

Social Media Usage and Its Impact on Learning and Social Behaviour among Nigerian Tertiary Students

Safina Sabo¹; and Celestina Audu²

¹Department of Mass Communication, School of Information Technology, Federal Polytechnic Nasarawa, Nasarawa State, Nigeria. ²Department of Humanities and Social Science, School of General Studies, Federal Polytechnic Nasarawa, Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.62154/ajhcer.2025.019.01030>

Abstract

Due to the globalization of communication, the surge in the use of social media platforms for education across various disciplines of study is undoubtedly increasing. From the standpoint of constructive use, social media has enabled teachers and students to exchange ideas and opinions on a variety of topics. However, the negative impacts of social media use on students' academic performance are likely caused by a number of problems. Through the use of a design questionnaire for data analysis, 200 students from Nigerian polytechnics were chosen to take part in the research project. According to the data, 62% of the student participants are addicted to using social media platforms for non-academic purposes, and 92% of them do not use social media for academic activities. Additionally, 26% of the respondents reported spending 6–10 hours on social media, while 65% reported spending 1–5 hours. Regretfully, 9% of the students who responded said they typically use social networking sites for more than 11 hours every day. This measurement of social media platform usage time showed a negative correlation with students' academic time availability and delayed time to sleep as a result of social interactions. In summary, the majority of participants said they spent a lot of time on social networking platforms for non-academic reasons. The behaviours may have a detrimental effect on the students' academic performance and sleep duration. As a result, the students might be more vulnerable to problems like academic failure and health challenges.

Keywords: Academic, Learning, Social Media, Tertiary Institution, Nigeria.

Introduction

Social media-based learning is a process where students study through the use of social media networking sites via cooperation and social interactions. The rise of social media has enormous potential to influence young people's learning capabilities and social regimes. Using social media has several effects on users, both good and bad. Because social media plays such an important role in education, academic tutors have encouraged students to use it for learning despite the difficulties that come with it (Kolha et al., 2021). Over the past few years, the use of various social media technologies has increased dramatically. The emergence of social media tools such as blogging platforms, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and others has taken the global academic achievements to the next level. Typically, social media tools are used outside the fold of a classroom, but in some cases, they are used within the framework of the classroom under the supervision of the teachers. Social media

platforms are used for quick and easy sharing of information among the community of users.

Students like using social media sites to enhance and supplement their learning activities, according to the study conducted by Veletsianos and Navarrete (2012). Significant evidence suggests that many students have profited from using social media platforms to increase their learning potential, although not all users have experienced these benefits, considering the learning approach of the students (Brady et al., 2010). Learning success is a product of learning performance, which hinges on learning style. The methods and modes of learning are very important because learning generally involves some integrated concepts. Modern learning involves the use of analogue and digital technologies, such as social media technologies.

Unfortunately, it was believed by many that social media usage has a lot of unreasonable effects compared to its positive benefits, especially in this era where students spend more time on social media doing other things outside the fold of their normal learning. There are so many indications that many students now spend more time on social media for non-educational purposes, with more distractions from their academic work (Bekalu et al., 2019). The overuse of social media networking systems can lead to an unproductive daily lifestyle concerning our physical and mental health. Excessive use of social media tends to affect human mental health. Depression and anxiety can also emerge from the uncontrollable use of social media networking sites. Due to the increasing negative consequences of excessive use of social media, there is a high demand to examine the drivers behind user behaviour. Therefore, this study strives to examine how students use social media in learning and its impacts on their social regime in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Examining the impact of tertiary students' use of social media based on the identification of factors influencing their intentions to use social media is the aim of the current study.

Objective of the Research

The objectives of this present study are:

- To examine the impact of tertiary students' use of social media based on the identification of factors influencing their intentions to use social media.
- To determine the extent of social media usage for learning among the tertiary education students in Nigeria.

Significance of the Study

Social media is a platform of linkages for people, but likely, these connections are merely used for positive or negative benefits. To determine whether social media truly serves as a social support system for students and whether they can utilise it to manage their studies and cultivate positive impacts, additional research is required to fully understand the psychological effects of social media on student life.

Literature Review

According to Charoensukmongkol (2018), excessive and uncontrolled use of social media can pose a serious threat to the general well-being of people. The study also shows how social media might have detrimental emotional effects on users, especially teenagers, by increasing social encounters. Fleck and Johnson-Migalski (2015) state that social media was initially developed to serve as a stress relief mechanism, but people eventually start to suffer stress as a result of excessive usage of the platforms. In addition, the content of social media chat can be negative, thereby invoking a bad mood in the individuals involved in the chat. According to Alahmar (2016), social media introduces people, particularly the younger generation, to brand-new, fascinating events and activities that may draw them in and keep them occupied for hours on end with various media contexts. It typically results in decreased academic performance and decreased productivity. Public sentiment is mostly caused by social media platforms, according to Chukwuere and Chukwuere (2017). According to a comprehensive review, students' academic performance improved when they used social media platforms for academic purposes, but it suffered when they used them for non-academic purposes (Gao, 2021). Using social media for academic purposes was linked to greater levels of educational attainment, according to a recent study of about 6000 Chinese undergraduate students (Hughes-Nind et al., 2024). A study by Camilia et al. (2013) examined how students use social networking sites and the impact it has on them. It investigates how their studies are impacted by their frequent usage of social networking sites. Six hundred respondents from several tertiary institutions in Mubi, Adamawa State, Nigeria, were given questionnaires. The study found that students at tertiary institutions in Mubi who frequently use social networking sites suffer from a number of detrimental effects.

In a research by Uche and Obiora (2016) on survey methodology. For data collection and analysis, a closed-ended questionnaire was used to choose a sample size of 393 undergraduate students from two higher institutions in Enugu. According to the findings, Nigerian students most frequently use Facebook and WhatsApp as social media platforms for informative, entertainment, and social interaction. It was found that rather than using social media to source and analyse academic material, most students utilise it to socialize. Oni and Osu (2023) investigated the connection between antisocial conduct, social media use, and its effects on students attending postsecondary institutions. We looked at the influencing elements. Through a descriptive survey design in a structured questionnaire, the most common forms of antisocial behaviour on social media platforms among students in postsecondary institutions, contributing factors to the development of antisocial behaviour, the average number of hours students spend on social media each day, and the differences in social media use between male and female students were identified. Numerous other research (Abubakar and Aliyu 2024; Aregbesola and Van der Walt, 2024; Ngonso et al., 2024) have also focused on social media use and its connection to social behaviour and learning among Nigerian tertiary students. Even with the several studies mentioned above, there is still a fair amount of research to be done on social media use and

how it affects Nigerian tertiary students' social behaviour and learning. None of the studies compare Nigeria's many polytechnics, particularly those from various geographical zones. In order to close the gap, this study was created.

Research Materials and Methods

For this study, 200 students were chosen from four universities to gather the necessary research data. The demographic data of the sample population is presented in Table 1. The participants were carefully selected with their agreement and given instructions before answering the questions in the questionnaire's structure. Students who have attended their institutions for more than a year are eligible to participate in the questionnaire to prevent erroneous answers based on inadequate knowledge. Each respondent is also given ample opportunity to review the questionnaire to furnish accurate and trustworthy responses to each question. Use of social media for academic purposes, addiction to social media use, excessive use of social media, duration of social media use, impact of social media on sleep duration, and obsession with social media use for non-academic purposes are all reflected in the questionnaire. Undergraduate students who were active on at least one social media platform were invited to participate in the study throughout the school day after the questionnaire was finalised. As a result, the final sample size of 200 students was sufficient for the intended analyses. Students between the ages of 16 and 30 made up our final sample, both male and female.

Table 1: Demographic information of the sample population

	N	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	90	45
Female	110	55
Age		
16–20 years old	130	65
21–25 years old	46	23
26–30 years old	24	12
Educational level		
National Diploma II	86	43
Higher National Diploma II	114	57

Results

Among the 200 students who were selected as respondents for this study, it was 190, representing 95% of the selected population who are conversant with the use of different social media platforms as shown in Fig. 1. The age range of the majority of the respondents who are users of the different kinds of social media platforms is 16-20 years, while the age range of those who are not users of different social media platforms ranges from 21-25 years, including a very few in the age range of 26-30 years as shown in Fig. 1. Various social media platforms serve a range of audiences and serve a variety of purposes. Instagram is

well-known for its short-form videos and visual material, whereas Facebook emphasises communicating with friends and family. Twitter is well-known for breaking news and instant updates, whereas LinkedIn is mainly used for professional networking and job searches. YouTube is a repository for longer-form video content, whereas TikTok is a platform for short, engaging videos. For businesses and academic purposes, successfully connecting and interacting with their target audience requires selecting the appropriate social media platform. Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, Snapchat, and Instagram were considered the various social media platforms that best suited the specific requirements and objectives of this study.

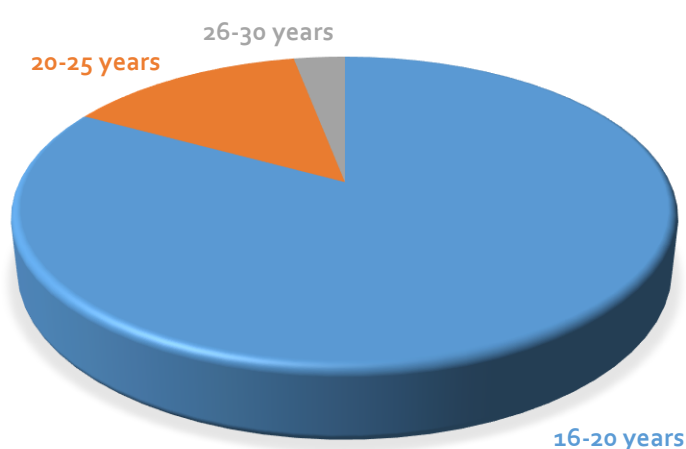


Fig. 1: Age range of social media user participants in the research

Discussion of Results

Use of social media for academic and non-academic purposes

Due to the widespread availability of cell phones and the ease with which social networking sites can be accessed through home computers, students at postsecondary institutions frequently utilise them. Students spend less time on academic tasks when they utilise social media. Social media platforms can currently be utilised to obtain information that is needed for educational reasons. However, research has indicated a considerable positive correlation between social media use and academic achievement, whereas social media use has a detrimental impact on academic development. Students who spend more time on social media platforms are more likely to perform poorly academically, according to previous research. This is because, rather than reading books, they spend time on social media platforms establishing friendships and engaging in online chats.

Instead of using social networking sites for academic objectives, the majority of participants used them for conversation. For the academic purpose of using the selected social media platform, it was presented that only 7% (N = 14) of the respondents used the platforms for academic purposes, while the remaining 93% (N = 186) agreed that they do not use the

social media platform for academic purposes, as illustrated in Fig. 2. This indicated that the majority of the students from the selected institutions are not disposed to using social media platforms for educational purposes. From a consequential point of view, this situation can have a serious negative impact on their academic performance. This presentation concurs with the findings presented by Abbas et al (2019), which stated that the use of social media platforms other than academic ones can strongly harm the academic performance of a student. According to a different study by Owusu-Acheaw and Larson (2015), students' academic performance may suffer if they use social media for non-academic objectives, particularly over an extended time.

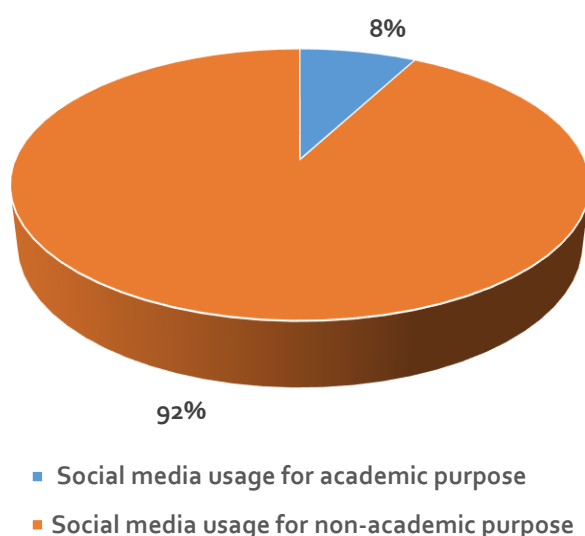


Fig. 2: Percentage of social media usage for both academic and non-academic usage

Addiction to social media usage for non-academic purposes

Social media addiction manifests as excessive online time, obsession with social media, loss of control over internet usage, a constant need for access to social media platforms, and a continuous increase in time spent on social media. Addiction to non-academic social media use is a serious issue that manifests as habitual use of social media platforms that disrupts many aspects of life. This addiction can have a detrimental effect on one's physical and mental health, social interactions, and academic achievement. Students at tertiary institutions use their smartphones to access social networking sites both on and off campus, especially those who are addicted to them. In the field of education, social media is crucial. Due to the abundance of social networking sites, students spend less time on educational tasks and more time chatting, watching films, and playing games (Abbas et al., 2019). In this study, 62% (N = 104) of the respondents responded that they are addicted to social media usage for non-academic purposes, while the remaining 38% responded that they are not addicted to the use of social media, as represented in Fig. 3.

A further analysis of this result indicated that for those who are addicted, the usage of social media networking sites may lead to self-pressure to finish their schoolwork as soon as possible because they were lured to new social media sites. Under a normal situation, students are supposed to use social media platforms for academic purposes to acquire valuable knowledge with the potential to improve their academic performance. Unfortunately, the addiction of a student to social media platforms can result in a very problematic situation that will waste their time that is meant for studies. The failure of students to use their time for fruitful academic activities may result in poor performance on competitive examinations and negatively impact the assimilation of knowledge. There is no doubt that the use of social media by tertiary institution students has significantly expanded, and the use of social media platforms can have both advantages and disadvantages.

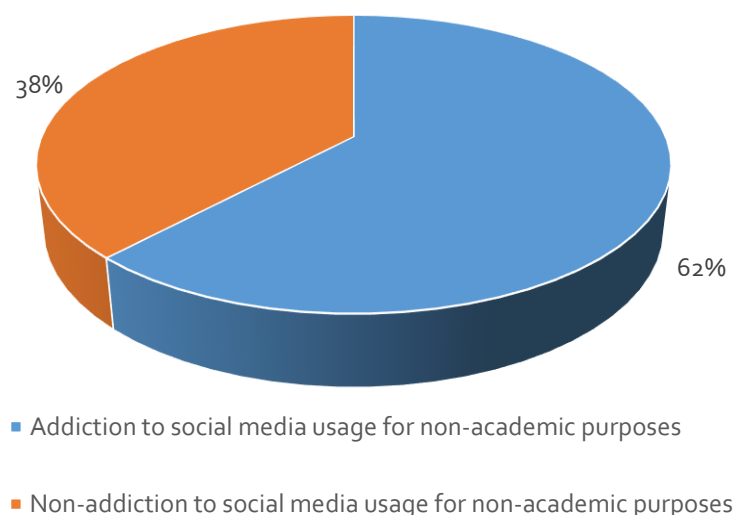


Fig. 3: Percentage of social media addiction and non-addiction for non-academic purposes

Duration of time on social media

A lot of people know that drugs, alcohol and gambling can be addictive to the human system (Lin et al., 2016). Still, not many know that social media can have the same addictive impact on our brains (Primack et al., 2017). Addiction in the human brain is a stimulation of an evolutionary hormone that helps us learn and repeat certain behaviours. Social media use can be acceptable in moderation, much like many other lifestyle decisions (Shensa et al., 2016). Due to its accessibility, ideas and concepts can be spread more quickly and widely than ever before. The incursion of different technologies associated with social media platforms enables us to improve our social life by keeping friends closer than before (Twenge, 2017). However, the time a student spends on social media is a critical factor. This factor can be used to determine the level of addiction of a social media user. Students use

social media for different hours both day and night, thereby spending more time than necessary.

It could be considered abnormal when a lot of time is spent on social media because of its potential impact on mental health and other negative aspects of human existence. People who are addicted to the use of social media sites as a result of long-term usage of the sites can expose themselves to risk in different ways, such as anxiety, sleep deprivation, depression, and psychological dissatisfaction. Rather than students spending their free time on reading and learning, they spend their time wrongly on social media. Additionally, excessive use of smartphones can lead to addiction and interfere with one's ability to spend relaxation time on the internet, chatting with friends and family, or searching for entertainment content. Furthermore, because learning and memory are impacted by sensory overload, the constant flow of information found in social media use can change the sensory perception of an individual, thereby impacting the mental health of the person (Rotondi et al., 2017).

In this study, the questionnaire was structured to capture three different categories of time the respondents spent on the social media platforms. The timeframes are grouped from 1 - 5 hours, 6 - 10 hours, and 11 hours and above in duration spent on social media. It was reported that 65% (N = 130) of the respondents spend between 1 – 5 hours on social media daily, while 26% (N = 52) responded that they spend between 6 – 10 hours. In addition, 9% of the total respondents of N = 200 agreed that they can spend above 11 hours daily on social media. From the outcomes presented, it can be deduced that the students spend a lot of time on social media and, by implication, that has a serious negative impact on their studies. Although the percentage of students who spent 6 hours and more is less than 50%, the consequences of spending a very long time on social media platforms far outweigh the benefits. For instance, spending a lot of time on social media at night has a potential effect on the sleeping duration of an individual. Insufficient sleep duration is a consequence of students going to bed late.

Lack of sleep is growing more common and is becoming a common trend in our society, and it has often been connected to late-night gaming and social media networking. A typical practice among many young folks is using a mobile phone late at night before sleeping. Sleep loss, irregular sleep-wake patterns, and an unnecessary delay of bedtime can be dangerous to human health. Increased daytime fatigue is a result of poor sleep quality. Getting more sleep may improve intellectual function and physical performance. Restricting sleep can negatively impact intellectual capabilities. Lack of sleep impairs health and makes people more susceptible to illnesses. Adequate sleep helps decrease the risk of unhealthy situations.

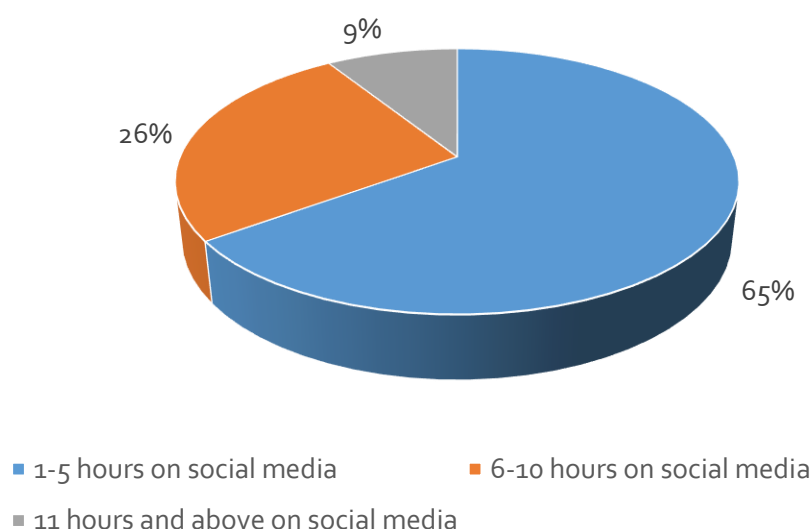


Fig. 4: Percentage of students spending different times on social media daily

Conclusions

From this study, it was observed that a majority of the students used social networking sites, but unfortunately, for non-academic purposes. It was also discovered that there is excessive usage of the social media platforms selected for the investigation in this study. Excessive social media use for non-academic purposes can distract students from their academic pursuits and delay their bedtime. Delaying bedtime lowers sleep quality and can consequently affect the health status of the individual. Therefore, this study found that the usage of social media among the polytechnic students in Nigeria has no relevant positive benefits concerning their academic pursuits. However, it can be concluded that the usage of social media platforms by the students is more connected to their interests, with a lot of non-academic connections. In furtherance, the findings of this study on the excessive time spent on social media, especially at night, can result in several chronic sleep restrictions with negative impacts on their health conditions. Additionally, excessive social media use can result in longer periods of sitting and less physical activity, which can eventually lead to a deskbound lifestyle. Chronic non-communicable disorders like hypertension and metabolic problems may become more likely as a result (Rotondi et al., 2017). Thus, it is strongly recommended that the habits that contribute to social media addiction and combat sleep deprivation, through the use of social media, should be discouraged through awareness campaigns by educational institutions.

Suggestions for Further Research

The majority of research publications concerning the use of social media have been largely quantitative or qualitative, and they are associated with a lot of drawbacks. Some other research methods, especially the cross-sectional methods, have attempted to address some of the challenges through a thorough appraisal of the possible correlations between the quantitative and qualitative approaches to address some of the long-term research

problems on the impact of social media on students. However, further studies can be designed for research on the investigation of critical emotive variables associated with the impact of social media usage on tertiary institution students. It is anticipated that additional longitudinal research will be able to demonstrate how ongoing social media use may impact changes in any of these affective variables throughout a student's academic career in tertiary institutions.

Acknowledgement

The authors acknowledge the financial support from the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) based on an Institution-Based Research (IBR) grant provided to the Federal Polytechnic Nasarawa (FPN).

References

- Abbas, J., Aman, J., Nurunnabi, M., & Bano, S. (2019). The impact of social media on learning behavior for sustainable education: Evidence of students from selected universities in Pakistan. *Sustainability*, 11(6), 1683.
- Abubakar, A., & Aliyu, S. A. A. (2024). Assessment of the application of social media among Muslims in tertiary institutions and its implications on their lives in Kaduna State, Nigeria. *Bulletin of Islamic Research*, 2(4), 629-652.
- Alahmar, A. T. (2016). The impact of social media on the academic performance of second year medical students at College of Medicine, University of Babylon, Iraq. *J Med Allied Sci*, 6(2), 77.
- Aregbesola, A., & Van der Walt, T. (2024). Evidence-based strategies for effective deployment, and utilisation of new media for educational purposes by Nigerian university students. *Education and Information Technologies*, 29(3), 3301-3364.
- Bekalu, M. A., McCloud, R. F., & Viswanath, K. (2019). Association of social media use with social well-being, positive mental health, and self-rated health: disentangling routine use from emotional connection to use. *Health Education & Behavior*, 46(2_suppl), 69S-80S.
- Brady, K. P., Holcomb, L. B., & Smith, B. V. (2010). The use of alternative social networking sites in higher educational settings: A case study of the e-learning benefits of Ning in education. *Journal of interactive online learning*, 9(2).
- Camilia, O. N., Ibrahim, S. D., & Dalhatu, B. L. (2013). The effect of social networking sites usage on the studies of Nigerian students. *The International Journal of Engineering and Science*, 2(7), 39-46.
- Charoensukmongkol, P. (2018). The impact of social media on social comparison and envy in teenagers: The moderating role of the parent comparing children and in-group competition among friends. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 27(1), 69-79.
- Chukwuere, J. E., & Chukwuere, P. C. (2017). The impact of social media on social lifestyle: A case study of university female students. *Gender and Behaviour*, 15(4), 9966-9981.
- Fleck, J., & Johnson-Migalski, L. (2015). The impact of social media on personal and professional lives: An Adlerian perspective. *The Journal of Individual Psychology*, 71(2), 135-142.
- Gao, T. (2021). How Social Media "Reverse Domesticates" and "Make the Best Use of Everything" from Students' Academic Achievement. In *E3S Web of Conferences* (Vol. 253, p. 03084). EDP Sciences.
- Hughes-Nind, J., Wang, M., Zhang, C., & Tibber, M. S. (2024). The association between motivations for social media use, stress and academic attainment. *Current Psychology*, 43(35), 28025-28037.
- Kolhar, M., Kazi, R. N. A., & Alameen, A. (2021). Effect of social media use on learning, social interactions, and sleep duration among university students. *Saudi journal of biological sciences*, 28(4), 2216-2222.

- Lin, L. Y., Sidani, J. E., Shensa, A., Radovic, A., Miller, E., Colditz, J. B., ... & Primack, B. A. (2016). Association between social media use and depression among US young adults. *Depression and anxiety*, 33(4), 323-331.
- Ngonso, B. F., Ukhurebor, K. E., Egielewa, P. E., Ndunagu, J. N., & Yaah-Nyakko, N. K. (2024). Impact of Social Media on Secondary Schools' Youths within Edo North, Edo State, Nigeria: A Psychological Perspective. *Journal of Education and e-Learning Research*, 11(1), 181-192.
- Oni, M. T., & Osu, U. C. (2023). Exploring Relationship between Social Media Use and Antisocial Behaviour among Tertiary Institution Students: An Investigative Study of Influencing Factors. *ASRIC JOURNAL ON SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES*, 75.
- Owusu-Acheaw, M., & Larson, A. G. (2015). Use of social media and its impact on academic performance of tertiary institution students: A study of students of Koforidua Polytechnic, Ghana.
- Primack, B. A., Shensa, A., Sidani, J. E., Whaite, E. O., yi Lin, L., Rosen, D., ... & Miller, E. (2017). Social media use and perceived social isolation among young adults in the US. *American journal of preventive medicine*, 53(1), 1-8.
- Rotondi, V., Stanca, L., & Tomasuolo, M. (2017). Connecting alone: Smartphone use, quality of social interactions and well-being. *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 63, 17-26.
- Shensa, A., Sidani, J. E., Lin, L. Y., Bowman, N. D., & Primack, B. A. (2016). Social media use and perceived emotional support among US young adults. *Journal of community health*, 41, 541-549.
- Twenge, J. M. (2017). *iGen: Why today's super-connected kids are growing up less rebellious, more tolerant, less happy--and completely unprepared for adulthood--and what that means for the rest of us*. Simon and Schuster.
- Uche, A. O., & Obiora, A. V. (2016). Social media typology, usage and effects on students of Nigerian tertiary institutions. *International Journal of Innovative Research and Development*, 5(8), 15-26.
- Veletsianos, G., & Navarrete, C. (2012). Online social networks as formal learning environments: Learner experiences and activities. *The international review of research in open and distributed learning*, 13(1), 144-166.