

A STUDY ON THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE ON THE ACADEMIC STUDY PATTERNS OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN ENUGU STATE

By

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Abstract

This study investigated the influence of social media on the study habits of undergraduate students in a selected university in Enugu State. While social media has become an essential tool for modern communication, it poses emerging challenges to students' academic culture and discipline. This research specifically focused on how social media usage affects students' study habits. A descriptive survey design was adopted, employing a mixed-methods approach that combined both qualitative and quantitative techniques. Data were collected through questionnaires and face-to-face interviews. A total of 15 students were interviewed individually, alongside 10 university lecturers, with responses recorded for detailed analysis. The study was anchored on the **Uses and Gratification Theory**, which suggests that media users are active participants who selectively engage with media based on specific motivations and needs. Findings revealed that a significant number of students frequently use platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter, often even during lecture hours. The study concluded that excessive and unregulated use of social media may negatively impact students' study habits and academic performance. It recommends the implementation of time-restrictive software and institutional guidelines to manage social media usage among students. The findings are expected to guide university administrators in formulating effective strategies to mitigate the adverse effects of social media on academic engagement.

Keywords: Social media, Study habits, Influence, Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Addiction

Introduction

To set the stage for this study, it is essential to define social media and explore its widespread use and influence on students' study behaviors, particularly among university undergraduates. Social media refers to digital platforms that enable interactive communication, content sharing, and collaboration among users. Bryer and Zavatarro (2011) define social media as technologies that facilitate social interaction, collaboration, and deliberation among various stakeholders. This definition highlights both the functionality and examples of social media, including blogs, wikis, media-sharing tools (audio, video, photo, and text), and networking platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, MySpace, LinkedIn, and Instagram.

From a contemporary standpoint, social media can be seen as a network of interactive communication that connects individuals through specialized electronic platforms, enabling real-time information exchange and relationship-building. These platforms have become integral to daily life, especially among young people, including university students.

Extant research has largely focused on how social media affects human social behavior and, to a lesser extent, its impact on academic performance. Scholars such as Finkelhor, Mitchell, & Wolack (2002), Greenfield & Subrahmanyam (2008), and Kramer & Winter (2008) have noted the growing popularity of online networking, particularly among adolescents and young adults. This rapid rise in social media engagement has sparked concern among parents, educators, religious leaders, and policymakers about its potential consequences on various aspects of youth development.

Given the central role that study habits play in academic success, it is imperative to understand how social media usage influences students' academic routines and behaviors. In this context, this study aims to examine the impact of social media on the study habits of undergraduate students in Enugu State universities, representing a broader inquiry into digital consumption trends in African developing nations.

Statement of the Problem

As highlighted in the introduction, social media has become an inseparable part of the daily lives of young people, particularly undergraduates. This constant engagement raises questions about its impact on essential academic routines such as reading, assignment completion, time management, and overall study discipline. Tynes (2009) noted that many parents are increasingly concerned that excessive use of social networking sites is leading their teenagers to neglect academic responsibilities. Despite regulations and restrictions set by educational institutions, the pervasive use of mobile gadgets and social media platforms continues to grow, causing anxiety among educators and the wider society.

Although various studies have acknowledged the positive aspects of social media—such as fostering connectivity, access to educational content, and enhanced collaboration—there is also substantial evidence pointing to its detrimental effects. While some researchers have explored its influence on youth morality and others have analyzed its relationship with academic performance, there remains a significant gap in the literature regarding how social media directly influences **study habits**, particularly in developing contexts like Nigeria. This study seeks to address that gap by focusing on the specific ways social media usage affects the academic routines and behaviors of undergraduates in Enugu State universities.

Objectives of the Study

This research was guided by the following objectives:

1. To identify the most commonly used social media platforms among undergraduate students in Enugu State universities.
2. To examine the impact of social media usage on the study habits of these students.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Uses and Gratifications Theory. As articulated by Straubhaar et al. (2014), this theory posits that media consumers are not passive recipients but active participants who selectively engage with media content to fulfill specific needs—be it for information, social interaction, or entertainment. The theory underscores the idea that individuals seek out particular media based on personal motivations and derive satisfaction from these interactions.

DeFleur (2010) further elaborates that media users have varying psychological, emotional, and cultural needs that influence their media choices and consumption habits. In this light, students who turn to social media may do so for reasons beyond academic purposes—such as social bonding, escapism, or recreation—which can lead to addictive behaviors. This addiction-like engagement may, in turn, interfere with their ability to maintain consistent study habits and focus.

The Uses and Gratifications Theory thus provides a suitable framework for analyzing how students interact with social media and the motivations behind their usage, offering insights into how such behaviors impact their academic discipline and productivity.

Literature Review

This section reviews relevant literature on the role of social media, its influence on social behavior, academic performance, and the growing concern of social media addiction among youths. Boyd (2007) observed that students embrace social media as a means of peer interaction, information exchange, and identity formation, raising the question: can this behavior support or undermine academic efforts?

Kord (2008) reported a significant rise in student engagement with social media since 2004, suggesting a possible link between increased usage and negative academic outcomes. As access to social media platforms expands, so does the potential for addictive behavior, making it crucial to investigate the effects on students' study habits. Several studies indicate that 80–90% of university students actively use at least one social media platform, highlighting the importance of this research.

Michele and Kist (2008) identified risks associated with platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and MySpace, noting that exposure to inappropriate content and harassment are common. Similarly, Kord (2007) emphasized that negative peer interactions on social media can influence student behavior and emotional wellbeing. Social media can also facilitate harmful behaviors such as impersonation and moral deviance.

Gross and Acquisti (2005) noted that while the internet was originally intended for academic research, it is increasingly being used by students for entertainment and social interaction. Bonds-Raacke and Raacke (2008) also found that social media affects students' cognitive processes, social interactions, and information acquisition strategies. In the U.S., Shih (2009) reported that over 90% of teenagers accessed the internet regularly, with more than 75% logging on daily, primarily for socializing rather than academic purposes.

Tynes (2009) emphasized growing parental and institutional concerns over students' excessive use of social media, which is seen to hinder academic engagement. Despite institutional efforts to regulate gadget use, concerns persist. Abdullah et al. (2009) and Lent et al. (2009) highlighted

that frequent use of social media diminishes respect for authority figures, such as parents and educators. However, it is important to note that most of these studies were conducted in Western contexts, and their findings may not be fully applicable to African cultures. Therefore, this study fills an important contextual gap by focusing on African university students.

On a positive note, Oskouei (2010) argued that the internet can serve as a powerful tool for knowledge sharing and collaboration when used effectively by students and teachers. Lusk (2010) also emphasized the potential of online communities to provide academic support, while Byrdolf (2007) observed that emerging web tools are transforming the way students learn and engage academically, especially for those less comfortable speaking in class.

Kalpidou, Costin, and Morris (2011) at Ohio State University found that students who frequently used Facebook spent less time studying and earned lower grades. Aryn Karpinski and Adam Duberstein similarly reported that Facebook users had significantly lower GPAs. However, other studies found no statistically significant correlation between social media use and academic performance.

This study aims to bridge three key gaps in existing literature:

1. Contextual gap – providing insight from an African/developing country perspective.
2. Historical gap – updating findings beyond studies conducted prior to 2011.
3. Topical gap – shifting the focus from moral behavior to study habits specifically.

Research Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design, guided by a mixed-methods approach that integrated both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. Simple random sampling was employed to select a representative sample of participants. Data collection instruments included structured questionnaires and in-depth interview guides. Quantitative data were statistically analyzed, while qualitative responses were thematically examined to provide a holistic understanding of the impact of social media on students' study habits.

Findings and Discussion

The study investigated the influence of social media on the study habits of university students in Enugu State. A total of 64 undergraduate students participated, comprising 38 females and 26 males. The key findings were:

- A majority of students reported daily engagement with platforms such as **Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter**, often during class hours.
- Many students acknowledged that social media consumption significantly reduced the time they dedicated to studying and academic tasks.
- Interview responses revealed that while social media provides a sense of social connection and emotional support, it also serves as a major distraction, especially during lectures or while completing assignments.

- Lecturers interviewed expressed concerns over students' inability to focus, reduced class participation, and declining academic performance, which they attributed in part to excessive social media use.

These findings support the Uses and Gratifications Theory, which asserts that users actively choose media based on personal needs, even when it may hinder their academic responsibilities. The addictive nature of social media engagement, especially among youth, demands closer attention from academic institutions and stakeholders to safeguard academic integrity and performance.

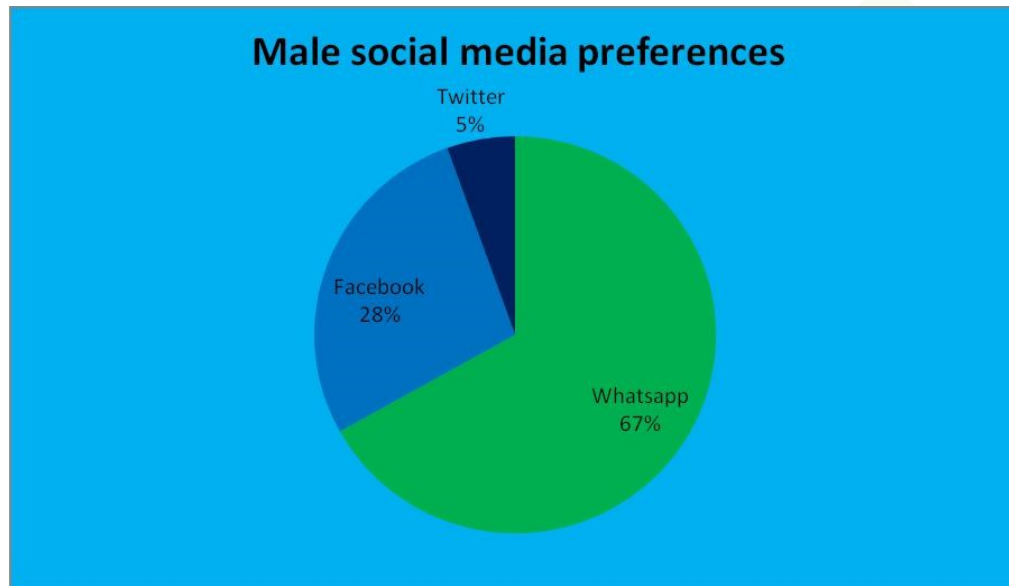


Figure:4.1

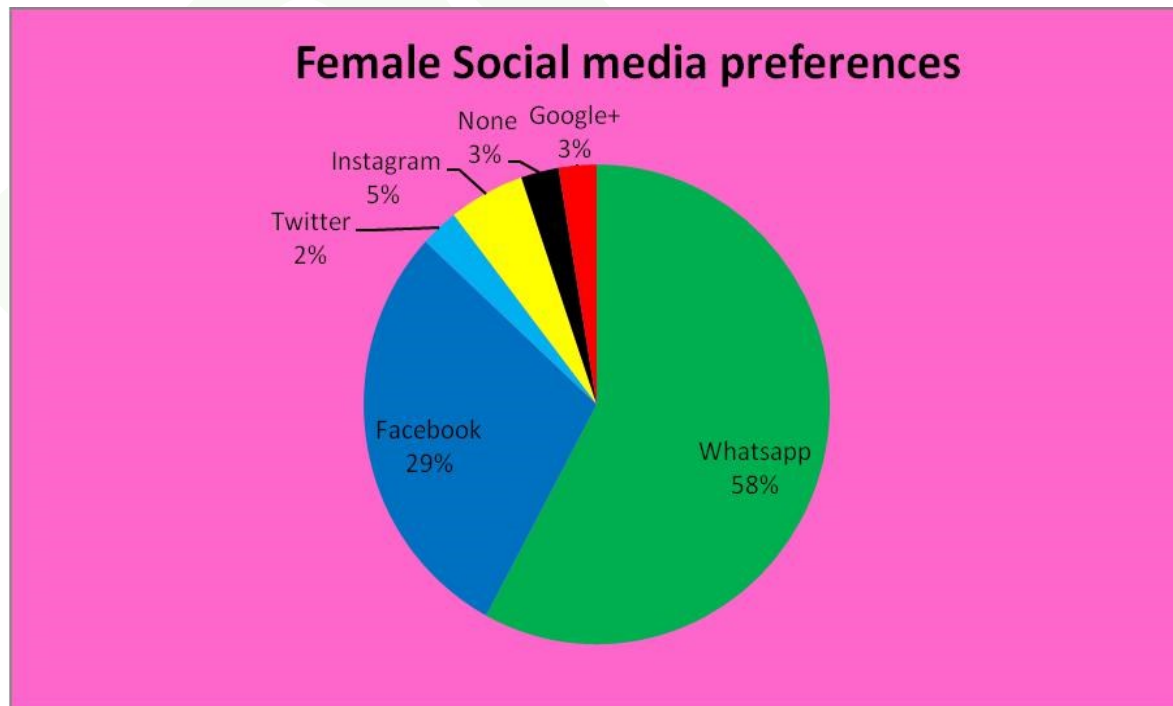


Figure 4.2

The results from figure 4.1 and 4.2 above shows that most of the male and female students are using Whatsapp followed by the face book then the others are almost out of use.

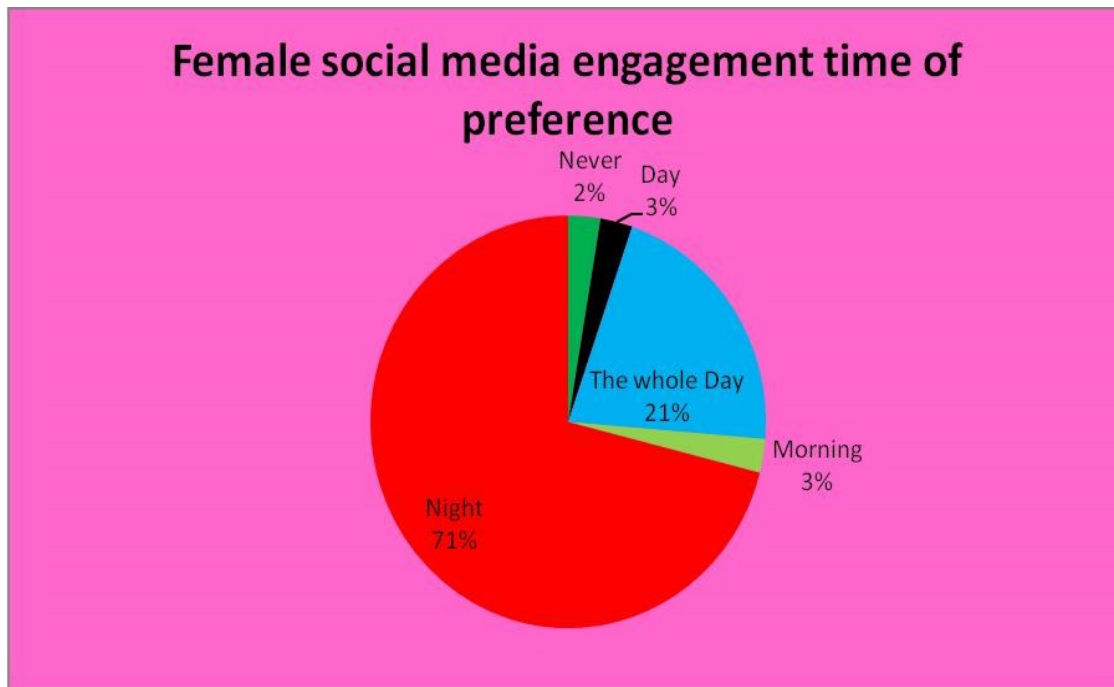


Figure 4.3. Source collected and data

Figure 4.3 and 4.4 respectively tested social media engagement time of preference. The results show that both male and female engage themselves in social media at night. This is an indicator that shows that the students' day time class studies are not affected by social media.

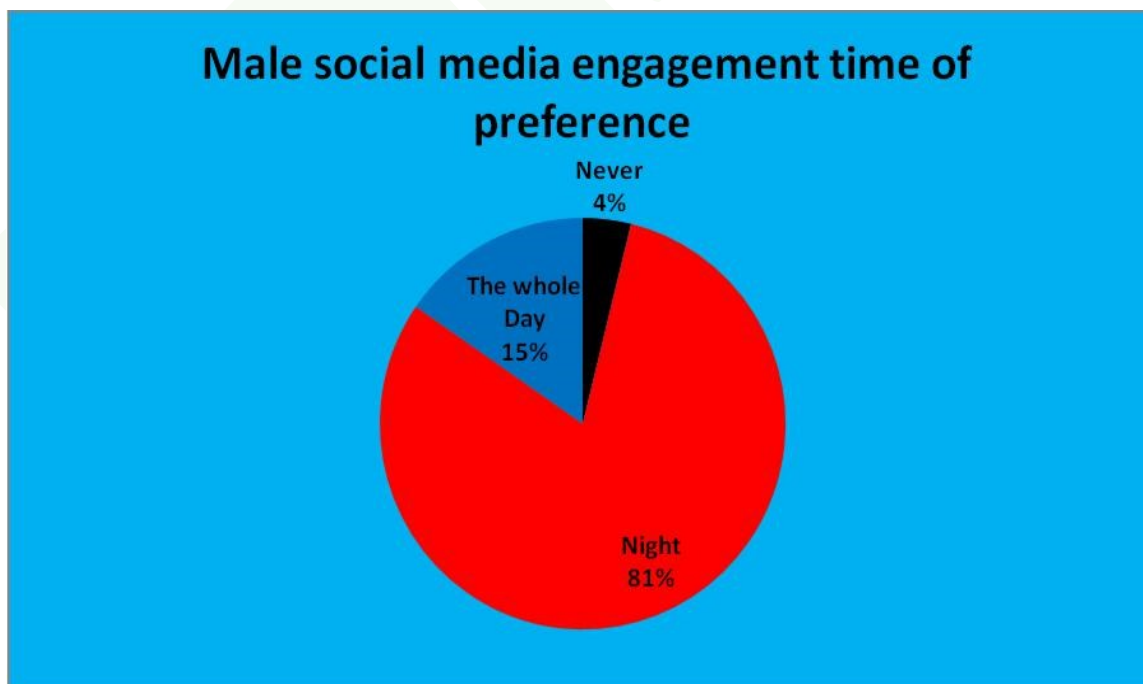


Figure 4.4: Source collected and analyzed data

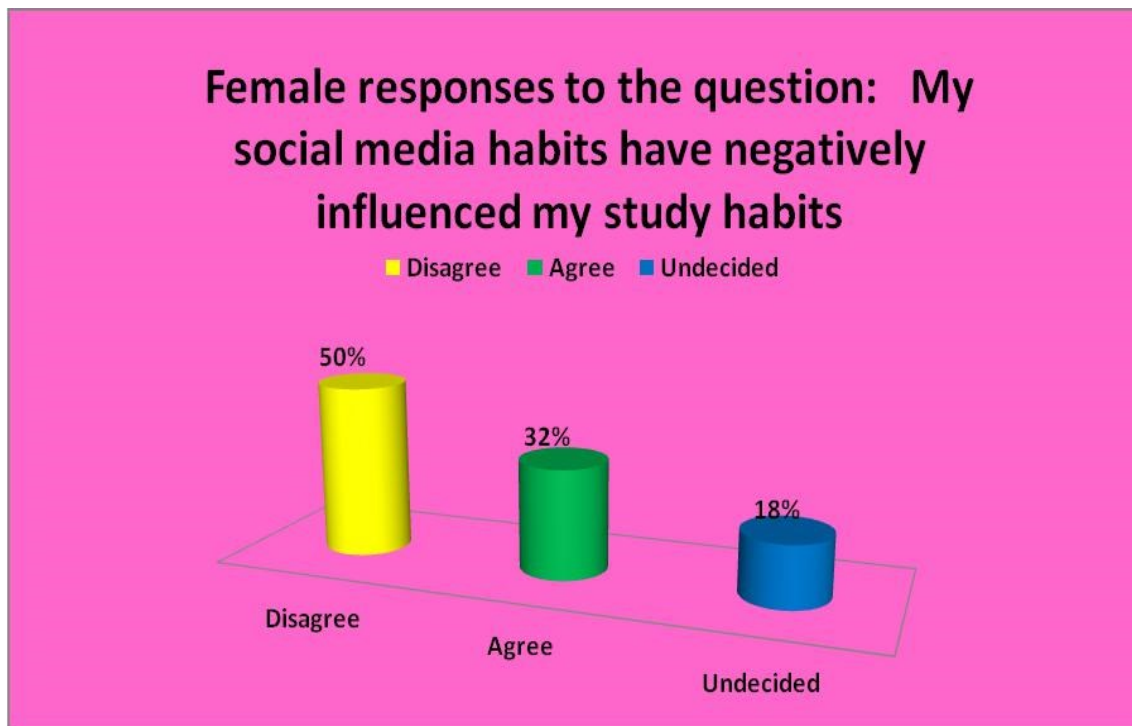


Figure 4.5: Source collected and analyzed data

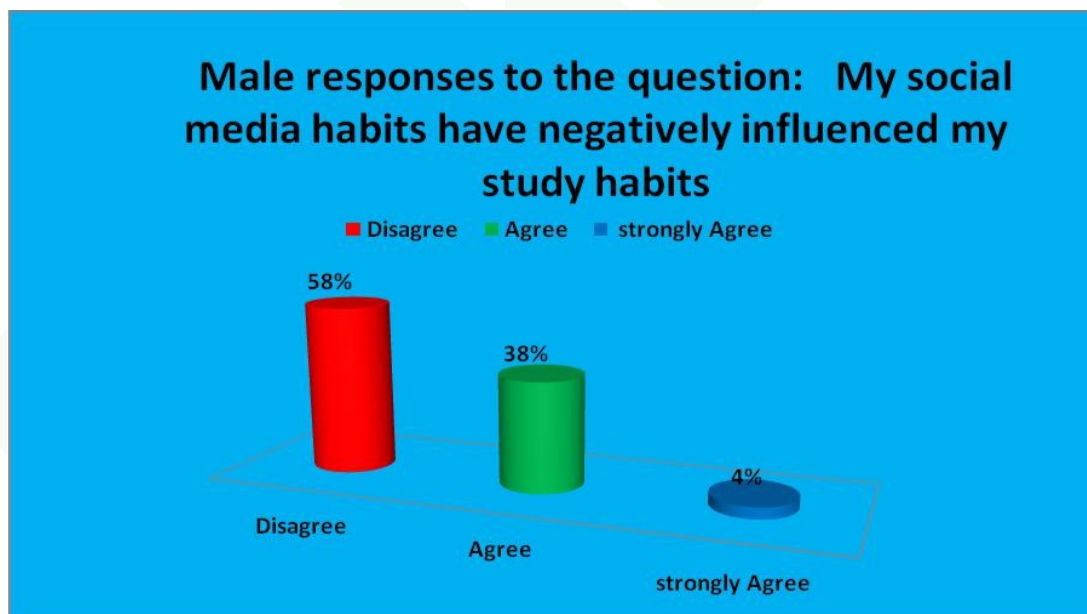


Figure 4.6: Source collected and analyzed data

Figures 4.5 and 4.6 are the results in response to the students believe in the negative effects of social media to their study time. The results are in contrary to the believes by the lecturer that social media affects students study habits negatively.

The results show that 50% of male and 58% female students disagree that the social media affects their study habits negatively. Without ignoring the negative effects completely 32% of the male students and 38% of the female students agreed that social media affects their study habits negatively.

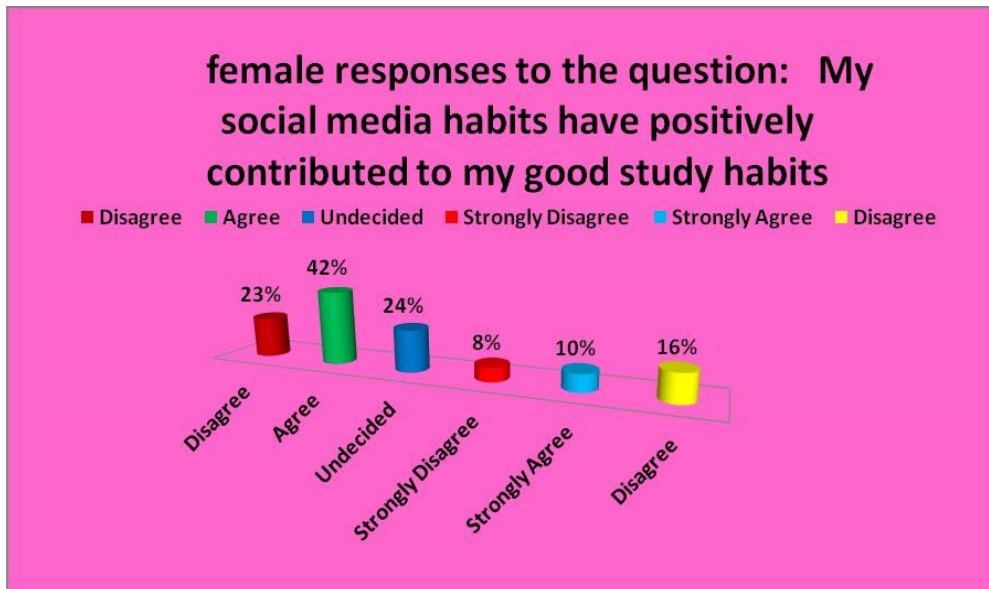


Figure 4.7. Source Collected and analysed data

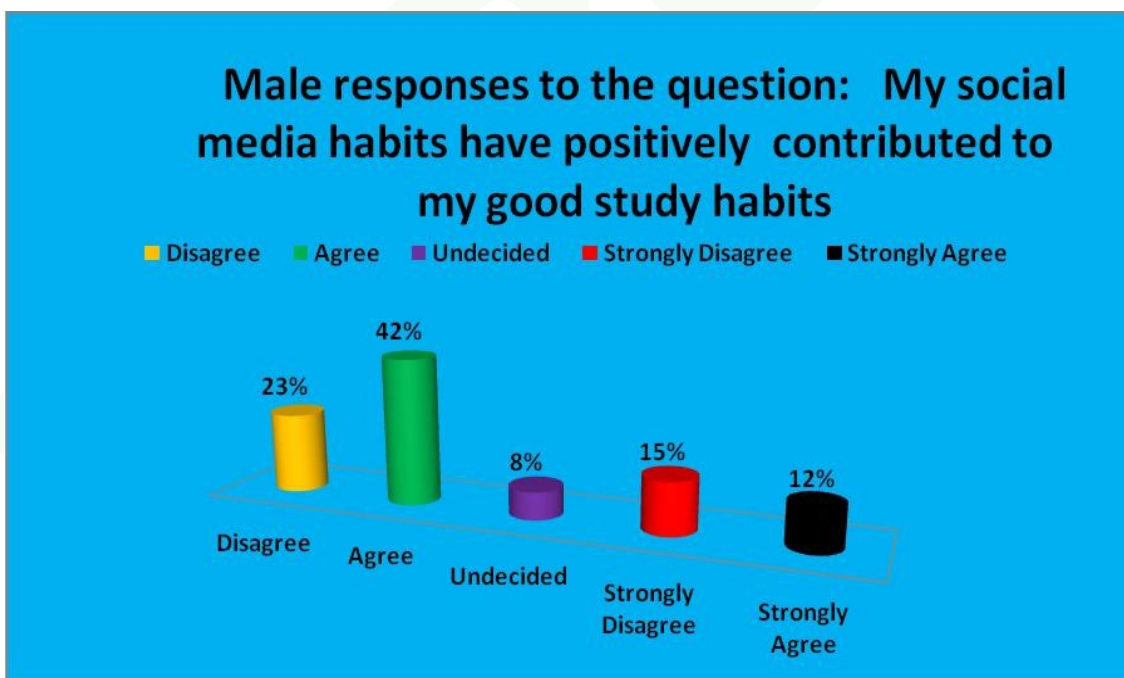


Figure 4.8: Source collected and analyzed data

Figures 4.7 and 4.8 were testing if their social media habits have contributed positively to their study habits and a good percentage are in agreement that it has positively supported them in their studies.42% of the male and 42% of female students agreed and 10% and 12% respectively also strongly agreed.

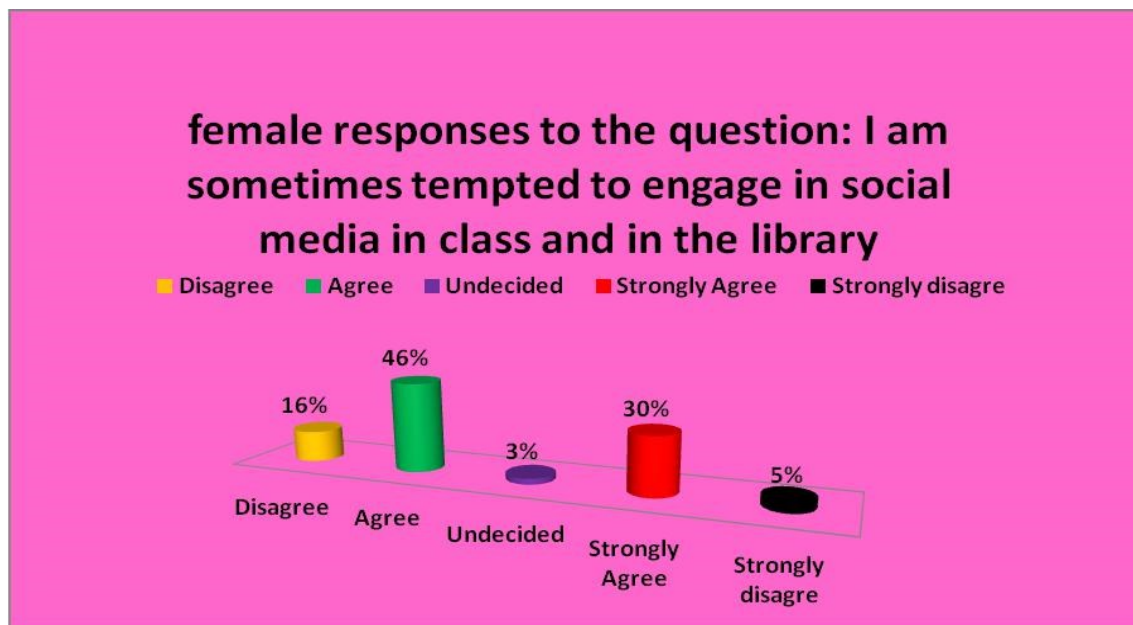


Figure 4.9: Source collected and analysed data

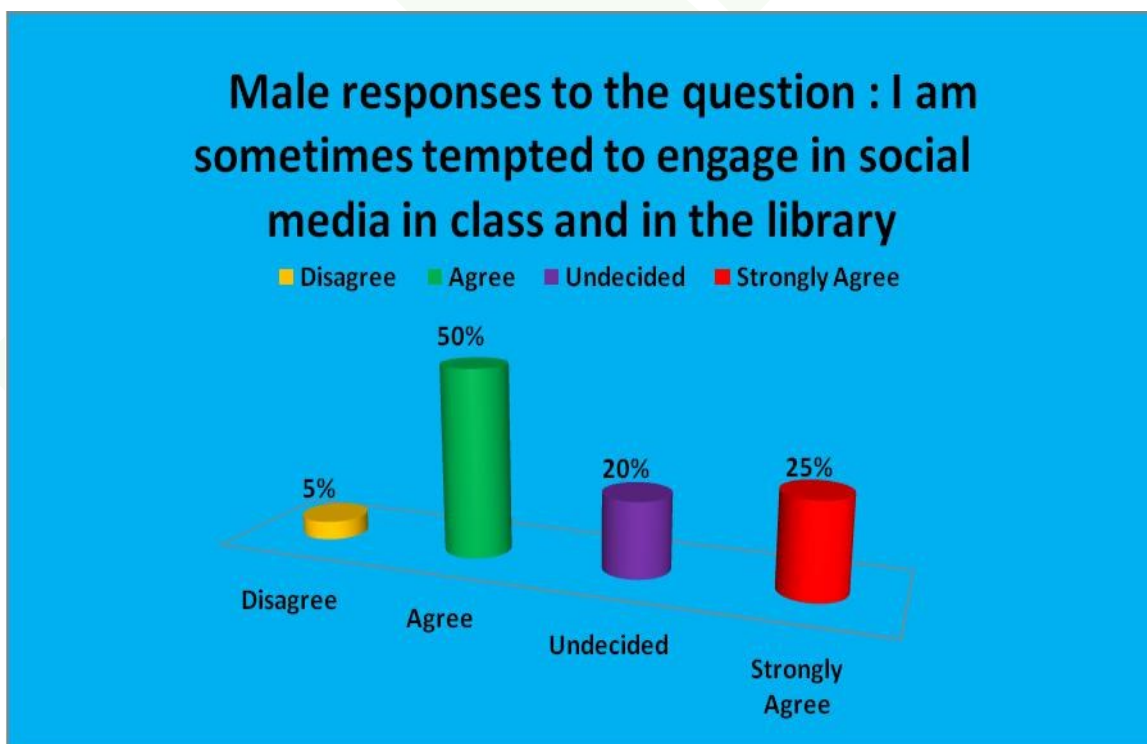


Figure 4.10: Source collected and analyzed data

Figures 4.9 and 4.10 present the findings from a question assessing students' temptation to use social media during class and in the library. The results indicate that although the temptation is notably high, students demonstrate considerable self-control. Among male respondents, 46% agreed and 30% strongly agreed that they feel tempted but manage to restrain themselves. The tendency was even more pronounced among female students, with 50% agreeing and 25% strongly agreeing, suggesting a higher level of temptation, though still accompanied by conscious self-regulation.

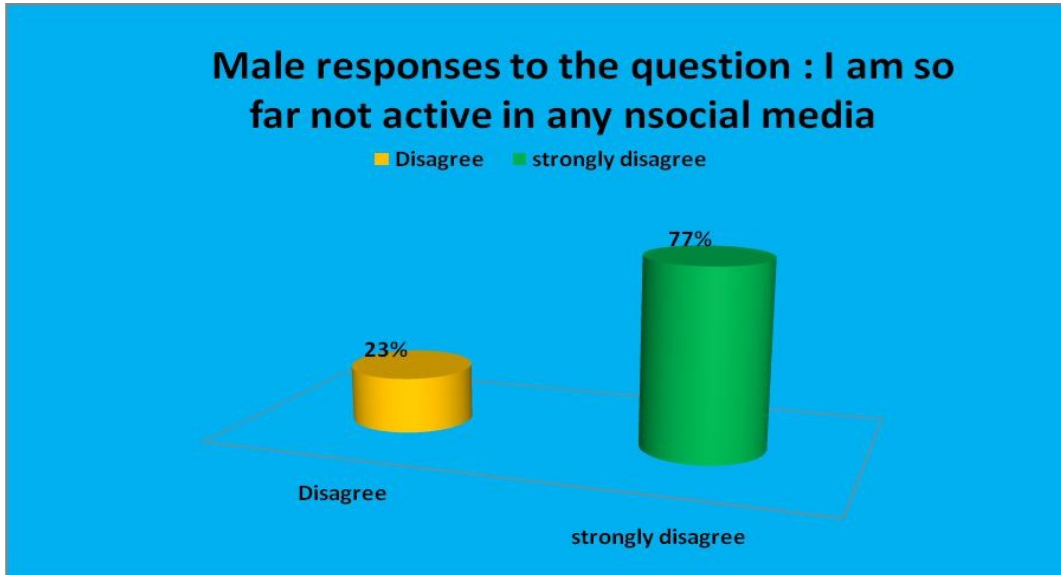


Figure 4.11

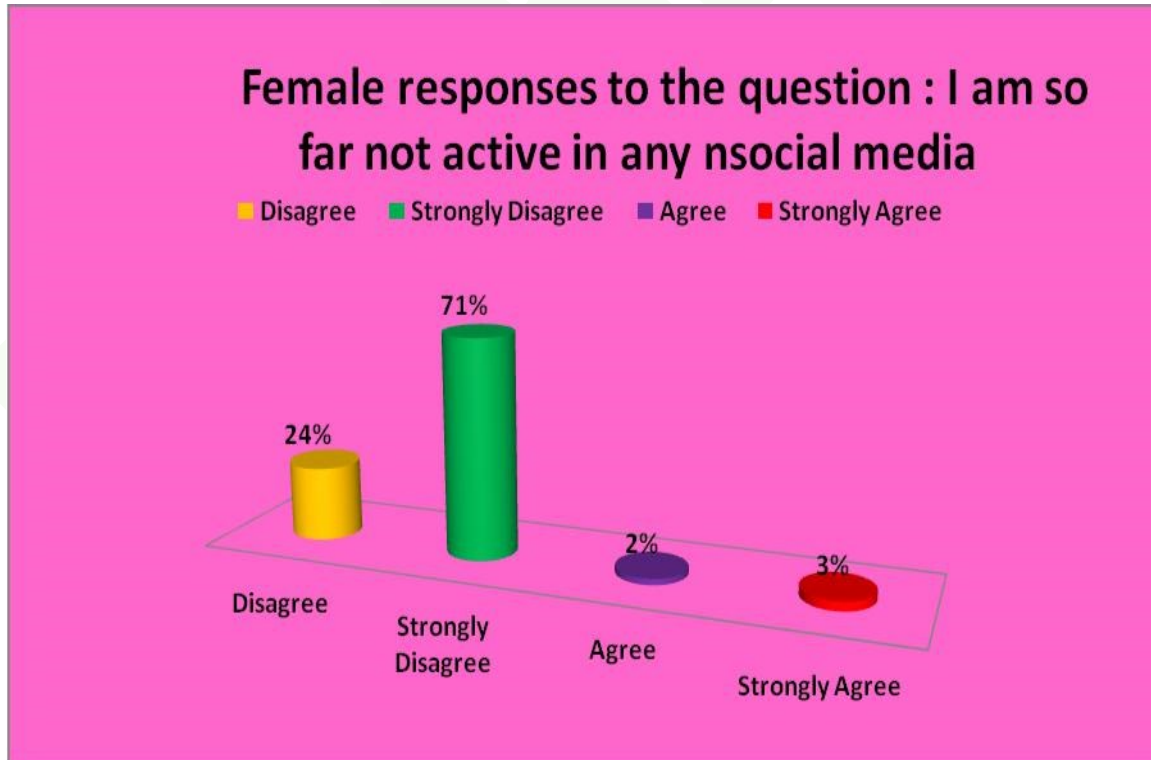


Figure 4.12:Source collected and analyzed data

Figures 4.11 and 4.12 present student responses to the question regarding non-engagement with social media. The data indicate that the majority of respondents are highly active on social media platforms. Among male students, **77% strongly disagreed** and **23% disagreed** with the statement that they are not currently active on any social media platform. Similarly, among female students, **71% strongly disagreed** and **24% disagreed**, further confirming a high level of social media engagement across both genders.

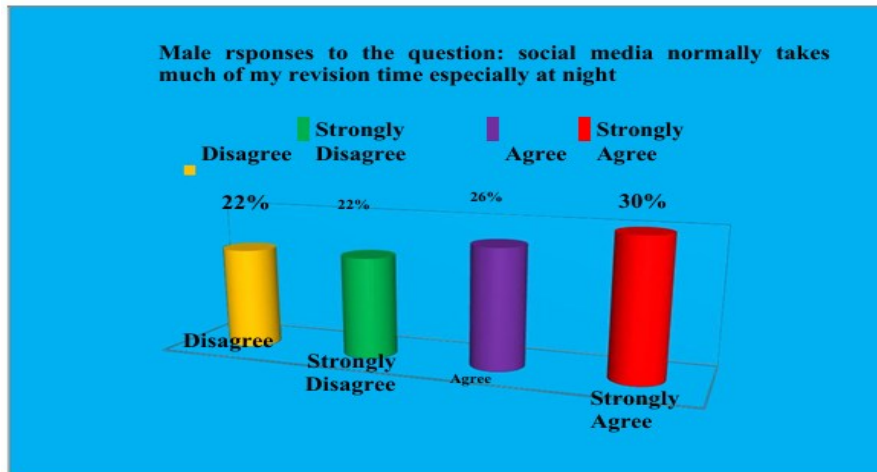


Figure 4.13 Source collected and analzsed data:

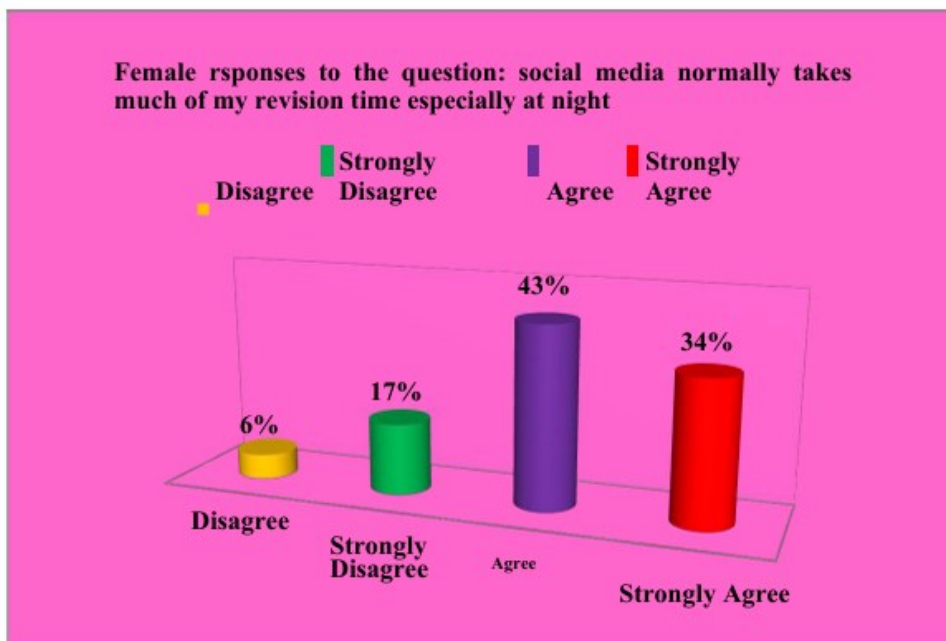


Figure 4.14: Source collected and analzsed data

Figures 4.13 and 4.14 present responses regarding the negative impact of social media on students' revision time, particularly during nighttime hours. Among male students, 26% agreed and 30% strongly agreed that social media use disrupts their night-time study. The effect was more pronounced among female students, with 43% agreeing and 34% strongly agreeing that social media interferes with their revision during the night.

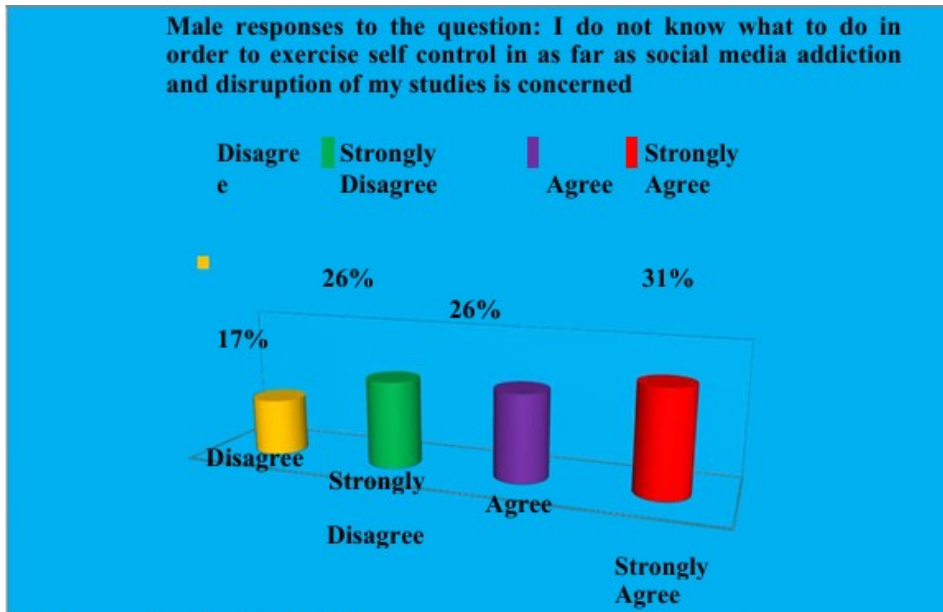


Figure 4.15: Source collected and analyzed data

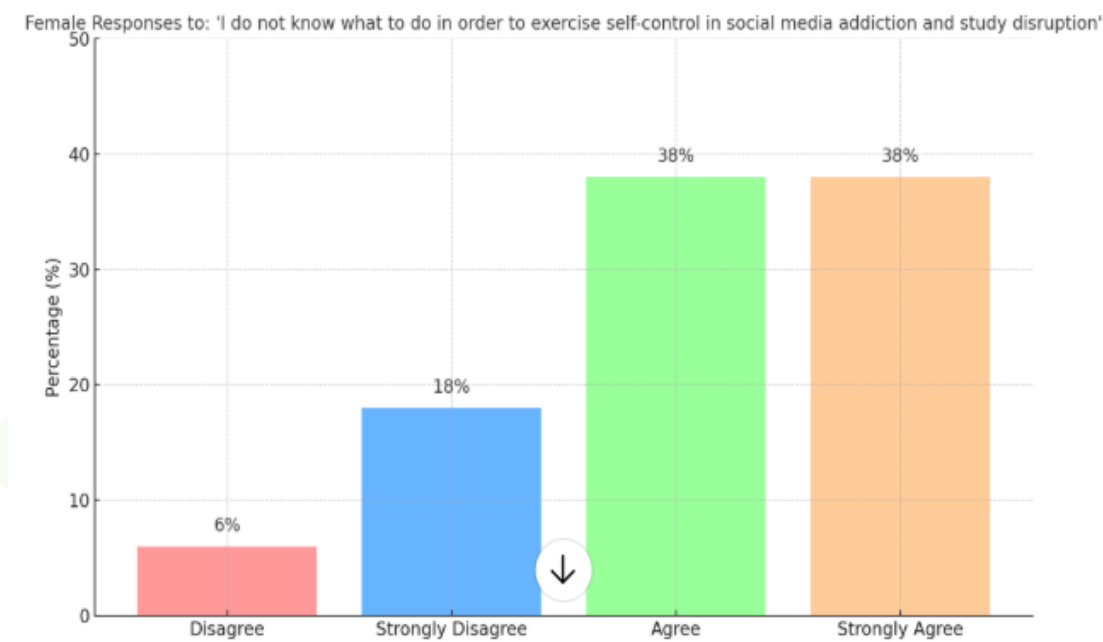


Figure 4.16: Source collected and analyzed data

Revised Version

Figures 4.15 and 4.16: Social Media Addiction and Self-Control

Figures 4.15 and 4.16 clearly indicate that respondents struggle with self-control concerning social media use, particularly in how it disrupts their revision time. The data further reveal that female students reported a higher level of social media engagement than their male counterparts.

This may be attributed to their greater interest in social exploration and networking. Among male students, 26% agreed and 31% strongly agreed that they could not control social media interference during night-time revision, compared to 38% and 38% respectively among female students.

Discussion of Findings

The discussion of findings is anchored on the study's two key objectives:

- i. To identify the types of social media platforms most commonly used by undergraduate students in Enugu State universities.
- ii. To examine the effects of social media usage on the study habits of these students.

Most Popular Social Media Platforms

Findings indicate that **WhatsApp** is the most commonly used social media platform, followed by **Facebook**. Other platforms like **Twitter** and **Instagram** were used to a lesser extent, and some platforms were not used at all. WhatsApp's popularity was attributed to its user-friendly interface, real-time messaging capability, and multimedia versatility. Facebook was preferred for its global reach, accessibility, and ease of use. Twitter appealed to some respondents due to its perceived association with sophistication and class, while Instagram attracted users for its strong visual and multimedia content capabilities.

Effects on Study Habits

Students generally reported that social media use during the **daytime** did **not** negatively affect their academic activities. In fact, many acknowledged that social media **enhanced** their academic performance by facilitating group discussions, timely dissemination of class updates, and sharing of study materials. It also fostered collaborative learning and team building through academic groups on these platforms.

However, during **night-time**, social media addiction was reported to negatively affect students' ability to revise and prepare for academic work. Respondents admitted a lack of self-control in managing their usage, leading to disrupted study patterns. This finding aligns with Michele and Shonna (2007), who reported that 51% of over 21 million youth social media users experienced negative behavioral impacts.

Report from Interviews

Interview data corroborated the survey findings. While students emphasized the academic benefits of social media during the day, lecturers expressed concern about its **adverse effects**. All interviewed lecturers cited instances of students engaging with social media during lectures and tutorials, and raised alarm over its role in facilitating examination malpractice.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

This study concludes that while social media can **support students' academic engagement during the day**, its **addictive use at night** significantly interferes with revision time. The data show near-universal involvement in social media, with WhatsApp being the most used platform,

followed by Facebook. Gender differences in usage were minimal, though male students appeared to prefer platforms associated with prestige, such as Twitter.

A substantial majority of respondents admitted to engaging in social media during class or while in the library for non-academic purposes. Over 70% of students—regardless of gender—reported excessive social media usage, driven largely by widespread access to smartphones and the internet.

Approximately 80% of female **and** over 50% of male respondents acknowledged that social media significantly interferes with their night-time revision. Similarly, 70% of female respondents and more than 50% of male respondents admitted they were unable to control this behavior.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. **Curriculum Inclusion:**
ICT curricula at all educational levels should include content on **responsible and productive use of social media**.
2. **Awareness and Self-Regulation:**
Students should be sensitized about the **addictive nature** of social media and encouraged to exercise **self-discipline and time management**.
3. **Counseling and Support:**
Universities should offer **guidance and counseling** programs to help students already affected by social media addiction and its academic and moral implications.

Suggestions for Further Research

1. **Beyond Youth:**
Future studies could explore the impact of social media on **domestic life** among adults, recognizing that addiction is not limited to the youth.
2. **Workplace Dynamics:**
Investigate how social media affects **time management and productivity** in organizational settings.
3. **Moral Behavior in Adults:**
Examine the influence of social media on the **moral conduct of adults**, particularly within specific institutions or professions.

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