

## Accessing the Impact of Unverified Instagram Blog Content on Undergraduates: A Case Study at Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU)

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### ABSTRACT

The proliferation of unverified Instagram blog content in Nigeria raises concerns about the credibility and trustworthiness of information disseminated through this medium and unverified contents on Instagram blogs lack proper fact-checking, leading to the spread of misinformation, rumors, and fake news which is why this research investigated the impact of unverified Instagram blogs' contents on Nigerian Undergraduates in Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife.

The study adopted the Uses and gratifications theory, which suggests that media users play an active role in choosing and using the media and that the user has alternate choices to satisfy their need. The study also adopted a survey research method to conduct the study through the use of questionnaire. The research sample size turned out to be 543 respondents but only 403 respondents completed the questionnaire from three faculties, which are; Faculty of Art, Faculty of Law, and Faculty of Administration which translated to a response rate of 74.2%.

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The statistical analysis was carried out using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). In terms of the research result, the high level of agreement among respondents regarding their engagement with Instagram blogs was shown with a weighted mean of 4.04 and the research results also showed the moderate level of agreement among respondents regarding their perception and attitude towards Instagram blogs' contents with a weighted mean of 3.57 and the third objective which sought to assess the impact of unverified contents among OAU undergraduates brought about a weighted mean of 3.99, which indicates a moderate level of agreement among respondents. The research recommended that a supportive online environment should be prioritized as a fundamental intervention strategy and also the promotion of positive engagement is essential to counteract the prevalence of objectifying content on social media platforms. The study concluded that, through targeted interventions and initiatives, institutions can empower students to navigate their online experiences effectively, thereby fostering a safer and more supportive digital landscape for all.

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**Keywords:** Instagram blogs contents, undergraduates, media, fake news

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Communication has essential components like language, symbols, and meaning formation which are used extensively in interpersonal relationships and persuasion efforts. The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary defines communication as the act of conveying ideas and feelings to others or providing them with information, it was further stated that communication also refers to the sharing or imparting of information through speaking, writing, or other means. Responsible

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engagement with the outside world, identity development, and shared meaning-making, all depend on effective communication (Onjefu & Olalekan, 2016). Overall, Human communication is a basic social process that depends on mutual comprehension between the sender and the recipient of the message.

Human communication is a multifaceted and intricate process in which information is shared through messages. It includes a range of topics, including cultural differences, growth, and the comprehension of signs and symbols. Many traditions and theories, such as the semiotic, phenomenological, cybernetic, socio-psychological, socio-cultural, critical, and rhetorical traditions, have been established to describe the nature of human communication (Mowlana, 2018; Apuke, 2017). Numerous linguistic disciplines, including cognitive and functional linguistics, pragmatics, semantics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, discourse analysis, and conversational analysis are all involved in the study of human communication (Beauchamp & Baran, 2023).

The rapid development of social media sites, such as Instagram, has changed how people communicate, consume media, and share information globally. Nigerians now access, exchange, and engage with news and information in a far different way than they did a few years ago because Nigeria is now a digitally engaged nation. Concerns over the reliability and authenticity of the material shared through these media have been raised by the rise of Instagram blogs as Nigeria's main news and content sources (Jimada, 2023).

The Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) reports that as of December 12, 2022, there were over 152.2 million active internet users in the nation, and over 210 million active mobile subscribers. With 31.6 million active social media users as of January 2023, WhatsApp is the most widely used platform in Nigeria, accounting for about 95% of all users. Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube are the next most popular social media platforms in Nigeria.

Nigeria had more over 12.2 million Instagram users as of May 2023. This amount represented 5.4% of the total population of the nation. A little over 37% of users were between the ages of 25 and 34, and 32.8% were between the ages of 18 and 24. The majority of Instagram users are young people, and blogs and individual accounts provide the majority of the content that they consume on the platform. Some of the contents these blogs and personalized profiles post affects their mental state and compels people to act in a particular way. Instagram, a platform for sharing photos and videos, has developed past its original use for sharing personal content to become a major news and information source. Instagram's visual nature, easy-to-use interface, and broad audience reach have made it a potent communication tool, which has resulted in the growth of Instagram blogs. These blogs frequently discuss a variety of subjects, such as politics, entertainment, lifestyle, health, and other subjects. While some Instagram blogs aim to uphold the highest standards of journalism, a large number of them provide sensationalized and unsubstantiated content in an effort to gain more followers and engagement (Rogers, 2021).

The contents of unverified Instagram blogs have the ability to greatly affect Nigerians' comprehension of a range of topics, including blogs, social dynamics, media, communication, and media (Inobemhe, et al., 2020). These blogs' informational output has the power to sway public opinion, affect how decisions are made, and even make social problems worse (Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2014). Thus, it is imperative to evaluate the effects of unverified Instagram blog posts on Nigeria's comprehension for both scholarly and practical purposes.

## 2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

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The proliferation of unverified Instagram blog content in Nigeria raises concerns about the credibility and trustworthiness of information disseminated through this medium (Jimada, 2023). Unverified content on Instagram blogs lacks proper fact-checking, leading to the spread of misinformation, rumors, and fake news (Gandasari, et al., 2023). This can significantly impact public perception and influence public opinion on various issues (Kesim, 2023). The rise of Instagram blogs challenges traditional media, bypassing editorial control and gatekeeping processes (Elega, *et al.*, 2023). This shift raises questions about the role and responsibilities of these new media outlets (Kunda, *et al.*, 2023). Unverified Instagram blog content can fuel social debates, polarize opinions, and contribute to the spread of harmful narratives. Additionally, many blogs aggregate and republish content from Instagram, amplifying the reach of unverified information. The impact of these blogs on information consumption and dissemination is an area of concern

This study comprehensively analyzed the impact of unverified Instagram blogs' content on Nigerian undergraduates within the domains of communication, media, and social dynamics. It explored the consequences of consuming unverified content on Instagram blogs and offered insights into potential solutions to mitigate the negative effects. The research will contribute to media studies, communication, and social sciences and may inform policy decisions promoting media literacy and responsible content dissemination in Nigeria.

This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the engagement level of Obafemi Awolowo University undergraduates with Instagram blogs'?
2. What are the perceptions and attitudes of Obafemi Awolowo University undergraduates towards Instagram blogs' contents?
3. What are the impacts of unverified Instagram blogs' contents on Obafemi Awolowo University undergraduates?

### 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Zou and Hyland (2020) focused on exploring how bloggers across disciplines engage their readers in their research titled, "Think about how fascinating this is: Engagement in academic blogs across disciplines". The research data was analyzed based on 132 blog posts from both soft and hard fields and the research results suggest blogs in soft disciplines have significantly more reader mentions, directives and questions, while hard science blogs rely on resources which claim relatively more authority and require more shared understanding. Elshata and Abusaada (2022) in his research titled, exploring the types of blogs cited in Urban planning research, focused on the crucial role of blogs in reporting topical materials yet to be adequately discussed in scholarly journals. The research was conducted using qualitative analysis and it examined 31 samples from 4 types of blogging sources cited in 10 publications published in 7 journals in 2020, while the research conclusion shows that the blogs are based on novel concepts that have not yet been subject to the peer review process.

Chawinga (2017), in the research titled, Taking social media to a university classroom: teaching and learning using Twitter and blogs investigated, how social media facilitates teaching and learning and the research data were collected in two ways, which are analysis of blog and Twitter posts by students and , a questionnaire was sent to 64 students to find out their perception towards the use of blogs and Twitter in a classroom environment. The study has unveiled that students are not only ready or enthusiastic in using social media in the accomplishments of their educational activities rather, students are able to practically use these social media practically and

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the research recommended that MZUNI and other institutions of higher learning should make Internet freely accessible or highly subsidized to all students. Magno (2017) in his research titled, the influence of cultural blogs on their readers' cultural product choices, examined the influence of cultural blogs on their readers' cultural product choices and the research data was gotten from an online survey which was conducted during the period of May to December 2015 with the readers of two Italian cultural blogs. The research findings revealed that the impact of blogs on readers intention to consume the products suggested by the blog is strongly influenced by reader engagement with the blogs.

Sidiqqi and Singh (2016) in their study titled, Social media: its impact with positive and Negative aspects, focused on all aspect of social media with its positive and negative effects and how these media will affect society in a broad way. The main focus is on some basic fields like business, education, society and youth as a previous research data was used in the research paper. They realized that some blogs can influence youths and that can make them violent and lead to them taking some inappropriate actions, and the study was concluded on the basis that the use of social media is beneficial but should be used in a limited way without getting addicted. Avsar (2021) examined the place of new media technologies and blogging activities in journalism practice in Kazakhstan in his study titled, New Media, Blogs, and Journalism in Kazakhstan. The study used statistical data published on the use of the internet and social media in Kazakhstan to analyze how people use the internet and the most frequently used social media platform, the research findings revealed that blogs are social spaces that allow user participation in many areas, from hobbies to professional life in Kazakhstan and it was concluded that blogs created new communication channels, new journalism styles, and new areas of expression for journalists in Kazakhstan. Lockie (2019) in the study titled, In Vlogs We Trust: Consumer Trust in Blog and Vlog Content, examined why consumers trust blog and vlog contents despite the consumer not personally knowing the blogger or vlogger. The research data was gathered through qualitative in-depth interviews which was conducted with 10 blog readers and vlog viewers, as well as three industry personnel involved in content creation and an online survey was also conducted with 300 USA blog readers and vlog viewers. The study concludes that amongst the many characteristics of blogs and vlogs, what truly influences consumer trust in blog and vlog contents is a Para social relationship that develops between the consumer and the content creator.

Morais and Jeronimo (2023) in his research titled, Platformization of News, Authorship, and Unverified Content: Perceptions around Local Media focused on exploring the relationship between local media and digital platforms for publishing and distributing content, considering the audiences' role. The research data was gathered through focus group discussions and the research findings revealed that local media professionals consider it essential to be present on distribution platforms, they are concerned about the inability of audiences to distinguish the content created by local media from others that circulate online. Carlson (2007) in his research titled *Blogs and Journalistic authority*, examined the reaction by journalists and others to blogs' role in US Election Day 2004 coverage. The research data included stories appearing in the mainstream press newspapers, television, and magazines as well as the journalism and media marketing trade press while the research data were examined using the method of discourse analysis. The study concluded that, blogs present journalists with an enticing antidote to the constraints of conventional journalism and an opportunity to make journalism more transparent

Auxier and Anderson (2021) in their research titled, social media use in 2021 stated that beyond the general question of overall social media use, the survey also covers use of individual sites

and apps. The survey was represented with some graphical representation of social media use in the United States in 2021, which was analyzed based on telephone interviews between 1502 adults who are 18 or above 18 years of age within the 50 states in the United States of America. The research findings show that a majority of snapchat and Instagram users report visiting these platforms daily (59% for both) and being active on these sites is especially common for younger users. Akram and Kumar (2017) investigated every aspect of social media with its positive and negative impacts while focusing on fields like health, business, education, society and youth in their research titled; A study on positive and negative effects of social media on society. The study collected secondary data from online sources, and also adopted the use of on-site observations, interviews and questionnaires to gather information on social media usage generally. According to the study, people are now dependent on technology as it is advancing day by day while the technological advancement has brought about good coordination among students and the study concluded that, some pointless sites can impact youths, which can end up plainly savage and can lead to a few negative effects.

More understanding can be deduced from Chukwuere and Chukwuere(2017) study titled, The impact of social media on social lifestyle which focused on the impact of social media on female students' social lifestyle. The research adopted a quantitative research methodology, using questionnaire research instrument among 69 female students in a university in South Africa and the study findings revealed that social media affects how female students think, interact and communicate. In another related article titled, Consuming, sharing, and creating content: How young students use new social media in and outside school by Lu et al., (2016), the study strives to distinguish extent of social media pursuit, and differentiate such activities between in and outside of school circumstances to acknowledge their relationships. The survey data was gotten from 186 secondary school students in Hong Kong and the research findings shows that the new media does not only serve for social and entertainment but also plays major roles in learning. Moreover, this study concludes that teachers should try to support the social media activities of the students, most especially content creation activities.

Palla and Sheikh (2021) in their research titled, Impact of social media on the academic performance of college students in Kashmir, investigated the impact of social media usage on the academic performance of some college students in Kashmir while questionnaires were administered to selected first, second and third year undergraduate students of government colleges in Kashmir to get the necessary data. The research findings show a majority of the students use social media networking sites to fulfill their educational needs and the study concluded that teachers must encourage their students to make the best use of social media networking sites for recreational and academic activities. In another related article by Kaya and Bicen (2016) titled, the effects of social media on students' behaviors; Facebook as a case study, they focused on examining students' behaviors on Facebook. In order to collect the primary data, a general scanning model was used to observe attitudes of 362 high school students and the study findings highlight that Facebook is used for communication entertainment, sharing news, pictures and songs. The research concluded that Facebook will be an alternative for communication with students.

As observed by Martin *et al.*, (2018) that students are beginning to use social media at a very young age in their research titled, Middle school students' social media use, which was conducted to measure middle school students' use of social media to develop a digital citizenship

curriculum. A survey was completed by 593 middle school students on their social media usage and the research findings shows that 17% started using social media at age nine or younger, 40% accepted friend requests from people they do not know, and 40% reported that their parents did not monitor their social media use, which calls for the needs of cyber-security education study. Bernard and Dzandza (2018) in their study titled, Effect of social media on academic performance of students in Ghanaian universities focused on the level of exposure of students of University of Ghana to social media sites. Questionnaires were administered to 200 students and 197 questionnaires were retrieved to gather data and the research findings shows that students of university of Ghana are well exposed to social media networks and it was concluded that social media can aid serious addiction and distraction which can affect the students' academic performance. The research recommended that Students must minimize the time they spend on social media to avoid being obsessed by these sites for unnecessary chatting

Kolhar *et al.*, (2021) in their research work titled, Effect of social media use on learning, social interactions and sleep duration among university students focused on the purposes for which social networking sites are used and their effects on learning, social interaction and sleep duration. Questionnaires were administered to 300 students of Abdul Aziz University to gather data and the results showed that 97% of the students used social media applications. The study concluded that prolonged use of social networking sites for non-academic purposes can affect the students' academic performance, interaction and sleep duration. Abbas *et al.*, (2019) focused on examining the constructive and adverse factors that impact on students' minds and how these helped students to share positive and negative aspects with others in their research titled, The impact of social media on learning behavior for sustainable education. Questionnaires were adopted to gather information and it was distributed to about 1000 Pakistan students, which brought about the findings that the usage of social media by Pakistan students has negative influence on the students' behavior other than positive influence. The study concluded that technology acceptance, its ease of use, and its perceived benefits play a decisive role in students' decisions to use social media. Celestine and Nonyelum (2018) in their research work titled, Impact of social media on students' academic performance investigated the impact of social media sites on students' academic performance in Samuel Adegboyega University. Questionnaires were used to gather data and the study concluded that there is a relationship between time spent on social media sites by students and their academic works. In conclusion, most of the research works reviewed above focused on the impact of social media generally, while others focused on social media usage; none of the reviewed works talked about the impact of unverified Instagram blogs' contents and the adverse effect it can have on students if not properly censored which is what this study is focusing on.

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#### 4. METHODOLOGY

This research focused on assessing the impact of unverified Instagram blogs' content on undergraduates in Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State. The study brought about the understanding of the effect of unverified Instagram blogs' contents on Obafemi Awolowo University Undergraduates. Hence, this study employed a descriptive research design to agree on the impact of unverified Instagram blogs' contents on Obafemi Awolowo University undergraduates. The research design was intended to provide an appropriate framework for this study (Sileyew, 2019) and it is the framework or plan for a study that is used in collecting and analyzing a set of data (Campbell, 1998). The researcher used the survey research method.

The research population for this study consists of undergraduate students who are currently working towards getting a bachelor's degree in Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife in Osun State. This community was considered suitable for the study for the following reason: this school has a large number of undergraduate students who have access to the social media. The population for this study is made up of undergraduate students from three faculties in OAU, which are: Faculty of Administration, Faculty of Law, and Faculty of Art. The total population for this study is 7310 undergraduate students from registry.

FACULTY	NO OF STUDENTS
FACULTY OF LAW	974 Students
FACULTY OF ADMINISTRATION	3754 Students
FACULTY OF ART	2582 Students
<b>TOTAL NO OF STUDENTS</b>	<b>7310 Students</b>

Source: Base Line Study

The sample size will be selected at random. So, the Krajcic and Morgan sampling table was used to determine the sample size, this means that a total random sample size of 543 respondents was used for this research.

According to the Krajcic and Morgan sample table the sample size is:

7000 according to Krajcic and Morgan sample table is 364

300 according to Krajcic and Morgan sample table is 169

10 according to Krajcic and Morgan sample table is 10

N is the total sample size.

$N=364+169+10=543$

N= 543 Respondents.

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<i>N</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>S</i>
10	10	220	140	1200	291
15	14	230	144	1300	297
20	19	240	148	1400	302
25	24	250	152	1500	306
30	28	260	155	1600	310
35	32	270	159	1700	313
40	36	280	162	1800	317
45	40	290	165	1900	320
50	44	300	169	2000	322
55	48	320	175	2200	327
60	52	340	181	2400	331
65	56	360	186	2600	335
70	59	380	191	2800	338
75	63	400	196	3000	341
80	66	420	201	3500	346
85	70	440	205	4000	351
90	73	460	210	4500	354
95	76	480	214	5000	357
100	80	500	217	6000	361
110	86	550	226	7000	364
120	92	600	234	8000	367
130	97	650	242	9000	368
140	103	700	248	10000	370
150	108	750	254	15000	375
160	113	800	260	20000	377
170	118	850	265	30000	379
180	123	900	269	40000	380
190	127	950	274	50000	381
200	132	1000	278	75000	382
210	136	1100	285	100000	384

Note.—*N* is population size. *S* is sample size.

Source: *Krajcic & Morgan, 1970*

List 1 : The Krajcic and Morgan Sample Table.

#### 4. DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings and analysis of the study on the impact of unverified Instagram blogs contents on Obafemi Awolowo University undergraduates. The chapter analyzed the engagement level of Obafemi Awolowo University undergraduates with Instagram blogs, examined the perceptions and attitudes of Obafemi Awolowo University undergraduates towards Instagram blogs' contents, as well as investigates the impact of unverified Instagram blogs' content among Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU) undergraduate students.

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#### 4.1 DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS FOR DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF THE RESPONDENTS

##### 4.1.1 DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF RESPONDENTS

The total number of questionnaires administered was five hundred and forty-three (543) while four hundred and three (403) questionnaire copies were fully filled and returned. This indicates a response rate of over seventy-four percent (74.2%). According to Mugenda & Mugenda (2010), response rates of 50% are considered adequate for analysis and reporting, while rates of 60% are deemed acceptable. Response rates of 70% and above are regarded as very good. Therefore, these thresholds were selected as suitable benchmarks for the present study.

##### 4.1.2 DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF RESPONDENTS

The study explored demographic characteristics of the respondents. This included the age, religion, marital status and occupation brackets. The researcher focused on these four (4) demographic characteristics because of their importance to the population. Data obtained from the field regarding gender, age group, faculty and level were analyzed and presented as shown in Table 1

<i>Age</i>		
<b>Age</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Below 16	9	2.2
16 – 20	339	84.1
21 -25	54	13.4
26-30	1	0.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>403</b>	<b>100</b>
<i>Gender</i>		
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Male	140	34.7
Female	263	65.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>403</b>	<b>100</b>
<i>Faculty</i>		
<b>Faculty</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Faculty of Art	138	34.2
Faculty of Law	121	30.0
Faculty of Administration	144	35.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>403</b>	<b>100</b>
<i>Level</i>		
<b>Level</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>

Part 1	72	17.9
Part 2	83	20.6
Part 3	112	27.8
Part 4	123	30.5
Part 5	13	3.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>403</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

The demographics of respondents to the research on the impact of unverified Instagram blogs contents on Obafemi Awolowo University undergraduates is shown by the demographic data provided in the SPSS findings. Firstly, the age distribution indicates that majority of participants fall within the age range of 16 to 20, representing 84.1% of the total sample. Only a small proportion of participants are below the age of 16 (2.2%), while a minority fall within the age ranges of 21 to 25 (13.4%) and 26 to 30 (0.2%). In the gender composition, it was revealed in the study that females constitute a significant majority of the participants, accounting for 65.3% of the total sample, whereas males represent 34.7%. This gender distribution reflects a higher representation of females in the study population.

Participants are affiliated with three main faculties namely Faculty of Art; Faculty of Law, and Faculty of Administration. Among these, the Faculty of Administration has the highest representation, with 35.7% of the participants, followed closely by the Faculty of Art (34.2%) and the Faculty of Law (30.0%). In examining the academic level, the participants are distributed across different academic levels, ranging from Part 1 to Part 5. Part 4 has the highest representation, accounting for 30.5% of the total sample, followed by Part 3 (27.8%), Part 2 (20.6%), Part 1 (17.9%), and Part 5 (3.2%). Overall, the demographic characteristics indicate a diverse sample in terms of age, gender, faculty affiliation, and academic level, providing a comprehensive representation of the study population. These insights will be valuable for understanding the perspectives and experiences of the participants in the context of the research objectives.

**Table 2: Data Presentation and Analysis of Demographic Information of the respondents**

Statements	Agree	Strong Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	STD
<b>Objective One: To analyze the engagement level of Obafemi Awolowo University undergraduates with Instagram blogs</b>							
<b>Weighted mean = 4.04; Arithmetic mean = 16.18; STD = 3.659</b>							
<b>Q1:</b> You use Instagram often	233 (57.8%)	131 (32.5%)	12 (3.0%)	8 (2.0%)	19 (19%)	<b>4.37</b>	<b>0.990</b>
<b>Q2:</b> You follow some unverified Instagram Blogs	132 (32.8%)	196 (48.6)	21 (5.2%)	21 (5.2%)	33 (8.2%)	<b>3.93</b>	<b>1.150</b>
<b>Q3:</b> You spend a lot of time on Instagram daily	155 (38.5%)	153 (38.0%)	30 (7.4%)	23 (5.7%)	42 (10.4%)	<b>3.88</b>	<b>1.271</b>
<b>Q4:</b> You engage one or all of these blogs: Instablog9ja, Gist lover Blog or MufasaTunde-Ednut blog	158 (39.2%)	165 (40.9%)	32 (7.9)	19 (4.7%)	29 (7.2%)	<b>4.00</b>	<b>1.145</b>
<b>Objective Two: Determine the perceptions and attitudes of Obafemi Awolowo University undergraduates towards Instagram blogs' contents</b>							
<b>Weighted mean = 3.57; Arithmetic mean = 17.86; STD = 4.538</b>							
You come across contents from unverified Instagram blogs often	162 (40.2%)	176 (43.7%)	33 (8.2)	9 (2.2%)	23 (5.7%)	<b>4.10</b>	<b>1.039</b>
Unverified Instagram blogs' contents are considered to be reliable	75 (18.6%)	133 (33.0%)	79 (19.6)	57 (14.1%)	59 (14.6%)	<b>3.27</b>	<b>1.317</b>
Unverified Instagram blogs' contents are considered to be effective	70 (36%)	154 (15.6%)	50 (4.7)	67 (28.9)	62 (14.7%)	<b>3.26</b>	<b>1.341</b>
Unverified Instagram blogs' contents has influenced your opinion or beliefs at some point	92 (22.8%)	167 (41.4%)	62 (15.4%)	43 (10.7%)	39 (9.7%)	<b>3.57</b>	<b>1.224</b>
Unverified Instagram blogs have a significant impact on the opinions of your peers	103 (25.6%)	168 (41.7%)	61 (15.1)	36 (8.9%)	35 (8.7%)	<b>3.67</b>	<b>1.199</b>

**Objective Three: impact of unverified Instagram blogs' content among Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU) undergraduates**

**Weighted mean = 3.99; Arithmetic mean =15.98; STD = 3.001**

You fact check information from Instagram blogs before believing or sharing it	129 (32.0%)	179 (44.4%)	50 (12.4)	20 (9.1)	25 (6.2%)	<b>3.91</b>	1.094
You are aware of the potential consequences of sharing unverified information	155 (38.5%)	192 (47.6%)	34 (8.4)	6 (1.5%)	16 (4.0%)	<b>4.15</b>	<b>0.930</b>
You have encountered information related to academics on Instagram	141 (35.0%)	195 (48.4%)	37 (9.2%)	10 (2.5%)	20 (5.0%)	<b>4.06</b>	<b>0.993</b>
You believe that exposure to unverified contents on Instagram affects students' academic performance	126 (31.3%)	176 (43.7%)	52 (12.9)	14 (3.5%)	35 (8.7%)	<b>3.85</b>	<b>1.159</b>
There should be stricter regulations on the dissemination of information through Instagram	208 (51.6%)	131 (32.5%)	34 (8.4)	7 (1.7%)	23 (5.7%)	<b>4.08</b>	<b>0.817</b>

**Source:** Computerized Results from this study. **Keys:** Strongly Agree (SA = 5); Agree (A = 4); Undecided (U = 3); Disagree (D = 2); Strongly Disagree (SD =1). The Decision Rule: 1-1.99 = SD; 2.00- 2.99 = D; 3.00 – 3.99 = U; 4.00 – 4.99 = A; and 5.00 – Above = SA. The neutral stands = 3, i.e.  $5+4+3+2+1 = 15/5 = 3$ . This implies score 3.0 is the criterion mean.

The data presented in Table 2 provides insights into the engagement level, perceptions, and impacts of unverified Instagram blogs among Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU) undergraduates.

**4.2.1 Interpretation and Implications of the Results for Objective One**

Engagement Level with Instagram Blogs The weighted mean for this objective is 4.04, indicating a relatively high level of agreement among respondents regarding their engagement with Instagram blogs. The majority of students reported using Instagram often (57.8% strongly agree, 32.5% agree), following unverified Instagram blogs (32.8% strongly agree, 48.6% agree), spending a lot of time on Instagram daily (38.5% strongly agree, 38.0% agree), and engaging with popular blogs like Instablog9ja, Gist lover Blog, or MufasaTundeEdnut blog (39.2% strongly agree, 40.9% agree). The high level of engagement observed among Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU) undergraduates with Instagram blogs indicates the platform's significant role in their daily lives. With a majority of students reporting frequent usage and spending substantial time on the platform, Instagram emerges as a primary source of information, entertainment, and social interaction. This finding underscores the platform's influence and relevance among the student community, suggesting its potential as a powerful communication channel. Moreover, the

popularity of specific blogs like Instablog9ja, Gist lover Blog, or MufasaTundeEdnut blog highlights their impact and reach, indicating their potential as influential sources of content shaping student opinions and behaviors.

#### **4.2.2 Interpretation and Implications of the Results for Objective Two**

Perceptions and Attitudes towards Instagram Blog Content The weighted mean for this objective is 3.57, indicating a moderate level of agreement among respondents regarding their perceptions and attitudes towards Instagram blog content. While a significant portion of students reported frequently encountering content from unverified Instagram blogs (40.2% strongly agree, 43.7% agree), there was less agreement regarding the reliability and effectiveness of such content. Additionally, a notable percentage of students indicated that unverified Instagram blogs' content has influenced their opinions or beliefs at some point (41.4% strongly agree, 22.8% agree), as well as the opinions of their peers (41.7% strongly agree, 25.6% agree). The diverse perceptions and attitudes towards Instagram blog content among OAU undergraduates highlight the complexity of students' interactions with online information sources. While many students frequently encounter content from unverified Instagram blogs, there is variation in their perceptions of its reliability and effectiveness. This suggests a need for critical evaluation and discernment among students when consuming information from social media platforms. Moreover, the admission of being influenced by unverified content and its perceived impact on peers' opinions underscores the potential influence and sway of Instagram blogs within the student community. This emphasizes the importance of promoting critical thinking and media literacy skills to empower students to navigate the digital landscape effectively.

#### **4.2.3 Interpretation and Implications of the Results for Objective Three**

Objective Three sought to investigate the impact of unverified Instagram blog content among OAU undergraduates. The weighted mean for this objective was 3.99, indicating a moderate level of agreement among respondents. A significant proportion (32.0%) reported fact-checking information from Instagram blogs before believing or sharing it, demonstrating a level of caution. Furthermore, the majority of respondents (38.5%) expressed awareness of the potential consequences of sharing unverified information, and many reported encountering unverified information related to academics on Instagram (35.0%). Additionally, a considerable number of respondents (31.3%) believed that exposure to unverified content on Instagram affects students' academic performance. The majority (51.6%) also supported stricter regulations on the dissemination of information through Instagram, indicating recognition of the need for measures to mitigate the spread of unverified content. The implications of encountering unverified content among OAU undergraduates extend beyond mere exposure, with potential consequences for academic performance and well-being. The acknowledgment of the need to fact-check information before believing or sharing it reflects a growing awareness among students about the importance of verifying online content. Additionally, awareness of the potential consequences of sharing unverified information suggests recognition of the risks associated with the dissemination of misinformation, highlighting the importance of responsible online behavior. The belief that exposure to unverified content affects academic performance raises concerns about its potential negative effects on students' educational outcomes, emphasizing the need for measures to mitigate its impact. Furthermore, the support for stricter regulations on the dissemination of information through Instagram reflects a call for action to address the spread of misinformation and safeguard the integrity of information shared on social media platforms, emphasizing the importance of regulatory measures in promoting a safe and trustworthy online environment.

### 4.3 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The present study assessed the impact of unverified Instagram blogs' contents on Nigerian undergraduates- a study of Obafemi Awolowo University undergraduates and the findings revealed a high level of engagement with Instagram among the respondents, with the majority reporting frequent usage, regular following of unverified blogs, and spending significant time on the platform daily. This suggests that Instagram plays a central role in the lives of Obafemi Awolowo University undergraduates, serving as a primary source of information, entertainment, and social interaction. The strong engagement with specific blogs like Instablog9ja, Gist lover Blog, or MufasaTundeEdnut blog underscores their influence and popularity among the student community. In a nutshell, the finding revealed a high level of engagement and followership on Instagram among undergraduates (80.1%), which is in line with the study by Auxier and Anderson (2021) and Martin et al., (2018).

The findings of this study revealed diverse perceptions and attitudes towards Instagram blog content among OAU undergraduates. While many students frequently encounter content from unverified Instagram blogs, there is variation in their perceptions of its reliability and effectiveness. Some students consider the content to be reliable and effective, while others are more skeptical. Additionally, a significant number of students reported being influenced by unverified content and acknowledged its impact on their peers' opinions. This highlights the potential influence of Instagram blogs within the student community and underscores the importance of promoting critical thinking and media literacy skills. The finding revealed diverse perception and attitude towards Instagram blogs' content (64.2%) which is in line with Kaya and Bicen(2016). In this study, the findings revealed that exposure to unverified information on Instagram can have negative consequences, with many students expressing concerns about its potential effects on academic performance. Moreover, the majority of students supported stricter regulations on the dissemination of information through Instagram, emphasizing the need for measures to address the spread of misinformation and promote a safe online environment. Conclusively, a lot of students are exposed to unverified information on Instagram blogs (70.5%), Which is in relation to Akram and Kumar (2017) and Bernard and Dzandza (2018).

### 4.4 RELIABILITY TEST

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.841	.818	17

**Table 3: Reliability Statistics**

The above **table 3** shows cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient is 0.841 while the cronbach's alpha based on standardized items is 0.818. This indicates a high level of internal consistency for the scale used in this study.

### CONCLUSION

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The research investigates the influence of unverified Instagram blog content on undergraduates at Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU) using a descriptive survey approach. This methodological choice allows for a thorough examination of the study's objectives. By administering surveys to a sample of OAU undergraduates, the research collects data to illuminate their interactions with unverified Instagram blog content. Through this methodology, the study provided insights into the engagement levels, perceptions, and impacts of such content specifically among OAU undergraduates. In pursuit of its objectives, the study endeavors to contribute to the academic discourse by expanding the literature on the impact of unverified Instagram blog content on undergraduate students. The findings of the research offer a compelling glimpse into the influence of unverified Instagram blog content on OAU undergraduates. It reveals a notable level of engagement with such content, as evidenced by the frequency of usage, regular following of unverified blogs, and significant time spent on the platform. Moreover, the study elucidates the varied perceptions held by students towards Instagram blog content. In conclusion, the research underscores the urgent need for interventions to address the adverse effects of consuming unverified Instagram blog content among OAU undergraduates. By acknowledging these challenges and promoting positive engagement, efforts can be made to cultivate a supportive online environment that prioritizes the well-being of students. Through targeted interventions and initiatives, institutions can empower students to navigate their online experiences effectively, thereby fostering a safer and more supportive digital landscape for all.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings and implications of the study, the following recommendations are proposed admitting the challenges posed by consuming unverified Instagram blog content:

1. Fostering a Supportive Online Environment should be prioritized as a fundamental intervention strategy. This entails creating spaces where students feel respected and supported, thus mitigating the harmful effects of objectifying content. Implementing policies and guidelines that promote respectful online behavior, while also providing resources and support services for students who experience negative interactions, can contribute to cultivating a safer digital environment.
2. Promoting Positive Engagement is essential to counteract the prevalence of objectifying content on social media platforms. Encouraging positive interactions among users can help shift the focus away from harmful content and foster a culture of empowerment and support. Initiatives such as promoting positive comments and self-expression can empower individuals to control their online experiences and contribute to a more inclusive and uplifting online community.
3. Educational initiatives aimed at enhancing media literacy and critical thinking skills can equip students with the tools to navigate online spaces effectively. By providing students with the knowledge and skills to discern between verified and unverified content, they can make informed decisions about their online interactions and mitigate the potential risks associated with consuming unverified content.

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