



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AMONG SOCIAL STUDIES STUDENTS AT THE FEDERAL COLLEGE OF EDUCATION EHA-AMUFU, NIGERIA

Boris Happy ODALONU <sup>1</sup>, Uzodimma Obialo ONUOHA <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Political Science, Federal College of Education Eha-Amufu, Enugu State, Nigeria. <sup>2</sup> Department of Social Studies, Federal College of Education Eha-Amufu, Enugu State, Nigeria

#### ABSTRACT

This study examines how social media usage influences the academic outcomes of students in the Social Studies Department of the Federal College of Education, Eha-Amufu. As digital communication platforms increasingly shape student behaviour and learning environments, concerns have arisen regarding their potential to disrupt academic focus. Adopting a descriptive survey methodology, the study collected data from 146 respondents using structured questionnaires. Findings indicate that while social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook facilitate peer interaction and knowledge sharing, they also pose significant distractions, particularly by reducing study time and concentration. The paper concludes by recommending digital literacy initiatives, responsible usage awareness, and academic support interventions to help mitigate the adverse effects of social media on students' educational achievement.

**Keywords:** Social media, Academic performance, High education institute, Social Studies Department, Nigeria

#### *Corresponding Author*

Boris Happy ODALONU: **Contact Numbers:** +2348185029445; +2348068811495

Email Address: [boris2nice@gmail.com](mailto:boris2nice@gmail.com), <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6706-9024>

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## 1.0. INTRODUCTION

Effective communication remains a cornerstone of human interaction and societal development. Throughout history, humans have continually sought more efficient ways to share information and connect with one another. The evolution of information and communication technologies has significantly transformed this process, making global interaction almost instantaneous (Alfred, Taylor, & Brown, 2006). What once required days or weeks to communicate can now be achieved in real time through digital means, including mobile devices and internet-based platforms.

The emergence of the internet and satellite technologies in the late 20th century catalyzed a communication revolution that gave rise to what is now referred to as social media. These platforms ranging from Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter to Instagram and Snapchat, enable users to interact, share content, and engage with a vast global audience. Social media leverages web-based technologies to transform passive media consumption into active social dialogue (Katz, 2009). It allows individuals to build networks, exchange ideas, and maintain both new and existing relationships without geographical constraints (Asemah & Edegoh, 2012; Smith & Johnson, 2020).

The widespread use of social networking platforms has had a notable impact on the youth, particularly students in tertiary institutions. While these tools offer opportunities for social connection and collaborative learning, they also present challenges. Concerns have emerged about their potential to distract students from academic tasks, leading to reduced study time and weakened academic performance (Martinez & Lopez, 2017). For many students, the lure of social media often supersedes academic responsibilities, creating a tension between online engagement and educational success.

Academic performance, a crucial indicator of educational achievement, is influenced by various factors, including study habits, learning environments, and now, digital behavior. According to Hoyle (1986, cited in Martinez & Lopez, 2017), educational institutions are established to equip learners with knowledge and skills, with academic excellence serving as a benchmark for success. However, the increasing prevalence of social media raises questions about its role in either supporting or undermining these academic goals.

Several studies have highlighted a growing concern over students' overreliance on social media platforms. The tendency to prioritize online interactions over classroom learning has been linked to distractions and a decline in academic focus (Brown & Garcia, 2018). Reports suggest that some students even engage with social media during lectures, often neglecting academic responsibilities in favour of online chats or browsing (Oche & Aminu, 2010; Olubiyi, 2012). This trend, if left unaddressed, could significantly impair academic outcomes.



While social media offers various advantages such as access to educational content and peer support, its unregulated use may pose serious challenges to students' academic progress. The present study, therefore, aims to explore the extent to which social media influences academic performance among students in the Social Studies Department of the Federal College of Education, Eha-Amufu. By understanding the patterns of usage and perceived impacts, the research seeks to inform strategies for balanced and responsible engagement with social media in academic settings.

### **1.1. Statement of the Problem**

The increasing penetration of digital technology, particularly mobile devices, has reshaped communication and information-sharing practices across societies. Today, it is common to observe individuals especially young people, deeply engaged with their smartphones in various settings, including educational institutions. Among the features that have gained immense popularity is social media, which has become a dominant aspect of student life.

Higher education institutions appear to be particularly affected by this trend, as students represent a significant proportion of active social media users. Platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok have become embedded in students' daily routines, often competing with academic activities for their time and attention (Ezeonwumelu, Ugochukwu, Okoro, & Ekanem, 2021). Although social media can support learning by facilitating communication, collaboration, and access to information, its uncontrolled usage raises concerns about declining academic focus and performance.

Recent research suggests that excessive use of social networking sites has led to a shift in priorities among students, with many allocating more time to online interactions than to academic pursuits (Kim & Lee, 2019). This trend has created a form of digital distraction, resulting in decreased concentration during lectures, reduced study hours, and ultimately, lower academic achievement. The problem becomes even more complex when considering students who view social media not as a tool for learning but primarily for entertainment and social engagement.

Furthermore, while some students report using social media to enhance their studies such as engaging in group discussions or accessing educational content others admit that it disrupts their academic discipline and time management. These conflicting experiences call for a deeper understanding of how social media usage affects students' academic performance, especially within specific educational contexts such as the Social Studies Department at the Federal College of Education, Eha-Amufu.

Given this background, the central problem this study addresses are how social media usage influences academic outcomes. Are these platforms being used constructively to enhance



learning, or are they contributing to poor academic performance through distraction and overuse? Answering this question is vital for developing informed interventions that promote productive engagement with digital technologies in the academic environment.

## **1.2. Objectives of the Study**

The primary objective of this research is to assess the influence of social media on the academic performance of students in the Social Studies Department at the Federal College of Education, Eha-Amufu. Specifically, the study aims to achieve the following:

1. to identify the social media platforms most frequently used by students in the department.
2. to examine the level and pattern of social media usage among Social Studies students.
3. to evaluate the perceived impact of social media on students' academic performance.

## **1.3. Research Questions**

In line with the above objectives, the study is guided by the following research questions:

1. Which social media platforms do students in the Social Studies Department engage with most frequently?
2. What is the extent and nature of social media usage among these students?
3. In what ways does social media usage affect the academic performance of students in the department?

## **2.0. CONCEPTUAL DISCOURSE**

### **2.1.0. Understanding Social Media**

Social media refers to a set of digital platforms that enable users to create, share, and interact with content and one another in real time. These platforms combine web-based and mobile technologies to facilitate collaborative dialogue, community building, and the dissemination of user-generated information. Common examples include Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, TikTok, and LinkedIn. These tools have become deeply embedded in everyday life, especially among young people and students.

Kietzmann et al. (2012) describe social media as a dynamic collection of platforms that support the sharing of content and interpersonal communication. Rather than merely providing information, these platforms promote interactivity, allowing users to comment, react, and co-create content. According to Andreas and Michael (2010), social media



applications are rooted in participatory web technologies and ideological principles that emphasize openness, connectivity, and peer collaboration.

Social networking sites, as a subset of social media, are online spaces that allow users to create personal profiles, establish connections, and engage in various forms of social interaction (Ellison & Boyd, 2007). These sites help individuals form communities based on shared interests, academic goals, or professional aspirations. Social media also encompasses features such as instant messaging, blog posts, video sharing, and real-time updates that collectively support both social and educational engagement.

### 2.1.1. Types of Social Media Use

**Mobile Social Media:** This refers to social media accessed through mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets. Unlike traditional desktop-based platforms, mobile social media integrates geolocation and real-time communication, enabling more immediate and context-aware interaction (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Students frequently use these platforms on-the-go, often blurring the line between academic time and leisure.

**Social Networking Platforms:** These platforms allow users to build digital communities and engage in interactive communication. They include a variety of websites and applications where users share updates, participate in discussions, and engage in both academic and non-academic activities. Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp are examples that support both personal and educational engagement, depending on how they are utilized.

Social media has evolved into a powerful tool that shapes how students access information, collaborate with peers, and manage their academic tasks. However, the same platforms also present risks when used excessively or without clear academic purpose, potentially leading to distractions and time mismanagement.

### 2.1.2. Relevance to Academic Context

In the context of higher education, social media can serve both as a facilitator and an obstacle to learning. On one hand, it promotes information sharing, virtual study groups, and peer-to-peer learning. On the other hand, overuse for entertainment or non-academic interactions can lead to reduced focus, procrastination, and even academic decline. Understanding how students interact with these platforms is essential for balancing the benefits and drawbacks within the educational environment.



## 2.2. Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which provides a valuable lens for understanding how individuals adopt behaviors through observation, interaction, and imitation within a social context (Bandura, 1977). Originally formulated in 1977 and later expanded into Social Cognitive Theory in 1986, Bandura's framework emphasizes that learning is not merely a product of direct experience but is also shaped by observing others in one's environment.

At the core of this theory is the concept that behaviour, personal factors, and environmental influences interact in a process known as reciprocal determinism. In this view, individuals learn new behaviours by watching the actions of others and the consequences of those actions. The theory underscores the roles of modeling, reinforcement, and cognitive processing in shaping an individual's learning and behaviour.

In the context of social media usage, Social Learning Theory is particularly relevant. Students often engage with various content on platforms such as WhatsApp, TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook, where they observe and imitate the behaviors, attitudes, and communication styles of peers, influencers, and celebrities. These observed interactions can significantly influence students' own behaviour, including their study habits, attention span, and academic values.

For instance, when students frequently see their peers using social media for entertainment during study periods, they may begin to model similar behaviour, perceiving it as normal or even desirable. Conversely, if students observe peers using digital platforms for educational purposes such as collaborative learning, academic discussions, or accessing scholarly resources, they may be encouraged to adopt more academically oriented practices.

Social Learning Theory also helps explain how digital behaviours may contribute to either positive or negative academic outcomes. While constructive modeling can lead to enhanced engagement, motivation, and collaboration, negative modeling such as excessive chatting or time-wasting online can result in distractions, procrastination, and declining academic performance.

Applying this theoretical lens, the study seeks to explore how students' exposure to social media content and their interaction patterns influence their academic behaviour and achievement. By understanding the social dynamics that guide digital engagement, educators and policymakers can design more effective interventions to promote responsible and educationally productive use of social media among students.





### **3.0. METHODOLOGY**

This study employed a descriptive survey design, which is appropriate for investigating the behaviors, perceptions, and attitudes of a specific population. The approach allows for the systematic collection and analysis of data to determine the relationship between social media usage and academic performance among students.

The research was conducted within the Department of Social Studies at the Federal College of Education, Eha-Amufu, located in Enugu State, Nigeria. The population comprised all students enrolled in the department during the 2022–2023 academic session. These students were considered suitable for the study due to their regular engagement with social media platforms and the academic demands of their course of study. A total of 150 students were selected through simple random sampling, ensuring that each student had an equal chance of being included in the study. This method was chosen to minimize selection bias and to allow for generalizable insights about the department's student body. Out of the 150 distributed questionnaires, 146 were completed and returned, representing a high response rate of over 97%, which provided a strong basis for data analysis.

Data were gathered using a structured questionnaire designed by the researchers. The instrument included both closed-ended and Likert-scale items and was divided into three major sections: Students' preferred social media platforms; Frequency and purpose of social media usage; and Perceived impact of social media on academic performance. The questionnaire used a four-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree," to measure levels of agreement on various statements related to social media usage and its effects. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics, specifically frequency counts, simple percentages, and mean scores. For interpretation purposes, a mean score of 2.5 and above was considered an indication of agreement with the item, while scores below 2.5 were interpreted as disagreement.

### **4.0. PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

#### **4.1. Presentation of Results**

This section presents and interprets the data collected from respondents in relation to the study's three key research questions. The results are organized by thematic areas, followed by discussion aligned with relevant literature.

#### **Research Question 1: Which social media platforms do students mostly engage with?**

The results presented in Table 1 showed that WhatsApp was the most frequently used platform among students, with a mean score of 2.77, indicating moderate to high usage.



Facebook, known for offering a mix of media types (text, image, video), also ranked high, with a mean score of 2.91, suggesting that its multifunctional features appeal strongly to students. In contrast, platforms that focus on visual content (e.g., Instagram, Snapchat) and text-based engagement (e.g., Twitter) recorded lower engagement, with mean scores of 2.14 and 2.18, respectively. Likewise, professional platforms such as LinkedIn had limited use (mean = 2.13), indicating a lower interest in career-oriented networking among the student population. These results suggest that students prefer platforms that combine communication, entertainment, and flexible content sharing. The popularity of WhatsApp and Facebook aligns with findings by Ezeonwumelu *et al.* (2021), who observed that students in Nigerian tertiary institutions are more drawn to social networking platforms that allow both academic and non-academic interactions.

**Table 1: The kind of social media platform students mostly engage with**

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	Decision
1	I uses WhatsApp more than any other social media	50	34	41	21	146	2.77	Accepted
2	I mostly engage with social media platforms that focus on visual content (e.g., Instagram, Snapchat)	19	20	69	38	146	2.14	Rejected
3	I prefer social media platforms that primarily involve text-based interactions (e.g., Twitter)	17	25	72	32	146	2.18	Rejected
4	I find myself more active on social media platforms that prioritize video content (e.g., YouTube, TikTok)	40	36	31	39	146	2.53	Accepted
5	I frequently engage with social media platforms that offer a combination of various content types (e.g., Facebook).	57	44	20	25	146	2.91	Accepted
6	I mostly use social media platforms that emphasize professional networking and career development (e.g., LinkedIn).	12	27	75	32	146	2.13	Rejected

Source: Field Work, 2023

### **Research Question 2: What is the extent of social media usage among students in the department?**

The results summarized in Table 2 based on research question two indicate that daily use of social media for personal interaction vary and information sharing is common, with a grand mean score of 2.64. Moreover, a significant number of students reported spending considerable time on social media during study hours (mean = 2.73), confirming that social





media frequently competes with academic activities for students' attention. However, when asked if social media served as their primary source of academic information, respondents largely disagreed (mean = 2.23). Nonetheless, a moderate number acknowledged that social media plays a role in collaborative academic communication (mean = 2.52). The results point to a situation where students heavily rely on social media for informal purposes but do not consistently integrate it into their academic activities. This echoes Kim and Lee's (2019) observation that while digital platforms are valuable for collaboration, their use is often skewed toward entertainment rather than education.

**Table 2: The extent of social media usage among students in Social Studies Department at Federal College of Education, Eha-Amufu**

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	Decision
1	I regularly engage in personal chats and information exchange through social media every day.	38	43	40	25	146	2.64	Accepted
2	I often devote a lot of my study time to browsing or using social media for non-academic interests.	41	42	45	18	146	2.73	Accepted
3	The duration I spend on social networking sites is typically longer than the time I dedicate to reading or studying.	41	32	28	45	146	2.50	Accepted
4	Social media is my primary source of information related to academic activities and events in the Social Studies Department	27	20	59	40	146	2.23	Rejected
5	Social media contributes meaningfully to interaction and teamwork among Social Studies students.	27	49	43	27	146	2.52	Accepted

Source: Field Work (2023).

### **Research Question 3: In what ways does social media usage affect students' academic performance?**

Findings on this question reveal a dual perception of social media's impact: Some students view it as beneficial for group work and collaborative learning, particularly through features like group chats and information sharing (mean = 2.78). Others acknowledge its negative effects, especially in terms of distractions during study sessions (mean = 2.69) and difficulty focusing on assignments due to excessive usage (mean = 2.75). Interestingly, only a modest number of respondents believed that social media had a positive influence on their academic performance overall (mean = 2.52), while many disagreed that social media helped them



access useful academic content (mean = 2.23). These findings are consistent with earlier studies, including Azizi et al. (2019) and Emeri (2019), which linked high levels of social media engagement with reduced academic performance, particularly among students who use these platforms compulsively. Conversely, when used purposefully, platforms can foster knowledge exchange and community learning, as highlighted by Gao *et al.* (2012).

**Table 3: The effects of social media on students' academic performance**

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	Decision
1	I think social media enhances my academic life in general.	33	39	45	29	146	2.52	Accepted
2	My frequent use of social media has reduced my study focus, which has had a negative effect on my academic results.	35	43	31	37	146	2.52	Accepted
3	I find it hard to concentrate during study time or lectures because of distractions from social media.	50	32	34	30	146	2.69	Accepted
4	I benefit academically from using social media to access useful learning content and academic information.	22	34	46	44	146	2.23	Rejected
5	Spending too much time on social media reduces my attention to schoolwork and academic responsibilities.	41	48	37	20	146	2.75	Accepted
6	Social media activities, such as group discussions and collaborative learning online, positively contribute to my academic success	49	37	40	20	146	2.78	Accepted

Source: Field Work (2023).

## 4.2. Discussion of Findings

This section discusses the findings of the study in relation to each of the three research questions, while drawing connections to relevant literature.

### Research Question 1: Which social media platforms do students in the Social Studies Department engage with most frequently?

The findings reveal that WhatsApp and Facebook are the most commonly used social media platforms among Social Studies students at the Federal College of Education, Eha-Amufu. These platforms are favored due to their ease of use, affordability, and features that support group communication and multimedia sharing. Students indicated that they use these platforms regularly for chatting, status updates, and participating in group discussions.



This usage pattern reflects the growing reliance of students on mobile-based social networking sites that offer real-time engagement. These results align with the work of Ezeonwumelu et al. (2021), who found that Nigerian students prefer platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook because they facilitate both social interaction and occasional academic communication. However, academic-focused platforms like LinkedIn and research-based blogs were rarely used, suggesting a gap between entertainment-driven and academically productive online behaviors.

### **Research Question 2: What is the extent and nature of social media usage among these students?**

The study shows that students engage with social media on a daily basis, with many spending a significant amount of time on these platforms often during periods designated for study. Although some students reported using social media for sharing academic materials or coordinating group assignments, the majority acknowledged that their use of social media is primarily for personal entertainment and social interaction.

The findings suggest that the extent of use is high but not always academically purposeful. Many respondents indicated that their use of social media affects their ability to concentrate, manage their time effectively, and meet academic deadlines. This supports earlier research by Kim and Lee (2019), who found that while social media has the potential to support learning, excessive or unguided usage often leads to digital distractions and poor academic discipline.

### **Research Question 3: In what ways does social media usage affect the academic performance of students in the department?**

Student responses indicate a mixed perception of the impact of social media on academic performance. On the positive side, a number of students acknowledged that platforms like WhatsApp allowed them to engage in collaborative learning, share information quickly, and stay informed about departmental updates. For instance, class groups were frequently cited as useful for passing on announcements and exchanging materials.

However, a larger number of respondents emphasized the negative effects, particularly in terms of distraction, procrastination, and reduced study time. Students reported checking their phones frequently while studying, sometimes abandoning academic tasks altogether due to constant notifications or the temptation to browse. These self-reported outcomes are in line with the findings of Azizi et al. (2019), who noted a strong correlation between high-frequency social media use and lower academic performance among students in higher education institutions.



Overall, the findings confirm that while social media can enhance academic communication when used purposefully, unregulated or excessive usage tends to disrupt students' concentration and academic achievement. The impact of social media on academic performance is therefore dependent on how students manage their time, prioritize their responsibilities, and regulate their online behaviours.

### **4.3. Summary of Key Insights**

1. WhatsApp and Facebook dominate student usage due to their interactive and flexible features.
2. Daily engagement with social media is widespread, but largely for non-academic purposes.
3. Students acknowledge both advantages (e.g., collaboration) and drawbacks (e.g., distraction) of social media.
4. Excessive use negatively impacts concentration and time management, while moderate, intentional use may support academic activities.

## **5.0. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1. Conclusion**

This study investigated the impact of social media usage on the academic performance of students in the Social Studies Department at the Federal College of Education, Eha-Amufu. Drawing on survey data from 146 students, the research revealed that social media plays a prominent role in students' daily lives, with platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook being the most commonly used. While social media offers certain benefits such as facilitating peer communication, enhancing group collaboration, and providing access to academic updates, these advantages are tempered by substantial drawbacks. Many students reported that frequent engagement with social media platforms often results in distractions, reduced study time, and difficulty focusing on academic tasks.

The dual impact underscores the need for a balanced approach to the use of digital platforms within educational settings. The findings also suggest that while some students attempt to integrate social media into their academic routines, the majority use these platforms primarily for leisure and personal interactions. This tendency may negatively affect academic outcomes if not effectively managed. Overall, the study concludes that social media, when used responsibly, can enhance academic interaction and learning. However, excessive or



misdirected usage can undermine students' academic goals and performance. Therefore, educational institutions must adopt proactive strategies to encourage mindful and productive use of these platforms.

## **5.2. Recommendations**

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Promote Digital Literacy Education:** Institutions should embed digital literacy programs into the curriculum. These should cover responsible social media usage, time management skills, and strategies for minimizing digital distractions during academic activities.
2. **Conduct Awareness Campaigns:** Workshops and seminars should be organized to educate students about the potential academic risks associated with excessive social media use. Emphasis should be placed on how to strike a balance between online engagement and academic focus.
3. **Encourage Academic Use of Social Media:** Lecturers and academic departments should explore ways to integrate social media tools such as WhatsApp groups or academic forums on Facebook for assignments, group discussions, and sharing educational materials.
4. **Establish Peer Mentoring and Support Systems:** Peer-led mentoring programs can provide students with a platform to share experiences, promote discipline in social media usage, and encourage collective responsibility among students.
5. **Set Clear Boundaries on Social Media Usage:** Students should be encouraged to set personal boundaries by allocating specific times for social media engagement, particularly outside of class or study hours. Developing such discipline can help preserve focus and improve academic outcomes.
6. **Involve Educators and Parents in Guidance:** Teachers, academic advisors, and even parents should actively support students in managing their social media habits. This can be achieved through regular check-ins, mentorship, and encouragement of academic goals over digital distractions.

## **Competing Interest**

The authors have declared that no conflicting interest exist in this study.





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