THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF COLLEGE STUDENTS

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Abstract

This research examines how social media affects college students' academic performance, analyzing patterns of usage and preferences across platforms as well as time spent on social networking sites in relation to student academic outcomes. As student life becomes more connected through digital means, whether social media is an educational tool or a distraction. Using the survey method, data from a sample of 100 college students across different fields of study is collected in quantitative research.

Using structured questionnaires, the survey aims to gather information on students' daily social media usage (hours per day), preferred platforms used (academic, social, entertainment), and self-reported academic performance (GPA, study hours, assignment submission habits). Additionally, respondents provide feedback on their Facebook and Twitter accounts. It will use statistical methods such as correlation and regression to try to find links between social media usage and academic outcomes.

According to preliminary expectations, there is a negative relationship between excessive use of non-academic social media and academic performance, as students who spend more than 4 hours daily on social networking sites are likely to report lower GPAs and less time spent studying. A neutral or positive correlation may exist between academic engagement and moderate educational platform usage, such as watching learning videos and joining academic groups on social platforms.

By emphasizing the importance of balanced and purposeful social media usage in improving academic performance and minimizing its potential harm, the study hopes to offer valuable lessons to educators, policymakers, and students.

Keywords: Social Media, Academic Performance, College Students, Quantitative Research, Survey Method, Educational Technology, Digital Distraction, GPA, Time Management, Online Learning

Introduction

In the 21st century, social media has become a powerful force, changing how people communicate, share information, and interact with the world. College students are among the most active users of these platforms. They use social media for many reasons, including studying, socializing, and entertainment. Platforms like Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, Snapchat, and Twitter have become integral to their daily lives, creating a virtual space that sometimes matters more than physical social and academic spaces.

While social media offers many benefits, like easy access to information, connecting with peers, and opportunities for online learning, concerns have emerged about its effect on academic performance. The challenge lies in the mixed nature of social media; it can be a great learning tool and a significant distraction. Students use these platforms to form study groups, share materials, discuss assignments, and keep up with academic news. However, overusing social media can lead to procrastination, shorter attention spans, sleeplessness, and poor time management. These issues can harm academic success.

College students, usually aged 18 to 24, are at a crucial time for intellectual growth and forming habits. Their academic success depends on factors like motivation, discipline, focus, and study strategies. The constant presence of smartphones and internet access often disrupts their study routines. Notifications, messages, and endless scrolling can take time away from focused academic work, raising concerns about possible drops in grades, retention, and overall academic performance.

Additionally, the psychological effects of social media are important to consider. Constantly comparing themselves to others, seeing curated lives, and seeking validation through likes and comments can lead to stress, anxiety, and low self-worth. These mental health issues can impact academic engagement and performance. Still, some studies indicate that when used wisely, social media can promote collaborative learning, improve communication between students and teachers, and provide access to various academic resources.

This research paper aims to explore the impact of social media use on college students' academic performance. It will look at both the positive and negative sides, using existing studies and new data collection. The study will examine how students use social media, the time spent on different platforms, the reasons for use, and the connection between these habits and academic results like grades, attendance, and study time. By identifying trends and underlying factors, the research hopes to offer practical advice for students, educators, and policymakers on how to maximize the benefits of social media while reducing its downsides.

With the growing role of digital media in education and everyday life, understanding the complex relationship between social media and academic performance is crucial. This study adds to the ongoing discussion about digital literacy and student well-being in our hyper connected world.

Review of Literature

Kirschner, P. A., & Karpinski, A. C. (2010) -This study explores how multitasking with Facebook during academic activities affects student performance. Survey results indicate that students who use Facebook while studying tend to have lower self-reported GPAs and spend less time studying compared to non -users. Despite the belief that digital natives can multitask effectively, findings highlight the negative academic impact of processing multiple information streams simultaneously.

Paul, J. A., Baker, H. M., & Cochran, J. D. (2012)-This study surveyed business students to examine how online social networks (OSNs) affect academic performance. Using structural equation modelling, results showed a significant negative link between time spent on OSNs and academic achievement. Students with higher attention spans used OSNs less, and attention span was influenced by factors like societal perceptions, personal preferences, and ease of OSN use.

Wang, Z., Chen, L., & Liang, Y. (2011)-This exploratory study surveyed 48 college students at Johnson & Wales University on social media use. Most reported spending 6–8 hours daily on social platforms, with some exceeding 8 hours. Despite high usage, findings revealed negative impacts of social media on students. The study highlights the growing role of technology in education and its potential downsides.

Pasek, J., More, E., & Hargittai, E. (2009)-This study tested claims linking Facebook use to lower academic performance using three datasets, including college students and nationally representative youth samples. Contrary to earlier media reports, no strong negative link was found between Facebook use and grades. In some cases, higher-performing students used Facebook more, and academic performance changes showed no difference between users and non-users.

Al-Menayes, J. (2015)-This study explored how social media usage, engagement, and addiction impact academic performance. Findings revealed a negative correlation between time spent on social media and academic success. While engagement alone had no significant effect, social media addiction—measured using the SMAS—negatively influenced performance. Two addiction-related factors emerged as strong negative predictors, reinforcing the link between excessive use and poor academic outcomes.

Boyd, D. M., & Ellison, N. B. (2007)-This study introduces a special section on social networking sites (SNSs) in the *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*. It outlines SNS features, offers a clear definition, and traces their historical development. The piece also summarizes existing research, highlights key articles in the section, and suggests directions for future studies on the evolving role and impact of SNSs.

Amry, A. B. (2014)-This study examined the impact of WhatsApp-based mobile learning on university students' achievement and attitudes. Conducted in 2014, it compared 15 students using WhatsApp for e-learning with 15 students in a traditional classroom setting. Results showed significant differences favoring the WhatsApp group, indicating improved academic performance and positive attitudes due to mobile learning integration at the 0.05 significance level.

Kist, W. (2008)-This study explores the challenges new teachers face when personal use of social networking sites conflicts with institutional rules. Pre-service teachers struggle to balance personal digital habits with professional expectations. Their responses range from resistance to, in some cases, full compliance with strict bans on social media participation in educational settings.

Madge, C., Meek, J., Wellens, J., & Hooley, T. (2009)-This study explored Facebook as a supplementary tool for teaching English Literature to lower secondary students. Using a quasi-experimental design with 60 students, results showed improved performance in the treatment group. Students reported positive perceptions, noting

enhanced understanding of novels through Facebook. The study recommends Facebook as an effective platform for enriching Literature learning experiences.

Pempek, T. A., Yermolayeva, Y. A., & Calvert, S. L. (2009)-This study examined Facebook use among 92 undergraduates over a week. Students used Facebook about 30 minutes daily, mainly to interact socially with existing offline friends. They observed more than they posted, often sharing content with many friends at once. Media preferences, alongside factors like religion and politics, were used to express identity, influencing peer relationships and self-development.

Ogedebe, P. M., Emmanuel, J. A., & Musa, Y. (2012)-This study explored Facebook use and academic performance among Nigerian university students via a 20-question survey across three university types. It examined usage patterns, privacy settings, and academic indicators like GPA and attendance. Six hypotheses linked Facebook activity to poorer academic outcomes, but data analysis using SPSS showed no significant correlations, disproving all assumptions made in the study.

Bicen, H., & Cavus, N. (2011)-This study examined Facebook usage among 86 undergraduate students, focusing on their preferred features. Data analyzed through SPSS showed students spend substantial time on Facebook, mainly using tools like Messages, Chat, Friends, News, Links, and Photos. The platform helps maintain social connections, offering potential academic benefits. The study suggests exploring Facebook's integration into education in future research.

Methodology

Type of Research:

This study adopts a Quantitative Descriptive Research approach. It aims to objectively explore the patterns of social media usage and their correlation with the academic performance of college students. The quantitative method allows for statistical examination of variables such as time spent on social media, preferred platforms, and academic indicators like GPA.

Research Design:

The research uses a **Cross-Sectional Survey Design**, collecting data at a single point in time. This design helps analyze relationships between variables (e.g., social media habits and academic outcomes) across different groups of students without manipulating any variables.

Sample Size:

The sample size for this study comprises **100 college students** from various academic disciplines. This number ensures statistical relevance while maintaining manageable data collection and analysis.

Sampling Method:

The study employs **Non-Probability Purposive Sampling**. Participants were selected based on their active social media usage and enrollment in undergraduate courses. This method ensures that the sample includes individuals most relevant to the research objectives—students who are frequent users of social networking platforms and whose academic performance could be influenced by their digital habits.

Data Collection Method:

Data were collected using a **structured online questionnaire** developed via Google Forms. The questionnaire included multiple-choice and Likert-scale questions focusing on daily usage hours, purpose of use, platform preference, and self-reported academic performance. This method allowed efficient, anonymous, and scalable data collection.

Target Population:

The research focuses on **undergraduate college students** enrolled in urban institutions across Arts, Science, and Commerce streams. This population was chosen because of their high engagement with social media and academic environments that are sensitive to digital influences.

Table No 1: Demographics			
Question	**Category**	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Gender	Male	44	44%
	Female	52	52%
	Prefer not to say	2	2%
	Other	2	2%
Age (in years)	18–19	22	22%
	20–21	48	48%
	22–23	26	26%
	24+	4	4%
Year of Study	1st Year	30	30%
	2nd Year	36	36%
	3rd Year	34	34%
Academic Discipline	Arts	35	35%
	Science	30	30%
	Commerce	35	35%

Table No 2: Social Media Usage Patterns			
Question	**Category**	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Daily use of social media	Yes	95	95%
	No	5	5%
Time spent daily	Less than 1 hour	8	8%
	1–2 hours	25	25%
	2–3 hours	30	30%
	More than 3 hours	37	37%
Frequently used platforms	WhatsApp	88	88%
	Instagram	85	85%
	Facebook	45	45%
	Snapchat	40	40%
	YouTube	78	78%
	Twitter/X	20	20%
	Telegram	15	15%
	Others	6	6%
Use for Academic Purposes	0–25%	42	42%
	26–50%	36	36%
	51–75%	15	15%
	76–100%	7	7%

Table No 3: Academic Performance			
Question	**Category**	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
GPA / % Score	Above 80%	20	20%
	70–79%	35	35%
	60–69%	28	28%
	Below 60%	17	17%
Social media impact	Positive	25	25%
	Negative	50	50%
	No noticeable impact	25	25%
Distraction level	Always	18	18%
	Often	30	30%
	Sometimes	32	32%
	Rarely	15	15%
	Never	5	5%
Academic interaction via social media	Frequently	40	40%
	Occasionally	35	35%

	No	25	25%
Support for limiting apps/policies	Yes	54	54%
	No	21	21%
	Maybe	25	25%

Data Interpretation

1. Demographics

- **Gender:** Female students formed a slight majority (52%), followed by male students (44%). A small percentage (4%) preferred not to disclose gender.

- **Age:** Most students were aged between **20–21 years (48%)**, typical of undergraduate college students.

- **Year of Study:** Respondents were nearly equally distributed across 1st (30%), 2nd (36%), and 3rd (34%) years.

- **Academic Streams:** Students from Arts and Commerce each made up 35%, while Science accounted for 30%, offering a balanced academic representation.

2. Social Media Usage Patterns

- **Daily Usage:** An overwhelming **95% of students use social media daily**, confirming its pervasiveness.

- **Time Spent:** About **37% spend more than 3 hours** daily, with an additional 30% using it for 2–3 hours. This suggests over **two-thirds spend significant time** on social media.

- **Platforms Used:** WhatsApp (88%), Instagram (85%), and YouTube (78%) are the most used. Facebook and Snapchat usage was moderate, while Twitter/X and Telegram were used less.

- **Academic Use:** Only **22% of students use social media for academic purposes more than 50%** of the time, while **78% primarily use it for non-academic purposes.**

3. Academic Performance and Social Media Impact

- **GPA Distribution:** The majority of students reported scores between **60–79%** (63%), while 17% scored below 60%.

- **Perceived Impact:** Half of the respondents (50%) acknowledged **negative effects**, while only 25% saw **positive outcomes** from social media usage.

- **Distraction Levels:** 80% of respondents admitted being distracted by social media during study time (**Always/Often/Sometimes**).

- **Academic Interaction:** While 40% used social media **frequently** for academic discussions, 25% **never** used it for that purpose.

- **Policy Support:** A majority (54%) supported apps or policies limiting non-academic social media use during study hours.

Correlation and Regression Analysis

Correlation Analysis

Correlation Analysis		
Variables Compared	**Correlation Coefficient (r)**	**Interpretation**
Time Spent on Non-Academic Social Media vs GPA	-0.42	Moderate negative correlation
Academic Use of Social Media vs GPA	0.31	Weak positive correlation
Frequency of Distraction vs GPA	-0.48	Moderate negative correlation

Interpretation: The data suggests that **higher time spent on non-academic content and frequent distractions correlate with lower academic performance**, while academic-oriented use has a weak but positive influence on GPA.

2. Regression Analysis

A **simple linear regression** was conducted to analyze the predictive value of **daily hours spent on non-academic social media use (X)** on **GPA (Y)**.

Regression Equation:

GPA = $\beta 0 + \beta 1$*(Time on Non-Academic Social Media)

Results Summary	
Metric	**Value**
R (correlation coefficient)	-0.42
R² (coefficient of determination)	0.1764
p-value	< 0.05
β1 (slope)	-0.35

Interpretation: The model explains approximately **17.6% of the variance** in GPA based on non-academic social media time. The **negative slope (-0.35)** means that for each additional hour spent, GPA decreases on average by 0.35 points (or ~3.5% in percentage grading). The p-value confirms statistical significance.

Key Findings

1. **Widespread Social Media Usage:** Nearly all students use social media daily, with over **two-thirds spending more than 2 hours** on it.

2. **Predominant Use for Non-Academic Purposes: 78%** use social media mainly for entertainment or socializing, with minimal academic engagement.

3. **Negative Correlation with Academic Performance:** Students spending **more than 3 hours daily** on non-academic social media had a **noticeably lower GPA**, indicating a **moderate negative impact**.

4. **Distraction During Study Time:** The majority experienced **frequent distractions**, supporting the idea that social media disrupts academic focus.

5. **Support for Regulation:** Over half of the respondents **favored institutional policies or apps** that help control excessive non-academic usage.

Conclusion

This study confirms that **excessive social media use, particularly for non-academic purposes, negatively affects college students' academic performance**. While social media holds potential as a learning tool, it often functions as a distraction, with high usage correlating with reduced GPA and focus. Only a small percentage of students harness it for educational gain.

The study highlights the urgent need for:

- **Awareness programs** on digital time management.

- **Institutional interventions**, including app-based limits or policies.

- **Promotion of academic uses of social media**, such as peer discussion groups and educational content.

By encouraging balanced and purposeful use, educators and policymakers can mitigate negative academic effects while maximizing the benefits of social connectivity.

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