

## A STUDY ON SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS ACADEMIC WORK AMONG STUDENTS OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN THE GAMBIA

Juwara, K.<sup>1</sup> & Dr. Menon, R. B.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Amrita School for Sustainable Development, Amritapuri Campus, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, Kerala, India.*

[am.id.dids22064@am.students.amrita.edu](mailto:am.id.dids22064@am.students.amrita.edu)

<sup>2</sup>*Department of Commerce and Management Amrita School of Arts, Humanities, and Commerce, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, Mysuru, India.*

[b-rethy@my.amrita.edu](mailto:b-rethy@my.amrita.edu)

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### Abstract

This study aims to establish the relationship between social media usage and attitudes towards academic work among the students of higher education Institutions in the Gambia. The study is important as some studies found it negative to students learning (Lenhart, 2010, Sharive, 2018) and thus needs attention. The study adopts quantitative research with two hundred and twenty-eight students chosen randomly from a population of nine hundred and ninety-seven (997) students and identified using Krejci Morgan's (1970) table. The respondents are year two students from the University of The Gambia (UTG) and the University of Science Engineering and Technology (USET). The study uses survey methods to collect and analyze data using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). The study uses descriptive analysis-test ANOVA and correlation. The key finding suggests that students' SM usage decreases their attitude toward academic work.

**Keywords:** Time displacement theory, Social Media usage, Students, attitude to academic work, Higher Education Institutions.

### INTRODUCTION

Social Media (SM) has become a dominant force in our daily lives(Jain, 2017), displacing us from our roles(Kayang &Jelsma, 2000) and creating a vacuum in other places. A 2023 global SM usage report shows 60% of the world's population uses SM, with an additional 150 million users in the last 12 months (Social & Metwater,2023). This growth is attributed to exposure, accessibility, and addictiveness, demonstrating resilience in the expansion of SM penetrations worldwide. The recent significant rise in SM penetration rate across the globe and regions, including Eastern and Southern Asia, Northern America and Southern America, North and Western Europe, and Africa(Social & Melt water, 2023, Bhoomani et al, 2019, Boyd & Ellison,2007), has implications for many nations such as Gambia where 17.1% of its populations are active SM users((Social & Melt water(2023) and children and youths thus having implication for students attitude towards academic work and overall success of higher education institution of the Gambia .

## Objectives

1. To find out the level of social media usage and attitude towards academic work among the students at higher education institutes in Gambia.
2. To find out the significant difference in social media usage and attitude towards academic work based on demographic variables.
3. To find out the relationship between social media usage and attitude toward academic work among the students at higher education institutes in Gambia.

## Hypothesis

1. There exists a high level of social media usage and attitude towards academic work among the students at higher education institutes in Gambia.
- 2 There is a significant difference in the level of social media usage and attitude toward academic work based on demographic variables.
3. There exists a relationship between social media usage and attitude toward academic work among the students at higher education institutes in Gambia.

## Problem Statement

Social media (SM) usage in higher education institutions in the Gambia is a concern due to its potential negative effects it is reported to have on students' academic performance and academic attitudes of students (Lenhart et al 2010, Shariver, 2018). Studies show that SM usage can lead to cyberbullying, poor performance, dropping out of school (Rumberger & Lims (2008), violence, or suicide. With a global annual increase rate of 12 million users , and with 17.1% (Social & Melt water, 2023)Gambians already SM users and there are concerns that it could beset learning as more school going children and youth embrace it as it seems now .Therefore, it is crucial to explore SM usage in Gambia to address this issue with a view to promote a production and industrialized economy. The research is anchored on the time displacement theory which is elaborated below.

## Time Displacement Theory

This theory was proposed by Price(1965)and Merton(1968) and suggests that scientific achievements are due to concentration on one activity over time, which displaces time for other activities (Kayang & Jelsma,2000,Tokunaga et al, 2016), leading to success or failure (Weiss 1968, Robinson, 1981, James,1995). This concept was used by media practitioners to understand how modern media has replaced traditional media. For example, studies have shown that the emergence of televisions and computers has reduced time spent on radios or social activities, but this notion of a negative correlation has been contested by some scholars (LazarFeld,1940,Robinson,1997,Grotta & Newson,1982, Neil, 2001). However, this study hypothesized that students' social media usage negatively impacts their attitude toward academic work, suggesting that higher SM usage leads to lower attitudes toward academic work.This theory is

relevant in this study because we consider social media as distracting learning which result to under-performance and dropout (Rumberger & Lims, 2008)

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Social Media (SM) is one of the latest technologies and innovations today that facilitates the easy (Mushtaq et al.'s (2018) and faster exchange of information, knowledge sharing, ensures social interaction (Hossain, 2020) and teaming among students (Masserini & Bini, (2021). These invariably establish a solid foundation for student learning. However, it is argued that overused or excessive use of social media also displaces (Kayany & Jelsma, 2000) students from their studies hence reducing academic scores (Karpinski, 2009, Yang et al.'s 2013, Akubugwo et al, 2013) hacking (Gonta, 2020) dropout (Rumberger & Lims (2008) Violence and suicide (Lakitta, 2016). According to time displacement theory (Kayang & Jelsma, 2000) the time students spend on the internet displaces their study time leading to under-performance (Englander et al's 2010, Salmela-Aro et al's 2017). However, there are arguments regarding the impact of SM on student academic achievements. Studies argue that SM deters (Nalwa et al (2013) and enhances learning (Junco et al. (2011, Kauser & Awan, 2019, Luo et al 2020, Khan 2010) and grade (Karpinski, 2009). For example, Chukuere, (2013), Boobaaskrishnan's (2019) and Masserini & Bini, (2021) assert that SM helps student through online information sharing. Notwithstanding, SM is continuously impacting on people and students in particular ((Social & Melt water, 2023).

According to Barrera-Verdugo et al's (2022) study in Chile found that social media positively impacts students' attitudes towards entrepreneurship. Han's (2022) survey also found that flipped classrooms in English language improve learning but faced a skill gap between teachers and students. Additionally, Pietsch et al.'s (2023) study found that an app-based "Meine Zeit ohne" intervention improved students' academic and mental health. While Muthami et al's (2023) study found both positive and negative effects of social media on students. Hossain et al.'s (2020) study in Bangladesh also found that social media can reduce stress, promote networking, and improve academic growth but also affects sleep, health.

The reviewed studies have gaps ranging from lack of theory to small sample sizes, age bias, regional differences, and general scope and this study will look into SM usage at Higher education Gambia.

## **Research Questions**

1. Whether the students at higher education institutes in Gambia are more influenced by social media?
2. Whether the students at higher education institutes in the Gambia have a favorable attitude toward Academic Work?
3. Is there any relationship between Social Media usage and Attitude toward Academic work?

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study used a quantitative design to select participants from the University of Science Engineering and Technology (USET) and the University of the Gambia (UTG), with a total population of 997. The sample size is 278 respondents selected through simple random sampling, with a 95% confidence level and 5% standard error as well as use of Krejcie Morgan's (1970) table (Avadhani & Menon, 2022) sample size table. 278 questionnaires were administered to the respondents, but only 228 returned and the data was analyzed using SPSS. Results are presented in tables.

## ANALYSIS

### Result

1(1) To find out the level of social media usage and attitude towards academic work among the students at higher education institutes in Gambia. A grading table has been made to assess the level of social media usage and attitude towards academic work among the students at higher education institutes in Gambia. The mean score rating is as follows: 1-12 - low level, 13-24 - moderate level, and 25-35 - high level. Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of the survey. The result in this table revealed that the mean value is 28.83 with a standard deviation of 3.832. Based on the grading table there exists a high level of social media usage among the students at higher education institutions in Gambia. The result further revealed that the mean value is 20.93 with a standard deviation of 3.702. Based on the grading table, there is moderate social media usage among students at higher education institutes in Gambia. This table is located after the reference.

**Table 1:** Descriptive Statistics of Social Media Usage and Attitude towards Work

Descriptive Statistics	Social Media Usage	Attitude Towards Work
Mean	28.83	20.93
Standard deviation	3.832	3.702

2 1). To find out the significant difference in Social Media Usage and Attitude toward Academic Work based on gender and age among the students at higher education institutes in the Gambia, a t-test was conducted. The t-test analysis was done to compare social media usage and attitudes toward academic work by students based on gender. The result (Table 2) showed that there was no significant difference in terms of gender as the t-value was equal to t-0.58 at the level of social media usage, and t-0.30 at the level of attitude towards work. The p-value was also 0.053 at the level of social media usage and .076 at the level of attitude toward academic work. Thus, there is no significant difference between Social Media Usage and Attitude toward Academic Work based on gender.

**Table 2.** Comparison of Social Media Usage and Attitude towards Academic Work based on gender.

Variable	Gender	Frequency	Mean	Standard Deviation	t	p-value
Social Media Usage	Male	151	28.73	3.745	0.58	0.53
	Female	77	29.06	3.025	4	2
Academic Work	Male	151	20.85	3.660	0.30	0.76
	Female	77	21.01	3.827	5	1

An ANOVA test was carried out to analyze social media usage and attitude towards academic work. The result (Table 3) has indicated no statistical significance since the results at the level of social media usage were  $f=1.076$  and  $Sig=.343$  and at the level of attitude towards work,  $f=.769$  and  $Sig=.465$ . The table displays the age-based analysis of the data on Social Media Usage and Attitudes towards Academic work has no statistical significance.

**Table 3** ANOVA Social Media Usage & Total Attitude towards Academic Work

	Sum of Square	Df	Mean Square	f	Sig
<b>ANOVA FOR SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE</b>					
Within Group	31.564	2	15.782	1.075	.343
Between Group	3314.794	226	14.676		
Total	3348.358	228			
<b>ANOVA FOR ATTITUDE TOWARD ACADEMIC WORK</b>					
Within Group	21.107	2	10.554	0.769	.465
Between Group	3102.779	226	13.729		
Total	3123.886	228			

3(1). To find out the relationship between social media usage and attitude toward academic work among students at higher education institutes in the Gambia, a correlation test which was\* significant at P-Value 0.05 (2 t-tailed) was conducted and it emerged that there was a correlation between the two variables which was significant at 0.05. This indicates negative correlations between the two variables, which also means as social media usage increases, attitude toward academic work decreases. This result validates the theoretical assumptions that the time students spend on social media displaces the time they have for learning which results to a decreased attitude toward learning as indicated in Table 4.

**Table 4** Correlation

		Total social media usage	Total attitude towards academic work
Total social media usage	Pearson correlations	1	-.156*
	Sig(2-tailed)		.018
	N		229
Total attitude towards academic work	Pearson correlations	-.156*	1
	Sig(2-tailed)	.018	
	N	229	

### Tenability of Hypothesis

HO1: Since social media usage is high level and Attitude toward academic work is at moderate levels, the first hypothesis is partially accepted.

HO2: The second hypothesis is completely rejected because there is no noticeable significant difference in social media usage and Attitude towards Academic work based on gender and age.

HO3: The third hypothesis is completely accepted, and we can see a negative correlation between social media usage and Attitude toward Academic work.

## **DISCUSSIONS**

The study reveals that students in higher education institutions in the Gambia are highly active on social media and their attitude toward academic work is moderate. This supports the theory and Hypothesis one that there is high level used of SM among the higher education students of The Gambia. The descriptive test also revealed that students performance was moderate due to SM usage this finding agree corroborates with Lenhart (2010), Shariver, 2018) Salmela-Aro et al (2017), Boyd and Ellison (2007), and (Social & Melt water (2023) who made similar findings. This has serious implication for learning and therefore a need for strong school social media regulations. The study also found no significant difference in social media usage among different ages and genders, contradicting hypothesis two yet having implication on education management and therefore, a need for age and gender specific SM measures. Finally, it was found that increased social media usage leads to a decrease in students' attitudes towards academic work which supports hypothesis three assumption and also corroborated by other studies (Karpinski, 2009, Yang et al.'s 2013, Akubugwo et al, 2013, Lenhart, 2010, Shariver, 2018). This has negative consequences on the performance, graduation and skill set of the students which negatively impact on the Socio- economic transformation of the country as well as the continent of Africa especially in its path to sustainable development. Therefore, a need for collaborative counseling and school SM regulations.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

The relationship test results indicate a negative correlation between students' increased use of social media and a decrease in their attitudes toward academic work. This is consistent with hypothesis three (H3), which predicts a decrease in students' attitudes towards academic work potentially affecting learning and national development. Thus a need for school social media policies to regulate student behaviors. The involvement of both genders and ages in social media usage which was also predicted by hypothesis (1) also poses challenge to performance rate and a need for school counseling. Decrease attitude to school could influence cyber crime and dropout rate and poor national development thus a need for community school and state partnership to address the upsurge.

## **LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

The study's limitation is the absence of socioeconomic and religious variables to measure students' social media usage and attitude towards academic attitudes, necessitating future research.

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## AUTHORS' DECLARATION

This manuscript is accurate, and the data will be available.

### Authors' contribution

Kemo Juwara – Conceptualisation, methodology, analysis, review, investigation, writing, Dr Rethy B. Menon – Editing, formal Analysis. All authors have read and agreed to publish the manuscript.

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### Conflict of Interest

The research authors have no conflict as far as this paper is concerned. It is purely for no monetary gain but academic purposes only.

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