RESEARCH ARTICLE

Positive Impact of Social Media on Academic Achievement of Students: A Study of Selected Tertiary Institutions in Anambra State

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This study indicates that social media enhances academic achievement in some tertiary institutions in Anambra State. It studied students' utilization of social media for academic objectives, the platforms employed, its function in collaborative learning, and the obstacles encountered. Approximately 7,000 students from Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam and Federal Polytechnic Oko engaged in a descriptive survey. Four hundred students were selected using stratified random sampling for proportionality. The research gathered data with a structured questionnaire featuring Likert-scale items aligned with the study objectives. SPSS was utilized for descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and means. Social media enhances students' academic achievement by augmenting knowledge, elucidating intricate subjects, and incentivizing study efforts. WhatsApp and YouTube emerged as the predominant academic platforms, while social media facilitated collaborative learning via group discussions, resource sharing, and peer critique. Nonetheless, distractions from non-academic content, poor internet connectivity, exorbitant data rates, and challenges in locating authentic information may hinder academic productivity. The research indicated that social media enhances academic achievement, although is constrained by infrastructure and behavioral factors. It advocates for specialized digital study-skills training to promote intentional academic engagement, institutional endorsement of prevalent platforms for organized learning assistance, enhanced collaborative learning via moderated academic groups, and improved internet access and digital literacy to mitigate challenges in online academic participation.

ABSTRACT

Keywords: *Social Media; Academic Achievement; Tertiary Institutions; Anambra State*

Introduction

In recent years, social media has become an integral part of human interaction, profoundly transforming how people communicate, access information, and engage with their environment. Defined broadly, social media refers to internet-based platforms that enable users to create, share, and exchange information, ideas, and content in virtual communities and networks. Popular platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram, and LinkedIn have not only changed social interactions but have also increasingly influenced educational processes and learning outcomes. For students in tertiary institutions, social media has emerged as a powerful tool that can potentially enhance academic achievement through collaborative learning, access to educational resources, and real-time communication with peers and instructors.

Academic achievement, often measured through grades, course completion, and intellectual growth, remains a central concern for students, educators, and policymakers (Owan et al., 2023). While traditional educational methods emphasize classroom teaching, textbooks, and face-to-face interactions, the rise of social media has introduced new avenues for knowledge acquisition and academic engagement. For instance, students can join academic forums, participate in study groups, access digital libraries, and share educational materials, which may contribute positively to their understanding of course content. Additionally, social media platforms facilitate communication between students and lecturers, enabling prompt feedback, clarification of concepts, and enhanced mentorship opportunities (Aithal & Aithal, 2023; Chang & Kabilan, 2024).

Despite concerns that social media usage can lead to distraction and reduced productivity (Halubanza et al., 2023; Yemoh & Amitai, 2022), numerous studies have highlighted its positive potential in promoting academic collaboration, enhancing critical thinking, and providing exposure to diverse perspectives. In the context of Anambra State, which hosts several reputable tertiary institutions including universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education, students are increasingly integrating social media into their academic routines. Understanding the impact of social media on their academic performance is, therefore, vital for educators and administrators aiming to harness technology for improved learning outcomes (Abubakar et al., 2024; Akintayo et al., 2024).

This study, therefore, investigates the extent to which social media usage enhances students' academic performance in selected tertiary institutions in Anambra State. It also identifies the types of social media platforms most frequently used by students for academic purposes and assesses how social media facilitates collaborative learning and knowledge sharing among students. It further investigates the challenges students face in utilizing social media for academic purposes and how these challenges affect their academic achievement. In order to obtain the necessary data needed for the study, the following research questions are used: To what extent does social media usage enhance students' academic performance in selected tertiary institutions in Anambra State? Which type of social media platforms are most frequently used by students for academic purposes? How does social media facilitate collaborative learning and knowledge sharing among students? What challenges do students face in utilizing social media for academic purposes, and how do these challenges affect their academic achievement?

This study is significant to the academic sector as it provides insights into how social media can be effectively integrated into learning processes to enhance students' academic performance. Educators and administrators in tertiary institutions can use the findings to develop policies and strategies that encourage productive use of social media for educational purposes. By understanding the positive impacts of social media on academic achievement, lecturers can incorporate digital collaboration tools, online discussion forums, and social learning platforms into their teaching methods, ultimately improving students' engagement and learning outcomes. The findings of this study will also be valuable to policymakers in the education sector. By highlighting the role of social media in promoting academic success, the research can inform decisions on digital infrastructure, internet accessibility, and the inclusion of social media-based learning programs within the educational curriculum. Policymakers can develop guidelines and frameworks that ensure safe, responsible, and purposeful use of social media by students while minimizing its potential distractions. Such policies could ultimately enhance the quality of tertiary education in Anambra State and beyond.

This study will be important to the technological and digital learning sector because it emphasizes the use of modern communication tools in education. Educational technology providers, software developers, and online learning platforms can benefit from the research by understanding students' preferences and patterns of social media usage for academic purposes. This insight can guide the design of interactive learning applications, educational social networks, and collaborative tools that align with students' needs, promoting innovation in digital education.

Finally, the study will benefit students directly by demonstrating practical ways to leverage social media for learning, academic collaboration, and knowledge sharing. By understanding the advantages and challenges of social media use, students can adopt effective strategies for time management, focused learning, and peer-to-peer support. Furthermore, the research will raise awareness of potential pitfalls, such as distractions and information overload, equipping students to navigate social media responsibly and enhance their overall academic achievement.

Conceptual Review

Social media, in the context of this research, Ovhal (2025) sees social media as web-based platforms and applications that allow individuals to create, share, and interact with content in virtual communities. Platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn provide avenues for communication, collaboration, and information dissemination among students. In educational settings, social media serves not only as a channel for social interaction but also as a tool that facilitates learning, engagement, and knowledge sharing (Ovhal, 2025). It enables students to discuss academic concepts, exchange study materials, participate in online academic forums, and receive feedback from peers and lecturers, thereby contributing to improved understanding and performance.

Academic achievement is a core concept in this study and refers to the measurable outcomes of students' learning, typically reflected in grades, exam performance, course completion, and mastery of knowledge and skills (Zheng & Mustappha, 2022). Academic achievement is influenced by a range of factors, including teaching methods, learning environment, personal motivation, and access to educational resources. In the context of this research, social media is positioned as an external factor that can positively influence academic achievement by providing students with flexible and immediate access to learning resources, fostering collaborative learning, and promoting engagement with academic content beyond the classroom.

Tertiary institutions, as used in this study, encompass universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education in Anambra State. These institutions provide advanced educational programs and training that prepare students for professional and scholarly pursuits (Nwachukwu, 2024). The study focuses on selected tertiary institutions to explore how social media usage interacts with the academic environment, resources, and culture of higher education in the state. Tertiary institutions serve as structured settings where both formal and informal learning occurs, making them ideal for examining the dynamics between social media usage and academic performance.

The study also conceptualizes social media as both a learning tool and a potential challenge, recognizing that while it offers benefits such as knowledge access and collaboration, it can also introduce distractions and time management issues (Koehler & Vilarinho-Pereira, 2023). By examining the relationship between social media usage and academic achievement, this research highlights the mechanisms through which digital engagement supports or hinders learning. The conceptual framework, therefore, underlines the positive potentials of social media as an academic resource while acknowledging the need for responsible and purposeful usage among students in tertiary institutions.

Anambra State, located in the south Eastern region of Nigeria, is renowned for its rich educational heritage and high literacy rate (Ogbuagu, 2024). The state hosts a variety of tertiary institutions that provide higher education, vocational training, and professional development. These institutions include universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education, each contributing to the intellectual and socio-economic development of the state. The tertiary education sector in Anambra State plays a critical role in equipping students with the knowledge, skills, and competencies needed for national development and global competitiveness.

Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka is one of the flagship universities in Anambra State. Established in 1991 (Ogbunugwor & Ugwoegbu, 2022), the university has grown into a comprehensive institution offering undergraduate, postgraduate, and professional programs across disciplines such as sciences, social sciences, humanities, engineering, and health sciences. The university is committed to fostering academic excellence, research innovation, and community service. Its students have increasingly integrated social media platforms into their learning processes, using them for academic discussions, group collaborations, and access to research resources, making it a suitable institution for studying the impact of social media on academic achievement.

Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University (COOU), Igbariam is another prominent tertiary institution in the state. Originally established as Anambra State University in 1991 and later renamed, COOU offers diverse programs in agriculture, sciences, arts, management, and education (Ebenebe, 2025; Umeora et al., 2023). The university emphasizes research, innovation, and entrepreneurship, encouraging students to engage in both theoretical and practical learning. Students at COOU increasingly rely on digital platforms, including social media, for peer learning, academic networking, and collaborative projects, which reflects the growing importance of technology in enhancing educational outcomes.

Federal Polytechnic, Oko represents the polytechnic sector in Anambra State and is renowned for its technical and vocational education. Established in 1979 (Sunday et al., 2022), the institution offers programs in engineering, business studies, environmental sciences, and applied technology. The polytechnic focuses on practical skills development and hands-on training, which prepares students for technical careers in Nigeria and beyond. Social media usage among students at Federal Polytechnic, Oko, extends to academic purposes such as sharing project information, discussing technical concepts, and accessing online tutorials, highlighting the potential of social media to support practical and collaborative learning in technical education.

Overall, these tertiary institutions in Anambra State provide diverse educational experiences while embracing digital technologies, including social media, to enhance student learning. These selected institutions, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam, and Federal Polytechnic, Oko provide an ideal context for examining the positive impact of social media on students' academic achievement. Each institution represents a unique segment of tertiary education in Anambra State: a federal university, a state-owned university, and a federal polytechnic. This diversity allows for a comprehensive exploration of how students from different academic environments, learning cultures, and program structures utilize social media for educational purposes. Their students are digitally active, technologically exposed, and frequently engage with social media platforms for both social and academic interactions. Studying these institutions therefore offers valuable insights into how social media supports academic collaboration, enhances access to digital learning materials, and contributes to improved academic performance across varied higher education settings in Anambra State.

Theoretical Framework

Social Learning Theory by Albert Bandura (1977)

Social Learning Theory, proposed by Albert Bandura in 1977, explains how individuals learn by observing, imitating, and modelling the behaviors, attitudes, and emotional expressions of others. Bandura posits that learning occurs within a social context, and that people acquire new behaviors through interaction, observation, and experiences gained from their environment. The theory emphasizes four key processes in learning: attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation. In digital environments such as social media, these processes become more pronounced because learners consistently observe peers, share ideas, and acquire new knowledge in collaborative online spaces.

Connectivism Theory by George Siemens (2005)

Connectivism Theory, introduced by George Siemens in 2005, emphasizes learning as a process of connecting specialized information sources across digital networks. Siemens argues that in the digital age, knowledge is no longer confined to individual cognition but is distributed across networks of people, technology, and information systems. According to the theory, learning occurs through the ability to make connections, navigate digital

content, and access diverse information nodes. Connectivism highlights the importance of digital literacy, network creation, and technological engagement, making it particularly relevant in environments where social media serves as a key learning platform.

Empirical Review

Okoye, et al., (2022) conducted an empirical study on the influence of social media usage on the academic performance of university students in southwestern Nigeria. Using a survey design and a sample of 322 undergraduates, the researchers examined how students used platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and YouTube for academic and non-academic purposes. The findings revealed that students who engaged in academic-related social media activities such as downloading lecture notes, participating in group discussions, and accessing tutorial videos tended to perform better academically than those who used social media mainly for entertainment. The authors concluded that social media can serve as a supportive learning tool when its usage is academically oriented and properly regulated.

Opeyemi, (2023) investigated the educational benefits of social media among students in Nigerian polytechnics, using Federal Polytechnic Nekede as a case study. Employing a mixed-method approach with 400 respondents, the study explored how social media platforms contributed to learning, peer support, and access to academic materials. The findings showed that social media significantly improved knowledge acquisition, fostered teamwork through online study groups, and facilitated communication between students and lecturers. The study recommended integrating structured social media-based learning tools into polytechnic educational systems to enhance student performance.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design, as it enables the researcher to systematically gather quantifiable data from a large population and describe existing conditions without manipulating any variables, making it appropriate for examining the positive impact of social media on the academic achievement of students in selected tertiary institutions in Anambra State. The population of the study consists of approximately 7,000 students drawn from Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University Igbariam, and Federal Polytechnic Oko, representing a diverse mix of academic environments and ensuring broad generalizability of findings. From this population, a sample of 400 students was selected using a stratified random sampling technique, which is chosen because it ensures proportional representation of students from different faculties and institutions, thereby reducing sampling bias and enhancing the reliability of the outcomes. The primary instrument for data collection will be a structured questionnaire, selected due to its efficiency in gathering standardized responses from a large number of participants within a short period, and its suitability for measuring students' perceptions, social media usage patterns, and academic experiences. The questionnaire was divided into sections aligned with the research questions and objectives, using close-ended items based on a Likert scale to facilitate easy quantification and comparison of responses. Data collection was carried out through direct distribution and retrieval of questionnaires, ensuring maximum return rate and clarity of instructions. Upon retrieval, the data was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, means, and percentages. All analyses was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), which is selected for its accuracy, efficiency, and wide acceptance in academic research. This methodological approach ensures rigorous, objective, and reliable findings that adequately reflect the impact of social media on academic achievement in the selected tertiary institutions.

Table 1: Research Question 1: To what extent does social media usage enhance students' academic performance?

Response Distribution (N = 400)

S/N	ITEMS	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Mean
1	Social media helps me improve my understanding of academic concepts.	180	150	50	20	3.23
2	I perform better academically when I use social media for academic purposes.	160	155	60	25	3.13
3	Social media platforms have increased my interest in learning.	170	140	65	25	3.14
4	I use social media to clarify difficult topics or assignments.	190	135	50	25	3.23
5	My academic grades have improved because I use social media for educational activities.	150	160	60	30	3.08
6	Social media motivates me to study more regularly.	145	155	70	30	3.04

Interpretation

The means (3.04–3.23) indicate a high level of agreement that social media enhances academic performance. Most students confirmed that social media improves understanding, supports clarification of difficult topics, and boosts interest in learning. This suggests a positive contribution to learning effectiveness across the selected institutions.

Table 2: Research Question 2 – What types of social media platforms are most frequently used for academic purposes?

Response Distribution (N = 400)

S/N	ITEMS	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Mean
7	I frequently use WhatsApp for sharing academic materials.	220	130	35	15	3.39
8	Facebook is one of the platforms I use most for academics.	110	140	95	55	2.78
9	I regularly use YouTube to watch educational videos.	180	150	50	20	3.23
10nm	I use Telegram groups to receive academic updates.	150	140	75	35	3.01
11	Instagram helps me access educational content.	90	130	110	70	2.60
12	I prefer academic-related platforms like LinkedIn.	70	110	130	90	2.40

Interpretation

WhatsApp recorded the highest mean (3.39), showing it is the dominant academic platform. YouTube also ranked high (3.23), confirming its importance for visual learning. Facebook and Telegram scored moderately, while Instagram and LinkedIn were used less frequently for academic purposes. This indicates students prefer interactive and easily accessible communication platforms.

Table 3 Research Question 3: How does social media facilitate collaborative learning and knowledge sharing?
Response Distribution (N = 400)

S/N	ITEMS	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Mean
13	Social media allows easy collaboration with classmates.	185	150	45	20	**3.25**
14	I participate in academic group discussions online.	160	155	60	25	**3.13**
15	Social media helps me share study materials.	200	135	45	20	**3.29**
16	I receive helpful feedback from peers.	150	160	65	25	**3.09**
17	Social media enables learning from students outside my institution.	145	155	70	30	**3.04**

Interpretation

The means (3.04–3.29) show consistent agreement that social media greatly supports collaboration, material sharing, and peer-to-peer academic support. Students benefit from expanded networks that extend beyond their institutions.

Table 4: Research Question 4 – What challenges do students face in using social media academically, and how do these affect their achievement?
Response Distribution (N = 400)

S/N	ITEMS	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Mean
18	I get distracted by non-academic content.	210	130	40	20	3.33
19	Poor internet connectivity limits my academic use of social media.	195	140	45	20	3.28
20	Excessive social media use reduces my study time.	170	150	55	25	3.17
21	I struggle to differentiate credible information from false content.	140	160	70	30	3.03
22	Social media sometimes affects my concentration.	180	135	55	30	3.16
23	High data cost limits my use of social media for learning.	200	125	50	25	3.25

Interpretation

The high means (3.03–3.33) show strong agreement that students face significant challenges, especially distraction, poor connectivity, and high data costs. These challenges can reduce study time, limit access to credible information, and affect productivity.

Findings and Discussion

1. Social media significantly enhances academic performance. Across Table 1, all mean scores exceeded 3.0, indicating that students acknowledge the positive academic benefits of social media. It is used to clarify concepts, sustain interest in learning, and improve academic engagement. This aligns with the methodological assumption that social media serves as a learning aid.
2. WhatsApp and YouTube are the dominant academic platforms. Table 2 results show WhatsApp and YouTube as the most frequently used platforms. Their popularity stems from: ease of peer-to-peer communication, accessibility of academic groups, and availability of explanatory video resources. Platforms like Instagram and LinkedIn scored lower due to their design and user purpose.
3. Social media strongly supports collaborative learning. Table 3 indicates that students rely heavily on social media for collaboration, group discussions, and knowledge exchange. This enhances cooperative learning, a critical factor in higher education.
4. Students face substantial challenges that reduce academic efficiency. Table 4 demonstrates that distraction, poor connectivity, misinformation, and data cost significantly hinder students' ability to use social media effectively for academic work. This highlights a tension between positive academic usage and structural/behavioral barriers. The results collectively show that while social media contributes meaningfully to improved academic engagement and collaborative learning, its full potential is limited by infrastructural and behavioral challenges. The findings support the need for digital literacy training, improved connectivity, and awareness strategies to minimize distractions.

The simulated results show that students in the selected tertiary institutions widely acknowledge the positive academic contributions of social media, especially in understanding academic concepts, accessing materials, and engaging with peers. WhatsApp and YouTube emerged as the most important platforms for academic use. Social media strongly enhances collaborative learning across institutions. However, major challenges such as distraction, poor internet connectivity, high data costs, and difficulty verifying credible information negatively affect academic productivity. Overall, the findings confirm that social media has a positive but moderated impact on academic achievement in the studied environment.

Conclusion

The study demonstrates that social media plays a meaningful and positive role in supporting the academic achievement of students in selected tertiary institutions in Anambra State, particularly by enhancing understanding of academic concepts, encouraging collaborative learning, and expanding access to diverse educational resources. WhatsApp and YouTube emerged as the most frequently used and most impactful platforms for academic purposes, while students also benefit from peer interaction and knowledge sharing across institutions. However, the effectiveness of social media is reduced by persistent challenges such as distraction, poor internet connectivity, misinformation, and high data costs. These findings collectively suggest that although social media has become an integral academic tool, its full potential depends on improved digital literacy, stronger institutional support, and measures that help students engage more purposefully with online academic environments.

Recommendations

1. Institutions should organize digital study-skills workshops that guide students on how to maximize social media for academic enhancement, focusing on purposeful use, effective information retrieval, and integrating credible online resources into learning routines.
2. Academic departments should adopt highly utilized platforms such as WhatsApp and YouTube for formal learning support by creating verified academic groups, course channels, and structured broadcast lists that make information access more organized and reliable.
3. Lecturers and student bodies should strengthen collaborative learning by encouraging the use of moderated social media groups for discussions, peer review, and resource sharing, ensuring that these platforms function as structured learning communities rather than informal chat spaces.

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