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STUDENTS' LEARNING BEHAVIOR IN USING SOCIAL MEDIA: JUNIOR HIGH TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the lived experiences of junior high school teachers in the Digos City Division regarding students' learning behavior influenced by social media. Nine (9) participants were selected through convenience sampling, each contributing their insights into how social media shaped students' academic focus, classroom conduct, and social interactions. Using a phenomenological approach, the researcher conducted face-to-face, semi-structured interviews to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. Thematic analysis was employed to draw out recurring themes from the participants' narratives. The findings revealed both positive and negative effects of social media. On one hand, it promoted creativity, collaboration, and access to educational content. On the other hand, teachers noted issues such as distractions, decreased academic focus, cyberbullying, and a weakening of academic integrity. In response to these challenges, teachers employed coping mechanisms that included setting clear boundaries on social media use, integrating social media positivity into the curriculum, and promoting digital literacy and responsible online behavior. Insights drawn from the study highlighted the importance of cultivating social media savvy and empowering educators with digital competence.These findings suggest the need for schools and education policymakers to create structured programs and guidelines that promote balanced, productive, and ethical use of social media among learners. The study advocates for continuous teacher training and the integration of digital citizenship education to equip students with the skills necessary to navigate the digital landscape responsibly.

KEYWORDS: *Students' Learning Behavior, Social Media, Junior High School*

INTRODUCTION

The use of social media on student behavior has become an increasingly relevant topic shapes the way students interact with the world around them. Social media, while offering opportunities for connection and knowledge-sharing, has also raised concerns about its impact on academic performance, mental health, social interactions, and even personal values. This study aims to explore how social media use affects the behavior of students, particularly in terms of their academic motivation, social relationships, and psychological well-being. The growing prevalence of digital devices among students and the increasing time spent on social media platforms have prompted the need to investigate these effects comprehensively.

This study was chosen to better understand the positive and negative outcomes of social media engagement among students, with a specific focus on educational and behavioral impacts. By examining patterns of social media usage and its consequences on student behavior, this research intends to provide valuable insights for educators, parents, and policymakers (Kuss & Griffiths, 2021). Those who will benefit from this study include school administrators, teachers, parents, and mental health professionals, who can use the findings to implement effective strategies that promote healthy social media habits and improve student well-being. Additionally, students themselves can gain awareness of how their online activities may influence their offline behavior, allowing them to make more informed decisions about their digital engagement (González & López, 2021).

In England, a 2019 study of more than 12,000 teenagers aged 13 to 16 revealed that frequent social media use—more than three times a day—was associated with poorer mental health and well-being (Kaneshiro, 2021). A 2019 study involving over 6,500 U.S. adolescents aged 12 to 15 found that spending more than three hours per day on social media could increase the risk of mental health issues (Williams, 2019). Additional research has also found connections between excessive social media use and symptoms of depression and anxiety. For instance, a 2016 study of over 450 teens showed that higher social media use, particularly late-night usage, and emotional investment (such as feeling distressed when unable to log in), was linked to poorer sleep quality and increased levels of anxiety and depression.

The study by Bond (2019) in Saudi Arabia's King Fahd University builds on earlier findings by exploring how certain characteristics of social media can influence the way students engage in knowledge-sharing and open debates. The study identifies four key social media characteristics that can either enhance or hinder students' participation in academic discussions and knowledge exchange. While some aspects, such as the ease of access and diverse communication features, can have a positive impact by fostering collaboration and learning, other factors—such as distractions, misinformation, and a preference for superficial engagement—can negatively affect student

behavior and academic focus. The study revealed a clear negative association between heavy social media use and student behavior, suggesting that overuse or improper engagement with these platforms can lead to disengagement from academic work and detrimental impacts on students' mental and social well-being (Bond, 2019).

In Pakistan, Abbas et al. (2019) shed light on the negative consequences of social media use among university students, revealing how excessive use can lead to frequent interruptions and wasted time, ultimately affecting students' academic performance. The findings align with other studies suggesting that students are often distracted by social media, undermining their focus on academic tasks and reducing overall productivity. Despite these negative effects, the study also emphasizes the dual nature of social media's impact, noting that when used in moderation for educational purposes, social media can have significant positive outcomes. For instance, students can leverage social media for knowledge generation, document sharing, and interaction with peers, which helps them exchange information, foster collaboration, and build professional networks.

In the Philippines, social media has become a central part of life, influencing communication, information access, and societal trends (Kemp, 2022). In Quezon City, with 82.4% of the population active on social media, its widespread use raises concerns about its impact on students' behavior. The constant connectivity can lead to distractions, misinformation, and unhealthy habits, negatively affecting academic performance and social interactions. Similarly, in Taguig, the growing reliance on digital tools presents both opportunities for learning and challenges in maintaining academic focus. As Ditche (2021) notes, the easy access to entertainment and social content can reduce productivity and hinder academic success. In Bacolod, social media has been shown to influence social interactions and academic focus, particularly among younger students (Kabigting et al., 2021). This study explores how social media affects junior high school students' academic performance, examining its impact on academic, social, and entertainment behaviors during the 2022-2023 school year.

In Digos City Division, the increasing use of social media on students' behavior has become a pressing concern for educators, parents, and administrators. With the widespread use of platforms like Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram, students are spending significant amounts of time online, often at the expense of academic responsibilities and face-to-face interactions. Teachers have observed a direct impact on student engagement, with excessive social media use leading to distractions, shorter attention spans, and declining academic performance. Beyond academic challenges, social media use also fosters unhealthy behaviors such as cyberbullying, peer pressure, and the promotion of unrealistic body image standards, all of which contribute to mental health issues and lower self-esteem among students. Given the widespread role of social media in shaping youth behavior, this issue is socially relevant as it impacts not only academic success but also the overall well-being of students. Addressing these challenges through digital literacy programs that promote responsible social media use and encourage healthier offline interactions is crucial for fostering a balanced, supportive learning environment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study aims to explore the perspectives of junior high teachers on the use of social media in education, focusing on how teachers perceive its impact on student learning and behavior. By examining teachers' views, this research highlights both the benefits and challenges of integrating social media into the classroom, as well as the strategies educators employ to manage its effects. Teachers' perspectives are crucial in shaping policies and practices that can help students navigate the digital landscape responsibly. As social media becomes an integral part of students' lives, understanding how teachers perceive its role in education is vital for developing effective teaching strategies that balance the advantages and potential risks (Thompson & Green, 2019).

Social media has fundamentally changed the way we learn and engage with others, particularly in the context of student behavior and academic performance. According to Hortiguela-Alcala (2019), social media provides a dynamic platform for students to share knowledge, connect with experts in their fields of interest, and collaborate with peers from around the world. This interconnectedness has made learning more engaging and accessible, allowing students to expand their horizons beyond the classroom. Social media has the potential to enhance the learning experience by offering students a wealth of resources, diverse perspectives, and opportunities for real-time interaction, making education more relevant.

Manca (2020) highlights the unique advantages that social media brings to education, particularly in promoting academic excellence by facilitating real-time discussions and collaboration beyond physical boundaries. The ability to engage with peers, educators, and experts across the globe creates a sense of a global learning community, making education more interconnected and dynamic. Social media platforms allow students to access a wide range of educational content, from expert insights to diverse viewpoints, which enriches their understanding of subjects. This enhanced access to information not only broadens students' knowledge but also encourages active participation and critical thinking.

The study by Appel et al. (2020) examines the impact of social media on academic performance among university students in Bangladesh, offering valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and researchers. The findings underscore the importance of addressing the excessive reliance on social media, which can detract from students' academic focus and productivity. The study suggests that while social media provides increased access to educational content and fosters global engagement, there is a need for a balanced approach to its usage. By implementing policy measures that encourage moderation and promote the responsible use of social media,

educators and policymakers can help students harness its educational benefits without allowing it to undermine their academic success.

Social media has undeniably become an integral part of daily life, and its influence on academic performance is increasingly important to consider (Appel et al., 2020). On one hand, social media provides students with easy access to a vast array of information, facilitating learning and offering convenient platforms for communication and collaboration, especially for group projects. These advantages can enhance students' ability to share ideas, access educational content, and stay connected with peers and educators. However, the very same platforms that offer these benefits can also serve as significant distractions.

Wakefield and Frawley (2020), social media use does not appear to significantly impact the academic performance of higher-achieving students. This suggests that students who are already highly motivated and self-disciplined may be better able to balance their social media use with their academic responsibilities. For these students, social media may even serve as a tool for promoting creativity and innovation, providing them with platforms to explore new ideas, collaborate with others, and access diverse sources of information. These students are likely to use social media more purposefully and constructively, leveraging it to enhance their learning experience rather than allowing it to serve as a distraction.

Longobardi et al. (2020) highlights that social media can have a significant positive impact on students' academic achievement and overall happiness. The study suggests that, when used constructively, social media provides students with unique opportunities to foster creativity and innovation. By engaging with a wide range of educational content, collaborating with peers, and exploring diverse ideas, students can enhance their problem-solving skills and academic performance. Additionally, social media serves as a platform for students to share their creative work, receive feedback, and connect with like-minded individuals, which can further boost their motivation and sense of accomplishment.

Chugh and Ruhi (2019) observed the significant role that social media can play in higher education, particularly in promoting creativity and innovation among students. Their research offers valuable insights for educators and administrators on how social media platforms can be leveraged to enhance teaching and learning outcomes. By integrating social media into educational practices, educators can provide students with diverse opportunities for collaboration, idea sharing, and access to a wealth of resources that can inspire creative thinking and innovative problem-solving. These platforms encourage active participation and enable students to engage in real-time discussions, share their work, and receive feedback from peers and experts worldwide.

Farrell and Brunton (2020) highlight the transformative role social media plays in promoting creativity and innovation, particularly for students who use it as a platform for sharing ideas, collaborating on projects, and engaging with a wide range of educational content. Social media offers students unique opportunities to explore new concepts, connect with peers and experts, and showcase their creative work to a global audience, which can significantly enhance their academic growth and personal development. However, the authors also stress the importance of finding a balance between students' online engagement and their academic responsibilities.

Research Questions

This study sought to explore the influence of social media on junior high school students through the perspectives of their teachers. By examining teachers' experiences, coping mechanisms, and insights, the research aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of how social media had affected students in the classroom.

1. What are the experiences of Junior High School Teachers on using social media inside the classroom?
2. How do Junior High School Teachers cope with the challenges of students' behavior in using social media inside the classroom?
3. What insight can be drawn to reinforce the use of social media inside the classroom?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to address its research objectives. In this paradigm, the researcher served as the primary instrument for both data collection and analysis (Juma, 2023), underscoring their active engagement in gathering and interpreting data. Their perspectives and analytic judgments were integral to the research process. The research design functioned as a structured framework for systematic data collection and analysis, guided by the researcher's theoretical orientation and study aims. By utilising a descriptive qualitative methodology, the investigation achieved an in-depth exploration of the phenomenon, capturing the richness and complexity of participants' experiences and perspectives.

Research Participants

The participants in this study comprised nine (9) teachers from the Digos City Division, who were selected via convenience sampling to ensure accessibility and availability for the research. This pragmatic approach enabled the researcher to engage individuals willing and able to contribute insights within the constraints of time and resources. Although convenience sampling may limit the generalizability of findings, it facilitated an efficient and manageable data-collection process under prevailing logistical conditions (Creswell, 2014).

To ensure relevance, the inclusion criteria required participants to have a minimum of three years' teaching experience at the junior high school level, thereby guaranteeing that each teacher had encountered a range of classroom challenges and developed strategies for addressing the influence of social media on student behavior. Additionally, all participants were actively employed at junior high schools, aligning with the study's focus.

Teachers were drawn from three schools of varying sizes to capture diverse instructional contexts: three from National High School (large), three from Dawis National High School (medium), and three from Balabag National High School (small). This stratified selection enabled the study to reflect a broad spectrum of school environments, enriching the analysis of how social media affected learner behavior across different settings.

Data Analysis

To preserve the integrity of the data analysis process, the researchers recorded all interviews for this study. This approach was chosen to enhance data validity by capturing participants' voices directly rather than relying solely on the researchers' interpretations or field notes. By reviewing the audio recordings, the researchers ensured an accurate and faithful representation of participants' viewpoints and experiences, capturing the natural flow of their thoughts, emotions, and narratives. This audio-based method also facilitated a more thorough analysis, as the researchers could revisit entire interviews as needed. During transcription and analysis, particular care was taken to reflect participants' words and sentiments accurately and reliably.

Thematic content analysis. was then employed to identify recurring themes within the interview data. One of the strengths of this approach was its flexibility, which suited both exploratory inquiries, where patterns emerge inductively, and deductive investigations, where specific hypotheses or areas of interest were tested. Throughout the analysis, the researchers remained committed to respecting the data and presenting the findings with full accuracy and integrity (Mortensen, 2020).

Environmental triangulation. was also applied when contextual factors were deemed likely to influence the results. This method involved examining data collected across different settings, times of day, and days of the week to determine whether the findings remained consistent under varying conditions. By customizing this triangulation to the specific needs and contexts of the research environment, the study's validity was further strengthened (Naeem, 2019).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implications

There were three major themes that high school teachers described in their experiences with students' learning behavior about social media use: Distractions and Decreased Focus, Cyberbullying and Negative Peer Interaction, and Negative Influence on Academic Integrity. Teachers observed that the constant use of mobile phones and access to social media platforms during class time often diverted students' attention from lessons, leading to a significant decline in focus and engagement. This distraction not only affected individual performance but also disrupted the overall flow of classroom instruction. Another key concern was the prevalence of cyberbullying and the emergence of unhealthy peer interactions online. Teachers noted that conflicts and teasing that began on social media frequently spilled into the classroom, damaging relationships and creating a hostile learning environment.

Finally, educators expressed growing concern over the negative impact of social media on academic integrity. The ease of accessing ready-made answers, copying content without proper attribution, and sharing answers during assessments were among the unethical practices fueled by unchecked social media use. These themes emphasize the urgent need for digital citizenship education and stronger school policies to help students navigate social media responsibly and maintain a healthy, respectful, and academically honest learning environment.

The analysis revealed three major themes from the experiences of junior high school teachers in addressing students' learning behavior about social media use: Setting Clear Boundaries, Integrating Social Media Positivity into the Curriculum, and Promoting Digital Literacy and Responsible Online Behavior. Teachers consistently emphasized the importance of establishing clear and consistent guidelines regarding appropriate social media use during school hours. By doing so, they aimed to reduce distractions, foster discipline, and set the tone for responsible digital conduct. These boundaries help students understand when and how social media can be used productively in the context of learning.

Teachers also found value in integrating positive uses of social media into their teaching strategies. Rather than banning these platforms outright, they incorporated them as educational tools—for instance, using class groups for discussions, assignments, or resource sharing. This helped students view social media not as a source of entertainment alone, but as a space for academic collaboration and communication.

Finally, promoting digital literacy and responsible online behavior emerged as a critical theme. Educators stressed the need to teach students how to evaluate the credibility of online content, avoid misinformation, and practice respectful communication. These skills are essential not just for academic success, but for developing thoughtful, ethical digital citizens. Together, these themes reflect the proactive and intentional efforts of teachers to navigate the complexities of student behavior in a digital age.

Lastly, junior high teachers highlighted two key insights for guiding students' learning behavior with social media: cultivating social media savvy and digital empowerment of educators. By cultivating social media savvy, teachers help students develop the critical skills needed to navigate online spaces responsibly evaluating the credibility of information, recognizing digital etiquette, and using platforms for collaboration rather than distraction. This savvy fosters a mindset in which social media becomes a tool for learning, creativity, and positive peer interaction.

Equally important is the digital empowerment of educators: when teachers themselves are confident and skilled in using digital tools, they can model best practices, design engaging, tech-enhanced lessons, and provide timely, constructive feedback. Empowered teachers are better equipped to integrate social media positively into the curriculum and to support students in balancing online engagement with academic responsibilities. Together, these insights underscore the collaborative role of both students and teachers in creating a digital learning environment that is safe, engaging, and academically enriching.
The findings of this study affirm the relevance of Social Comparison Theory (Festinger, 1954), particularly in explaining students' emotional and academic behaviors as influenced by their social media experiences. Teachers observed that students often displayed diminished self-esteem, reduced classroom participation, and increased anxiety behaviors likely tied to online comparisons with peers who appear more successful or popular. These observations reinforce the notion that upward social comparisons, which are frequent in curated social media environments, can negatively impact students' academic motivation and mental well-being. This theory contextualizes how learners' exposure to idealized online content influences their self-perception and focus in the classroom.

Moreover, the Uses and Gratification Theory (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974) provides a valuable lens through which to interpret the dual nature of students' engagement with social media. The study revealed that students use social media not just for entertainment or communication, but also to fulfill psychological needs such as validation, belongingness, and social connection. Teachers noted that while some students leveraged these platforms for academic collaboration and expression, others were prone to distraction and poor study habits. This supports the theory's assertion that users are active agents who seek media to gratify specific needs that sometimes clash with academic priorities, resulting in either enhancement or deterioration of learning behavior.

Lastly, the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989) contextualizes the way students integrate social media into their academic routines. The findings showed that students were more likely to use social media productively when they perceived it as easy to navigate and beneficial to their learning such as accessing educational content, collaborating on projects, or seeking feedback. Conversely, when social media was seen primarily as a source of entertainment, it detracted from academic engagement.

Future Direction
In light of the findings and the significance of this study on students' learning behavior in using social media, several strategic directions are recommended to strengthen digital learning integration and promote responsible social media engagement in schools. These directions aim to benefit key stakeholders in the education system, including learners, teachers, school administrators, and policymakers.

Teachers, as facilitators of 21st-century learning, should receive sustained support in building their capacity to manage social media use within instructional settings. The researcher recommends that the Department of Education offer continuous professional development on digital pedagogy, online classroom management, and interventions for issues such as cyberbullying and digital distraction. Equipping teachers with these skills will enable them to model appropriate behavior, implement preventive strategies, and effectively integrate social media into teaching in a safe and productive manner.

Learners must be empowered to develop responsible digital habits and critical thinking skills. Schools should incorporate structured lessons on digital citizenship, social media etiquette, and information literacy across subject areas. It is recommended that students be provided with guided opportunities to practice respectful online communication, assess the credibility of digital content, and establish healthy boundaries for screen time. By nurturing these competencies, learners will be better prepared to navigate the ethical, emotional, and academic challenges of the digital age.

At the system level, the Department of Education is urged to institutionalize clear and comprehensive policies that regulate and support the responsible use of social media in schools. These policies should outline acceptable digital behavior, mechanisms for addressing violations, and protocols for student protection in online environments. Additionally, ongoing monitoring and evaluation should be conducted to ensure consistent implementation across all schools.

Finally, the findings of this study suggest several directions for future research. Scholars are encouraged to examine the broader psychological and social implications of social media use, such as digital anxiety, peer validation pressures, and the role of family support in shaping student behavior. Future studies may also explore how these issues manifest across different cultural, geographic, and socioeconomic contexts, thereby contributing to a more holistic and inclusive understanding of student learning in the digital era.

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