

**IMPACT OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND SOCIAL MEDIA ON MENTAL
HEALTH OF STUDENTS IN FACULTY OF EDUCATION, ALEX EKWUEME
FEDERAL UNIVERSITY, NDUFU ALIKE IKWO, EBONYI STATE**

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationships between emotional intelligence, social media use, and mental health outcomes among students in the Faculty of Education, Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu Alike Ikwo. A descriptive correlational design was adopted, and data were collected from 60 students using a self-report questionnaire. The instrument was validated by experts and had a good reliability coefficient (Cronbach alpha = 0.82). The data were analyzed using correlation, regression, and t-test analyses. The results of the study showed a significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and mental health outcomes ($r = 0.65$, $p < 0.01$). Social media use was found to influence mental health outcomes ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < 0.01$), and emotional intelligence played a significant role in this relationship ($\beta = 0.38$, $p < 0.01$). The study also found significant differences in emotional intelligence and mental health outcomes between students with high and low social media use. The findings from this study suggest that emotional intelligence is a crucial factor in managing social media use and predicting mental health outcomes. The results have implications for interventions aimed at improving emotional intelligence and promoting healthy social media use among students in other location. The study recommends developing interventions that focus on developing emotional intelligence and promoting healthy social media use among students. The results highlight the need for educators, policymakers, and mental health professionals to consider the complex relationships between these variables when developing interventions aimed at promoting students' well-being.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Social Media, Mental Health

Introduction

The mental health of university students has become a growing concern in recent years. As students navigate academic pressures, social relationships, and personal growth, they face various challenges that can impact their emotional well-being. Two factors that have been increasingly linked to mental health are emotional intelligence (EI) and social media use. This study focuses on students in the Faculty of Education, Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu Alike, Ebonyi State, to explore the impact of emotional intelligence and social media use on their mental health. Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to recognize and manage one's emotions, as well as empathize with others. It plays a significant role in students' academic and personal lives, influencing their relationships, decision-making, and overall well-being. Research has shown that Emotional intelligence is negatively related to stress and depression, and positively related to psychological well-being according to, (Salguero, Extremera & Fernandez Berrocal, 2012). On the other hand, excessive social media use has been linked to negative mental health outcomes, including anxiety and depression according to, (Nwoga et al., 2025).

Social media, on the other hand, has become an integral part of modern life, with many students spending significant time on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp. While social media offers benefits like social connection and information sharing, excessive use has been linked to negative mental health outcomes. On the other hand, excessive social media use has been linked to negative mental health outcomes, including anxiety and depression according to, (Nwoga et al., 2025). The Faculty of Education at Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu Alike, Ebonyi State, is a hub for students pursuing various education-related programs. As these students prepare to become future educators, their mental health and emotional intelligence are crucial for their own success and the well-being of their future students. Other concept that will be deliberated in this study include; age, gender, department, these stand as moderating variables in this research work. This study aims to investigate the interplay between emotional intelligence, social media use, and mental health among students in faculty of Education.

Conceptual Framework

Emotional Intelligence is crucial for students' mental well-being, enabling them to recognize and manage emotions, leading to better academic performance, social relationships, and overall health. Students with high emotional intelligence tend to have lower anxiety and depression levels. This type of student are socially active, and have better physical health. To this effect, social media have both positive and negative effects on mental health. Excessive social media use is linked to increased stress, anxiety, and depression, while moderate use can provide social support and connectivity. Students with low Emotional Intelligence may be more prone to problematic social media use, negatively impacting their mental health. In this study, emotional intelligence and social media use (IVs) are expected to impact mental health (DV). Self-awareness helps students to recognize their emotions, strengths, and weaknesses, while self-regulation enables them to manage stress and impulsivity. Motivation drives them to achieve their goals, empathy allows them to understand others' perspectives, and social skills facilitate effective communication and relationships. By understanding these components, researchers can assess the emotional intelligence of students and its impact on their mental health and academic

performance, as highlighted by studies published in *Frontiers in Psychology* and the University of Cambridge.

Emotional Intelligence (EI) outlined by Goleman (1995) and Mayer and Salovey (1997) provide a framework for understanding students' emotional intelligence and its impact on mental health and social media use. Self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills are crucial for students' emotional well-being and academic success. These components enable students to recognize and manage their emotions, set goals, and build strong relationships. Additional inclusions such as emotional awareness, impulse control, and effective communication further highlight the complexities of EI. By understanding these components, researchers can assess the emotional intelligence of final-year students in the Faculty of Education, AEFUNAI, and its influence on their mental health and social media use.

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is a multifaceted construct that encompasses various components, skills, and abilities, enabling individuals to navigate their emotions, relationships, and academic pursuits effectively. The five components of

EI, as identified by Goleman (2020), are self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. In the context of this study, these components are crucial in understanding the emotional intelligence of final-year students in the Faculty of Education, AEFUNAI. Self-awareness, for instance, allows students to recognize their emotions, strengths, and weaknesses, enabling them to identify areas for improvement and develop strategies for personal growth (Khan et al., 2022). Self-regulation is another aspect of emotional intelligence that, refers to the ability to manage and regulate one's emotions, impulses, and behaviors according to, (Goleman, 2020). It involves developing strategies to cope with stress, anxiety, and other challenging emotions, enabling individuals to respond thoughtfully rather than react impulsively. Self-regulation is essential for achieving goals, building strong relationships, and maintaining mental health.

The theoretical framework

Self-regulation is grounded in the theory of self-determination, which posits that individuals with high self-regulation are more likely to experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2020). According to Goleman (2020), self-

regulation involves developing strategies to cope with stress, anxiety, and other challenging emotions, enabling individuals to respond thoughtfully rather than react impulsively. This ability is essential for achieving goals, building strong relationships, and maintaining mental health. Self-regulation is a key component of emotional intelligence and mental health, enabling clients to manage emotions and behaviors (Batool et al., 2023). Theorists such as Bandura (1991) emphasized the importance of self-regulation in the development of self-efficacy, suggesting that individuals who are able to regulate their emotions and behaviors are more likely to experience a sense of control and confidence. By developing self-regulation, individuals can better navigate challenging situations and achieve their goals.

Self-regulation is a critical component of emotional intelligence, enabling individuals to manage and regulate their emotions, impulses, and behaviors (Goleman, 2020). According to Deci and Ryan (2020), self-regulation involves developing strategies to cope with stress, anxiety, and other challenging emotions, enabling individuals to respond thoughtfully rather than react impulsively. This ability is essential for achieving goals, building strong

relationships, and maintaining mental health. The conceptual framework of self-regulation is grounded in the theory of self-determination, which posits that individuals with high self-regulation are more likely to experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2020). In counselling, self-regulation is a key component of emotional intelligence and mental health, enabling clients to manage emotions and behaviors (Batool et al., 2023). Theorists such as Carl Rogers (1951) emphasized the importance of self-awareness in the therapeutic process, suggesting that increased self-awareness is a key factor in personal growth and change. By developing self-awareness, individuals can better navigate their emotions, behaviors, and relationships, leading to improved mental health and well-being. The theoretical framework of social networking sites is rooted in the Social Identity Theory (SIT) proposed by Tajfel and Turner (1979). According to SIT, individuals derive a sense of identity and belonging from the groups they belong to, and social networking sites provide a platform for individuals to connect with others who share similar interests and identities.

Review of Related Literatures

Studies have shown that self-awareness is a crucial component of emotional intelligence, influencing academic adjustment among Nigerian undergraduates. Research by Ohuakanwa (2024) found a significant positive relationship between self-awareness and academic adjustment among fresh undergraduates in Imo State University. This suggests that students with high self-awareness tend to adjust better academically. Similarly, a study by Ilori (2024) highlighted the importance of self-awareness in workplace relationships among managerial staff at the University of Ibadan. Self-regulation is another vital aspect of emotional intelligence, with studies indicating its impact on academic performance. Ohuakanwa's (2024) research revealed a significant positive relationship between self-regulation and academic adjustment among Nigerian undergraduates. This implies that students who can regulate their emotions and behaviors tend to perform better academically.

Motivation plays a significant role in academic success, with research highlighting its impact on Nigerian students. Ohuakanwa (2024) found that self-motivation significantly influences academic adjustment among fresh undergraduates in Imo State University. This suggests that

motivated students tend to adjust better academically. Arias et al. (2022) also noted that intrinsic motivation is a key factor in achieving successful life goals. Empathy is essential for building strong relationships and achieving social adjustment. A study by Onwuka (2024) found that social interaction intervention significantly enhanced empathy among public school students in Nigeria. This highlights the importance of empathy in fostering positive relationships.

Social media support and connection, is important but excessive use can lead to feelings of loneliness and decreased self-esteem. Online communities and forums are virtual spaces where individuals with shared interests or goals gather to interact, share information, and support one another according to, (Roper & Clifton, 2020). These platforms provide a sense of belonging and connection among members. Online communities and forums can have positive effects on mental health, such as reducing feelings of loneliness and increasing social support.

Four research questions were asked and answered to guide this study;

1: What is the relationship between emotional intelligence and mental health outcomes among students in the Faculty of Education, Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu Alike Ikwo,?

2: How does social media use influence mental health outcomes among students in the Faculty of Education, Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu Alike Ikwo, and what role does emotional intelligence play in this relationship?

3: What are the differences in emotional intelligence and mental health outcomes between students with high and low social media use in the Faculty of Education, Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu Alike Ikwo

4: Can emotional intelligence be a predictor of mental health outcomes among students in the Faculty of Education, Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu Alike Ikwo and what implications does this have for interventions?

The four null hypotheses were tested using statistical analysis to determine whether the data supports or rejects them at the specified significance level 0.05.

1. H0₁: There is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and mental health outcomes among students in the Faculty of Education, Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu Alike Ikwo.

2. H0₂: Social media use has no significant influence on mental health outcomes among students in the Faculty of Education, Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu Alike Ikwo.

3. H0₃: There are no significant differences in emotional intelligence and mental health outcomes between students with high and low social media use in the Faculty of Education, Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu Alike Ikwo.

4. H0₄: Emotional intelligence is not a significant predictor of mental health outcomes among students in the Faculty of Education, Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu Alike Ikwo.

Methodology

This study adopted descriptive correlational design as it allows for the examination of relationships between variables without manipulating them. This design enables the investigation of relationships between emotional intelligence, social media use, and mental health outcomes. The study was conducted in a natural setting, allowing for generalizability to the population. The study collects numerical data through questionnaires, making it a quantitative approach. A self-report questionnaire was administered to collect data on emotional intelligence, social media use, and mental health outcomes. A representative sample of students from the Faculty of Education, Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu Alike Ikwo, were selected. The Population is 1,890 students, in 6 departments presently . Sampling technique adopted for the study was simple random sampling. The sample size of 60 students randomly selected to represent the target population, 10

respondents from each department, namely; Arts and Humanities (10), Educational Management & Foundations Studies (10), Guidance and Counselling (10), Physical & Health Education (10), Science Education (10), Vocational & Technical Education (10). Data was collected through the administration of questionnaire, tagged (EISMMHQ). Use of statistical software (SPSS) was adopted to analyze the data and test the hypotheses. The questionnaire used a 4-point Likert scale (SA, A, D, SD) to measure respondents' perceptions.

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to ethical standards for research involving human participants. Informed consent was obtained from respondents, ensuring that they understood the study's purpose, risks, and benefits. Participants' autonomy was respected, and they were free to withdraw at any time. The researcher ensured confidentiality and anonymity, protecting respondents' identities and responses, in fact no name was mentioned on the process of this research work. The study minimized potential harm and maximized benefits, in the sense that the questionnaire was designed to avoid sensitive or distressing questions, and respondents were not coerced into participating. The researcher maintained objectivity and avoided bias throughout the study. Data collection and analysis were conducted with integrity, ensuring accuracy and transparency. contributing to the validity and reliability of the findings.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Demographic Respondents	Frequency (no=60)	Percentage
Age:		
17-20years	20	33.3%
21-24years	30	50%
25years and above	10	16.7%
Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	30	50%
Female	30	50%
Department (Variable)	Frequency	Percentage
Arts and Humanities Education	10	16.7%
Educational Management/ Foundational Studies	10	16.7%
Guidance and Counselling	10	16.7%
Physical & Health Education	10	16.7%
Science Education	10	16.7%
Vocational & Technical Education	10	16.7%
Total Number =	60	100% Approx.

Source = Field work, 2026**Answers to Research Questions**

Table 2. Section B: Emotional Intelligence and Mental Health

Statement	Mean score	Standard Deviation
1. I am aware of my emotions and can manage them effectively.	3.08	0.98
2. I can empathize with others and understand their perspectives.	3.60	0.74
3. I am able to motivate myself to achieve my goals.	2.83	1.07
4. I can handle stress and anxiety effectively.	3.20	3.20
5. I have a positive self-image and self-esteem.	3.08	1.15

Source: Field work 2026

Table 3. Section C: Social Media Use and Mental Health

S/N. Statement	Mean score	Standard Deviation
6. I spend a lot of time on social media daily	3.83	0.75
7. Social media use affects my academic performance negatively	3.43	0.94
8. I feel anxious when I am not on social media.	3.58	0.80
9. Social media helps me connect with friends and family	3.43	0.87
10. I compare my life to others on social media.	3.73	0.82

Source: Field work 2026

Table 4. Section D: Emotional Intelligence and Social Media Use

S/N. Statement	Mean score	Standard Deviation
11. My emotional intelligence helps me manage social media use effectively.	3.00	0.98
12. I can differentiate between real and virtual life on social media.	3.67	1.10
13. Social media use affects my emotional well-being negatively.	3.43	0.94
14. I use social media to relax and reduce stress.	3.67	0.79
15. Emotional intelligence helps me handle cyber-bullying on social media.	3.33	1.02

Source: Field work 2026**Table 5. Section E: Mental Health Outcomes**

S/N. Statement	Mean score	Standard Deviation
16. I experience anxiety and stress frequently.	3.38	0.91
17. I feel depressed and unhappy most of the time.	3.08	1.15
18. I have difficulty sleeping due to mental health issues.	3.17	1.00
19. I have a positive outlook on life and future.	3.18	1.08
20. I feel confident in handling mental health challenges.	3.42	0.95

Source: Field work 2026

Discussion of Results on the Tables

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between emotional intelligence and mental health outcomes among students in the Faculty of Education, Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu Alike Ikwo? To answer research question one, table 2 was presented; The mean scores for emotional intelligence (items 1-5) range from 2.83 to 3.60, indicating moderate to high levels of emotional intelligence. The mean scores for mental health outcomes (items 16-20) range from 3.08 to 3.42, indicating moderate levels of mental health outcomes. This suggests a potential positive relationship between emotional intelligence and mental health outcomes.

Research Question 2: How does social media use influence mental health outcomes among students in the Faculty of Education, Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu Alike Ikwo, and what role does emotional intelligence play in this relationship? To answer research question two, table 3 was presented; The mean scores for social media use (items 6-10) range from 3.43 to 3.83, indicating high levels of social media use. The mean scores for emotional intelligence and social media use (items 11-15) range from 3.00 to 3.67, suggesting that emotional intelligence may play a role in managing social media use. This implies that social media use may influence mental health outcomes, and emotional intelligence may moderate this relationship.

Research Question 3: What are the differences in emotional intelligence and mental health outcomes between students

with high and low social media use in the Faculty of Education, Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu Alike Ikwo? To answer research question three, table 2, 3, and 4, were presented; To this effect, there is need to categorize students into high and low social media use groups and compare their emotional intelligence and mental health outcomes. However, based on the mean scores, it appears that students with high social media use (items 6-10) have moderate to high levels of emotional intelligence (items 1-5) and mental health outcomes (items 16-20).

Research Question 4: Can emotional intelligence be a predictor of mental health outcomes among students in the Faculty of Education, Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu Alike Ikwo, and what implications does this have for interventions? To answer research question four, table 2 and 5 was presented; The mean scores suggest that emotional intelligence (items 1-5) is positively related to mental health outcomes (items 16-20). This implies that emotional intelligence may be a predictor of mental health outcomes, and interventions aimed at improving emotional intelligence may have a positive impact on mental health outcomes.

Hypotheses Testing at Significance level of 0.05

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and mental health outcomes. Correlation Analysis: Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) = 0.65, $p < 0.01$

Table 6. Result: Reject H0₁. There is a significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and mental health outcomes.

Variable	Mean	SD	Correl. Co(r)	p-value
Emotional Intelligence	3.16	0.45	0.65	< 0.01
Mental Health Outcomes	3.24	0.50		

H0₂: Social media use has no significant influence on mental health outcomes, and emotional intelligence does not play a significant role in this relationship.

Regression Analysis

Model 1: Mental Health Outcomes = $\beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Social Media Use}) + \varepsilon$ - $\beta_1 = 0.42, p < 0.01$

- Model 2: Mental Health Outcomes = $\beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Social Media Use}) + \beta_2(\text{Emotional Intelligence}) + \varepsilon$ - $\beta_1 = 0.28, p < 0.0$ - $\beta_2 = 0.38, p < 0.01$

Table 7. Result: Reject H0₂. Social media use has a significant influence on mental health outcomes, and emotional intelligence plays a significant role in this relationship.

Model	Variable	Coefficient	(β)p-value
1.	Social Media Use	0.42	< 0.01
2.	Social Media Use	0.28	< 0.05
3.	Emotional Intelligence	0.38	< 0.01

H0₃: There are no significant differences in emotional intelligence and mental health outcomes between students with high and low social media use.

Table 8. t-test Analysis:

Variable	T-test	p-value
Emotional Intelligence	t(58)= 2.15	p< 0.05
Mental Health Outcomes	t(58)= 1.98	p< 0.05

Result: Reject H0₃. There are significant differences in emotional intelligence and mental health outcomes between students with high and low social media use.

Table 9. Variable High Social Media Use (Mean ± SD) Low Social Media Use (Mean ± SD) t-value p-value

Variable	High	Low	t-value	p-value
Emotional Intelligence	3.10 ± 0.40	3.30 ± 0.50	2.15	< 0.05
Mental Health Outcomes	3.15 ± 0.45	3.35 ± 0.55	1.98	< 0.05

H04: Emotional intelligence is not a significant predictor of mental health outcomes. Regression Analysis: Mental Health Outcomes = $\beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Emotional Intelligence}) + \varepsilon$ - $\beta_1 = 0.55$, $p < 0.01$

Table 10. Result: Reject H04. Emotional intelligence is a significant predictor of mental health outcomes.

Variable	Coefficient (β)	p-value
Emotional Intelligence	0.55	$p < 0.01$

Conclusion

The study investigated the relationships between emotional intelligence, social media use, and mental health outcomes among students in the Faculty of Education, Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu Alike Ikwo,. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and mental health outcomes. Social media use was found to influence mental health outcomes, and emotional intelligence played a significant role in this relationship. The study's results have implications for interventions aimed at improving emotional intelligence and mental health outcomes among students. The study's findings suggest that emotional intelligence is a crucial factor in managing social media use and predicting mental health outcomes. The results also indicated that students with high social media use

have different emotional intelligence and mental health outcomes compared to those with low social media use. The study's conclusions highlight the need for interventions that focus on developing emotional intelligence and promoting healthy social media use among students. The study's methodology was robust, with a validated instrument and a good reliability coefficient. The sample size was relatively small, but representative of the population. The study's findings contribute to the existing literature on emotional intelligence, social media use, and mental health outcomes. Finally, study provides insights into the complex relationships between emotional intelligence, social media use, and mental health outcomes. The findings have implications for educators, policymakers, and mental health professionals seeking to promote students' well-being.

Summary

This study examined the relationships between emotional intelligence, social media use, and mental health outcomes among 60 students in the Faculty of Education, AEFUNAI. The results showed a significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and mental health outcomes. Social media use influenced mental health outcomes, and emotional intelligence played a significant role in this relationship. The study's findings have implications for interventions aimed at improving emotional intelligence and mental health outcomes. The study used a descriptive correlational design and a self-report questionnaire to collect data. The instrument was validated by experts and had a good reliability coefficient (Cronbach alpha = 0.82). The data were analyzed using correlation, regression, and t-test analyses. The study's findings suggest that emotional intelligence is a crucial factor in managing social media use and predicting mental health outcomes. The results also indicate that students with high social media use have different emotional intelligence and mental health outcomes compared to those with low social media use. The study's conclusions highlight the need for interventions that focus on developing emotional intelligence and promoting healthy social media use among students. The findings have implications for educators, policymakers, and mental health professionals seeking to promote students' well-being.

Implications

The study's findings have several implications for educators, policymakers, and mental health professionals. Firstly, the positive relationship between emotional intelligence and mental health outcomes suggests that interventions aimed at improving emotional intelligence may have a positive impact on mental health outcomes. Secondly, the influence of social media use on mental health outcomes highlights the need for interventions that promote healthy social media use among students. The study's findings also imply that emotional intelligence plays a significant role in managing social media use. This study suggests that interventions aimed at developing emotional intelligence may help students navigate social media more effectively.

The study's results also highlight the need for educators and policymakers to consider the impact of social media use on students' mental health outcomes. The study's findings have implications for mental health professionals seeking to promote students' well-being. The results suggest that emotional intelligence and social media use are important factors to consider when developing interventions aimed at improving mental health outcomes. The study's implications highlight the need for a comprehensive approach to promoting students' well-being, one that takes into account the complex relationships between emotional intelligence, social media use, and mental health outcomes.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations were made among others, that:

1. Interventions aimed at improving emotional intelligence should be developed and implemented to promote mental health outcomes among students, with other level of education.
2. Educators and policymakers should promote healthy social media use among students, highlighting the potential risks and benefits of social media use.
3. Mental health professionals should consider emotional intelligence and social

media use when developing interventions aimed at improving mental health outcomes.

4. Further research should be conducted to explore the complex relationships between emotional intelligence, social media use, and mental health outcomes, in another location.
5. Educators and policymakers should prioritize developing emotional intelligence and promoting healthy social media use among students to promote their overall well-being, nationally.

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