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Social Media Use and Academic Engagement among Undergraduate Students in Nigeria: Evidence from Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu-Alike, Nigeria

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Abstract

The rapid growth of social media usage among students in higher institutions worldwide has been driven by technological advancements and increased internet accessibility. This study examined the relationship between social media use and the academic activities of undergraduate students at Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu-Alike (AE-FUNAI) Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to determine the extent of students' exposure to social media, assess the level of social media usage among students, and investigate its impact on their academic activities. The study was anchored on the Technological Determinism Theory. A descriptive survey research design was adopted, while the questionnaire served as the primary instrument for data collection. A sample size of 391 respondents was selected using the purposive sampling technique. Data were analyzed using frequencies and percentages, with findings presented in tables. The results revealed that the majority of students at AE-FUNAI were highly exposed to social media and demonstrated a high level of usage. Furthermore, the study established that social media positively influenced students' academic activities through personalized learning opportunities, access to academic networks, enhanced communication, support systems, real-time updates, and increased access to educational resources. Based on these findings, the study recommended that the management of AE-FUNAI should integrate social media into the educational curriculum to improve learning outcomes and formulate clear guidelines for responsible social media use among students.

Keywords: Social Media, Media Use, Academic Engagement, Undergraduate Students

Introduction

The emergence of social media has brought significant transformation to the educational sector by providing students with numerous opportunities to access information that enriches their studies and enhances academic performance (Obagwu, 2023). Scholars such as Chukwu and Ekwunife (2021) and Apuke (2016) describe social media as one of the most important contemporary means of communication because it facilitates interaction among individuals regardless of distance or cost. Through these platforms, users can easily share information, files, pictures, videos, messages, and conversations. Social media therefore represent digital communication channels that enable individuals and groups to connect, exchange ideas and experiences, and build relationships. In recent years, social media have become an integral part of the lives of young people, particularly students (Ekwunife, Nwachukwu, Ume, Onyeneho, Agha, & Boniface, 2023). In Nigeria, many students now rely on social media to support their academic activities and remain informed about developments within their environments (Onyebuchi, Obayi, & Amadi, 2019).

Geppert and Gassmann (2019) argue that social media have encouraged innovative and creative approaches to education by providing digital learning resources that improve teaching and learning processes in educational institutions. Similarly, Ukeje, Nnaji, Ekwunife, Iteshi, Nwosu, Chioke, Ogbulu, Nwachukwu, Onyeneho, Ojogbane, and Nwangbo (2023) maintain that social media have automated both learning and administrative processes through digital platforms that enable students to access academic information, receive support, and connect with fellow students, lecturers, and family members.

Social media can also be described as computer-mediated tools that allow users to create, share, and exchange information, ideas, pictures, and videos within virtual communities and learning environments. The use of these platforms has increased rapidly among young people across the globe. Sivakumar (2020) observes that social media play a significant role in education and in students' daily lives. In Nigeria, social media have become one of the fastest-growing and most popular means of communication among youths, significantly influencing students' behaviours, reactions to issues, and daily activities (Otube & Oji, 2024; Ekwunife, Emebo, Agha, Onyeneho, Ukeje, Nwachukwu, & Uchechi, 2025). According to Zengler (2020), social media have become indispensable in the lives of young people, with more than half of the global population under the age of 40 actively using these platforms. Olaimolu and Alade (2024) further affirm that social media are now an integral aspect of students' lives, presenting both opportunities and challenges for academic performance. Their influence extends beyond personal communication, entertainment, and networking into the educational sphere, where they increasingly shape teaching, learning, and academic engagement.

Despite the numerous benefits associated with social media, its impact on students' academic performance remains a subject of scholarly debate. While some studies suggest that social media enhance learning through improved access to information and collaborative engagement, others argue that excessive usage may distract students from academic responsibilities and negatively affect performance. Although several studies have examined the relationship between social media usage and academic achievement, there remains a paucity of empirical research focusing specifically on students of Alex Ekwueme Federal

University Ndufu-Alike. Given the pervasive use of social media and its potential influence on students' academic outcomes, it is important to investigate its impact within this context. Against this backdrop, this study examined the impact of social media on the academic performance of students in Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu-Alike. Specifically, the study sought to determine the extent to which students are exposed to social media, assess their level of social media usage, and investigate the influence of social media on their academic activities and performance.

Literature

Concept of Social Media

Social media have become one of the most transformative innovations in contemporary communication, reshaping the way individuals interact, exchange information, and participate in social, educational, political, and economic activities. The rapid advancement in digital technologies and internet connectivity has increased the popularity and accessibility of social media platforms across the world, particularly among young people and students. According to Bangura (2024, p. 2), social media refer to "online platforms and applications that facilitate the creation, sharing and exchange of user-generated content, ideas and information within virtual communities." Similarly, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), cited in Maiwada and Lawal (2024), define social media as a broad category of internet-based technologies that enable users to create, share, and exchange information and content through online networks and communities. These definitions highlight the interactive and participatory nature of social media, which distinguishes them from traditional media platforms. The emergence of social media has significantly transformed patterns of communication and social interaction globally. Unlike traditional media that operate on one-way communication models, social media encourage active participation, collaboration, and instant feedback among users. Okigbo and Esajober (2024) observe that social media have revolutionized communication by providing users with platforms that allow immediate interaction regardless of geographical boundaries. Through applications such as Facebook, WhatsApp, TikTok, Instagram, and X, individuals can communicate, share opinions, disseminate information, and build virtual communities in real time (Ekwunife, Nwachukwu, Agha, Onyeneho, Ukeje, & Agbong, 2025).

In recent years, social media have become deeply integrated into the daily lives of students, particularly those in tertiary institutions. University students rely heavily on social networking platforms for communication, entertainment, information sharing, collaboration, and academic engagement. Ezeah, Asogwa, and Edogor (2015) describe social media as modern interactive communication channels through which people connect, exchange ideas, share experiences, and disseminate messages and information based on shared interests. Their interactive nature has made them attractive to students who seek quick access to information and peer interaction. Within the educational sector, social media have introduced new opportunities for teaching and learning. Educational institutions increasingly integrate digital communication tools into academic activities to improve learning outcomes and facilitate collaboration among students and lecturers. Adegboyega (2020) argues that social media have contributed significantly to the intellectual development of students by accelerating access to educational materials and enhancing knowledge dissemination. Through social media platforms,

students can participate in online discussions, attend virtual classes, collaborate on assignments, and access digital libraries and educational resources with ease.

Aiyende and Omojola (2021) further contend that technological innovations, particularly social media technologies, have brought remarkable improvement to the educational system. According to them, social networking platforms enable university students to interact socially in real time while simultaneously providing opportunities for academic engagement. These platforms support the sharing of documents, videos, voice notes, lecture materials, and educational links, thereby enhancing communication between students and lecturers. Consequently, social media have evolved from mere entertainment tools to important instruments for educational interaction and collaborative learning.

The integration of social media into education aligns with the global transition toward digital learning environments. The advancement of information and communication technologies (ICTs) has transformed traditional classroom settings into more interactive and flexible learning systems. According to Boyd and Ellison (2007), social networking sites are web-based services that allow individuals to construct public or semi-public profiles, articulate lists of users with whom they share connections, and interact within digital communities. This networking capability has created opportunities for students to form academic groups, exchange lecture notes, and discuss academic issues beyond the physical classroom environment. The popularity of social media among youths and students can also be attributed to the accessibility and affordability of smartphones and internet-enabled devices. In many developing countries, including Nigeria, mobile technology has expanded internet access among young people, making social media usage more widespread. Statista (2024) reports that millions of young people globally spend significant hours daily on social networking platforms for communication, entertainment, and educational purposes. This trend has contributed to the increasing dependence on social media as a major source of information and interaction among students.

In addition, social media foster collaborative learning by encouraging peer-to-peer interaction and teamwork. Students can create virtual learning communities where they exchange ideas, solve academic problems, and support one another academically. According to Greenhow and Lewin (2016), social media support participatory learning by allowing students to actively engage in content creation, discussion, and knowledge sharing. This collaborative dimension enhances critical thinking, creativity, and communication skills among learners.

Furthermore, social media platforms provide students with opportunities for self-expression and creativity. Platforms such as YouTube and TikTok enable students to create and share educational content, tutorials, and innovative ideas with global audiences. This participatory culture has expanded learning opportunities beyond conventional classroom settings and encouraged independent learning among students.

Despite these benefits, scholars have raised concerns about the excessive use of social media among students. While social media facilitate communication and learning, their uncontrolled usage may result in distractions, addiction, and reduced academic concentration. Bangura (2024) notes that many students have become excessively attached to social media platforms to the extent that these platforms dominate their daily activities. The

addictive nature of social media often leads students to spend long hours browsing, chatting, and consuming entertainment content at the expense of academic activities. Similarly, Wickramanayake (2022) describes social media as a “double-edged sword” because of its capacity to produce both positive and negative effects on users, particularly young people. On the positive side, social media promote communication, knowledge sharing, and educational engagement. On the negative side, excessive usage may expose students to cyberbullying, misinformation, academic distraction, and reduced face-to-face interaction. The challenge therefore lies in how students manage and utilize these platforms.

Another important concern associated with social media is the issue of misinformation and exposure to inappropriate content. Because social media platforms allow unrestricted content generation and sharing, students may encounter misleading information, fake news, and harmful materials that can negatively influence their academic and social development. According to Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, and Silvestre (2011), social media environments are highly dynamic and decentralized, making information verification difficult. Consequently, students must develop digital literacy skills to critically evaluate the credibility of information obtained through social media. Moreover, social media have altered the dynamics of interpersonal relationships and communication patterns among students. While these platforms encourage virtual interaction, some scholars argue that excessive online engagement may reduce physical socialization and weaken direct interpersonal communication skills. Turkle (2015) maintains that although digital communication technologies connect people virtually, they may simultaneously diminish meaningful face-to-face interactions. Among university students, excessive engagement with social media may reduce participation in physical academic activities and social engagements within the campus environment.

In the Nigerian context, social media have become increasingly influential in shaping students’ behaviours, attitudes, and lifestyles. Nigerian youths are among the most active users of social networking platforms in Africa due to increasing smartphone penetration and internet accessibility. Social media have become integral to students’ social and academic experiences, influencing how they communicate, learn, and access information. This widespread usage has generated growing scholarly interest in understanding how social media affect students’ academic performance and overall development.

Social Media and Academic Performance of Students

The relationship between social media usage and students’ academic performance has attracted considerable scholarly attention in recent years. The increasing dependence on social networking platforms among university students has generated debates regarding whether these platforms contribute positively or negatively to academic achievement. Okigbo and Esajobor (2024) observe that social media usage has become a significant aspect of students’ lives, especially among undergraduates in tertiary institutions. Students now rely on social media platforms not only for social interaction but also for obtaining information, sharing experiences, and engaging in academic discussions.

Academic performance generally refers to the extent to which students achieve their educational goals, usually measured through examinations, assignments, projects, and overall learning outcomes. Researchers have examined how students’ engagement with social media influences these academic outcomes. Maiwada

and Lawal (2024) argue that social media platforms provide informal learning opportunities that support teaching and learning processes. Through online interactions and virtual connectivity, students can exchange academic ideas, collaborate on assignments, and gain access to educational resources outside the traditional classroom setting.

Nayar (2018) further asserts that social media provide educationally supportive digital platforms that enhance pedagogical effectiveness and efficiency in teaching and learning. These platforms offer modern learning facilities that encourage educational engagement, inspiration, and collaborative learning among students. For example, students can join academic groups on WhatsApp and Telegram where lecture materials, assignment instructions, and examination updates are shared instantly. Such interactions can improve students' understanding of academic content and facilitate continuous learning beyond classroom hours.

Studies have consistently shown that a large proportion of students in higher institutions actively use social media platforms. Sahoo (2024) notes that students engage with social media for various purposes, including communication, information gathering, entertainment, and academic collaboration. Similarly, Akhtar, Abdullah, Matloob, and Malik (2025) describe social media as an indispensable force in students' lives because they provide unprecedented access to global communication, information, and entertainment. Through platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and TikTok, students can access tutorials, educational videos, research materials, and instructional content that complement classroom learning. Research indicates that social media can positively influence students' academic performance when used appropriately. Junco (2012) found that certain forms of social media engagement, such as participating in educational discussions and sharing academic content, can improve student engagement and collaborative learning. Similarly, Tess (2013) argues that social media facilitate communication between lecturers and students, promote active learning, and enhance student participation in academic activities. Through virtual discussions and online collaboration, students become more engaged in learning processes and develop stronger communication skills. Social media also support flexible and self-directed learning. Students can access educational materials anytime and anywhere without the limitations of physical classrooms. This flexibility is particularly beneficial in contemporary educational systems where digital learning has become increasingly important. According to Greenhow and Chapman (2020), social media technologies support informal learning environments that encourage creativity, critical thinking, and independent research among students.

However, despite these benefits, several studies have highlighted the negative consequences of excessive social media usage on academic performance. One of the major concerns is distraction. Many students spend considerable time browsing social networking platforms for entertainment purposes rather than focusing on academic activities. Excessive engagement with social media can reduce study time, concentration, and productivity. Kirschner and Karpinski (2010) found that students who spent more time on social networking sites tended to have lower academic performance compared to those who used such platforms moderately.

Similarly, Bangura (2024) observes that many students have become addicted to social media without fully understanding its adverse effects on their academic and personal lives. Addiction to

social networking platforms may lead to procrastination, poor time management, and reduced academic commitment. Students who spend excessive hours chatting, watching videos, or scrolling through online content may struggle to complete assignments, prepare adequately for examinations, or maintain effective study habits. Wickramanayake (2022) argues that although social media provide numerous benefits, they can also negatively influence students when used irresponsibly. Exposure to entertainment content, online gossip, cyberbullying, and non-academic discussions may divert students' attention from educational activities. In some cases, excessive social media use may contribute to stress, anxiety, and sleep disturbances, all of which can negatively affect academic performance.

Adegboyega (2024) emphasizes that social media, like many technological innovations, possess both opportunities and threats. The impact of social media on students depends largely on the manner and purpose of usage. When students utilize social networking platforms for academic research, collaboration, and information sharing, the platforms can enhance learning outcomes. Conversely, when social media are used excessively for entertainment and non-academic activities, they may hinder academic achievement. Ezeah, Asogwa, and Edogor (2015) similarly describe social media as a double-edged sword capable of exerting both positive and negative influences on students' academic performance. According to the authors, responsible usage can support educational advancement, whereas misuse may result in distraction and poor academic outcomes. This dual nature of social media underscores the importance of understanding students' patterns of usage and their implications for academic performance. In addition, the impact of social media on academic performance may vary depending on factors such as frequency of usage, purpose of engagement, self-regulation, and digital literacy skills. Students who possess strong time-management skills are more likely to benefit academically from social media usage than those who lack self-discipline. Therefore, the relationship between social media and academic performance is complex and multidimensional.

Given the increasing integration of social media into students' academic and social lives, there is a growing need for empirical studies that examine how these platforms influence learning outcomes in specific educational contexts. Understanding students' patterns of social media usage and its implications for academic performance remains essential for educators, policymakers, and researchers. Such understanding will help educational institutions develop strategies that maximize the educational benefits of social media while minimizing its negative effects on students' academic development.

Review of Related Studies

Okigbo and Esajobor (2024) investigated social media usage and academic performance of undergraduate students. Using the survey method, the researchers studied the opinions of 355 students drawn from the Faculty of Education in the two universities in Delta State, Nigeria. The study used the questionnaire for data collection, and found out that undergraduate students in Delta State were undecided on the influence of information overload from social media sites. Also, the study found that students of public universities in Delta State agreed on the influence of peer interactions through social media on academic performance. The study is related to this current study because it deals with social media influence on the academic performance. The gap in

knowledge here is that the study did not specify the kind of influence social media exert on the academic performance of students. This current study filled that gap.

Olaimulu and Alade (2024) investigating the impact of social media on academic performance of students. The study employed mixed method in studying 250 students selected through stratified random sampling. Data were collected through surveys and focus group discussions. The study showed that social media had a strong influence on the academic outcomes of students. The study also found that social media benefit students in the area of academic communication and access to academic resources. It equally discovered that excessive usage of social media can negatively affect the academic performance of students because of distraction and stress that come with addiction to social media. The study is related to this current study because it highlighted the impact of social media on the academic outcome of students.

Aiyende and Omojola (2021) explored the influence of social media on the academic performance of students at the University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria. adopting a descriptive survey research design, a random sampling technique was used to select 200 respondents for the study. Data were collected through the questionnaire. The study found that students of University of Port Harcourt are exposed to new information through the social media. The study also found that social media enable the students to be aware of all that were happening in the school and they spent more time online and anything of interest to them and their studies. The authors argued that the management of academic institutions should provide a platform for the use of various social media platforms during school hours so as to improve students' academic perform. The study is related to this present study.

Apuke (2017) evaluated the influence of social media on academic performance of Taraba State University. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study, using questionnaire as instrument of data collection. The researcher sampled the opinions of 100 students who were randomly selected a findings showed that students of Taraba State University had access to social media and they do so through different channels such as smart phones, tablets and computers. The study also found that students who spent more time on social media were likely to perform poorly in their academic activities than those who did not. The study argued that social media affect the performance of students negatively. The gap in knowledge here is that the study did not look at the positive influence of social media on the academic performance of students. It played down on how social media can benefit the students in their academic pursuit.

Theoretical Explication

This study is anchored on the Technological Determinism Theory propounded by Marshall McLuhan in 1962. The theory explains the extent to which technological innovations influence human behaviour, social interactions, cultural values, and societal development. According to McQuail (2010, p. 24), Technological Determinism presumes that "a society's technology drives the development of its social structure and cultural values." The theory therefore emphasizes that technology is a major force responsible for social transformation and the reorganization of human activities.

Technological Determinism emerged from the idea that technological advancement shapes not only communication

patterns but also the ways individuals think, behave, and interact within society. The theory argues that changes in communication technologies often lead to corresponding changes in social institutions, cultural practices, and patterns of human relationships. In the media environment, technological innovations determine how media messages are produced, distributed, accessed, and consumed. Consequently, advancements in digital communication technologies such as social media have transformed communication processes globally, especially among young people and students in higher institutions.

According to Wimmer and Dominick (2011), the theory posits that social progress follows a predictable path largely driven by technological innovation. The theory is built on two central assumptions. First, technological development follows a logical and progressive pattern that is relatively independent of political or cultural influence. Second, technology subsequently shapes and restructures society in ways that encourage further technological advancement. In essence, the theory views technology as the principal driver of social change and societal transformation. Technological Determinism further explains that technology influences virtually every aspect of human existence, including education, communication, economy, and culture. Strict adherents of the theory maintain that the effects of technology are inevitable and pervasive regardless of the specific ways individuals choose to use technological tools. Thus, technology is perceived not merely as an instrument of human activity but as a dominant force that shapes human experiences, relationships, and behaviours. The theory therefore suggests that people learn, think, communicate, and interact differently as a result of the communication technologies available within their society.

The relevance of this theory to the present study lies in its ability to explain how social media, as a product of modern communication technology, have transformed students' academic and social lives. Social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, TikTok, and Instagram have altered the ways students communicate, access information, collaborate academically, and spend their leisure time. The increasing dependence on these technologies among students demonstrates the deterministic influence of communication technologies on contemporary educational practices and students' behavioural patterns. The reviewed empirical studies further support the assumptions of Technological Determinism Theory. For instance, Okigbo and Esajobor (2024) found that peer interaction through social media significantly influenced students' academic performance, indicating how digital technologies shape communication and learning behaviours among undergraduates. Similarly, Olaimolu and Alade (2024) observed that social media enhanced students' access to academic resources and communication, while excessive usage also created distractions and stress that negatively affected academic outcomes. These findings reflect the dual influence of technology on society as proposed by the theory. In the same vein, Aiyende and Omojola (2021) discovered that social media exposed students to new information and enabled them to stay updated on academic activities within the university environment. This finding demonstrates how communication technologies shape students' awareness, information-seeking behaviour, and educational engagement. Likewise, Apuke (2017) revealed that students who spent excessive time on social media were more likely to experience poor academic performance, highlighting the powerful influence of technology on students' habits and academic productivity.

The reviewed studies collectively indicate that social media technologies have become deeply embedded in students' academic and social experiences. These technologies influence how students learn, interact, manage time, and perform academically. Therefore, Technological Determinism Theory provides an appropriate framework for understanding how social media technologies shape students' academic activities and performance in contemporary society. The theory is particularly suitable for this study because social media represent one of the most significant technological innovations of the digital age. Their widespread adoption among students has transformed communication, learning processes, and access to information in higher institutions. By applying Technological Determinism Theory, this study seeks to explain how the pervasive use of social media influences the academic performance of students in Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu-Alike.

Methodology

Survey research design was adopted for the study. Survey is considered useful because it is important in obtaining information from the population about their opinion, attitude and behaviour towards a subject. The population of the study is 16,859 which consists of the undergraduate students of Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu Alike (AE-FUNAI). The population was drawn from the Exams and Records Unit of AE-FUNAI. The sample size of the study was 391, determined using Taro Yamane Formula.

The formula is stated as

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where;

n=sample size

N=population

e= assumed margin of error (0.05)

1= a constant

In substituting, the following will be obtained:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{16859}{1 + 16859(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{16859}{1 + 16859(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{16859}{1 + 42.1475}$$

$$n = \frac{16859}{43.1475}$$

$$n = 390.7$$

$$n = 391$$

Therefore, the sample size for this study is 391.

The purposive sampling technique was adopted and data were collected through personal administration of questionnaire to the respondents. The study used descriptive statistical tool such as simple percentage and tables to analyze data collected from the respondents.

Results and Findings

A total of 391 copies of questionnaire were distributed to purposively selected participants in Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu Alike (AE-FUNAI). A total number of copies of the questionnaire returned and found usable for analysis were 377,

representing 98% return rate. The data gathered from the field were presented quantitatively using descriptive statistical tools such as simple percentage and tables. The results are presented as follow:

Research Question One: Extent students in Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu Alike are Exposed to Social Media

4.1: Do you have a social media handle?

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
1.Yes	369	98%
2.No	8	2%
Total	377	100

Source: Field survey 2025

The table shows that 369 students representing 98% of the students of Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu Alike have social media handle. This implies that majority of the students in AE-FUNAI are social media users.

4.2: What do you use to access social media?

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
1.Computer	30	8%
2.Smart Phone	347	92%
Total	377	100

Source: Field survey 2025

The implication of the table indicates that majority of the students of AE-FUNAI access social media through smart phones

4.3: How often do you use social media?

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
1.Very often	364	8%
2.Less often	13	92%
Total	377	100

Source: Field survey 2025

The table shows that students of AE-FUNAI use social media very often. This implies that majority of the students of AE-FUNAI are exposed to social media.

Research Question Two: Level of social media usage among students of Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu Alike

4.4: What activities do students engage on social media?

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
1.Discussing assignment and project	106	28%
2.Sharing educational resources and materials	81	21%
3.Collaborating on group project	90	24%
4 Seeking help or guidance from peers or instructors	100	27%
Total	377	100

Source: Field survey 2025

The table shows that students of AE-FUNAI engage social media with the following activities; discussing assignment and project, sharing educational resources and materials, collaborating on group project, and seeking help or guidance from peers or instructors. This implies that social media help to enhance and facilitate excellent academic performance through purposeful, intentional and responsible academic engagements.

4.5: What is the level of social media utilization among students of AE-FUNAI?

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
1. High	355	94%
2. Low	22	6%
Total	377	100

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The table shows that the level of social media utilization among students of AE-FUNAI is high. This implies that students of AE-FUNAI are maximizing the potential of social media for their advantage.

Research Question Three: Impact of social media on the academic activities of students in Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu Alike Ikwo

4.6: How does social media impact on your academic performance?

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
1. Positively	357	95%
2. Negatively	20	5%
Total	377	100

Source: Field Survey 2025

The table shows that social media exert positive influence on the academic activities of students in AE-FUNAI. This implies that students of AE-FUNAI are using social media in a responsible and wonderful way.

4.7: Which social media platform do you use most frequently for your academic activities?

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
1. Whatsapp	190	50%
2. TikTok	62	16%
3. Facebook	45	12%
4. Instagram	32	8%
5. Twitter(X)	48	13%
Total	377	100

Source: Field Survey 2025

The table implies that Whatsapp is the social media platform that students of AE-FUNAI use most frequently for their academic activities.

4.8: What are the impact of social media on students' academics?

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
1. Personalized learning	86	23%
2. Access to academic networks	78	21%
3. Improved communication		
4. Support system	50	13%
5. Real time updates	61	16%
6. Access to educational resources	54	14%
	48	13%
Total	377	100

Source: Field Survey 2025

The table shows that social media impact on the academics of students in the following ways; personalized learning, access to academic networks, improved communication, support systems, real time updates and access to educational resources.

Discussion of Findings

Research Question One: To what extent are students of Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu-Alike exposed to social media?

Findings from the study revealed that students of Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu-Alike are highly exposed to social media platforms. The study showed that 369 respondents, representing 98% of the total respondents, owned at least one social media account, while only 2% indicated that they did not have any social media handle. The findings further revealed that the majority of the students accessed social media primarily through smartphones and engaged with these platforms very frequently. This indicates that social media have become deeply integrated into the daily lives and communication patterns of undergraduate students in the university. The high level of exposure to social media among the students may be attributed to the increasing accessibility of smartphones, internet connectivity, and the relevance of social networking platforms in students' academic and social engagements. The findings suggest that social media platforms have become essential communication and information-sharing tools among university students.

The result corroborates the findings of Aiyende and Omojola (2021), who observed that university students are highly exposed to social media and constitute major users of social networking platforms. According to the authors, students spend considerable time online accessing information related to their interests and academic activities. The finding also aligns with Sahoo (2024), who reported that students actively use social media for communication, information gathering, entertainment, and educational purposes. In addition, the finding supports the assumptions of Technological Determinism Theory, which posits that technological innovations significantly influence human behaviour, communication patterns, and social interaction. The widespread exposure of students to social media demonstrates the pervasive influence of communication technologies in shaping contemporary educational experiences.

Research Question Two: What is the level of social media usage among students of Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu-Alike?

The findings of the study indicated that the level of social media usage among students of Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu-Alike is remarkably high. A total of 355 respondents, representing 94% of the respondents, affirmed that students frequently utilize social media platforms for various academic and social purposes. The study further revealed that students use social media to discuss assignments and projects, share educational resources and learning materials, collaborate on group tasks, and seek academic assistance from peers and lecturers. These findings imply that social media platforms have become important tools for academic engagement and collaborative learning among university students. The results demonstrate that students are not only using social media for entertainment and social interaction but also for educational activities that support their academic performance. Through these platforms, students can easily communicate with classmates, exchange lecture materials, and access information relevant to their studies.

The findings are consistent with the study conducted by Sakhieva, Meshkova, Gimaliev, Melnik, Shindryaeva, and Zhdanov (2024), which reported that a vast majority of university students possessed social media accounts and actively utilized these platforms for learning, accessing information, and maintaining academic interactions. Similarly, the findings agree with Maiwada and Lawal (2024), who asserted that social media provide informal learning opportunities that enhance teaching and learning processes. The result also supports the views of Nayar (2018), who maintained that social media platforms serve as modern educational tools that facilitate effective teaching, learning, and academic engagement.

Furthermore, the findings reinforce the assumptions of Technological Determinism Theory by demonstrating how digital communication technologies have transformed the ways students interact, learn, and exchange academic information. The integration of social media into students' academic activities reflects the significant role technology plays in shaping educational practices in modern society.

Research Question Three: What is the impact of social media on the academic activities of students in Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu-Alike?

The findings revealed that social media exert a predominantly positive influence on the academic activities of students in Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu-Alike. The study showed that 357 respondents, representing 95% of the respondents, strongly agreed that social media positively influence students' academic activities. Specifically, the findings indicated that social media contribute to personalized learning, improved communication, access to academic networks, real-time academic updates, availability of support systems, and easier access to educational resources and materials. The study also revealed that WhatsApp was the most frequently used social media platform for academic activities among the students. The findings suggest that social media have become valuable educational tools that support teaching and learning processes. Students now utilize social networking platforms to engage in collaborative learning, communicate with peers and lecturers, and access educational materials conveniently. The ability to participate in online academic discussions and receive instant information updates contributes positively to students' academic productivity and learning experiences.

The findings are in agreement with Sivakumar (2020), who argued that social media have significantly improved students' academic performance by providing access to educational resources, online textbooks, tutorials, and academic support networks. Similarly, the findings support the views of Greenhow and Lewin (2016), who maintained that social media facilitate collaborative learning and encourage active participation in educational activities. The findings also align with the study by Olaimolu and Alade (2024), which revealed that social media enhance academic communication and improve students' access to educational materials and learning opportunities.

However, the findings differ from those of Apuke (2017), who concluded that excessive exposure to social media negatively affected students' academic performance. While Apuke emphasized the distracting nature of social media, the present study found that students of Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu-Alike largely utilize social media platforms for constructive academic purposes. This difference in findings may be attributed to variations in patterns of social media usage, institutional environments, and students' level of digital literacy. Overall, the findings indicate that when used purposefully and responsibly, social media can positively contribute to students' academic development and learning outcomes. The findings further validate Technological Determinism Theory by demonstrating how social media technologies shape students' academic behaviours, communication patterns, and learning experiences in contemporary educational environments.

Conclusion

The study concluded that social media utilization among students in higher institutions exerts significant influence on academic activities and learning outcomes. Findings from the study showed that students of Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu-Alike are highly exposed to social media and utilize these platforms extensively for academic and social purposes. The study further established that social media positively influence students' academic activities by facilitating collaborative learning, improving communication, enhancing access to educational resources, and providing academic support systems.

The study therefore concludes that social media have become indispensable tools in contemporary education. When utilized responsibly and purposefully, social media platforms can enhance students' academic performance and learning experiences. Students can leverage these platforms to discuss assignments and projects, share educational materials, collaborate on group tasks, and seek academic guidance from peers and instructors. Consequently, the integration of social media into educational activities can contribute significantly to improved teaching and learning outcomes in higher institutions.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The management of Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu-Alike should integrate social media platforms into the educational curriculum in order to enhance teaching, learning, and academic engagement among students.
2. The university management should organize social media literacy programmes and workshops to educate students

on the effective and responsible use of social media for academic purposes.

3. The management of Alex Ekwueme Federal University Ndufu-Alike should develop and implement clear guidelines regulating social media usage among students to encourage productive academic engagement and minimize excessive or distracting usage.
4. Lecturers and academic departments should encourage the use of educational social media groups and online learning communities to facilitate academic discussions, information sharing, and collaborative learning among students.
5. Students should be encouraged to maintain a balance between academic and non-academic use of social media in order to avoid distractions, addiction, and poor time management that may negatively affect their academic performance.

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