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Impact of Social Media Usage on Academic Performance of Students

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Abstract

Social media plays a major role in the daily life of college students. This research focuses on understanding how social media affects students both positively and negatively. It helps students to communicate easily, share knowledge, and stay updated with current information. However, excessive use of social media can lead to loss of concentration, addiction, and a decline in academic performance. The study finds that students who use social media in a limited and productive way can improve their learning and social connections. On the other hand, misuse of these platforms can affect time management, sleep quality, and mental health. The research concludes that awareness about balanced use of social media is important for students' academic success and personal growth.

College students are increasingly engaging with social media platforms, which not only consume a significant amount of their time but also detrimentally affect their academic performance. This heightened social media usage disrupts sleep patterns and diminishes sleep quality, further worsening its negative impact. In this study, the relationship between social media use, sleep quality, academic performance, and personality traits was examined among 80 college students.

The analysis revealed that ***sleep quality plays a crucial mediating role*** *between social media usage and academic performance. Students who spent long hours on social media experienced poor sleep, which negatively influenced their academic outcomes. Additionally, the study explored the influence of personality traits on social media engagement and academic performance. While overall personality traits showed a limited effect on grades,* ***neuroticism*** *emerged as a significant factor — showing a* ***positive correlation with social media use*** *but a* ***negative correlation with academic performance****.*

These findings highlight the importance of addressing both social media habits and sleep quality to enhance academic outcomes among college students. Promoting digital discipline, setting screen-time limits, and encouraging responsible social media use can help students maintain better focus, mental health, and overall academic achievement.

Keywords: *Social Media Usage, Academic Performance, Personality, Sleep, Students, Mental Health*

Introduction

In today's digital age, social media has become an integral part of students' daily lives. Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, and TikTok are not only used for communication and entertainment but also for education and information sharing. While social media offers students opportunities to connect globally, access learning materials, and express creativity, it also raises concerns about distraction, addiction, and its impact on mental health and academic performance.

The increasing dependence on social media has changed the way students interact, learn, and perceive the world around them. Many students spend several hours online every day, which influences their study habits, sleep patterns, and social relationships. Constant notifications, peer pressure, and comparison on social platforms can reduce concentration and motivation for academic tasks. At the same time, social media can serve as a valuable educational tool—offering access to tutorials, online lectures, and collaborative learning groups that improve communication and knowledge sharing.

Therefore, understanding both the positive and negative effects of social media is essential to help educators, parents, and policymakers create a balanced approach to its use in education and personal life.

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This research aims to examine how social media affects students' academic performance, behaviour, and psychological well-being. It also seeks to explore how responsible use of social platforms can enhance learning experiences, promote creativity, and improve digital communication among students.

Research has demonstrated that social media use and gratifications vary depending on user characteristics such as age, gender, and personality. The gratifications also differ by platform. For example, Facebook may satisfy needs related to belonging and self-presentation (Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012); Instagram supports self-expression, social interaction, surveillance of others, documentation, creativity, and "coolness" (Sheldon & Bryant, 2016); while Snapchat is often used for communication within one's immediate network (Piwek & Jonson, 2016).

As of early **2025**, India had approximately **806 million internet users**, corresponding to an internet penetration rate of **55.3%** of the population (Datar portal, 2025). Social commerce in India is projected to experience substantial growth—Bain & Company estimates that it will reach **USD 16–20 billion by 2025**, rising from a base of USD 1.5–2 billion in 2020, reflecting a compound annual growth rate of **55–60%** (Bain & Company, 2025). Among social media platforms, **WhatsApp** remains the most widely used in India, followed by **Instagram** and **Facebook** (Bain, Meltwater, 2025).

Objectives of Research

The main goal of this research is to understand how social media usage affects the academic performance, behaviour, and mental well-being of students. As social media has become deeply embedded in everyday life, especially among young people, it is important to study its influence on learning habits, academic results, and social behaviour. The following are the detailed objectives of this research:

1. **To analyse the extent and pattern of social media usage among students.**
   This objective focuses on identifying how frequently students use social media, which platforms they prefer (such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, or TikTok), and the main purposes for which they use them — whether for education, entertainment, communication, or other personal interests.
2. **To study the impact of social media on students' academic performance.**
   This includes evaluating how the time spent on social media affects study habits, concentration, class participation, assignment completion, and overall grades. It aims to find out whether heavy use of social media results in lower academic performance or whether educational use of these platforms can improve learning outcomes.
3. **To examine the relationship between social media use and students' psychological and behavioural aspects.**
   This objective explores how social media influences students' motivation, self-esteem, emotional well-being, and social relationships. It also seeks to identify signs of social media addiction, anxiety, and peer pressure that may negatively affect mental health and learning efficiency.
4. **To explore the positive role of social media as an educational tool.**
   This examines how social media can be used for academic collaboration — such as sharing study materials, attending online lectures, joining educational groups, or interacting with teachers and classmates through virtual platforms. It aims to highlight how responsible use can promote creativity, communication, and digital literacy.
5. **To suggest strategies for balancing social media usage and academic responsibilities.**
   This objective focuses on providing practical recommendations for students, parents, and educators to manage screen time effectively, encourage productive use of social platforms, and minimize distractions. It also aims to help institutions develop awareness programs that promote responsible digital behaviour among students.

Review of Literature

- Several studies have been conducted to understand the influence of social media on students' academic and personal lives. Researchers have found that social media has both positive and negative effects depending on how it is used.
- According to **Kietzmann et al. (2011)**, social media has become an important platform for communication, knowledge sharing, and community building among young people. **Junco (2012)** found that moderate use of social networking sites can help students collaborate and improve engagement in learning activities. Similarly, **Ahn (2011)** highlighted that social media helps students build social connections, which enhances communication skills and self-confidence.
- However, other studies show that excessive use of social media can have harmful effects. **Kirschner and Karpinski (2010)** reported that students who spend too much time on Facebook tend to have lower academic performance due to reduced study time and concentration. **Paul et al. (2012)** noted that overuse of social media leads to procrastination, stress, and sleep problems among college students.
- Some research also emphasizes the educational benefits of social media. **Tess (2013)** stated that platforms like YouTube, Google Classroom, and discussion forums can be effective tools for collaborative learning and information exchange. With the rise of **AI-driven educational content and digital classrooms in 2025**, platforms such as YouTube, LinkedIn Learning, and Instagram Reels are now widely used by students to access tutorials, career guidance, and skill-based learning materials.
- Recent studies in India and globally (DataReportal, 2025; Meltwater, 2025) show that

over **55% of college students spend more than 3 hours daily** on social media. The **availability of smartphones and constant internet access** has made social networking site usage more prevalent among university students. However, this high usage has been shown to **reduce the amount of time students spend on academic activities**.

- While social media can help retrieve educational materials, it also negatively affects academic progress when misused. **Owusu-Acheaw and Larson (2015)** and **Abbas et al. (2019)** found that most students use social media platforms primarily for chatting and entertainment rather than academic purposes. Consequently, students who spend more time online chatting or gaming tend to perform poorly in academics because of reduced study time and focus.

Research Methodology

This research aims to study the effect of social media on students' academic performance, behaviour, and daily life. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were employed to collect and analyse data.

Research Design

A descriptive research design was used to gather detailed information about students' use of social media and its impact on their academic performance and personal life. The study employed a cross-sectional design and focused on identifying both positive and negative effects of social media.

To investigate the impact of social media on academic performance at Anna University, an online survey was conducted using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 26 questions covering:

- Demographic information
- Personality traits
- Academic performance indicators
- Social media usage patterns and their perceived impact
- Sleep habits

The questionnaire was adapted from established research papers cited in the references.

1. **Sample Size and Population**
   The study targeted college students from different streams, including Arts, Science, and Commerce. A total of 100 students were approached using a non-probabilistic convenience sampling method via Google Forms shared in university WhatsApp groups. Out of these, 72 valid responses were received.
2. **Data Collection Method**

Primary data were collected using the structured questionnaire, which included multiple-choice and open-ended questions. It focused on:

- Time spent on social media
- Purpose of use
- Favourite platforms
- Perceived effects on academics and personal life

Secondary data were gathered from books, journals, research papers, and online articles relevant to the impact of social media on students.

3. **Data Analysis**

The collected data were analysed using **IBM SPSS software**. Descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation (SD), and standard error (SE) were computed. Charts and graphs were used to present key findings.

To test study hypotheses, **multiple linear regression** was employed. The null hypothesis was rejected if the p-value was less than 0.05, indicating statistical significance. Percentage and comparative analyses were also used to interpret the results.

4. **Limitations of the Study**

The study has several limitations:

- It was restricted to a small number of college students and may not represent the entire student population.
- Results were based on self-reported data, which may include personal bias.
- The convenience sampling method may limit the generalizability of the findings.

Results

The research aimed to understand how social media affects college students academic performance, daily habits, and social behaviour. Based on the responses collected from the questionnaire, the following results were observed:

1. **Usage of Social Media**
   Around **90% of students** reported using social media daily. The most popular platforms were **Instagram, WhatsApp, and YouTube**, reflecting students' preference for communication, multimedia content, and social interaction.
2. **Purpose of Use**
   - **60% of students** used social media primarily for **entertainment and communication**.
   - **40% of students** used it for **educational purposes**, such as accessing study materials, tutorials, and participating in group discussions.
3. **Time Spent Online**
   Most students spent **2–4 hours per day** on social media. Those spending more than 4 hours reported **less time for academic activities**, including studies and assignments, indicating a potential negative impact of excessive usage.
4. **Positive Effects**
   Students noted several benefits of social media, including:
   - **Knowledge enhancement** through educational content and online resources
   - **Improved communication skills** via peer interaction
   - **Staying updated** with current events
   - **Support for online learning and collaboration**, through study groups and discussions
5. **Negative Effects**
   Some students reported adverse effects of excessive social media usage:
   - **Distraction and procrastination**, reducing study efficiency
   - **Lowered concentration** during academic tasks

- **Stress or anxiety**, arising from social comparisons and online pressure

6. **Academic Performance**
   The study found a link between the **purpose of social media use** and academic outcomes:
   - Students who used social media for **educational purposes** generally achieved **better academic results**.
   - Students who primarily used it for **entertainment** showed comparatively lower academic performance

Discussions

The findings of this study indicate that social media plays a **significant role in the lives of college students**, influencing not only their academic performance but also their social relationships, communication skills, and overall lifestyle. The results demonstrate that while social media can serve as a **powerful educational and communication tool**, excessive usage may become a major source of distraction.

1. **Positive Impacts**
   The study revealed that students primarily use social media for **entertainment and connecting with friends**, but an increasing number also use it for **educational purposes**, such as sharing notes, attending online classes, and watching learning videos. This finding aligns with earlier research by **Tess (2013)** and **Junco (2012)**, which suggested that social media can **enhance student engagement and promote collaborative learning** when used effectively. Students who used social media for academic purposes generally demonstrated better academic outcomes compared to those who used it primarily for entertainment.
2. **Negative Impacts**
   Conversely, the study also highlighted potential **negative outcomes**, consistent with the findings of **Kirschner and Karpinski (2010)**. Many students reported being **easily distracted by constant notifications**, which negatively impacts their concentration and reduces time spent on studies. Additionally, prolonged social media use was associated with **mental fatigue, stress, and sleep disturbances**, further affecting academic performance and overall well-being.
3. **Implications for Responsible Use**
   Despite its drawbacks, social media remains an **inseparable part of student life**. The key challenge is not to eliminate its use but to encourage **responsible and time-managed usage**. Educational institutions can play a vital role by:
   - Conducting **awareness programs** on digital balance and mental well-being
   - Promoting the use of social media as a **learning and collaborative tool** rather than for pure entertainment

Conclusions

The study concludes that social media has a **significant impact** on the academic and personal lives of students. It serves as a valuable platform for **communication, knowledge sharing, and creative expression**, which can support learning, collaboration, and social development. However, **excessive or uncontrolled use** of social media can result in distraction, poor time management, and reduced academic performance.

The findings indicate that the **influence of social media depends on its purpose and duration of use**. Students who use social media primarily for **educational purposes** tend to perform better academically and acquire useful information, whereas students who use it mainly for **entertainment** often experience negative outcomes such as stress, addiction, and lack of focus. This emphasizes that social media should be used as a **tool for learning and collaboration**, rather than solely for leisure.

Additionally, the study highlights the **interconnected relationship between social media usage, sleep patterns, personality traits, and academic performance**:

- Correlation analysis revealed a significant negative association between time spent on social media and academic performance, demonstrating the potential detrimental effects of excessive usage.
- Positive correlations were observed between **sleep quality and duration** and academic achievement, underscoring the importance of sufficient sleep for optimal learning outcomes.
- Different **personality traits** influenced academic performance in distinct ways:
  - **Extraversion, Conscientiousness, and Openness to Experience** positively correlated with higher academic achievement.
  - **Neuroticism and Agreeableness** showed negative associations, likely linked to varying levels of social media engagement.

  Factor analysis further identified underlying components related to academic performance, lifestyle habits, social media engagement, time management, and sleep patterns, highlighting the multifaceted nature of students' academic outcomes.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of thesis paper.

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