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Scroll or Study? Social Media Usage and Academic Orientation of Postgraduate Students across Academic Stream

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Abstract

The purpose of the study is to investigate how social media usage of postgraduate students differs by academic stream and whether social media usage correlates with their academic orientation. This study applies a quantitative method with 256 postgraduate students from arts and science streams. For data collection, participants completed self-reported questionnaires covering demographics, social media usage, and academic orientation. Results of statistical analysis indicate that social media usage and academic orientation of students differ significantly by academic stream. Additionally, correlation analysis demonstrates that social media usage is negatively correlated with students' academic orientation. This research contributes to the existing field of knowledge that excessive use of social media can have adverse effects on academic success. Based on these empirical results, it is concluded that students should be oriented towards the effective utilization of social media platforms for high academic engagement.

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1. Introduction

In the contemporary technology era, social media has emerged as one of the most transformative forces shaping human communication, interaction, and information exchange. The rapid advancement of digital technologies, smartphones, and high-speed internet has revolutionized how people connect, learn, and express themselves across global boundaries. Platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Twitter have become integral to everyday life, influencing social relationships, education, business, and even political engagement. Overall, social media in the present time represents a dual-edged phenomenon—empowering global communication and innovation while simultaneously demanding digital literacy, ethical awareness to ensure healthy and meaningful engagement in the digital world. As a popular way, students use social media to communicate with each other (Alwagait *et al.*, 2015) ^[2]. Social media usage can influence addictive behaviour. Many students develop compulsive habits of checking their phones or scrolling through feeds for long hours, which disrupts sleep patterns, reduces physical activity, and limits real-life social interactions. This digital dependency often leads to loneliness, isolation, and a decline in interpersonal communication skills. Research findings show a dual relationship between social media usage (Nuraini *et al.*, 2020; as cited in Joshi *et al.*, 2024, Wisdom, 2025) ^[10, 6, 14]. Moderate, purposeful use is associated with improved academic engagement, collaboration, and information literacy. It is reported that social media utilization is positively correlated with academic success of higher education students (Joshi *et al.*, 2024) ^[6], while excessive, recreational use tends to correlate with lower academic performance (Arunachalam *et al.*, 2024) ^[3]. Thus, the impact of social media depends largely on how students integrate it into their learning practices.

2. Literature Analysis

The existing body of literature indicates the positive and negative influence of social media on students' academic performance. According to the research, senior high school students use Facebook the most for social and academic purposes followed by Messenger, YouTube, Instagram, and other platforms (Arago, 2025)^[17]. University students use the social media platform for academic discussions with respect to their class lecturers, materials for assignments and projects, and in supplementing classroom learning (Wisdom, 2025)^[14]. About 88.75% of college students reported that social media can be effectively used for educational purposes (Sikarwar and Agrawal, 2025)^[11]. It is also reported that students can use social media as a means of communication. It can be used to enhance their understanding of the course (Sutarno, 2019)^[13]. In an empirical study conducted on South Indian university student population, it is found that social media facilitates knowledge sharing and enhances student's motivation and performance (Sivakumar *et al.*, 2023)^[12]. Similarly, in Bangladeshi university students, academic performance is positively influenced by social media activities including gaming, media sharing, and video streaming (Chowdhury and Begum, 2025)^[5]. Study conducted on Indian higher education students reported that social media can improve communication, teamwork, and access to educational materials, which could make students more motivated and interested in learning (Shukla *et al.*, 2025)^[18].

Studies reported a significant negative correlation between university students' utilization of social media and their academic performance. This implies that academic performance tends to decrease with the increase in social media usage (Arunachalam *et al.*, 2024)^[3]. Results of meta-analytical studies concluded a negative correlation between students' social media addiction and their academic performance (Salary *et al.*, 2025)^[15]. From the aforementioned investigations, it is revealed that social media has negative impact on student's academic performance. However, studies also reported that students who frequently use social media tend to experience academic stress (Banci *et al.*, 2024)^[16]. Among undergraduate student population, it is observed that the overuse of social media is distorting their societal behaviour (Gurung, 2022)^[19]. Students' use of social media can adversely affect their social behaviour (Adegboyega, 2020)^[1]. Social media usage can cause

procrastination, distraction, and even negative effects on sleep pattern and mental health (Shukla *et al.*, 2025)^[18]. Similarly, a considerable portion of students stated that social media often act as a distracting factor for their academic responsibilities (Bangura, 2024). Study conducted on undergraduate and postgraduate students demonstrated a considerable difference in social media across field of study (Joshi *et al.*, 2024)^[6]. Similarly, study conducted on bachelor, master and doctoral students, a significant difference was found in the use of social networks (Jusufi and Koro, 2023)^[7]. However, studies also reported that social media usage of arts and science undergraduate students do not differ significantly (Nanda and Panda, 2024)^[9].

Although a growing body of research has explored the relationship between social media usage and academic orientation, significant gaps remain in investigating the social media usage of postgraduate student population. Additionally, there is lack of empirical studies about the significant difference in social media usage according to academic stream. Based on the empirical gap in existing body of literature, the present study aimed to analyze the difference in academic media usage by academic stream and to examine the correlation between social media usage and academic orientation of postgraduate students.

3. Materials and Methods

This study utilized a quantitative research design, collecting primary data from 256 postgraduate students of Odisha. Based on academic stream, 135 students from arts and 121 from science stream were selected using random sampling technique. The academic orientation scale is designed with 25 items. For content validity, the draft scale was subjected to the expert's judgements. The Cronbach alpha value was found to be .83, indicating high internal consistency of items. By conducting pilot study, social media usage scale was developed and validated. It includes 20 items having Cronbach alpha reliability value of .79. Both the measures are based on a five-point Likert rating where 5 represents "Strongly Agree" and 1 represents "Strongly Disagree". Data were collected by administering the survey instruments in face-to-face setting. Students voluntarily provided their responses to survey instruments ensuring voluntary participation. For data analysis, independent t-test and Pearson correlation were used in SPSS software.

4. Result

4.1. Relationship between social media usage and academic orientation

Table 1: Correlation between social media usage and academic orientation

Pearson correlation (r) between social media usage academic orientation	-.045**
Decision on H_0	Reject H_0
Interpretation	Significant negative correlation

In Table-1, result of Pearson's product moment correlation indicates a significant negative correlation between students' social media usage scores and their academic orientation

scores, $r = -.045$. This indicates as the use of social media increased, academic orientation tended to decrease.

4.2. Difference in social media usage across academic stream

Table 2: Descriptive statistics on social media usage and academic orientation

Group Statistics						
	Stream	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	
Social Media Usage	Arts	135	61.170	7.437	.64015	
	Science	121	62.008	7.842	.71297	

Table-2 describes that the mean score (61.170) and standard deviation (7.437) of arts postgraduate students on social media usage found to be lower than mean score (62.008) and

standard deviation (7.842) of science postgraduate students. To determine the significant difference, independent sample t-test was administered.

Table 3: Mean difference in social media usage and academic orientation across academic stream

	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Social Media Usage	.532	.467	-.877	254	.014	-.8378	.9554	-2.7194	1.0436

Table-3 describes the statistical result of independent t-test. In relation to social media usage, the mean scores of arts postgraduate students ($M=61.170$, $SD=7.437$) were significantly lower than mean scores of science postgraduate students ($M=62.008$, $SD=7.842$), t (254) =-.877, $p=.014$. It reveals a statistically significant difference between arts and science postgraduate students. Furthermore, it indicates that postgraduate students enrolled in science discipline are more likely to utilize social media.

5. Discussion

In this study, a negative relationship was found between social media usage and academic orientation in postgraduate student population. This result aligns with the previous researches (Arunachalam *et al.*, 2024; Salary *et al.*, 2025)^[3, 15]. time spent on social media displaces time that could otherwise be devoted to academic activities such as studying, reading, or engaging in intellectual discussions. Students who spend extended periods scrolling through social networking sites may experience reduced academic focus and diminished study efficiency. Furthermore, social media can create constant distractions through notifications and peer interactions, leading to fragmented attention and poorer time management. From statistical analysis, the study found a significant difference in social media usage between arts and science postgraduate students. This result is in line with past investigation (Jusufi and Koro, 2023; Joshi *et al.*, 2024)^[6, 7]. This result suggests that the nature of students' academic disciplines influences the extent and purpose of their social media use. One possible explanation for this difference is the variation in academic culture and learning styles across disciplines.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the study underlines the negative correlation between social media usage and postgraduate students' academic orientation. The implication of this research suggests that students should be oriented towards the effective utilization of social networking platforms for high academic engagement. Excessive engagement with social networking platforms often leads to distraction, procrastination in academics, and reduced academic focus, which in turn affects students' learning outcomes and performance. The time spent on non-academic online activities can replace valuable study time, while constant

exposure to entertainment diminishes students' motivation toward educational goals. Moreover, the overuse of social media contributes to lower concentration levels, poor time management, and decreased academic discipline. Therefore, while social media holds potential as an educational tool when used purposefully, its uncontrolled or excessive use tends to undermine students' academic orientation and overall educational achievement. The findings indicate that science postgraduate students exhibit a higher level of academic orientation compared to arts students. This difference may be attributed to the practical nature of science disciplines. Overall, the results suggest that disciplinary context influences students' academic motivation, learning strategies, and goal orientation, with science students tending to display more focused academic engagement and achievement-oriented behavior. From the aforementioned evidence, it is suggested that comparative research can be conducted across different cultural and educational contexts to investigate whether the negative effects of social media usage on academic orientation are universal or culturally specific. Future work can also investigate how social media usage may impact different aspects of academic orientation, such as goal setting, persistence, and self-efficacy rather than analyzing it as a single construct.

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