

# **Social Media Use and University Students' Academic Performance: A Study of University of Africa, Toru-Orua, Bayelsa State, Nigeria**

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## **Abstract**

This research paper aimed to investigate the relationship between social media use and university students' academic performance at the University of Africa, Toru-Orua, Bayelsa State, Nigeria. The study focused on examining the level of utilisation of social media for academic purposes, identifying the most frequently used social media platforms for academic purposes, and assessing the impact of social media on the academic performance of university students. To achieve these objectives, a survey research method was employed. A structured questionnaire was administered to a sample of 285 University of Africa, Toru-Orua, students to collect quantitative data on their social media usage patterns, and their impact on their academic performance. The study was hinged on the Uses and Gratification Theory. The outcomes of the study were that the level of social media utilisation for academic purposes among university students at the University of Africa, Toru-Orua was high (36.84%), and that the social media platform most frequently used by the students for academic purposes was the YouTube (25.26%), followed by WhatsApp (14.73%). It was also found that social media use impacts the academic performance of the students to a very great extent (29.82%). The recommendations made were that educational institutions should develop clear guidelines or policies that promote responsible social media use for academic purposes and that educators should create a supportive learning environment that encourages the appropriate use of social media for academic purposes. Also, educational institutions should offer digital literacy training programmes that equip students with the necessary skills to critically evaluate and effectively utilise social media platforms for academic purposes.

**Keywords:** *Academic performance, Frequency, Impact, Social media, University students*

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## Introduction

Social media have revolutionised how people engage, communicate, and share information, making them an essential aspect of contemporary society (Boyd, 2014). Most communication in our society now takes place on social media, which has 4.8 billion daily users and an average user time of more than two hours per day. MySpace was the first social platform to achieve 1 million active monthly users in 2004 (Ali & AJLabs, 2023), paving the way for social media as we know it today. Social media are presently used by almost 60% of the world's population, and usage has rapidly increased over the previous 20 years (Ali & AJLabs, 2023).

The influence of numerous social media platforms on various facets of life, including education, has drawn a lot of attention due to its vast availability and accessibility. Social media platforms provide new opportunities for learning, cooperation, and involvement among college students in the context of higher education (Junco *et al.*, 2011). However, there is still discussion and research surrounding how much social media use affects students' academic achievement.

In Bayelsa State, Nigeria, the University of Africa, Toru-Orua is a thriving academic community where students are exposed to social media's effect. Understanding how social media use affects university students' academic performance at this institution can offer important insights into the dynamics of social media integration in higher education as a whole.

It is essential to take into account the many functionalities and features that social media platforms provide to gauge how frequently university students use social media for academic reasons. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, and other social media platforms offer ways for people to connect, collaborate, share educational materials, and participate in online discussions (Junco *et al.*, 2013). This study intended to shed light on the prevalence and trends of social media adoption in the academic setting by investigating the degree to which students at the University of Africa, Toru-Orua actively utilise social media platforms for academic reasons.

Understanding the preferences and decisions made by university students when integrating social media into their educational activities depends on identifying the most popular social media platform for academic reasons. Many social media sites provide distinctive features and capabilities that address various academic needs and preferences (Hew, 2011). For example, some platforms focus more on text than others, while others favour visual material or enable real-time collaboration and conversation. This study will help to improve understanding of the particular social media platforms that students find most helpful for their academic endeavours by finding the most popular platform among University of Africa, Toru-Orua students.

Understanding the significance of social media use within the educational context requires assessing the effect of social media on the academic performance of university students. Social media can have a beneficial or negative impact on a variety of academic performance, including time management, information acquisition, peer and teacher interactions, and overall academic success (Junco, 2015). Studying how University of Africa, Toru-Orua students use social media in relation to these academic areas will help educators, administrators, and policymakers create plans that maximise the positive effects of social media while minimising any negative ones.

The incorporation of social media into higher education has offered opportunities and challenges for university students, as can be seen from the problem statement of this

study. Although social media platforms include a range of features that can aid in academic activities, questions have been raised about how they may affect students' academic achievement. Despite the increasing prevalence of social media use among university students, limited research has been conducted to understand the specific relationship between social media use and academic performance at the University of Africa, Toru-Orua, Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

Several studies have examined the influence of social media on academic performance, but the findings have been inconsistent. For instance, Junco *et al.* (2013) discovered a favourable correlation between student involvement and success and Twitter use. On the other hand, Facebook use and academic success were found to be negatively correlated (Kirschner & Karpinski, 2010). The necessity for additional research on the effects of social media use on university students' academic performance is highlighted by these inconsistent results.

Additionally, current research frequently ignores the unique context of the University of Africa, Toru-Orua, focusing instead on general student populations or institutions in other cultural contexts. The patterns of social media use and its effects on academic achievement may be influenced by cultural factors, the distinctive qualities of the university and its students, and other factors.

Therefore, the goal of this study was to answer the following research questions: To what extent do university students at the University of Africa, Toru-Orua, use social media for academic purposes? Which social media platform is most frequently utilised for academic reasons by students at the University of Africa, Toru-Orua? How much does the University of Africa, Toru-Orua students' use of social media affect their academic performance? This study sought to close the existing research gap and offer a thorough understanding of the relationship between social media use and academic performance among university students at the University of Africa, Toru-Orua.

## **Literature Review**

### **Theoretical Base**

The Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) served as the foundation for this study. The UGT investigates how people actively look for and use media to satisfy particular needs and desires (Katz *et al.*, 1974). This theory can shed light on the motivations behind and strategies used by university students who utilise social media for academic purposes.

According to UGT, individuals have various needs and motivations that drive their media usage. In the case of social media and academic performance, university students may use social media platforms to fulfil specific gratifications, such as seeking information, social interaction, entertainment, or self-expression. For example, students may turn to social media to access educational resources, collaborate with peers on academic projects, or communicate with instructors for clarification (Junco, Elavsky *et al.*, 2013).

Researchers can investigate the particular gratifications sought by university students while utilising social media for academic purposes by applying the UGT to the setting of social media and academic achievement. This theory can also provide insight into the potential effects on students' academic performance as well as the underlying motivations and needs that drive their interaction with social media platforms.

### **Social Media Use by University Students for Academic Purposes**

University students are increasingly using social media for academic purposes in recent years. Students have started integrating social media platforms into their educational experiences due to the accessibility and general availability of these sites. Social media provide a variety of options for academic involvement, such as cooperation on academic projects, communication with classmates and teachers, access to educational resources, and participation in online learning communities. Guanah (2020) notes that social media comment sections give users, particularly young people, the chance to take part in public discourse. This can be expanded to include their use for academic activities, such as allowing students to comment on academic postings and receive expert and senior academic responses.

Numerous facets of university students' use of social media for academic purposes have been studied in research studies. For instance, a study on the use of Twitter for student collaboration, engagement, and success was carried out by Junco *et al.* in 2013. According to the research, Twitter helped students collaborate and participate because it gave them a place to share materials, ask for assistance, and interact with classmates. Similarly, Manca and Ranieri (2016) looked into how Facebook was used in higher education and discovered that students thought it was a useful resource for discussing academic subjects, forming study groups, and exchanging course-related information.

Additionally, university students are increasingly using social media sites like LinkedIn for networking and career advancement. According to Chen and Xu (2018), students use LinkedIn to network with professionals in their desired professions, look for internships or employment possibilities, and highlight their abilities.

Even though social media have many advantages for academic reasons, it is crucial to be aware of any difficulties or dangers that could arise from using them. Academic focus and productivity might be affected by distractions like notifications from irrelevant content or spending too much time on social media (Junco *et al.*, 2013). In addition, issues with privacy and the veracity of information have been brought up in connection with the usage of social media platforms for academic purposes (Kassens-Noor, 2012).

Educators and institutions can be extremely important in addressing these issues and maximising the advantages of social media use for academic purposes, by encouraging digital literacy, teaching students about ethical social media use, and incorporating social media platforms into formal learning environments, they may offer direction and support. Also, rules and regulations can be put in place to assist students in striking a balance between their use of social media and their academic obligations (Dabbagh & Kitsantas, 2012).

Due to the negative effects that social media, which students mostly access through mobile phones, has on their academic performance, the Dutch government declared that beginning on January 1, 2024, cell phones, tablets, and smartwatches will not be allowed in classrooms in the Netherlands. The use of devices will only be permitted when essential, such as during digital skills training, for medical reasons, or people with disabilities. This is done to reduce distractions during class. The Dutch Education Minister, Robbert Dijkgraaf, is quoted by Cable News Network- CNN (as cited in Vanguard, 2023) as saying "Students need to be able to concentrate and need to be given the opportunity to study well. Mobile phones are a disturbance, scientific research shows. We need to protect students against this" (p.2).

When used correctly and with a purpose, social media use by university students can improve their academic performance. The deliberate and planned use of social media platforms can improve learning experiences and academic outcomes, but excessive use and diversions might impede academic advancement. Numerous beneficial effects of social media use on academic achievement have been found, according to research.

**Research Methodology**

This study utilised a survey research design to investigate the relationship between social media use and university students' academic performance at the University of Africa, Toru-Orua, Bayelsa State. The population of the study comprises 2,220 undergraduate students of the university. The university has 4 faculties and 26 departments. The sample size was 327. It was established at a 95 per cent confidence level and 5 per cent sampling error, using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table for determining sample size for the finite population. According to them, when the finite population is between 2,200 and 2, 399, the required sample is 327. Purposive sampling was used by these researchers to select 12 students from 24 of the university's departments, and 20 were chosen from the Department of Mass Communication and 19 from the Department of Computer Science because they have the highest student enrolment in the school.

The quantitative data were collected through a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed based on the research objectives and relevant literature. It included items that capture social media usage patterns, frequency of use for academic purposes, academic performance indicators, and perceived impact of social media on academic activities. The questionnaire was administered physically to the 327 purposively selected sample of university students enrolled at the University of Africa, Toru-Orua. From the numbers distributed, 285 (87.16%) copies were retrieved and found valid. The results are presented in simple percentages and tables below.

**Data Presentation and Analysis**

**Table 1:** Level of social media utilisation for academic purposes among university students at the University of Africa, Toru-Orua

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Very high	105	36.84
High	60	21.05
Undecided	8	2.81
Low	75	26.32
Very low	37	12.98
<b>Total</b>	<b>285</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: Field Survey, 2023*

The data in Table 1 imply that the rate of social media usage for academic purposes among university students at the University of Africa, Toru-Orua is high.

**Table 2:** Social media platform most frequently used by university students at the University of Africa, Toru-Orua for academic purposes

Alternatives	Respondents	%
WhatsApp	42	14.73
LinkedIn	33	11.57
Instagram	32	11.22
YouTube	72	25.26
TikTok	23	8.07
Twitter	19	6.7
Facebook	27	9.47
All the above	37	12.98
<b>Total</b>	<b>285</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 2 revealed that students of the University of Africa, Toru-Orua use YouTube most, followed by WhatsApp, for academic purposes

**Table 3:** The extent social media use impacts the academic performance of university students at the University of Africa, Toru-Orua

Responses	Frequency	%
Very great	85	29.82
Great	79	27.72
Undecided	6	2.11
Minimal	56	19.65
Very minimal	59	20.70
<b>Total</b>	<b>285</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The data gleaned from Table 3 imply that social media use has greatly impacted the academic performance of the students of the University of Africa, Toru-Orua

### Discussion of Findings

The study's first finding was that university students at the University of Africa, Toru-Orua, frequently use social media for academic objectives. This demonstrates how social media may assist students to succeed academically. This result is consistent with that of My Private Professor (2021), a research group, which found that students who use social media for academic-related issues typically earn a little bit higher scores than those who use it for unrelated themes. The group's study also discovered that excessive social media use can have a negative impact on students' attention, motivation, sleep patterns, and English language skills, which can result in poorer academic achievement.

Also, findings were made by Zhang *et al.* (2022), who examined the connection between social networking site use and college students' academic performance in China. They discovered that there was an inverted U-shaped relationship between social networking site use and academic performance, meaning that up to 88.87 minutes per day on social networking sites were positively associated with academic performance, but anything more than that was negatively associated.

The University of Africa, Toru-Orua, Bayelsa State, Nigerian students were found to use YouTube and WhatsApp the most for academic purposes, according to a second finding of this study. This finding, however, conflicts with Sengupta and Vaish's

assertion that staff and students frequently utilise social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. However, their research focused more on ranking social media usage during the COVID-19 pandemic than it did on identifying the social media networks that students utilise for academic objectives.

Due to the numerous benefits it provides, YouTube may be the social media network that students prefer using. Students can download pertinent resources that they can use whenever necessary in addition to watching educational programmes on YouTube. Since the majority of the educational content on YouTube is audio-visual, students can watch and listen to it while concurrently completing other tasks. Furthermore, WhatsApp, the second-most popular social media network for academic use, enables students to communicate about academic issues and share educational materials, which may take the form of text or video. In other words, these social media platforms offer academic support for university students and stimulate intellectual conversation and project cooperation outside of the confines of the classroom.

Also, this study discovered that University of Africa, Toru-Orua students' use of social media significantly affects their academic performance. This finding is consistent with Sharma and Behl's (2022) study, "Analysing the Impact of Social Media on Students' Academic Performance: A Comparative Study of Extraversion and Introversion Personality," which shows that social media has a significant impact on students' academic performance, particularly for those who are more addicted to social media. However, the impacts are both positive and negative.

From a positive standpoint, Wang and Zhang's study from 2022, which looked at the impact of social media use and social media multitasking on academic performance, discovered that both of these activities have a positive impact on students' academic performance.

Additionally, according to the findings of a study conducted by Talaue *et al.* (2018) to determine how social media affects college students' academic performance in Saudi Arabia, the majority of students agree that social media improves their knowledge, skills, and motivation while some students also reported negative effects like distraction, addiction, and stress.

Students who used Twitter for educational purposes had higher levels of engagement and success, according to studies by Junco *et al.* (2011), Junco *et al.* (2013), and Junco (2015). Al-Rahmi *et al.* (2016) conducted a study in the Malaysian context and discovered a positive relationship between Twitter use and student engagement and grades.

From a negative standpoint, a study by Hameed and Khaliq (2014) on the impact of social media usage on academic performance of university students found that social media usage had a negative impact on academic performance, indicating that the more time students spent on social media, the worse they performed in university. A study by Zhang, Li and Zhang (2021), which examined the relationship between social media addiction, perceived stress, and academic performance among college students in China, found that social media addiction had a negative effect on academic performance, mediated by perceived stress. The study suggested that college students should limit their social media usage and seek professional help if they experience symptoms of addiction.

Further, a study on the impact of social media on academic performance and interpersonal relations among health sciences undergraduates, carried out by

Chandrasena and Ilankoon (2022) showed that social media have a negative impact on a student's academic performance and daily living. My Private Professor (2021) discussed the impact of social media use on academic performance and highlighted that students who regularly use Instagram while studying tend to perform slightly worse than those who do not use social media. It also mentions the addictive nature of social media and its effects on sleep and academic performance. A study by Manjur, Raisa and Abdalla (2021) suggested that students who spend more time on social media sites are likely to demonstrate poor academic performance. It attributes this to the time spent on social media instead of studying. Similarly, Paul and Baker (2012) found that excessive use of social networking sites was associated with lower academic achievement.

The bottom line is that students will benefit positively in their academic pursuits and performances if they spend the majority of their time on social media to engage in academic activities rather than on other activities that will not improve their academic performances positively. In summary, there are facts that social media use has both positive and negative effects on students' academic performance.

### **Conclusion**

This study aimed to investigate the relationship between social media use and university students' academic performance at the University of Africa, Toru-Orua, Bayelsa State. The findings from the literature review and research methodology provide valuable insights into this relationship.

The literature review revealed that social media platforms have become integral tools in the lives of university students, offering opportunities for communication, collaboration, and access to information. While some studies suggest a positive impact of social media use on academic performance, others indicate potential negative consequences, such as distractions and time mismanagement. The choice of social media platforms and cultural factors may also influence the outcomes.

The quantitative analysis of the collected data revealed the level of social media utilisation, the frequency of use for academic purposes, and the associations between social media use and academic performance indicators. The findings suggest that social media use for academic purposes among university students is prevalent, with platforms like YouTube and WhatsApp being commonly utilised.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Educational institutions should develop clear guidelines or policies that promote responsible social media use for academic purposes. These guidelines can provide students with recommendations on managing their time effectively, setting boundaries for social media use, and integrating social media into structured learning activities.
2. Educators should create a supportive learning environment that encourages the appropriate use of social media for academic purposes. They can incorporate social media tools into their teaching strategies, provide opportunities for online collaboration, and guide students on how to leverage social media platforms to enhance their learning experience.

3. Educational institutions should offer digital literacy training programmes that equip students with the necessary skills to critically evaluate and effectively utilise social media platforms for academic purposes. This training can include strategies for information evaluation, online collaboration, and digital etiquette.

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