

Impact of Social Media on Academic Performance Among Junior High School Students: A Qualitative Exploration of Coping Strategies and Self-Regulation Mechanisms at Tubo-Tubo National High School

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Article History:

Date Received: April 20, 2026

Date Revised: April 25, 2026

Date Accepted: May 3, 2026

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20040287>

Document ID: 2026IJROMS0047

Recommended Citation:

Basalo, L. S., Gahum, D. M., Laude, Jr, E. S., & Felongco, W. S. (2026). Impact of Social Media on Academic Performance Among Junior High School Students: A Qualitative Exploration of Coping Strategies and Self-Regulation Mechanisms at Tubo-Tubo National High School. *International Journal of Research on Multidisciplinary Studies*, 1(4), 31-41.
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20040287>

Abstract. Social media's influence on adolescent academic performance remains understudied, particularly in Southeast Asian contexts where rapid digital adoption intersects with distinct educational systems and cultural norms. While extensive research in Western settings has documented both positive and negative outcomes, limited qualitative evidence exists regarding how junior high students in this region navigate social media use and self-regulate their academic engagement. This study explored how 20 junior high school students (Grades 7–10) at Tubo-Tubo National High School, Monkayo, Davao de Oro, Philippines, experienced social media use and perceived its effects on academic performance, examining their self-regulation and time management strategies. Using structured interviews analyzed through thematic analysis, the study investigated patterns of social media engagement, student perceptions of academic impact (assessed through self-reported measures and school records), and self-regulation approaches. Findings revealed that social media use presented both opportunities and challenges for academic work. Students described learning benefits, including access to educational information and peer collaboration, alongside challenges such as distraction and procrastination. Critically, academic outcomes appeared contingent on usage patterns and individual regulatory capacity rather than technology use alone. Five factors emerged as shaping students' ability to balance social media and academics: time management skills, engagement frequency, self-discipline, concentration impact, and coping strategy deployment. Students employed diverse self-regulation strategies, including environmental modification, cognitive self-monitoring, and scheduled usage windows. The study found that complete abstinence proved neither necessary nor practical. Instead, intentional engagement combined with digital literacy instruction can help students maximize educational benefits while minimizing disruption. Results suggest that interventions should develop students' capacity for self-regulated use through collaborative efforts among educators, families, and students themselves. These findings have significant implications for Southeast Asian educational policy and practice, highlighting the need for culturally responsive digital literacy curricula rather than technology restriction.

Keywords: academic performance; adolescent self-regulation; coping strategies; junior high school; social media

Introduction

Social media has become an essential part of adolescents' lives, shaping how students communicate, access information, and engage with learning. While it offers opportunities for collaboration and access to educational resources, it also creates challenges related to distraction, reduced focus, and poor time management, especially among junior high school students. Studies show that social media functions both as an educational tool and a source of disruption to academic concentration (Mohammed et al., 2025). In the Philippine context, students use platforms such as Facebook for research, peer interaction, and understanding lessons (Dimacangun & Guillena, 2023), yet teachers continue to report concerns about decreased focus, distraction, and issues in academic behavior (Ancheta, 2025). At Tubo-Tubo National High School in Davao de Oro, similar concerns have been raised by teachers and parents regarding students' increasing social media use and its possible connection to declining academic performance. This situation highlights the problem of balancing the benefits and negative effects of social media on student learning.

Existing studies consistently show that excessive social media use is associated with lower academic performance. While moderate and purposeful use can support peer interaction and learning, excessive engagement is linked to stress, distraction, and maladjustment (Panda, 2024). Time management has been

identified as a key factor through which social media affects academic outcomes, with students who maintain balanced usage demonstrating better performance (Arago, 2025). In the Philippine setting, Facebook remains the most commonly used platform, and patterns of use are linked to differences in communication skills and time management (Arago, 2025). Students who use social media primarily for educational purposes tend to perform better than those who use it mainly for entertainment (Teketel et al., 2025). In addition, problematic smartphone use and digital dependence have been associated with lower perceived academic performance (Buctot et al., 2021). These findings confirm the presence of a problem but mainly focus on measurable outcomes rather than how students experience and manage these challenges.

Despite these findings, there is a clear gap in the literature regarding the lived experiences of junior high school students, particularly in the Philippine context. Many studies focus on university students or rely on quantitative measures, offering limited insight into how younger learners perceive social media use and how they manage its effects. Although some research has explored related areas such as social-emotional learning and student perceptions of digital tools (Ajias-Maningo, 2025; Mercado, 2024), there is still limited understanding of how students themselves navigate the tension between social media use and academic responsibilities. Studies suggest that students are aware of responsible digital practices and develop coping strategies to manage these demands (Abuzar & Hussain, 2024), while educators emphasize the need to promote digital competence and responsible use (Ancheta, 2025). However, these perspectives are not sufficiently explored in relation to junior high school students' daily experiences.

This study aims to address this gap by examining the real-life experiences of junior high school students in managing social media use and academic responsibilities. It focuses on how students understand the effects of social media on their learning, the coping strategies they employ, and their perspectives on responsible digital citizenship. The study is limited to junior high school students in a Philippine school setting, particularly in Tubo-Tubo National High School, and centers on their experiences rather than solely on statistical relationships. By focusing on student perspectives, the study seeks to provide a more grounded understanding of how social media influences academic performance and to inform more practical and student-centered approaches to addressing its impact (Gita & Dullet, 2025).

Research Questions

This study aims to explore the lived experiences and strategies of junior high school students regarding social media usage and academic performance.

Specifically, this study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are junior high school students lived experiences of social media usage and its perceived impacts on academic performance, including its dual role as both an educational resource and source of distraction?
2. What coping mechanisms and time management strategies do students employ to balance social media engagement with academic responsibilities?
3. What recommendations and insights do students offer for promoting responsible and purposeful social media use within academic contexts?

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study assessed the impact of social media usage on the academic performance of junior high school students at Tubo-Tubo National High School (TNHS) in Davao de Oro, Philippines. The research focused on 20 secondary school students enrolled in Grades 7-10, examining their patterns of social media use across multiple platforms including Facebook, TikTok, WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram, and Telegram. The investigation encompassed students' perceived effects on academic performance, the educational benefits they gain from social media, the challenges they face, and the coping mechanisms and self-regulation strategies they employ to manage their digital engagement alongside academic responsibilities. The study captured concurrent social media usage patterns and academic performance during a single academic semester through structured interviews lasting 30-45 minutes. The study was limited to a single junior high school location in Davao de Oro, Philippines, which constrains generalizability to other geographic regions and educational contexts. The research employed a cross-sectional design that captured only a snapshot of students' experiences at one point in time, thereby limiting the ability to clarify causal patterns or track longitudinal changes in social media usage and academic outcomes. Participants were limited to students aged 12-16 who were active social media users (minimum 2 hours weekly) with regular school enrollment and who possessed the cognitive and communication ability to participate in structured interviews. The study excluded students with significant intellectual or communication disabilities and those experiencing acute mental health crises. Additionally, the sample size of 20 students, while appropriate for qualitative analysis, limits transferability to broader populations, and the self-reported nature of participant responses reflects student perceptions rather than objective behavioral patterns.

Literature Review

Social Media Use in Educational Contexts

Social media has become a central component of students' educational experiences, yet its impact on academic performance remains complex and inconsistent. Some studies highlight its positive role, showing that students who engage with multiple platforms and use them for academic purposes demonstrate better academic outcomes (Szabó & Prohmvitak, 2025; Amadu et al., 2025). Similarly, research across different countries indicates that academic-oriented use—such as accessing learning materials and collaborating with peers—enhances engagement and academic performance (Abuzar & Hussain, 2024; Owo, 2025). However, other studies report contrasting findings, emphasizing that entertainment-driven use of platforms such as TikTok and Facebook is associated with lower academic performance (Amadu et al., 2025). These differences suggest that social media does not have a uniform effect; instead, its impact depends on how, why, and how often it is used.

Time Displacement and Cognitive Effects

Several studies explain the negative impact of social media through time displacement and cognitive interference. Research shows that increased time spent on social media reduces time available for academic tasks, directly affecting performance (Tesfaye, 2025; Naggar et al., 2024). In addition, multitasking between social media and schoolwork leads to reduced concentration and lower productivity due to divided attention (Essien, 2025). Studies also indicate that high levels of social media use are associated with poor time management, reduced self-regulation, and increased anxiety (Şingir, 2025). The concept of "academic cyberslacking" further explains how students shift attention away from academic tasks toward online activities, resulting in decreased motivation and fragmented thinking (Zhou et al., 2026). These findings consistently show that the negative effects of social media are not only behavioral but also cognitive in nature.

Psychological Factors and Academic Outcomes

The relationship between social media use and academic performance is also influenced by psychological factors. Studies reveal that social media use contributes to social anxiety and fear of missing out, which negatively affect academic performance (Gong et al., 2025; Elsayed, 2025). Moreover, excessive use has been linked to emotional distress and lower academic achievement (Beetru et al., 2026). However, some findings show inconsistencies, as students may perceive social media as harmful even when actual academic outcomes are not significantly affected (Hill et al., 2024). This indicates that students' perceptions and emotional responses play an important role in shaping academic performance, making the relationship more complex than direct cause-and-effect.

Contextual and Cultural Variations

The impact of social media varies across different cultural and educational contexts. Studies show that high-performing students in some settings still engage heavily in social media use, suggesting that factors such as motivation and self-regulation influence outcomes (Szabó & Prohmvitak, 2025). Cross-cultural research further indicates that differences in academic performance are shaped by institutional and cultural factors rather than social media use alone (Ejaz et al., 2025; Aziz et al., 2025). In Southeast Asia, social media has been found to support learning when used intentionally, but excessive reliance may limit critical thinking and innovation (Anh et al., 2025; Chowdhury, 2024). These findings highlight that the effects of social media are context-dependent and influenced by both individual behavior and environmental factors.

Coping Mechanisms and Self-Regulation Strategies

Students employ various strategies to manage the effects of social media on their academic responsibilities. Research shows that planning, time management, and structured routines are effective in reducing distraction and improving academic performance (Islam & Rabbi, 2024; Şingir, 2025). High-performing students tend to demonstrate stronger self-regulation, including setting priorities and limiting distractions (Gottschlich & Atapour, 2024; Lamban et al., 2025). Additionally, social support, physical activity, and structured breaks have been identified as coping strategies that help students manage academic stress and digital engagement (Kausar et al., 2024). However, the effectiveness of these strategies varies depending on students' self-control, motivation, and available support systems (Salguero-Pazos & Reyes-de-Cózar, 2025).

Research Gap and Justification of the Study

The reviewed literature shows that social media has both positive and negative effects on academic performance, influenced by usage patterns, psychological factors, and contextual conditions. However, most existing studies focus on quantitative relationships, university-level populations, or generalized comparisons across contexts. There is limited research that explores how junior high school students, particularly in the Philippine setting, experience and manage these effects in their daily academic lives. While studies identify key factors such as time management and self-regulation, they do not fully explain how students balance social media use and academic responsibilities from their own perspectives. This gap highlights the need for a qualitative, student-centered approach. Therefore, this study aims to examine the lived experiences of junior high school students at Tubo-Tubo National High School to provide a more contextualized understanding of how social media influences academic performance and how students navigate its challenges.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to explore junior high school students' experiences with social media usage and its impact on academic performance. According to qualitative research principles, this approach is appropriate for examining complex social phenomena in their natural setting, allowing a deeper understanding of students' behaviors, perceptions, and coping strategies (Mbwambo et al., 2025). The design focuses on describing and interpreting students' lived experiences without imposing predetermined categories, thereby capturing the complexity of adolescent digital engagement (Ancheta, 2025). This approach is suitable for the study as it aims to understand how social media use influences students' academic responsibilities and daily learning experiences.

Sampling Design

The study employed purposive sampling to select participants who have direct experience with social media use and its academic effects. Purposive sampling allows the researcher to identify information-rich participants who can provide meaningful insights into the research problem (Mbwambo et al., 2025). This method prioritizes depth of information rather than statistical representation, making it appropriate for qualitative inquiry (Ancheta, 2025). A total of 20 junior high school students were selected based on specific criteria, ensuring that participants could effectively describe their experiences and perspectives. The findings of the study aim for transferability, allowing other researchers and educators to determine the applicability of the results to similar contexts (Mbwambo et al., 2025).

Research Locale

The study was conducted at Tubo-Tubo National High School located in Tubo-Tubo, Monkayo, Davao de Oro. The school serves junior high school students from Grades 7 to 10 and represents a typical provincial school setting. This location provides a relevant context for examining how students in rural or semi-urban environments engage with social media and manage their academic responsibilities. Similar studies conducted in the region highlight its relevance as a research setting for student behavior and academic performance (Rulida & Dioso, 2024). The locale allows for a contextual understanding of students' experiences within their community and educational environment (Ancheta, 2025).

Research Participants

The study included 20 junior high school students from Grades 7 to 10 enrolled at Tubo-Tubo National High School. This sample size is appropriate for qualitative research as it allows for in-depth analysis of participant experiences while remaining manageable (Wutich et al., 2024). Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on the following criteria: active use of social media, enrollment in Grades 7 to 10, willingness to participate, and ability to provide informed assent with parental consent. The participants represented different grade levels and genders to capture varied perspectives on social media use and academic performance.

Research Instrument

The researcher used a structured interview guide as the primary data collection instrument. The guide consisted of open-ended questions designed to gather information on students' social media usage patterns, perceived effects on academic performance, advantages and challenges, and strategies for managing social media use. Structured interviews provide a consistent framework while allowing flexibility to explore participants' responses in detail (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). The instrument was developed

through literature review, reviewed for clarity, and refined to ensure that questions were appropriate and understandable for junior high school students.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher first secured permission from school authorities to conduct the study. After approval was granted, informed consent was obtained from parents or guardians, and assent was secured from the student participants. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on the established criteria. Data were collected through one-on-one structured interviews conducted in a quiet and private setting within the school. Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes and was audio-recorded with permission. The researcher provided clear instructions and ensured that participants understood the purpose of the study before the interview began. Responses were recorded, transcribed, and kept confidential by assigning codes instead of using participant names. All data were securely stored and used solely for research purposes, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without consequences.

Results and Discussions

Research Question 1: What are junior high school students lived experiences of social media usage and its perceived impacts on academic performance, including its dual role as both an educational resource and source of distraction?

Table 1. Do you use social media?

Grade Level	Selected Responses	Thematic Analysis	Emergent Theme
Grade 7	"Oh, te" (Yes);	The responses show that Grade 7 students are already exposed to social media, although the frequency of use varies. Some students use it regularly, while others limit their use depending on time and access.	Prevalence of Social Media Use
	"Usahay lang" (Sometimes)		
Grade 8	"Yes"	The Grade 8 response indicates consistent use of social media, suggesting that it has become a normal part of students' daily routines for communication and entertainment.	
Overall Finding		Social media use is common across all grade levels, showing that students are generally familiar with and actively engaged with digital platforms.	

Social media use is remarkably prevalent across all secondary education levels, representing a fundamental shift in how adolescents communicate and access information. Approximately 90% of adolescents utilize social networking services (Donatille & Emmanuel, 2025). With an overwhelming 99.3% of school-aged youths engaging with applications such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and TikTok on a daily basis (Donatille & Emmanuel, 2025). The data from this study reveals a progression in engagement patterns, with Grade 7 students exhibiting diverse usage frequencies—ranging from regular engagement to occasional or situational use depending on time availability and access constraints. This variability among younger secondary students contrasts with Grade 8 responses, which demonstrate consistent and normalized daily engagement with social media platforms (Arago, 2025). The transition from sporadic to routine usage reflects the developmental normalization of digital interaction as students' progress through secondary education. This widespread adoption and increasing standardization of social media use among teenagers establishes a critical context for understanding the relationship between digital engagement and academic performance. Rather than viewing social media as a peripheral technology, the data confirms that these platforms have become integral to adolescent social structures and daily routines. Understanding this baseline prevalence is essential for educators and parents seeking to support students in managing the competing demands of academic responsibilities and digital engagement. The fact that nearly universal adoption begins at or before Grade 7 suggests that intervention strategies addressing digital literacy and time management must commence early in secondary education to be maximally effective.

Table 2. Do you think social media helps you learn better, or does it distract you more? Why?

Grade Level	Selected Responses	Thematic Analysis	Emergent Theme
Grade 7 (Aster)	"I get distracted... social media is addictive."	This response highlights how prolonged use of social media can lead to distraction and reduced focus on school tasks. Students may struggle to control their usage, which affects study time.	Dual Role of social media in Learning
Grade 9 (Anemone)	"I can use it to search for information."	The response shows that social media can support learning by providing quick access to educational content and study-related information.	
Grade 10 (Brant)	"Both... helpful but distracting."	This response reflects a balanced view, recognizing that while social media can be useful for learning, excessive use can also interfere with academic responsibilities.	

Student responses reveal a sophisticated understanding of social media's paradoxical role in academic learning, extending beyond simplistic categorizations of either "helpful" or "harmful." The data demonstrates that students across different grade levels recognize the complex interplay between platform benefits and inherent risks. Excessive use correlates with reduced study time, procrastination behaviors, and diminished academic focus (Essien, 2025), a concern particularly acute among younger adolescents who struggle with impulse control and self-regulation. Conversely, purposeful and intentional engagement with social media facilitates rapid information access and enhances academic involvement when platforms are utilized as deliberate learning tools (Bhoir, 2025). The observation from Grade 10 students that social media exhibits both beneficial and distracting attributes signifies developmental maturity in understanding nuanced technology use. Research demonstrates that the impact of social media on learning is fundamentally contingent on usage patterns, contextual factors, and individual regulatory strategies rather than being uniformly positive or negative (Mohammed et al., 2025). This variability highlights critical individual differences in self-control capacity and digital literacy. Educational stakeholders must recognize that effective intervention should not advocate for complete social media abstinence—an unrealistic and potentially counterproductive approach—but rather should emphasize development of digital literacy skills and time management strategies (Aziz, 2025). Such interventions should help students leverage the informational and collaborative benefits of these platforms while actively mitigating distraction risks and recognizing addiction potential. Supporting students in developing metacognitive awareness of their own usage patterns is essential for enabling intentional, goal-aligned engagement with digital platforms.

Table 3.: Have you ever delayed doing schoolwork because of social media?

Grade Level	Selected Responses	Thematic Analysis	Emergent Theme
Grade 9 (Anemone)	"No, nothing."	This response suggests that some students are able to manage their time well and prioritize schoolwork despite having access to social media.	Social Media–Related Procrastination
Grade 10 (Brant)	"I was not able to answer... got addicted."	The response indicates that excessive social media use can lead to postponement of school tasks, especially when students lose track of time online.	
Grade 10 (Albatross)	"Yes, sometimes."	This response shows that procrastination may occur occasionally, particularly when students do not set clear limits on social media use.	

The relationship between social media use and academic procrastination demonstrates considerable heterogeneity among secondary students, revealing substantial individual differences in self-regulation and impulse control. Student responses exhibit a spectrum ranging from effective time management and task prioritization to significant delays and incomplete schoolwork attribution to social media distraction. Some students successfully maintain focus on academic responsibilities despite easy access to engaging digital platforms, demonstrating capacity for self-regulation and clear prioritization of educational goals (Srisarajivakul et al., 2025). This capacity appears more robust in older students and those with established digital literacy practices. In contrast, other students report complete inability to resist social media engagement when attempting schoolwork, resulting in addiction-driven postponement of assignments and loss of temporal awareness (Tang & He, 2025). These students describe losing track of time while engaged with platforms, demonstrating the powerful mechanisms through which social media design features capture and sustain attention. Between these extremes lies a substantial group experiencing occasional or sporadic procrastination, particularly when they fail to establish clear usage boundaries or structured routines (Demavivas et al., 2025). The presence of such variability underscores that social media-related procrastination is not an inevitable consequence but rather contingent upon individual differences in self-control capacity, habit formation patterns, and boundary-setting abilities. These varying trajectories suggest that universal prescriptions about technology use are insufficient; instead, targeted interventions must address the specific regulatory challenges faced by different student populations (Donatille & Emmanuel, 2025). Effective approaches should combine development of time management skills, metacognitive awareness of personal triggers, and structured environmental modifications to support students in maintaining academic task completion despite pervasive digital distraction opportunities.

Table 4. How does social media help you in your studies?

Grade Level	Selected Responses	Thematic Analysis	Emergent Theme
Grade 7 (Buttercup)	"I research it."	The response shows that students use social media as a tool for searching for information when they encounter difficult homework or lessons.	Social media as a Learning Resource
Grade 8 (Cedar)	"I can answer assignments more easily."	This indicates that social media helps students understand tasks better by providing examples, explanations, or shared academic content.	
Grade 9 (Bluebottle)	"It provides information."	The response reinforces the idea that social media serves as an accessible source of educational materials that support learning.	

Student responses to this research question reveal explicit recognition of social media's legitimate function as an educational tool and learning resource when utilized with intentionality and academic purpose. Across multiple grade levels, students identify information access and task facilitation as primary mechanisms through which social media supports academic achievement. Platforms provide rapid access to informational resources that enable problem-solving when students encounter academic challenges, allowing them to locate explanations, examples, and contextual information relevant to their learning tasks (Bhoir, 2025). Beyond simple information retrieval, social media facilitates access to peer-generated educational content in the form of study guides, worked examples, and collaborative learning materials that enhance comprehension of complex academic material (Ashraf et al., 2021). This peer-generated content often presents information in accessible language and formats specifically calibrated to secondary student understanding, potentially reducing cognitive load compared to formal educational materials. The capacity for responsible, purposeful use to facilitate resource discovery and stimulate information-seeking behaviors that actively enhance academic engagement demonstrates that social media need not be viewed exclusively as an entertainment medium undermining education (Maryam et al., 2025). Rather, these platforms represent a rich repository of educational resources awaiting strategic activation by students and educators. Current educational practice often emphasizes restrictions and warnings about social media rather than developing student capacity to leverage its legitimate informational and collaborative affordances. Effective approaches should prioritize fostering digital literacy competencies and critical evaluation skills that enable students to assess information credibility, recognize bias, and synthesize content from multiple sources (Culcasi et al., 2025). Such skills development represents a more productive educational path than attempted elimination of social media use, which is neither feasible nor aligned with contemporary adolescent communication realities.

Table 5. What are your challenges with academic performance because of using social media?

Grade Level	Selected Responses	Thematic Analysis	Emergent Theme
Grade 7 (Aster)	"My grades dropped."	This response suggests that uncontrolled social media use may reduce study time, leading to lower academic performance.	Academic Impact of Excessive Social Media Use
Grade 8 (Cedar)	"My grades improved."	The response shows that when used properly, social media can positively support academic performance by helping students' complete tasks efficiently.	
Grade 9 (Bluebottle)	"My quiz scores have dropped."	This response indicates that late-night or excessive social media use may limit review time, affecting quiz and test results.	

Student reports regarding the relationship between social media use and academic performance reveal a striking polarization of outcomes, demonstrating that social media's impact on scholastic achievement is neither uniformly detrimental nor universally beneficial but rather fundamentally contingent upon individual usage patterns and self-regulation characteristics. The reported grade decline experienced by some students directly corresponds to research documenting that uncontrolled social media consumption systematically reduces dedicated study time, diminishes cognitive focus on academic material, and correlates strongly with lower grade point averages (Essien, 2025). This negative relationship intensifies when social media use occurs during critical academic periods, with excessive or late-night engagement displacing essential exam preparation and content review time (Mohammed et al., 2025). Reduced sleep quality resulting from nighttime social media engagement further compounds academic performance deficits through impaired cognitive function and decreased classroom attention. Conversely, the reported grade improvement by another student illustrates an alternative pathway wherein purposeful, structured social media engagement—deliberately accessing educational content, participating in subject-specific online study groups, or utilizing platforms for homework assistance—can actually enhance academic efficiency and task completion speed (Gita & Dullet, 2025). The divergence between these outcomes underscores a critical

principle: the net effect of social media on academic performance depends fundamentally on whether usage patterns reflect addiction-driven distraction or intentional, goal-aligned engagement (Samimi et al., 2025). This distinction extends beyond simple presence or absence of use to encompass the quality, intentionality, and structural context within which engagement occurs. For students developing metacognitive awareness and behavioral self-regulation capacity, social media can function as an academic tool; for those lacking such regulatory skills, identical platforms become engines of academic disruption. This polarization highlights the necessity of targeted intervention strategies addressing behavioral self-regulation rather than universal prohibitions.

Research Question 2: What coping mechanisms and time management strategies do students employ to balance social media engagement with academic responsibilities?

Table 6. How do you cope with these challenges?

Grade Level	Selected Responses	Thematic Analysis	Emergent Theme
Grade 7 (Buttercup)	"I put my phone away."	This response shows that students cope by physically distancing themselves from their phones to avoid distractions while studying.	Self-Regulation Strategies for using social media
Grade 8 (Ash)	"I remind myself not to use it all the time."	This reflects self-awareness and conscious effort to control social media habits to maintain focus on schoolwork.	
Grade 8 (Birch)	"I set a schedule."	This response indicates the use of time management strategies, allowing students to balance academic tasks and social media use.	

Student responses to coping strategies reveal that adolescents possess considerable agency in managing their digital lives and spontaneously develop evidence-based self-regulation techniques without formal instruction, suggesting natural developmental capacity that educational programs can systematically enhance and formalize. The strategy of physically separating from devices represents environmental modification grounded in behavioral psychology principles, wherein removing external cues associated with problematic behaviors significantly increases likelihood of sustained focus and academic engagement (Gita & Dullet, 2025). By deliberately placing phones out of reach or sight during study periods, students eliminate the stimulus that triggers automatic impulses toward social media checking and notification engagement. This externally-focused regulatory approach proves particularly effective for students struggling with internal impulse control. In contrast, self-directed cognitive monitoring through reminders and intentional thought interruption reflects emerging metacognitive capabilities and introspective awareness of personal digital habits (Samimi et al., 2025). These students actively engage in what cognitive-behavioral literature terms positive self-talk and conscious override of habitual urges, representing more sophisticated regulatory pathways requiring development of emotional and behavioral maturity. The strategy of establishing predetermined schedules for social media use demonstrates sophisticated time management and planning competencies, allowing students to satisfy social needs and recreational interests within structured temporal boundaries while rigorously protecting designated study periods from digital intrusion (Lashari et al., 2025). This approach acknowledges that complete abstinence is neither realistic nor psychologically sustainable, instead implementing moderate, controlled use patterns. Collectively, these three distinct regulatory strategies—environmental control, cognitive self-regulation, and temporal structuring—demonstrate that adolescents spontaneously develop sophisticated self-management techniques (Lamban, 2025). Educational interventions should leverage this existing capacity by formalizing and reinforcing such competencies through explicit digital literacy and self-regulation instruction, enabling students to strengthen nascent skills and apply them consistently across academic contexts.

Research Question 3: What recommendations and insights do students offer for promoting responsible and purposeful social media use within academic contexts?

Table 7. What can you recommend regarding the proper use of social media?

Grade Level	Selected Responses	Thematic Analysis	Emergent Theme
Grade 7 (Carnation)	"There should be a balance."	The response emphasizes the importance of balancing academic responsibilities and social media use to avoid negative effects on learning.	Balanced and Purposeful Social Media Use
Grade 9 (Coral)	"Use only for academic purposes when needed."	This suggests that social media should be used with clear goals, especially for academic-related activities, to prevent misuse.	

Student recommendations for social media use demonstrate a remarkable sophistication in understanding balanced digital citizenship, advocating for intentional integration rather than prohibitive abstinence—a perspective markedly more nuanced than traditional fear-based educational messaging about

technology. The recommendation emphasizing balance reflects student recognition that moderate social media consumption, when coupled with deliberate self-regulation practices and metacognitive awareness, does not inherently undermine academic achievement or developmental well-being (Sonika & Vivekanand, 2025). This viewpoint acknowledges the social and communicative functions of digital platforms as developmentally appropriate and psychologically legitimate, rejecting pathologizing frameworks that position all adolescent technology engagement as problematic. The alternative recommendation to use social media exclusively for academic purposes when needed represents a more restrictive but equally intentional approach, emphasizing purposeful engagement with platforms as deliberate tools for educational progress rather than passive entertainment consumption (Panchbhैया & Bhardwaj, 2025). This student acknowledges genuine educational value inherent in social media platforms, including access to educational materials, facilitation of peer collaboration, and resource sharing, while maintaining vigilance against recreational use that displaces academic priorities. Both recommendations converge on a fundamental principle: effective social media utilization requires intentionality, purposefulness, and explicit alignment with academic and developmental objectives rather than defaulting to habitual consumption patterns (Donatille & Emmanuel, 2025). These student-generated recommendations provide critical guidance for educators, parents, and school administrators seeking to develop collaborative digital literacy initiatives. Rather than relying on fear-driven messaging that loses credibility with digitally-native adolescents, educational stakeholders should utilize these student insights as foundations for programs empowering adolescents to become conscientious digital citizens who recognize social media as a powerful tool requiring mindful, intentional management rather than passive consumption or categorical rejection.

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to established ethical standards, including the Belmont Report principles and the Philippine National Code of Ethics for Health Research. As participants were minors (aged 12–16), parental informed consent and student assent were obtained prior to data collection, ensuring that participation was voluntary and that participants could withdraw at any time without consequences. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained by assigning identification codes and securely storing all data in password-protected and encrypted devices accessible only to the researchers. The study posed minimal risk, limited to time commitment and possible minor discomfort, which was mitigated by allowing participants to skip questions or discontinue participation. Appropriate support mechanisms were available when needed. Ethical approval was secured from relevant school authorities, and the researchers ensured integrity, transparency, and responsible reporting of findings throughout the study.

Conclusion

The study concludes that social media plays a dual role in the academic lives of junior high school students, serving both as a learning resource and a source of distraction. Students use social media for educational purposes, communication, and entertainment, but excessive use is associated with reduced concentration, procrastination, and delays in completing academic tasks. The findings highlight that students' ability to balance social media and academic responsibilities is influenced by key factors such as time management, frequency of use, self-discipline, and strategies for managing academic demands. Notably, some students demonstrate effective self-regulation practices, while others experience difficulty in controlling their usage. These results emphasize the need for schools to strengthen students' self-regulation and digital literacy skills to support better academic performance and responsible social media use.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommends that the Department of Education develop and implement policies that strengthen digital literacy and responsible social media use in schools, including allocating resources for training programs, integrating digital literacy into the curriculum, and establishing clear guidelines on appropriate use during academic activities. School Heads are advised to assess their schools' readiness in implementing digital wellness initiatives, create programs that promote student self-regulation, establish clear school policies, strengthen coordination with parents, and ensure the availability of guidance services for students experiencing difficulties related to excessive use. Teachers are encouraged to integrate purposeful and guided use of social media into their instructional strategies while maintaining clear boundaries during learning time and pursuing professional development related to digital literacy and classroom management. Parents are encouraged to actively monitor and guide their children's social media use by setting clear rules, promoting balanced screen time, and maintaining open communication. Students are urged to practice self-regulation by managing their time effectively, limiting social media use during study periods, and engaging in activities that support their academic performance and well-being.

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