

# Implications of Social Media on Teaching and Learning: A Phenomenological Study on Student's Experiences in Yobe State-Owned Tertiary Institutions

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## Abstract

This phenomenological study explored the implications of social media on teaching and learning in Yobe state-owned tertiary institutions. Through interviews and observations with fifteen (15) purposely selected final year students as informants, the study found that social media can have both positive and negative implications on student learning outcomes. Positive implications included higher academic performance, increased student collaboration, and heightened student interest and motivation. These findings suggest that social media can be a valuable tool for enhancing the learning experience and improving student outcomes. However, the study also identified negative implications of social media on teaching and learning. These included the deterioration of reading culture, procrastination, and distraction from academic activities. These results highlight the importance of promoting responsible usage of social media in educational settings to mitigate these negative implications. At the end, the study sheds light on the complex and multifaceted relationship between social media and teaching and learning in tertiary education, and underscores the need for educators to critically assess the benefits and drawbacks of incorporating social media into their instructional practices.

**Keywords:** *implications, social media, teaching and learning, tertiary institutions, Yobe state*

## **Introduction**

In recent times, technology has endeavoured to carry out its responsibility of assisting mankind. The resultant implications of its usage resulted in a significant medium of social connection as well as education and learning. Several studies on the implications of technology particularly in tertiary educational institutions have revealed fascinating results on teachers and students over the years. The advent of open social media platforms altered how people engage with one another and made the world a smaller community by enabling individuals to communicate with one another (Alodat, 2023). The importance of social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Google Plus, WhatsApp, Telegram and Flickr in educational activities have shown to provide easy contact between students and others outside of the classroom, such experts in the field and other students studying related subjects. According to Liu, (2010), the introduction of social media has had a big influence on how teachers and students learn. Social media has influenced teachers, students, and others in higher education settings today to collaborate with one another on the responsibilities of knowledge building in learning and environments for instruction. Social networking tools may improve class content and have a good impact on conversations, group projects, and writing (Yunus, 2016)

Researchers and educators are always experimenting with social media in an effort to foster teamwork, critical thinking, and knowledge creation (Kurfiss, 1988). However, because these media are typically accessible to the public, it is necessary to carefully weigh the advantages, consequences, and risks of this openness. Additionally, constant communication with students is necessary to address their concerns and resolve problems relating to the use of social media as they emerge.

Higher education institutions are using social media in teaching and learning at a faster rate

than before due to the rapid development in the number of social media users and their use in daily communication for both individuals and corporations. In spite of enormous literature on the impact of social media usage on learning, the need to explore further became imperative to gain more understanding of the issue within different contexts. Given this, the purpose of this study is to explore the implications of social media usage on teaching and learning among students of tertiary institutions in Yobe State. In doing so, the study aims at specifically exploring how social media affects students' academic lives, how students utilize these platforms, and how these platforms affect their academic lives.

When discussing social media and school life, researchers, student affairs professionals, and all the other entities involved would benefit greatly from an understanding of social media, its use, and how it is affecting the learning environment for students. The study's findings will aid in rethinking and strategizing how they feel about using social media. Additionally, it will encourage individuals to see the fascinating prospects social media brings to both everyday life and the life of a student.

## **Literature review**

**Social media:** the coined term 'Social media' defies universal definition. It is a concept that is broadly used to describe any number of technological systems related to collaboration and community (Joosten, 2012). According to Carr (2015), "social media are Internet-based channels that allow users to opportunistically interact and selectively self-present, either in real-time or asynchronously, with both broad and narrow audiences who derive value from user-generated content and the perception of interaction with others". While to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), "social media is a group of Internet-based applications that builds on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allows the creation and

*Implications of Social Media on Teaching and Learning: A Phenomenological Study on Student's Experiences in Yobe State-Owned Tertiary Institutions*

exchange of user-generated content”, social media as defined by Miller, (2016) refers to the “colonization of the space between traditional broadcast and private dyadic communication, providing people with a scale of group size and degrees of privacy that we have termed “scalable sociality.” However, the commonality in all these definitions centred on social media are type of platforms where users create, share, and engage with content, emphasizing user-generated contributions and the presence of individual profiles (Obar, 2015). Whether it’s posting a tweet, sharing an Instagram story, or participating in online discussions, social media has become an integral part of our digital lives. Below are some examples of social media platforms most used by students

**Facebook:** one of the most popular social networking sites is Facebook, which was created in 2004 by Harvard freshman Mark Zuckerberg. According to studies, 94% of college students use the website and spend 10 to 15 minutes there with 150–200 pals. Ninety percent of college freshmen currently have Facebook profiles (Carreon, et al. 2019)

**WhatsApp:** WhatsApp Messenger is a communication tool that allows users to send instant messages, photos, videos, and voice messages and to make voice calls over an Internet connection (Koparal, et al., 2019). WhatsApp is currently one of the most popular mobile apps with over 1 million users at the end of 2009, increasing to tenfold users in 2010

**Twitter:** Often referred to as a microblogging service, Twitter is a social networking platform. Twitter restricts postings and updates to 160 characters, unlike Facebook or MySpace. Due to its relatively short post lengths, some have proposed that Twitter facilitates speedier communication (Java, Song, Finin, & Tseng, 2007). According to Java et al. (2007), a typical micro blogger updates many times a day, in contrast to the regular blogger who may post every few days.

**Telegram:** Telegram is a cloud-based messaging app that allows users to log in simultaneously from several devices and have their messages automatically sync across them all. Because the media and messages in the Telegram app are kept in the cloud, it uses less than 100 MB of storage on a smartphone. Messages can be sent one-to-one with a single person or one-to-many through channels or groups (Abdul, 2021) and its instant messaging is the ideal method for sharing huge files since it supports a wide range of media types and files up to 2 GB in size (Archambault, 2021). Either individual sent messages can be removed, or a contact's whole chat history can be erased.

Positive implications of social media in teaching and learning have been established in literature. For instance, in an exploratory study on the impact of WhatsApp on education using content analysis, Cetinkaya (2017) found that WhatsApp is more effective in complementing traditional learning environments and boosting student achievement than other learning environments. While examining the impact of social media learning environments on the learning process of students studying Architecture, Engineering, and Construction (AEC) in Nigeria, Gambo (2023) reported that social media platforms enhance students' learning experiences by facilitating collaboration, discussions, and knowledge sharing among peers. However, the study also highlighted the need for proper guidance and monitoring to ensure that students are using social media responsibly and effectively in their academic pursuits. Furthermore, a study on the effects of social media on undergraduate students' achievement and interest in chemistry in the North-central geo-political zone, Fatokun (2019) reported a positive impact on students' achievement, increased students' interest and motivation, demonstration of deeper understanding.

Consequently, the study highlighted the importance of monitoring social media usage to

ensure that it is used in a constructive and academic-focused manner.

The usage of social media in teaching and learning has not been without negative implications. Several studies have established the negative implications of social media in teaching and learning processes. For example, Amadi (2018) in an examination of the relationship between social media networking and academic performance among university students, found that excessive use of social media can have a negative impact on students' academic performance. The study highlighted the need for students to balance their online activities with their studies. In a related study on the effect of social media usage on students' academic performance, Ahmad (2019) found that excessive use of social media can lead to distractions and decreased academic performance. The study suggests that there is a correlation between high social media usage and poor academic performance among students. It concludes by recommending that students should limit their time spent on social media in order to improve their academic outcomes. Additionally, Araoye (2018) found that social media can lead to procrastination among students, leading to poor academic performance. The study suggests that there is a need for students to manage their time on social media effectively in order to improve their academic performance. Furthermore, a study carried out by Nkordeh (2017) on the impact of social media on the reading culture of Nigerian youths, reported that while social media can offer educational opportunities, it equally poses the challenges for traditional reading habits and critical thinking skills among students.

## **Methodology**

A useful qualitative tool for exploring how different people perceive a common phenomenon is phenomenology (Creswell, 2013; Litchman, 2013). The primary, common phenomena of interest for this study was the

implications of social media on teaching and learning. Participants were gathered from 7 tertiary institutions of learning owned by Yobe state government. Experience with social media use and temptation while working on autonomous academic activities was necessary for participants to give insightful interview replies. Thus, in order to choose individuals who were familiar with the topic of interest, criteria sampling was used. Within the final sample, fifteen undergraduate students participated. Participants came from final levels of their studies and a range academic discipline. Participants' ages varied from 20 to 25 years old. The interview methodology used was semi-structured guided by interview prompts to obtain data. The researcher used voice recorders to record the interviews and the data collected was transcribed. Data collection ended at the point of saturation. This is a stage where no new themes were emerging from the data, codes were concatenated into clusters of meaning (Creswell, 2012).

Following the interview process and transcription, the replies were analysed using phenomenological data analysis approaches (Moustakas, 1994) to find emergent themes. The preliminary exploratory analysis method recommended by Creswell (2012) was first used by the researcher to examine the transcriptions. To get closer to the data during this early study, important memos were written inside the transcripts. Next, the interview data were subjected to the horizontalization process that Moustakas (1994) had recommended. This stage found "significant statements" on the experiences of students using social media.

As a consequence of this approach, two major themes emerged on the implications of social media on teaching and learning among students of Yobe state-owned tertiary institutions. Each of these major themes; positive and negative implications comprise of other several sub-themes as presented below in findings and discussion section.

## **Findings and discussions**

*Implications of Social Media on Teaching and Learning: A Phenomenological Study on Student's Experiences in Yobe State-Owned Tertiary Institutions*

The main purpose of this study was to explore experiences on implications of social media among final year students of Yobe state-owned tertiary institutions. Informants were asked to narrate their experiences on the perceived implications of social media on teaching and learning. Consequently, several themes emerged from the data collected through in-depth interviews and are categorized here under two broad themes. These themes are positive and negative themes. For the purposes of confidentiality, pseudonyms were used throughout instead of informant's real names.

### **Positive implications of social media on teaching and learning**

For purposes of clarity, we refer to positive implications as those effects of social media usage that have progressively influenced teaching and learning.

**Higher Academic Performance:** One positive implication unanimously mentioned by informants is higher academic achievements. Informants are of the view that their reliance on social media in the pursuance of academic tasks had significantly enhanced their achievements. In the words of P2, *"if not for the soft copy of the course resources shared by a colleague in the platform, I don't think I will pass most courses in the just concluded examination"*. While P10 stated that *the creation of our course platform has been a wonder idea*, P8 disclosed that *the virtual interactions and sharing of resources greatly influenced my understanding of some concepts better than class lectures*. Based on the informants' narrations above, most informants agreed that their usage and reliance on social media in teaching and learning has not only impacted their better understanding of course content, but ultimately resulted in passing their examination with better grades. This finding is in support of Cetinkaya's (2017) who reported that WhatsApp is more effective in boosting students' academic performance than the traditional learning environment.

**Enhanced collaboration and discussions:** Effective teaching and learning need cooperation and conversation. They not only improve students' academic achievement but also foster the growth of their communication, critical thinking, and feeling of community. Findings in this study also suggest that social media has played a vital role in enhancing students' academic cooperation and discussion. Statements in relation this were variously expressed by informants. To P5, *"unlike in the past, group discussion among course mates is increasingly becoming easier with the aid of social networking sites"* and to P 14, *social media is superb. I can now relate with my course mates within a matter of click and at my comfort zone. This has eased the previous burden of converging in classroom and sometimes with disappointments*. While P 9 simply stated that *I am now closer to my course mates. I can relate with them easily wherever I happen to be and readily discuss academic issues through social media*.

True to the assertions of informants, the positive implications of social media do not only impact on students but teachers as well. Teachers may create a dynamic and engaging learning environment that equips students for success in school and beyond by promoting cooperation and conversation in the classroom. Again, this finding is consistent with Gambo (2023) who reported that social media platforms enhance students' learning experiences by facilitating collaboration, discussions and knowledge sharing.

**Increased students' motivation and interest:** social media can play a significant role in arousing students' interest and motivation towards teaching and learning in several ways. For instance, social media can provide avenues for communication, students' engagement with multimedia content such as videos and images, and personalization of learning experience for each student by providing them with tailored resources, feedback, and support. Most informants, while expressing their experiences,

opined that social media is a great motivator to teaching and learning activities. Such expressions like “*social media platforms are now indispensable*” (P 10), “*WhatsApp has revolutionized teaching and learning, thereby motivated students’ interest and making the process easier and cheaper compared to previous times*” (P 7) and P 13 claimed in support that “*learning would have cumbersome and less interesting without social media*”. These statements are suggestive that students of Yobe state-owned tertiary institutions have developed more interest to teaching and learning as a result of social media usage and is being a great motivator to teaching and learning.

### **Negative implications of teaching and learning**

While social media can have some positive implications on teaching and learning, however, findings in this study shows that social media can as well have some drawbacks. The drawbacks that became evident in this study include; distraction of students’ academic activities, procrastination among students and deterioration of reading culture.

***Distraction of students’ academic activities:*** social media can be a major distraction for students when they are trying to focus on their academic activities. With the constant notifications, updates, and messages that social media platforms offer, it can be easy for students to get sidetracked and spend more time on their devices than they should be. While commenting on the obstructive nature of social media particularly during class periods, P 9 stated that “*I still find it difficult to prioritize my attention between social media and lectures*”. As a confirmation to P 9 on this, P 12 noted that “*most times, I had to leave lecture hall to attend to social media notification*”. “*I still remember the day when a lecturer sent me out of class when I was chatting with a friend while lectures were on-going*” (P 6). These expressions captured in interviews with informant are indicative of fact that social media is a source

of students’ distraction in teaching and learning. This finding is also consistent with Ahmad (2019) who reported that excessive use of social media can lead to distractions and decreased academic performance.

***Procrastination among students:*** The act of delaying or postponing obligations or tasks often in order to give attention to less significant or more pleasurable activities is known as procrastination. With the constant availability of social media platforms, students often find themselves easily distracted and spending hours scrolling through feeds, commenting on posts, and engaging in online conversations. As a result, they may put off important tasks such as studying, completing assignments, or preparing for exams. Similarly, findings in this study also suggested that students experience procrastination as a result of constant usage of social media as expressed by informants in the following statements. “*Rather than concentrating on academic contents, I spend more time on surfing and watching football matches when I am supposed to be reading for examinations*” (P 10). P 6 simply stated that “*If I had spent so much time focussing on online discussions and academic interactions than gaming, my scores for last semester would have been better*”. This finding is similar to Araoye (2018) who also found that excessive use of social media can lead to procrastination among students.

***Deterioration of reading culture:*** Social media's continual barrage of brief, readily readable material is one way it has aided in the decline of reading culture. Social media's rapid tempo promotes skimming and speedy surfing over in-depth reading of written content. This may result in shorter attention spans and a propensity for rapid satisfaction rather than reading slowly and thoroughly. Earlier, Nkordeh (2017) has reported on a similar that social while social media can offer educational opportunities, it can also pose the challenges of deterioration of reading habits and critical thinking among students.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this phenomenological study has revealed a range of implications of social media on teaching and learning among final year students of Yobe state-owned tertiary institutions. On the positive side, social media has been found to increase student engagement, facilitate collaboration and communication, and provide new avenues for learning and sharing information. Additionally, social media has the potential to enhance creativity and critical thinking skills among students. However, the study also uncovered negative implications of social media in education. These include the potential for distraction, procrastination among students and deterioration of reading culture. It is important for educators to be mindful of the potential benefits and drawbacks of incorporating social media into the teaching and learning process. By implementing appropriate guidelines and strategies, educators can harness the positive aspects of social media while mitigating the negative implications, ultimately enhancing student learning outcomes in the digital age.

## Recommendations

Based on the data collected and analysed on the implications of social media on teaching and learning among final year students of Yobe state-owned tertiary institutions, this study recommends as follows;

1. While encouraging the implementation of educational social media platforms specifically designed for academic purposes in schools and classrooms to promote collaboration and motivation among students, the need to provide training and guidelines for students on how to effectively use social media for educational purposes, equally requires attention
2. The need to address the issue of procrastination by teaching students time management skills and strategies

for using social media in a productive manner.

3. Provide resources and support for students who may be struggling with distractions caused by social media, such as implementing digital detox programs or setting guidelines for social media use during study hours.

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