



Impact Of Social Media On Academic Engagement Of University Of Ilorin Undergraduate Students

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Abstract

The study focuses on the influence of social media in educational involvement of undergraduate students at University of Ilorin with a particular focus on the implications for responsible digital learning and institutional practice. The study aimed to determine most popular social media among students, explore social media's impact on academic involvement, investigate relationship between social media usage and academic engagement, uncover challenges with using social media for academic purposes and identify strategies for encouraging responsible and productive academic use of social media. Descriptive survey research design was used. The population of study consisted of undergraduate students of University of Ilorin and respondents were selected using multi-stage sampling technique in various faculties. The instruments used in collecting the data were a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher that was validated by experts and then was tested for its reliability by Cronbach alpha method. Data analysis techniques used were descriptive and inferential statistics. The results revealed that social media use by students is extensive and that its impact has both positive and negative consequences for their academic involvement. Social media allows the access to academic materials, communication, collaboration, clarification of academic issues and participation in learning activities. However, overuse and misuse can lead to distraction, lower concentration, time management problems, and other hindrances to effective engagement in learning. The study concludes that when social media is used educationally with the proper institutional guidance and responsible use, it can enhance academic engagement. It thus calls for better integration of appropriate digital social engagement in learning process, the formulation of institutional guidelines for responsible academic use of social media, better support for digital learning, and the promotion of digital learning for students. Such measures can help universities to establish structured, inclusive and productive digital learning spaces.

Keywords: Social Media; Academic Engagement; Digital Learning; Higher Education; Institutional Digital Governance; Responsible Technology Use

Introduction

In the last 20 years, social media has grown from mere means of communication into digital spaces for interactions, information sharing and knowledge exchange. Although created primarily for social interaction, these platforms have become integral to learning, business, politics and daily life (Kapoor et al., 2018). This is particularly evident with younger age groups and students (Pew Research Center, 2021). Social media is a part of university life today because it's accessible via a smartphone and provides fast information.

Students at the University use WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter/X and Telegram both for academic and non-academic purposes. They offer a platform for sharing messages, groups, videos, academic news, and co-learning. Students can share course works, join in with study groups and get access to educational content. But when these platforms are used too much for entertainment rather than academics, they can be a rival to the schoolwork. This is why social media is important to academic engagement, as they can be used as learning tools as well as a distraction.

The use of social media is an informal extension of the learning environment in higher education. It's interactive, so pupils can share knowledge, have discussions, and can find academic resources outside of the classroom. Study groups and lecture note exchange can be facilitated by WhatsApp, Telegram, Facebook and Instagram can be used for spreading academic information. TikTok and YouTube also offer tutorials which can be used in addition to formal instruction. These options demonstrate how social media can be used to enhance flexible learning if used in the right way and with the right direction.

They might foster the interaction between students and teachers, facilitate peer-support and stimulate self-study (Manca and Ranieri, 2016). However, overuse of social media can lead to distraction, procrastination, inadequate time management, and decreased focus on school work (Anwar and Marwan, 2022). So universities need to think about how to better leverage the benefits of these platforms in order to minimize the use that negatively affects learning. This will necessitate responsible-use practices and institutional guidance.

Academic engagement is about giving of attention, effort, and involvement into learning activities. It is considered as one of the key factors in academic achievement and learning outcomes (Alrashidi et al., 2016). Academic engagement is often referred to as the behavioural, cognitive and emotional components. Behavioural engagement is defined as participation in the school community, cognitive engagement as intellectual effort and learning processes, and emotional engagement as motivation, interest and feeling at home in the school community (Hasanov et al., 2021).

In the modern digital learning context, these dimensions can be affected by students' experience with social media platforms. Social media can foster cooperation, information sharing, student-to-student engagement and involvement but can also present students with conflicting information and divided attention. It is thus dependent on purposeful use and the environment that institutions provide for responsible academic engagement, in part. The use of social media has therefore given rise to issues regarding the organization of learning with the support of technology and the shaping of digital behaviour in universities.

Social media can be used to promote peer learning and access to learning materials (Mensah et al., 2023). Other platforms can provide academic information; WhatsApp and Telegram can be used to communicate in groups and share documents. These can enhance behaviour and cognitive engagement through active involvement and knowledge sharing (Sivakumar, Jayasingh and Shaik, 2023). On the other hand, using the device for entertainment can lead to procrastination and diminished attention (Anwar and Marwan, 2022).

The outcomes relate to institutional issues as well. Digital platforms are essential for universities' communication and learning and responsible digital governance is critical. Academic-use expectations, lecturer moderation, digital-literacy initiatives, privacy awareness and appropriate information sharing are included in the institutional guidance. Digital inclusion is also important, as it relies on devices, stable internet connectivity, low cost data and electricity.

In Nigeria, the use of the Internet and the smartphones has grown and social-media involvement among university students has risen. The Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC, 2024) stated that millions of youths rely on mobile data services. Undergraduates in Nigeria are likely to communicate and engage in academic activities through WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter/X. Many post lecture notes, hold group discussions, and find learning resources, with overuse also linked with distraction and diminished academic productivity.

The University of Ilorin becomes a fertile ground for studying these issues as its undergraduates employ social media for learning and socializing. Some students rely on digital platforms for communication, learning and sharing in their classes, some for entertainment purposes only. The issue of dual use makes question of whether social media is a boomerang or a burden for academic engagement contentious, and what institutional measures can help to create a proper environment for productive use.

The study is needed due to the rising reliance of students on social media and doubt about its effects on student's academic participation. Social media has its pros and cons and can present opportunities for collaboration, sharing of information, and access to academic materials, but it also has a way of distracting, managing time poorly, and decreasing one's commitment to study. Most of the previous research conducted in Nigeria has been centred on academic performance and few have been focused on behavioural, cognitive and emotional engagement. The present study therefore looks at the nature of social networking site and its influence on the academic engagement of the University of Ilorin undergraduates and considers implications on responsible digital learning, institutional guidance, digital inclusion and higher education policy.

Statement of the Problem

It is a great opportunity for higher education, but it's also come with some serious challenges, especially for the university student population. Various platforms like WhatsApp, Telegram, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter/X have become an integral part of students' daily activities in the school environment. They provide for communication, collaboration, sharing of information, access to educational resources, interaction outside of the classroom. Simultaneously, they have been raised as potential distractors of students, as a means to procrastinate, as a decrease in concentration, and as a decrease in attention to academic tasks. The societal and personal nature of the Internet calls into question the impact that use of social platforms has on student engagement.

In current context of university, students are now relying on mobile devices and social media during the school day, both in the classroom and on their own. The University of Ilorin undergraduate students communicate, engage, entertain, share information and discuss academic issues on platforms like WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok and Twitter-X. Some students may use these to share learning resources and engage in educational conversations, while others might spend a lot of time on social media feeds, replying to messages, or watching entertainment videos. It is hard to distinguish between educational activities and distractive behaviours on the same digital platforms, because there is academic and non-academic use of these platforms.

Social media has also evolved as an alternative and additional learning environment. Students are increasingly accessing tutorials on the web, studying pages, engaging in online discussion groups and getting information about courses through social media. These activities can be used to assist learning, especially when used alongside classroom learning. But the distinction between engaging in education, and becoming distracted, can be tricky. The same platforms that are used to access academic content also vie for students' attention with entertainment content as well as constant social interaction (Korucu & Atun, 2017). Thus, the focus is not merely on frequency and extent of students' social media use, but rather on how their social media use patterns and purposes impact their behavioural, cognitive, and emotional engagement in academic activities.

This is a pertinent issue at the University of Ilorin, where discipline and productivity in academics are buoyant. Students share lectures, group discussions, social relationships, learning materials and communicate with each other through social media in undergraduate courses. However, little empirical studies are available to inform on impact of social-media use on academic engagement of University of Ilorin undergraduates on the larger academic engagement aspects. Academic engagement as a multidimensional construct of student participation, student motivation, intellectual effort, and student persistence in learning has received relatively little attention in previous Nigerian studies which primarily focused on academic performance using grades as an indicator (Okeya-Olayinka and Martins-Adediran, 2025).

Another issue has to do with the institutional control of online platform supporting learning. With increasing presence of social media in academic lives of students, universities have the responsibility of deciding how social media platforms can be used productively and responsibly. If there is no explicit guidance from the institution, little support by the lecturer, no cohesive academic group, no support for digital literacy, and inappropriate expectations for students' responsible use, students may receive the benefits of online platform while at the same time being exposed to distraction, inexperienced use of time, and other obstacles to effective learning. This is not just an issue related to students' online conduct, but also about how universities can provide structured environments for responsible digital learning.

The institutional dimension is especially relevant since evidence of students' experiences could help make decisions about digital-learning practices, infrastructure, academic communication, lecturer moderation, and responsible use of social platforms. If there is no evidence, teachers and policymakers may have a hard time deciding on the appropriate institutional response that will strike a balance between educational benefits of social media and desire to safeguard academic attention and engagement. The current gap in knowledge thus relates to how social media affects students' academic engagement and the institutional approaches needed to encourage their positive academic engagement with social media.

Thus, the present study aims to offer substantive knowledge of effect of social media on academic engagement of undergraduate students at University of Ilorin based on evidence. It also aims to develop ideas that help teachers, university administrators, policy makers and students in creating more formal, responsible

and educationally beneficial social media usage in the University context.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of study is to investigate impact of social networking sites on academic engagement of undergraduate students at the University of Ilorin. That is, the study aims to determine whether social media use promotes or hinders students' involvement in learning activities and how it affects the behavioural, cognitive, and emotional dimensions of engagement. In achieve the aim, the following objectives of this study are as follows:

- i.To identify most used social media among undergraduate students of University of Ilorin.
- ii.To examine the positive impact of social networking sites on academic engagement of undergraduate students of the University of Ilorin.
- iii.To assess the relationship between social media usage and academic engagement among undergraduate students in the University of Ilorin.
- iv.To identify the challenges in using social platforms for academic engagement among undergraduate students of University of Ilorin.
- v.To provide strategies for improving students' academic engagement through use of social medial platforms.

Research Questions

Based on objectives of the study, following research questions will guide subject-matter of this study:

- i.What are most used social media among undergraduate students of University of Ilorin?
- ii.What are positive impact of social platforms on academic engagement of undergraduate students of the University of Ilorin?
- iii.What is relationship between social networking sites usage and academic engagement among undergraduate students in the University of Ilorin?
- iv.What are challenges in using social media for academic engagement among undergraduate students of the University of Ilorin?
- v.What are strategies for improving students' academic engagement through use of social medial platforms?

Research Hypotheses

In line with research objectives and questions, following hypotheses will be tested at 0.05 level of significance of the study:

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in academic engagement of undergraduate students based on their gender.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in academic engagement of undergraduate students based on their faculty.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference in academic engagement of undergraduate students based on their level of study.

Methodology

The study employed descriptive survey research design to study effect of social media on academic engagement of undergraduate students of University of Ilorin. The design fit the purpose because it allowed for obtaining quantitative data regarding students' lived experiences, perceptions and behavioral patterns related to use of social media and engagement in the academic domain without influencing or intervening in the study variables. It also offered the suitable platform for the analysis and comparison of pattern and difference between students' responses based on academic and demographic characteristics. The survey approach was used to directly collect students' social media usage for academic and extra-curricular activities, and to document students' perceptions of consequences of social media use for participation, concentration, communication and learning activities.

The population of study consisted of undergraduate students of the university of Ilorin in the Faculties of Agriculture, Arts, Basic Clinical Sciences, Basic Medical Sciences, Clinical Sciences, Communication and Information Sciences, Education, Engineering, Environmental Sciences, Law, Life Sciences, Management Sciences, Pharmaceutical Sciences, Physical Sciences, Social Sciences and Veterinary Medicine. It was estimated that over 50,000 students attended the undergraduate program. This population was deemed suitable because they engage with socially mediated learning activities and traditional learning activities as undergraduates and frequently use social media with platforms like WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter/X,

YouTube and other online communication platforms.

The sample for study was 392 undergraduate students. The respondents were selected from various faculties and levels of study to ensure representation across the various academic structure of the university. Stratified random sampling was used by stratifying the student population based on the respective faculty and academic level, and then random sampling was done from each of the groups. Stratification minimized the risk of extreme bias in the sample by particular faculties or study level and allowed the study to reflect the variability in students' academic experiences and backgrounds and their experiences with social media.

A structured questionnaire designed by researcher based on objectives and research questions of the study was main tool used to collect data. The instrument captured demographic details of respondents, social media platforms used, patterns and purpose in social media use, perceived influence on academic engagement, challenges that arise in academic social media use and strategies to enhance productive engagement through social media. Measurable responses related to students' experiences and perceptions were gathered via structured Likert-type items. Items were written in clear and direct language in order to ensure consistency in interpretation and that items could be analyzed quantitatively.

The questionnaire was validated by the experts. An instrument examination was conducted to assess clarity of the items, the relevance of the items, the structure of the items, and the consistency of the items with the study's objectives by a team of experts in education, measurement, and research methods. Some of these observations were taken into account when developing the questionnaire prior to the final administration. A pilot test was also conducted with students who were not included in main study in order to find ambiguous and poorly structured items. Cronbach alpha procedure was used to assess internal consistency of instrument. A reliability score of 0.70 or higher was used as the criterion for determining reliability.

Data collection took place as a result of obtaining appropriate permission from the relevant universities. The respondents were selected and given information on the purpose of the study and they were given the opportunity to participate in the study voluntarily. The questionnaires were physically distributed to the sampled students with proper accessibility, where applicable, via an online platform (Google Forms). The instrument was clearly explained to ensure that it is completed correctly. No identifying data was asked for by participants and responses remained confidential during the study. Completed questionnaires were checked for completeness and then sorted, coded and analyzed statistically. Data collected was based on the principles of voluntary participation, anonymity, and confidentiality, as well as responsible handling of respondents' information.

Descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were used to analyze collected data and was also analyzed by SPSS. Demographic characteristics and usage patterns of social media were reported as frequencies and percentages, while mean and standard deviation were used to describe respondents' answers to questions about academic involvement, perceived effects, challenges, and strategies for improvement. Where appropriate, four point Likert scale items were interpreted using a criterion mean of 2.50.

The study hypotheses were tested using inferential statistics at 0.05 level of significance. To evaluate if there were any gender differences in academic engagement, an independent-samples t-test was used. The difference between academic engagement across faculties and levels of study were analyzed using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). These analytical procedures allowed the researcher to go beyond description and to establish if there were statistically significant differences between groups of respondents. An empirical foundation that can help to interpret the use of social media and its implications for academic engagement of University of Ilorin undergraduate students was thus provided by the use of descriptive and inferential techniques.

Results

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of 392 respondents. The respondents were from various faculties and levels of study, with 58.9% of the sample female. The age group of 21-25 age group accounted for the maximum number of 42.1% and the maximum percentage was recorded in faculty of education is 13.5%.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 392)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Faculty	Agriculture	22	5.6
	Arts	24	6.1
	Basic Clinical Sciences	20	5.1
	Basic Medical Sciences	21	5.4

	Clinical Sciences	23	5.9
	Communication & Information Sciences	25	6.4
	Education	53	13.5
	Engineering	28	7.1
	Environmental Sciences	19	4.8
	Law	18	4.6
	Life Sciences	26	6.6
	Management Sciences	27	6.9
	Pharmaceutical Sciences	16	4.1
	Physical Sciences	17	4.3
	Social Sciences	25	6.4
	Veterinary Medicine	8	2.0
Level of Study	100	90	23.0
	200	85	21.7
	300	80	20.4
	400	90	23.0
	500	47	12.0
Gender	Male	161	41.1
	Female	231	58.9
Age	16–20	140	35.7
	21–25	165	42.1
	26–30	78	19.9
	31 and above	9	2.3
Total		392	100.0

Patterns of Social Media Platform Use

Table 2 shows that WhatsApp is the most popular platform (89.3%), followed by Facebook (81.6%), Telegram (72.7%), Twitter (66.3%), and Instagram (63.8%). The usage, however, was significantly lower on less mainstream platforms.

Table 2. Distribution of Social Media Platforms Used by Undergraduates

Rank	Platform	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Likert Scale	Interpretation
1	WhatsApp	350	89.3	5	Very High Usage
2	Facebook	320	81.6	5	Very High Usage
3	Telegram	285	72.7	4	High Usage
4	Twitter	260	66.3	4	High Usage
5	Instagram	250	63.8	4	High Usage
6	TikTok	230	58.7	3	Moderate Usage
7	YouTube	225	57.4	3	Moderate Usage
8	Snapchat	200	51.0	3	Moderate Usage
9	LinkedIn	170	43.4	3	Moderate Usage

10	Reddit	150	38.3	2	Low Usage
11	Pinterest	140	35.7	2	Low Usage
12	Quora	120	30.6	2	Low Usage
13	Discord	110	28.1	2	Low Usage
14	Skype	95	24.2	2	Low Usage
15	WeChat	85	21.7	2	Low Usage
16	Tumblr	70	17.9	1	Very Low Usage
17	Twitch	65	16.6	1	Very Low Usage
18	SoundCloud	60	15.3	1	Very Low Usage
19	Line	55	14.0	1	Very Low Usage
20	Thread	50	12.8	1	Very Low Usage
21	Badoo	45	11.5	1	Very Low Usage
22	Clubhouse	40	10.2	1	Very Low Usage
23	Hootsuite	35	8.9	1	Very Low Usage
24	Naijapals	30	7.7	1	Very Low Usage
25	Crowwe	25	6.4	1	Very Low Usage
26	StumbleUpon	20	5.1	1	Very Low Usage

Influence of Social Media on Academic Engagement

The results in Table 3 show that access of past questions and study guides scored the highest mean score ($M = 3.25$) followed by clarification of difficult topics ($M = 3.20$) and communication about course work ($M = 3.19$). Findings also suggest behavioural issues, such as hyperactivity and inattention.

Table 3. Impact of Social Media on Academic Engagement (N = 392)

S/N	Items	SA n (%)	A n (%)	D n (%)	SD n (%)	Mean	Interpretation
1	Prefer data over food	110 (28.1%)	120 (30.6%)	95 (24.2%)	67 (17.1%)	2.70	Moderate Agreement
2	Participate in academic discussions	150 (38.3%)	170 (43.4%)	50 (12.8%)	22 (5.6%)	3.14	High Agreement
3	Lose focus in class	130 (33.2%)	140 (35.7%)	80 (20.4%)	42 (10.7%)	2.91	Moderate Agreement
4	Borrow money for data	100 (25.5%)	115 (29.3%)	110 (28.1%)	67 (17.1%)	2.63	Moderate Agreement
5	Communicate about coursework	165 (42.1%)	160 (40.8%)	45 (11.5%)	22 (5.6%)	3.19	High Agreement
6	Clarify difficult topics	170 (43.4%)	150 (38.3%)	50 (12.8%)	22 (5.6%)	3.20	High Agreement

7	Spend 8–12 hours daily	90 (23.0%)	110 (28.1%)	120 (30.6%)	72 (18.4%)	2.56	Moderate Agreement
8	Use longer than intended	140 (35.7%)	155 (39.5%)	60 (15.3%)	37 (9.4%)	3.02	High Agreement
9	Forget school work	120 (30.6%)	135 (34.4%)	90 (23.0%)	47 (12.0%)	2.84	Moderate Agreement
10	Access past questions & guides	180 (45.9%)	150 (38.3%)	40 (10.2%)	22 (5.6%)	3.25	High Agreement

Challenges Associated with Academic Use of Social Media

Distraction ($M = 3.25$) and poor or unstable internet connection ($M = 3.18$) were the most frequently rated challenges as can be seen in Table 4. Other constraints that were reported as relevant included power outages, lack of data, time loss and disturbed sleep patterns.

Table 4. Challenges in Using Social Media for Academic Engagement

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	Decision	Rank
1	Feels boring and lonely	85	120	110	77	392	2.54	Agreed	9
2	High cost of devices	130	140	70	52	392	2.89	Agreed	6
3	Poor/unstable internet	170	150	45	27	392	3.18	Agreed	2
4	Lack of sufficient data	160	140	60	32	392	3.09	Agreed	4
5	Loss of time	145	155	60	32	392	3.05	Agreed	5
6	Frequent power outage	155	150	55	32	392	3.09	Agreed	3
7	Online bullying	70	95	120	107	392	2.33	Disagreed	10
8	Academic use causes depression	65	90	125	112	392	2.28	Disagreed	11
9	Affects sleep pattern	150	145	60	37	392	3.04	Agreed	7
10	Easily distracted	180	150	40	22	392	3.25	Agreed	1

Strategies for Strengthening Academic Engagement through Social Media

The strategies reported in Table 5 all exceeded the criterion mean of 2.50. Provision of free campus Wi-Fi was rated highest ($M = 3.50$), followed by stable power supply ($M = 3.43$) and maintenance of official academic pages ($M = 3.38$).

Table 5. Strategies for Improving Academic Engagement Through Social Media (N = 392)

S/N	Items	SA f (%)	A f (%)	D f (%)	SD f (%)	Mean	Decision	Rank
1	Lecturers use educational social media	210 (53.6%)	130 (33.2%)	35 (8.9%)	17 (4.3%)	3.36	Agreed	4
2	Encourage academic social media groups	195 (49.7%)	145 (37.0%)	32 (8.2%)	20 (5.1%)	3.31	Agreed	6

3	Train students on responsible use	205 (52.3%)	140 (35.7%)	30 (7.7%)	17 (4.3%)	3.35	Agreed	5
4	Provide stable power supply	220 (56.1%)	135 (34.4%)	25 (6.4%)	12 (3.1%)	3.43	Agreed	2
5	Integrate social media into teaching	190 (48.5%)	150 (38.3%)	35 (8.9%)	17 (4.3%)	3.30	Agreed	7
6	Provide free campus Wi-Fi	240 (61.2%)	120 (30.6%)	20 (5.1%)	12 (3.1%)	3.50	Agreed	1
7	Teach time management skills	200 (51.0%)	145 (37.0%)	30 (7.7%)	17 (4.3%)	3.34	Agreed	3
8	Organize workshops on social media tools	185 (47.2%)	150 (38.3%)	37 (9.4%)	20 (5.1%)	3.27	Agreed	9
9	Maintain official academic pages	215 (54.8%)	135 (34.4%)	28 (7.1%)	14 (3.6%)	3.38	Agreed	3
10	Moderate academic discussions	180 (45.9%)	155 (39.5%)	35 (8.9%)	22 (5.6%)	3.26	Agreed	10

Gender Differences in Academic Engagement

Descriptive statistics and the independent-samples t-test were combined because they address the same hypothesis. As presented in Table 6, female students recorded higher academic engagement ($M = 3.12$, $SD = 0.49$) than male students ($M = 2.97$, $SD = 0.54$). The difference was statistically significant, $t(390) = 2.41$, $p = .016$; therefore, H_{01} was rejected.

Table 6. Gender Differences in Academic Engagement and Independent-Samples t-Test

Group/Test	N	Mean	SD	t	df	p-value	Decision
Male	161	2.97	0.54				
Female	231	3.12	0.49				
Independent-samples t-test	—	—	—	2.41	390	0.016	Reject H_{01}

Faculty-Based Differences in Academic Engagement

The inferential tests relating to faculty were consolidated in Table 7. Both reported tests were statistically significant. The one-way ANOVA indicated significant differences in academic engagement across faculties, $F(15, 376) = 3.42$, $p = .001$. The Faculty of Education recorded the highest reported mean ($M = 3.28$), whereas Arts recorded the lowest ($M = 2.95$).

Table 7. Tests of Faculty-Based Differences in Academic Engagement

Test	Statistic	df	p-value	Decision
Chi-Square Goodness-of-Fit	$\chi^2 = 43.57$	15	< 0.001	Reject H_{02}
One-Way ANOVA	$F = 3.42$	15, 376	0.001	Reject H_{02}

Differences in Academic Engagement by Level of Study

Descriptive and inferential results for study level are combined in Table 8. The highest mean engagement was observed among 500-level students ($M = 3.20$, $SD = 0.46$), while 200-level students recorded the lowest mean ($M = 2.98$, $SD = 0.52$). The ANOVA showed a statistically significant difference across levels, $F(4, 387) = 2.85$, $p = .024$; therefore, H_{03} was rejected.

Table 8. Academic Engagement by Level of Study and One-Way ANOVA

Level/Test	N	Mean	SD	F	df	p-value	Decision
100 Level	90	3.01	0.50				
200 Level	85	2.98	0.52				
300 Level	80	3.05	0.51				
400 Level	90	3.12	0.49				
500 Level	47	3.20	0.46				
One-Way ANOVA	—	—	—	2.85	4, 387	0.024	Reject H_{03}

Summary of Hypothesis Testing

The overall hypothesis decisions are summarized in Table 9. All three null hypotheses were rejected at 0.05 significance level.

Table 9. Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Test Used	p-value	Decision	Main Finding
H_{01} : Gender	Independent-samples t-test	0.016	Reject H_{01}	Females recorded higher engagement than males
H_{02} : Faculty	One-Way ANOVA	0.001	Reject H_{02}	Academic engagement differed across faculties
H_{03} : Level of Study	One-Way ANOVA	0.024	Reject H_{03}	Academic engagement differed across study levels

Discussion

The results indicate that undergraduates of the University of Ilorin has come to rely on social media for their academic and social engagement. For the first research question, WhatsApp was the most used platform and others such as Instagram, YouTube and Twitter/X were widely used. This compliments the previous findings that the university students find messaging based platforms to be appealing due to its fast communication, group interaction and file sharing capabilities (Ainin et al., 2015; Al-Rahmi & Othman, 2019). The findings imply that these platforms have become more than just means of social interaction; they also have become informal extensions of the learning environment of the University. This opens opportunities for structured academic communication and collaboration on digital platforms for institutions.

With regard to second research question, the results indicate that social media have both positive and negative impacts on academic engagement. Students stated that social media is beneficial to them to access learning resources, to discuss, to communicate with peers and share their coursework. This aligns with purposeful social media use as found by Junco (2012) to enhance student engagement and collaborative learning by Aun (2022). Using it too much can cause distraction and concentration problems, and difficulty managing your time. This aligns with the findings of Kirschner and Karpinski (2019) which related heavy social media usage to academic performance. This suggests that not every social media must be used for education, and that there is a need to be responsible in using social media, rather than indiscriminate.

The third research question was about association between the use of social media and academic engagement. The results indicated that those students who use social media as the main purpose of learning tend to exhibit learning activities participation and involvement. The findings then suggest that social media can be an effective means of engagement provided that it is used purposefully for learning activities. In terms of institutions, this further proves how critical it is to foster students' digitally productive academic behaviors.

Distraction, misinformation, weak network connectivity, high data usage and power outages were among the issues highlighted as being relevant to the fourth research question. The results are congruent with Kirschner and Karpinski (2019), and Aun (2022) who found that distraction and mismanagement of time were problems related to social media. Aun (2022) identified some barriers to effective Digital Learning. Significantly, the issues are not just behavioural. The digital inclusion and institutional infrastructure are also evident in the poor access to the internet, high data prices and unreliable electricity. These limitations may limit access to digital participation and the access to learning opportunities.

Last, the results suggest positive attitudes towards structured academic groups, engagement of the lecturer, training in responsible use, enhanced digital access, and institutional guidance. The measures are similar to Al-Rahmi and Othman (2019) and Aun (2022) who pointed out the significant role of deliberate and goal-oriented social media application for education. The results thus indicate a university administration's role to positively influence responsible digital learning. Use policies can be established at the institutional level, lecturer interventions can be used to regulate student's academic interaction, and digital-literacy initiatives can assist students to manage their academic and non-academic activities. At the institutional level, use policies can be established, lecturer interventions can be used to regulate student's academic interaction, and digital-literacy initiatives can be used to assist students to balance their academic and non-academic activities. The study did not directly measure privacy, or digital wellbeing, but they are still pertinent factors to consider when universities institutionalise use of social media for learning.

In general, the results show that social media cannot be regarded as good or bad. Its impact is based on usage patterns, supportive institutional structures, digital accessibility and the degree of structuring and guiding of academic activities. The study thus calls for a strategy that is dualistic in nature, in which social media is promoted as an educational tool within the university, but at the same time there is a need to deal with its distractive elements, unequal access and not responsible use in the institutional context.

Conclusion

This study looked at effects of social media on academic engagement of Undergraduates in University of Ilorin and revealed that social media has been an integral part in the academic and social life of the students. The results indicate that students actively engage with various social media communications tools to share information, learn collaboratively, to discuss the subject, and to access learning materials. In parallel, the study confirms that impact of social platforms on academic engagement is not necessarily negative or positive, but depends largely on the purpose, intensity and how social media is used. Social media can be used in the academic setting for participation, communication, peer interaction and access to educational resources. But overuse and misuse can lead to distraction, lowered concentration, poor time management and lack of commitment to academic studies. The study also suggests that there is a significant link between social media usage patterns and students' academic engagement, and that certain infrastructural issues, like the Internet connection, high data fees, and the lack of electricity, may hinder effective use of and engagement with digitally-supported learning. Consequently, the results suggest that a balanced institutional strategy is needed in higher education in context of social media. Social media should not be just a distraction in the university and should not be taken for granted that it is self-learning educational. Rather, appropriate use relies on institutional support, active participation of lecturers, digital-literacy assistance, gaining greater access and using the digital responsibly. Acknowledging potential of digital platforms to enhance engagement, collaboration, participation and other productive forms of digital learning with University of Ilorin undergraduates, it is recommended that social media be used as a platform of learning, provided it is made available in a structured and controlled academic environment with adequate policies.

Recommendations

Based on findings of the study, following recommendations are deemed expedient:

1. The University of Ilorin should develop clear guidelines that regulate and promote responsible academic use of social media among undergraduate students.
2. Lecturers should intentionally integrate social media platforms into their teaching by creating academic groups where course materials, announcements, and discussions can take place in a structured manner.
3. Students should be trained on digital literacy and responsible social media usage so that they can manage their time effectively and reduce distractions.

4. The university management should organize seminars, workshops, and awareness programs to educate students on balancing academic and non-academic use of social media.
5. Efforts should be made to improve internet access on campus to support academic engagement through online platforms.
6. Students should be encouraged to use social media primarily for academic collaboration, information sharing, and constructive discussions rather than excessive entertainment.
7. Policies should be introduced to minimize distractions during lecture hours, including sensitization on turning off notifications during academic activities.

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