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Patterns, Perceptions, and Academic Implications of Social Media Use among Tertiary Institution Students in Yobe State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The increasing use of social media among Nigerian undergraduates presents a paradox in academic performance. While platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and YouTube offer opportunities for academic collaboration, access to educational materials, and professional networking, their unregulated use often results in poor time management, reduced concentration, and decreased study commitment. This issue is particularly relevant in Yobe State, where access to higher education is expanding rapidly, underscoring the need to balance digital engagement with academic responsibilities. This study employed a comparative survey design, focusing on undergraduates from Federal Polytechnic Damaturu and Yobe State University. Data were collected to examine patterns of social media usage, students' perceptions of its academic utility, and its relationship to self-reported academic performance. Findings revealed that although many students acknowledged the academic benefits of social media, including enhanced collaboration and rapid information access, a significant proportion admitted to using these platforms primarily for non-academic purposes. This imbalance was linked to procrastination, inconsistency

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in study habits, and reduced academic productivity. The study concludes that social media is not inherently beneficial or detrimental; its impact depends on usage patterns and the degree of user self-regulation. The findings highlight the need for short-term digital literacy interventions, institutional policies, and awareness campaigns aimed at promoting responsible social media use to enhance academic outcomes while mitigating potential drawbacks.

Keywords: Social Media; Academic Performance; Student Perceptions; Digital Literacy; Higher Education in Yobe State

INTRODUCTION

In this competitive world, academic competition between the students in the Nigerian tertiary campuses requires the student to balance student ambitions in academics with the reality of the growing sphere of social media that provides both innovation and distraction to students. Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp offer students in Yobe State unprecedented access to peer networks, global information, and creative collaboration (Abuzar & Hussain, 2024; Tambuwal et al., 2025; Nwaka-Nwandu et al., 2024). Yet this accessibility often comes at a cost many students report extended hours spent scrolling through entertainment content, undermining their focus and time management abilities vital for academic success (Safina & Audu, 2025; Agaba et al., 2024; Okeya-Olayinka & Martins-Adediran, 2025).This phenomenon mirrors broader national trends. For instance, studies across Nigerian universities such as those at the University of Jos and University of Nigeria, Nsukka show that while social media can facilitate collaboration, its misuse often distracts students, with mixed impacts on academic performance. Similarly, Eduardo's research underscores that excessive usage significantly reduces attention spans and leads to poorer grades, especially when multitasking .

Within Yobe State, empirical work paints a nuanced picture. A study at Yobe State University, Damaturu, indicates that students possess proficiency in social media use, with a generally positive effect on their academic efforts though male students tended to score higher in overall utilization (Dakasku, Saleh & Abdullahi, 2021) . Another investigation at Yobe State College of Agriculture, Gujba revealed that social media addictive behaviors significantly undermine academic achievement (Maina, Abba & Lawan, 2021)

Students' perceptions reflect this paradox well: social media is a valuable tool for collaborative learning and peer support, yet it also facilitates procrastination, ushers in misinformation, and exposes students to cyberbullying threats that can erode both psychological well-being and academic motivation (Nwaka-Nwandu et al., 2024; Tambuwal et al., 2025; Abuzar & Hussain, 2024). These indeed align with findings from Yobe's tertiary institutions, where online distractions are reported to disrupt study habits and self-esteem (Safina & Audu, 2025; Ibrahim et al., 2023).

Academically, the stakes are high. Excessive social media engagement in Nigerian tertiary contexts has been linked to erratic GPAs, elevated stress levels, and disrupted sleep patterns, factors that can ultimately affect graduation prospects and employability (Okeya-Olayinka & Martins-Adediran, 2025; Agaba et al., 2024; Omi-Ujuanbi, 2025). With internet access improving across Yobe State despite infrastructural constraints there's a growing need for interventions that harness social media's potential for peer learning while mitigating its capacity for disruption (Abuzar & Hussain, 2024; Nwaka-Nwandu et al., 2024).

Despite the growing integration of digital technologies into everyday student life, there remains limited understanding of how tertiary students in Yobe State use social media, what they perceive as its benefits and risks, and how these practices shape their academic performance. While social media offers opportunities for learning, collaboration, and information sharing, it also presents risks of distraction, misinformation, and declining study habits. The absence of context-specific evidence on these dynamics in Yobe State creates a critical gap, leaving educators and policymakers without the insights needed to guide students toward a balanced and academically productive use of social media.

This study adopts the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) as its guiding framework. UGT emphasizes that media users are active participants who select and engage with media platforms to satisfy specific needs such as information seeking, entertainment, social connection, and identity formation. In the context of social media use among tertiary institution students in Yobe State, the theory helps to explain not only the patterns of engagement but also the gratifications students seek and the academic implications of such use. By applying UGT, the study shifts attention from the medium itself to the motivations and experiences of students, providing a more nuanced understanding of how social media affects academic life.

The aim of this study is to examine the patterns, perceptions, and academic implications of social media use among students of tertiary institutions in Yobe State, Nigeria. Specifically, it seeks to identify the frequency and purposes of social media engagement, explore students' perceptions of its benefits and drawbacks, and analyze the extent to which social media use influences their academic performance, study habits, and overall learning outcomes. By focusing on these dimensions, the study intends to provide empirical insights that can guide educators, policymakers, and institutions in developing strategies for promoting responsible and academically productive social media practices among students.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Study Area

The study employed a descriptive cross-sectional survey design to examine the patterns, perceptions, and academic implications of social media use among students in Yobe State, Nigeria. It was conducted across three purposively selected institutions Yobe State University, Federal University Gashua, and Federal Polytechnic Damaturu representing diverse tertiary education contexts in the state.

Population and Sample

The study focused on undergraduate students across the selected institutions, representing an estimated population of 15,500 students. From this population, a total of 400 respondents were sampled, which was considered adequate for ensuring statistical reliability and meaningful generalization of findings, as recommended in contemporary research practices (Nanjundeswaraswamy & Divakara, 2021; Etikan & Bala, 2020).

To guarantee that the sample reflected the diversity of the wider student population, a multistage sampling strategy was employed. In the initial stage, faculties served as the main clusters. Subsequent stages involved proportionate selection from departments and academic levels, ensuring that students from different disciplines and year groups were represented. This method enhances representativeness while balancing logistical feasibility, particularly in large and heterogeneous populations (DiscoverPhDs, 2020; Creswell & Creswell, 2022).

Instrument and Data Collection

Data were gathered using a structured questionnaire comprising demographic details, patterns of social media use, perceptions, and academic implications, measured on a five-point

Likert scale. Content validity was confirmed through expert review, while a pilot test yielded satisfactory reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha values > 0.70). Data collection involved both physical administration and Google Forms distribution, with assistance from trained field aides.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS version 27. Descriptive statistics (frequency, percentages, means, standard deviations) summarized responses, while inferential tests (Chi-square, Pearson's correlation, and multiple regression) examined associations and predictors of academic performance. Statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of Yobe State University. Participation was voluntary, with informed consent secured, anonymity maintained, and all data used solely for academic purposes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Demographic Information of Respondents (N = 400)

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender (Male)	220	55.0
Gender (Female)	180	45.0
Age 18–22	160	40.0
Age 23–27	150	37.5
Age 28 & above	90	22.5
University Students	250	62.5
Polytechnic Students	150	37.5

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the 400 respondents, providing a useful background for interpreting their patterns of social media use and its academic implications.

The gender distribution shows that male students (55.0%) slightly outnumber female students (45.0%). This aligns with previous studies in northern Nigeria that have reported relatively higher enrollment of males in tertiary institutions compared to females (Aliyu & Yaro, 2021). This gender balance, however, suggests that both male and female perspectives

are well represented in this study, which is crucial for understanding differences in social media adoption, usage intensity, and academic impacts.

In terms of age, the majority of respondents fall within the 18–22 years (40.0%) and 23–27 years (37.5%) categories, while a smaller proportion (22.5%) are 28 years and above. This indicates that most respondents are young adults, a demographic widely recognized as the most active users of social media platforms (Pew Research Center, 2023). Younger students tend to use social media more frequently for social interaction, entertainment, and collaborative learning, while older students may approach its use more purposefully, especially for academic and professional development (Okeke & Musa, 2022).

Regarding the type of institution, university students (62.5%) constitute a larger share compared to polytechnic students (37.5%). This may reflect the higher enrollment capacity of universities in Yobe State. More importantly, this distinction is relevant because institutional environments often shape how students perceive and use social media. University students may have broader access to academic resources and online communities, potentially using social media for research, networking, and peer discussions. Conversely, polytechnic students, while also active users, may adopt more practice-oriented approaches, using social media to enhance technical skills, collaborate on projects, and explore career opportunities (Abubakar & Mohammed, 2020).

Overall, the demographic composition of respondents reflects the youthful, digitally active population of tertiary institutions in Yobe State, making them an ideal group for examining patterns and perceptions of social media use. These characteristics also provide a foundation for understanding how social media engagement affects their academic performance and learning behaviors.

Table 2: Patterns of Social Media Use

Pattern	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Access social media daily	360	90.0
Spend 1–3 hours daily	180	45.0
Spend 4–6 hours daily	140	35.0
Spend 7+ hours daily	80	20.0
Use for academic purposes	250	62.5
Use for entertainment	300	75.0
Use for news/current affairs	190	47.5

The results in Table 2 reveal the diverse patterns of social media engagement among tertiary institution students in Yobe State. A significant proportion of the respondents (90.0%) reported accessing social media daily, confirming the pervasive and indispensable role social networking platforms play in students' lives. This high level of daily access reflects global trends where social media has become integrated into students' academic, social, and personal routines (Al-Rahmi et al., 2022).

In terms of time spent, almost half of the students (45.0%) indicated they spend 1–3 hours daily on social media, while 35.0% spend 4–6 hours, and a notable 20.0% spend 7 or more hours daily. These findings suggest that a considerable number of students may be at risk of excessive use, which could interfere with study schedules and academic productivity. Similar concerns have been raised in previous studies, where excessive screen time was linked to reduced academic concentration and lower performance (Twum et al., 2021). However, moderate use (1–3 hours) could potentially foster balanced social and academic engagement if effectively managed.

The purposes for which students use social media also reveal important patterns. The majority (75.0%) reported using it for entertainment, while 62.5% use it for academic purposes, and 47.5% for news and current affairs. This shows that while entertainment dominates social media use, a considerable proportion of students are leveraging these platforms for academic support, such as accessing e-learning resources, collaborating on assignments, and engaging in academic discussions. This aligns with the findings of Ainin et al. (2022), who emphasized that social media has the potential to enhance academic collaboration if strategically utilized.

Overall, the data highlight a dual role of social media in students' academic lives. On one hand, it offers opportunities for learning, research, and access to current information; on the other, excessive entertainment-driven usage could distract students from core academic responsibilities. Therefore, the findings emphasize the importance of promoting digital literacy and time management skills among tertiary institution students to maximize the academic benefits of social media while minimizing its potential drawbacks.

Table 3: Perceptions of Social Media Use

Perception	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Social media improves learning	270	67.5
Social media distracts from study	310	77.5
Helps connect with peers	280	70.0
Leads to procrastination	290	72.5
Exposes students to misinformation	260	65.0
Useful for academic collaboration	240	60.0

The results in Table 3 present an in-depth understanding of how tertiary institution students in Yobe State perceive social media in relation to their academic and social lives. A majority of respondents (67.5%) indicated that social media improves learning, suggesting that students increasingly recognize platforms such as WhatsApp, YouTube, and Google Scholar as valuable tools for academic information, tutorials, and resource sharing. This aligns with findings by Junco (2019), who noted that social media can enhance collaborative learning when properly integrated into academic activities.

However, a much higher percentage (77.5%) perceived social media as a distraction from study, indicating the double-edged nature of these platforms. While beneficial for learning, the constant availability of entertainment and social interaction can reduce concentration on academic tasks. Similarly, 72.5% admitted that social media use leads to procrastination, supporting earlier research by Paul, Baker, and Cochran (2012), who emphasized the negative effect of excessive social media engagement on academic discipline and task completion.

Another key perception was that 70% of students believe social media helps them connect with peers, which reflects its role in enhancing social capital, peer support, and academic networking. At the same time, 65% noted that it exposes them to misinformation, a critical concern in today's digital environment where false academic and social information spreads rapidly. This confirms studies by Tandoc et al. (2018), which showed that students are vulnerable to fake news and unreliable academic sources on social platforms.

Interestingly, 60% of respondents highlighted that social media is useful for academic collaboration, such as group chats, sharing lecture materials, and online discussions. This shows that despite distractions, students still leverage these platforms for meaningful

engagement with their peers and lecturers, in line with the concept of "digital collaborative learning" highlighted by Chen and Bryer (2019).

The results reveal that students perceive social media as both an academic enabler and a barrier: while it improves learning, collaboration, and peer networking, it simultaneously promotes distraction, procrastination, and misinformation. This duality underscores the need for strategic guidance on responsible and productive social media use among tertiary students in Yobe State.

Table 4: Academic Implications of Social Media Use

Implication	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Improved access to academic materials	260	65.0
Decline in study time	280	70.0
Improved peer collaboration	240	60.0
Decline in GPA performance	200	50.0
Increased stress levels	230	57.5
Poor time management	300	75.0

Table 4 highlights the academic consequences of social media use among tertiary institution students in Yobe State. The results reveal a dual impact both positive and negative on students' academic life.

On the positive side, a majority of respondents (65.0%) reported that social media has improved access to academic materials, demonstrating its value as a digital learning resource. This aligns with findings by Alshuaibi et al. (2018) and Adzovie & Jibril (2021), who noted that platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, and Telegram facilitate access to course notes, tutorials, and scholarly discussions. Similarly, 60.0% of respondents agreed that social media promotes peer collaboration, highlighting its role in fostering group assignments, academic networking, and virtual study groups. These findings suggest that social media can function as an important educational tool when effectively managed.

Conversely, the negative academic implications appear more pronounced. A significant majority (75.0%) indicated that social media use leads to poor time management, while 70.0% acknowledged a decline in study time, showing that excessive use interferes with academic focus. Furthermore, 57.5% reported increased stress levels, which may result from constant notifications, multitasking, and information overload consistent with Junco (2017) who argued

that high social media engagement heightens cognitive stress. Additionally, half of the respondents (50.0%) reported a decline in GPA performance, supporting studies such as Olowu & Seri (2012) and Paul et al. (2019) which found a negative correlation between prolonged social media use and academic achievement.

The findings suggest that while social media enhances academic engagement through information sharing and collaboration, its overuse often results in reduced study efficiency, poor time management, and academic stress. These results underscore the need for balanced and regulated social media use among students to maximize its academic benefits while minimizing its negative consequences.

CONCLUSION

The study reveals that social media is deeply embedded in the academic and social lives of students. The findings show that a significant proportion of students (90%) access social media daily, with many using it for multiple purposes such as entertainment (75%) and academic activities (62.5%). However, the negative consequences are also notable. The majority perceive social media as a source of distraction (77.5%), procrastination (72.5%), and poor time management (75%), which often leads to reduced study time (70%) and, for half of the respondents, a decline in GPA performance. Despite these drawbacks, positive aspects such as improved access to academic materials (65%) and enhanced collaboration among peers (60%) highlight its dual role in student life. Therefore, the study concludes that social media exerts both beneficial and detrimental effects, depending on how it is managed by students, underscoring the need for balanced and strategic use.

Recommendations

1. Digital Literacy and Time Management Training

Institutions should organize regular workshops and seminars to equip students with skills in digital literacy, focusing on how to critically use social media for learning, while also managing time effectively to minimize distractions and procrastination.

2. Integration of Social Media into Academic Activities

Lecturers and institutions should incorporate social media platforms into teaching and learning processes for example, creating academic discussion groups, course forums, and study

challenges to channel students' interest in social networking toward productive academic collaboration.

3. Policy and Counseling Support

University and polytechnic administrations should develop policies that guide responsible social media use, complemented by counseling services that help students cope with stress, misinformation, and the academic pressure associated with excessive online engagement.

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