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Developing a Technique for Incorporating Social Media into Conventional Teaching Modes: A Case Study of Selected Tertiary Institutions in North-West and North-East Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The rapid expansion of digital technologies has generated new opportunities for teaching and learning in higher education. Although social media is widely used for communication, its structured integration into conventional teaching remains limited in many tertiary institutions in developing countries. This study investigates the potential for incorporating social media into traditional teaching modes in selected tertiary institutions in North-West and North-East Nigeria. A survey research design was employed, with data collected through a structured questionnaire administered to students and lecturers across four institutions. A total of 155 valid responses were analysed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. The findings indicate that most respondents have smartphones, access the internet, and actively use social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube, and Telegram. WhatsApp emerged as the most widely used platform for academic communication and collaboration. Respondents generally perceived social media as enhancing student engagement, facilitating knowledge sharing, and strengthening interactions between lecturers and students. However, challenges such as inadequate internet connectivity, high data costs, and the absence of institutional policies were identified as key barriers to effective educational use. The study concludes that while social media has the potential to complement conventional teaching, effective integration requires improved digital infrastructure, institutional support, and enhanced digital literacy. These findings contribute to ongoing discussions about the role of social media in fostering collaborative, networked learning environments in higher education.

Keywords: Social Media Integration, Conventional Teaching Methods, Higher Education, Collaborative Learning, Digital Pedagogy

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Digital technologies have transformed teaching and learning in higher education. Social media is a key tool for communication, collaboration, and knowledge sharing within academic settings. Studies show social media supports interactive learning through real-time communication, easy access to resources, and collaboration (Al-Rahmi *et al.*, 2020; Tang & Hew, 2022).

In developing countries such as Nigeria, the widespread adoption of smartphones and the growing internet penetration have further accelerated the use of social media among students and educators. These developments have reshaped how learners access information, interact with peers, and engage with academic content. However, despite its growing relevance, the formal integration of social media into teaching practices in many tertiary institutions remains limited.

Traditional lecture formats continue to dominate most Nigerian higher education institutions, resulting in the underutilisation of digital tools that could enhance learning. The gap between everyday social media use and its limited academic application highlights the need for structured integration. Addressing this divide is essential for increasing student engagement, supporting collaborative learning, and improving the quality of higher education in the digital era.

1.1 The Concept of Social Media

Social media platforms allow users to create, share, and exchange information in digital environments. They use Web 2.0 technology for user participation, content creation, and communication (Appel *et al.*, 2020).

Examples of social media platforms include WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter (X), and Telegram. Educational platforms include Google Classroom and Moodle. Unlike traditional media, social media lets users be both creators and consumers of content. This supports real-time interaction and constant engagement.

In education, social media supports flexible, learner-centred teaching. It encourages peer interaction, knowledge sharing, and academic engagement beyond the classroom (Manca, 2020; Tang & Hew, 2022). It is thus seen as valuable in modern education.

1.2 Social Media for Academic Activities

The use of social media for academic purposes has attracted increasing scholarly attention due to its potential to enhance teaching and learning. Social media platforms offer students opportunities to access academic materials, collaborate with peers, and communicate with instructors beyond formal classroom settings.

For example, video-sharing platforms and virtual communication tools enable students to access recorded lectures, tutorials, and multimedia learning materials that support independent and self-paced learning. Furthermore, social media facilitates collaborative learning by enabling students to participate in discussions, share ideas, and

engage in group activities regardless of geographic constraints.

Evidence indicates that integrating social media into teaching improves participation, knowledge sharing, and collaboration (Al-Rahmi *et al.*, 2020; Manca, 2020). This suggests it can make teaching more interactive and student-centred.

1.3 Impact of Social Media on Students' Academic Performance

Recent studies explore how social media affects students' academic performance. Social media can improve outcomes by increasing access to resources, fostering collaboration, and enhancing engagement (Tang & Hew, 2022).

Through online discussions and knowledge-sharing activities, students can deepen their understanding of course content and benefit from collaborative learning environments. In addition, social media platforms can support active learning and continuous engagement with academic materials.

On the other hand, heavy or unregulated use of social media may lower academic performance. Some studies show that frequent social media use leads to distraction, less time for study, and weaker academic focus. Psychological issues like fear of missing out (FoMO) and addiction to social media have also been connected to reduced academic achievement (Keles *et al.*, 2020).

Social media's effect on performance depends on how it is used in education. When integrated with structured teaching, it can enhance conventional methods through interactive and collaborative learning.

1.4 Problem Statement

Incorporating digital technologies into teaching boosts engagement, communication, and access. Social media, in particular, helps to create interactive and collaborative learning beyond the traditional classroom.

However, in many Nigerian tertiary institutions, most teaching remains traditional. Social media is not often formally included in teaching. This is despite the wide use by students and lecturers. Barriers include poor digital infrastructure, expensive internet, lack of policies, limited digital skills, and concerns about distraction and misuse.

Most research on social media in education focuses on use and perceptions rather than practical integration. This research is based in developed countries, leaving a gap in effective approaches in Nigerian institutions.

Without integration frameworks, social media's educational value remains limited. Students mostly use it socially, not academically, and lecturers may hesitate due to uncertainty or lack of support.

This study addresses these challenges by examining approaches for integrating social media with conventional teaching in selected institutions in North-West and North-East Nigeria. It analyses social media usage patterns and identifies factors that facilitate successful integration. The

objective is to provide practical insights for educators and policymakers aiming to enhance teaching and learning through digital technology.

The study is grounded in constructivist and connectivist learning theories, which emphasise the importance of social interaction, collaboration, and networked knowledge in the learning process (Siemens, 2020). These theoretical perspectives suggest that learning occurs not only through direct instruction but also through engagement with digital networks and communities. Consequently, integrating social media into conventional teaching represents a viable pathway for fostering more interactive, collaborative, and digitally connected learning environments in higher education.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Study Area

This study was conducted in four tertiary institutions located in the North-West and North-East geopolitical zones of Nigeria: Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria (Kaduna State); Federal Polytechnic Kaura-Namoda (Zamfara State); the University of Maiduguri (Borno State); and Federal Polytechnic, Bauchi (Bauchi State). These institutions were selected because they represent a mix of universities and polytechnics with diverse academic programmes and student populations within the Nigerian higher education system.

Ahmadu Bello University is one of the largest universities in Nigeria, with a student population exceeding 40,000. Federal Polytechnic, Bauchi is similarly one of the largest polytechnics in the country, offering programmes in engineering, technology, sciences, and management. Federal Polytechnic Kaura-Namoda provides National Diploma (ND) and Higher National Diploma (HND) programmes across several disciplines, while the University of Maiduguri serves as a major academic hub in North-East Nigeria. The selection of these institutions provided a suitable context for examining how social media can be integrated into teaching and learning within diverse tertiary education environments.

2.2 Research Design

This study adopted a quantitative survey research design to examine how social media platforms can be effectively incorporated into conventional teaching modes in tertiary institutions. Survey research is widely recognised in educational studies as an appropriate method for collecting data from large populations and analysing patterns of behaviour, perceptions, and experiences within defined groups (Creswell & Creswell, 2019; Saunders *et al.*, 2021). The survey approach was considered suitable for this study because it enabled the researchers to obtain direct responses from both students and lecturers regarding their use of social media, perceptions of its educational value, and the challenges associated with its integration into academic settings. Furthermore, this design facilitated systematic comparison of responses across multiple institutions,

thereby enhancing the reliability and generalisability of the findings.

2.3 Population of the Study

The study population comprised students and academic staff from the four selected tertiary institutions. These groups were selected because they represent the primary stakeholders in the teaching and learning process within higher education.

Students are the main beneficiaries of instructional practices and are among the most active users of social media platforms. Their experiences and perceptions are therefore critical in evaluating the educational relevance of these technologies. Lecturers, on the other hand, are responsible for designing and delivering course content and play a central role in determining the extent to which digital tools such as social media can be integrated into teaching practices (Bond et al., 2020).

The inclusion of both students and lecturers ensured a comprehensive and balanced perspective on the feasibility and effectiveness of integrating social media into conventional teaching.

2.4 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

Purposive and convenience sampling techniques were employed to select participants for the study. These non-probability sampling methods are commonly used in educational research to obtain data from participants with relevant experience or exposure to the phenomenon under investigation (Etikan&Bala, 2020).

This approach enabled the researchers to target individuals who were actively engaged in academic activities and had access to social media or digital technologies. A total of 155

respondents, comprising both students and lecturers from the selected institutions, participated in the study.

The questionnaires were distributed through both physical and electronic means to enhance response rates and ensure adequate representation across the participating institutions. This combination of distribution methods also helped to minimise response bias and improve data coverage.

2.5 Data Collection Instrument

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to capture information on the use of social media in teaching and learning within tertiary institutions. The questionnaire consisted of several sections covering:

1. demographic characteristics of respondents
2. access to digital devices and internet connectivity
3. patterns of social media usage
4. perceived impact of social media on teaching and learning
5. challenges associated with using social media for academic purposes

The instrument included both closed-ended questions (using Likert scales and multiple-choice responses) and open-ended questions to allow respondents to provide additional insights into their experiences and perspectives. The use of a structured questionnaire ensured consistency in responses and facilitated quantitative analysis.

2.6 Distribution of Questionnaires

The questionnaires were administered to respondents across the four selected institutions. Participants were informed about the purpose of the research and were assured that their responses would remain confidential and would be used solely for academic purposes.

Table 1: Distribution of Questionnaires Across Participating Institutions

S/No.	Institution	No. of questionnaires administered	No. of questionnaires returned correctly
1	Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria	45	45
2	Federal Polytechnic Kaura-Namoda	40	40
3	University of Maiduguri, Maiduguri	35	35
4	Federal Polytechnic, Bauchi	35	35
	Total	155	155

All distributed questionnaires were successfully returned and included in the analysis, resulting in a 100% response rate.

2.7 Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed using descriptive statistical techniques. The responses were first coded and organised to ensure consistency and facilitate systematic analysis. Frequency distributions and percentages were subsequently computed to summarise respondents' characteristics and to identify patterns in social media usage, perceived benefits, and challenges associated with integrating social media into teaching and learning.

Descriptive statistics were considered appropriate for this study because they enable researchers to present survey

data clearly and meaningfully, while also facilitating the identification and interpretation of trends within a dataset (Creswell & Creswell, 2019; Saunders et al., 2021). The analysed data were presented in tables, accompanied by concise explanatory notes that highlighted key findings on respondents' demographic characteristics, social media use patterns, perceived educational benefits, and barriers to effective implementation.

In addition, responses to open-ended questions were analysed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns, themes, and perspectives on the use of social

media in higher education. Thematic analysis is widely recognised as a flexible and rigorous qualitative technique for interpreting textual data and uncovering meaningful insights (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

3.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results

This section presents the findings derived from the analysis of the questionnaire data collected from respondents across

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Institutional Role

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Student	75	48.4
Lecturer / Academic Staff	80	51.6
Total	155	100

The distribution of respondents shows that lecturers accounted for a slightly higher proportion (51.6%) than students (48.4%). This near-balanced representation offers perspectives from both primary providers and recipients of instruction, thereby strengthening the validity of insights regarding the integration of social media into teaching and learning.

Table 2: Demographic Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	95	61.3
Female	60	38.7
Total	155	100

Male respondents constituted the majority of the sample (61.3%), while females accounted for 38.7%. Despite this imbalance, including both genders ensures that the findings reflect diverse perspectives on the use of social media in tertiary education.

Table 3: Demographic Distribution of Respondents by Age Group

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
Below 20 years	0	0.0
20–29 years	16	10.3
30–39 years	27	17.4
40–49 years	86	55.5
50 years and above	26	16.8
Total	155	100

The age distribution indicates a predominance of respondents in the 40–49 years age group (55.5%), followed by those aged 30–39 years (17.4%) and those aged 50 years and above (16.8%). This pattern suggests that many respondents are experienced professionals, particularly lecturers, whose exposure to both conventional teaching methods and emerging digital

The combination of descriptive and thematic analyses enhanced the depth and comprehensiveness of the study by integrating quantitative findings with qualitative insights derived from respondents' experiences and perspectives.

the four selected tertiary institutions. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, were used to summarise the responses. The results are presented in tables, followed by concise interpretations highlighting key patterns relevant to the study objectives.

technologies provides valuable insights into integrating social media into higher education.

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents by Institution

Institution	Frequency	Percentage
Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria	45	29.03
Federal Polytechnic Kaura-Namoda	40	25.81
University of Maiduguri	35	22.58
Federal Polytechnic Bauchi	35	22.58
Total	155	100

The highest proportion of respondents was drawn from Ahmadu Bello University (29.03%), followed by Federal Polytechnic Kaura-Namoda (25.81%), University of Maiduguri (22.58%) and Federal Polytechnic Bauchi (22.58%). The distribution indicates that the dataset is largely influenced by perspectives from ABU and Federal Polytechnic Kaura-Namoda.

Table 5: Distribution of Student Respondents by Level of Study

Level	Frequency	Percentage
ND I	0	0.0
ND II	5	6.7
HND I	11	14.7
HND II	5	6.7
100 Level	0	0.0
200 Level	5	6.7
300 Level	5	6.7
400 Level and above	44	58.7
Total	75	100

A majority of student respondents (58.7%) were at the 400-level or above, indicating that most participants were senior students with substantial experience in tertiary learning environments. Their perspectives are particularly relevant for assessing the potential integration of social media into academic practices.

Faculty/Department	Frequency	Percentage
Administration/Public Administration	6	3.9
Agriculture	12	7.7
Computer Science	6	3.9
Environmental Studies	6	3.9
Health Sciences	6	3.9
Public Administration	12	7.7
School of Agriculture	12	7.7
Science and Technology	6	3.9
Other Departments	89	57.4
Total	155	100

Respondents represented a wide range of academic disciplines, indicating multidisciplinary participation. The predominance of the “other departments” category (57.4%) suggests broad institutional representation across various academic fields.

Table 7: Distribution of Lecturer Respondents by Teaching Experience

Teaching Experience	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 5 years	41	51.3
5–10 years	3	3.8
11–20 years	28	35.0
Over 20 years	8	10.0
Total	80	100

More than half of the lecturers (51.3%) reported less than five years of teaching experience, while 35.0% had between 11 and 20 years. This distribution reflects a mix of early-career and experienced academics, providing diverse perspectives on the adoption of digital teaching tools.

Nevertheless, some respondents acknowledged potential drawbacks, including the risk of distraction and irresponsible online behaviour. Most respondents believed that formal integration of social media into teaching practices would improve access to learning resources, knowledge sharing, and collaboration among academic stakeholders. Many also expressed willingness to participate in social media-based learning groups. However, concerns were raised regarding potential financial burdens associated with internet access and device costs.

Challenges of Using Social Media for Academic Purposes

Most Frequently Used Social Media Platforms for Academic Purposes

WhatsApp emerged as the most frequently used platform for academic activities (86.2%), followed by Facebook (44.8%) and YouTube (41.3%). Other platforms, such as

Table 6: Distribution of Respondents by Faculty or Department

Several barriers to the effective use of social media were identified. The most prominent challenges include poor internet connectivity, high data costs, privacy concerns, and risks such as cyberbullying and plagiarism. Respondents also highlighted limited technical skills and the absence of institutional policies as factors that may hinder the formal adoption of social media in teaching and learning.

Most Useful Social Media Platforms for Teaching and Learning

Responses to the open-ended questions indicate that WhatsApp is widely regarded as the most effective platform for teaching and learning due to its affordability, accessibility, and group communication features. Google Meet and Google Classroom were also highlighted for supporting online lectures, while YouTube was recognised for providing instructional videos and tutorials.

Respondents' Access to Digital Devices and Internet Connectivity

The results indicate widespread access to essential digital technologies. All respondents reported owning smartphones, while a large proportion (82.6%) owned laptops and had active internet data plans (79.4%). However, ownership of specialised devices such as iPads (38.1%) and e-book readers (31.0%) remains relatively limited. These findings suggest that smartphones and laptops serve as the primary devices for accessing digital learning platforms and social media tools.

Respondents' Registration on Social Media Platforms

The results reveal widespread adoption of major social media platforms. Registration levels were particularly high for WhatsApp (96.8%), Telegram (96.8%), and Facebook (89.7%), indicating their strong presence within the academic community. In contrast, platforms such as Keek, Path, and Tango recorded minimal usage. This pattern underscores the dominance of mainstream platforms in facilitating communication and information sharing among students and lecturers.

Telegram, Instagram, and educational forums, recorded comparatively lower usage. These findings indicate that WhatsApp serves as the primary medium for academic communication and resource sharing within the selected institutions.

Average Time Spent on Social Media per Day

Most respondents (55.5%) reported spending three to four hours daily on social media, while 20.6% spend more than four hours. Only a small proportion (3.2%) spend less than one hour per day. This high level of engagement suggests that social media platforms play a significant role in respondents' daily communication and information-seeking activities.

Primary Purposes for Using Social Media

The findings indicate that social media serves both academic and social functions. The most common use was accessing academic materials (79.4%), followed by social interaction (75.5%) and news consumption (72.3%). Over half of respondents also use social media for group discussions and communication with lecturers or fellow students, underscoring its collaborative potential in academic environments.

Perceived Impact of Social Media on Teaching and Learning

Respondents expressed predominantly positive perceptions regarding the educational value of social media. A majority agreed that it enhances student engagement, collaboration, and communication between lecturers and students. Many also indicated that social media accelerates the sharing of academic information and supports peer learning beyond the classroom. Nevertheless, some respondents acknowledged potential drawbacks, including the risk of distraction and irresponsible online behaviour. Most respondents believed that formal integration of social media into teaching practices would improve access to learning resources, knowledge sharing, and collaboration among academic stakeholders. Many also expressed willingness to participate in social media-based learning groups. However, concerns were raised regarding potential financial burdens associated with internet access and device costs.

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Challenges Encountered When Using Social Media for Academic Purposes

Poor internet connectivity emerged as the most frequently cited challenge (57.7%). Other issues include high data costs, distractions from entertainment content, and limited access to digital devices. These findings underscore the

infrastructural and economic barriers affecting the effective integration of social media into academic environments.

Conditions Required for Institutional Adoption of Social Media

Respondents identified reliable internet connectivity as the most critical requirement for integrating social media into teaching and learning. Additional conditions include institutional Wi-Fi provision, digital literacy training, access to technological infrastructure, and the establishment of clear institutional policies guiding the use of social media in academic activities.

General Comments on Social Media Use in Higher Education

The general responses suggest that social media holds significant potential to enhance teaching and learning in Nigerian tertiary institutions. However, respondents emphasised the need for responsible use, institutional regulation, and improved access to digital resources to ensure the effective realisation of the educational benefits of social media.

3.2 Discussion

This study examined the potential for incorporating social media into conventional teaching modes within selected tertiary institutions in North-West and North-East Nigeria. The findings provide valuable insights into how students and lecturers engage with social media technologies, as well as the opportunities and challenges associated with integrating these tools into formal educational practices.

The demographic characteristics of the respondents indicate that both students and lecturers were adequately represented, with lecturers constituting a slightly higher proportion of participants. The predominance of respondents within the 40–49 age group suggests that many participants are experienced academics who have been exposed to both traditional teaching approaches and emerging digital learning environments. This pattern aligns with recent studies indicating that mid-career academics are increasingly adopting digital tools as part of evolving pedagogical practices (Bond et al., 2020; Manca, 2020). The presence of such participants enhances the relevance of the findings for understanding the integration of social media into established teaching practices.

The findings further reveal that most respondents possess smartphones, laptops, and internet access, indicating that the basic technological infrastructure required for social media-supported learning is largely available. Similar trends have been reported in recent studies conducted in developing contexts, where mobile devices serve as the primary means of accessing digital learning resources (Al-Rahmi et al., 2020; Tang & Hew, 2022). However, the relatively low ownership of specialised devices such as tablets and e-book readers suggests that mobile phones remain the dominant platform for accessing educational content. This reinforces the growing importance of mobile

technologies in fostering flexible, accessible learning environments.

Another key finding is the widespread use of social media platforms among respondents, particularly WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube, and Telegram. WhatsApp emerged as the most frequently used platform for academic communication, which is consistent with recent research highlighting its effectiveness in facilitating collaborative learning, group interaction, and instant communication in educational settings (Cetinkaya, 2019; Al-Rahmi et al., 2020). Similarly, the prominence of YouTube as a learning resource reflects global trends in which video-based platforms are increasingly used to support self-directed and multimedia learning (Tang & Hew, 2022).

The analysis of respondents' purposes for using social media demonstrates its dual role as both a social and academic tool. While many respondents reported using social media to access learning materials and collaborate with peers, a substantial proportion also reported using it for social interaction and entertainment. This finding supports recent studies that conceptualise social media as a hybrid learning environment that bridges formal and informal learning contexts (Manca, 2020). Consequently, the educational effectiveness of social media depends largely on how it is structured and integrated into teaching and learning activities.

The results also show that respondents spend a considerable amount of time on social media platforms, with most indicating daily usage of between three and four hours. Similar findings have been reported in recent studies on digital media engagement among university students, where prolonged usage presents both opportunities for academic collaboration and risks of distraction (Keles et al., 2020). This suggests that rather than restricting social media use, educators should adopt strategies that channel students' engagement towards productive academic activities.

Participants' perceptions of the educational impact of social media were generally positive. Most respondents agreed that social media enhances student motivation, facilitates collaboration, and strengthens communication between lecturers and students. These findings are consistent with constructivist perspectives, which emphasise the role of interaction and collaborative knowledge construction in learning (Schunk, 2020). Social media platforms provide interactive environments where learners can exchange ideas, engage in discussions, and access diverse perspectives beyond the traditional classroom.

Similarly, the findings align with the principles of connectivism, which conceptualise learning as the process of forming networks of information sources and social connections in digital environments (Siemens, 2020). Social media platforms serve as key nodes in these networks, enabling learners to access distributed knowledge and participate in global learning communities. The widespread use of platforms such as WhatsApp and YouTube demonstrates how digital networks increasingly complement conventional sources of knowledge.

Despite these opportunities, the study identified several significant barriers to the effective integration of social media into teaching practices. Poor internet connectivity and high data costs emerged as the most prominent challenges, alongside concerns about distractions, misinformation, and the absence of institutional policies regulating academic use of social media. These findings are consistent with recent studies conducted in African higher education contexts, which highlight infrastructural limitations and digital inequality as key constraints to the adoption of educational technologies (Mtebe&Raisamo, 2020).

The qualitative findings further emphasise the importance of institutional support in facilitating the integration of social media into teaching. Respondents highlighted the need for reliable internet connectivity, provision of institutional Wi-Fi, digital literacy training, and clear policy frameworks to guide the academic use of social media. These findings underscore the critical role of institutional and policy-level interventions in creating enabling environments for digital learning.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to ongoing discourse on digital learning by demonstrating that the effectiveness of social media integration is highly context-dependent. While constructivist and connectivist theories emphasise the benefits of collaborative and networked learning, this study's findings highlight the importance of infrastructure, institutional support, and digital competence in realising these benefits in practice.

However, certain limitations should be acknowledged. The study was conducted within a limited number of institutions in two geopolitical zones of Nigeria, which may affect the generalisability of the findings. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data means that the results reflect participants' perceptions rather than direct observation of teaching practices. Future research could address these limitations by adopting mixed-method approaches that incorporate interviews, classroom observations, or experimental designs to provide deeper insights into the integration of social media in higher education.

4.0 CONCLUSION

This study investigated the potential for incorporating social media into conventional teaching modes in selected tertiary institutions in North-West and North-East Nigeria. Specifically, the research examined respondents' access to digital technologies, patterns of social media usage, perceptions of its impact on teaching and learning, and the conditions required for its effective integration into higher education.

The findings reveal several important insights. First, both lecturers and students reported widespread access to smartphones, laptops, and internet connectivity, indicating that the foundational technological conditions for social media-supported learning are already present among many users. Second, social media adoption is widespread, with platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube, and

Telegram frequently used for communication, information sharing, and academic collaboration. Among these, WhatsApp emerged as the most commonly used platform for academic interaction due to its accessibility, affordability, and group communication features (Al-Rahmi *et al.*, 2020).

The results further demonstrate that most respondents perceive social media as a valuable educational resource that enhances student engagement, facilitates collaboration, and improves communication between lecturers and students. These findings are consistent with contemporary perspectives on digital learning, which emphasise the importance of interaction, collaboration, and networked knowledge construction in modern educational environments (Bond *et al.*, 2020; Tang & Hew, 2022).

However, the study also identified several challenges that may hinder the effective integration of social media into formal teaching practices. These include unreliable internet connectivity, high data costs, distractions from non-academic content, and the absence of clear institutional policies governing the academic use of social media. These barriers highlight the critical importance of infrastructural investment, digital literacy development, and institutional support in enabling the effective use of digital technologies in higher education (Mtebe & Raisamo, 2020).

From a policy perspective, the findings suggest that higher education institutions should develop clear and structured strategies for integrating social media into teaching practices. Such strategies should include reliable internet infrastructure, institutional Wi-Fi services, digital literacy training for both lecturers and students, and the establishment of institutional guidelines to ensure the responsible and effective use of social media platforms.

In terms of research implications, future studies should explore discipline-specific approaches to integrating social media into teaching and learning, as pedagogical strategies may vary across academic fields. Longitudinal studies could also examine how sustained engagement with social media platforms influences learning outcomes, student engagement, and collaborative knowledge construction over time. Furthermore, future research should focus on developing and empirically validating structured models for integrating social media into conventional teaching modes in order to maximise educational benefits while minimising potential drawbacks.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the growing body of research on digital learning in higher education by demonstrating that social media platforms hold significant potential to complement conventional teaching practices. Although these technologies are already widely used by students and lecturers, their full educational potential has not yet been realised within formal academic settings. By identifying the infrastructural, institutional, and pedagogical conditions necessary for effective implementation, this study advances understanding of how social media can support more interactive, collaborative,

and digitally connected learning environments in tertiary education.

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