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The Role of Social Media in Enhancing Students Learning at University Level

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to examine the role of social media in enhancing students learning at university level. The objectives of the study were: i) To identify social media platforms used by students at university level, ii) To assess the level of students learning at university level & iii) To examine the role of social media in enhancing students learning at university level. A quantitative approach by descriptive method was used to conduct the research and cross-sectional survey techniques was used to collect data. The population comprised all 4,217 student's faculty of social sciences at the University of Kotli AJ&K, from which 353 students were selected using simple random sampling following Morgan's (1970) table. "The researcher developed a five-point Likert scale questionnaire for the study. The questionnaire has three sections. The first section focused on social media, the second section dealt with students' learning, and the third section explored the role of social media in enhancing students' learning at the university level." The reliability of instrument was measured through Cronbach's Alpha and the value was .776. The researchers collected data personally. The response rate was 100%. The data were analyzed by using Statistical Package for Social Science Software (SPSS). The researchers applied mean score. It is concluded that social media significantly enhances learning experiences, promotes academic discussions, and increases engagement. Overall, the findings suggest that social media enables students to access a vast array of educational resources, engage in discussions beyond classroom boundaries, and collaborate with peers more effectively at the university level. Hence, university administrations are recommended to boost student engagement by integrating social media into coursework and creating dedicated groups. This makes learning more interactive and prepares students for a digitally driven world. By leveraging social media, universities can enhance the overall learning experiences of students.

Keywords: Social Media, Students Learning.

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INTRODUCTION

Media refers to the various communication outlets, tools, or technologies used to store and deliver information, entertainment, and data to a broad audience. It acts as a bridge for conveying messages from creators to the public, facilitating communication and shaping public opinion, social norms, and attitudes. Media can be defined by its technology, symbol systems, and processing capabilities. The most obvious characteristic of a medium is its technology: the mechanical and electronic aspects that determine its function and, to some extent, its shape and other physical features. These are the characteristics that are commonly used to classify a medium such as a television, a radio, and so on. The cognitive effects of these characteristics, if any, are usually indirect. Characteristics such as size, shape, and weight make it more likely that a student will learn with a book but not a 180 Learning with Media computer while on a bus, although of course this predilection is changing as computers get smaller, lighter, and cheaper. A few cognitive effects of technology, however, are more direct. For example, the size and resolution of many computer screens are such that reading their texts may be more difficult than reading the text of some books (Lippell, 2016).

Social media refers to digital platforms and applications that enable users to create, share, and exchange content, as well as participate in social networking. Unlike traditional media, which delivers content from a central source to a passive audience, social media is characterized by interactivity, user-generated content, and the ability to form communities around shared interests. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), TikTok, and LinkedIn allow individuals, organizations, and influencers to publish content, engage in dialogue, and cultivate online identities, fundamentally shifting the dynamic from one-way consumption to participatory communication (Aichner, *et al.*, 2021)

The impact of social media is profound, influencing everything from personal relationships and culture to politics and commerce. It has democratized content creation, giving voice to individuals and marginalized groups while enabling movements to organize on a global scale. However, it also presents significant challenges, including concerns over mental health, the spread of misinformation, data privacy, and the algorithmic curation that often prioritizes engagement over accuracy. As social media continues to evolve, it remains a powerful tool for connection and expression, yet its effects on society continue to prompt critical scrutiny and calls for greater accountability (Shao & Wang, 2017).

Social media holds immense importance in today's world as the primary infrastructure for communication, connection, and community-building. It allows individuals to maintain relationships across geographical boundaries, discover shared interests, and access real-time information about world events, public health updates, and cultural trends. For businesses, organizations, and public figures, social media provides an unparalleled platform for brand building, customer engagement, marketing, and direct feedback, effectively leveling the playing field where small enterprises can reach global audiences alongside major corporations. In the civic sphere, it has become a vital arena for political discourse, activism, and social movements, enabling grassroots organizing and giving marginalized voices a platform that traditional media often overlooked (Gnach, 2017).

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Beyond connection and commerce, social media plays a critical role in shaping culture, driving innovation, and influencing public opinion. It serves as a primary source of news for a significant portion of the population, often determining which stories gain visibility and how they are framed. The importance of social media also lies in its economic impact, having given rise to entire industries such as influencer marketing, content creation, and e-commerce integration. However, its significance is double-edged: while it empowers individuals and fuels economic opportunity, its influence over mental health, democratic processes, and information integrity underscores why understanding and responsibly navigating these platforms has become an essential skill in the modern era (Ausat, 2023).

Learning is the process through which individuals acquire new knowledge, skills, behaviors, or attitudes, leading to a relatively permanent change in understanding or capability. It occurs through various mechanisms, including direct instruction, personal experience, observation of others, and practice. Learning is not confined to formal settings like schools or workplaces; it happens continuously throughout life in everyday situations from mastering a new language or musical instrument to adapting to social norms or navigating unfamiliar technology. Fundamentally, learning involves cognitive, emotional, and environmental influences interacting to shape how a person interprets and responds to the world around them (Feuerstein, Feuerstein & Falik 2015).

The importance of learning extends to every dimension of human existence, serving as the foundation for personal growth, professional development, and societal progress. On an individual level, learning fosters adaptability, critical thinking, and resilience, enabling people to solve problems and pursue their goals. Collectively, a society's capacity to learn whether through education systems, scientific discovery, or cultural exchange determines its ability to innovate, address complex challenges, and evolve. In an era of rapid technological change and shifting economic landscapes, lifelong learning has become not merely beneficial but essential, empowering individuals to remain relevant and engaged while driving the continuous advancement of communities and nations (Spiel, *et., al* 2018).

Student learning refers to the process by which learners acquire, internalize, and apply knowledge, skills, and competencies within educational settings. It extends beyond mere memorization to encompass deep understanding, critical thinking, and the ability to transfer learning to new contexts. Student learning is shaped by multiple factors, including instructional quality, curriculum design, peer interactions, and the learner's own motivation, prior knowledge, and cognitive development. Effective student learning is often most successful when it is active rather than passive involving inquiry, collaboration, problem-solving, and opportunities for feedback and reflection allowing students to construct meaning rather than simply receive information (Sá, 2018).

The significance of student learning lies in its foundational role in shaping future opportunities, personal fulfillment, and societal contribution. For individual students, meaningful learning builds confidence, intellectual curiosity, and essential life skills such as resilience, communication, and adaptability. For educators and institutions, fostering effective student learning requires creating inclusive, supportive environments that accommodate diverse learning styles, backgrounds, and paces. In

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an increasingly complex and rapidly changing world, student learning must also prepare young people not only with academic knowledge but with the capacity to think critically, collaborate across differences, and continue learning independently equipping them to navigate challenges and contribute meaningfully long after their formal education concludes (Spiel, *et., al* 2018).

Student learning is of paramount importance because it forms the bedrock upon which individual futures and broader societal progress are built. For the individual, meaningful learning equips students with essential knowledge, critical thinking skills, and problem-solving abilities that enable personal growth, economic independence, and informed decision-making. It fosters intellectual curiosity, resilience, and self-confidence qualities that empower students to navigate life's challenges, pursue fulfilling careers, and adapt to an ever-changing world. Beyond academic achievement, student learning cultivates social and emotional competencies such as collaboration, empathy, and communication, which are vital for building healthy relationships and contributing meaningfully to communities (Spiel, *et., al* 2018).

On a collective level, the quality of student learning directly determines a society's capacity for innovation, economic competitiveness, and social cohesion. A well-educated populace drives scientific advancement, strengthens democratic institutions through informed civic participation, and fosters the cultural literacy necessary for mutual understanding in diverse societies. Conversely, gaps in student learning perpetuate cycles of inequality, limiting opportunities for marginalized groups and constraining a nation's potential. In an era defined by rapid technological change and complex global challenges from climate change to public health investing in robust, equitable student learning is not merely an educational priority but a fundamental imperative for sustainable development, social justice, and the long-term prosperity of communities and nations alike (Camilleri & Camilleri, 2016).

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the study were

To identify social media platforms used by students at university level.

To assess the level of students learning at university level.

To examine the role of social media in enhancing students learning at university level.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Media refers to the collective communication channels or tools used to store and deliver information or data to a broad audience. Traditionally, this includes print media (newspapers, magazines), broadcast media (television, radio), and digital media (websites, social media platforms). Its primary functions are to inform the public about current events, educate on various topics, provide entertainment, and serve as a platform for public discourse. By acting as a conduit between those with information and those seeking it, media shapes public perception and holds powerful institutions accountable (Meikle, 2016).

In the modern era, the landscape of media has been radically transformed by digital technology. The rise of the internet and social media has shifted power from traditional gatekeepers such as editors and producers to individuals, enabling instant, two-way communication and the rapid spread of user-generated content. While this

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has democratized information and fostered global connectivity, it has also introduced significant challenges, including the proliferation of misinformation, the creation of "echo chambers" that reinforce existing beliefs, and the struggle to sustain quality journalism in a fragmented, attention-driven economy (Dovbysh, 2021).

Social media are new media technologies that facilitate the creation, sharing and aggregation of content (such as ideas, interests, and other forms of expression) amongst virtual communities and networks. The term social in regard to media suggests platforms enable communal activity. Social media helps people connect and build networks. Users access social media through web-based or mobile applications. These interactive platforms allow individuals, communities, businesses, and organizations to share, co-create, discuss, participate in, and modify user-generated or self-curated content. Social media is used to share memories, form friendships, build communities and learn. They may be used to promote people, companies, products, and ideas. Social media can be used to consume, publish, or share news (Meikle, 2016).

social media is broadly defined as a category of digital platforms that facilitate user-generated content, interpersonal interaction, and networked communication. Scholarly reviews across disciplines such as communication studies, sociology, psychology, and marketing have examined social media through multiple theoretical lenses, including network theory, uses and gratifications theory, and critical discourse analysis. Key themes in the existing literature include the transformation of public discourse, the role of algorithms in shaping information exposure, the emergence of influencer culture, and the implications for identity formation and social capital. Researchers have also extensively documented both positive outcomes such as community building, civic engagement, and democratized content creation and negative consequences, including misinformation, echo chambers, mental health concerns, and privacy erosion (Santos, 2022).

Social media platforms are digital spaces designed for connection, content sharing, and conversation. Major types include social networks (Facebook, LinkedIn) for connecting people; media-sharing networks (Instagram, YouTube, TikTok) for visual content; discussion forums (Reddit, Quora) for in-depth conversations; and bookmarking/curation networks (Pinterest) for discovering content (Meikle, 2024).

Social Networks (Connecting): Focus on linking users to friends, family, and professionals, allowing the sharing of text, updates, and photos, like Facebook, LinkedIn.

Media-Sharing Networks (Visual Content): Centered on sharing high-quality images, short-form videos, or live-streaming content, like Instagram, YouTube, TikTok.

Discussion Forums (Community & Information): Specialized platforms for sharing news, ideas, and detailed opinions, often featuring niche communities, like Reddit, Quora.

Bookmarking & Content Curation (Discovering): Networks designed to discover, save, and organize content like ideas, trends, and tutorials, like Pinterest, Flipboard.

Consumer Review Networks (Feedback): Dedicated to sharing reviews and finding information about products, services, and brands, like Yelp, TripAdvisor.

Blogging & Publishing Networks (Content Creation): Platforms tailored for publishing long-form articles, essays, or personal blog content, like WordPress,

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Medium, Tumblr.

Instant Messaging & Chat (Direct Communication): Platforms focused on real-time, private, or group messaging rather than public broadcasting, like WhatsApp, Telegram, Snapchat.

Social media is vital in modern society because it facilitates instant global connectivity, information sharing, and community building. With over 5 billion users, it acts as a primary tool for communication, entertainment, education, and business, transforming how people interact and access information (Fazil, *et., al* 2024).

Connectivity and Relationships: It allows people to stay connected with friends, family, and niche communities regardless of distance, strengthening social bonds and reducing isolation.

Business and Marketing: It is an essential, cost-effective tool for brand visibility, customer engagement, targeted advertising, and e-commerce. Businesses use it for real-time customer feedback, customer service, and leveraging influencer marketing.

Information and News Dissemination: Social media serves as a major source of news and real-time updates for over half of U.S. adults, allowing for rapid information spread, including during emergencies.

Social and Political Impact: It empowers individuals to voice opinions, organize social movements, and report on human rights issues. Governments and organizations use it to engage with citizens and publicize activities.

Professional Networking: Platforms like LinkedIn facilitate job searching, career development, and building industry connections.

Learning is the process of acquiring new knowledge, skills, behaviors, or attitudes through study, experience, or instruction. It results in a relatively permanent change in understanding or behavior and is often considered a continuous, lifelong process rather than a single event. Active Process: It involves constructing knowledge by connecting new information to existing knowledge. Behavioral Change: It leads to modifications in how one acts or reacts, sometimes through reinforcement or observation. Cognitive & Experiential: It includes both mental processes (acquiring information) and practical experience (practice). Types: Common forms include associative learning (classical conditioning, operant conditioning) and cognitive learning (Romanov & Shiryaeva, 2024).

Student learning is a process of acquiring new knowledge, behaviors, skills, attitudes, or preferences through study, experience, or instruction. It involves lasting changes in a learner's understanding and ability to perform tasks (Pettigrew, 2015).

Active Engagement: Students learn best when they are actively processing information through doing, thinking, discussing, and creating, rather than just passively receiving information.

Constructing Meaning: Students do not just absorb facts; they create meaning by connecting new information to prior experiences and knowledge.

Types of Learning: This includes cognitive (thinking and memory), behavioral (response to stimuli), social (observing others), and experiential (learning by doing).

Methods of Learning: Students often have preferred styles for absorbing information, such as visual (charts/diagrams), auditory (lectures/discussions), or kinesthetic (hands-on activities).

Role of Memory: Learning is considered a change in long-term memory, where

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information moves from temporary working memory to long-term storage for future application.

Effective learning is often supported by motivation, regular practice, feedback, and a positive environment.

Formal learning refers to structured and intentional education that typically takes place in institutional settings such as schools, universities, or training centers. It follows a defined curriculum, is guided by trained educators, and often leads to recognized certifications or qualifications. This type of learning is characterized by its systematic approach, clear learning objectives, and assessment methods such as exams or graded assignments. Formal learning provides foundational knowledge and skills that are essential for academic progression and professional credentials (Gramatakos & Lavau, 2019).

Informal learning occurs outside of structured educational environments and is not formally assessed or certified. It happens spontaneously through daily experiences, self-directed exploration, interactions with others, and engagement with media or technology. Examples include learning a recipe from a family member, acquiring technical skills through online tutorials, or developing problem-solving abilities through work experiences. Informal learning is often driven by curiosity, necessity, or personal interest and plays a crucial role in lifelong learning and practical skill development (Souto-Otero, 2021).

Non-formal learning occupies the space between formal and informal learning. It involves organized educational activities that take place outside formal institutional frameworks, such as community workshops, adult education programs, vocational training, or sports clubs. While it is structured and often has specific learning goals, it typically does not lead to formal certification. Non-formal learning is particularly valuable for skill-building, personal development, and reaching learners who may not have access to or succeed within traditional educational systems (Moreland, 2019).

Experiential learning emphasizes learning through direct experience, reflection, and active engagement. Rooted in the work of educational theorists such as David Kolb, this type of learning follows a cycle of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. It is commonly applied in internships, laboratory work, service-learning projects, and hands-on training. Experiential learning bridges theory and practice, enabling learners to develop practical skills, critical thinking, and deeper understanding by applying knowledge in real-world contexts (Alabi, 2024).

Social learning posits that individuals learn by observing, imitating, and interacting with others. Based on Albert Bandura's social learning theory, this type emphasizes the role of modeling, vicarious reinforcement, and social context in the learning process. In practice, social learning occurs through collaborative group work, peer mentoring, discussion-based classrooms, and increasingly through digital platforms where learners engage with communities of practice. It highlights the importance of social interaction, feedback, and shared knowledge construction in effective learning (Firmansyah & Saepuloh, 2022).

Cognitive learning focuses on internal mental processes such as attention, memory, reasoning, and problem-solving. Unlike behaviorist approaches that emphasize external stimuli and responses, cognitive learning theory examines how learners

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process, store, and retrieve information. Strategies associated with this type include metacognition, concept mapping, critical analysis, and the development of higher-order thinking skills. Cognitive learning is central to academic disciplines that require analytical reasoning, logical argumentation, and complex information synthesis (Maringanti & Sahu, 2024).

Affective learning pertains to the development of attitudes, values, emotions, and interpersonal skills. It involves how learners respond emotionally to experiences, form beliefs, and develop empathy, motivation, and ethical reasoning. This type of learning is critical in fields such as character education, social-emotional learning programs, and professional training that emphasizes teamwork, leadership, and cultural competence. Affective learning influences not only what learners know but also how they feel, behave, and relate to others (Ritonga, 2025).

Blended learning combines traditional face-to-face instruction with digital or online learning experiences. This hybrid approach leverages the strengths of both modalities offering the personal interaction and immediate feedback of in-person settings alongside the flexibility, personalization, and rich multimedia resources of digital platforms. Blended learning has gained prominence in educational institutions and corporate training environments, as it accommodates diverse learning styles, enables self-paced study, and enhances engagement through varied instructional methods (Niyomves, Kunacheva & Sutadarat, 2024).

METHODOLOGY

A quantitative approach by descriptive method was used to conduct the research and cross-sectional survey techniques was used to collect data. The population comprised all 4,217 student's faculty of social sciences at the University of Kotli AJ&K, from which 353 students were selected using simple random sampling following Morgan's (1970) table. "The researcher developed a five-point Likert scale questionnaire for the study. The questionnaire has three sections. The first section focused on social media, the second section dealt with students' learning, and the third section explored the role of social media in enhancing students' learning at the university level." The questionnaire was validated from two educational expert from department of education. Researcher conducted pilot testing to check the accuracy and usability of instrument by distributed questionnaire among students. The reliability of instrument was measured through Cronbach's Alpha and the value was .776 which was acceptable. The research er collects the data through personal visits and analyzes data through statistical package of social sciences (SPSS) by using mean score.

RESULTS

Following are the results of the study on the basis of objectives and research questions

Table 1: Social Media at University Level

S. No	Statements	Mean
1	I use social media daily for academic purposes.	4.01
2	I find academic resources on social media platforms.	3.50
3	Social media distracts me from my studies.	2.20
4	I follow educational groups on social media.	4.22

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5	Social media improves my communication skills for academic tasks.	3.93
6	I share academic information on social media.	3.40
7	I get timely updates about university events via social media.	3.75
8	I use social media to interact with instructors/teachers.	3.72
9	Social media enhances my learning experience.	4.22
10	I prefer social media for academic discussions over face-to-face.	2.27
	Overall Mean Score	*3.52*

Table 1 indicates the results of descriptive statistics used to analyze the use of social media at the university level. It can be noted that students disagreed with the statements: "Social media distracts me from my studies (Mean=2.20)" and "I prefer social media for academic discussions over face-to-face (Mean=2.27)". However, the mean value of the rest of statements indicated that the students agreed with those statements. The overall mean score (Mean=3.52) indicate that students perceive social media as valuable education tool that enhance learning, communication and access to information at the university level.

Table 2: Students Learning at University level

S. No	Statements	Mean
1	I enjoy learning new things in my classes.	3.84
2	I participate actively in class discussions.	4.13
3	I set goals for my academic performance.	3.51
4	I manage my study time effectively.	3.93
5	I ask questions when I don't understand something.	3.66
6	Learning is more effective when I work in groups.	4.24
7	I use different resources (books, online, etc.) for learning.	3.83
8	I am motivated to learn when the topics interests me.	3.56
9	I apply what I learn to real-life situations.	2.16
10	I prefer project-based learning over exams.	4.37
	Overall Mean Score	*3.72*

Table 2 indicates the result of descriptive statistics used to analyze students' learning at the school university level. It can be noted that students disagreed with the statements: "I apply what I learn to real-life situations (Mean=2.16)". However, the mean value of the rest of statements indicated that the students agreed with those statements. The overall mean score (Mean=*3.72*) indicate that students are satisfied with their academic learning at university level.

Table 3 Role of Social Media in Enhancing Students Learning at University Level

S. No	Statements	Mean
1	I use social media to discuss coursework with classmates.	4.31
2	Social media resources supplement my classroom learning.	4.27
3	I learn new study techniques from social media.	3.95
4	Social media connects me with peers for collaborative learning.	4.27
5	I engage more with learning material through social media	3.63

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	discussions.	
6	Social media provides access to useful learning apps.	3.80
7	I share learning experiences on social media.	3.77
8	Social media helps me stay motivated to learn.	3.83
9	I find educational videos on social media helpful for learning.	4.30
10	Social media improves my overall learning experience.	4.47
	Overall Mean Score	*4.06*

Table 3 indicates the results of descriptive statistics used to analyze the role of social media in enhancing students' learning at the university level. The findings reveal that most students have a positive perception of social media use in their academic activities. The highest mean score was recorded for the statement "Social media improves my overall learning experience" (Mean = 4.47), indicating that students consider social media highly beneficial for learning, "I use social media to discuss coursework with classmates" (Mean = 4.31) reflects strong agreement, highlighting its role in promoting academic communication and "I engage more with learning material through social media discussions" (Mean = 3.63) indicates an area that may require improvement. Overall, the remaining statements also show mean values above average, indicating general agreement among students. The overall mean score (Mean = 4.06) suggests that students perceive social media as an effective tool that positively enhances their learning experience at the university level. The results indicate that social media plays a significant role in enhancing students' learning at the university level.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of Tables 1, 2, and 3 collectively indicate that social media plays a positive and significant role in enhancing students' learning at the university level. Table 1 shows that students generally perceive social media as a valuable educational tool (Mean = 3.52), supporting learning, communication, and access to information, although they do not prefer it over face-to-face discussions and do not consider it a major source of distraction. Table 2 reveals that students are satisfied with their academic learning (Mean = 3.72), but the low mean for applying knowledge to real-life situations highlights a gap between theoretical and practical learning. Table 3 further strengthens these findings, with a high overall mean (Mean = 4.06), confirming that social media significantly enhances learning experiences, promotes academic discussions, and increases engagement. Overall, the findings suggest that social media enables students go access a vast array of educational resources, engage in discussions beyond classroom boundaries, and collaborate with peers more effectively at the university level.

RECOMMENDATION

Following were the recommendations of the study

Parents are recommended to regularly discuss online safety with their kids and set clear screen time limits. This helps children use social media responsibly and focus on their studies. By doing so, parents can ensure a healthy balance between online engagement and academic priorities.

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Students are recommended to leverage social media for academic gains by joining relevant groups and sharing resources with peers. Setting boundaries is key to balancing studies and online engagement. This way, social media becomes a useful tool, not a distraction.

Teachers are recommended to bridge the gap between theory and practice by using case studies and project-based learning. This approach helps students apply academic concepts to real-life situations, making learning more relevant and effective. Practical assignments can spark creativity and problem-solving skills.

University administrations are recommended to boost student engagement by integrating social media into coursework and creating dedicated groups. This makes learning more interactive and prepares students for a digitally driven world. By leveraging social media, universities can enhance the overall learning experience of students.

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