

NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' EVERYDAY PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL MEDIA, CELEBRITY CULTURE, AND BEHAVIOURS

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Abstract

This study delves into the intricate relationship between social media, celebrity culture, and the everyday lives of Nigerian university students at Edo State University, Uzairue. Utilizing a quantitative approach, the research investigates how students engage with and respond to celebrity content on social media platforms. The core objective is to understand how these interactions influence students' behaviours and perceptions of themselves, others, and the world around them. Employing an online survey questionnaire distributed through Google Forms to 378 students, the research ensures anonymity and facilitates reaching a wider audience. The findings reveal a high engagement rate with social media, with Facebook emerging as the preferred platform for following celebrities. The analysis delves deeper, exploring how social media use shapes student perceptions and behaviours concerning celebrity culture. The research aims to contribute to a nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between these elements within the Nigerian university context. This knowledge can be valuable in understanding the evolving youth culture and its potential implications for educational and social development.

Keywords; social media, celebrity culture, Nigerian university students, perception and behaviours.

Declaration of conflicting interests: The Authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

INTRODUCTION

The digital landscape has become an inseparable part of everyday life, particularly for young adults. Social media platforms have emerged as powerful tools for shaping communication, information consumption, and identity formation (Ahn *et al.*, 2017). In Nigeria, university students are at the forefront of this digital revolution, actively engaging with a vast array of social media content, including that created by celebrities (Akinsola *et al.*, 2022). However, the multifaceted influence of this amplified celebrity culture on students' everyday lives remains a topic demanding deeper exploration. While traditional celebrity influence through mass media has been documented (Marshall, 2018), social media presents a unique and potentially more potent environment. Celebrities leverage these platforms to cultivate

carefully curated online personas, potentially shaping unrealistic expectations and influencing social attitudes (Adeseye, 2017). Research suggests these portrayals can exert a powerful effect on young Nigerians' social behaviours and aspirations (Akinsola *et al.*, 2016). Studies examining social media celebrities and undergraduates' lifestyle choices reveal how online content can influence students' decisions regarding fashion, language use, and even relationships (Ayeni *et al.*, 2017).

This study delves into this intricate relationship between social media, celebrity culture, and Nigerian university students. By analysing student engagement with celebrity content on social media platforms, this research aims to understand how these interactions influence various aspects of students' lives. We go beyond mere perception to explore the

potential effects on students' behaviours (e.g., consumer choices, self-presentation), perceptions (e.g., self-image, social aspirations), and overall well-being (e.g., academic performance, mental health). Ultimately, this investigation seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex ways social media and celebrity culture intersect to shape the experiences of Nigerian university students.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The pervasive influence of the digital realm, particularly among young adults in Nigeria, is evident in the widespread use of social media platforms, which serve as influential tools shaping communication, information consumption, and identity formation. Specifically, Nigerian university students exhibit significant engagement with social media, particularly in consuming content generated by celebrities. Despite this, there remains a notable gap in understanding the comprehensive impact of heightened celebrity culture within these online spaces on the daily lives of Nigerian university students. Celebrities utilize social media platforms to cultivate carefully constructed online personas, fostering a sense of closeness with their followers and blurring the boundaries between reality and constructed image. This phenomenon, often referred to as "hyper-visible celebrities," is underexplored in the context of Nigerian university students, highlighting a specific area of research where existing literature falls short in capturing the nuanced influence of social media and celebrity culture on this demographic.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine the extent to which social media influences Nigerian students' perceptions of celebrity culture.
2. To explore the impact of social media on Nigerian students' everyday behaviours relating to celebrity culture.
3. To investigate how Nigerian students' perceptions of celebrity culture are shaped by their exposure to social media.
4. To assess the role of social media in shaping Nigerian students' attitudes and behaviours towards celebrities.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How does social media exposure contribute to Nigerian students' perceptions of celebrity culture?

2. In what ways does social media influence Nigerian students' everyday behaviours relating to celebrity culture?
3. To what extent do Nigerian students' perceptions of celebrity culture rely on their exposure to social media?
4. What is the correlation between Nigerian students' attitudes and behaviours towards celebrities and their use of social media platforms?

LITERATURE REVIEW

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

Social media, shaping Perception and behaviours

Social media has become an undeniable force in shaping communication and information consumption, particularly among young adults (Marshall, 2018). It encompasses a diverse range of interactive online platforms that allow users to connect, share content, and participate in virtual communities. Social media is a web-based and mobile application that enables users to create and share content, engage in social interactions, and build communities online (Okafor, 2017). Social media platforms include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube, etc. Social media has become a quotidian in everyday modern life with billions of people using it daily. These social media platforms offer a constant stream of information and content, including content created by celebrities. Studies have documented the significant influence social media can have on users' behaviours and perceptions (Aronson, 2016; Cialdini, 2020).

In Nigeria, university students represent a demographic particularly engrossed in these online spaces (Okafor, 2017). This generation actively engages with a vast array of social media content, including that created by celebrities. However, the multifaceted influence of this amplified celebrity culture on their everyday lives remains a topic demanding deeper exploration.

Social media platforms offer a unique environment for young adults to explore and construct their identities (The Social Animal, 2021). This exploration can significantly impact their perceptions and behaviours. Young people curate online personas that project a desired image of themselves. Exposure to celebrities and their carefully crafted online portrayals can influence their perceptions of beauty, success, and social status. Research by Livingstone (2019) suggests that social comparison with these online portrayals can significantly impact young people's perceptions of their own self-esteem and body

image.

This online self-presentation can also translate into real-world behaviours. Okafor (2017) highlights how exposure to celebrities on social media can influence young Nigerians' (including university students) dress code, language use, and even relationship decisions. Essentially, social media can become a platform for young adults to experiment with different identities and see which ones garner the most positive online responses, shaping their behaviours in the process.

Celebrity culture

The pervasiveness of social media has significantly amplified the phenomenon of celebrity culture, fundamentally transforming how celebrities interact with audiences and how audiences perceive celebrities. Social media platforms offer celebrities unprecedented control over their online personas. Celebrities can curate meticulously crafted images, share glimpses into their seemingly perfect lives, and foster a sense of intimacy with their followers (Marshall, 2018). This constant visibility creates a category of "hyper-visible celebrities" who are omnipresent in the online sphere (Turner, 2017). However, these portrayals are often carefully constructed narratives, blurring the lines between reality and carefully crafted images (Nzekwe, 2017). Celebrities have become powerful marketing tools, wielding significant influence over consumer behaviour (McCavendish *et al.*, 2020). Social media endorsements can be particularly effective, as celebrities leverage their perceived authenticity and connection with fans to promote products and services (Cialdini, 2020). However, recent research by McCavendish *et al.* (2020) highlights a growing trend of scepticism among young consumers towards celebrity endorsements, suggesting a need to understand if this scepticism is also present among Nigerian university students. The curated and often unrealistic portrayals of celebrities on social media can distort users' perceptions of reality (Nzekwe, 2017). Excessive social media use and exposure to unrealistic portrayals can contribute to feelings of inadequacy, anxiety, and social comparison, potentially impacting mental well-being (Przybylski *et al.*, 2018).

Relationship between social media, celebrity culture, and Nigerian students

Social media's grip on young adults, including Nigerian university students, is undeniable. These platforms are breeding grounds for celebrities with carefully crafted online images that can significantly influence students' daily lives. This research explores this complex connection between social media, celebrity culture, and students, focusing on how it

shapes their identity, buying habits, and mental health. Social media offers a unique space for young adults to explore and construct their identities (The Social Animal, 2021). However, these self-presentations are often influenced by external factors, particularly the seemingly perfect lives portrayed by celebrities. Studies by Livingstone (2019) suggest that young people engage in social comparison with online celebrities, potentially leading to distorted body image and self-esteem issues. Okafor (2017) highlights how exposure to celebrities on social media shapes young Nigerians', including university students', fashion choices, language use, and even relationship decisions.

Understanding how Nigerian university students navigate this online self-presentation landscape and how celebrity portrayals influence their identities is crucial for this research. Social media has become a powerful marketing tool, with celebrities acting as influential figures who can sway consumer behaviour (Media Strategies for Building Brand Loyalty, 2017). Celebrities endorse products and services, and their online presence can significantly influence students' purchasing decisions, particularly for young people who may be more susceptible to celebrity endorsements (Cialdini, 2020; Hussein *et al.*, 2016). However, recent studies by McCavendish *et al.* (2020) suggest a growing trend of scepticism among young consumers towards celebrity endorsements. Investigating whether this scepticism is present among Nigerian university students and how they perceive celebrity endorsements can offer valuable insights into their consumer behaviour in the digital age.

While the influence of social media and celebrities on young people's behaviours and perceptions is well-documented, a specific gap exists in understanding the nuanced impact on Nigerian university students. This research aims to address this gap by investigating how Nigerian university students engage with celebrity content on social media and the resulting changes in their everyday lives. It will explore how these interactions influence their self-perception, social aspirations, consumer choices, and overall well-being.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

The intricate relationship between social media, young people, and celebrity culture has garnered increasing research attention in recent years. Studies consistently highlight the significant impact social media can have on young people's perceptions and behaviours. Akinfewa *et al.* (2022) explored the mediating role of social comparison in the relationship between celebrity endorsement and purchase intention among young adults in Nigeria. Their study, while focusing on celebrity endorsement and purchase

intention, offers valuable insights into the social comparison aspect that is relevant to this research. They explored how social comparison mediates the relationship between celebrity endorsements and purchase decisions among young adults in Nigeria. This paper can leverage this by investigating how social comparison with celebrities' online influences students' daily behaviours beyond just buying products.

Ogunbanjo, G. A., & Adeyemi, O. S. (2022), in their work; "Celebrity Endorsement on Social Media and Brand Perception among Young Adults in Nigeria" explored the connection between social media, celebrities, and young adults in Nigeria. It examines how celebrity endorsements on social media influence brand perception, providing valuable insight into how students perceive and interact with celebrities online. This research builds upon this previous research by delving deeper into the everyday behaviours and perceptions students form beyond brand endorsements, through engagement with celebrity content on social media. Akinlade et al, (2023) in their work "Social Media Use Patterns and Body Image Concerns among Adolescents in Nigeria" investigated how social media use patterns are linked to body image concerns among adolescents in Nigeria. While not directly focused on celebrities, it explored a crucial aspect of student behaviour highly influenced by social media portrayals. The research explored social comparison tendencies on social media, which aligns with this study in how students might compare themselves to celebrities online. By focusing on social comparison, this work offers valuable insights into the potential negative impacts of social media on students, investigating how celebrity portrayals online might contribute to body image issues and negative self-perception among students.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT)

The Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) provides a valuable framework for understanding the relationship between social media, celebrity culture, and Nigerian students' everyday perceptions and behaviours. This theory, developed by Katz, Blumler, and Broderick (2017), posits that individuals are not passive consumers of media but rather active participants who choose media outlets to fulfil specific needs and desires. Students seek different gratifications, and these gratifications drive Nigerian students to engage with celebrities on social media. Gratifications such as, entertainment (following celebrities for fun, amusement, or to escape from daily life (Chen & Zhang, 2019), information (seeking news and updates about celebrities' lives and careers

(Jackson, et al 2021), social connection (feeling connected to a community of fans or interacting with celebrities directly (Jin & Liu, 2021), etc.

By understanding the motivations behind students' social media use, this research can then explore how these gratifications shape their perceptions of celebrities, for example, students seeking information might become more critical consumers of celebrity portrayals, questioning the authenticity of online content (Ekeanyanwu, 2021).

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a survey research design to investigate the relationship between social media, celebrity culture, and Nigerian students' perceptions and behaviours. The survey research design is appropriate for this study because it allows for data collection from a large population, and it is cost-effective and efficient (Bryman, 2022). The survey will be conducted online using Google Forms to reach a wider audience and ensure the anonymity of the respondents. The population of this study is Edo State University students who are active social media users and reside in Nigeria. As of January 2024, Edo State University Uzairue has approximately 7000 students (EDSU admin, 2024). To ensure a representative sample, the study targeted both postgraduate and undergraduate students from diverse departments and age groups. Using the Taro Yamane formula $n=N/(1+N(e)^2)$ the sample size for the study was determined as 385. The data collection instrument for this study was an online survey closed-ended questionnaire, for quick and easy responses. The questionnaire was designed to elicit information on the use of social media, the relationship reference celebrity culture, and how this culture influences Nigerian students' perceptions and behaviours. The data collected from the survey were analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution, percentages, and mean scores. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used for data analysis. The findings were presented in tables, charts, and graphs to aid in interpreting the results.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Table 1: Gender Distribution

Gender	N	%
Male	129	34.1
Female	244	64.6
Prefer not to say	5	1.3
Total	378	100%

Source: Online survey, 2024

Most respondents 64.6% from the table above, are

identified as females. Further research might benefit from a more balanced sample to ensure the generalizability of findings to the entire student population (Moser & Kalton, 2018). It will be useful to employ recruitment strategies that target a wider range of genders to achieve a more representative sample. Additionally, recent studies suggest a potential trend of increasing social media use among males in Africa (Global Webindex, 2023), so future research designs should account for this evolving landscape.

Table 2: Age Distribution

Option	N.	P%
18-24	136	36
25-34	153	40.5
35-44	59	15.6
45-54	20	5.3
55 and above	10	2.6
Total	378	100

Source: online survey, 2024

The largest age group in this table is the 25-34-year-olds, making up 40.5% of the population. This suggests a relatively young population. There is a slight decline in each subsequent age group, with the smallest being the 55.

Table 3: Social Media Usage

Time	N	%
Less than 1 hour	120	31.7
1-2 hours	97	25.7
3-4 hours	108	28.6
More than 4 hours	53	14.0
Total	378	100%

Source: Online survey, 2024

The most popular time spent on social media is Less than 1 hour, with 31.70% of users reporting this usage. The least popular time spent on social media is More than 4 hours, with 14.00% of users reporting this usage.

Table 4: Regularly Used Social Media Platforms

Option	N	%
Facebook	107	28.3
Instagram	65	17.2
Twitter	20	5.3
TikTok	83	22
Snapchat	33	8.7
YouTube	60	15.9
LinkedIn	10	2.7
Total	378	100

Source: online survey, 2024

This table scouts the distribution of preferred social media platforms among a sample of 378

individuals. TikTok (22%) and Facebook (28.3%) emerge as the most popular platforms, capturing over half (50.5%) of the users. This aligns with current trends highlighting the rise of short-form video content (TikTok) and the continued dominance of established platforms like Facebook. YouTube (15.9%) is another major player, reflecting its popularity for video content consumption across demographics. Instagram (17.2%) remains a significant platform, particularly for image sharing and social connection. Snapchat (8.7%) holds a smaller but steady user base, especially among younger demographics. Twitter (5.3%) and LinkedIn (2.7%) have a lower presence in this specific sample. However, their importance varies depending on factors like age, profession, and purpose of social media use.

Table 5: Frequency of Coming Across Celebrity-Related Content

Option	N	%
Rarely	40	10.6
Occasionally	120	31.7
Frequently	150	39.7
Very frequently	68	17.9
Total	378	100

Source: online survey, 2024

Looking at the data, we can see a distribution of how often people encounter celebrity-related content. Nearly 40% (39.7%) of the surveyed population reports encountering celebrity-related content "frequently." This indicates that a substantial portion of the population is exposed to celebrity content on a regular basis. Over 30% (31.7%) encounter it "occasionally". A combined 50.3% (39.7% + 31.7%) see celebrity content at least "occasionally". A smaller portion (17.9%) comes across it "very frequently". Only 10.6% report seeing it "rarely". This suggests that a significant majority (over 68%) of the surveyed population is exposed to celebrity content at least occasionally. This data indicates a high public interest in celebrity culture. It also reflects the pervasiveness of celebrity content across various media platforms.

Table 6: Actively Seeking Celebrity-Related Content

Option	N	%
Yes	179	47.4
No	199	52.6
Total	378	100

Source: online survey, 2024

This table reveals that nearly half, 47.4% (179 out of 378) of the surveyed population actively seeks out celebrity-related content. This indicates a substantial interest in keeping up with celebrity news,

gossip, or social media posts. Almost half (47.4%) actively seek celebrity content. Slightly more than half (52.6%) do not actively seek it. This data suggests a significant portion of the population finds celebrities interesting or engaging. It also reflects the influence of celebrity culture on popular interests and conversations.

Table 7: Perception of Celebrities Based on Social Media Portrayal

Option	N	%
Role models	98	25.9
Inspiring	127	33.6
Harmful influence	69	18.3
irrelevant	49	12.9
Other	35	9.3
Total	378	100

Source: online survey, 2024

This table shows how the surveyed population perceives celebrities based on their social media portrayal. Most respondents hold positive perceptions of celebrities on social media. "Inspiring" (33.6%) is the most frequent perception, followed by "Role models" (25.9%). This suggests that a significant portion of the population views celebrities as sources of inspiration and positive influence. Studies have shown that celebrities can be powerful advocates for social change and inspire their audience through their social media platforms. For instance, Malala Yousafzai's activism on social media helped raise awareness about girls' education rights (Ardalan, & Bakhshi, 2017). A sizeable group (18.3%) perceives celebrities as a "Harmful influence" on social media.

Table 8: Change in Perception of Celebrities Due to Social Media Exposure

Option	N	%
Yes	234	61.9
No	144	38.1
Total	378	100

Source: online survey, 2024

This table investigates how social media exposure impacts people's perceptions of celebrities. A significant majority (61.9% or 234 out of 378) reported a "Yes", indicating their perception of celebrities has changed due to social media exposure. This suggests that social media plays a substantial role in shaping public perception of celebrities. A minority (38.1% or 144) reported a "No", indicating their perception of celebrities remained unchanged despite social media exposure. Social media allows for a more unfiltered glimpse into celebrities' lives, potentially revealing aspects beyond their carefully crafted public image.

This exposure can challenge or confirm pre-existing perceptions (Hang *et al.* 2022). Celebrities can leverage social media to connect with fans directly, fostering a sense of relatability and potentially influencing how they are perceived (Jin and Liu, 2021).

Table 9: Effects of Social Media on Behaviours Related to Celebrity Culture

Option	N	%
It influences my purchasing decisions	98	25.9
It changes my fashion trends and preferences	117	30.9
It affects my desire to imitate celebrities	78	20.6
It has no influence on my behaviours	75	19.8
Other	10	2.7
Total	378	100

Source: online survey, 2024

This table investigates how social media influences people's behaviour regarding celebrity culture. A significant portion of the population reports a moderate level of influence from social media on their behaviours. "Changes fashion trends and preferences" (30.9%) is the most frequent effect, followed by "Influences purchasing decisions" (25.9%). A considerable portion (19.8%) reports "No influence" from social media on their celebrity-related behaviours. This indicates that not everyone is susceptible to celebrity influence on social media. A smaller segment (20.6%) acknowledges that social media "Affects their desire to imitate celebrities." A small group (2.7%) falls under the category of "Other", suggesting there might be other, less common ways social media impacts their behaviour related to celebrity culture. Social media allows celebrities to showcase their fashion choices and promote brands they endorse, potentially influencing viewers' purchasing decisions and fashion preferences (McLaughlin *et al.*, 2016).

Table 10: Pressure to Conform to Celebrity Lifestyles on Social Media

Option	N	%
Yes	175	46.3
No	203	53.7
Total	378	100

Source: online survey, 2024

This table explores the prevalence of feeling pressure to conform to celebrity lifestyles as portrayed on social media. A significant portion of the surveyed population (46.3% or 175 out of 378) reports feeling "Yes", indicating they experience pressure to conform to celebrity lifestyles on social media. This suggests

that social media exposure to celebrities can create a sense of pressure to emulate their portrayals of wealth, success, or attractiveness, which can be unrealistic or heavily curated (Jang *et al*, 2021). Slightly more than half (53.7% or 203) report feeling "No" pressure to conform. This indicates that not everyone is susceptible to this pressure.

Table 11: Frequency Of Engaging in Discussions About Celebrities On Social Media

Option	N	%
Rarely	85	22.5
Occasionally	122	32.3
Frequently	116	30.7
Very frequently	55	14.5
Total	378	100

Source: *online survey, 2024*

This table examines how often people engage in discussions about celebrities on social media. The majority of respondents (63% or 238 out of 378) engage in discussions about celebrities on social media with some regularity. "Occasionally" (32.3%) is the most frequent engagement level, followed by "Frequently" (30.7%). This suggests that celebrity discussion is a moderately common occurrence on social media platforms. A sizeable portion (22.5% or 85) reports engaging "Rarely" in these discussions. A smaller segment (14.5% or 55) engages "Very frequently" in discussions about celebrities on social media.

Table 12: impact of social media on knowledge of celebrity culture

Options	N	%
Yes	261	69.1
No	117	30.9
Total	378	100

Source: *online survey, 2024*

This table analyses how social media influences people's knowledge of celebrity culture. A significant majority of respondents (69.1% or 261 out of 378) answered "Yes", indicating they believe social media has increased their knowledge of celebrity culture. This suggests that social media platforms can be a significant source of information about celebrities, offering a constant stream of news, updates, and glimpses into their lives. A minority (30.9% or 117) answered "No", suggesting their knowledge of celebrity culture is not significantly impacted by social media (Jackson *et al*,2021).

Table 13: Actions Taken on Social Media Due To Negative Celebrity-Related Content

Options	N	%
Yes	147	38.9
No	231	61.1
Total	378	100

Source: *online survey, 2024*

This table probes how people react to negative celebrity-related content encountered on social media. A significant portion of respondents (38.9% or 147 out of 378) answered "Yes", indicating they take some form of action on social media after encountering negative content about a celebrity. This suggests that negative celebrity portrayals can prompt people to engage with the issue on social media platforms. The majority (61.1% or 231) answered "No", indicating they don't take any action on social media after seeing negative celebrity content. Those who take action might express their opinions (e.g., commenting, posting), defend the celebrity (if a fan), or even criticize the source of the negativity (Anagnostopoulos *et al*, 2018).

Table 14: Perception Of Authenticity of Celebrity Content On Social Media

Options	N	%
Yes always	78	20.6
Sometimes	176	46.6
Rarely	78	20.6
No, never	46	12.2
Total	378	100

Source: *online survey, 2024*

This table explores how people perceive the authenticity of content celebrities share on social media. The data reveals a range of perceptions regarding celebrity content authenticity. "Sometimes" (46.6%) is the most frequent response, indicating a nuanced view where some content might be perceived as genuine and others as inauthentic. A significant portion believes celebrities are "Yes, always authentic" (20.6%) or "Rarely authentic" (20.6%), suggesting some perceive all celebrity content as genuine or fabricated. A minority (12.2%) believes celebrity content is "No, never authentic". The high percentage of "Sometimes" responses suggests people are sceptical of blanket statements about celebrity content (Ekeanyanwu, 2021).

Table 15: Impact Of Social Media on Celebrity Culture

Options	N	%
It has intensified the obsession with celebrities	107	28.3
It has democratized access to celebrity culture	127	33.6
It has made celebrities more accessible and relatable	98	25.9
It has created a false image of celebrities	39	10.3
Other	7	1.9
Total	378	100

Source: online survey, 2024

This table scrutinizes various ways social media has impacted celebrity culture. The data reveals social media's influence on celebrity culture is multifaceted, with no single option receiving a clear majority. A significant portion (28.3% or 107) believes social media has "Intensified the obsession with celebrities". This suggests the constant presence of celebrities on social media platforms can fuel excessive interest and public scrutiny (Akinfenwa, et al, 2022) . On the other hand, "It has democratized access to celebrity culture" (33.6% or 127) and "It has made celebrities more accessible and relatable" (25.9% or 98) were also chosen by a considerable number of respondents. This indicates that social media has broken down barriers between celebrities and the public, allowing for a more direct connection. A smaller segment (10.3% or 39) feels social media has "Created a false image of celebrities". This highlights the concern that celebrities often curate their online personas, potentially portraying an unrealistic and idealized version of their lives.

Table 16: Overall Effects of Social Media on Nigerian Students' Perceptions of Celebrity Culture

Options	N	%
Positive	118	31.2
Negative	196	51.9
Neutral	64	16.9
Total	378	100

Source: online survey, 2024

This table investigates the overall impact of social media on Nigerian students' perceptions of celebrity culture. A significant majority (51.9% or 196) of respondents perceive the effects of social media on celebrity culture as "Negative". This suggests that social media might contribute to unrealistic portrayals, unhealthy comparisons, or a distorted view of celebrities' lives (Akinsola et al,2016). A smaller portion

perceives the effects as "Positive" (31.2% or 118) or "Neutral" (16.9% or 64). This indicates that social media might also offer positive aspects like increased accessibility or a platform for critical discussions.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Research Question One: *How does social media exposure contribute to Nigerian students' perceptions of celebrity culture?*

The findings indicate that social media significantly shapes students' perceptions of celebrities. Consistent with Ogunbanjo & Adeyemi (2022), the curated content on platforms like Instagram and Twitter can create idealized or unrealistic portrayals of celebrities' lives. This resonates with Akinlade et al. (2023) who explored how social media use patterns can fuel social comparison among adolescents. Students might compare themselves to these seemingly perfect online personas, potentially leading to feelings of inadequacy or pressure to conform to unrealistic beauty standards. Additionally, similar to Ekeanyanwu (2021), social media can be a breeding ground for negativity, with rumours and gossip shaping students' perceptions of celebrities.

Research Question Two: *In what ways does social media influence Nigerian students' everyday behaviours relating to celebrity culture?*

Social media use can significantly influence students' everyday behaviours related to celebrities. This aligns with Akinfenwa et al. (2022) who explored the mediating role of social comparison in purchase decisions influenced by celebrity endorsements. However, this research extends beyond buying habits. Students might actively engage in online discussions about celebrities (Valenzuela et al., 2017), closely follow their activities (Okechukwu & Ugwu, 2018), or even defend them from online negativity. Furthermore, similar to Bouza et al. (2019), students might take action based on their perceptions, sharing celebrity content, expressing opinions through comments, or even boycotting brands a celebrity endorses if controversy arises. This research offers a more comprehensive understanding of how social media shapes students' everyday interactions with celebrities beyond just financial decisions.

Research Question Three: *To what extent do Nigerian students' perceptions of celebrity culture rely on their exposure to social media?*

The findings suggest a significant reliance on

social media for students' perceptions of celebrity culture. This aligns with Jackson et al. (2021) who noted the constant content updates and easy accessibility that make social media platforms primary sources of information about celebrities. However, this work acknowledges the potential for students to develop critical media literacy skills. While some students might heavily rely on social media, others might be more critical consumers of information, recognizing the potential for bias or inauthenticity as observed by Anyadike-danes et al. (2017). This highlights the need for further exploration of factors that influence students' ability to critically evaluate online content.

Research Question Four: *What is the correlation between Nigerian students' attitudes and behaviours towards celebrities and their use of social media platforms?*

The data suggests a potential correlation between student attitudes and behaviours towards celebrities and their use of social media platforms. This aligns with Jin & Liu (2021) who found that students who actively follow celebrities and engage with their content exhibit stronger emotional connections and are more likely to defend them or be influenced by their endorsements. Conversely, this paper suggests that students who are critical of social media portrayals or perceive celebrities as inauthentic might be less engaged with their online presence and have more balanced attitudes. Further research is needed to explore the nature and strength of this correlation.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the intricate relationship between social media, celebrity culture and Nigerian students' perceptions and behaviours. Through analysing survey data and incorporating insights from recent Nigerian scholars, a deeper understanding of this complex phenomenon has been gathered.

The findings reveal a significant influence of social media exposure on students' perceptions. Platforms like Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, etc. offer a constant stream of content, often curated to project a specific image of celebrities' lives. This curated nature can lead to unrealistic portrayals, potentially fostering social comparison and unrealistic expectations among students (Ekeanyanwu, 2021; Akinfenwa et al, 2022). Additionally, social media can be a breeding ground for negativity and rumours, shaping perceptions in potentially distorted ways (Anagnostopoulos *et al.*, 2018). However, social media's influence extends beyond shaping perceptions. It also affects students' everyday behaviours related to celebrity culture.

The reliance on social media as a source of

information about celebrities is another key takeaway. The constant updates and easy accessibility make these platforms a primary source for students (Jackson *et al.*, 2021). However, the analysis also highlights a range of student perspectives. While some heavily rely on social media, others recognize the potential for inauthenticity and bias in online portrayals (Anyadike-danes *et al.*, 2017).

Finally, a potential correlation exists between student attitudes, behaviours, and their social media use. Students who actively follow celebrities and engage with their content might exhibit stronger emotional connections, be more likely to defend them, or be more susceptible to their endorsements (Jin & Liu, 2021). Conversely, students critical of social media portrayals or who perceive celebrities as inauthentic might be less engaged with their online presence and have more balanced attitudes (Jang et al, 2021).

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Integrate media literacy programs into education to teach students how to analyse online information critically.
2. Promote open communication between parents and children about social media and celebrity culture.
3. Utilize social media for positive discussions and highlight influencers promoting realistic portrayals.
4. Conduct further research on the impact of different social media platforms and content types.

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