

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE AND SCHOOL ADJUSTMENT AMONG SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN KADUNA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study investigated the relationship between social media usage and school adjustment among senior secondary school students in Nigeria. A sample of 383 SSS II students was randomly selected from public secondary schools, and data were collected using the Social Media Usage Questionnaire (SMUQ) and the School Adjustment Scale (SAS). Results showed significant negative correlations between social media usage and three dimensions of school adjustment that academic, emotional, and behavioural; while the relationship with social adjustment was weak and non-significant. Regression analysis revealed that social media usage significantly predicted academic ($R^2 = .16$), emotional ($R^2 = .08$), and behavioural adjustment ($R^2 = .11$). The findings suggest that excessive time spent on social media may hinder students' concentration, emotional stability, and compliance with school norms. Recommendations are offered for parents, educators, and policymakers regarding balanced digital engagement.

Keywords: Social Media, School Adjustment, Academic Adjustment, Emotional Adjustment, Senior Secondary Students

Introduction

Social media has become deeply embedded in the everyday lives of adolescents, shaping how they communicate, learn, manage emotions and relate to others. Senior secondary school students are particularly active on platforms such as TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and X, which offer opportunities for social interaction and academic support but also raise concerns about their possible impact on school functioning. During this stage, school plays a central role in developing social and emotional competencies, yet students also experience heightened pressures, including heavier academic workloads, increasing peer influence and new personal responsibilities associated with adolescence (Avci, 2024; Nagata, 2024).

School adjustment refers to how effectively a student adapts to the academic, social, emotional, and behavioural demands of the school environment. It involves achieving a good fit between the learner and the school system. Scholars describe it as a multidimensional process influenced by personal, psychological, and environmental factors, and manifested through academic performance, social integration, emotional stability, and appropriate conduct (Kumar, 2022; IGI Global, 2025). It is central to students' success because difficulties during adjustment can result in stress, declining performance, and reduced well-being. Early identification of adjustment challenges enables educators to provide timely support and improve school outcomes (Smith, 2022).

Academic adjustment concerns students' ability to meet academic expectations, manage study demands, and develop effective learning strategies. It includes motivation, time management, engagement, and satisfaction with the learning environment. Social media contributes both positively and negatively: it supports learning through access to educational resources and peer collaboration,

but excessive non-academic use may lead to distraction, reduced engagement, and poorer performance (Ahmed & Musa, 2024). Research indicates that academic adjustment is shaped by individual, institutional, cultural, and psychological factors, influencing students' resilience, persistence, and achievement (Ahmad & Rana, 2023; EJTAS, 2024). Students with strong academic adjustment show higher motivation, emotional stability, and better outcomes, while poor adjustment is linked to disengagement, absenteeism, and burnout. Schools should therefore foster supportive learning environments and provide mentorship to enhance academic resilience.

Social adjustment reflects students' ability to build positive relationships, cooperate with peers, and engage meaningfully in the social life of the school. Scholars emphasize its role in developing social competence, belonging, and harmonious participation (Safri & Vajpeyifa, 2025). Social media can enhance social integration by facilitating communication and collaboration but may also encourage superficial interactions, social isolation, or anxiety when overused (Alhassan & Yusuf, 2021). Effective social adjustment requires adaptive social skills and emotional competence. Social adjustment is a key indicator of student well-being and influences academic success, peer relationships, and long-term interpersonal development.

Emotional adjustment involves students' ability to regulate emotions, manage anxiety or stress, and maintain psychological balance. It covers coping with internalizing and externalizing problems while drawing on personal resources such as resilience and self-esteem (Martin-Ruiz et al., 2023). Social media can help students express themselves and access support but may also increase feelings of inadequacy, anxiety, or emotional distress due to comparison or cyberbullying (Ahmed & Musa, 2024). Emotional adjustment contributes to motivation, coping, and stable participation in school life. Schools should integrate emotional intelligence training, create safe environments, and monitor the emotional effects of digital engagement. Teacher training should include early detection of emotional difficulties.

Behavioural adjustment refers to students' conformity to school norms, discipline, punctuality, and responsible conduct. It includes self-control, respect for rules, and productive engagement with school activities (Wang, 2024; Adebayo & Ahmed, 2025). Social media influences behaviour by shaping online habits that may translate into positive responsibility or, conversely, procrastination, lateness, or exposure to risky behaviours (Omoniyi & Adegbite, 2022). Schools need strategies that strengthen self-regulation, discipline, and positive conduct.

Social media usage refers to how individuals engage with these platforms which include; the frequency, intensity, and purpose of their interactions. It includes activities such as posting, commenting, browsing, sharing, and participating in online communities. Researchers highlight both instrumental use (academic collaboration, information seeking) and recreational use (entertainment, socializing), noting that user patterns vary by age, culture, and personal needs. Social media has become deeply integrated into identity development, social life, emotional expression, and academic activities.

Social media platforms differ in structure and purpose:

Facebook emphasizes networking and content sharing.

WhatsApp provides instant messaging and group communication.

TikTok supports short-form, algorithm-driven creative content.

YouTube serves as a global video-sharing and learning platform.

Twitter/X focuses on real-time, short-form communication and public discourse.

Social media usage comprises several components that include; communication, information sharing, entertainment, social interaction, collaboration, and self-presentation which reflect the diverse ways

adolescents engage with digital platforms (Valkenburg et al., 2021). Students rely on these platforms to maintain relationships, support learning, express identity, and participate in online communities (Du, 2024). While academically focused use can enhance peer learning and engagement, recreational or excessive use especially at night often contributes to distraction, reduced concentration, sleep problems, and emotional strain, ultimately affecting school adjustment (Ibrahim et al., 2023).

The consequences of social media use on students' adjustment are both positive and negative. Positively, social media enhances social support, promotes collaboration, improves access to information, and strengthens school relationships (Avci, 2024). It can foster creativity, provide educational resources, and facilitate participation in academic discussions (Nagata, 2024). However, excessive or unregulated use can impair academic focus, increase procrastination, fuel social comparison, and heighten anxiety or emotional instability (Valkenburg et al., 2021). Unhealthy dependence on social validation may also affect students' self-esteem and overall well-being (Israelashvili, 2025).

The study is anchored on Uses and Gratifications Theory, Social Learning Theory, and Ecological Systems Theory, which together explain that students' social media use is driven by personal needs, shaped through observed online behaviours, and influenced by interactions within family, school, peer, and cultural contexts, ultimately affecting academic, social, emotional, and behavioural adjustment.

In Nigeria, particularly Kaduna State, social media use among secondary school students has mixed outcomes, supporting learning and peer interaction on one hand, but contributing to academic decline, stress, poor self-regulation, and behavioural challenges when use is excessive or poorly managed, with limited studies examining these effects across all dimensions of school adjustment. Given these concerns, this study examines the relationship between social media usage and students' academic, social, emotional, and behavioural adjustment in senior secondary schools in Kaduna State, with the goal of informing strategies that support healthier digital habits and enhance students' overall wellbeing.

Statement of the Problem

School adjustment is crucial for students' academic success, social integration, emotional well-being, and behavioral discipline. Poor adjustment can result from challenges in coping with academic demands, managing stress, forming peer relationships, and adhering to school rules, often leading to lower academic performance and emotional or behavioral difficulties. In recent years, excessive or unregulated social media use has emerged as a major factor influencing students' adjustment, contributing to distraction, procrastination, social comparison, and emotional strain. Despite its prevalence, limited research has examined the comprehensive impact of social media on academic, social, emotional, and behavioral adjustment among Nigerian secondary school students, particularly in Kaduna State. This study seeks to fill this gap by investigating the relationship between social media usage and school adjustment, providing insights to support balanced social media use and improved student adaptation.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are to determine the:

1. Relationship between social media usage and academic adjustment among senior secondary school students in Kaduna state, Nigeria
2. Relationship between social media usage and social adjustment among senior secondary school students in Kaduna state, Nigeria
3. Relationship between social media usage and emotional adjustment among senior secondary school students in Kaduna state, Nigeria

4. Relationship between social media usage and behavioural adjustment among senior secondary school students in Kaduna state, Nigeria

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses was tested at a 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant relationship between social media usage and academic adjustment among senior secondary school students in Kaduna state, Nigeria
2. There is no significant relationship between social media usage and social adjustment among senior secondary school students in Kaduna state, Nigeria
3. There is no significant relationship between social media usage and emotional adjustment among senior secondary school students in Kaduna state, Nigeria
4. There is no significant relationship between social media usage and behavioural adjustment among senior secondary school students in Kaduna state, Nigeria.

Methodology

This study adopted a correlational research design to examine the relationship between social media usage and school adjustment among senior secondary school students. This design was suitable as it allows determination of the strength and direction of relationships without manipulating variables. The population consisted of 70,074 SS II students in public senior secondary schools across 23 LGAs of Kaduna State (2024/2025). Using Research Advisor (2006), a sample of 383 students was selected through a multi-stage cluster sampling: first, the state was divided into three zones (North, Central, South); second, three LGAs and three schools per zone were randomly selected; third, proportionate sampling of SS II students yielded 383 participants from nine schools (total enrollment: 5,050). Data were collected using the Social Media Usage Scale for Senior Secondary Students (SMUS-SSS; Olatunde & Yusuf, 2021) and the School Adjustment Scale (SAS; Sinha & Singh, 2023), both 5-point Likert instruments. Content validity was ensured by four Educational Psychology and Counselling experts at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. Reliability coefficients were high: $\alpha = .955$ (SMUS-SSS) and $\alpha = .846$ (SAS), indicating suitability for data collection (Siguenza et al., 2024; Zakariya, 2022). Data analysis was performed using SPSS version 27, with descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation to test hypotheses at the 0.05 significance level.

Results

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables (N = 383)

Variable	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Social Media Usage (hours/day)	4.62	1.88	1	10
Academic Adjustment	52.41	10.32	28	78
Social Adjustment	47.33	8.91	26	72
Emotional Adjustment	49.12	9.44	25	75
Behavioural Adjustment	51.05	9.88	27	77

The table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the study variables among 383 SSS II students. On average, students spent a relatively high amount of time on social media (M = 4.62 hours per day, SD = 1.88), indicating that social media use is a prominent aspect of their daily routines, with usage ranging from minimal to very heavy engagement (1–10 hours). The mean scores for academic (M = 52.41, SD = 10.32), social (M = 47.33, SD = 8.91), emotional (M = 49.12, SD = 9.44), and behavioural adjustment (M = 51.05, SD = 9.88) suggest moderate levels of adjustment across all dimensions,

though the wide ranges indicate notable variability among students.

Hypotheses Testing

H01: There is no significant relationship between social media usage and academic adjustment among senior secondary school students in Kaduna state, Nigeria.

Table 2: Simple Regression Analysis of Social Media Usage on Academic Adjustment

Predictor	β	SE	t	p	R ²
Social Media Usage	-.41	.046	-8.95	< .001	.16

The regression analysis showed that social media usage significantly predicted academic adjustment ($\beta = -.41, p < .001$). The model explained 16% of the variance in academic adjustment ($R^2 = .16$). This indicates that increased social media usage is associated with poorer academic adjustment. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

H02: There is no significant relationship between social media usage and social adjustment among senior secondary school students in Kaduna state, Nigeria

Table 3: Simple Regression Analysis of Social Media Usage on Social Adjustment

Predictor	β	SE	t	p	R ²
Social Media Usage	-.09	.052	-1.84	.067	.01

The regression results indicated that social media usage did not significantly predict social adjustment ($\beta = -.09, p = .067$). The model explained only 1% of the variance ($R^2 = .01$). Thus, the null hypothesis is retained, indicating no meaningful predictive relationship.

H03: There is no significant relationship between social media usage and emotional adjustment among senior secondary school students in Kaduna state, Nigeria.

Table 4: Simple Regression Analysis of Social Media Usage on Emotional Adjustment

Predictor	β	SE	t	p	R ²
Social Media Usage	-.28	.047	-5.93	< .001	.08

This finding shows that social media usage significantly predicted emotional adjustment ($\beta = -.28, p < .001$). The model accounted for 8% of the variance in emotional adjustment ($R^2 = .08$). This suggests that higher social media usage contributes to poorer emotional adjustment. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

H04: There is no significant relationship between social media usage and behavioural adjustment among senior secondary school students in Kaduna state, Nigeria

Table 5: Simple Regression Analysis of Social Media Usage on Behavioural Adjustment

Predictor	β	SE	t	p	R ²
Social Media Usage	-.33	.045	-7.30	< .001	.11

The regression analysis indicated that social media usage significantly predicted behavioural adjustment ($\beta = -.33, p < .001$), explaining 11% of the variance ($R^2 = .11$). This implies that increased engagement with social media negatively affects students' behavioural adjustment. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 6: Regression Summary for Predicting School Adjustment and SMU

Outcome Variable	β	SE	t	p	R ²
Academic Adjustment	-.41	.046	-8.95	<.001	.16
Social Adjustment	-.09	.052	-1.84	.067	.01
Emotional Adjustment	-.28	.047	-5.93	<.001	.08
Behavioural Adjustment	-.33	.045	-7.30	<.001	.11

The findings show that increased social media usage is significantly associated with poorer school adjustment among SS II students. Specifically, social media usage had significant negative correlations with academic adjustment ($r = -.41, p < .001$), emotional adjustment ($r = -.28, p < .001$), and behavioural adjustment ($r = -.33, p < .001$), indicating that higher usage is linked with reduced concentration, increased stress, weaker emotional regulation, and poorer compliance with school rules. In contrast, the relationship between social media usage and social adjustment was weak and not statistically significant ($r = -.09, p = .067$), suggesting that students' peer relationships and sense of social belonging are not substantially affected by their level of social media engagement. Overall, the results indicate that excessive social media use negatively influences key dimensions of school adjustment, while its impact on social adjustment remains minimal.

Discussion of Findings

Recent studies show that social media usage influences multiple dimensions of school adjustment, with effects largely depending on the type, purpose, and intensity of use. Excessive or recreational engagement has been linked to lower academic adjustment, including reduced concentration, weaker study habits, procrastination, and poorer overall academic performance, as demonstrated by Binai and Anupama (2020), Colak et al. (2023), and Du and Jin (2024). Beyond academics, heavy use also negatively impacts emotional and behavioral adjustment, contributing to higher stress, anxiety, emotional dysregulation, sleep disturbances, and reduced classroom discipline (Colak et al., 2023; Mensah & Ofori, 2022; Adeoye & Salami, 2023). In contrast, purposeful and moderate use, such as participating in academic discussions, collaborating in study groups, or engaging in structured peer support, has been shown to enhance academic engagement, strengthen emotional well-being, and promote positive behavioral outcomes (Chen & Xiao, 2022; Lee & Kim, 2021).

Social adjustment appears less affected when social media is used constructively, as students can maintain existing friendships, form meaningful peer networks, and foster a sense of belonging within the school community (Chan, Srisarajivakul & Renshaw, 2025; Du & Jin, 2024). Collectively, these findings emphasize that the influence of social media on school adjustment is highly context-dependent, suggesting that moderation, purposeful engagement, and proper guidance are crucial for

ensuring that digital interactions support rather than hinder students' academic, social, emotional, and behavioral development.

Conclusion

The study revealed that increased social media usage hinders several aspects of school adjustment among senior secondary students. Higher usage significantly predicts poorer academic adjustment, reduced emotional stability, and weaker behavioural control. Students who spend more time on social media tend to experience lower concentration, heightened stress, and greater distractibility. However, social media use does not have a significant effect on social adjustment, indicating that peer interactions and relationships remain largely unaffected. Overall, excessive social media engagement poses challenges to students' academic, emotional, and behavioural functioning, underscoring the importance of promoting balanced and responsible digital habits.

Recommendations

1. Teachers should guide students on responsible social media use and time management to support academic focus.
2. School counsellors should provide programmes to help students manage stress and emotional challenges linked to social media.
3. Parents should monitor screen time and encourage productive offline activities to promote emotional and behavioural adjustment.
4. Schools should enforce policies limiting phone and social media use during school hours.
5. Students should be encouraged to use social media constructively for learning and academic collaboration.

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