

Asosiasi Asesmen Pendidikan (AAP)


Address: Bumi Mutiara Serang, Cluster Symphony, Blok C2 No.18 Serang – Banten, 42122 – Indonesia.

☎ +62 85312898866; ✉ jurnal@aapbk.org



Journal of Counseling and Educational Research

ISSN 3063-9786 (Electronic)

Editor:  Yuda Syahputra

Publication details, including author guidelines

URL: <https://journal.aapbk.org/index.php/jcerch/about/submissions#authorGuidelines>

Parental Monitoring and Open Communication Strategies as Predictors of Adolescents' Social Media Use and Adjustment among undergraduates in Anambra State, Nigeria

Mary Nneka Nwipko¹, Azukaego Ifeoma Eluemuno², Victor Ugochukwu Ezeonwumelu¹, Christopher Obinna Alaribe¹

¹Department of Educational Foundations, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria

²Department of Educational Psychology/G&C, Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri, Nigeria

Article History

Received : 24 Mai 2025

Revised : 14 July 2025

Accepted : 17 July 2025

How to cite this article (APA 6th)

Nwipko, M. N., Eluemuno, A. I., Ezeonwumelu, V. U., & Alaribe, C. O. (2025). Parental Monitoring and Open Communication Strategies as Predictors of Adolescents' Social Media Use and Adjustment among undergraduates in Anambra State, Nigeria. *Journal of Counseling and Educational Research*, 2(1), 1–13. DOI: 10.63203/jcerch.v2i1.174

The readers can link to article via <https://doi.org/10.63203/jcerch.v2i1.174>

Correspondence regarding this article should be addressed to:

Mary Nneka Nwipko, E-mail : nm.nwipko@unizik.edu.ng, Awka, Nigeria

SCROLL DOWN TO READ THIS ARTICLE



Asosiasi Asesmen Pendidikan (as Publisher) makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications. However, we make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Asosiasi Asesmen Pendidikan. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information.



This work is licensed under a <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>

Copyright by Nwipko, M. N., Eluemuno, A. I., Ezeonwumelu, V. U., & Alaribe, C. O. (2025)

The authors whose names are listed in this manuscript declared that they have NO affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest (such as honoraria; educational grants; participation in speakers' bureaus; membership, employment, consultancies, stock ownership, or other equity interest; and expert testimony or patent licensing arrangements), or non-financial interest (such as personal or professional relationships, affiliations, knowledge or beliefs) in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript. This statement is signed by all the authors to indicate agreement that the all information in this article is true and correct.

Original Article

Parental Monitoring and Open Communication Strategies as Predictors of Adolescents' Social Media Use and Adjustment among undergraduates in Anambra State, Nigeria

Mary Nneka Nwikpo¹, Azukaego Ifeoma Eluemuno², Victor Ugochukwu Ezeonwumelu¹,
Christopher Obinna Alaribe¹

¹Department of Educational Foundations, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria

²Department of Educational Psychology/G&C, Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri, Nigeria

Abstract. The increasing immersion of children and young adults in social media has heightened concerns about their psychosocial adjustment, underscoring the critical role of parental monitoring and communication. This study investigated how parental involvement, through monitoring and open communication, predicts social media use and adjustment among undergraduates in Anambra State, Nigeria. A correlational survey design was employed. Data were collected from 269 undergraduates (134 males, 135 females), aged 17 to 24 years, purposively selected from two public universities. The 24-item Parental Monitoring and Communication Questionnaire (PMCQ), culturally adapted and revalidated by experts, was used for data collection. Analyses were conducted using descriptive statistics, simple linear regression, and multiple regressions via SPSS version 25. Parental monitoring negatively predicted social media use ($\beta = -0.29$, $R^2 = .084$, $p < .001$) and positively predicted adolescent adjustment ($\beta = 0.34$, $R^2 = .116$, $p < .001$). Similarly, open communication negatively predicted social media use ($\beta = -0.23$, $R^2 = .053$, $p < .001$) and positively predicted adolescent adjustment ($\beta = 0.31$, $R^2 = .096$, $p < .001$). When combined, parental monitoring and open communication explained 11.6% of the variance in social media use and 17.2% in adolescent adjustment ($p < .001$), confirming their joint predictive strength. The findings reinforce the importance of autonomy-supportive parenting practices in the digital age. Implications include the need to enhance parents' digital literacy, promote culturally sensitive communication, and encourage school-family collaboration. It is recommended that parenting workshops, school engagement programs, and policy frameworks be developed to support parents in guiding responsible social media use among Nigerian youth.

Keywords: Parental Monitoring; Open Communication; Adjustment; Social Media

Corresponding author: Mary Nneka Nwikpo, E-mail : nm.nwikpo@unizik.edu.ng, Awka, Nigeria



This work is licensed under a CC-BY

Introduction

While adolescence is conventionally defined as the period between ages 10 and 19, emerging research in developmental psychology supports an extended conceptualisation of this stage into the early twenties. This broader framework, often referred to as “late adolescence” or “emerging adulthood,” is particularly applicable to undergraduate students aged 17 to 24, who continue to

experience salient developmental transitions. These include identity exploration, value formation, and increased autonomy processes typically associated with adolescent development. Importantly, individuals within this age bracket often engage in risk-prone behaviours analogous to those observed in younger adolescents, such as substance use, weapon-related behaviour (Nwikipo et al., 2020; Nwikipo et al., 2021), unprotected sexual activity (Shayo & Kalomo, 2019), and problematic digital engagements, including exposure to idealised romantic content via dating apps (Nwikipo et al., 2025) and social media-related challenges like time mismanagement and academic procrastination (Ezeonwumelu et al., 2021). Therefore, the present study adopts a developmental lens that recognises the continued relevance of the term “adolescents” in describing undergraduate students, given their ongoing susceptibility to psychosocial vulnerabilities and maladaptive behaviours characteristic of this transitional life stage.

Given the developmental vulnerabilities still present among undergraduate students, especially in their continued susceptibility to maladaptive behaviours, the role of parental influence remains crucial during this extended adolescent phase. This reality underscores the vital role of parents in guiding adolescent behaviour, particularly through monitoring and open communication. Successful parenting during adolescence demands consistent engagement, effective supervision, and a solid emotional bond. This is why Nwikipo et al (2016; 2021) explained it as the period that requires that the task of parenting be done assiduously with all necessary support system put in place to churn out well-adjusted children and adolescents to promote the desired virtues of good citizenship. Social media use, although potentially enriching, poses significant developmental risks when excessive or unsupervised. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok allow adolescents to express themselves, build social networks, and access support (Dodemaide et al., 2022), but overuse has been linked to poor sleep (Lund et al., 2021; Yu et al., 2024), attention difficulties (Cardoso-Leite et al., 2021), academic challenges (Paul, 2024; Ezeonwumelu et al., 2025), reinforcement of unrealistic romantic ideals (Nwikipo, 2025) and psychological distress including depression, anxiety, validation-seeking behavior and social comparison and suicidal ideation (Hilty et al., 2023; Young et al., 2024; Offor et al., 2024). Additionally, prolonged social media engagement may reduce meaningful offline interactions, undermining family relationships and cohesion (Mahmoud & Shafik, 2020; Ukaegbu et al., 2022).

A relevant concept in this context is ‘technoference’ which is the disruption of interpersonal communication by technology (McDaniel, 2014). Smartphones and other digital devices, while beneficial, often interfere with parent-child interactions, potentially weakening relational bonds, and impeding parental influence. As adolescents increasingly turn to online spaces for connection and validation, parents face the challenge of remaining involved without being intrusive. Research highlights the efficacy of proactive, constructive strategies for reducing social media-related risks. Jaycox (2024) supports using the platforms themselves for intervention. Ezeonwumelu et al. (2021) recommend integrating educational content into social media to promote time management and responsible use. Central to these interventions is parental involvement, with studies emphasizing the importance of setting boundaries and maintaining open communication (Alabi & Kabiru, 2024; Barry & Kim, 2023; Meng et al., 2025).

Parental monitoring, defined as the awareness and supervision of children’s behaviours, routines, and relationships, remains a cornerstone of adolescent development. Effective monitoring includes setting rules, knowing the child’s friends, tracking school performance, and supervising online activity. These practices can mitigate adolescents’ engagement in risky behaviours, such as substance abuse, cultism, and sexual exploitation, while promoting healthier emotional and behavioural outcomes (Umeh & Ekwueme, 2018).

Nonetheless, monitoring adolescents poses unique challenges due to the developmental characteristics associated with this stage. Adolescents seek autonomy, resist authority, and often strive for peer acceptance, which can lead them to follow peer norms, even when those norms

involve risky behaviors (Nwikpo & Offordueze, 2022). Emotional volatility, identity exploration, sensitivity to criticism, and emerging sexual awareness often contribute to tension in parent-child relationships. In the Nigerian context, these dynamics are further complicated by cultural norms that discourage open dialogue on sensitive topics, particularly issues related to sex and mental health. Even though exposure through education appears to be relaxing some of the culturally imposed restrictions on parent-child communication about such sensitive matters, research has revealed that many parents, especially mothers, who are naturally regarded as the “bridge to the social life” of their children, are not technologically savvy enough to guide and monitor their children effectively in digital spaces. These parents are constrained by several factors that hinder effective digital parenting (Nwikpo et al., 2021). Unfortunately, even when such parents are aware of their limitations, they often continue to adopt authoritarian, power-controlling parenting styles.

Scholars note that overly strict or psychologically controlling parental behavior can trigger adverse outcomes. Flamant et al. (2020) found that adolescents often perceive intrusive supervision as psychological control, leading to different coping mechanisms that contribute to internalizing (e.g., anxiety, depression) and externalizing (e.g., defiance) symptoms. Similarly, Wang et al. (2007) observed that authoritarian strategies negatively affect adolescents' emotional regulation and adjustment. Thus, monitoring must be balanced with sensitivity and autonomy-supportive strategies.

The integration of open communication as a parenting strategy is essential. It aligns closely with principles from developmental psychology, particularly Erikson's psychosocial theory and Attachment theory. According to Erikson (1968), adolescents navigating the identity versus role confusion stage require environments that encourage self-expression and exploration. Open, empathetic dialogue with parents fosters emotional security and validation, both of which are critical for identity formation and psychosocial stability. Likewise, Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969; Ainsworth, 1989) posits that secure parent-child bonds, developed through emotionally responsive communication, promote trust and adolescent willingness to disclose. Metzger et al. (2012) found that parents who emphasize communication over control experience higher levels of adolescent disclosure and reduced conflict, compared to those adopting authoritarian styles. Open communication, characterized by honesty, empathy, and mutual respect, creates a safe space for adolescents to express themselves without fear of reprimand or rejection. Empirical evidence further shows that such dialogic practices not only strengthen parent-child relationships but also promote responsible social media engagement (Branje, 2018; Umeh & Ekwueme, 2018). Notably, the Parent-Adolescent Communication about Adolescents' Social Media Use Scale (PACAS), developed by Beyens et al. (2024), indicates that adolescents are more likely to disclose online activities when open dialogue is encouraged. This, in turn, reduces covert or risky digital behaviors.

In the contemporary digital landscape, parental monitoring and communication are indispensable for understanding how adolescents navigate online platforms and maintain psychosocial well-being. A growing body of research underscores the influence of parental involvement on adolescents' digital behaviors and emotional adjustment. For instance, Boer et al. (2023) found that parenting approaches that blend active monitoring with emotional support mitigate problematic social media use. In the Nigerian context, Amobi et al. (2020) and Adigwe and van der Walt (2020) observed that parental mediation styles significantly affect adolescents' social media engagement and capacity for self-regulation. In the same vein, James and Kur (2022) identified the mediation strategies employed by parents in addressing digital media risks encountered by children, specifically those related to conduct, content, contact, and commercial exposure, and examined the outcomes associated with these strategies. Moreover, open communication has consistently emerged as a protective factor. Shpancer (2020), in a systematic review, concluded that empathetic parent-adolescent dialogue enhances emotional regulation and social competence. Similarly, Mbachu et al. (2020) demonstrated that Nigerian adolescents whose caregivers engage in open communication report greater comfort and knowledge in

addressing sensitive topics. These findings underscore the need for communication strategies that go beyond mere supervision.

Despite individual scholarly attention to both parental monitoring and open communication, research on their combined effect on adolescents' social media use and psychosocial adjustment, particularly among Nigerian undergraduates, is markedly limited. Much of the extant literature either isolates these parenting strategies or focuses primarily on younger adolescents. However, in contexts like Nigeria where parental influence often extends into emerging adulthood, students in tertiary institutions continue to depend on familial support. This study therefore offers a novel contribution by jointly examining these two complementary parenting strategies and their simultaneous impact on two vital outcomes: digital engagement and psychosocial adjustment. Grounded in the socio-cultural realities of Anambra State, the investigation bridges a significant gap in existing scholarship. The findings are anticipated to inform culturally sensitive parenting practices, digital literacy initiatives, and mental health interventions. These are all crucial in today's dynamic technological and social environment.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the predictive value of parental monitoring on social media use and adjustment among undergraduates in Anambra State.
2. To investigate the predictive value of open communication with parents on social media use and adjustment among undergraduates in Anambra State.
3. To determine the combined predictive influence of parental monitoring and open communication strategies on social media use and adjustment among undergraduates in Anambra State.

Research Questions

1. What is the predictive value of parental monitoring on social media use and adjustment among undergraduates in Anambra State?
2. What is the predictive value of open communication with parents on undergraduates' social media use and adjustment in Anambra State?
3. What is the combined predictive influence of parental monitoring and open communication strategies on social media use and adjustment among undergraduates in Anambra State?

Null Hypotheses

1. **There is no significant predictive value** of parental monitoring on social media use and adjustment among undergraduates in Anambra State.
2. **There is no significant predictive value** of open communication with parents on social media use and adjustment among undergraduates in Anambra State.
3. **There is no significant combined predictive influence** of parental monitoring and open communication strategies on social media use and adjustment among undergraduates in Anambra State.

Scope of the Study

This study is delimited to undergraduate students in two universities in Anambra State, namely Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka (a federal university) and Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam (a state university). The study focuses on students across all available Faculties in these institutions. However, it is restricted to students in 100 to 300 levels. Final year students (400 level and above) are excluded from the study on the grounds

that, due to their longer duration in the university environment, they may have developed a higher degree of maturity and self-monitoring in their use of social media, which could introduce bias into the results. The study specifically examines the influence of parental monitoring and open communication strategies on students' use of social media and their adjustment. The social media platforms of interest are limited to Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram, as these are among the most widely used platforms by Nigerian youths for social interaction, self-expression, and content consumption.

Method

Design of the Study

The study adopted a correlational survey design, which was appropriate for examining the predictive relationships between the independent variables, parental monitoring and open communication strategies, and the dependent variables, social media use and adolescent adjustment, among undergraduate students in Anambra State. The design allowed for the collection and analysis of self-reported data without manipulation of variables.

Participants

The population for this study comprised undergraduate students in Anambra State, Nigeria. The final sample consisted of 269 students (134 males, 135 females), aged between 17 and 24 years ($M = 19.64$, $SD = 1.73$), drawn from two public universities: Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka ($n = 141$) and Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam ($n = 128$). A purposive sampling technique was used to select these institutions, with the intention of capturing the experiences of students from both a federal (NAU) and a state-owned (COOU) university, thereby enhancing the diversity and generalizability of findings within Anambra State. These institutions were also selected due to their large and heterogeneous student populations, their strategic locations in different senatorial districts of the state, and the researchers' logistical access and existing academic collaborations which facilitated data collection.

Students were recruited across multiple faculties, including Education, Social Sciences, Arts, Management, and Health Sciences, to ensure representation of various academic disciplines. Although full proportional sampling by faculty size was not implemented, efforts were made to include a balanced mix of disciplines to reflect the diversity of student experiences and backgrounds. Initially, 300 students (150 from each university) were invited to participate in the study. After data screening for completeness and eligibility, 31 responses were excluded, resulting in 269 valid responses. To ensure relevance to the research objectives, only students who self-identified as active users of social media platforms and who gave informed consent were included in the final sample.

The population for this study comprised undergraduate students in Anambra State, Nigeria. The final sample consisted of 269 students (134 males, 135 females) aged between 17 and 24 years ($M = 19.64$, $SD = 1.73$), drawn from two public universities: Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka ($n = 141$) and Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam ($n = 128$). A purposive sampling technique was employed to select these institutions, one federal and one state-owned, based on their accessibility and demographic diversity. Initially, 300 students (150 from each university) were invited to participate. Following data screening, 31 responses were excluded due to incompleteness or non-submission, resulting in 269 valid responses. Eligibility criteria included active engagement with social media platforms and willingness to participate in the study.

Instrumentation

Data were collected using a structured, self-report instrument titled: Parental Monitoring and Communication Questionnaire (PMCQ). The questionnaire consisted of four sections with a total of 24 items (6 items per section), adapted from validated instruments to suit the study context:

1. Section A: Parental Monitoring Scale – Adapted from Stattin and Kerr (2000), this section assessed the extent to which students perceived their parents as monitoring their daily activities.
2. Section B: Parent-Adolescent Communication Scale – Adapted from Barnes and Olson (1985), this section measured the level of openness and quality of communication between undergraduates and their parents.
3. Section C: Social Media Use Scale – Adapted from the Social Media Engagement Questionnaire (SMEQ) by Savci and Aysan (2017), this section assessed behavioural tendencies and levels of engagement with social media platforms.
4. Section D: Adolescent Adjustment Scale – Adapted from the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) developed by Goodman (1997), this section measured aspects of emotional, social, and behavioural adjustment among the students.

All items across the four sections were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), and the instrument was adapted and revalidated for cultural and contextual appropriateness to suit the Nigerian undergraduate population.

Procedure

The adapted instrument underwent revalidation through expert review by university lecturers in Educational Foundations to ensure content and face validity. A pilot study was also conducted involving 30 undergraduate students from Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri, a university not included in the main study sample. The internal consistency of each subscale was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The results were as follows:

1. Parental Monitoring Scale ($\alpha = 0.81$)
2. Parent-Adolescent Communication Scale ($\alpha = 0.85$)
3. Social Media Use Scale ($\alpha = 0.78$)
4. Adolescent Adjustment Scale ($\alpha = 0.83$)

These coefficients indicate satisfactory internal consistency for all subscales. The questionnaire was administered electronically using Google Forms. The researchers did not physically interact with the respondents; instead, the link to the form was distributed through university student WhatsApp platforms, emails, and academic group forums. Before accessing the questionnaire, participants were presented with an informed consent section that explained the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and the right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. Confidentiality and anonymity of responses were assured. Only those who provided consent by ticking the agreement box were allowed to proceed to the questionnaire items. Data collection lasted for two weeks, after which responses were retrieved, screened, and prepared for analysis.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25. The following analytical tools were employed: descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) to summarise participants' responses across the four variables of interest; simple linear regression to determine the individual predictive value of parental monitoring and open communication on both social media use and adolescent adjustment; and multiple regression analysis to determine the combined predictive influence of parental

monitoring and open communication on social media use and adjustment. All hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance, with the results reported using regression coefficients (β), coefficient of determination (R^2), F-values, and p-values.

Results and Discussions

This section presents the results of the study based on the research questions and null hypotheses using descriptive and inferential statistics. The analyses were carried out using SPSS version 25.0.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables (N = 269)

Variable	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Parental Monitoring	21.37	4.26
Open Communication	22.14	3.89
Social Media Use	20.45	4.72
Adolescent Adjustment	19.87	4.63

Note. M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation.

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the main variables. The mean scores suggest that the participants reported moderate levels of parental monitoring and open communication. Their average levels of social media use and adolescent adjustment also appear moderate, which provides a foundation for exploring predictive relationships.

Table 2. Simple Linear Regression: Predictive Value of Parental Monitoring

Outcome Variable	β	R^2	F	p
Social Media Use	-0.29	.084	24.43	< .001
Adolescent Adjustment	0.34	.116	35.20	< .001

Note. β = standardized regression coefficient.

The results in Table 2 indicate that parental monitoring significantly predicted both social media use and adolescent adjustment. The negative β value for social media use suggests that higher parental monitoring is associated with lower social media use. Conversely, the positive β value for adolescent adjustment indicates that greater parental monitoring is associated with better adjustment. Thus, the first null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 3. Simple Linear Regression Showing the Predictive Value of Open Communication on Social Media Use and Adjustment

Outcome Variable	β	R^2	F	p
Social Media Use	-0.23	.053	14.89	< .001
Adolescent Adjustment	0.31	.096	28.93	< .001

Note. All results significant at $p < .05$.

Table 3 shows that open communication with parents also significantly predicted both social media use and adolescent adjustment. Higher levels of open communication were associated with reduced social media use and enhanced adolescent adjustment. Therefore, the second null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 4. *Multiple Regression: Combined Predictive Influence of Parental Monitoring and Open Communication*

Outcome Variable	Predictor	β	R^2	F	p
Social Media Use	Parental Monitoring	−0.21	.116	17.47	< .001
	Open Communication	−0.17			
Adolescent Adjustment	Parental Monitoring	0.25	.172	27.69	< .001
	Open Communication	0.23			

Note. β = standardized regression coefficient. All models significant at $p < .05$.

Table 4 presents the combined predictive effects of parental monitoring and open communication. Both predictors jointly and significantly influenced social media use and adolescent adjustment. The combined R^2 values of .116 and .172 indicate that these parenting strategies account for 11.6% and 17.2% of the variance in social media use and adolescent adjustment respectively. Hence, the third null hypothesis is also rejected.

Discussions

The present study examined the predictive roles of parental monitoring and open communication strategies on social media use and adolescent adjustment among undergraduate students in Anambra State. The findings broadly support the hypothesized relationships and align with existing literature on adolescent development, parenting, and social media engagement. The results revealed that parental monitoring significantly predicted both social media use and adolescent adjustment, with higher levels of monitoring associated with reduced social media use and better adjustment outcomes. This is consistent with prior research emphasizing parental supervision as a critical protective factor in adolescent risk behaviour management (Umeh & Ekwueme, 2018). Given that adolescence is marked by heightened exploration and risk-taking tendencies (Nwikpo et al., 2020; Shayo & Kalomo, 2019), effective parental monitoring appears vital in curbing excessive or problematic engagement with social media platforms, which can otherwise exacerbate issues like academic procrastination and psychological distress (Ezeonwumelu et al., 2021; Hilty et al., 2023). The negative association between monitoring and social media use supports the notion that attentive parental oversight can mitigate adolescents' propensity for potentially disruptive online behaviours (Alabi & Kabiru, 2024). The positive link between parental monitoring and adolescent adjustment underscores the importance of consistent parental engagement during this critical developmental phase. As noted by Nwikpo et al. (2016; 2021), adolescence requires diligent parenting with robust support systems to nurture well-adjusted individuals capable of navigating emerging psychosocial challenges. The finding aligns with evidence that adolescents benefit emotionally and socially when parents maintain awareness of their activities and social networks, facilitating healthier behavioural regulation and resilience (Umeh & Ekwueme, 2018). Vrolijk and Van der Valk (2023) did not agree entirely with this opinion as they found linkages between parental monitoring and adolescents' externalizing problems.

On the other hand, open communication was found to significantly predict social media use and adolescent adjustment, where greater openness correlated with reduced social media use and improved adjustment. This supports the assertion that open, empathetic parent-child dialogue fosters trust and adolescent disclosure, thereby enhancing parental influence without the negative effects associated with authoritarian control (Metzger et al., 2012; Branje, 2018). In the Nigerian context, where the collectivist culture typically emphasises hierarchy, respect for elders, and restrained expression of dissent, such openness is not always encouraged, particularly in discussions around mental health, sexuality, or digital behaviour. These cultural norms may initially hinder open dialogue. However, the study's findings highlight the

transformative potential of empathetic communication strategies in digital parenting (Nwikpo et al., 2021). When adolescents feel safe and supported in expressing themselves, even within a collectivist framework, they are less likely to resort to maladaptive behaviours and more likely to regulate their social media engagement responsibly (Beyens et al., 2024). This suggests that adapting open communication to align with cultural expectations, for example, by maintaining a respectful tone or encouraging indirect disclosure, can make it more acceptable and effective within Nigerian families.

The combined predictive effect of parental monitoring and open communication on both social media use and adjustment further emphasizes the need for integrated parenting approaches. Parenting strategies that balance supervision with open, respectful communication provide adolescents with structure and autonomy support, mitigating risks associated with “technoference” and fostering positive developmental trajectories (McDaniel, 2014; Tang et al., 2024). This integrative approach aligns with the recommendation by Barry and Kim (2023) and Meng et al. (2025) that interventions targeting adolescent well-being in the digital age should not solely focus on control but also on nurturing quality parent-child relationships.

From a theoretical perspective, this finding resonates with Erikson’s psychosocial theory, which posits that adolescents are in the identity versus role confusion stage, during which they seek environments that affirm their self-expression and identity development (Erikson, 1968). Open communication offers emotional security and validation, which facilitates the resolution of this critical developmental task. Similarly, Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969; Ainsworth, 1989) explains that secure attachments, often fostered through responsive and emotionally available communication, contribute to psychosocial adjustment by enhancing trust, emotional regulation, and social competence.

The moderate effect sizes (R^2 values of 0.116 for social media use and 0.172 for adolescent adjustment) suggest that while parental factors are important, other variables such as peer influence, personality traits, and educational environment may also significantly shape adolescent behaviours and outcomes. Future research should explore these additional influences to develop a comprehensive understanding of adolescent adjustment in Nigeria’s evolving social context.

In summary, the study confirms that both parental monitoring and open communication are essential protective factors against excessive social media use and poor adolescent adjustment. These findings carry important implications for parents, educators, and policymakers seeking to support Nigerian undergraduates’ psychosocial development. Culturally sensitive parenting programmes that enhance parents’ digital literacy and communication skills may strengthen family bonds and promote healthier social media practices among adolescents, thereby mitigating risks and enhancing well-being in this critical life stage.

Limitations of the Study

This study has some limitations that should be acknowledged. Firstly, data were collected through self-report questionnaires, which may be subject to response bias, including social desirability and recall inaccuracies. Secondly, the study focused only on undergraduates from two universities in Anambra State, thereby limiting the generalizability of the findings to students in other regions or institutions. Thirdly, the cross-sectional design does not allow for conclusions about causality between variables.

Implications

The results of this study have several important implications for parents, educators, and policymakers etc, seeking to support Nigerian undergraduates' psychosocial development.

1. **Parental Role Reinforcement:** The study underscores the need to support parents in adopting effective monitoring and communication practices that respect adolescents' growing autonomy while providing appropriate guidance.
2. **Digital Literacy Development:** Since many parents, especially mothers, face challenges navigating digital platforms, enhancing parents' digital skills can improve their capacity to supervise and communicate about social media use effectively.
3. **Cultural Sensitivity in Parenting:** Interventions should consider Nigerian cultural norms that often hinder open discussions on sensitive topics, promoting approaches that encourage respectful and empathetic communication without being intrusive.
4. **Holistic Adolescent Support:** Recognizing that parenting is one of multiple influences on adolescent behaviour, schools and community programs should collaborate with families to provide comprehensive support addressing psychosocial and technological challenges.

Conclusions

The study confirms that both parental monitoring and open communication are essential protective factors against excessive social media use and poor adolescent adjustment among undergraduate students in Anambra State, Nigeria. They both significantly and independently predicted adolescents' social media use and adjustment. Furthermore, their combined influence accounted for a meaningful proportion of the variance in these outcomes. These results underscore the continued relevance of parenting practices during late adolescence and emerging adulthood, even as young people assert greater independence. In particular, the study highlights the importance of a balanced approach that combines appropriate supervision with open, empathetic dialogue. Such an approach not only mitigates excessive or harmful social media engagement but also fosters healthier emotional and behavioural adjustment. In the context of Nigeria's evolving digital landscape and cultural dynamics, the study affirms the urgent need to strengthen parent-child relationships through intentional strategies that align with the realities of modern adolescence.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and implications of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Parenting Workshops and Training:** Organize community-based workshops to equip parents with skills in digital literacy, positive monitoring techniques, and effective communication strategies tailored to Nigerian cultural contexts.
2. **School-Family Collaboration:** Schools should establish programs that encourage parental involvement in adolescent digital behaviour and provide resources to foster open dialogues about social media use and mental health.
3. **Development of Digital Parenting Resources:** Educational authorities and NGOs should develop culturally relevant guides and digital tools that assist parents in monitoring adolescents' social media activities while promoting autonomy-supportive communication.
4. **Policy Advocacy:** Policymakers should integrate family-focused digital well-being strategies into broader adolescent health and education policies, ensuring that parental support is a key component of national youth development programs.

Suggestions for Further Research

Future research should adopt a longitudinal design to better understand the causal relationships between parental practices and adolescent social media use and adjustment over time. Expanding the study to include a more diverse sample across multiple states and types of institutions would enhance the generalizability of findings. In addition, employing a mixed-methods approach which combines quantitative surveys with qualitative techniques such as interviews or focus group discussions could yield richer insights into the cultural and contextual nuances of parent-adolescent interactions in the digital age. Future studies may also investigate potential moderating or mediating variables, such as parenting style, gender, socioeconomic status, or social media intensity, to uncover complex pathways through which parental communication and monitoring impact adolescent adjustment. Furthermore, examining the role of parental digital literacy and changing gender norms may provide a more holistic understanding of effective parenting strategies in Nigeria's rapidly evolving digital society.

References

- Adigwe, I., & van der Walt, T. (2020). Parental mediation of online media activities of children in Nigeria: A parent-child approach. *Computers in Human Behavior Reports*, 2, 100041. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chbr.2020.100041>
- Alabi, A., & Kabiru, J. (2024). The impact of social media on family relationships: A study of Jaji, Abuja. *British Journal of Mass Communication and Media Research*, 4 (1). <https://doi.org/10.52589/BJMCMR-NYGWLLJ9> (<https://abjournals.org/bjmcmr/papers/volume-4/issue-1/the-impact-of-social-media-on-family-relationships-a-study-of-jaji-abuja/>)
- Ainsworth, M. D. S. (1989). Attachments beyond infancy. *American Psychologist*, 44(4), 709–716. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.44.4.709>
- Amobi, T. I., Oloruntola, S., & Obia, V. (2020). Parental mediation of mobile and social media engagement of teens in Lagos State, Nigeria. *SAU Journal of Management and Social Sciences*, 5(2), 19–35. Published 2020
- Barnes, H. L., & Olson, D. H. (1985). Parent-adolescent communication and the circumplex model. *Child Development*, 56(2), 438–447. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1129732>
- Barry, C. T., & Kim, H. (2023). Parental monitoring of adolescent social media use: Relations with adolescent mental health and self-perception. *Current Psychology*, 43, 2473–2485. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-023-04434-2>
- Beyens, I., Keijsers, L., & Valkenburg, P. M. (2024). Development, validity, and reliability of the parent-adolescent communication about adolescents' social media use scale (PACAS). *Journal of Children and Media*, 18(2), 159–177. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17482798.2023.2299828>
- Bowlby, J. (1969). *Attachment and loss: Vol. 1. Attachment*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Boer, M., Stevens, G. W. J. M., Finkenauer, C., & van den Eijnden, R. J. J. M. (2023). Predicting adolescents' problematic social media use from profiles of internet-specific parenting practices and general parenting dimensions. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 52, 45–61. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-023-01816-4>
- Branje, S. (2018). Development of parent–adolescent relationships: Conflict interactions as a mechanism of change. *Child Development Perspectives*, 12(3), 171–176. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdep.12278>
- Cardoso-Leite, P., Buchard, A., Tissieres, I., Mussack, D., & Bavelier, D. (2021). Media use, attention, mental health, and academic performance among 8 to 12-year-old children.

- **PLOS ONE*, 16*(11), e0259163. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0259163> (<https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0259163>).
- Dodemaide, P., Merolli, M., Hill, N., Joubert, L. (2022). Do Social Media Impact Young Adult Mental Health and Well-Being? A Qualitative Study, *The British Journal of Social Work*, Volume 52, Issue 8, Pages 4664–4683, <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcac078>
- Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity: Youth and crisis*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Ezeonwumelu, V. U., Nwikipo, M. N., Offor, U. I., & Stanley, U. M. (2025). Frequency of social media engagement as correlates of university undergraduates' academic procrastination in Anambra State. *Journal of Theoretical and Empirical Studies in Education*, 10(2),
- Ezeonwumelu, V. U., Nwikipo, M. N., Okoro, C. C., & Ekanem, E. I. (2021). Social media addiction and time management skills of university students in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. *Global Journal of Social Science Studies*, 7(1), 24–34. <https://doi.org/10.20448/807.7.1.24.34>
- Flamant, N., Haerens, L., Mabbe, E., Vansteenkiste, M., & Soenens, B. (2020). How do adolescents deal with intrusive parenting? The role of coping with psychologically controlling parenting in internalizing and externalizing problems. *Journal of Adolescence*, 84, 200–212. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2020.09.003> ScienceDirect+2
- Goodman, R. (1997). The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire: A research note. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 38(5), 581–586. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-7610.1997.tb01545.x>
- Hilty, D. M., Stubbe, D., McKean, A. J., Hoffman, P. E., Zalpur, I., Myint, M. T., ... & Li, S. T. T. (2023). A scoping review of social media in child, adolescents and young adults: research findings in depression, anxiety and other clinical challenges. *BJPsych open*, 9(5), e152. doi:10.1192/bjo.2023.523
- Jaycox, L. H., Murphy, E. R., Zehr, J. L., Pearson, J. L., & Avenevoli, S. (2024). Social media and suicide risk in youth. *JAMA Network Open*, 7 (10), e2441499. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2024.41499> (<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2825340>).
- James, P. A., & Kur, J. T. (2020). Parental Mediation of Childrens Risky Experiences with Digital Media. *The Journal of Society and Media*, 4(2), 298–318. <https://doi.org/10.26740/jsm.v4n2.p298-318>
- Lund, L., Sølvhøj, I.N., Danielsen, D. *et al.* Electronic media use and sleep in children and adolescents in western countries: a systematic review. *BMC Public Health* 21, 1598 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-021-11640-9>
- Mahmoud, H. A., & Shafik, S. A. (2020). The effect of social media on family relationships. *IOSR Journal of Nursing and Health Science*, 9 (6), 47–57. (<https://www.iosrjournals.org/iosr-jnhs/papers/vol9-issue6/Series-3/G0906034757>)
- Mbachu, C. O., Agu, I. C., & Eze, I. (2020). Exploring issues in caregivers and parent communication of sexual and reproductive health matters with adolescents in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. *BMC Public Health*, 20, 77. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-019-8058-5>
- Meng, Z., Min, K., Ma, R., Yang, J., Zhang, H., & Li, Q. (2025). The mediating effect of parental monitoring in the association between parent–child relationship harmony and smartphone addiction. *BMC Public Health*, 25, Article 1184. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-025-22366-3>.
- Metzger, A., Ice, C., & Cottrell, L. (2012). But I trust my teen: Parents' attitudes and response to a parental monitoring intervention. *AIDS Research and Treatment*, 2012, Article ID 396163. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2012/396163>
- Nwikipo, M. N., Anierobi, E. I., Okeke, A. N., & Ifejirofor, A. P. (2020). The prevalence of weapon-carrying/use amongst senior secondary school students in Anambra State, Nigeria. *African Journal of Human Development and Lifespan (AJHDL)*, 2, 288–304.

- Nwikpo, M. N., Anierobi, E. I., & Okeke, A. N. (2021). Constraints to effective digital parenting by Nigerian mothers: A study of young mothers from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State. *Journal of Educational Psychologists*, 14 (1), 188 - 202
- Nwikpo, M. N., & Offordueze, O. A. (2022). Prevalence, causes, and consequences of premarital cohabitation and academic performance of undergraduates of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. *International Journal of Management, Social Sciences, Peace and Conflict Studies*, 5(4), 45–60
- Nwikpo, M. N., Ezeonwumelu, V. U., Eluemuno, A. I., & Anierobi, E. I. (2022). Weapon possession and use: Rural-urban and school-type differences in the motivating factors and degree of involvement of in-school adolescents in Anambra State, Nigeria. *Journal of Theoretical and Empirical Studies in Education*, 7(1), 139–153
- Nwikpo, M. N., Ezeonwumelu, V. U., Eluemuno, A. I., & Oyeyemi, A. A. (2025). The role of fan page romantic ideals in reinforcing problematic dating app use among emotionally sensitive undergraduates of tertiary institutions in Anambra State, Nigeria. *Unizik Journal of Educational Research and Policy Studies*, 19(3), 42–59
- Offor, U. I., Ezeonwumelu, V. U., Nwikpo, M. N., & Chinyeaka, E. K. (2024). Social media use as a predictor of suicide ideation among university undergraduates in Anambra State. *Journal of Theoretical and Empirical Studies in Education*, 9(1), 1–16.
- Savci, M., & Aysan, F. (2017). The role of impulsivity in the relationship between problematic Internet use and psychological symptoms. *Addicta: The Turkish Journal on Addictions*, 4(1), 21–37. <https://doi.org/10.15805/addicta.2017.4.1.0025>
- Shpancer, N. (2020). Parent–adolescent communication in adolescence and its relationship to adolescent well-being: A systematic review. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 34(2), 134–152. <https://doi.org/10.1037/fam0000470>
- Stattin, H., & Kerr, M. (2000). Parental monitoring: A reinterpretation. *Child Development*, 71(4), 1072–1085. [https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8624.0021](https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8624.0021Ukaegbu, M. I., Nengi, M., & Ibiene, S. J. (2022). Effects of social media on family bond and cohesion: A study of Port Harcourt residents, Rivers State. *Greener Journal of Social Sciences, 12*(1), 25–33)
- Wang, Q., Pomerantz, E. M., & Chen, H. (2007). The role of parents' control in early adolescents' psychological functioning: A longitudinal investigation in the United States and China. *Child Development*, 78(5), 1592–1610. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2007.01085.x>
- Yu, D.J., Wing, Y.K., Li, T.M.H. *et al.* The Impact of Social Media Use on Sleep and Mental Health in Youth: a Scoping Review. *Curr Psychiatry Rep* 26, 104–119 (2024). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11920-024-01481-9>