

Social Media Exposure and The Relationship Between Materialistic Values and Deviant Behaviour Among Ekiti State University Students

Olubunmi A. Olanipekun^{1*} 

Damian K. Adebo² 

Dolapo T. George-Onoko³ 

AFFILIATIONS

^{1,2&3}Department of Adult Education and Community Development, Ekiti State University, Ado Ekiti, Nigeria.

CORRESPONDENCE

Email: olubunmi.olanipekun@eksu.edu.ng*

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Abstract: Social media platforms often expose users to idealised lifestyles, luxury consumption, and status-oriented content, which may subsequently shape attitudes towards material possessions and success. This study investigated the relationship between social media exposure and the development of materialistic values and deviant behaviour among students at Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti. The research assessed the levels of social media exposure, the extent of materialistic value orientation, and the prevalence of deviant behaviour among the students. A descriptive survey research design was employed for this study. The population comprised all students of Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, and a purposive sample of 300 students was selected. Data were gathered through a structured questionnaire comprising four sections: socio-demographic information, social media exposure, materialistic values, and deviant behaviour. The instrument demonstrated internal consistency, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.82. Data collection was conducted via online administration using Microsoft Forms. Descriptive statistics were utilised to analyse the research questions, while Pearson product-moment correlation was employed to test the hypotheses. The findings

indicated that students experienced a high level of social media exposure. Furthermore, the study revealed that materialistic values existed among the respondents at a moderate-to-high level, while deviant behavioural tendencies were present at a moderate level. Correlation analysis revealed significant relationships between social media exposure and both materialistic values and deviant behaviour among the students. The study concluded that social media exposure is significantly associated with materialistic attitudes and behavioural tendencies among university students.

Keywords: Social media exposure, materialistic values, deviant behaviour, university students, youth behaviour, digital media influence.

1. Introduction

The rapid advancement of digital communication technologies has fundamentally transformed the manner in which individuals interact, communicate, and construct their social identities. Among these technologies, social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and Twitter have emerged as predominant venues for social interaction, information dissemination, and identity formation, particularly among young people. University students represent one of the most actively engaged demographic groups on these platforms due to their familiarity with technology, social connectivity requirements, and exposure to global cultural trends. While social media provides opportunities for communication, networking, and learning, scholars have expressed concerns regarding the potentially significant impact of social media on the values, attitudes, and behavioural patterns of young users. One area garnering increasing scholarly attention is the relationship between exposure to social media and the development of materialistic values, as well as deviant behaviours among youth populations.

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Materialism is defined as the emphasis individuals place on the acquisition of wealth, possessions, and status symbols as fundamental components of happiness and success in life. According to Kasser (2016), materialistic values emerge when individuals prioritise extrinsic goals—such as financial success, popularity, and image—over intrinsic goals, which include personal growth, relationships, and community engagement. Similarly, Richins (2017) elucidates that materialism develops through various socialisation processes, including familial influence, peer interactions, and media exposure. These processes shape individuals' beliefs regarding the meaning of success and happiness. Research has indicated that individuals who strongly endorse materialistic values are likely to equate well-being with consumption, wealth accumulation, and social comparison. For instance, Aknin, Wiwad, and Hanniball (2018) assert that individuals' spending behaviours and consumption patterns are frequently associated with their perceptions of happiness and personal satisfaction. However, the pursuit of materialistic objectives does not necessarily yield enhancements in psychological well-being.

Empirical studies have consistently demonstrated that a pronounced inclination towards materialism can contribute to various psychological and behavioural issues. For example, Karabati and Cemalcilar (2010) report that materialistic orientations among university students are negatively correlated with well-being and life satisfaction. Similarly, Jaspers et al. (2023) found that materialism is associated with lower levels of life satisfaction, particularly when individuals engage in continual comparisons of their possessions and social status with others. Furthermore, Isham et al. (2022) argue that materialistic values may hinder the pursuit of sustainable well-being, as they promote consumption-oriented lifestyles at the expense of meaningful social relationships and personal fulfilment. These patterns can begin to manifest early in life; for instance, Chaplin (2014) found that materialistic orientations vary between economically disadvantaged and affluent children, suggesting that socioeconomic context significantly influences the development of materialistic values from a young age. In extreme instances, the pursuit of materialistic goals may manifest in maladaptive consumption behaviours, including compulsive buying, financial irresponsibility, and social comparison anxiety. For example, Harnish et al. (2019) observe that heightened materialistic tendencies can be a contributing factor to compulsive buying behaviour, particularly among individuals experiencing loneliness or social anxiety. Additionally, Pérez de Albéniz-Garrote et al. (2021) discovered that compulsive buying among adolescents was exacerbated by substance use, highlighting the broader cluster of risk behaviours that may accompany materialistic and compulsive consumption tendencies among young people.

The development of social media has significantly heightened the exposure of young individuals to materialistic messages and lifestyles. Social networking platforms are increasingly saturated with images and narratives that celebrate lavish lifestyles, consumer goods, fashion, beauty, and wealth. These representations often interpret success through visible consumption, thereby prompting users to compare their lives with the idealised portrayals presented by influencers, celebrities, and peers. According to Yu-Ting and Qing-Qi (2020), the passive utilisation of social networking sites can promote materialistic values in adolescents through upward social comparison processes, wherein individuals benchmark themselves against others whom they perceive to be more successful or affluent. Similarly, Chae (2018) elucidates that exposure to social media influencers frequently engenders feelings of envy among followers, particularly when influencers showcase luxury consumption and idealised lifestyles. Such experiences may compel users to emulate similar lifestyles in pursuit of social recognition and approval.

In addition to social comparison, peer communication on digital platforms plays a substantial role in the formation of materialistic orientations. Bindah and Othman (2012) contend that peer interactions can exert a strong influence on consumer values among young adults by reinforcing norms associated with consumption, status, and lifestyle preferences. Social media platforms facilitate these peer influences by enabling users to continuously observe and assess each other's possessions,

achievements, and social experiences. Furthermore, Moschis et al. (2011) highlight the impact of media exposure on materialistic attitudes as a consequence of repeated exposure to consumer-oriented messages and advertisements. Consequently, social media functions as a significant socialising and communication platform, wielding considerable influence in shaping value systems and behavioural expectations among young users.

Another dimension of concern related to materialistic values is the potential for deviant or unethical behaviours to emerge. Deviant behaviour is generally defined as actions that contravene societal norms, institutional rules, or moral standards. Among university students, such behaviours may include academic dishonesty, financial misconduct, substance use, fraud, cyberbullying, or various forms of rule-breaking conduct. Research indicates that individuals with pronounced materialistic orientations may be more inclined to engage in unethical behaviour when such conduct is perceived as a means of attaining wealth, status, or social recognition. For instance, Yue, Zeng, and Li (2024) demonstrate that materialism can increase the likelihood of unethical behaviour, particularly in individuals with low self-control or high pressures for material success. Similarly, Maras et al. (2015) report a correlation between materialistic attitudes in adolescents and behavioural difficulties alongside social adjustment issues. A potential mechanism linking materialism to unethical or deviant conduct is the attenuation of empathy: Zeng et al. (2025) found that materialistic tendencies are associated with receiving less empathy from others, which may, in turn, undermine the social bonds and accountability that typically deter norm-violating behaviour.

Social influence processes play a significant role in shaping behavioural patterns among young people. According to Ahmed et al. (2020), adolescents and young adults are particularly vulnerable to both prosocial and antisocial influences emanating from their peers. In social media environments, these influences can rapidly proliferate through digital interactions, group norms, and viral trends. For instance, behaviours that emphasise wealth display, luxury consumption, or risk-taking financial behaviours may become normalised within peer networks. Additionally, Huang et al. (2023) underscore that peer influence can profoundly affect the social behaviours of adolescents by impacting their attitudes, motivations, and behavioural expectations. Within the university context, such influences may manifest in behaviours such as pressure to exhibit expensive possessions, engage in status-driven consumption, or pursue financial gains through questionable means.

The effect of materialistic values on behaviour is further reinforced by psychological models of consumer behaviour, which elucidate the role of individual attitudes and persuasive messages in shaping behavioural outcomes. For example, Spasova and Gundasheva (2019) highlight that attitudinal and persuasive processes are critical in influencing consumer behaviour by altering individuals' beliefs regarding desirable lifestyles and consumption patterns. When individuals are repeatedly exposed to persuasive messages that accentuate wealth, luxury, and success, they may internalise these ideals as benchmarks of personal achievement. Over time, such internalised beliefs can shape individuals' behavioural choices, including the ways in which they pursue economic opportunities and social status.

Among university students, the transition to adulthood is frequently associated with an increased sense of independence, identity exploration, and social comparison. These developmental processes may render students more susceptible to social media influences and materialistic ideals. Research has shown that young adults are particularly vulnerable to materialistic messaging due to their evolving identities and desire for social recognition. For instance, Lučić demonstrates the relationship between financial behaviour and consumption patterns, while Denegri et al. (2022) provide evidence that peer influence and attitudes towards money are closely linked to the development of materialistic values among adolescents.

1.1 Problem statement

In the Nigerian context, particularly within university settings, social media has become an integral component of students' daily lives. Students frequently utilise social media platforms for communication, entertainment, academic collaboration, and social networking. However, the increasing prevalence of content showcasing luxury lifestyles, narratives of wealth accumulation, and consumer-oriented messaging on these platforms may influence student perceptions of success and acceptable behavioural norms. Empirical evidence from Nigeria indicates that materialistic tendencies are already prevalent among university students. For instance, Oluwagbohunmi (2021) reported that students at Ekiti State University exhibit notable materialistic tendencies, which may subsequently affect their consumption behaviours and lifestyle preferences.

Despite the burgeoning research interest in materialism and the influence of social media on individuals globally, there is a paucity of empirical research addressing the relationship between social media exposure, materialistic values, and deviant behaviour among university students in Nigeria. Most existing studies are predominantly focused on Western or Asian contexts, revealing a gap in understanding how these dynamics operate within the African university milieu. Given the rapid increase in digital media usage among youth in Nigeria, it is imperative to conduct research examining how social media interactions may influence value systems and behavioural tendencies within this demographic.

Understanding these relationships is particularly significant for higher education institutions, as universities play a crucial role in shaping the ethical orientations, social values, and standards of behaviour among students. If social media exposure is a contributing factor to the development of materialistic values, leading to deviant behaviour, universities and policymakers may need to implement interventions that promote responsible media use, ethical awareness, and value-based education. Therefore, investigating the influence of social media on materialistic values and deviant behaviour among university students can yield valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and researchers interested in youth development and the effects of digital media.

The Social Comparison Theory (Festinger, 1954) serves as the theoretical foundation for this study, positing that individuals possess an innate need to evaluate their own opinions, abilities, and status through comparisons with others, particularly those perceived as superior. This comparison process is exacerbated by social media platforms, which inundate users with idealised and curated portrayals of the lives, wealth, and possessions of peers, celebrities, and influencers. In this context, it is posited that exposure to such content exaggerates the perceived disparity between the user's life and those of others, thereby instilling materialistic value orientations as users attempt to bridge this gap through acquisition and consumption. When this gap cannot be narrowed through legitimate means, the theory further suggests that subsequent social comparison pressures may render individuals "primed" for norm-violating or deviant actions as alternative strategies for attaining the desired status. Consequently, the relationship between the constructs examined in the present research can be interpreted through the lens of Social Comparison Theory, as it provides a coherent framework to link social media exposure with materialistic values and deviant behaviour.

1.1.1 Research objectives

Against this backdrop, this study investigates the influence of social media on materialistic values and deviant behaviour among students of Ekiti State University. The specific objectives are:

- To examine the level of social media exposure among students of Ekiti State University.
- To determine the extent of development of materialistic values among Ekiti State University students.
- To assess the level of deviant behaviour among students of Ekiti State University.

- To examine the relationship between social media exposure and the development of materialistic values and deviant behaviour among students of Ekiti State University.

1.1.2 Research hypotheses

Two research hypotheses were formulated for the study

- **H₀₁:** There is no significant relationship between social media exposure and the development of materialistic values among Ekiti State University students.
- **H₀₂:** There is no significant relationship between social media exposure and deviant behaviour among Ekiti State University students.

2. Materials and Methods

The study adopted a descriptive research design of the survey type. The descriptive survey design was deemed appropriate as it enabled the researcher to gather data from a substantial number of respondents regarding their opinions, experiences, and behavioural tendencies related to social media usage. This design also facilitated the description of the existing conditions of social media exposure, materialistic value orientation, and deviant behaviour among university students without manipulating any variables. Furthermore, the survey approach allowed for the collection of quantitative data that could be statistically analysed to identify patterns and relationships among the variables of interest.

The population of the study comprised all undergraduate students of Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti. The university hosts students from various faculties and academic levels who actively engage with digital technologies and social media platforms for academic, social, and entertainment purposes. A sample of three hundred (300) students was selected for the study. Respondents were recruited through departmental social media groups and class platforms across faculties, with the online questionnaire link made available to interested and eligible students until 300 fully completed responses had been received; all 300 administered questionnaires were returned complete and valid, resulting in a response rate of 100% among participants. The sample size was considered adequate for the descriptive and correlational analyses conducted, consistent with conventional guidance for survey research of this nature, although no formal *a priori* power analysis was conducted, which is acknowledged as a limitation of the study. The selected sample facilitated effective data management and statistical analysis; however, as a non-probability sample, it does not permit statistical claims of representativeness or generalisation to the wider student population. This limitation is addressed further in the Limitations section. The selected sample also allowed for effective data management and statistical analysis while maintaining the representativeness of the larger student population. The study utilised a purposive sampling technique in selecting participants for the research. This technique involved deliberately choosing respondents who were active social media users and who were willing to participate in the study. The purposive approach ensured that the respondents possessed the relevant characteristics required for the investigation, particularly their familiarity with social media platforms.

Data for the study were collected using a structured questionnaire designed by the researcher. The questionnaire served as the primary research instrument for gathering quantitative data from the respondents. The instrument was organised into four sections in accordance with the objectives of the study. Section A focused on the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents and collected information such as gender, age, faculty, and level of study. This section provided background information about the participants and aided in describing the demographic distribution of the respondents. Section B comprised items that examined the level of social media exposure among students of Ekiti State University. The questions in this section addressed issues such as the frequency of social media use, the duration of time spent on social networking platforms, and the types of platforms commonly utilised by students.

Section C of the questionnaire concentrated on the development of materialistic values among the respondents. Items in this section measured students' attitudes towards material possessions, wealth acquisition, luxury lifestyles, and the importance attached to owning expensive items as indicators of success. This section was designed to ascertain the extent to which students exhibited materialistic orientations. Section D addressed the level of deviant behaviour among students. The items in this section evaluated behavioural tendencies that could be deemed deviant within the university environment, including behaviours associated with rule violations, unethical practices, or socially undesirable conduct. Respondents were required to indicate their level of agreement with each statement based on a four-point Likert scale format. Given the 4-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree = 4, Agree = 3, Disagree = 2, Strongly Disagree = 1) with a theoretical midpoint of 2.5, item and grand mean scores were interpreted using the following criterion: mean scores of 1.00–1.99 were classified as low, 2.00–2.49 as low-to-moderate, 2.50–2.99 as moderate, and 3.00 and above as moderate-to-high. It should also be noted that the deviant behaviour items in Section D were phrased in terms of students' perceptions of deviant conduct among their peers (e.g., "Some students engage in...") rather than the respondents' own behaviour; this distinction is further addressed under Limitations.

The validity of the research instrument was established through the careful development of questionnaire items in relation to the study's objectives. Content and face validity of the instrument were confirmed through expert review by research supervisors and lecturers in the department, who assessed the items for clarity, relevance, and appropriateness in measuring the constructs of social media exposure, materialistic values, and deviant behaviour prior to administration; their feedback informed revisions to the final version of the questionnaire. Reliability of the instrument was determined using the internal consistency method. A reliability test was conducted to evaluate the consistency of responses across questionnaire items through a pilot study involving 30 undergraduates outside the sampled institution. The data collected were analysed using Cronbach's alpha, which yielded coefficient values of 0.83, 0.85, and 0.79 for Sections B, C, and D respectively, indicating a high level of internal consistency and confirming that the instrument was reliable for the purpose of the study.

Data for the study were collected through the online administration of a questionnaire using Microsoft Forms. This online approach was adopted as it provided a convenient and efficient means of reaching respondents within the university community. The link to the questionnaire was disseminated to students through digital communication channels, and respondents were required to complete the questionnaire electronically. The utilisation of an online platform also facilitated expedited data collection and ensured that responses were automatically recorded in a digital format suitable for analysis. Participation in the study was voluntary, allowing respondents to complete the questionnaire at their convenience. Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Ekiti State University Health Research Ethics Committee prior to data collection. An informed consent statement was presented on the first page of the online questionnaire, outlining the study's purpose, the voluntary nature of participation, and respondents' right to withdraw at any point without penalty; only students who indicated consent were permitted to proceed to the questionnaire items. No personally identifying information was collected, and all responses were stored securely and treated with strict confidentiality, accessible only to the research team, given the sensitive nature of the items relating to dishonesty and rule-breaking. The data collected from the respondents were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviations were employed to summarise the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents and to describe the levels of social media exposure, materialistic values, and deviant behaviour among the students. Additionally, inferential statistics were utilised to test the hypotheses formulated for the study. Specifically, the Pearson product-moment correlation (PPMC) technique was employed to determine the nature and strength of the relationships between social media exposure and the development of materialistic values, as

well as between social media exposure and deviant behaviour among the students. The hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance.

3. Presentation of Results

The results of the study are presented below, based on the data collected and the research objectives and hypotheses generated.

Table 1: Level of social media exposure among students of Ekiti State University ($n = 300$)

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean
1	I use social media platforms daily.	138 (46.0)	114 (38.0)	32 (10.7)	16 (5.3)	3.25
2	I spend several hours on social media every day.	126 (42.0)	120 (40.0)	35 (11.7)	19 (6.3)	3.18
3	Social media is one of my main sources of information.	117 (39.0)	123 (41.0)	43 (14.3)	17 (5.7)	3.13
4	I frequently interact with friends through social media platforms.	132 (44.0)	111 (37.0)	37 (12.3)	20 (6.7)	3.18
5	I regularly view posts related to luxury lifestyles and expensive products.	111 (37.0)	126 (42.0)	48 (16.0)	15 (5.0)	3.11
6	I follow celebrities or influencers on social media.	123 (41.0)	117 (39.0)	38 (12.7)	22 (7.3)	3.14
7	I often watch lifestyle content on social media platforms.	108 (36.0)	129 (43.0)	49 (16.3)	14 (4.7)	3.10
8	I check my social media accounts multiple times a day.	144 (48.0)	105 (35.0)	28 (9.3)	23 (7.7)	3.23
9	Social media plays an important role in my daily routine.	120 (40.0)	117 (39.0)	51 (17.0)	12 (4.0)	3.15
10	I find it difficult to stay away from social media for a whole day.	102 (34.0)	123 (41.0)	54 (18.0)	21 (7.0)	3.02

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics concerning the level of social media exposure among students at Ekiti State University. The results indicate that a significant proportion of the respondents reported frequent use of social media platforms. Specifically, 138 respondents, representing 46.0%, strongly agreed that they utilise social media platforms daily, while 114 respondents, representing 38.0%, indicated agreement with the statement. Similarly, 126 respondents (42.0%) strongly agreed that they spend several hours on social media each day, while 120 respondents (40.0%) expressed agreement. A substantial number of respondents also reported checking their social media accounts multiple times daily and frequently interacting with friends through these platforms. Moreover, many respondents acknowledged following influencers and engaging with lifestyle-related content online. The mean scores ranged from 3.02 to 3.25, with a grand mean of 3.15, indicating that students at Ekiti State University experience a high level of exposure to social media platforms.

Table 2: Extent of development of materialistic values among Ekiti State University students ($n = 300$)

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean
1	Owning expensive items makes a person more successful.	93 (31.0)	132 (44.0)	56 (18.7)	19 (6.3)	3.00
2	I admire people who display luxury lifestyles.	99 (33.0)	123 (41.0)	55 (18.3)	23 (7.7)	2.99
3	Having expensive gadgets is important to me.	105 (35.0)	120 (40.0)	58 (19.3)	17 (5.7)	3.04
4	I often desire to own the products I see online.	102 (34.0)	126 (42.0)	48 (16.0)	24 (8.0)	3.02
5	Material possessions are a sign of achievement.	90 (30.0)	135 (45.0)	60 (20.0)	15 (5.0)	3.00
6	I feel impressed when people show wealth on social media.	96 (32.0)	129 (43.0)	49 (16.3)	26 (8.7)	2.98
7	I believe success is reflected in the things people own.	87 (29.0)	132 (44.0)	68 (22.7)	13 (4.3)	2.98

8	I like to purchase fashionable items that show status.	102 (34.0)	123 (41.0)	47 (15.7)	28 (9.3)	3.00
9	I feel motivated to work harder when I see wealthy lifestyles online.	108 (36.0)	120 (40.0)	61 (20.3)	11 (3.7)	3.08
10	I would like to live a luxurious lifestyle like those seen on social media.	114 (38.0)	117 (39.0)	48 (16.0)	21 (7.0)	3.08

Table 2 presents a descriptive analysis of the development of materialistic values among students at Ekiti State University. The findings indicate that a substantial majority of respondents expressed agreement with statements indicative of materialistic attitudes. Specifically, 93 respondents (31.0%) strongly agreed, and 132 respondents (44.0%) agreed that owning expensive items enhances an individual's success. Similarly, 99 respondents (33.0%) strongly agreed with the assertion that they admire individuals who exhibit luxurious lifestyles, while 123 respondents (41.0%) concurred with the statement. A considerable proportion of respondents also reported a desire for products encountered online and regarded expensive gadgets and fashionable items as significant indicators of status. Furthermore, many respondents indicated that they feel motivated when observing affluent lifestyles on social media. The mean scores varied from 2.98 to 3.02, with an overall mean of 3.02, suggesting the presence of materialistic value orientations at a moderate to high level among the surveyed students.

Table 3: Level of deviant behaviour among students of Ekiti State University (n = 300)

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean
1	Some students engage in dishonest practices to obtain money.	84 (28.0)	123 (41.0)	66 (22.0)	27 (9.0)	2.88
2	Students sometimes exaggerate their lifestyles on social media.	108 (36.0)	120 (40.0)	51 (17.0)	21 (7.0)	3.05
3	Some students engage in online scams to achieve financial success.	75 (25.0)	117 (39.0)	75 (25.0)	33 (11.0)	2.78
4	Students sometimes engage in risky behaviours to appear wealthy.	81 (27.0)	123 (41.0)	66 (22.0)	30 (10.0)	2.85
5	Some students pressure their peers to display expensive items.	90 (30.0)	120 (40.0)	60 (20.0)	30 (10.0)	2.90
6	Students sometimes break institutional rules for financial gain.	72 (24.0)	126 (42.0)	69 (23.0)	33 (11.0)	2.79
7	Some students imitate questionable lifestyles seen online.	87 (29.0)	120 (40.0)	63 (21.0)	30 (10.0)	2.88
8	Students sometimes exaggerate achievements on social media.	105 (35.0)	123 (41.0)	51 (17.0)	21 (7.0)	3.04
9	Peer pressure sometimes pushes students into unethical behaviour.	96 (32.0)	117 (39.0)	60 (20.0)	27 (9.0)	2.94
10	Some students engage in activities they normally would not do to gain status.	84 (28.0)	120 (40.0)	66 (22.0)	30 (10.0)	2.86

Table 3 presents a descriptive analysis of the level of deviant behaviour among students at Ekiti State University. The findings indicate that respondents recognise the presence of behaviours that may be classified as deviant within the university environment. Specifically, 108 respondents (36.0%) strongly agreed, and 120 respondents (40.0%) agreed that students occasionally exaggerate their lifestyles on social media. Similarly, 105 respondents (35.0%) strongly agreed that students sometimes embellish their achievements on social media platforms. A significant number of respondents also suggested that peer pressure can motivate students to engage in unethical behaviours and that some students emulate questionable lifestyles observed online. Furthermore,

certain respondents acknowledged that some students may partake in dishonest practices or violate rules in pursuit of financial success and social recognition. The mean scores ranged from 2.78 to 3.05, with a grand mean of 2.90, indicating that deviant behavioural tendencies are present at a moderate level among students at Ekiti State University.

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between social media exposure and the development of materialistic values among Ekiti State University students.

Table 4: Relationship between social media exposure and development of materialistic values

Variables	N	Mean	Stand Dev	r-cal	p-value
Social Media Exposure	300	31.48	3.06	0.749*	0.000
Materialistic Values	300	30.13	3.21		

*P<0.05

Table 4 demonstrates that the r-cal value of 0.749 is significant at the 0.05 level of significance, as the P-value (0.000) is less than 0.05. Consequently, the null hypothesis is rejected. This finding suggests that a significant relationship exists between social media exposure and the development of materialistic values among students at Ekiti State University. Furthermore, the coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.561$) indicates that social media exposure accounts for approximately 56.1% of the variance in materialistic values among the respondents, with the remaining variance attributable to other factors.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between social media exposure and deviant behaviour among Ekiti State University students.

Table 5: Relationship between social media exposure and deviant behaviour

Variables	N	Mean	Stand Dev	r-cal	p-value
Social Media Exposure	300	31.48	3.06	0.608*	0.000
Deviant Behaviour	300	28.97	2.98		

*P<0.05

Table 5 indicates that the r-cal value of 0.608 is statistically significant at the 0.05 level of significance, as evidenced by the P-value (0.000), which is less than 0.05. Consequently, the null hypothesis is rejected. This finding suggests a significant relationship between social media exposure and deviant behaviour among students at Ekiti State University. Furthermore, the coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.370$) reveals that social media exposure accounts for approximately 37.0% of the variance in deviant behaviour among the respondents.

4. Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study provide significant insights into social media exposure and the relationship between materialistic values and deviant behaviour among students at Ekiti State University. The descriptive results indicate that students exhibited a high level of exposure to social media platforms, with a grand mean score of 3.15. A considerable proportion of the respondents reported using social media platforms daily, spending several hours on these platforms, frequently interacting with friends online, and regularly consuming lifestyle-related content. This finding reflects the increasing integration of social media into the daily lives of young individuals, particularly university students, who rely heavily on digital communication platforms for socialisation, information sharing, and entertainment purposes. The elevated level of social media exposure demonstrated by the respondents aligns with broader international trends, wherein young adults are increasingly engaging with digital environments. Social media platforms have emerged as central arenas for identity construction, peer interaction, and lifestyle representation, thus serving as influential agents within youth populations.

The study also revealed that students exhibited a moderate to high degree of materialistic values, with a grand mean score of 3.02. Many respondents acknowledged that owning expensive items is associated with successful individuals, expressed admiration for those who showcase luxurious lifestyles, and demonstrated interest in purchasing fashionable or costly items encountered online. These results suggest that materialistic ideals prevail among the university's student population and that such ideals may be shaped by the commercial content frequently presented on social media platforms. The prominence of materialistic orientations among young people has been extensively examined in existing literature. For example, Kasser (2016) characterises materialistic values as those that develop when individuals prioritise external indicators of success, such as wealth, possessions, and status, over intrinsic goals, including personal growth and meaningful relationships. Similarly, Smith (2017) argues that materialism is cultivated through socialisation processes related to media exposure, peer communication, and cultural expectations regarding success and achievement.

The results of this research, therefore, support the assertion that exposure to consumer-oriented messages can influence individuals' attitudes towards material possessions. Social media platforms frequently showcase idealised images of wealth, luxury, and success through influencers, celebrities, and peer interactions. Such portrayals may prompt users to evaluate their lives according to material standards and engage in processes of social comparison. Similar patterns have been highlighted in previous studies. For instance, Yu-Ting and Qing-Qi (2020) reported that passive use of social networking sites may amplify materialistic tendencies among adolescents due to upward social comparison with individuals who appear to possess more enviable lifestyles. Likewise, Chae (2018) noted that exposure to influencers presenting luxurious lifestyles may evoke feelings of envy and aspiration among social media users, thereby fostering materialistic attitudes. These perspectives reinforce the findings of this study, indicating that students who frequently engage with social media content may develop stronger materialistic orientations.

Another key finding of the study revealed that deviant behaviour existed at a moderate level among the students, with a grand mean score of 2.90. Respondents opined that some students exaggerate their lifestyle on social media, imitate dubious behaviours seen online, and sometimes engage in unethical actions to gain social recognition from their peers or to succumb to peer pressure. Although the results do not indicate the prevalence of deviance among all students, they do suggest the presence of behaviours that may violate social norms or institutional expectations within the university environment. Previous studies have demonstrated a relationship between materialistic values and behavioural problems. Maras et al. (2015) reported that materialistic attitudes among adolescents correlate with emotional and behavioural issues, including tendencies towards rule-breaking and difficulties in emotional and behavioural adjustment. Similarly, Harnish et al. (2019) observed that an excessive focus on material acquisition may lead to maladaptive behaviours such as compulsive buying and financial irresponsibility, particularly when social pressure to display wealth and status is prevalent.

The results of hypothesis testing further indicated a significant relationship between social media exposure and the development of materialistic values among the students. The correlation analysis yielded an r -cal value of 0.749 and a p -value of 0.000, which was found to be statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected, demonstrating a strong association between social media exposure and the development of materialistic values among students at Ekiti State University. This finding reinforces the notion that social media platforms serve as potent vehicles for transmitting values and socialising consumers. Through constant exposure to images of luxury lifestyles, expensive products, and narratives about status, users may adopt materialistic ideals and come to associate success with visible consumption. This finding aligns with the work of Bindah and Othman (2012), which identified peer communication and media exposure as significant factors in the development of materialistic values among young consumers. Likewise, Moschis et al.

(2011) emphasised that media environments play a crucial role in shaping consumption-oriented attitudes and materialistic orientations among youth.

The results also indicated a significant relationship between social media exposure and deviant behaviour among the respondents. The correlation analysis revealed an r -cal value of 0.608 with a p -value of 0.000, which was significant at the 0.05 level. This led to the rejection of the second null hypothesis, providing evidence that increased exposure to social media is associated with heightened tendencies towards deviant behaviour among students. This result suggests that social media may exert a behavioural influence through its peer interactions, social comparisons, and exposure to risky or unethical behaviours portrayed online. Young individuals may emulate behaviours observed in their digital networks or feel pressured to meet specific lifestyle expectations to gain social recognition and acceptance. This perspective is supported by the work of Ahmed et al. (2020), who demonstrated that adolescents and young adults are particularly vulnerable to the positive and negative social influences exerted by their peers in social settings. Similarly, Huang et al. (2023) highlighted the significant role of peer interactions in shaping social behaviours and attitudes among adolescents.

Furthermore, the relationship between materialistic orientation and unethical behaviour has been substantiated by previous empirical research. Yue, Zeng, and Li (2024) found that individuals with high materialistic values are more likely to engage in unethical behaviour when they believe such behaviour will lead to wealth or social status. The findings of the present study, therefore, reinforce the argument that social media exposure may indirectly contribute to deviant behaviour by promoting materialistic ideals centred on the acquisition of wealth and the display of status. When individuals experience pressure from their inability to achieve these ideals, yet lack legitimate means to do so, they may resort to behaviours that violate social norms.

5. Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between social media exposure and the development of materialistic values, as well as deviant behaviour, among students at Ekiti State University. The findings indicated that social media has become a central aspect of students' daily lives and is significantly associated with their attitudes, values, and behavioural tendencies. The research revealed that exposure to social media platforms is correlated with materialistic orientations among students, particularly through the continuous display of luxurious lifestyles, consumer goods, and status-related content. Furthermore, it demonstrated that social media exposure is associated with behavioural tendencies that may suggest an intention to deviate from expected social or institutional norms. These findings underscore the significance of the digital media environment on the value systems and behaviours of young individuals in university settings. Consequently, there is a pressing need for enhanced awareness, guidance, and educational initiatives that promote responsible social media use and encourage students to prioritise ethical values, personal development, and positive social behaviour.

5.1 Limitations and recommendations

This study has several limitations that must be considered when interpreting the results. First, the cross-sectional correlational design suggests that the association identified between social media exposure, materialistic values, and deviant behaviour does not imply causation. It remains possible that the direction of the relationships could be unidirectional or bidirectional, or even that they may be reciprocal. Second, the sample of 300 students was non-probability or purposive, meaning that the findings may not accurately represent the wider student population or students at other universities; thus, the results should be regarded as indicative only. Third, the study relied on self-report responses collected through a web-based questionnaire, which may be influenced by social desirability bias, particularly for items concerning dishonesty and rule-breaking. Fourth, the questions on the deviant behaviour scale referred to the "perceptions" of deviant behaviour within

the general population of “students” rather than to personal instances of deviant behaviour; hence, the results from the deviant behaviour scale should be interpreted accordingly. The findings of this study suggest a need for future research to address these limitations through longitudinal or experimental designs that utilise probability sampling across multiple institutions, employing first-person language in the formulation of self-report items.

- Universities should launch media literacy programmes to educate students about the possible psychological and behavioural impacts of social media exposure, particularly regarding materialistic pressures and unrealistic expectations for a specific lifestyle.
- University authorities should enhance value-based education and ethical orientation programmes that encourage students to prioritise integrity, responsibility, and personal development over material success as measures of achievement.
- Given that respondents are adult university students, families and significant others may, when the relationship allows, play a supportive rather than supervisory role by engaging in open conversations about social media use, wealth, and success. This will encourage students to develop balanced perspectives on these issues through dialogue rather than direct oversight.
- Counselling units in universities should organise workshops and awareness campaigns to help students understand the perils of excessive materialism and the risks of engaging in deviant behaviours for social recognition.
- Policymakers and educational stakeholders should promote responsible digital culture initiatives that encourage young people to use social media platforms for educational development, creativity, and constructive social engagement rather than status competition or material display.

6. Declarations

Author Contributions: Conceptualisation (O.A.O. & D.K.A.); Literature review (O.A.O.); methodology (D.K.A.); software (O.A.O.); validation (O.A.O. & D.K.A.); formal analysis (D.K.A.); investigation (O.A.O. & D.T.G.); data curation (O.A.O., D.K.A & D.T.G) drafting and preparation (O.A.O. & D.K.A.); review and editing (O.A.O. & D.K.A.); supervision (O.A.O.); project administration (O.A.O. & D.T.G.); funding acquisition (N/A). All authors have read and approved the published version of the article.

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