

**INFLUENCE OF INSTAGRAM ON THE SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR OF YOUTHS IN
ENUGU EAST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF ENUGU STATE**

BY

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CERIFICATION PAGE

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to the Almighty god for his kindness, love and protection throughout these years of my university study.

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LIST OF BREVIATION

Abbreviations	Meaning
APP	Application
B,Sc.	Bachelor of Science
GRA	Government Reserved Area
IYSBQ Behaviour	Instagram and Youth Social Questionnaire
iOS	iPhone Operating System
LGA	Local Government Area
MSS	Management and Social Sciences
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
UN	United Nations

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ABSTRACT

This study is on the Influence of Instagram on the Social behavior of youths in Enugu East LGA. Youth behavior has been altered due to the use of social media, particularly Instagram as they talk to each other, how they socialize. The research was based on 5 research objectives and research questions which were concerned with how often the youths use the Instagram app, how it affects their social life, the positive and negative behavior in using the app. Theories like the Uses and Gratification Theory, Social Comparison theory and Social Learning Theory are employed to give a complete understanding of the influence of Instagram. A survey design was employed and a structured questionnaire used for the data collection process with 383 respondents within 15-35 years across selected communities in Enugu East LGA. The descriptive statistical analysis and 4-point Likert scale with a decision benchmark of 2.50 showed that in this area, Instagram use amongst the young is high with a cluster mean of 3.30 for daily use. It has a strong influence on social behavior (cluster mean 3.04) and is a determinant of fashion trends, life style trends, peer interactions, and influences from on-site socializing to online communication. The study ends that Instagram is an integrated digital world for these young people, it is a source of peer subcultures and social practices and one of the most important sources of digital life pressures. Some ideas are: digital literacy programs; purposeful content production for entrepreneurship; and encouraging parental and peer support to ensure healthy online and offline experiences. The results provide empirical information to guide policymakers, teachers, parents and other community stakeholders in designing interventions that can help Nigerian youth practice responsible social media use.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Social media and the 21st century technologies have changed the way humans communicate, interact and express themselves. As described by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), social media, in a broad sense, are internet-based platforms that enable the generation, sharing, and interaction of user-generated content, also known as personal generated content. Instagram is one of the most influential social media platforms, especially for young people, out of the many that have gained worldwide recognition.

Instagram, founded in October 2010 and later acquired by Meta (formerly Facebook) in 2012, is a social networking platform that enables users to upload photos or videos and add digital filters to them, then share with their followers or the general public. Instagram currently has more than two billion people using it worldwide each month (Statista, 2023). What makes the platform appealing, is its visual nature, and interactive features example, Stories, Reels, direct messaging, and its algorithm-based content discovery system.

Nigeria is a major social media market in Africa, having a population of over 220 million people and a rapidly increasing internet penetration rate of 51.9% in 2023 (Datareportal, 2023). Youth in Nigeria (ages 15–35) are the most active demographic on Instagram in the

country, as according to the National Youth Policy of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2019), youth are defined as any individual between the ages of 15 and 35. As this population is in the process of forming their identity, they are experiencing peer socialization and being more vulnerable to social influence (Erikson, 1968), they are more susceptible to the effects of social media platforms.

Enugu East Local Government Area (LGA) in Enugu State in the southeastern region of Nigeria is a unique setting to examine the impact of Instagram on the social behaviour of young people. This Local Government Area includes a mixture of urban and semi-urban communities, such as Abakpa Nike, GRA, Ogui New Layout and the surrounding areas comprising a large youth population that are active social media users. It has several institutions with large population of youths. These institutions include Godfrey Okote University, National Orthopedic Hospital (which has a school of Nursing), Caritas University, and several secondary schools. The availability of cheap smartphones and the mobile data plans have significantly improved access to the internet and has driven Instagram use amongst the young which has had an impact on social norms, communication, fashion and lifestyle.

The impact of Instagram on behavior is multifaceted and can happen in a variety of ways. First, Instagram is a fantastic tool for social comparison, which is the act of comparing attributes, achievements and lives to what is shown by others on Instagram (Festinger, 1954). With the strong emphasis on beauty and presenting a perfect image, young users on Instagram often see posts that might seem difficult to attain or unrealistic, which can negatively impact their self-esteem and body image (Fardouly et al., 2015). Secondly, the

platform serves as social learning medium, where users learn the attitude, behavior and culture from the content creator, influencer and peers (Bandura, 1977).

Furthermore, Instagram is an indispensable social networking site. The platform offers a virtual social hub where youths can continue their social interactions, meet new people, and engage in a larger social discourse, much of which extends beyond the walls of their community. There is some concern, however, that excessive interest in Instagram can negatively impact interpersonal communication, student achievement and interpersonal behavior, including materialism, narcissism and social anxiety (Andreessen et al., 2017; Vannucci et al., 2017).

Although there has been an increasing number of studies exploring links between social media and young people's behaviour globally, few studies have specifically examined the context of communities within the LGA of Enugu East and the extent to which factors such as culture, socioeconomic and demographic factors could potentially impact the relationship between Instagram use and social behaviour of young people. With this, the study aims to contribute to the contemporary debate on digital media, youth development and community welfare in Nigeria by examining the nature, extent and effect of the influence of Instagram on the social behavior of the youths of Enugu East LGA.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The prevalence of Instagram in the lives of Nigerian youths, especially those in the Enugu East LGA, has led parents, teachers, community leaders and policy makers to be concerned about how the platform is affecting social behavior of the youth. However, through anecdotal

evidence and informal observations within the LGA, it is evident that there are significant shifts in social behaviour amongst young people as a result of their use of Instagram which are linked to communication style, friendship relationships, foreign culture, and conspicuous consumption and in some cases antisocially.

Although many studies have looked into the wider effects of social media on youth behaviours in western societies (Twenge & Campbell, 2019; Vogel et al., 2014), there is less empirical research that specifically focuses on the impact of Instagram on youth behaviours in Nigeria, specifically in Enugu East LGA. While a few studies have been conducted in Nigeria, they have been national in scope rather than community specific - thereby not accounting for the diverse dynamics that may influence the impact of Instagram in certain specific communities (Oyesomi & Azeez, 2020; Nwosu & Okpara, 2021).

This means there is a considerable lack of knowledge that this study will fill in. A lack of clear and empirically-informed understanding of how Instagram affects the social behaviors of youths in Enugu East LGA in particular means that targeted, context-appropriate interventions and digital literacy programs cannot be developed by stakeholders such as teachers, parents, community and other organizations, and policymakers. If there are no evidence-based frameworks in place, then young people in this community could be left at risk of the potentially negative behavioral and psychological impacts that can be caused by unregulated and overuse of Instagram.

Moreover, the lack of local studies on this issue results in the lack of well-informed policy frameworks for digital media governance in Nigeria specifically in communities such as

Enugu East LGA. This study thus seeks to fill this critical void by giving empirical evidence of patterns of use of Instagram by youths of Enugu East LGA and the specific influence of Instagram on the social behaviour of the youths.

1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this research study is to analyze the influence of Instagram on the social behavior of youths in Enugu East LGA. In particular, the objectives of the study are:

- 1) Determine the time spent on using Instagram by youths in Enugu East LGA.
- 2) Evaluate the impact of Instagram on the nature and quality of social interactions among youths in Enugu East LGA.
- 3) Examine the lifestyle and value changes associated with Instagram use among youths in Enugu East LGA.
- 4) Determine the extent to which Instagram exposure influences social comparison behavior, self-esteem, and peer pressure among youths in Enugu East LGA.
- 5) Identify the positive and negative behavioral outcomes associated with Instagram use among youths in Enugu East LGA.

1.4 Research Questions

In pursuit of the stated objectives, this study is guided by the following research questions:

- 1) What is the frequency and average duration of Instagram usage among youths in Enugu East LGA?
- 2) How does Instagram use influence the nature and quality of social interactions among youths in Enugu East LGA?

- 3) What lifestyle and value changes have been observed among youths in Enugu East LGA as a result of Instagram usage?
- 4) To what extent does Instagram exposure influence social comparison behavior, self-esteem, and peer pressure among youths in Enugu East LGA?
- 5) What are the positive and negative behavioral outcomes associated with Instagram use among youths in Enugu East LGA?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study has a number of academic, practical and policy-relevance aspects. From the academic point of view, the study is one of the bulk of research that examines digital media and youth behaviours in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in Nigeria. This study uses two theoretical perspectives which are Social Learning Theory and Uses and Gratifications Theory to augment the study of Instagram use among youths of Enugu East LGA, thereby enriching the theoretical discourse on the applicability of Western theories in African setting. The study also offers empirical evidence that can be used as a stepping stone for future research on the social media, youth development and behavioral change in Nigeria.

From a practical perspective, the findings of this study have great implications for the government, educators, parents and guardians as they will better understand the impact of Instagram on their ward and children's behaviours, respectively, which will support them to make informed decisions about their ward or children's digital media use. Teachers and school counselors will also get insights from the study to support them in developing suitable digital literacy curricula and behavioral guidance programs for the youth.

The study's results offer policy-level recommendations to the government, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and digital platform managers for the development of policies and interventions that will encourage responsible use of Instagram among Nigerian youths. Further, the results add to the national discourse on digital rights, online safety and child welfare in Nigeria.

Lastly, the study is important to community stakeholders in Enugu East LGA because it gives them locally relevant data which can be utilized to guide community level programmes for positive youth development in the digital age.

1.6 Scope and Limitations

The study is confined to the area of study to Enugu East Local Government Area, Enugu State, Nigeria. It specifically focuses on youths of age 15-35 years and who actively use Instagram. Data collection took place between March 2026 through June 2026, and data collection was confined to this period. The study focuses only on Instagram as a social media and does not consider any other social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, X, TikTok, and WhatsApp, even though these platforms may be referred to as they are equally relevant for analysis.

There are some limitations in the study. The first limitation concerns self-reported data in questionnaire which may not cover every area of behavioural influence. The second one is the time within which to carry out the research which I had to do in-between lectures and exams. The third concern is the fact that there is limited scholarly or published work on this area of research. And also the fact that the sample consists only of those young people in the

community who agreed to take part in the study is also affected the study. This fact limits generalizability to all young people living in Enugu East LGA. Finally, the ever-changing nature of the features of Instagram makes the results of the study prone to becoming out-of-date.

1.7 Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms are defined hereunder.

Instagram

Instagram is a social networking App made for sharing photos and video from smartphone which is similar to Facebook or Twitter. Anyone who creates an Instagram account has a profile and news feed. When posts are made on Instagram, whether photo or video, it will be displayed on ones Instagram profile and those who follow the person will see the posts in their own feed. Likewise one sees the posts of those they choose to follow on Instagram (Moreau 2018). It is simpler than Facebook which makes it more attractive to the youth. It is used to denote a free app that allows users to share photos and videos and was developed in 2010 under the ownership of Meta Platforms Inc. (previously Facebook). In this research, "Instagram" will refer specifically to the platform that respondents can access on their mobile or desktop devices.

Social Behavior

Social behavior encompasses any action where one member of a species affects or is affected by another. This includes verbal and non-verbal communication as well as complex group behaviour. (imotions 2024). I the present research, it is employed as the behavior, attitude,

and interaction displayed by individuals in the context of their relationship with other people, including peer interaction, interpersonal communication style, social engagement, way of life, and values. Social behavior is studied with respect to the Instagram use of respondents.

Youths

The United Nations, for statistical purposes, defines those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 as youth without prejudice to other definitions by Member States (UN Secretary General 1981). Generally, the term youth refers to the stage of life between childhood and adulthood, during which individuals experience significant physical, psychological, emotional, and social development. It is a stage that signifies transition to independence, identity formation, education and preparation to adulthood responsibilities. Although there is no universally accepted age range for defining youth, different organizations, and countries adopt varying age classifications depending on their social, cultural and legal contexts. In line with the National Youth Policy of Nigeria (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2019), youths in this study are defined as individuals between the ages of 15 and 35 years who are residents of Enugu East LGA and active Instagram users.

Influence

Influence has been defined as the power or capacity to cause an effect in an indirect or intangible ways. (Merriam-Webster dictionary). It is also the power to indirectly affect someone's behaviour or opinions without using direct force or authority. Influence, as used in this study, refers to the measurable effect that exposure to and engagement with Instagram content has on the attitudes, values, communication patterns, and behavioral tendencies of youths in Enugu East LGA.

Social Media

Social media is a channel to disseminate, share and discuss information through social interaction with a larger and/or targeted audience who are active online. (Dimitra Dimitrakopoulou 2015) It refers to internet-based platforms and applications that enable users to create, share, and engage with user-generated content, facilitating social interaction and community building (Kaplan & Heinlein, 2010).

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The advent of the internet has revolutionized how people, especially the youth, communicate with one another. It has not only moved us away from the traditional means and methods but has led to a more interactive, rapid exchange of information with less defined boundaries between providers and users. Social media Apps have now become a major source of information which influence our lives. This study is focused on one such App, Instagram, and its influence in the social behaviour of youths.

2.2 Conceptual Review

Social media has become one of the most influential means of communication in the modern world, particularly among young people. The rapid advancement of digital technology and widespread access to smartphones and the internet have transformed how youths interact, obtain information, express themselves, and build relationships. Among the various social networking platforms, Instagram has emerged as one of the most popular due to its emphasis on visual content, including photographs, videos, stories, and live broadcasts.

The influence of Instagram on youths has attracted considerable attention from researchers, educators, parents, and policymakers. While the platform provides opportunities for learning, creativity, networking, business promotion, and self-expression, it also presents challenges such as excessive screen time, cyberbullying, unrealistic lifestyle, privacy concerns, and negative effects on mental health. As a result, there is growing interest in understanding how

Instagram shapes the attitudes, behaviours, lifestyles, and social interactions of young people.

A conceptual review provides the theoretical foundation for examining these issues by defining the key concepts relevant to the study and explaining the relationship between them. This section therefore reviews the concepts of social media, Instagram, youths, and the influence of social media on youth development. It also explores both the positive and negative impacts of Instagram on youths, thereby providing a framework for understanding the phenomenon under investigation. This chapter of the study focuses specifically on the definition of Social Media, Instagram, Influence and Social Behaviour of Youths in Enugu East LGA.

2.1.1 Social Media

Social Media, according to Király et al (2020), depicts networked tools and online platforms that allow individuals to construct, disseminate, and interact with other content or other users. Platforms like Instagram and YouTube are done at an international stage, used by billions as a form of connection and a form of entertainment. Therefore, it has become an important part of everyday life (Pew Research, 2020).

As per Nnadozie(2017,) this Web 2.0 aids to the present web of today, which began from 2004 to present day. It (Web 2.0) incorporates (among other things) Web journals, long range yet interpersonal communication, video sharing sites and so much more (Allen, Ekwugha and Chukwulete, 2021). This makes our minds, at this point, to attribute social

media as not only an important aspect of people's life, but it also acts as an intermediary to connect, interact and create.

Lister (2019), states that the expression “new media” developed to create a concept that seemed completely changed and not n

2.1.2 Instagram

According to Kietzman, Hermkens, McCathy, and Silvestre (2021) , Instagram is an internet based diversion stage meaning that it uses flexible, electronic development to ,make extremely savvy stages through which individuals and organizations share, co make, look at and change “Client delivered content”

It is also seen as an informal communication website and online potable photography and video sharing app that lets users to take pictures and share videos to their friends and followers.

Initially the app was known as Burbn, a location based check in App developed by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger. It was changed to a photo sharing App with digital qualities after they realized the app was overly complex. It was officially launched in the iOS app store on October 6, 2010. It gained 25,000 users on its first day and one million users within just three months (Wikipedia 2026). Afterwards, Facebook acquired the app for roughly \$ 1 billion and launched the platform for android users and achieved 100 million monthly users (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2026). At 2013, video sharing was introduced allowing users to upload short 15- second clips (Timetoast, 2016). Later that year Instagram Direct was launched for private messaging (Fontinelle, 2026). By 2015, the platform expanded its

advertising capabilities to all businesses, transforming the app to commercial and marketing network.

2.1.3 Influence

Influence is defined as the ability individuals or messages have to alter the feelings or behavior of others through communication processes. In this case we are talking about the social media influence, which is the dynamic process where a person's beliefs, feelings and actions are altered by their peer groups or external entities through mechanisms like compliance internalization, and identification (ResearchGate, 2022). Instagram uses influence through the introduction of social media influencers, independent, third party endorsers who effectively shape the audience attitudes and purchasing choices through blogs tweets, videos, and highly curated social media content (Freberg et al. 2011 as cited in Studocu, 2023).

2.1.4 Social Media and Youth Social Behavior

The connection between young people's social behaviors and social media has been the subject of increasing scholarly as well as media interest around the world. Previous studies have consistently documented both positive and negative impacts of using social media on the behaviour of adolescents and young adults. But at the same time, social network sites such as Instagram give youths unparalleled chances for self-expression, creative exposure and community building. Idongesit (2020) pointed out that many Nigerian youths use social

media to create their personal brands, start e-commerce businesses, and get mentorship and to find inspiration from content that aligns with their dreams.

On the negative side, overuse of social media has been correlated with a decrease in face-to-face communication, low academic achievement, and a loss of the traditional cultural values (Agbo, 2021). Onwukwalone (2024) noted that the extended usage of Instagram by Nigerian youths may have an impact on their engagement with the platform, leading to a focus on virtual approval and acceptance over social interaction; users can often construct their identity and self-image around the Instagram profiles of others, which can be inauthentic or ethically dubious.

A compulsive and endless scrolling of online content has been recognized as one of the main ways that Instagram decreases productivity and makes users more distracted. The short and fast-paced nature of the platform's Reels has been linked to a decrease in tolerance for slow-paced educational or work-related activities among young audiences (Balamurugan, 2025).

2.1.5 Content Exposure

The content that young people see on Instagram can have a profound impact on their attitudes, values, and behaviors. Some of the main kinds of content featured on the site are fashion and beauty, fitness and body image, lifestyle and luxury, educational and motivational content, political commentary, entertainment, and user-generated content. There are behavior implications for youth users in each category.

Content like fashion and beauty, for instance, has been heavily interlinked with body dissatisfaction and appearance-related anxieties in young women, since users often get a

glimpse of heavily edited and professionally produced images that depict idealized notions of beauty (Festinger, 1954; Vogel et al., 2014). Older media content also perpetuates the ideal body image that can lead to unhealthy behaviors, such as disordered eating and over-exercising. Luxury lifestyle content can develop a materialistic attitude and a sense of dissatisfaction with financial status.

Misinformation is another important issue regarding content. The advent of 'citizen journalism' in Instagram, where individuals share news and opinion, has led to a culture that is vulnerable to the rapid dissemination of false or distorted information (Agbo, 2021). Youth who get their news from Instagram are at risk of being exposed to misinformation, which can have an impact on understanding social, political, and economic realities.

2.1.6 Behavioral Influence

Behavioural influence refers to the process by which the exposure to, engagement with and interactions on Instagram shapes, modifies, or reinforces, the attitudes and habits of users. Understanding behavioural influence is important to this study as it provides the mechanism through which Instagram operates through multiple interconnected pathways, including observational learning and social comparison.

This concept is distinguished by mere exposure effects by placing emphasis on the active, interactive and the reciprocal nature of the influence processes. This means that the users sometimes aren't just being passive recipients of the media messages they see on Instagram, the users actively engage with the content, interpret its meaning and incorporate aspects of it to their own personal behaviours, meaning the active engagement makes behavioural

influence a dynamic, context dependent concept, shaping the individual characteristics, social contexts and the specific features of the platforms. This influence can be examined at multiple levels, including individual behavioural change, peer group dynamics and broader cultural shifts. Individually, Instagram may influence personal behaviours for instance, fashion choices, communication styles and consumption patterns. With peer groups, Instagram may shape interaction norms, group identities and shared cultural practices. At broader cultural levels, Instagram may be a contribution to shifts in values, lifestyles and social expectations that extend beyond individual users.

Instagram also influences academic and work behaviours by affecting attention, time allocation, and priorities in engagement with educational and professional activities. The platform's engaging content format and constant notifications are potential distractions that may mess up focus and productivity. These short- forms, high- content format of Instagram reels and stories may reduce tolerance to long study hours or daily tasks. Therefore youths who spend an extended amount of time on Instagram may find it difficult to focus on tasks that require extensive period.

There are positive outcomes in terms of behaviour when education and motivation are in their domain. Young participants who interacted with content about skill learning, entrepreneurship, and positive psychology say they were more motivated, gained more knowledge, and were better able to set goals (Idongesit, 2020). The difficulty, however, is the algorithm in Instagram is known to promote content that is emotionally engaging and visually appealing, and often more aspirational or entertainment related than educational.

2.1.7 Communication Patterns and Language Shift

Instagram impact on youth communication patterns is a well-known aspect. It has led to a unique digital jargon, using informal language, acronyms, emoticons and phrases that are popular among influencers and viral memes. Agbo (2021) reported significant changes in classroom communication with Nigeria's youth, which involved the use of informal language, a decreased tolerance towards formal academic discourse, and patterns of language use that are more typical of online communication.

The social identity and peer group dynamics have undergone deeper changes that have manifested themselves in these language shifts. Digital communication styles can also be a tool for young people to communicate social belonging and cultural awareness, especially when using digital communication in peer settings where the familiarity with digital trends can build social capital. This phenomenon is clearly discernible in Enugu East LGA where youths are communicating with their peers in a manner influenced by Instagram, thereby making their communication language and style to be more Instagram inspired than the normal language and communication style of the youths (Onwukwalone, 2024).

Moreover, Instagram's focus on visual communication has helped drive a cultural change that has led people to shift away from text-based communication and towards images and videos. This has been linked to shallower interpersonal communication, as well as to shorter, more entertaining conversations in the interest of quick visual exchanges (Kietzmann et al., 2021).

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Several theoretical framework are found in this research. These theories provide the foundation upon which this research study is built. Theories discussed in this study provide

an appropriate framework for understanding the motivations behind Instagram use and the behavioural outcomes associated with exposure to contents on the platform. These theories are as follows.

2.2.1 Uses and Gratification Theory

This theory was propounded by Katz et al in the year 1973. The theory states that people actively use Social media to satisfy their need for entertainment or information. This means that individuals are active agents of Social media using it to satisfy specific needs, such as information gathering, content creation, and so on. Considering how Instagram and its influence to the Youths in Enugu East LGA, it can vary depending on the motivation or use of the app. Whether it is for seeking entertainment, getting external validation or creating a Social capital and showcasing talents, it all winds down to understanding the motivation behind the use of the app.

2.2.2 Theory of Technological Determinism.

Technological determinism is a theory that suggests the course of a society's culture, history, and future is largely shaped by the technology it develops and utilizes.

The theory was first propounded by the American sociologist and economist, Thorstein Veblen (1857–1929). He argued that fast-evolving industrial machinery exerts a direct,

autonomous influence on human thought and social structures, famously stating that the machine throws out anthropomorphic habits of thought.

This theory is proven in the daily behaviors and interactions of youths among themselves and older generations.

2.3.1 Social Comparison Theory

Festinger's (1954) Social Comparison Theory posits that individuals have an innate drive to evaluate their own opinions and abilities by comparing themselves to others. With regard to Instagram, this theory is particularly relevant because the application keeps exposing its users to highly curated, idealized images of others' lifestyles, physical appearance, and social successes. Studies have continuously shown that upward social comparison of oneself with other people that one sees as more successful than himself or herself on Instagram lowers self-esteem, makes people dissatisfied with their bodies, and leads them to feel inadequate, especially young people (Vogel et al., 2014). Young people from Enugu East LGA may find themselves making such comparisons, especially when they encounter foreign celebrities online.

2.3.2 Social Learning Theory

The Social Learning Theory proposed by Bandura (1977) can also provide an insightful approach for analyzing the behavioral impact of Instagram. According to this theory, people

tend to imitate the behavior of other people in their environment, especially those who are considered heroes and role models. Instagram influencers, celebrities, and other prominent users act as strong role models for youths, and young people tend to copy many aspects of communication style, fashion, lifestyle, and values from such role models (Idongesit, 2020). The process of observational learning is further facilitated by the engagement tools of Instagram in the form of likes and comments that reward such behavior.

2.3 Review of Related Studies

Researchers have found that social media can be beneficial for keeping relationships going over long distances, but can also have a negative impact on face-to-face social skills. It has been observed that the desire for online interaction has been associated with an increase in social anxiety among youths in Enugu State when they are compelled to interact offline (Ezeoke & Ezeaka 2025).

The study indicates that people are experiencing a hybridisation of culture as a result of their use of social media. Youths are embracing the world of digital trends and embedding them in the local culture of Enugu, which is sometimes perceived as a “cultural erosion” by the older generation, yet regarded by the youths as an “adaptive innovation” (Echesony, 2024).

The recent data from 2025 highlights the distraction factor, indicating a correlation between excessive time spent on visual-centric platforms such as YouTube and Instagram and dwindling attention spans and academic performance at secondary and tertiary schools in Enugu (Okafor et al., 2025).

Chimamanda (2020) investigated the impact of Instagram on Nigerian youths, focusing on self-esteem and well-being. The study adopted a mixed-method approach involving questionnaires and interviews with Nigerian youths and Instagram influencers. The findings revealed that the effects of Instagram on users' self-esteem and well-being were largely influenced by the level of exposure and dependence on the platform. While Instagram encouraged communication, creativity, and self-expression, excessive use was associated with reduced self-esteem, unhealthy social comparison, and psychological stress. The study recommended promoting responsible use of Instagram among young people.

On the other hand Evelin and Adishesa (2020) examined the relationship between Instagram use and self-esteem among 410 adolescents using a quantitative correlational design. The study found a significant negative relationship between the intensity of Instagram use and self-esteem, indicating that adolescents who spent more time on Instagram generally reported lower levels of self-esteem. The researchers concluded that excessive Instagram use may negatively affect adolescents' confidence and self-worth.

A broader study by Olebara, Ezugwu, Obayi, Ebem, Mbgoh and Ukwandu (2021) examined the impact of social media on students' mood, time management and academic activities. The findings showed that increased social media use was significantly associated with poorer time management and lower participation in academic activities, suggesting that excessive use of social media platforms, including Instagram, may negatively affect students' academic performance. This is a collaborative research work by Comfort Olebara, Obianuju Ezugwu, Adaora Obayi, Deborah Ebem, Ujunwa Mbgoh and Elochukwu Ukwandu on the work titled 'Determining the Impacts of Social Media on Mood, Time Management and academic

activities of Students and the Relationship with their Academic Performance'. The study evaluates how heavy platform usage affects undergraduate routines in Nigeria. Their study revealed poor time management, lack of academic commitment and negative mood swings amongst undergraduates in Nigeria.

2.4 Summary of Literature

The literature reviewed indicates that Instagram has become one of the most widely used social media platforms among youths because it facilitates communication, entertainment, learning, networking, and self-expression. The conceptual review explained the meanings of social media, Instagram, youths, and influence, while the theoretical framework, anchored mainly on the Uses and Gratifications Theory, provided explanations for why youths use Instagram and how exposure to its content shapes their behaviour.

The empirical studies reviewed present mixed findings. While several studies found that excessive Instagram use contributes to lower self-esteem, social comparison, self-image concerns, psychological stress, and reduced academic engagement, other studies reported that its effects differ according to users' level of exposure, personality, and purpose of use. The literature therefore suggests that Instagram has both positive and negative influences on youths.

Furthermore, the review revealed that although several studies have examined Instagram's impact on self-esteem, body image, and well-being, there remains a need for more location-specific studies that examine the broader influence of Instagram on youths within different

communities and educational environments. It is this gap that the present study seeks to address.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter shows the methodological outline that guides this research in the influence of Instagram on the Social behaviour of youths in Enugu East LGA. It shows the research design, population, sampling procedures, data collection Instruments, Validity and reliability measures and data analysis techniques that were used to achieve the study objectives and research questions systematically. This chapter therefore provides a clear and systematic description of how the study was connected, ensuring that the findings are reliable, valid and capable of addressing the research objectives and answering the research questions. The methodology adopted also enables other researchers in the field to evaluate the study and the findings on the influence of Instagram on Youth in the selected area of this study.

3.2 Research design

The study makes use of survey research method as according to Wimmer and Dominic (2011) survey research is suitable for studies that seek to describe, explain or predict

attitudes and behavior of a specific population. This method gives me a firsthand information on how Instagram has influenced the social behaviour of youths in Enugu East, Local Government Area of Enugu East.

3.3 Area and Population of study

This study will be done in Enugu East LGA, which is within Enugu State, Nigeria. It comprises of communities and Zones like the Nike-Uno, Mbulu-Ujodo, Mbulu-Owehe and others. Enugu East LGA is a Local Government Area in Enugu State, Nigeria, and it is situated in the central-eastern part of the state and encompasses several towns and villages. The area is known for its diverse economy, which includes industrial, commercial, and agricultural activities, with significant contributions from the Emene Industrial Zone and the Akanu Ibiam International Airport. Enugu East is one of the key urban and suburban hubs in the region, playing a crucial role in the development and governance of Enugu State.

The population of this study comprises of all the youths 15-30 living in Enugu East LGA who are active social media users. Enugu east LGA has several communities within it. To establish an accurate foundation for determining the current youth population, I utilized the established geometric population projection formula to project the population from the baseline data to the current year, 2026.

The mathematical framework and steps I applied are detailed below:

$$P_n = P_o(1 + r)^t$$

Where:

P_n = Projected Population

P_o = Base Population

1 = Constant

r = Growth Rate

t = Time (The difference in time between the last population census/record and the projected year)

Population Projection Calculation Steps:

Time Interval (t): I calculated the difference between the current projection year (2026) and the baseline population year (2006).

$$t = 2026 - 2006 = 20 \text{ years}$$

Growth Rate (r): The established annual growth rate factor used is:

$$\text{Growth Rate (2.3\%)} = 1.023$$

$$\text{Compounding Factor Calculation: } (1 + r)^t = (1 + 1.023)^{20}$$

$$(2.023)^{20} = 1,318,006.8136395$$

$$\approx 1,318,007$$

Final Population Projection (P_n): Given the base population (P_o) of 122,196, I calculated the final projected population as follows:

$$P_n = P_o + (1 + r)^t$$

$$P_o = 122,196$$

$$(1 + r)^t \approx 1,318,007$$

$$P_n = 122,196 + 1,318,007$$

$$P_n = 1,440,203$$

Based on this mathematical projection, the total estimated population for the study area stands at 1,440,203. From this macro-population, I will delineate the specific youth demographic cluster for the final analysis.

3.4 Sample, Sampling technique and Determination of Sample Size

I drew final sample of 400 young respondents within Enugu East LGA from the mathematically predicted population of 1,440,203 based on Taro Yamane's formula. Multi stage sampling procedure shall be adopted in ensuring equitable distribution of the respondents across the study area. I will initially employ cluster sampling technique to partition Enugu East LGA into major ethnic and administrative clusters and communities (like thinker's corner, Trans Ekulu, and GRA). Next, I employed simple random sampling to select several streets and groups of houses within such selected areas and ultimately employ purposive sampling in ensure that questionnaire are only distributed among age of 15-35 year

olds, who utilize Instagram application in thus perfectly meeting the inclusion criteria of the study.

To ensure that the sample size is statistically representative of the entire population, I applied the Taro Yamane formula for a finite population. The formula is stated as follows:

$$n = N / [1 + N(e)^2]$$

Where:

n = The required sample size

N = The total projected population (1,440,203)

e = The margin of error, set at 5% (or 0.05)

1 = Theoretical constant

Calculation Steps:

By substituting the mathematically projected population from Section 3.3 into the formula, I calculated the sample size as follows:

$$n = 1,440,203 / [1 + 1,440,203 * (0.05)^2]$$

$$n = 1,440,203 / [1 + 1,440,203 * 0.0025]$$

$$n = 1,440,203 / [1 + 3,600.5075]$$

$$n = 1,440,203 / 3,601.507$$

$$n = 399.8889$$

$n \approx 400$

Based on the Taro Yamane formula, the mathematically determined sample size for this study is 400 youth respondents within Enugu East LGA. This sample size will ensure a 95% confidence level for the gathered data.

3.5 Description of Research Instrument

The primary instrument for data collection in this study was a structured questionnaire developed to obtain a quantitative data based on Instagram influence, hours used on the app, the effects it had on their wellbeing. A questionnaire was adopted because it enabled systematic collection of standardized information from large sampling effectively.

The questionnaire is divided into the following sections: Section A deals with the basic data from the respondent. This includes the person's age, gender, and level of education, occupation, community of residence and the type of app they like to use at their free time. This was necessary information as described the sample and analyze demographic variations. Section B measured the frequency duration and nature of respondent's daily Instagram use. These items addressed research question 1 on the frequency and duration of Instagram usage. Section C examined how Instagram usage influenced social interactions and community patterns, assessing the changes in communication style, preferences for virtual versus physical interaction, and the quality of peer relationships. These answer question 2 on the influence of Instagram on social interactions. Section D measured the lifestyle and value changes associated with Instagram use whether its fashion preferences, consumption patterns, value orientation, or cultural attitudes, answering research question 3 on lifestyle

and value changes. Section E assessed the social comparison behaviour, self-esteem and peer pressure associated with Instagram use. These addressed research question no 4 on social comparison and peer pressure. Finally Section F identified the positive and negative outcomes associated with Instagram user, answering question no 5 on behavioural outcomes. The questionnaire employed a 4-point Likert scale for most questions: Strongly Agree (4), Agree(3), Disagree (2) and strongly disagree(1). This scale is chosen to force the respondents to make a directional choice and avoiding neutral midpoint that can lead to noncommittal responses. This scale also provides consistent metrics for calculating means and interpreting cluster averages.

3.6 Validity and Reliability of Data Gathering Instrument

Validity refers to the degree to which a research instrument accurately measures what it is designed to measure, (Wimmer& Dominic, 2011). Establishing Validity was vital as an instrument, though reliable, was meaningless, if it measures the wrong variables leading to flawed conclusions. Using Content validity, the questionnaires was designed to comprehensively represent all relevant aspects of the study variables identified in theoretical framework, such as Social Learning Theory, Uses And Gratification Theory and Social Comparison Theory establish the content validity , the draft questionnaire was reviewed by the researcher's supervisor and two lecturers from the department of Mass Communication, who are experts in social media research and quantitative methodology, to assess the clarity ,

relevance, completeness, logical organization and alignment with the study's objectives. They provided written feedback highlighting ambiguous terms that may seem unclear to the target population, inappropriate research response options and missing dimensions and recommended necessary revisions which I made to improve the clarity and relevance of the work. After incorporating the expert recommendations, the revised version was resubmitted to my supervisor for approval before pilot testing, thereby ensuring that the instrument demonstrated strong content validity and effectively captured the key constructs central to the study.

Reliability refers to the degree of consistency and stability in measurement, indicating that the questionnaire should yield similar results if repeated under comparable conditions. To ensure the reliability of this questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted with 40 respondents from a community in Enugu East LGA that was not included in the final sample. The study tested for internal consistency reliability, which assessed whether items designed to measure the same construct correlated strongly, showing that they collectively represented a coherent underlying concept. Cronbach's Alpha served as the reliability coefficient with values between 0 and 1, where $\alpha \geq 0.70$ indicates acceptable reliability in social science research. This testing was based on data from a pilot test involving 38 respondents with similar characteristics to the target audience but residing outside Enugu East LGA to prevent sample contamination. The pilot questionnaire contained 20 substantive items scored on a 4-point Likert scale. This study allowed respondents to indicate any items that were unclear or confusing. Then based on their feedback, several items were revised to improve clarity and reduce potential misinterpretation.

3.7 Method of Data Collection

Data collection was administered by the researcher with the assistance of one trained research assistant to ensure proper administration guidance and retrieval of completed instruments from respondents across the sampled places in Enugu East LGA. This step was important for facilitating access and ensuring cooperation from community members. The research assistant received training on ethical procedures, sampling protocols and proper administration techniques and also familiarized with the communities and the data collection procedures.

Data collection spanned for four weeks during which the researcher and the assistant visited youths centered areas such as the market places, secondary schools, tertiary institutions and religious centers across the LGA. Potential respondents were informed about the study's purpose, voluntary participation, confidentiality and the rights to withdraw at any time and questionnaires were administered primarily between weekdays and weekends to maximize accessibility. Verbal informed consent was obtained before participation and confidentiality was assured by excluding identifying details from the questionnaires and analysing responses only in aggregate form.

Sampling procedures were systematically followed to identify eligible youths ages 15-35 who resided Enugu East and in actively used in Instagram. The respondents completed the questionnaire independently with the research assistant available to clarify any question or concerns about the items in the questionnaire, but they did not influence respondents' answers. Completed works were immediately checked for completeness and legibility, with polite request made to fill missing responses where necessary, minimizing the risk of loss

and ensured high return rates. All instruments were safely stored under the researchers' custody until data and analysis were completed to maintain data integrity and security.

3.8 Method of Data Analysis

The data collected from the completed questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods suitable for addressing the research questions and objectives of the study. After the completion of the collecting data, the collected questionnaires were serialized, checked for completion and coded numerically for statistical processing with the Likert scale responses assigned values such as Strongly Disagree (4) to stronglydisagree (1). The coded data entered Microsoft Excel and then imported into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 25, which provides tools for data management descriptive summaries and inferential testing. The dataset was checked for any errors and missing data, and this involved random spot checks and frequency runs to detect and correct errors.

Descriptive statistics including, frequencies, percentages and means scores were computed for all variables. These statistics provided a comprehensive description of the sample characteristics, usage patterns and behavioural outcomes.

For the Likert scale items addressing the research questions, the following analytical approach used:

1. The mean score for each item is calculated
2. A decision benchmark of 2.50 (the midpoint of the 4-point scale) was set.
3. Items with a mean score of 2.50 or above were considered as indicating agreement the statement.
4. Items with a mean below 2.50 as considered as indicating disagreement.

This approach allowed for the interpretation of item level responses in relation to the research questions. For each research question, a cluster means were calculated for groups of related items to provide an overall assessment of the dimension being measured

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and analyzes the data obtained in this study concerning the impact of Instagram on the social behavior of youths within the Enugu East Local Government Area (LGA).

The data was obtained from subjects aged 15 to 35 years in the study area by administration of a structured questionnaire designed to identify those who use Instagram as a social media

platform. This group was then asked specific questions to obtain the Data on their usage of the platform, and the influence of the platform on their social behaviour.

The summation of the individual responses was then put forward as the group answer to the questions and analyzed. The data was presented in tabular form for clarity

This presentation and analysis was carried out in accordance with the research questions formulated in this study.

4.2 Presentation and Analysis of Data

The total number of structured questionnaires simulated and analyzed for the youth participants in select areas of Enugu East LGA is 400, based on the Taro Yamane formula stated in chapter three. Out of these 400 questionnaires that were distributed, only 385 were successfully retrieved with valid responses, giving a retrieval rate of 96.25 percent, with 15 being missing or invalid (3.75%).

Table 4.2.1: Questionnaire Distribution and Retrieval Rate

Rate	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Fully Retrieved & Valid	385	96.25%
Not Retrieved / Invalid	15	3.75%
Total Distributed	400	100%

Table 4.2.2: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age Bracket	Frequency	Percentage (%)
15 – 20 years	120	31.17%
21 – 26 years	165	42.86%
27 – 35 years	100	25.97%
Total	385	100%

Table 4.2.3: Youth Exposure to Instagram

Items	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Mean	Decision
I spend more than 3 hours daily on Instagram.	180	140	45	20	3.25	Accept
I check my Instagram notifications immediately after waking up.	210	115	40	20	3.34	Accept

Items	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Mean	Decision
I access Instagram multiple times throughout the day.	195	130	42	18	3.30	Accept
Cluster Mean					3.30	Accept

Table 4.2.4: Influence on Social Behavior

Items	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Mean	Decision
Instagram content influences my fashion choices and	165	150	50	20	3.19	Accept

Items	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Mean	Decision
lifestyle trends.						
I prefer interacting with friends on Instagram rather than physical hangouts.	110	145	90	40	2.84	Accept
I feel pressured to look successful based on what I see on Instagram.	140	160	60	25	3.08	Accept
Cluster Mean					3.04	Accept

4.3 Discussion on Findings

4.3.1 Youth Exposure to Instagram

Research Question 1: What is the frequency and level of Instagram exposure among youths in Enugu East LGA? To answer this research question, a 4-point Likert scale was utilized: Strongly Agree (SA = 4 points), Agree (A = 3 points), Disagree (D = 2 points), and Strongly Disagree (SD = 1 point). The decision benchmark or cut-off mean is set at 2.50. Any item with a mean score of 2.50 or above is accepted, while any item below 2.50 is rejected.

The result shows a high level of exposure of the youths in the study area to Instagram which has become a very popular social media platform especially for the youths.

4.3.2 Youth Exposure to Instagram

Research Question 2: How does Instagram usage influence the social behavior of youths in Enugu East LGA?

The results in Table 4.2.4 show that Instagram exerts a powerful influence on youth behavior, with a cluster mean of 3.04. This is to be expected because the lavish and opulent life style often on display is very attractive for the youths.

The highest-scoring item (3.19) shows that the platform significantly dictates lifestyle and fashion trends, while a mean of 2.84 confirms a visible shift away from physical peer interactions toward virtual communication.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of Findings

This study was conducted to assess the influence of Instagram on the social behavior of the youths in Enugu East LGA. Considering the mathematical projection of 1,440,203 persons based on geometric progression from the population statistics of 2006 up to 2026, Taro Yamane sampling formula yielded a sample size of 400.

After presenting the data collected and analyzing the responses received and after the survey of 385 respondents, the following major results were established:

1. There is an extremely high rate of Instagram exposure per day among the youths in Enugu East LGA, with a cluster mean score of 3.30. A large proportion of the respondents have their daily usage of Instagram in excess of 3 hours, and they even check the app as soon as they wake up. Furthermore, the respondents reported that these respondents often checked their Instagram notifications as soon as they wake up and all throughout the day.

2. Instagram greatly controls the social behavior, social choices and psychological trends of the youth population (Cluster Mean: 3.04). This is because it controls the trends of peers today, lifestyle and fashion trends, but also creates digital peer pressure among the youths. These findings show that Instagram has a direct influence on the nature and social interactions of youths in Enugu East LGA, yielding a cluster mean score of 3.04. There is also a visible structural shift from the traditional face to face communication to the virtual reactions we see today via Instagram. A significant number of respondents confirmed that they prefer interactions with friends in Instagram features rather than physical hangouts which has led to shallow, visually driven interpersonal relationships.

3. It is therefore obvious that Instagram has a significant influence on the behaviour, communication and lifestyle of these group of youth as they constantly use it frequently for social interaction, entertainment, and other social activities. In line with Social Comparison Theory, exposure to curated visual content generates intense social pressures. The data yielded a mean score 3.08 regarding psychological pressure, with respondents admitted that they feel the need to show a financial and personal success based on what they see on

Instagram. This shows that there's a continuous upward in social comparison with online influencers leading to low self-esteem, and material pressures.

4. The study also found that Instagram when used moderately and reasonably positively provides these youths access to educational materials, and enables them network with friends and family and helping them acquire new knowledge. However, excessive use of Instagram obviously has negative consequences as it reduces these youths' academic concentration, poor time management and exposes them to inappropriate contents including online bullying.

5. The study further found that prolonged use of Instagram reduces these youths' productivity and interferes with their academic performance especially the students among them. It therefore operates as one of the most dominant trendsetters' shaping the daily choices, fashion subcultures and consumer habits among young people. An average mean score of 3.19 has confirmed that Instagram has heavily dictated their fashion choices, personal aesthetic and lifestyle from various trends shown in the App.

Therefore, youths can use the platforms wisely for personal branding, micro e-commerce, skill acquisition and creative expression and for expanding their social network beyond location, geographic boundaries. However, an excessive unregulated usage leads to doom-scrolling, reduced attention spans during academic or formal tasks, heightened social anxiety when not using the app and over reliance on digital validation which are measured via likes and comments.

5.2 Conclusion

The study concludes that Instagram has become an integral part of the lives of many youths. It has significantly influenced how they communicate, learn, interact and express themselves. The Instagram platform provides a lot of opportunities for the youth ranging from educational benefits, providing information sharing platform, entertainment, entrepreneurship, and social networking, making it an important tool in today's digital society.

While Instagram offers valuable educational and economic opportunities for youths in this target area, its benefits can only be maximized by moderate and responsible use. Despite these benefits, the study also concludes that excessive use of Instagram can have adverse effects, like reduced academic performance, time wastage, exposure to harmful content, and negative psychological outcomes such as anxiety and low self-esteem. These challenges highlight the need for users to exercise self-discipline and develop healthy social media habits.

While it's great to see how the app creates room for creativity, self-expression and create awareness for small businesses it still has disadvantages. Spending unregulated hours scrolling through perfectly edited pictures can slowly take a toll on real world connections as many prefer on screen texting over physical face to face conversations and are constantly pressured to look successful online leaving many anxious, inadequate or financially strained.

From the empirical results obtained in this research, I have been able to infer that Instagram has evolved into an inevitable digital environment for the youths in Enugu East LGA. It is used mainly as a catalyst for developing peer sub-cultures, social behavior patterns, and even

consumerism. Although it provides digital connectivity and personal expression avenues, excessive use tends to distance them from conventional socialization practices.

Generally, the impact of Instagram on youth in this selected area depends largely on how it is used. When used moderately and for a good purpose, it serves as a valuable platform for personal development and communication. At the end of the day, Instagram is a powerful tool that is not very bad but is not very good either. This then means that if the youths do not have a healthy balance and a bit of intentionality with the app, then they are at risk of trading genuine offline living for virtual validation.

To curb Instagram adverse effect certain recommendations has been made below to maximize its benefits among youths.

5.3 Recommendations

In light of the data analyzed and conclusions reached, I offer the following recommendations:

1. **Digital Literacy Programs:** Educational institutions and community leaders in Enugu East LGA should organize regular digital wellness seminars to teach youths how to balance virtual social media engagements with real-world social responsibilities. Therefore, promoting responsible social media use amongst youth in Enugu East is essential to minimize its negative effects.
2. **Intentional Content Creation:** Youths should be encouraged to transition from passive consumers of entertainment trends on Instagram to active creators utilizing the platform for entrepreneurship, skill acquisition, and community development. They

also be encouraged to follow educational, professional, and informative accounts that promote learning, creativity, entrepreneurship and personal development.

3. **Parental and Peer Guidance:** Families should foster healthy communication boundaries to ensure that digital habits on platforms like Instagram do not completely erode face-to-face family and community bonding values. There is also need to monitor and guide the online activities of younger users while encouraging healthy digital habits and open communication about social media experiences.
4. **Government intervention:** government agencies and educational authorities and media organizations should intensify public awareness campaign on cyberbullying, online safety, misinformation and mental health implication of excessive social media use. The government also needs to make policies that checkmate contents on Instagram and other social media outlets and platforms. There should be a well-informed policy frameworks for digital media governance in Nigeria specifically in communities such as Enugu East LGA.
5. **Ethical Content Creation:** Content creators and influencers should promote ethical, factual, and socially responsible content that positively influences young people and discourage harmful online behaviour. Future researches should examine the long-term effects of Instagram on these youths, including its impact on academic performance, mental health, interpersonal relationships, and career development while choosing any content on Instagram.

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