



**PERCEIVED INFORMATION OVERLOAD, INFORMATION ANXIETY AND  
SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE AMONG UNDERGRADUATE LEARNERS IN THE  
UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN, NIGERIA**

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**Abstract**

*Despite numerous benefits attributed to Social Media Platforms (SMPs), these digital tools have become a source of information overload and anxiety for students in HEIs. Arguably, this is due to the challenges of navigating and coping with the increasingly huge resources on SMPs. The focus of this study was to assess the manifestations of perceived information overload, information anxiety, and social media usage among undergraduate learners in the University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. Five faculties were selected using a survey research design approach using Google questionnaire as the main instrument for data collection. A total of 380 undergraduate students were sampled using descriptive and inferential statistical tools to analyze the collected data. Results revealed high manifestation of perceived information overload and anxiety among the respondents surveyed. The outcome also showed that there are no significant gender disparities in the manifestations of information overload and information anxiety. Similarly, the investigation showed a strong positive link between perceived information overload and information anxiety in the study area. Furthermore, a high level of social media usage among students were seen in the area of consumption-based, belief-based, image-based and comparison-based. Therefore, in order to mitigate information overload and information anxiety in the use of social media, this study recommended that institutions of learning should develop targeted interventions to enable students to inculcate coping strategies such as information-seeking and searching skills, time management skills, constructive abstinence and queuing methods among others.*

**Keywords:** Perceived Information overload, Information anxiety, Social media usage, Undergraduate students

## **Introduction**

Emergence of Web 2.0 technology has revolutionized the way and manner people communicate and share information across space and boundaries. For instance, it brought about the proliferation, wide acceptance, and use of Social Media Platforms (SMPs) among diverse user groups, especially students in higher institutions of learning globally. SMPs are sets of digital tools that allow users to create, share, and consume content with others in a networked environment (Davis, 2016). It is an online medium used for communication, interaction, sharing of resources collaboration, and passing of information over a large group of people that are widely dispersed (Facer & Childs, 2020).

Over the past years, researchers have identified several benefits that SMPs offer to students such as seamless communication and interaction, online engagements, connections, learning and education, marketing, entertainment, global awareness, and understanding among others (Nti, Akyeramfo-Sam, Bediako-Kyeremeh & Agyemang, 2022; Pang, 2018). Aside, a lot of academic activities are being undertaken by students on SMPs such as video and audio recording of lectures, navigating resources, organizing and participating in online classes, discovering educational opportunities and scholarships, downloading e-books, handouts, and class notes (Raut & Patil, 2016).

However, despite the numerous benefits of SMPs, these digital tools have become a source of information overload and anxiety for students in higher institutions. This can be adduced to the task of navigating and coping with the increasingly huge resources on SMPs (Wang, Xu, & Xie, 2022). In social media use, Information Overload (IO) can be described “as a situation whereby users have access to information more than they can cope with while using social media platforms” (Jones & Kelly, 2018). Relatively, Information Anxiety (IA) has to do with distraction and stress associated with sorting out the unrelated resources available on social media platforms (Anto, Asif, Basu, Kanapathipillai, Salam, Selim, Zaman & Eisingerich, 2023). On account of the increasingly huge resources on SMPs, students in higher institutions are often exposed to constant challenges of navigating and coping with these resources, which eventually may lead to IO and IA. For instance, perceived information overload may occur among students due to high reliance on multiple social media platforms for academic, social, and personal purposes. This constant bombardment of information and the need to stay connected and up-to-date on multiple social media may equally lead to difficulty in filtering relevant information and ultimately lead to information anxiety. Therefore, as students navigate these multiple platforms, they often experience increased stress levels and decreased productivity due to the pressure to constantly monitor and process information (Orben 2020).

Several researchers, especially outside Nigeria, have investigated IO and IA experiences in the use of SMPs among learners in tertiary institutions. These studies have agreed that there is the prevalence of IO and IA among university students using the social media platforms. (Al-Kumaim, Hassan, Shabbir, Almazroi & Al-Rejal, 2021; Virkus, Mandre, & Pals, 2018; Khalid, Saeed & Syed, 2016). Boursier, Gioia, Musetti & Schimmenti (2020) in their study drew out a tacit relationship between social media use and anxiety. The investigation by Swar, Tahir, and Iris (2017) proved that there is a nexus between information overload and the manifestations of negative psychological imbalance, such as stress and anxiety, by users. Apart from these, Belabbes, Ruthven, Moshfeghi & Pennington (2023), for example, have

identified five catalysts of information overload while using SMPS. These include: undefined information needs, information characteristics and the space where users deploy information, the user's cognitive quotient and general the information environment.

In the same vein, Bawden and Robinson (2020) recognized another four categories of IO triggers which they labelled as follow: preponderance, dynamism and distinction of information, currency of information, pervasive and pushed information, parochial factors and personal differences. These triggers as identified by these authors can be responsible for information overload associated with university students, however, their manifestations may differ from person to person. For instance, information anxiety could also be triggered by Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). The FOMO could spill into other causes arising from posts that relate with missing private events or the experiences of others relayed on the social media (Hayran, Anik & Gürhan-Canli, 2020).

The foregoing clearly shows that quite a number of investigations have been made in this area of study. This naturally justifies the urgent need to undertake an empirical study in this area which focuses on students in higher institutions in the Nigerian environment. This study will determine the level of perceived IO and IA experienced by students, in Nigeria, in their course of navigating SMPs; and suggest possible interventions that could help to cope with information overload and anxiety.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions of the study are formulated below:

1. What is the quantum of perceived IO in social media usage among students in the University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria?
2. What is the quantum of perceived IA in social media usage among students of the University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria?
3. What is the extent of social media usage among students in the University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria?

### **Hypotheses**

The null hypotheses below were tested at 0.01 significant level

1. H1: There is no connection between perceived IO and IA in the use of social media among undergraduate students of the University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria.
2. H2: There are no gender differences in perceived information overload and information anxiety among undergraduate students of the University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Information Overload in Perspectives**

Several researchers have defined IO from diverse perspectives, however, there is no universally accepted definition of IO. For instance, Bawden & Robinson (2020) defined IO "as a situation that arises when there is so much information, that it constitutes a hindrance to the user rather than an opportunity". It can be defined as an unmanageable information volume, or better yet, too much available information (Jones & Kelly, 2018). Furthermore, it

has also been explained as a situation when an individual finds it difficult to cope with deluge of information available, thereby hindering their potential of achieving set tasks or objectives (Belabbes et al., 2023). Based on these definitions, IO can simply be defined as a situation of too many information sources that exceed the coping ability of a person.

### **Concept of Information Anxiety**

IA is the crises that occurs due to the denial of access to required information (Bawden & Robinson, 2020). The causes of information anxiety include lack of insufficient information, poorly presented information and ignorance about the information environment in which one operates, and information overload among others (Anto et al., 2023). Therefore, IA can be experienced by students while using SMPs due to some of these reasons identified in the literature.

### **Coping Strategies in Dealing with IO and IA among Students in Higher Institutions**

Several researchers have delved into coping strategies in handling IO and IA experienced by people while using social media (Shahrzadi, Mansouri, Alavi & Shabani, 2024; Liang & Fu, 2017; Neben, 2015). Some of these coping strategies are highlighted below:

*Filtering strategy:* This is a systematic way of identifying relevant information based on some sets of criteria by a social media user. It involves selecting, omitting, and ranking information deemed to be relevant or not relevant to a social media user (Mahdi, Ahmad, Ismail, Natiq & Mohammed, 2020). This method can help in reducing overload and anxiety among social media users.

*Information avoidance:* It simply means deliberately ignoring some useful information or sources of information while dealing with too much information (Neben 2015). This strategy can be used to reduce overload and anxiety while using SMPs, whereby social media users fail to attend to everything they come across.

*Information withdrawal:* This strategy involves limiting the number of sources to be consulted on social media, or disregarding relevant materials with very lean usefulness potential. This strategy can be utilized by social media users in diverse ways such as reducing the traffic of notifications issued per day ‘unfollowing’ social media pages, intentionally switching-off mobile phones and postponing attention to emails (Liang & Fu, 2017).

*Satisficing:* This entails making use of just enough information to make a decision that minimally satisfies the social media user (Stevens, 2019). By this method, social media users may at times ignore information sources that would contribute to making optimal decisions. However, there are consequences for this approach if the decision taken is counterproductive. For instance, Hoffman (2023) distinguished between good satisficing and bad satisficing, in the sense that good satisficing depends on a certain rationale for taking a particular decision, thereby reducing overload; while bad satisficing may be caused by an inability to locate the relevant information sources, thereby leading to ineffective decisions.

*Information architecture:* This can be achieved by structuring information spaces through User Experience (UX) interface design (Griver, 2023). This helps avoid too much crowded information in the form of text, images, and numbers while users are navigating SMPs. By this approach, information overload may be reduced drastically through the selective way of using text, images, and videos on screens.

*Personal information management and literacy:* This strategy is tailored towards seeking and searching for the right information on the internet using specific approaches. By this method,

information is properly managed, and it becomes less burdensome. These personal skills can be inculcated by attending information literacy classes or training sessions (Shahrzadi et al., 2024).

*Queuing*: This is often referred to as wait and see strategy, it means delaying in attending to some useful information (Walgrave & Dejaeghere, 2017). Queuing strategy can also be used by social media users while delaying to act immediately on relevant information sources, or putting some information on hold to “read later”.

The above-outlined strategies can be useful to students while navigating SMPs as a way of mitigating information overload and anxiety.

### **Social Media Usage among Students in Higher Institutions in Nigeria and Other Spaces**

Several studies have looked at the use of social media by students in higher institutions across developed and developing countries. As expected, the isolated enquiries have produced unique results that are harmonisable.

We begin with Junejo, Hussain & Lashari (2022) who investigated the linkage between the use of social media among university students and other variables such as their learning attitudes, subjective disposition and academic output. Data was collected from 254 university learners who were ardent users of social media platforms. Findings showed that the social media had an impactful significant the scores of students, attitudes toward scholarship, and overall study habits or philosophy. It was also derived that learners involved in over-use of social media pages had a comparative low in academic performance and well-being. In another study that focused on Chennai district, India, Vanithamani (2021) examined the effect of social media on students. This investigation dispensed a questionnaire to harvest information from 200 college students. Results revealed that social media was commonly used among students in the Chennai district, however, it had a negative impact on their academic performance and their mental balance.

Tayo, Adebola and Yahya (2019) paid attention to the use of the social media among undergraduates and how it has impacted on their studies. The descriptive survey design used drew 850 undergraduate learners from Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. The structured questionnaire deployed in the surveyed area revealed that most undergraduate students utilized social media platforms for purposes that include, academic socialization and information gathering, among others. Results further revealed that social media had negative consequences on students in manifestations of anti-social behaviors (such as cyberbullying, internet scams) and distraction showed in their academic performances and lows in other related academic areas such as writing and spelling proficiencies.

On the whole, these empirical studies have shown that social media as a tool provides numerous benefits for students such as entertainment, engagement, and information sharing among others. However, the consequences of social media usage cannot be overlooked such as addiction, cyberbullying, information overload, and anxiety among others if not utilized with caution.

### **Related Studies on Information Overload, Anxiety, and Social Media Usage: Perspectives on Students in Higher Institutions Globally**

Researchers outside Nigeria who have examined information overload, anxiety, and social media use among students in higher institutions have come out with varying perspectives that are relevant to this study.

Li's (2023) inquiry on social media overuse and anxiety among students in a Chinese university focused on the connection between social media overuse and psychological stress. An aggregate number of 358 Chinese College students served as the sample for this study. His outcome showed that social media overuse was closely related with stress and anxiety. In another investigation, Kim (2022) explored the nexus between social media use and information overload among learners in higher institutions. The outcome of the structured questionnaire used to collect data from 150 students informed that excessive social media use was associated with information overload, thereby causing stress and decreased academic performance.

Wang et al. (2022) also took as its primary concern the interconnection that lies between social media overload and anxiety among learners in Shangdad, China where he pulled, for his study, a population of 644 University students. His findings found a meeting point between social media overload and anxiety, however this association was mediated by information strain and risk perception. Hussain, Ghani, Minhas, Irfan & Rehman (2021) carried out a robust investigation on the effect of information overload on university students and their patterns of internet use. The sample size covered 400 students, 100 from each of the Four Universities. The universities are: International Islamic University, Quaid-e-Azam University, National University of Modern Languages and Federal Urdu University Islamabad, Pakistan. Findings revealed that the majority of the students experienced information overload due to huge resources on the internet comprising relevant and irrelevant information. Also, mention should also be made of Vannucci, Flannery & Ohannessian (2017) who examined the impact of time spent using social media on anxiety symptoms in adults. The outcome, from the 563 adults that provided data for the study, affirmed symptoms of anxiety manifests in adults that spent more time using the social media.

Overall, literature has shown that information overload and anxiety are common experiences among students exposed to the social media. Although there are huge resources on the internet, however, inability to cope with those resources may lead to physical, psychological, mental, and emotional traumas for student users.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The most applicable theories to this study are: Information Overload theory and the Anxiety Uncertainty Management theory. Each of these theories is discussed briefly below:

#### **Information Overload Theory (IOT)**

Information overload theory (IOT) was propounded by Gross (1964). According to this theory, it is believed that individuals experience cognitive overload when they are exposed to an excessive amount of information, leading to decreased productivity, increased discomforts, and reduced decision-making ability. This theory suggests that the human brain has a restricted power to process information. Consequently, when the capacity over shoots its limit, a state of mental fatigue, anxiety, and decreased performance may set in. Also, information velocity, or the speed at which information is changing, can also contribute to information

overload, thereby making it difficult to keep up with latest trends in the information world. The effects of information overload are far-reaching and can have far reaching consequences for individuals or corporate organizations. For instance, it can negatively impact ones output and cause stress accumulation or retard decision-making ability among others. In a situation of chronic information overload, mental health issues may arise such as anxiety, depression, burnout, as well as reduced job satisfaction and turnover. This theory is most applicable to students in their use of SMPs due to the huge resources they encounter on the internet, at times making them feel overwhelmed and struggling to process and use the information effectively.

### **The Anxiety-Uncertainty Management (AUM) Theory**

This theory was propounded by Gudykunst (2005). This theory explains how individuals manage anxiety and uncertainty in intercultural interactions and information processing. The theory posits that individuals experience anxiety and uncertainty when they encounter unfamiliar or uncertain situations. When individuals face these situations, they may experience anxiety, which can manifest as feelings of apprehension, worry, or fear. This anxiety can be triggered by the uncertainty of the situation, the individual's lack of control, or the potential for negative outcomes. According to this theory, individuals employ various strategies in dealing with anxiety such as avoidance, denial, seeking social support, information seeking, reappraisal, and problem-focused coping.

In the context of social media usage, students may experience anxiety in the course of processing too much available information at their disposal. Therefore, students may show feelings of apprehension, uncertainty, stress, and other mental issues. Effective management of this anxiety and uncertainty can lead to increased confidence and competence, while ineffective management can result in increased stress, anxiety, and decreased performance.

### **Methodology**

The study adopted survey research design approach using a structured questionnaire as major instrument of data collection. The collection of data from respective learners across the faculties in the University of Ilorin was through a Google questionnaire. A Google form was deployed to collect data from learners in selected the faculties. The forms was dispensed among selected learners through their social media groups. Participants were instructed to complete the form objectively and to the best of their ability. A number of 308 respondents filled out the Google questionnaire and were returned valid for processing. The data harvested were analyzed using inferential and descriptive statistics. The return rate was 81% which is quite on the high side.

The study comprised of 25,626 learners selected from five faculties at the University of Ilorin. Out of the thirteen faculties in the university, a stratified sampling technique was adopted to choose five faculties. The justification for the selection of the respective faculties hinge on their high population ccompared to others. In order to arrive at the sample size for this study, the model of Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) was used to choose the appropriate sample size based on the given population for this study. Consequently, an aggregate of 380 was established as the sample size for this study derivable from the population size of 25,626.

The main instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was structured into Six Sections covering demographic attributes as well as adapted scales measuring perceived information overload, information anxiety, and the use of social media. The adapted scales were designed as a Four-point Likert scale type with multiple options.

Section A focused on the bio-data of the respondents. The Section B of the study comprised of an adapted scale called the Social Media Usage Scale (SMUS) developed by Tuck and Thompson (2024). It comprised of 18 items which were further divided into four sub-scales measuring Image-based usage (4 items), Comparison-based usage (6 items), Belief-based usage (4 items), and Consumption-based usage (4 items). Section E also comprised of an adapted scale measuring the extent of information overload. The scale was initially developed by Misra (2011). Section F comprised of 8 items measuring information anxiety adapted from Erfanmanesh et al. (2012).

The adapted scales were tested for face validity by the assistance of Two experts in the field of Information Technology. This was achieved after several corrections and fine-tuning of the questionnaire items. This was done to ensure clarity of the items measuring each of the constructs. On the other hand, the validity of the content of the adapted scales was equally tested. This is done by establishing the Cronbach's Alpha Reliability score of each. The Cronbach's Alpha scores of the three adapted measurements were between 0.70 and 0.87, which are considerably high, thereby revealing that the level of reliability was high.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Analysis of Data**

The data harvested were analyzed with the use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 20.0. version. Results are presented in the below Tables along with their interpretations.

### **Demographic Information of Respondents**

**Table 1: Bio-data of the Respondents**

S/N	Bio- data		Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Gender	Male	137	44.5%
		Female	171	55.5%
		<i>Total</i>	<i>308</i>	<i>100.0%</i>
2	Age	15 - 19 years	41	13.3%
		20 - 25 years	240	77.9%
		25 - 30 years	19	6.2%
		30 years and above	8	2.6%
		<i>Total</i>	<i>308</i>	<i>100.0%</i>
		3	Level	100 LEVEL
200 LEVEL	35			11.4%
300 LEVEL	5			1.6%
400 LEVEL	218			70.8%
500 LEVEL	18			5.8%
600 LEVEL	7			2.3%
<i>Total</i>	<i>308</i>			<i>100.0%</i>

Table 1 above, shows the population attributes of the respondents which reveal a gender distribution of 171 (55.5%) were females, while 137(44.5%) were males. The highest number



of respondents in this study were female students. The age disparities in the study showed that, the majority of respondents 240(77.9%) fall within the age category of 20-25 years, followed by 41(13.3%) 15-19 years, 19(6.2%) 25-30 years, and 8(2.6%) are above 30 years. In terms of student status of the respondents, majority number, 218 (70.8%) are in the 400 level, 5(1.6%)300 level, 35(11.4%) 200 level, 25(8.1%)100 level, 18(5.8%)500 level and 7(2.3%)600 level respectively.

### Analysis of Research Questions

*Research Question One:* What is the quantum of perceived information overload in the use of social media among students of the University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria?

**Table 2: Extent of perceived information overload in social media usage among students of the university, Kwara state, Nigeria**

S/ N	Items	SA F(%)	A F(%)	D F(%)	SD F(%)	M EA N	SD
1	I feel intimidated by the gross volume of information I find on social media.	62 (20.1)	178 (57.8)	55 (17.9)	13 (4.2)	2.9 4	.73 9
2	I am always distracted due to huge resources on social media platforms.	43 (14.0)	178 (57.8)	83 (26.9)	4 (1.3)	2.8 4	.66 2
3	I always keep up with the constant stream of updates and posts which feels like a burden, particularly during exam periods.	23 (7.5)	123 (39.9)	134 (43.5)	28 (9.1)	2.4 6	.76 2
4	I have come to realize that the overload of information on social media makes it difficult for me to focus on studying or completing assignments.	44 (14.3)	159 (51.6)	85 (27.6)	20 (6.5)	2.7 4	.78 2
5	I experience feelings of anxiety or stress due to information overload while using social media.	11 (3.6)	142 (46.1)	127 (41.2)	28 (9.1)	2.4 4	.70 8
6	I often feel like I need to constantly check social media to stay informed, even though it can be overwhelming.	65 (21.1)	174 (56.5)	61 (19.8)	8 (2.6)	2.9 6	.71 6
7	I feel like I miss important information because I can't	54 (17.5)	131 (42.5)	106 (34.4)	17 (5.5)	2.7 2	.81 5

	keep up with everything on social media.						
8	The constant stream of information on social media has made it difficult for me to relax and unwind.	12 (3.9)	100 (32.5)	146 (47.4)	50 (16.2)	2.2 4	.76 6
9	I often feel like I need to be constantly "connected" to social media to avoid missing out.	59 (19.2)	143 (46.4)	85 (27.6)	21 (6.8)	2.7 8	833
10	I have noticed that information overload on social media makes me feel less productive overall.	38 (12.3)	123 (39.9)	98 (31.8)	49 (15.9)	2.4 9	.90 4
Grand Mean						2.9 8	

The results on Table 2 show a high level of perceived information overload the use of the social media among undergraduate learners of the University of Ilorin with a grand mean score (2.98). This result shows that the students experienced a high level of perceived information overload while using social media. For instance, 240 (77.9%) of the students felt intimidated with the volume of information on social media, while, 239 (77.6%) felt they needed to constantly check social media to stay informed, even though it can be overwhelming. 221(71.8%) felt they were always distracted by the vast resources on social media platforms. Also, 202(65.6%) indicated that often feel pressured to constantly stay connected to social media to avoid missing out.

*Research Question Two:* What is the quantum of perceived information anxiety in social media usage among students of the University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria?

**Table 3: Extent of perceived information anxiety in social media usage among students of the university of Ilorin, Kwara state, Nigeria**

S/N	Item	SA F(%)	A F(%)	D F(%)	SD F(%)	Mean	SD
1	I feel anxious whenever I need to find information for a research project or assignment on social media due to the need to search all available sources.	60 (19.5)	121 (39.3)	94 (30.5)	33 (10.1)	2.68	.909
2	I have noticed that the vast amount of irrelevant information and resources on social media makes	50 (16.2)	176 (57.1)	66 (21.4)	16 (5.2)	2.84	.750

	me feel overwhelmed and unsure of where to start my research.						
3	I am worried when the quality of retrieved information resources from the social media is unreliable and irrelevant.	62 (20.1)	163 (52.9)	66 (21.4)	17 (5.5)	2.88	.789
4	I find it difficult to distinguish between credible and unreliable information on social media.	45 (14.6)	131 (42.5)	116 (37.7)	16 (5.2)	2.67	.788
5	I feel anxious when I do not know the required skills to search for information on social media.	33 (10.7)	139 (45.1)	113 (36.7)	23 (7.5)	2.59	.779
6	Anxiety grips me when I find too much information that I cannot relate to on social media.	48 (15.6)	129 (41.9)	112 (36.4)	19 (6.2)	2.67	.812
7	I feel unsatisfied when the information retrieved from social media is not up-to-date.	88 (28.6)	157 (51)	51 (16.6)	12 (3.9)	3.04	.779
8	I feel unhappy when the information that I acquire from social media is not easy to use and not self-explanatory.	88 (28.6)	157 (51)	51 (16.6)	12 (3.9)	3.84	1.130
<i>Grand Mean</i>						2.90	

The results in Table 3 show a high level of perceived information anxiety in social media usage among University of Ilorin learners with a grand mean score of (2.90). For instance, the highest number 245(79.6%) of the students stated that they feel unhappy when the information they acquire from social media is not easy to use and not self-explanatory. 245 (79.6%) feel unsatisfied when the information retrieved from social media is not up-to-date. Again, 225 (73.0%) are worried when the standard of the information resources from the social media is not reliable and irrelevant; while 226(73.3%) agreed that the vast amount of irrelevant information and resources on social media makes them feel overwhelmed and unsure of where to start my research. This result implies that most of the students in the study area experienced information anxiety when using social media platforms.

*Research Question Three:* What is the level of social media usage among students of the University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria?

**Table 4: Extent of social media usage among students of the University of Ilorin, Kwara state, Nigeria**

S/N	Image-Based Usage	SA F(%)	A F(%)	D F(%)	SD F(%)	ME AN	SD
1	I share posts or stories about myself to gain the attention of others.	32 (10.4)	67 (21.8)	128 (41.6)	81 (26.3)	2.16	.934
2	I feel important whenever people like, comment, and share my content.	57 (18.5)	158 (51.3)	77 (25)	16 (5.2)	2.83	.785
3	I like to read other people's comments on my posts to know their impressions about my content.	67 (21.8)	161 (52)	74 (24)	6 (1.9)	2.94	.731
4	I feel disappointed whenever people do not give favorable comments on my posts	48 (15.6)	98 (31.8)	108 (35.1)	54 (17.5)	2.45	.956
5	I use social media filters and editing tools to enhance my appearance before posting photos.	11 (3.6)	101 (32.8)	145 (47.1)	51 (16.6)	2.23	.764
	<i>Group Mean</i>					2.52	
	<b>Comparison Based Usage</b>						
6	I compare myself with other people's lifestyles and experiences on social media.	12 (3.9)	82 (26.6)	115 (37.3)	99 (32.1)	2.02	.863
7	I compare my body size or looks to others on social media to boost my self-esteem.	8 (2.6)	31 (10.1)	165 (53.6)	104 (33.8)	1.81	.714
8	I use social media to reflect on the past and compare my past to my present.	46 (14.9)	137 (44.5)	89 (28.9)	36 (11.7)	2.63	.877
9	I always look for content that would make me improve on myself	151 (49)	129 (41.9)	21 (6.8)	7 (2.3)	3.38	.714
10	I take breaks from social media to avoid an inferiority complex.	42 (13.6)	101 (32.8)	120 (39)	45 (14.6)	2.45	.903
	<i>Group Mean</i>					2.46	

<b><i>Belief Based Usage</i></b>							
11	I love to share posts or stories on my religious beliefs on social media.	78 (25.3)	155 (50.3)	69 (22.4)	6 (1.9)	2.99	.746
12	I go on social media to share my ideologies about life.	62 (20.1)	115 (37.3)	119 (38.6)	12 (3.9)	2.74	.823
13	I Comment on other people's posts (s) whenever it contradicts my belief system.	20 (6.5)	77 (25)	174 (56.5)	37 (12)	2.26	.751
14	I always sift social media content that is not in line with my beliefs and ethics.	81 (26.3)	149 (48.4)	47 (15.3)	31 (10.1)	2.91	.901
<i>Group Mean</i>						2.72	
<b><i>Consumption-Based Usage</i></b>							
15	I often find myself mindlessly scrolling through social media content without a specific purpose.	95 (30.8)	150 (48.7)	62 (20.1)	1 (0.3)	3.10	.717
16	I am more likely to trust information, stories and posts that are shared by friends and influencers on social media platforms.	56 (18.2)	106 (34.4)	127 (41.2)	19 (6.2)	2.65	.847
17	I usually visit other people's profile pages within and outside my network to determine their level of status and attainment in life.	50 (16.2)	157 (51)	76 (24.7)	25 (8.1)	2.75	.822
18	I use social media for entertainment purposes.	157 (51)	128 (41.6)	19 (6.2)	4 (1.3)	3.42	.668
<i>Group Mean</i>						2.98	
<i>Grand Mean</i>						2.65	

The results in Table 4 show a high level in the use of social media among undergraduate students of the University of Ilorin with a grand mean score of (2.65). Therefore, in sequential preference, students exhibited a high level of consumption-based usages with a group mean score of (2.98), followed by belief-based usages with a group mean score of (2.72); image-based usages with a group mean score of (2.52), and lastly, comparison based usages with a group mean score of (2.46). This result implies that most of the students in the study area used social media for diverse purposes such as image building, comparison, sharing their beliefs, and consuming information to stay informed.

### Analysis of Research Hypotheses

*Hypothesis One:* There will be no correlation between perceived information overload and information anxiety in social media usage among students of the University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria.

**Table 5: Correlational table showing the relationship between perceived information overload and perceived information anxiety**

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Number of Cases</i>	<i>Pearson Correlation</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>P value</i>
Perceived Information Overload	308	.608	23.39	P<.0.01
Perceived Information Anxiety	308		17.59	

\*\* Correlation is Significant at 0.01 (Two-Tailed)

The result in Table 5 shows that a notable positive correlation exists between perceived information anxiety and information overload in social media usage among University of Ilorin students ( $r = .608$ ,  $p < 0.5$ ). This depicts that as information overload increases, perceived information anxiety also tends to increase. The relationship coefficient of .608 gives the impression that a moderate positive relationship exists between the two variables. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected

*Hypothesis Two:* There are no gender differences in perceived information overload and information anxiety among undergraduate students of the University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria.

**Table 6a: Independent t-test table showing no significant gender difference in perceived information overload between male and female students**

<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>Mean diff</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Sig (2 tailed)</i>
Males	137	.257	.687	306	.397	4.818	.492
Females	177				.397	5.293	

Results in Table 6a show no tangible differences between genders in their perceived information overload among students at the University of Ilorin. The scores for males revealed ( $M=3.97$ ,  $SD=4.818$ ) and Females ( $F=3.97$ ,  $SD=5.293$ );  $t(306)=.687$ ,  $P=.492$ . This suggests that male and female students experience the same levels of information overload. Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted.

**Table 6b: Independent t-test table showing no significant gender difference in perceived information anxiety between male and female students**

Gender	N	F	t	Df	Mean diff	SD	Sig (2 tailed
Males	137	2.727	.287	306	.153	4.022	.774
Females	177				.153	5.060	

Results in Table 6b show no significant distinction between males and females in their perceived information anxiety among students at the University of Ilorin. The scores for males indicated ( $M=.153$ ,  $SD=4.022$ ) and Females ( $F=.153$ ,  $SD=5.060$ );  $t(306)=.2.727$ ,  $p=.774$ . This suggests that male and female students experience the same levels of information anxiety. Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted.

### Discussion of Findings

This research work investigated perceived information overload, information anxiety and social media usage among undergraduate learners in the University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. The findings in this study are discussed in alignment with the research questions raised, along with the extant literature.

*Research Question One:* What is the quantum of perceived IO in social media usage among students of the University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria?

In line with research question one, outcomes revealed a high number of perceived information overload having a grand mean score of (2.98). This result supports the conclusions in past studies on information overload among students in higher institutions (Hassan et al., 2021; Al-Kumaim et al., 2021)

*Research Question Two:* What is the quantum of perceived IA in social media usage among students of the University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria?

In line with research question two, findings showed a high level of perceived information anxiety having a grand mean score of (2.90). This result supports the findings of past studies on information anxiety and the use of SMPs among students in higher institutions (E.g. Li, 2023; Vannucci et al., 2017).

*Research Question Three:* What is the extent of social media usage among students in the University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria?

In line with research question three, findings showed a substantial number of social media usage with a grand mean score of (2.65). Varying levels of usage are reported in the following order with their mean scores: Consumption usages (2.98), Belief-based usages (2.52), Image-based usages (2.72), and Comparison usages (2.46). This result is in line with past studies that found a high level of social media usage among students in the surveyed institutions (Vanithamani et al., 2021; Tayo et al., 2019).

*Hypothesis One:* There is no significant relationship between perceived IO and IA in the use of social media among undergraduate students of the University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. In line with study hypothesis one, results revealed a significant positive link between perceived IO and IA in social media usage among students of the University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. This finding consolidates that of Wang et al. (2022) which exhibited that a positive correlation exists between social media overload and anxiety among students in China.

*Hypothesis Two:* There are no gender differences in perceived IO and IA among students of the University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria.

In line with research hypothesis two, findings exhibited that there are no gender differences in their perceived information overload and information anxiety among undergraduate students of the University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. This result depicts that gender is not one of the indices that determine the perceived levels of information overload and information anxiety. In explicit term, information anxiety exists across the two gender groups regardless of the gender type. Therefore, information anxiety can be triggered by other factors and is not necessarily gender-based (Belabbes et al., 2023).

### **Conclusion**

This research work has demonstrated that an appreciable level of perceived information overload and information anxiety exists among undergraduate students in the University of Ilorin. It also established a moderate relationship between perceived information overload and information anxiety. A high level of social media usage was found among students in terms of consumption-based usage, belief-based usage, image-based usage, and comparison-based usage respectively. The result of this study shows an urgent need for higher institutions to organize training and counseling sessions to enable students to inculcate coping strategies in dealing with information overload and information anxiety often experienced by students in their use of SMPs.

### **Summary of Major Findings**

The major findings in this research work are as follows:

- i.** A high level of perceived information overload in the use of the social media among undergraduate learners of the University of Ilorin.
- ii.** A high level of perceived information anxiety in social media usage among University of Ilorin learners.
- iii.** A high level in the use of social media among undergraduate students of the University of Ilorin.
- iv.** There existed a positive correlation between perceived information anxiety and information overload in social media usage among undergraduate learners of the University of Ilorin.
- v.** There were no tangible differences between the gender groups in their perceived information overload among undergraduate students at the University of Ilorin

### **Recommendations**

Based on the foregoing, the below recommendations would assist students in higher institutions to cope better with information overload and information anxiety often experienced while using SMPs:

- i** Higher institutions of learning should educate students on diverse coping strategies for handling information overload and anxiety they experience in the use of social media platforms.



- ii. Excessive social media use should be discouraged among students, therefore enlightening them on the ills of social media.
- iii. Higher institutions should enlighten students on the causes and consequences of information anxiety, and how they can cope while using SMPs.
- iv. Higher institutions should enlighten students on the causes and consequences of information overload, and how they can cope while using SMPs.
- v. Practical sessions should be organized for students to enable them to inculcate information-seeking and searching skills, time management skills, avoidance, withdrawal, and queuing methods among others as a means of combating information overload and anxiety.

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