



Impact of social media usage on college students' learning behaviour and academic engagement

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Abstract

Today, social media platforms play a significant role in shaping both the academic and social activities of college students. The present study investigates how the use of social media influences the learning behaviour and academic engagement of college students. A quantitative descriptive research design was employed for the study. Data were collected from 100 undergraduate students of Bapujee College, Sarthebari through a self-constructed questionnaire using the simple random sampling. Percentage analysis was used to analyse the collected data with the help of SPSS. The findings indicate that social media plays a positive role in enhancing access to learning resources, peer interaction, and academic engagement when used for educational purposes. However, excessive use negatively affects concentration and time management among some students. The study concludes that guided and purposeful use of social media can significantly support students' learning behaviour and academic engagement.

Keywords: Social media, learning behaviour, academic engagement, college students, higher education

Introduction

In recent years, the rapid growth of digital technology has significantly transformed the teaching-learning process in higher education. Among various digital tools, social media has emerged as one of the most influential platforms shaping students' academic and social lives. Social media platforms such as YouTube, WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and Telegram are widely used by college students for communication, information sharing, collaborative learning, and access to academic resources. These platforms allow students to interact beyond the classroom, exchange ideas instantly, and obtain learning materials with ease.

Social media has the potential to support learning by providing quick access to educational content, online discussions, academic videos, and peer support. It also helps students stay connected with classmates and teachers, thereby encouraging academic engagement and cooperative learning. At the same time, excessive or inappropriate use of social media may negatively influence students' learning behaviour by causing distraction, reduced concentration, and poor time management. Many students spend a considerable amount of time on social networking sites, which may affect their academic focus and study habits.

Therefore, it is essential to examine the impact of social media usage on students' learning behaviour and academic engagement in higher education institutions. Understanding how students use social media and how it influences their academic life can help educators and institutions guide students towards its effective and responsible use. The present study attempts to analyse the impact of social media usage on the learning behaviour and academic engagement of undergraduate students of Bapujee College, Sarthebari.

Significance of the Study

The present study is significant as it studies the impact of social media usage on the learning behaviour and academic engagement of college students in higher education. In an era of increasing digital dependence, understanding the

educational role of social media is essential for promoting effective learning practices. The study highlights how social media can support academic communication, access to learning resources, and peer interaction when used appropriately.

The findings of the study are beneficial for students, as they create awareness about responsible social media usage and its influence on concentration, study habits, and academic engagement. The study is also useful for teachers and educators, as it provides insights into students' learning behaviour and helps in integrating social media-based learning strategies effectively. Moreover, the study contributes to educational research by providing empirical evidence that may assist institutions and policymakers in framing guidelines for the constructive use of social media in higher education.

Statement of the Problem

The study is entitled as Impact of Social Media Usage on College Students' Learning Behaviour and Academic Engagement.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the duration of time spent on social media by students
2. To analyse the impact of social media on students' learning behaviour of students
3. To study the impact of social media on the academic engagement of students

Research Questions

1. How much time do students spend on social media daily?
2. What is the impact of social media usage on students' learning behaviour?
3. How does social media usage influence students' academic engagement?

Review of Related Literature

Dutta & Hazarika (2021) focused on social media's influence on academic motivation among students at Assam University. Their research found that students who used social media to join academic groups and access educational content reported higher motivation levels and better class participation. Conversely, students who mainly used social media for leisure reported reduced attention spans and procrastination in academic tasks. The study recommended workshops on responsible social media use to enhance students' learning engagement and reduce the negative impacts.

Baruah (2019) studied college students in Guwahati to assess how social media impacts their classroom involvement and learning practices. The results revealed that a majority of students used platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram daily, with many reporting that these platforms both helped and hindered their studies. Specifically, students used social media for discussion of academic problems and sharing educational videos, but also acknowledged that notifications, messages, and entertainment content often distracted them during self-study hours. The study concluded that while social media can support collaborative learning, uncontrolled use weakens learning behavior and academic engagement.

Singh *et al.* (2018) examined the correlation between social media usage and academic performance among Indian undergraduate students. The findings indicated that moderate use of social media for academic discussions enhanced academic engagement, whereas excessive non-academic use correlated with lower academic achievement. The study emphasized the need for digital literacy programs to help students use social media constructively, suggesting that guided usage can positively influence learning behavior.

Sharma & Verma (2016) conducted across Indian colleges, Sharma and Verma explored how social media affects students' study habits and classroom engagement. Results showed that while social media helped students access study materials and form academic groups, it also significantly contributed to reduced concentration during study hours. Many participants admitted they opened social media first when studying, which interrupted their learning routines. The study concluded that social media acts as both a tool for academic support and a source of distraction, depending largely on how students regulate their usage.

Al-Rahmi and Othman (2013) conducted an international study on universities in Malaysia examining the impact of social media on students' learning engagement. The research revealed that social media platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp enhanced communication between students and teachers, facilitated knowledge exchange, and increased participation in academic-related activities. Students who frequently interacted through social media for academic purposes reported better engagement and improved collaborative learning. Nonetheless, excessive use without academic focus was linked to distraction and reduced attention in classes. This suggests that purposeful integration of social media in learning may benefit academic involvement.

Junco (2012) ^[1] investigated how college students' use of social networking sites impacts their academic performance and engagement. The study found that higher frequencies of social media use were significantly associated with lower

GPA's and decreased time spent on academic tasks. Students who used social media for recreational purposes tended to demonstrate poorer learning behaviors and less academic dedication. However, when social media was used for academic collaboration or information sharing, positive effects on engagement were recorded. This research highlights that the purpose and manner of social media use determine its impact on learning outcomes.

Research Methodology

Research Method

A quantitative descriptive research design was adopted for the study.

Population of the Study

The population of the study consisted of undergraduate students of Bapujee College, Sarthebari.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample of the present study comprised 100 undergraduate students of Bapujee College, Sarthebari. The respondents were selected using the simple random sampling technique, which ensured that every student in the college had an equal chance of being included in the study. This technique helped in obtaining a representative sample and minimizing selection bias.

Tool Used

A self-structured questionnaire titled "Social Media Usage, Learning Behaviour and Academic Engagement Questionnaire (SMULBAEQ)" was used for data collection. The questionnaire was developed by the investigator to assess the extent of social media usage and its impact on learning behaviour and academic engagement among undergraduate college students.

Data Collection

The data were collected from undergraduate students of Bapujee College, Sarthebari. After obtaining prior permission from the college authorities, the investigator administered a self-structured questionnaire titled "Social Media Usage, Learning Behaviour and Academic Engagement Questionnaire (SMULBAEQ)" to 100 students selected through simple random sampling. The purpose of the study was clearly explained, and confidentiality of responses was assured.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

Objective No. 1: To study the duration of time spent on social media by students

Table 1: Time spent on social media per day

N	Mean	SD
100	3.10	1.20

Time Duration	Number of Students	Percentage
Less than 1 hour	10	10
1-2 hours	26	26
3-4 hours	38	38
More than 4 hours	26	26
Total	100	100

Interpretation: The analysis indicates that the mean time spent on social media by college students is 3.10 hours per

day with a standard deviation of 1.20, showing moderate variability among respondents. A majority of students (64%) reported spending more than three hours daily on social media, suggesting high exposure which may influence academic activities.

Objective No. 2: To analyse the impact of social media on students' learning behaviour of students

Table 2: Impact of Social Media on Learning Behaviour

Indicators	Percentage	Mean	Standard Deviation
Concept clarity	32	3.42	0.88
Study Distraction	40	3.76	0.91
Concentration Level	38	3.69	0.89
Paper quality	35	3.58	0.94

Interpretation: The analysis reveals higher mean scores for study distraction (M = 3.76, SD = 0.91) and reduced concentration (M = 3.69, SD = 0.89). Although social media contributes to concept clarity for some students, the percentage and mean values indicate that excessive usage negatively affects concentration and paper quality, thereby influencing learning behaviour adversely.

Objective No. 3: To study the influence of social media on the academic engagement of student

Table 3: Academic Engagement Indicators

Indicators	Percentage	Mean	Standard Deviation
Peer Interaction	60	3.62	0.86
Academic Communication	54	3.48	0.90
Academic Focus	46	3.44	0.88
Task Procrastination	42	3.31	0.92

Interpretation: The table show that social media enhances peer interaction (60%, M = 3.62) and academic communication (54%, M = 3.48). However, notable mean scores for task procrastination (M = 3.31) and reduced academic focus (M = 3.44) indicate that social media also creates challenges for sustained academic engagement.

Major Findings

The major findings of the present study are as follows:

- The mean time spent on social media by college students was 3.10 hours per day, indicating a moderately high level of social media usage among undergraduate Arts stream students.
- A majority of students spent more than three hours daily on social media, showing extensive engagement with digital platforms.
- Social media usage had a negative impact on learning behaviour, particularly in terms of study distraction and reduced concentration, as reflected by higher mean scores for these indicators.
- The quality of paper writing and academic assignments was negatively affected among a considerable proportion of students due to excessive social media usage.
- Social media contributed positively to peer interaction and academic communication, indicating its supportive role in collaborative learning.

- At the same time, a significant number of students experienced procrastination and reduced academic focus, showing the dual influence of social media on academic engagement.
- Overall, excessive and unregulated use of social media was associated with weaker learning behaviour and lower academic quality, while moderate use supported academic interaction.

Educational Implications

The findings of the study have important implications for students, teachers, and educational institutions:

- Awareness and guidance: Students should be made aware of the negative effects of excessive social media usage on concentration, paper writing quality, and academic performance.
- Time management training: Colleges may organise workshops on time management and responsible digital usage to help students balance academic and social media activities.
- Academic use of social media: Teachers can integrate social media platforms purposefully for academic communication, discussion forums, and sharing learning resources.
- Digital literacy programmes: Educational institutions should promote digital literacy to encourage constructive and ethical use of social media for learning.
- Monitoring and support: Teachers and mentors should guide students who show signs of academic distraction and low-quality academic work due to overuse of social media.
- Policy development: Institutions may frame guidelines for the effective use of social media in academic settings to enhance learning outcomes and academic engagement.

Conclusion

The study concludes that social media usage has a significant influence on the learning behaviour and academic engagement of undergraduate students. While social media supports peer interaction and academic communication, excessive use leads to study distraction, reduced concentration, and lower quality of academic work. Therefore, balanced and purposeful use of social media is essential to enhance academic engagement without adversely affecting learning behaviour. Educational institutions should guide students towards responsible digital practices to ensure positive learning outcomes.

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