

SOCIAL MEDIA EXPOSURE AND MATERIALISTIC VALUES: A DILEMMA FOR UNDERGRADUATES OF LAGOS STATE UNIVERSITY

YUSUF, H. T.¹, ODUTAYO, A. O.², AKINTOLA, M.², & YUSUF, A. O.¹

¹Department of Social Sciences Education, Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria

²Department of Educational Foundations and Counseling Psychology, Faculty of Education, Lagos State University, Ojo.

E-mail: o_odutayo@outlook.com **Phone No:** +234-803-395-3944

Abstract

This study explored social media exposure and materialistic values of undergraduates of Lagos State University, Nigeria. Cultivation and social realism served as the theoretical base for the study, and literature was reviewed along these perspectives. It was an online survey and undergraduates of Lagos State University served as the total population. Purposive sampling technique was used to randomly select undergraduates of Lagos State University who are on Instagram. Lagos State University official Instagram page formed the existing database as it was used as the platform to request the participation of undergraduates in the 5minutes online survey. The instrument had Sections A, B & C. In section B, participants responded to a 10-item short version of Material Values Scale (MVS, Richins, 2004) while section C was a 10-item statements on social media exposure. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer and calculate research questions 1 and 2. While research question 3 had corresponding research hypothesis which was tested and analysed with paired t-test at 0.05 level of significance. Output of the analysis revealed that there is significant relationship between social media exposure and materialistic values among undergraduates. The study recommended the need for social media literacy through its introduction as a theme/topic/course in social studies curriculum at all levels of education to educate users on the dangers and also enhance the positive traits of social media.

Keywords: Social Media, Materialism, Values, Social Studies

Introduction

The news from mainstream media in recent days is quite disheartening. From the rampant kidnappings in the eastern region to discovery of ritual dens in the western region. The entire country seems to be warped in major forms of immoral acts. These immoral acts stem from the lure of materialism. In simplistic terms, materialism is the interest in or desire for wealth, possessions, and so on. On a more technical basis, materialism is a multidisciplinary concept which is often operationalized from different perspectives. A summary of the focal points in the variant operationalization described materialism as a way of life, value orientation, cultural system, personality trait, second order value and aspiration. In a nutshell, materialism is about values and desire for money and possessions.

Several definitions have been given to materialism but Kamal, Chu and Pedram (2013) identified three key components in the materialism construct, namely, centrality of acquisition, acquisition as the pursuit of happiness and success defined in terms of level of possession.

Centrality of Acquisition is described as the major importance an individual placed on the accumulation of possessions. By so doing, materialism is viewed as a lifestyle choice that dedicates how individuals choose to live their daily lives as well as how they set their longterm life goals.

Acquisition as the Pursuit of Happiness is the driving force behind the search for and value of possessions. This is based on the notion that people who possess materialistic values acquire possessions that will help them achieve a heightened sense of well-being and satisfaction in life.

Success defined in Terms of Level of Possession is seen as the tendency by materialists to measure success on the basis of their possessions. This implies that materialists view themselves as successful in terms of the products they possess that project their desired images.

According to widely adopted perspective of Richins (2004), materialistic values are reflected by the degree to which possessions and the acquisition of possessions are central to a person's life, the degree to which people believe possessions and their acquisition bring happiness and life satisfaction, and the degree to which people assess the success of others in terms of possessions. Embracing this line of thought, Oprea, Buijzen, Van Reijmersdal and Valkenburg (2011) argued that materialistic values in individuals are reflected by the importance they attach to possessions, the satisfaction they get from obtaining new possessions, and the degree to which they like others with more possessions more than those without.

Materialism in adolescents is a cause of worry because it is considered a socially undesirable character trait that is associated with negative outcomes on both level of the individual and society (Roberts & Clement, 2007). It is viewed in a negative light because people often have unpleasant experiences with materialistic individuals who are considered as overtly competitive, manipulative, exploitative, selfish, and less empathetic and more ecologically destructive. Materialists generally show less pro-social interpersonal behavior, less concern for and involvement in social issues such as social security and environmentalism and more ecologically destructive behavior, more spending problems, debt and poor learning outcomes (Roberts & Clement, 2007). According to Vandana (2014), studies on materialism in young people follow one of the two viewpoints: socialization and psychological. Socialization viewpoint focus on the importance of family, peers, and media as a key source of materialistic values which is the centerpiece of this study.

In past decades, one of the socializing agents which has been found to be a major carrier of materialism among young people is the media. Vandana (2014) stated that the media creates a sense of self between what people have and what they do. With the advent of internet, particularly, web 2.0, media is no longer limited to traditional platforms like television, radio or newspaper. Social media is the trendy media platform which refers to a group of web 2.0 applications that permit the creation and exchange of user generated content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). It has become prominent worldwide and considered as an essential daily need among digital natives who fall within university level of education. The most popular of all social media platforms is Facebook, with over 2 billion active monthly users, more than China's 1.36billion population, making it the largest nation (Statista, 2017).

The management of Facebook have capitalized on its worldwide popularity by expanding the company's investment such as purchasing Instagram, another social media platform in 2012. Instagram is a photo-sharing social media platform which was launched in 2010.

In 2014, 20% of internet users visit Instagram, by February 2017, Instagram enjoys visit from 32% of internet users, with 400million daily active users and by June 2017, it had 700million active monthly users (Aslam, 2017). It is interesting to note that 91% of posts on Instagram are photos. Instagram allows users to share and expose complete experience through pictures. Exposure to social media has generated an increasing rate of selfpresentation and desire for fame in a grandiose and exaggerated manner (Ryan & Xenos, 2011). In addition, luxury is overrepresented on social media. Social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, Youtube, Twitter, and so on, are used to promote the ideology that possessions are important and that desirable qualities such as beauty, happiness and success can be obtained by acquiring material possessions. Hence, individuals who frequently use social media and are exposed to its contents could have an increased belief that materialistic values bring happiness and success.

This study rests on a double pivot of theories (cultivation and social realism). Cultivation theory has been used in the past decade to explain why media viewership and materialism are positively related (Morgan & Shanahan, 2010). It noted that individuals who use media indiscriminately and with lack of discretion will be more likely to perceive the real world in ways that reflect the most stable and recurrent patterns of portrayals in the media world (Signorelli & Morgan, 1990). On the basis of this theory, heavier users of social media will be more likely to hold beliefs that are consistent with the material world portrayed on social media than lighter users. On the same note, it has been argued that social media influence the construction of social reality which suggests to some extent that social media shape or cultivate individual's perception of social reality. This can be further buttressed when social media images are not entirely congruence with the typical environments of users or when users do not have alternative sources of information on which to base their judgements of social reality.

Given the heavy usage of social media among young people, they might be living in two dimensions (i.e. real life versus virtual life). From the perspective of social realism, it can be contended that social media presents an unrealistic image of many aspects of the traditional simplistic Nigerian lifestyle. For instance, luxury is presented more than the average individual can expect to acquire in a lifetime. The lack of discretion and indiscriminate social media exposure and wanton materialistic values may be seen as being caught between the devil and the deep blue sea. This is a difficult situation where an individual is faced with two dangerous alternatives. The devil is bad and being caught in the deep blue sea is like in no man's land which is also bad. This naturally raises concern and in this regard, indiscriminate social media exposure and materialistic values, are seen as antithesis to the objectives of social studies education. One major task of the social studies education is the attempt to generate desirable social attitudes such as self-discipline, social and moral responsibility. Yusuf (2004) added that social studies education is equally an important vehicle to understand the Nigerian society and make individuals conscious of others' existence and therefore develop the spirit of self-sacrifice and self-reliance.

According to Aslam (2017), young people between the ages of 18-29 represent the heaviest (59%) users of Instagram where 95 million photos are shared daily and over 40 billion photos have been shared since its launch. The indiscriminate social media exposure and the

emphasis and importance that young people place on possessions and consumption, namely, materialism, is an important area of study for social educators. Vandana (2014) cited studies in India (Gupta, 2011), United Kingdom (GFK Social Research, 2007), and United States (Kortan, 1999) which revealed that individuals have become more materialistic these days than in previous generations. One of the earlier studies suggested that individuals' consumption of traditional media is related to their level of materialism (Bindah & Othman, 2011).

In a vice versa situation, Kamal et al (2013) reported that individuals with high levels of materialism tend to be heavy users of media. Overtime, several studies have been conducted on the relationship between traditional forms of media such as television and print advertising, and materialism (Lens, Pandelaere, & Warlop, 2010). In addition, a handful of studies extended materialism relationship to the area of the internet (Chang & Zhang, 2008; and Jiang & Chia, 2009). But there is yet to be deeper insight into the relationship between materialism and the trendy form of media: social media. In this vein, this study investigated the relationship between social media exposure and materialism among undergraduates of Lagos State University. The major purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between social media exposure and materialistic values of undergraduates in Lagos State University. By so doing, the following research questions were raised to guide the study.

- (i) What is the level of materialism among Lagos state university undergraduates?
- (ii) To what extent does social media exposure affect materialistic values of Lagos State University undergraduates?
- (iii) Is there any relationship between social media usage and materialism among Lagos state university undergraduates?

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between social media exposure and materialistic values of undergraduates in Lagos State University

Methodology

This study was an online type of survey. The population comprised the undergraduates of Lagos State University, Nigeria. Active users of Instagram among Lagos State University Undergraduates formed the target population. Purposive sampling technique was used to randomly select undergraduates of Lagos State University who are active users of Instagram. Lagos State University official Instagram page formed the existing database as it was used as the platform to request the participation of undergraduates in the 5minutes online survey. The sample comprised of 240 active users aged 17 – 28years, 147 female and 93 male students who responded to the online survey which had three sections. Section A consisted of demographic information of the participants.

Section B was used to assess participants' level of materialism. Participants responded to a 10-item short version of Material Values Scale (MVS, Richins, 2004) on a 4-point likert type scale which ranged from 1 as strongly disagree to 4 as strongly agree. Original scoring was based on three constructs of materialism: Success (I measure success in life as having many material possessions), Centrality (I find luxury as very important) and Happiness (Buying things give me a lot of pleasure). Section C was used to assess the affective component of social media exposure, responses were obtained on a 10-item researchers-designed questionnaire with high and low ratings. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer and calculate research questions 1 and 2. While research question 3 had

corresponding research hypothesis which was tested and analysed with paired t-test at 0.05 level of significance.

Answering Research Questions

Research Question 1: What is the level of materialism among Undergraduates of Lagos State University?

Responses were collated and subjected to mean and standard deviation. Given that the 10 items in section B of the questionnaire were structured in a four-response-type, the minimum, maximum and range score of respondents were 10, 40 and 30 respectively. The range was therefore divided by three responses (High, Average and low) and the cut-off of 10 was obtained. Thus, 10 – 20, 21 – 30 and 31 – 40 scores signified Low, Average and high level of materialism respectively. The mean statistics of respondents were weighted and presented in table 1.

Table 1: Level of Materialism among Undergraduates in Lagos State University

S/N	Items	No	Mean	S.D.
1.	I find luxury as very important	240	3.45	1.12
2.	I consider accumulating too much money to buy all things I need as essential in life	240	3.42	1.23
3.	Owning expensive items such as clothes, wristwatches, footwear's are important for perfect living	240	3.40	1.34
4.	I measure success in life as having many material possessions	240	3.31	1.47
5.	I feel happier with my beautiful possessions	240	3.28	1.57
6.	Buying things gives me a lot of pleasure	240	3.21	1.69
7.	I get upset when I do not have money to purchase the things I want	240	3.15	1.73
8.	I admire people who own expensive homes, cars and clothes	240	3.10	1.80
9.	I like to own expensive things that impress people	240	3.07	1.84
10.	the things I own say a lot about how well I am going in life	240	3.00	1.95
Weighted Mean			32.39	

Table 1 illustrated that the weighted mean obtained was 32.39 which fell within the score range of 31-40. This implies that the level of materialism was high among undergraduates of Lagos State University. The high level of materialism is a negative trait.

Research Question 2: To What Extent does Social Media Exposure affect Materialistic Values of Undergraduates in Lagos State University?

In response to research question 2, data was collated and subjected to mean and standard deviation. The 10 items in section C of the questionnaire were also structured in a fourresponse-type, the minimum, maximum and range score of respondents were 10, 40 and 30 respectively. The range was also divided by three responses (High, Average and low)

and the cut-off of 10 was obtained. Thus, 10 – 20, 21 – 30 and 31 – 40 scores signified Low, Average and high level of extent of social media exposure respectively. The mean statistics of respondents were weighted and presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Extent of Social Media Exposure on Materialistic Values of Undergraduates

S/N	Items	No	Mean	S.D.
1.	I use social media profile/update as a symbol of success of my contacts	240	3.62	1.02
2.	Social media gives me the platform to show my expensive items	240	3.58	1.06
3.	Buying expensive things to display on social media gives me a lot of pleasure	240	3.53	1.11
4.	I find friends who show off expensive stuffs on social media to be more fun.	240	3.47	1.21
5.	I have frequent thoughts about my favorite social media celebrities	240	3.46	1.33
6.	I hope I can be as attractive as some of my contacts on social media	240	3.42	1.43
7.	I hope I can be as successful as some of my friends on social media	240	3.31	1.54
8.	I want to be as stylish as some people I see on social media	240	3.23	1.62
9.	I want to be as trendy as some models on social media	240	3.18	1.73
10.	I aspire to have the lifestyles of some celebrities I see on social media	240	3.05	1.87
Weighted Mean			33.85	

As Shown in Table 2, the weighted mean obtained was 33.85. Since the weighted mean fell within the scoring range of 31–40, this shows that the extent of Social Media Exposure on Materialistic Values of Undergraduates was high. The high level of social media exposure is an indication of negative response.

Hypothesis Testing

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between social media exposure and materialistic values of undergraduates in Lagos State University.

Table 3: Paired t-test Statistics showing the Difference between Social Media Exposure and Materialistic Values of Undergraduates in Lagos State University

Variables	No	Mean	S. D.	df	t-value	Sig	Remark
Exposure	240	19.821	5.409	239	3.714	0.01	Significant
Materialistic Value	240	27.975	8.454				

*Significance at $p < 0.05$

Table 3 shows that the paired t-value 3.714 is obtained with a p-value of 0.01 computed at 0.05 alpha level. Since the p-value of 0.01 is less than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, there was significant difference between social media exposure and materialistic values of undergraduates in Lagos State University ($t_{\{239\}} = 3.714$, $p < 0.05$).

Summary of Findings

- (i) There exists high level of materialism among undergraduates in University of Lagos.
- (ii) Social media exposure is high among undergraduates which influence their materialistic values.
- (iii) There is significant relationship between social media exposure and materialistic values of undergraduates.

Discussion

Findings of this study revealed that materialism is high among undergraduates. This is in line with Vandana (2014) and Gupta (2011) who found that this present generation is more materialistic than previous generations. Maltby (2010) observed that many young people believe that they will become famous even if they have no deserving skills or talent, with Ng, Tam and Shu (2011) adding that the desire for fame is associated with materialism. This is also in agreement with Kamal et al (2013) who reported that both American and Arab young social media users exhibited a higher level of materialism. Another observation from the output of analysis indicated that social media exposure is high among undergraduates which influence their materialistic values. This finding is in consonance with Kamal et al (2013) who found that both American and Arab social media users showed high level of social media usage which serves as a predictor of their materialistic values. Sabir, Naeem and Amin (2016) also indicated that social media intensity has direct effect on conspicuous consumption (materialism). In addition, Cheung (2013) observed that attraction towards media celebrities significantly predict materialistic values of young people. The aforementioned was explained by Suren (2016) as the vulnerability that exist among young people that are heaviest users of social media. Ryan and Xenos (2011) had earlier reported that social media may provide an opportunity for young people on social media to engage in self-promotional behaviours but not to suggest that all social media users are participating for superficial reasons. It should be understood that social media provide space to young people to draw images about their identities (social status, likes and dislikes, beliefs, interests), therefore, young people indulge in activities through which they can present themselves in a better way to get appreciation among friends, peers and family.

Another finding of this study revealed that there is significant statistical relationship between social media exposure and materialistic values of undergraduates. This is in agreement with one study of American and Arab youth that revealed materialism is higher as social media use increases (Kamal, et al, 2013). The findings suggest that, just as television use is associated with more materialism, so is use of social media. This seems logical since most social media messages also contain advertising, which is how the social media companies make a profit. This finding is also in agreement with Moore and McElroy (2011) and Pagani, Hofacker and Goldsmith (2011) who discovered that social media users are often materialistic. Although, Sabir, et al (2016) revealed that relation between social media intensity and materialism was insignificant. This was due to introducing materialism as a mediator variable. In the virtual arena of Instagram, facebook, twitter, youtube, young

people choose what they want to present and more often than not, choose to expose luxurious and aromatic self-image because they know their peers are observing their activities which is quite irrational and impetuous. This finding has lend credence to the position that social media may promote materialism because it concentrates on what individuals have, want to be and not who individuals are.

Conclusion

On the basis of the findings in this study, highly exposed social media users will be more likely to hold beliefs that are consistent with the material world portrayed on social media than lowly exposed users. On this note, social media influence the construction of social reality which suggests to some extent that social media shape or cultivate individual's perception of social reality. This can be further buttressed when social media images are not entirely congruence with the typical environments of users or when users do not have alternative sources of information on which to base their judgements of social reality. Given the heavy usage of social media among young people, they might be living in two dimensions. Hence, individuals who frequently use social media and are exposed to its contents could have an increased belief that materialistic values bring happiness and success. The aforementioned is evidence to the negative context of social media exposure and materialistic values leaving young people in a situation between the devil and the deep blue sea.

Recommendations

The findings of this study contribute significantly to the understanding of young people on social media exposure, if it can be used for negativity like materialistic values, it can also be used to promote desired societal values in realizing the objectives of social studies education.

- (i) The need for social media literacy through its introduction as a theme/topic/course in social studies curriculum at all levels of education to educate users on the dangers and also enhance the positive traits of social media.
- (ii) Discourage high level of materialism by extolling high moral virtues and projecting image of morally upright individuals.
- (iii) Acquire social media skills for social studies instruction and seize the initiative for positive social media exposure.
- (iv) To encourage the general public to see social media as a positive tool to enhance, stimulate and promote societal values.

References

- Aslam, S. (2017, August 10). Instagram by the numbers: Stats, demographics and fun facts. OmniCore. Retrieved from www.omnicoreagency.com/instagram-statistics/
- Bindah, E. V. & Othman, M. N. (2011). The role of family communication and television viewing in the development of materialistic values among young adults: A review. *International Journal of Business and Social Sciences*, 2,23, 238-248.
- Chang, J., & Zhang, H. (2008). Analyzing online game players: From materialism and motivation to attitude. *Cyberpsychology and Behavior*, 11,6, 711-14.

- Cheung, W. K. (2013). The relationship between advertising and the level of materialism among adolescents in Hong Kong. *Discovery-SS Student E-Journal*, 2, 68-89.
- GFK Social Research. (2007). Reflections on childhood-lifestyle. Retrieved from http://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/resources/documents/good%20childhood/6293_full.pdf
- Gupta, N. (2011). Globalization does lead to change in consumer behavior: An empirical evidence of impact of globalization on changing materialistic values in Indian consumers and its aftereffects. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 23,3, 251-269.
- Jiang, R., & Chia, S. C. (2009). The direct and indirect effects of advertising on materialism of college students in China. *Asian Journal of Communication*, 19,3, 319-36.
- Kamal, S., Chu, S., & Pedram, M. (2013). Materialism, attitudes, and social media usage and their impact on purchase intention of luxury fashion goods among American and Arab young generations. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 13,1, 27-40.
- Kaplan, A. & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world unite: The challenges and opportunities of social media. *Business Horizons*, 53, 59-68.
- Kortan, D. C. (1999). *The post-corporate world: Life after capitalism*. New York: BerrettKoehler Pub.
- Lens, I., Pandelaere, M., & Warlop, L. (2010). Effects of advertising exposure on materialism and self-esteem: Advertised luxuries as a feel-good strategy? *Advances in Consumer Research*, 37. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/1854/LU-970121>
- Maltby, J. (2010). An interest in fame: Confirming the measurement and empirical conceptualization of fame interest. *British Journal of Psychology*, 101, 411-432.
- Moore, K., & McElroy, J.C. (2012). The influence of personality on facebook usage, wall postings, and regret. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 28, 267-274.
- Morgan, M., & Shanahan, J. (2010). The state of cultivation. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 54, 337-355.
- Ng, H. K. S., Tam, K. P. & Shu, T. M. (2011). The money attitude of covert and overt narcissists. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 51, 160-165.
- Oprea, S.J., Buijzen, M., van Reijmersdal, E.A., & Valkenburg, P.M. (2011). Children's advertising exposure, advertised product desire, and materialism: A longitudinal study. *Communication Research*, 1-31.
- Richins, M. L. (2004). The material values scale: Measurement properties and development of a short form. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31,1, 209-219.
- Roberts, J. A. & Clement, A. (2007). Materialism and satisfaction with overall quality of life and eight life domains. *Social Indicator Research*, 82,79-92.

- Ryan, T. & Xenos, S. (2011). Who uses facebook? An investigation into the relationship between the big five, shyness, narcissism, loneliness and facebook usage. *Computers in Human Behaviour*, 27, 1658-1664.
- Sabir, R. I., Naeem, M., & Amin, M. (2016, December 19-20). Determining the impact of social media intensity and celebrity culture on conspicuous consumption with mediating effect of materialism. *Proceedings of 2nd International Multi-Disciplinary Conference*, Gujrat, India.
- Signorelli, N., & Morgan, M. (1990). Preface. In N. Signorelli, & M. Morgan (Eds). *Cultivation analysis: New directions in media effects research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Statista (2017). Number of monthly active Facebook users worldwide as of 2nd quarter 2017. The Statistics Portal. Retrieved from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/264810/number-of-monthly-active-facebookusers-worldwide/>
- Suren, R. (2016). Influence of social media on teenagers. Retrieved from www.huffingtonpost.com/suren-ramasubbu/influence-of-social-media-on-teenagers_b_7427740.html
- Vandana, U. L. (2014). A review on the role of media in increasing materialism among children. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 133, 456-464.
- Yusuf, A. (2004). Effects of co-operative and competitive instructional strategies on junior secondary school students in social studies in Ilorin, Nigeria. Phd. Thesis. Ilorin: Curriculum Studies and Educational Technology Department, University of Ilorin.