

"A Qualitative Study on the Influence of Social Media Usage on the Academic Engagement and Performance of D.El.Ed. Students in Selected Teacher Training Colleges of Bhagalpur District, Bihar"

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Abstract

Social media has become an integral part of students' daily lives, especially among teacher education students who actively engage with digital platforms for academic, professional, and personal purposes. While social media offers opportunities for collaborative learning, access to educational resources, and professional networking, excessive and unregulated usage may adversely affect academic focus and performance. The present qualitative study aims to explore the influence of social media usage on the academic engagement and performance of teacher training college students in Bhagalpur district of Bihar. The study adopts a qualitative research design using interviews, focus group discussions, and classroom observations as tools for data collection. The findings reveal that social media plays a dual role—acting as both a facilitator and a barrier to academic performance. The study concludes with suggestions for responsible social media usage and highlights the need for digital literacy among teacher education students.

Keywords: Social Media, Academic Performance, Teacher Education students, Academic Engagement

Introduction

In the digital age, social media has emerged as a dominant force shaping communication, learning, and social interaction among students. For teacher education students, social media platforms serve not only as tools for personal interaction but also as informal learning spaces where academic content, teaching resources, and professional ideas are exchanged. Scholars have noted that social media has the potential to influence students' academic engagement both positively and negatively, depending on the purpose and intensity of usage (Junco, 2012).

Academic performance in teacher education is a crucial concern, as these students are future educators who are expected to demonstrate strong academic competence, reflective thinking, and responsible professional behavior. According to Greenhow and Lewin (2016), social media can support collaborative learning, peer discussion, and access to diverse educational resources. At the same time, uncontrolled exposure to social media may lead to distraction, reduced attention span, and poor academic discipline (Karpinski, 2010).

In the Indian context, the rapid expansion of smartphones and affordable internet access has increased social media usage among college students, including those enrolled in teacher training institutions. Studies indicate that platforms such as WhatsApp and YouTube are frequently used by teacher trainees for sharing notes, watching teaching videos, and discussing academic issues (Sharma & Shukla, 2020). However, excessive engagement with non-academic content has been found to interfere with study habits and concentration (Raut & Patil, 2019).

Despite the growing body of research on social media and education, most studies are quantitative and focus on general college students. There is limited qualitative research exploring how teacher education students themselves perceive and experience the impact of social media on their academic performance, particularly in semi-urban districts like Bhagalpur, Bihar. Therefore, the present qualitative study attempts to explore the influence of social media usage on the academic engagement and performance of teacher education students through their lived experiences and perspectives.

Review of Literature

Social Media and Higher Education

Social media has become an integral part of higher education systems worldwide. According to Boyd and Ellison (2007), social networking sites allow individuals to create profiles, interact with others, and form online communities. In educational contexts, these platforms provide opportunities for collaboration, communication, and informal learning. Studies have shown that social media enhances students' access to academic content beyond classroom boundaries (Tess, 2013).

However, the educational value of social media depends largely on how it is used. Kirschner and Karpinski (2010) found that students who spent more time on social networking sites tended to have lower academic performance due to divided attention and multitasking. This dual nature of social media makes it an important area of investigation in educational research.

Impact of Social Media on Academic Performance

Academic performance is often measured in terms of grades, participation, motivation, and learning outcomes. Junco (2012) reported that while certain academic uses of social media improved engagement, frequent non-academic use negatively affected students' grades. Similarly, Paul, Baker, and Cochran (2012) observed that excessive social media use reduced time spent on academic activities, leading to poor academic outcomes.

Conversely, some researchers argue that social media can positively influence academic performance when used purposefully. Greenhow and Robelia (2009) highlighted that social media encourages peer-to-peer learning, sharing of ideas, and collaborative problem-solving. Students who actively participate in academic discussions on social platforms often develop deeper conceptual understanding.

Social Media and Student Engagement

Student engagement is a key factor in academic success. Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004) described engagement as behavioral, emotional, and cognitive involvement in learning. Social media has been found to influence all three dimensions. Studies suggest that students feel emotionally connected and motivated when learning through familiar digital platforms (Dabbagh & Kitsantas, 2012).

However, distraction remains a major concern. Rosen, Lim, Smith, and Smith (2011) reported that constant notifications and online interactions interrupt students' focus, making sustained academic engagement difficult. This challenge is particularly relevant for teacher education students who are required to engage in reflective and practice-based learning.

Social Media Use among Teacher Education Students

Teacher education students represent a unique group, as they are both learners and future teachers. Research by Sharma and Shukla (2020) revealed that teacher trainees frequently use social media for academic collaboration, lesson planning ideas, and exam preparation. YouTube was found to be especially useful for understanding teaching methods and classroom strategies.

At the same time, studies indicate that teacher trainees often struggle with balancing academic and non-academic social media usage. Raut and Patil (2019) found that prolonged exposure to entertainment-based content reduced study time and affected academic discipline. This imbalance raises concerns about professional readiness among future teachers.

Indian Context and Regional Studies

In India, the impact of social media on students has gained increasing attention. Kumar and Priyadarshini (2018) observed that social media positively supported learning in urban colleges but had mixed effects in semi-urban and rural settings due to lack of guidance and digital literacy. Students often lacked awareness about productive usage of social media for academic purposes.

Very few studies have focused on teacher education institutions in Bihar. Existing research mostly relies on survey methods, leaving a gap in understanding students' lived experiences. A qualitative approach can provide deeper insights into how teacher education students perceive social media's role in shaping their academic behavior.

Research Gap

From the review of literature, it is evident that:

Most studies are quantitative in nature.

Limited research focuses specifically on teacher education students.

Regional qualitative studies in districts like Bhagalpur are scarce.

Students' personal experiences and perceptions remain underexplored.

The present study addresses these gaps by adopting a qualitative approach to examine the influence of social media on the academic engagement and performance of teacher education students in Bhagalpur district, Bihar.

Operational Definitions

Social Media: Digital platforms that allow users to create, share, and exchange information and ideas, such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Telegram.

Academic Performance: The level of achievement demonstrated by students in academic activities, including classroom participation, assignments, examinations, and overall learning engagement.

Teacher Education Students: Students enrolled in teacher training programs such as B.Ed., D.El.Ed., or equivalent courses.

Academic Engagement: The degree of students' involvement, interest, and participation in academic learning activities.

Objectives of the Study

1. To explore the patterns of social media usage among teacher education students.
2. To understand students' perceptions regarding the influence of social media on their academic performance.
3. To examine the positive and negative academic experiences related to social media usage.
4. To identify challenges faced by students due to excessive or improper use of social media.
5. To suggest strategies for effective and responsible use of social media in teacher education.

Research Questions

1. How do teacher education students use social media in their academic life?
2. What are students' perceptions of social media's influence on their academic performance?
3. In what ways does social media support or hinder academic engagement?
4. What challenges do students face due to social media usage?
5. How can social media be used more effectively for academic purposes?

Research Methodology

Research Nature and Design

The present study adopted a qualitative research approach with a descriptive design to explore the lived experiences and perceptions of students regarding the influence of social media on their academic engagement and performance.

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised students enrolled in the Diploma in Elementary Education (D.El.Ed.) programme in selected teacher training colleges of Bhagalpur district, Bihar.

Sample and Sampling Technique

A purposive sampling technique was used to select 30 D.El.Ed. students from different teacher training colleges. The sample included students from different semesters, ensuring variation in academic experience, gender, and social background. Only those students who actively used social media were included in the study.

Statistical Techniques

The information gathered through the questionnaire was examined using descriptive statistical techniques. The interview data were interpreted through qualitative analysis. Adopting a qualitative ethnographic approach, the researcher reviewed the descriptive data and applied categorical aggregation to identify emerging themes and formulate meaningful interpretations. Thematic analysis was used. Data were transcribed, coded, categorized, and interpreted to identify recurring themes and patterns.

Context of the Study

The study was conducted in teacher training colleges offering the D.El.Ed. programme, where students are trained for elementary-level teaching. Since D.El.Ed. students are future primary teachers, their academic engagement and digital habits hold special importance in shaping foundational education.

Tools of Data Collection

Semi-Structured Interviews: Conducted with individual students to explore personal experiences.

Focus Group Discussions: Organized to capture collective views and peer interactions.

Classroom Observations: Used to observe students' academic engagement and behavior.

Procedure of Data Collection

Data were collected after obtaining permission from college authorities. Ethical considerations such as informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation were strictly followed.

Significance of the Study

The present study holds significant value for teacher education institutions, educators, students, and future researchers. By focusing on D.El.Ed. students, the study provides insights into how social media influences the academic engagement and performance of future elementary teachers. It highlights the ways in which social media can function as both a supportive academic resource and a potential source of distraction, thereby emphasizing the importance of balanced and responsible usage. The findings of the study can assist teacher educators in understanding students' digital learning behaviors and in integrating social media meaningfully into teaching-learning processes. At the institutional level, the study offers a basis for developing guidelines and digital literacy initiatives that promote academic discipline and professional growth. Furthermore, the qualitative nature of the study contributes rich, contextual understanding to existing literature, especially in the context of semi-urban teacher training institutions like those in Bhagalpur district. Thus, the study serves as a valuable reference for policy formulation, curriculum planning, and further research in the field of teacher education and digital learning.

Delimitations of the Study

The present study was limited to selected teacher training colleges of Bhagalpur district, Bihar. It focused only on students enrolled in the Diploma in Elementary Education (D.El.Ed.) programme. The study adopted a qualitative approach and was based on the self-reported experiences and perceptions of the students. Therefore, the findings may not be generalized beyond the studied context.

Analysis and Findings

The qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and classroom observations were analyzed using thematic analysis. The analysis was organized according to the objectives of the study to ensure clarity and systematic interpretation. Based on the coding and categorization of data, the following major themes emerged:

- Patterns of Social Media Usage among D.El.Ed. Students
- Perceived Influence of Social Media on Academic Performance
- Positive Academic Engagement through Social Media
- Negative Academic Experiences and Challenges
- Need for Guidance and Regulation in Teacher Training Institutions

Each theme was analyzed in relation to the specific objectives of the study, and the findings were interpreted accordingly.

Objective 1: To explore the patterns of social media usage among D.El.Ed. students

Analysis:

The data revealed that almost all D.El.Ed. students used social media on a daily basis. WhatsApp emerged as the most frequently used platform for academic purposes, particularly for sharing notes, receiving class updates, and discussing assignments. YouTube was commonly used to watch teaching demonstrations, classroom management techniques, and child psychology-related videos. Instagram and Facebook were mainly used for entertainment and social interaction. Most students accessed social media through smartphones, especially during evening hours.

Findings:

- D.El.Ed. students showed high dependence on WhatsApp and YouTube for academic-related activities.
- Non-academic platforms were used more frequently during leisure time.
- Smartphones were the primary medium for accessing social media.

Objective 2: To understand students' perceptions regarding the influence of social media on their academic performance

Analysis:

Students expressed mixed perceptions regarding the influence of social media on their academic performance. Many participants believed that social media helped them understand difficult concepts, prepare lesson plans,

and stay connected with peers. At the same time, several students acknowledged that excessive use negatively affected their concentration and study routine. The perception of impact largely depended on the purpose of use.

Findings:

- Students perceived social media as both helpful and harmful to academic performance.
- Academic-oriented usage was viewed positively.
- Excessive and purposeless usage was perceived as a major academic barrier.

Objective 3: To examine the positive and negative academic experiences related to social media usage.

Analysis:

The analysis indicates that social media created both positive and negative academic experiences among D.El.Ed. students. On the positive side, students used social media platforms to access teaching strategies, activity-based learning methods, and assessment-related videos relevant to elementary education. Academic groups and peer interactions supported collaborative learning, exchange of ideas, and increased confidence in lesson planning and classroom preparation.

However, the analysis also revealed negative academic experiences associated with excessive and non-academic use of social media. Students reported distraction during study time, poor time management, and reduced concentration, which adversely affected their academic engagement. Thus, the academic experiences of students varied depending on the purpose, frequency, and control over social media usage.

Findings:

- Social media provided positive academic experiences by enhancing engagement and collaborative learning. Students benefited from easy access to teaching-learning materials related to D.El.Ed. training.
- Digital content supported practical components such as lesson planning and teaching methods. Academic interaction and peer communication through social media improved conceptual understanding.
- Negative academic experiences included distraction, time wastage, and reduced focus due to excessive use.
- Overall, social media showed a dual academic impact, where purposeful academic use was beneficial, while excessive non-academic use negatively affected students' academic experiences.

Objective 4: To identify challenges faced by students due to excessive or improper use of social media.

Analysis:

The analysis revealed that excessive or improper use of social media created several academic challenges for students. Continuous notifications, entertainment-oriented content, and frequent checking of social media distracted students during self-study and lectures. Many students reported spending more time on social media than intended, which led to poor time management. This excessive usage resulted in delayed completion of academic tasks such as assignments and lesson planning. Additionally, students experienced reduced attention span and difficulty maintaining concentration during study hours, negatively affecting their academic discipline.

Findings:

- Excessive social media use caused distraction and ineffective time management.
- Students faced delays in completing academic tasks and assignments.
- Continuous notifications reduced concentration during study and classroom sessions.
- Improper use of social media negatively affected students' focus and academic discipline.

Objective 5: To suggest strategies for effective and responsible use of social media in teacher education.

Analysis:

The analysis highlighted the need for clear strategies to promote the effective and responsible use of social media in teacher education. Students reported a lack of formal guidance on ethical and academic use of social media within teacher training institutions. They emphasized the importance of orientation programs, digital

literacy training, and continuous guidance from teacher educators. The analysis further indicated that when social media is systematically integrated into academic activities, it can support professional development while minimizing misuse. Proper monitoring and role modeling by teacher educators were also identified as essential strategies for responsible usage.

Findings:

- There is a need for institutional guidelines to promote responsible social media use.
- Orientation and digital literacy programs can help students use social media effectively for academic purposes.
- Teacher educators play a key role in modeling ethical and professional social media behavior.
- Structured academic integration of social media can reduce misuse and enhance professional growth.

Overall Findings of the Study

The overall findings of the study reveal that social media plays a significant and multifaceted role in the academic lives of D.El.Ed. students. Almost all students regularly used social media platforms, with WhatsApp and YouTube emerging as the most preferred tools for academic communication, access to study materials, and understanding teaching–learning strategies relevant to elementary education. Students perceived social media as a supportive academic resource that enhanced collaborative learning, peer interaction, and confidence in lesson planning and classroom preparation. Purposeful and academic-oriented use of social media contributed positively to conceptual clarity, practical training components, and academic engagement.

At the same time, the study found that excessive and improper use of social media created notable academic challenges. Continuous notifications, entertainment-based content, and lack of self-regulation led to distraction, poor time management, delayed completion of academic tasks, and reduced concentration during study hours and classroom sessions. The findings clearly indicate that the impact of social media on academic performance is dual in nature—beneficial when used in a structured and academic manner, and harmful when used excessively without guidance. The study further highlights a strong need for institutional guidelines, digital literacy programs, and active guidance from teacher educators to promote responsible and effective use of social media in teacher education. Structured academic integration and ethical role modeling by teacher educators can help maximize the educational benefits of social media while minimizing its negative effects.

Conclusion

The present qualitative study provides an in-depth understanding of the influence of social media usage on the academic engagement and performance of D.El.Ed. students in selected teacher training colleges of Bhagalpur district, Bihar. Based on the lived experiences and perceptions of the participants, the study clearly establishes that social media plays a dual and multifaceted role in the academic lives of teacher education students.

The findings reveal that social media platforms, particularly WhatsApp and YouTube, have emerged as significant academic support tools by facilitating access to learning resources, peer interaction, collaborative learning, and practical teaching inputs such as lesson planning and classroom strategies. Purposeful and academic-oriented use of social media was found to enhance students' conceptual understanding, engagement, confidence, and preparedness for their future roles as elementary teachers. In this sense, social media functions as an informal yet influential extension of the teaching–learning process.

At the same time, the study highlights the adverse academic consequences of excessive and unregulated social media usage. Distraction caused by continuous notifications, overexposure to entertainment-based content, and lack of self-regulation negatively affected students' concentration, time management, academic discipline, and overall engagement. These challenges underline the risk of diminished academic focus when social media use is not guided or monitored within teacher education contexts.

The study further emphasizes the critical role of teacher education institutions and teacher educators in shaping responsible digital behavior among future teachers. The absence of formal guidelines and structured digital literacy initiatives was identified as a key concern. Therefore, the study strongly advocates for the integration of digital literacy programs, ethical orientation sessions, and institutional policies that promote balanced and academic use of social media. Teacher educators, through professional role modeling and systematic academic integration of social media, can significantly reduce misuse while enhancing its educational value.

In conclusion, the study asserts that social media, when used responsibly and purposefully, has substantial potential to enrich academic engagement and professional growth among D.El.Ed. students. However, without proper guidance and regulation, it may hinder academic performance and discipline. The study contributes valuable qualitative insights to the existing literature, particularly in the context of semi-urban teacher education institutions, and offers meaningful implications for policy formulation, curriculum planning, and future research in teacher education and digital learning.

Suggestions

On the basis of the findings of the present qualitative study on the influence of social media usage on the academic engagement and performance of D.El.Ed. students, the following suggestions are proposed for effective and responsible utilization of social media in teacher education institutions:

Development of Institutional Guidelines

Teacher training colleges should frame clear and well-defined institutional guidelines regarding the academic and ethical use of social media. These guidelines can help students understand acceptable usage patterns and discourage excessive or non-academic engagement during study hours.

Integration of Digital Literacy Programs

Regular digital literacy and awareness programs should be organized for D.El.Ed. students to enhance their understanding of productive, safe, and responsible use of social media. Such programs should focus on academic utilization, time management, and self-regulation skills.

Academic Integration of Social Media

Social media platforms like WhatsApp and YouTube may be systematically integrated into teaching-learning processes for sharing academic resources, discussion of course content, lesson planning, and reflective learning activities. Structured academic use can reduce misuse and improve engagement.

Role of Teacher Educators as Digital Role Models

Teacher educators should model ethical and professional use of social media by demonstrating how digital platforms can be used constructively for academic collaboration, professional development, and lifelong learning.

Orientation Programs for New Students

Orientation sessions at the beginning of the D.El.Ed. programme should include guidance on balancing academic and personal use of social media. Early awareness can help students develop healthy digital habits.

Monitoring and Academic Support Mechanisms

Colleges may establish supportive monitoring mechanisms, such as academic mentoring and peer support groups, to help students manage social media usage without creating excessive restrictions.

Promotion of Time Management Skills

Students should be encouraged to develop effective time management strategies, including scheduled study time and limited social media usage during academic hours, to improve focus and academic discipline.

Encouragement of Reflective Digital Practices

Students may be guided to reflect on their own social media habits and evaluate how these practices influence their academic performance and professional development as future teachers.

Parental and Community Awareness (Where Appropriate)

In semi-urban contexts, limited parental awareness about academic use of social media may affect students' learning habits. Awareness initiatives can support responsible digital behavior beyond the classroom.

Scope for Further Research

Future studies may adopt mixed-method or longitudinal approaches to examine the long-term impact of social media on teacher education students. Comparative studies across regions and programmes can further enrich understanding.

These suggestions aim to maximize the educational benefits of social media while minimizing its negative effects, thereby supporting academic engagement, professional competence, and responsible digital citizenship among D.El.Ed. students.

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Tool 1: Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

Interview Questions

1. Which social media platforms do you use most frequently?
2. For what academic purposes do you use social media (e.g., notes, videos, discussions)?
3. How does social media help you in understanding D.El.Ed. subjects or teaching methods?
4. Do you feel that social media improves your academic performance? Why or why not?
5. How much time do you usually spend on social media in a day?
6. Have you ever felt distracted from studies due to social media use? Please explain.
7. Does social media affect your concentration during self-study or exams?
8. How does social media influence your preparation for teaching practice or internship?
9. What challenges do you face while managing academic work and social media use?
10. Do you receive any guidance from teachers regarding academic use of social media?
11. What suggestions would you give for better use of social media in teacher training?

Tool 2: Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Guide

1. How important is social media in your academic life as a D.El.Ed. student?
2. Which platforms are most useful for academic collaboration and why?
3. In what ways does social media support or hinder your academic engagement?
4. How does social media affect your time management and study routine?
5. Do you think social media should be formally integrated into teacher training?
6. What problems do students commonly face due to excessive social media use?
7. What role should teacher educators play in guiding social media usage?
8. How can D.El.Ed. students use social media more responsibly as future teachers?

Tool 3: Classroom Observation Schedule

1. Students' attentiveness during lectures
2. Use of smartphones during class or academic discussions
3. Participation in classroom activities and discussions
4. Reference to online content (videos, posts, digital notes) during learning
5. Completion of assignments and lesson plans on time
6. Interaction patterns influenced by online academic groups
7. Signs of distraction due to mobile or social media notifications