.

**To find out how SNS is used to create awareness about causes of depression among Nigerian Young Adults.** In addition, findings from the research have been able to attenuate that SNS though facilitates depression; it has also served as an effective tool in creating awareness or campaigning about the causes of depression among the Nigerian youths. This has contributed to reducing the scourge as well as creating a higher level of consciousness among the youths on depression, thereby helping to reduce it. Also a number of users are able to indirectly consume messages about depression which in turn serves as a way of enlightening them on the phenomenon. This can be regarded as the third person effect

**To find out how SNS is used to create awareness about preventing depression among Nigerian Young Adults.** The study found out that through SNS posts on Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram and Twitter, SNS platforms were able to create awareness on how users can prevent depression through various forms and patterns. These patterns include the design and posting of various graphics, videos, and messages that educated people on various ways of preventing depression as well as

how to manage or reduce it for users who already fell into it. Also, findings also revealed that sometimes, SNS discussion were created in order to serve as a platform for educating and enlightening the various users on depression.

In conclusion, there is need for media literacy among the various SNS users. When there is adequate media literacy, users will know what information to consume on the SNS and when. Media literacy will also reduce the level at which people get depressed due to SNS use as they will be able to understand that not all information or content on the media is to be consumed verbatim.

Also, this research has been able to create an illusion on the third person effect theory. For instance, we have been able to find out that many of the SNS user get somewhat affected by the use of different SNS and it thereby affects their psychological wellbeing and stability. Sometimes, they get affected by the messages they consume through SNS and thereby get depressed due to the indirect messages they consume.

In essence, this research has been able to affirm that there is a third person effect on consuming contents on SNS by its users as it then affect them thereby leading to depression. Also, media literacy is quite important when discussing the effect of SNS. This means the media consumers need proper education and enlightenment on what and how to consume media messages in order to prevent the negative effects.

### **5.3 Suggestions for Further Research**

The research has been able to display quite a number of important findings; however, there are also a number of suggestions that will drive home these findings. Quite importantly, this research is a qualitative study, and one of the major challenges of qualitative research is based on its ability of not being generalizable, as such, the



findings in this study are not generalizable. Due to this, further research may be carried out using quantitative data in finding out how SNS influence users and how it causes depression. In addition, there is need for media literacy among media consumers. This indicates that citizens need to be conscious and aware of the different media contents they consume. This will help them filter the messages and consume the most appropriate ones moderately.

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## **APPENDICES**

## **Appendix A: Questionnaire**

### **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

#### **Participant Demographics**

Participant Name

Age

Gender

Marital Status

Occupation

How often do you use SNS platforms?

Which SNS platform do you use most often?

Do you think depression is real?

Have you ever suffered from any form of depression?

#### **Questions**

What acts on SNS do you think causes depression among Nigerian Young Adults?

How do you think SNS is contributing to the increase in the rate of depression among Nigerians?

How do you think SNS is used to create awareness about depression?

How do you think low self-esteem contributes to depression through SNS platforms?

How do you think Nigerian Young Adults can prevent SNS negativities of SNS depression?

## **Appendix B: Interview Transcripts**

### **Interview 1**

Okay, you already answered the next question so let's just move on to the next one.

Do you think depression is real?

I don't know if I've ever experienced what depression is but like they always say, to those that have experienced it, I believe it's real somehow somehow. But for me, I don't think I've ever been in that situation.

Okay, you also already answered the next question. So, let's just move on to the main questions. What acts on SNS do you think causes depression among young Nigerian adults?

I don't think I've experienced what depression is in the first place but answering from what the definition of depression is, I'd say priorities are different. What influences a person's act will go a long way affecting our thoughts and emotions. So basically, depression among Nigerian youths.

What acts on SNS do you think causes depression?

Yeah, I'm coming. I'm just trying to give a background of what depression is and what acts actually lead to that. Let me just say what our priorities are could actually, if truly it is being initiated by what we see probably what people post. The stuffs they see online, probably the images of houses, luxuries and everything. If you are not in the best situation to handle such pressure like you wanting to get to that position, even when you know you are not capable or you are not even close to be there yet. Then, you start putting yourself under pressure as a matter of fact before you know it, you get weighed down by unnecessary situations then, we call it frivolities and all of

that. So, before you know, you are already putting yourself in someone else's shoes and in that situation, you are already getting depressed like you are wishing you are there and you are not there yet.

So basically, you are saying one of the things that causes depression on SNS, is people trying to be what they are not, because other people are there at that time.

Yeah.

Okay, thank you

They get carried away by these things.

Okay, next question, how do you think SNS is contributing to the increase in the rate of depression among Nigerians

I think let's go back to the question I just answered. Basically, it is what they see and they try to picture themselves in other person's shoes, just trying to be who they are not or trying to put themselves in situations in where they are not yet. I think that increases the tendency of being depressed.

So, the SNS definitely contributes to the increased rate of depression among our youths

For those that are being depressed actually.

Okay. How do you think SNS is used to create awareness about depression?

Okay, let me just say this. What you choose to see or what you choose to watch on SNS would determine what your orientation is or what you pursue. For some people, what they copy is inspirational posts, they choose to pick that. They use it to inspire



themselves. For some people, they go through images and stuffs that they just want to make it whichever way. But for those that pick on posts that inspires, then in that way, you could help create awareness, that okay this way which way, whichever way you put it, you can still get it, just work your way, work your ass through it and you'd be there. So, depends on what content you view on SNS like I said. The content you pursue will determine what awareness you are trying to create or what form of depression you are trying to put under yourself.

How do you think low self-esteem contributes to depression through SNS platforms? Okay, self-esteem. That is you not believing I'm yourself or something. Okay that is a personal thing I think. For someone that has low self-esteem and feels he cannot make it in life and you see people doing well on SNS, you tend to pull yourself back emotionally, in that case you would feel these people are way beyond where you think you are and you just cannot match with the standard and in a situation where you are really thinking about that, there is no way you can inspire yourself to do something better for yourself. Low self-esteem with the vices of SNS, believe me the person is not going nowhere. So, depression is definitely going to set in.

So, low self-esteem and going through some fake stuff on SNS definitely are two bad combinations.

Exactly.

How do you think Nigerian young adults can prevent SNS negativities of SNS depression?

Basically, what you go after on SNS would determine what outcome or result you get. For someone like me, I know what I want. I know what I'm after, so when I'm on

SNS, I like to know what I'm pursuing. So, it is not even about using SNS. Yeah, SNS is a platform, you could put yourself out there, market yourself on SNS. So, it's not just about the negative aspect of SNS. SNS doesn't really have any negativity on any person. It's just about what the person is going after. So, if you try to live a fake life in quote because it is not everything you see on SNS that is actually real. It's just painted and you just feel that is the good life. People have their own issues they are passing through. You trying to picture yourself in their shoes definitely, you are trying to put yourself under pressure. Let's try to look at the better side of SNS and forget about the negativities. Negativity is a thing of the mind. If you work on the negative, definitely nothing good is actually going to work out. So, basically it's just a thing of the mind. Put your mind along the good line and you'd be fine.

So what you are trying to say is one way to prevent SNS negativity is individuality depends on you and what you want. Okay, thank you for your time. That's all for now. Thank you.

## Interview 2

Have you ever suffered from any form of depression?

Yeah, I have. I have. Uhm. Making films for example now, you know it's not everything you have access to. It's not everything you want that will get done. So, the fact that you are not getting what you want done, most times, gets me depressed.

What acts on SNS do you think causes depression among Nigerian young adults?

Seeing people having money. What causes depression most is when you see your leaders and their kids' spending money and you are just sitting down? You voted them and you are like I don't understand (laughs). You voted them there. You know there's no money in the country. Seeing those kind of things gets you depressed and seeing that your existence in Nigeria is not worth it.

How do you think SNS is contributing to the increase in the rate of depression among Nigerians?

I strongly believe SNS is otherwise. SNS is helping us clear the whole depression thing because most times, there are videos you see on the internet, comedy videos and stuff and on Twitter too when you see a Nigerian bashing other people. Based on my own point of view, when I'm depressed, I just go on SNS and check comedy videos and see what's happening there.

I don't think you got the question. Let me repeat it. How do you think SNS is contributing to the increase in the rate of depression among Nigerians? What are those things on SNS that makes people depressed? How do they contribute to that?

I mentioned that before. I said when you see your leaders and their kids spending money. Do you understand? I mentioned that before. Spending money on their kids and spending our money and our hard work and yet they still call us lazy Nigerian youths. Yeah, those kind of things. I mentioned that earlier.

How do you think SNS is used to create awareness about depression?

Okay, most times, you see celebrities coming out to say they are depressed. SNS is used most times by celebrities to educate the masses that depression is real even if they have everything but they get depressed. So, it's real. It's a real thing. They tell us everything and it's a way of communicating to everybody and tell them that depression is actually real.

How do you think low self-esteem contributes to depression through SNS platforms?

Of course that one is one of the, what do I call it now, that one is one of the attributes of depression. When you see people having what you don't have or when people do things to you that you don't want. You understand. You see your friend on SNS who is SNS inclined and has everything in the world that you feel, on SNS. I don't know, I feel it helps.

It helps? Or it causes more issues?

Okay, SNS causes a lot based on the fact that people live fake lives on SNS. You that you feel you are living an ordinary life, and you see someone on SNS and that person looks like a million dollars. You'd start having low self-esteem and you'd start thinking about it and you'd start getting depressed. So, SNS causes depression.

How do you think Nigerian young adults can prevent SNS negativities of SNS depression?

The only thing we can do is by minding our business. That's the only thing that causes it. You see someone will post something now and people will go to the comment section and start dropping things that are not important or relevant. So I think the only thing we can do as Nigerian youths is to go on hustling with whatever we are doing and mind our business and leave everybody to their lives but I think that's highly impossible. Trust me. Because without those people jumping into the comment sections, we'd not be seeing nice memes on Twitter. I don't know, I think everything works hand in hand.

You talked about yourself being a filmmaker. I want to go back to that and you said there are things on SNS that makes you depressed. Can you make that clear?

I did not say things on SNS makes me depressed. What I said was, as a filmmaker for instance now, what makes me depressed is whenever I'm making a movie and things are not going as planned or whenever I'm editing a video and I'm missing some clips which obviously means I did not shoot them or I misplaced the files so it's like another work again so you just sit back and begin to think about your life like why did I choose this profession. It's not something that is easy. When you are going through that depression, of course people see you and feel like oh this kind of person does not go through those kind of things. However, the thing I know is that plenty people go through depression out there. Celebrities, footballers, all those people that we feel their lives are perfect, they go through depression so I think that's where the awareness should come from actually, from people on top because I've seen Janet Jackson coming out to say she has been depressed, fighting with depression, that's one. I think celebrities need to come clean for people to know that this life we live is

not as we think. It's not as Instagram-like, what i mean is when you see people looking like a million dollars like they don't have pimples, they don't have stretch marks, they don't have those kind of things and you that you are fat and you have those kinds of things and you start wondering, How did God create me like this?. Depression has started. You start thinking about your life. So, the thing is I feel for the awareness to begin, the awareness should not just come from we telling people, it should come from the celebrities themselves like we ones we look up to, the ones you are always checking through their pages, the ones that would be like, me too I go through depression, I'm a human being.

So, on the part of saying the only way we Nigerian youths can prevent negativities of SNS depression is through minding their business. Do you think there is no other way they can create awareness about this issue or stuff like that?

Okay, how we naturally create awareness here in Nigeria is by posting on Twitter, posting on Instagram. I think we can do that but what I just naturally want to say is that, Nigeria for Instance, we don't tend to mind our business. I know people might have other opinion to what I just said now but what I mean by minding their business is that, fine, there are more important things to be worried about if you understand what I mean. Fine, you see a celebrity now posting a picture and the celebrity's boobs are fallen or they are not how they should be, you will start seeing in the comment section, you are a celebrity, and you have this you have that. And we all know that celebrity is a human too. That celebrity might start going through depression. That's even us, we youths causing the whole problem. If we can learn to mind our business and leave them, there's a reason they are there. They are there because they have been pushing and hustling for their goal. If we can do the same, towards our own

goal, we would not have time to have those kind of things. So, the best thing we can do is forget about those kind of things and learn to mind our business.

Okay, that's very nice. Thank you so much Mr. Hassan, thank you for your time

You are welcome.

### Interview 3

Have you ever suffered any form of depression?

I think yeah but very long ago actually. So, what acts on SNS do you think causes depression among young adults in Nigeria?

Hmm. children of nowadays, I think the acts on SNS that causes depression among young adults is mostly due to the fact that most celebrities, most especially the young ones flaunt their wealth on SNS, what they are not, leaving a fake life thereby making young adults feel that they haven't achieved anything in life. Also, you know depression can cause death and all that. Also, what I think is that all these celebrities I'm talking about flaunts their perfect bodies and curves on SNS making young adults envy them and feel less of themselves because they have not achieved the body shape that they see on SNS. So, because they call people on SNS that are living a fake life, perfect more than they do. Instead of them to be happy and rejoicing on what God gives to them, they keep on envying people, celebrities on SNS.

So, how do think SNS is contributing to the increasing rate of depression in Nigeria?

You see, whatever is put on SNS is seen as perfect in the eyes of their fans. Because if a celebrity should come today and say, this cloth, I bought it for \$25 and deep inside their own heart, they know this isn't worth \$25. They will think that is true because this person is a celebrity, he or she would not want to go less than the worth that he or she worth. So, they would rather believe that and you know young adults look up to those people and they go extra miles to be like them and when this can't be achieved, they go into a state of depression and feel worthless and useless to themselves. That's what I think.



Alright, thank you. So, how do you think SNS is used to create awareness about depression?

I don't think SNS is being used as a means to create awareness about depression but ways by which it can be done is also using celebrities, icons that young adults look up to so they can talk to them and what I think is, advice. People that can advise them, people that are older than them, go close to them. People that are more educated in the state of depression people who get into them. That's why we hear some young ones of today, some people jump into the river, some starve him or herself, take poisonous something, drink and die even harm themselves. So I think they need someone mature someone close to them, their mother, their father, their sister, that are more wiser than them, that have more experience in life.

How do you think low self-esteem contributes to depression through SNS platforms? You see I will say low self-esteem contributes to depression because firstly, you don't feel too proud of yourself. You should show the real you, this is where you can get to. You don't need to look at people in order to build yourself the way you want to and you don't approve of anything good in you. When you see people do better than you, you will definitely be depressed. So, I think my advice is to be yourself and know what you can do.

So, how do you think Nigerian young adults can prevent SNS negativities of SNS depression?



You know, by focusing on the good part about themselves and knowing that not everyone is perfect because in SNS you see some celebrities, they expose their selves, what they are not in their home, they lie about what they have not achieved in life, they lie about flashes of cars that is not their own, that is not even what they can

buy. SNS, in the good part is knowing that not everyone is perfect, I said that before and besides most celebrities only posts good things among themselves. They don't post their flaws and also, they should focus on what makes them happy not what they see on SNS because they go into looking at SNS, looking at the celebrities saying this is my godmother, this is my godfather, I want to be like them but they don't really know what that person is going through, what that person is facing in that particular state the person is. They just believe when the person wears clothes, bit cars and post fake things on SNS, they believe it's real, wow I like this, they keep commenting I want to be like this, without them thinking about what has God ordained me to do. That's what I think. I think the young adults should be more focused in their own happiness.

Alright, thank you very much.

You are welcome.

## Appendix C: Ethical Review Approval

 <p><b>Doğu Akdeniz Üniversitesi</b> "Erdem, Bilgi, Gelişim"</p>	<p><b>Eastern Mediterranean University</b> "Virtue, Knowledge, Advancement"</p>	<p>99628, Gazimağusa, KUZEY KIBRIS / Famagusta, North Cyprus, via Mersin-10 TURKEY Tel: (+90) 392 630 1995 Faks/Fax: (+90) 392 630 2919 E-mail: bayek@emu.edu.tr</p>
<p><b>Etik Kurulu / Ethics Committee</b></p>		
<p><b>Reference No:</b> ETK00-2018-0293</p>	<p>26.11.2018</p>	
<p><b>Subject:</b> Application for Ethics.</p>		
<p><b>RE:</b> Humphrey Oseremhen Omozejele Faculty of Communication</p>		
<p>To Whom It May Concern:</p>		
<p>On the date of <b>26.11.2018</b>, (Meeting number <b>2018/61-13</b>), EMU's Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee (BAYEK) has granted, Humphrey Oseremhen Omozejele from the, Faculty of Communication to pursue with her MA. thesis work "<b>Roles of Social Networking Sites on Depression Among Nigerian Young Adults</b>" under the supervision of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Bahire Özad. This decision has been taken by the majority of votes.</p>		
<p>Regards,</p>		
<p> <b>Assoc. Prof. Dr. Şükri Tüzmen</b> Director of Ethics Committee</p>		
<p>ŞT/ba.</p>		
<p><a href="http://www.emu.edu.tr">www.emu.edu.tr</a></p>		