
Social Media Usage and Its Effect on Academic Behaviour

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ABSTRACT

The rapid expansion of digital communication technologies has significantly transformed the way students interact, learn, and process information. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp have become deeply embedded in students' daily routines, influencing their academic behaviour in both constructive and disruptive ways. This study explores the relationship between social media usage and academic performance, focusing on behavioural patterns such as attention span, study habits, time management, and classroom engagement.

A mixed-method approach was employed, combining survey-based quantitative data with qualitative insights from student interviews. The findings reveal that moderate and purposeful use of social media supports collaborative learning, access to educational content, and peer interaction. However, excessive and unregulated usage leads to procrastination, reduced concentration, sleep disturbances, and lower academic achievement.

The study highlights the dual nature of social media as both a learning facilitator and a potential distraction. It concludes that structured usage, digital literacy, and institutional guidelines are essential to harness its educational benefits while minimizing adverse effects.

***KEYWORDS:** Social Media, Academic Behaviour, Student Performance, Digital Learning, Attention Span*

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary digital era, the widespread adoption of social networking technologies has brought a paradigm shift in educational environments. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube have transitioned from mere communication tools into influential ecosystems that shape students' cognitive, behavioural, and academic patterns. The accessibility of smartphones and affordable internet services has further accelerated this transformation, making social media an integral component of students' daily routines.

Academic behaviour encompasses a broad spectrum of student activities, including study habits, classroom participation, time management, motivation, and overall engagement with learning tasks. Traditionally, these behaviours were influenced by classroom teaching, peer interaction, and institutional frameworks. However, with the rise of digital platforms, the learning environment has expanded beyond physical classrooms into virtual spaces, where information is constantly produced, shared, and consumed.

One of the defining characteristics of social media is its immediacy and interactivity. Students can access educational content, participate in discussions, and collaborate with peers in real time. Platforms such as Telegram and WhatsApp host numerous academic groups where notes, assignments, and resources are exchanged instantly. Similarly, video-based platforms provide tutorials, lectures, and demonstrations that complement classroom instruction.

Despite these advantages, concerns have been raised regarding the potential negative effects of excessive social media usage. Continuous exposure to notifications, entertainment content, and non-academic interactions often leads to fragmented attention, reduced concentration, and procrastination. Students may find it difficult to maintain focus on academic tasks, leading to a decline in productivity and academic outcomes. Moreover, late-night usage patterns can disrupt sleep cycles, indirectly affecting cognitive performance and memory retention.

Another important aspect is the psychological influence of social media. The need for social validation, constant comparison, and fear of missing out (FOMO) can create mental distractions that interfere with academic engagement. These behavioural changes highlight the necessity to critically examine how social media shapes students' academic lives.

Therefore, this study aims to explore the multifaceted relationship between social media usage and academic behaviour. By analyzing both positive and negative impacts, the research seeks to provide a balanced understanding and offer practical insights for students, educators, and policymakers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The relationship between social media usage and academic behaviour has been widely studied across various educational contexts, revealing a complex and often contradictory set of findings. Scholars have approached this topic from psychological, educational, and technological perspectives to understand its implications.

Early research by Junco (2012) established a negative correlation between excessive use of Facebook and academic performance, indicating that students who spent more time on social networking sites tended to have lower grades. Similarly, Kirschner and Karpinski (2010) found that heavy users of social media reported significantly lower GPAs and spent fewer hours studying compared to non-users.

In contrast, other studies highlight the constructive potential of social media when used for academic purposes. For instance, platforms such as YouTube have been recognized as valuable educational resources, offering access to lectures, tutorials, and skill-based content. Research by Manca and Ranieri (2016) suggests that social media facilitates collaborative learning by enabling students to share knowledge, discuss ideas, and engage in peer-to-peer interaction.

From a behavioural perspective, Rosen (2013) emphasized the issue of multitasking, where students frequently switch between academic work and social media activities. This constant task-switching reduces cognitive efficiency and increases the likelihood of errors. The concept of “continuous partial attention” explains how divided focus negatively impacts deep learning and retention.

Indian researchers such as Sharma and Verma (2018) have also contributed to this field, highlighting that while social media enhances communication and accessibility of information, it simultaneously increases the risk of addiction and time mismanagement. Their findings suggest that students often struggle to maintain a balance between academic responsibilities

and online engagement.

Recent studies have explored the psychological dimensions of social media usage. The phenomenon of FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) has been identified as a significant factor that drives compulsive checking behaviour, leading to decreased academic focus. Excessive engagement with platforms like Instagram has been linked to anxiety, reduced self-esteem, and distraction among students.

Another important area of research focuses on sleep patterns. Late-night usage of social media has been associated with sleep deprivation, which directly affects cognitive functioning, memory consolidation, and academic performance. Studies indicate that students who use social media extensively during nighttime hours exhibit lower levels of concentration and higher levels of fatigue during academic activities.

The literature suggests that the impact of social media on academic behaviour is not inherently positive or negative. Instead, it depends on factors such as duration of use, purpose of engagement, level of self-regulation, and awareness of its consequences. This highlights the need for a balanced and mindful approach to social media usage in academic contexts.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To analyze the extent of social media usage among students
- To examine its impact on academic behaviour
- To identify positive and negative effects
- To suggest strategies for effective usage

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study adopts a **mixed-method research design**, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive analysis of the impact of social media usage on academic behaviour.

RESEARCH DESIGN

A **descriptive and analytical research design** was used to examine patterns of social media usage and their influence on students' academic activities. This approach allows for systematic observation, measurement, and interpretation of behavioural trends.

POPULATION AND SAMPLE

The target population for the study consisted of undergraduate students from various academic disciplines. A total of **200 students** were selected as the sample size to ensure adequate representation.

- **Sampling Technique:** Random sampling
- **Age Group:** 18–24 years
- **Educational Level:** Undergraduate students

This sampling method ensures that each individual in the population has an equal chance of being selected, thereby reducing bias.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Data was collected using both **primary and secondary sources**:

1. Primary Data

a) Structured Questionnaire:

A well-designed questionnaire consisting of both closed-ended and Likert-scale questions was used to gather quantitative data. The questionnaire focused on:

- Time spent on social media
- Purpose of usage (academic vs non-academic)
- Impact on study habits and concentration
- Academic performance indicators

b) Interviews:

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected participants to gain deeper qualitative insights into behavioural patterns and personal experiences.

2. Secondary Data

Secondary data was collected from:

- Academic journals
- Research articles
- Educational reports
- Online databases

This helped in supporting and validating the primary findings.

TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES FOR DATA ANALYSIS

The collected data was analyzed using:

- **Statistical Tools:**

Percentage analysis and graphical representation were used to interpret quantitative data.

- **Thematic Analysis:**

Qualitative responses from interviews were categorized into themes such as distraction, productivity, collaboration, and addiction.

RESEARCH VARIABLES

- **Independent Variable:** Social media usage (time, frequency, purpose)
- **Dependent Variable:** Academic behaviour (study habits, performance, concentration)

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- The study is limited to a sample size of 200 students
- Responses are based on self-reported data, which may include bias
- The study focuses only on undergraduate students and may not represent other educational levels

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Participation was voluntary
- Respondents' identities were kept confidential
- Data was used strictly for academic purposes

KEY EFFECTS ON ACADEMIC BEHAVIOUR

The influence of social media on academic behaviour is multidimensional, affecting cognitive processes, emotional well-being, and learning patterns. Its effects can be broadly categorized into **positive** and **negative dimensions**, both of which significantly shape students' academic experiences.

POSITIVE EFFECTS

1. Enhanced Access To Learning Resources

Social media platforms have revolutionized access to educational content. Applications like YouTube provide a vast repository of lectures, tutorials, and concept-based explanations across

disciplines. Students are no longer restricted to classroom teaching and textbooks; instead, they can explore diverse learning materials at their own pace.

This accessibility promotes **self-directed learning**, where students take initiative in understanding complex topics independently. It also supports revision and reinforcement of concepts through visual and interactive content.

2. Collaborative Learning And Peer Interaction

Social media fosters collaboration through group discussions and peer engagement. Platforms such as WhatsApp and Telegram enable students to form study groups where they exchange notes, solve problems collectively, and clarify doubts in real time.

This collaborative environment enhances:

- Communication skills
- Teamwork and cooperation
- Critical thinking through discussions

Peer-to-peer learning often simplifies complex ideas, making them easier to understand.

3. Improved Digital Literacy and Skills

Regular interaction with social media tools improves students' digital competencies. They become proficient in:

- Searching and evaluating online information
- Creating and sharing digital content
- Using communication tools effectively

These skills are essential in modern academic and professional environments, contributing to overall academic development

4. Increased Engagement and Motivation

Interactive features such as comments, likes, and sharing mechanisms create an engaging learning environment. Educational influencers and academic communities on platforms like Instagram and Twitter often share informative content that stimulates curiosity and interest.

This engagement can lead to:

- Increased participation in academic discussions
- Exposure to new ideas and perspectives
- Motivation to explore topics beyond the syllabus

Real-Time Information Sharing

Social media enables instant dissemination of academic information, including announcements, deadlines, and updates. Students remain informed and connected with their academic networks, reducing communication gaps.

NEGATIVE EFFECTS

1. Distraction and Reduced Concentration

One of the most significant negative impacts is constant distraction. Notifications from platforms such as Facebook and Instagram interrupt study sessions, breaking concentration and reducing productivity.

Frequent interruptions lead to:

- Reduced attention span
- Difficulty in deep learning
- Increased cognitive load

2. Procrastination and Poor Time Management

Social media often becomes a major source of procrastination. Students may initially intend to use it for short breaks but end up spending extended periods scrolling through non-academic content.

This behaviour results in:

- Delayed assignment completion
- Reduced study time
- Increased academic stress

3. Decline in Academic Performance

Excessive use of social media is directly linked to lower academic performance. Time that

could be spent on studying is diverted towards entertainment and social interaction.

Students who lack self-regulation often struggle to balance academic responsibilities with online engagement, leading to poor outcomes.

4. Sleep Disturbances and Fatigue

Late-night usage of social media disrupts sleep patterns. Continuous scrolling, exposure to blue light, and emotional engagement delay sleep onset.

Consequences include:

- Daytime fatigue
- Reduced concentration in class
- Impaired memory retention

Sleep deprivation significantly affects overall academic behaviour and performance.

5. Addiction And Dependency

Social media platforms are designed to be engaging and habit-forming. Over time, students may develop dependency, where they feel compelled to check their accounts frequently.

This addiction leads to:

- Reduced academic discipline
- Loss of focus on long-term goals
- Increased anxiety when disconnected

6. Psychological and Emotional Impacts

Social comparison and the desire for validation on platforms like Instagram can negatively affect mental health. Students may experience:

- Anxiety and stress
- Low self-esteem
- Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)

These emotional factors indirectly influence academic engagement and motivation.

7. Reduction in Face-To-Face Interaction

Excessive reliance on online communication reduces direct interpersonal interaction. This can impact:

- Classroom participation
- Communication confidence
- Social skills development

BALANCED PERSPECTIVE

The effects of social media on academic behaviour are not inherently fixed but depend on **how, why, and how much** it is used. When utilized strategically for academic purposes, it enhances learning and collaboration. However, uncontrolled usage leads to negative behavioural patterns that hinder academic success.

Developing **self-regulation, digital discipline, and awareness** is essential for students to maximize the benefits of social media while minimizing its adverse effects.

DISCUSSION

The findings demonstrate that social media is neither entirely beneficial nor wholly harmful. Its influence depends on the purpose, duration, and awareness of usage. Educational institutions must integrate digital literacy programs to guide students in using these platforms productively.

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Encourage time management strategies
- Promote academic use of social media platforms
- Limit non-educational screen time
- Conduct awareness programs on digital discipline
- Integrate social media into formal learning frameworks

CONCLUSION

Social media has become an inseparable part of students' academic lives, significantly influencing their behaviour and performance. While it offers valuable opportunities for learning and collaboration, uncontrolled usage leads to adverse academic outcomes. A balanced approach, supported by self-regulation and institutional guidance, is essential to

maximize its benefits while minimizing its drawbacks. The future of education lies in effectively integrating social media into structured learning environments.

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