# Social Media Use and Early Adolescents Academic Achievement: Variations by Parent-Adolescent Communication and Gender

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**Abstract**: Early adolescent involvement with social media platforms continues to grow which created concerns about academic effects on this population. Past research has studied social media impacts on education but the relationship between parent conversation with adolescents and gender influence in this area requires further evaluation. A research study analyzes social media relationship to early adolescent academic outcomes while examining its differences according to parent-adolescent communication models and gender variables. Social media overuse creates negative impacts on student grades until the communication quality between parents and teenagers acts as an intervening factor in this connection. The connection between open parental support in communication with children helps adolescents maintain better social media regulations which minimizes academic performance deterioration. Gender differences exist between social media usage because female adolescents use educational content more extensively than male adolescents who focus on entertainment content which yields contrasting academic effects. The research finds that parents and adolescents need to develop communicative strategies which maintain healthy social media use while fulfilling their academic tasks. These study results will assist stakeholders in developing structured models of adolescent social media usage to produce positive educational outcomes when using digital platforms. The study shows self-perception together with usage patterns significantly shape social media experiences of respondents but trust & openness and peer influence demonstrate the highest level of change. The average rating regarding rules and restrictions shows that some students live under strict supervision but other students face less regulation. The wide range of social influences and peer expectations demonstrates that people experience social media through distinct individual and social environments.

**Keywords**: Academic achievement, communication, gender differences, self-regulation, digital literacy, Trust & Openness, Rules & Restrictions, Usage Patterns and Social Expectations:

## INTRODUCTION

The use of social media has become essential in adolescent life as it shapes diverse aspects of their intellectual growth and their social capabilities and emotional progress. The academic performance effects of Instagram and other social media platforms including Face book, YouTube, and TikTok continue to produce widespread discussions among researchers. The period involves adolescents having more autonomy that allows them to decide how they interact with digital platforms. Research shows that educational experiences of students face multiple potential results from social media interactions. Through social media students obtain access to educational information as it enhances their digital skills and supports group learning. Prolonged social media usage leads to performance problems because it creates moments where students get distracted and spend less time on studies.

Multiple environmental elements such as communication patterns between parents and teenagers along with sex-based differences determine how much these effects will impact individuals. Social media attitudes formed by adolescents directly relate to the quality of interaction they have with their parents. High-quality parental engagement teaches adolescents self-control which enables them to combine their virtual life with their homework responsibilities. When parents devote time to teach their children about responsible social media conduct as well as establish proper limitations and invest in learning activities their students achieve enhanced scholastic results. Negative academic results develop when adolescents use social media excessively because they have either uncommunicative or controlling parents who avoid discussing these activities.

The effect becomes more intricate because of gender variations. The research indicates male adolescents use social media differently than their female counterparts. Research indicates that boys usually access social media channels to play games along with entertaining themselves but girls focus more on building connections along with educational content.
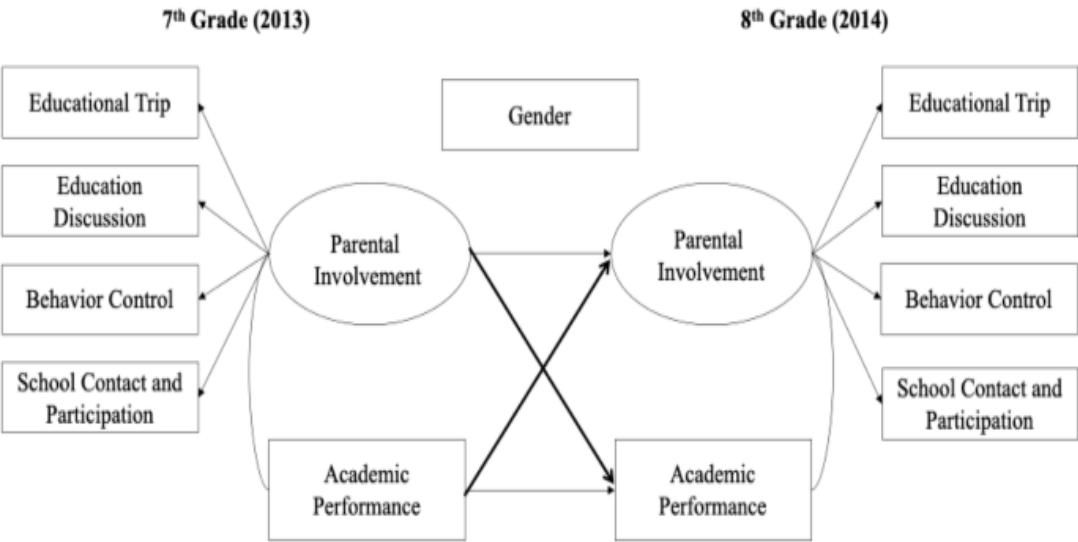
*Theoretical Background*

The study has its theoretical base in the psychological framework Uses and Gratifications Theory combined with the educational theories of Self-Determination Theory and Parental Mediation Theory.

The (UGT) demonstrates that people use media platforms to fulfill particular requirements that encompass social connections together with enjoyment and knowledge acquisition. Early adolescents use social media for multiple purposes which include getting academic aid along with enjoying recreational moments. The types of motivations behind their social media utilization determine the magnitude through which social media shapes their educational performance outcomes in either a favorable or unfavorable way. (SDT) intrinsic motivation together with extrinsic motivation determines how young people behave. Social media acts as an educational resource for adolescents when their learning motivation is based on internal factors that drive their engagement with content. The online conduct of students gets distracted when external factors like seeking peer acceptance or social validation steer their internet activities which may cause poor academic results.

Parental Mediation Theory studies the parental impact on children's media engagement by analyzing three main strategies that include active mediation through discussions about use practices, restrictive mediation through setting boundaries and co-viewing as shared media activities. Adolescents develop better critical thinking skills along with responsible media behaviors through active parental mediation which entails direct conversations and guidance but restrictive mediation usually results in adolescents hiding their activities. This study examines social media behavior alongside academic success of adolescents by analyzing how parent-adolescent interaction affects it through multiple theoretical frameworks that include gender-based digital behavior assessments.

**Figure: 02**



*Role of Parent-Adolescent Communication*

Adolescents who had **open and supportive communication with their parents** demonstrated better self-regulation and time management skills, allowing them to use social media more productively. Parents who actively discuss online risks, encourage responsible digital behavior, and set **reasonable screen-time boundaries** help their children develop a **balanced approach** to social

media consumption. Conversely, restrictive parenting approaches—such as excessive monitoring, punishment-based regulations, or outright bans—often lead to **resistance and secretive behavior**. Adolescents subjected to strict digital restrictions may find alternative ways to access social media, sometimes in unhealthy ways. Boys tend to use social media more for gaming, entertainment, and recreational content, which may increase the likelihood of distractions from studies. Girls, on the other hand, often use social media for **communication, social networking, and sometimes educational support**, making them more likely to integrate social media into their learning processes. Understanding these gender differences is essential in **designing effective interventions**. Schools and parents should recognize that boys and girls may require different guidance when it comes to balancing social media and academics. Tailored educational programs that address **specific digital engagement patterns** can help both male and female students maximize the academic benefits of social media while minimizing its distractions.

## RESEARCH AGENDA AND CONTRIBUTIONS

**Kristjansson & Sigfúsdóttir (2009)** indicated that parental support positively affects academic achievement, with stronger effects observed among girls. Parental monitoring, which includes tracking academic progress and social activities, also significantly enhances school performance for both genders. Additionally, the study highlights that the amount of time spent with parents indirectly contributes to better academic outcomes by strengthening parental support and monitoring. The results suggest that fostering a strong parent-adolescent relationship plays a critical role in educational success, particularly for girls. The study emphasizes the need for family-based interventions to improve academic performance by promoting positive parental involvement. **Lau (2017)** finds that excessive social media use negatively correlates with academic performance, primarily due to distraction and reduced study efficiency. Multitasking—using social media while studying—further exacerbates this negative effect by lowering concentration and cognitive retention. The study calls for universities to implement awareness programs on responsible social media consumption to enhance academic outcomes.

**Livingstone & Helsper (2008)** mediation (setting time limits and content restrictions), and co-use (parents engaging with children while online). The study finds that active mediation is the most effective in promoting responsible internet use, as it helps children develop critical thinking skills. Restrictive mediation, while limiting exposure to harmful content, may lead to increased secrecy and resistance from children. Co-use, though fostering positive parent-child relationships, has a weaker influence on regulating online behavior. The study emphasizes the importance of balanced mediation strategies that combine active guidance with appropriate restrictions. It also highlights the need for parental digital literacy to effectively navigate online risks and opportunities for their children.

**Lowe & Dotterer (2013) analyze** data from a diverse sample of adolescents to explore how these parenting behaviors shape academic performance. The findings indicate that both parental monitoring and warmth significantly impact students' academic achievement, but their effects vary across racial and ethnic groups. Parental monitoring—tracking school progress and setting academic expectations—positively correlates with higher grades and motivation. However, parental warmth, characterized by emotional support and encouragement, plays a crucial role in fostering resilience and engagement in school, especially among minority students who may face additional educational barriers. The study highlights the need for culturally responsive parenting interventions that emphasize both structure and emotional support to enhance academic success among minority youth. It suggests that educators and policymakers should work with families to promote a balanced approach to parenting that encourages both guidance and emotional connection.

**Malik (2020)** find that while excessive social media use negatively affects academic performance due to distractions, it can also enhance creativity when used for knowledge-sharing and interactive learning. Intrinsic motivation plays a key mediating role—students who are self-driven and engage in meaningful social media interactions tend to benefit more in terms of creative thinking and problem-solving skills. The study suggests that educators should encourage responsible social media use by integrating digital platforms into learning environments to enhance engagement and creativity. It also highlights the need for students to develop self-regulation strategies to balance academic responsibilities with social media engagement.

**Marsiglio et al. (2000)** emphasized the shift from a deficit-based view of absent fathers to a more nuanced understanding of diverse fathering roles. It also highlights the increasing importance of co-parenting, father-child attachment, and socioeconomic factors in shaping fatherhood experiences. The study calls for more intersectional research that considers race, class, and cultural influences on fathering. Additionally, the authors stress the need for longitudinal studies to better understand how fatherhood evolves over time and influences children's academic and social outcomes.

**Martin et al. (2013)** findings suggest that students who enter university with strong academic foundations and positive learning habits are more likely to sustain academic momentum. Additionally, personal resilience, motivation, and external support systems contribute to ongoing success. The study underscores the importance of early interventions, such as orientation programs and mentorship, to help students maintain their academic trajectory. It also highlights how life experiences outside of academia, such as work and family responsibilities, impact students' performance. The authors recommend that universities implement strategies to support students facing life challenges and promote sustained academic engagement.

**Moreno (2010)** develop communication skills and maintain peer relationships. However, excessive use of social media can also pose risks, such as cyber bullying, online harassment, and privacy concerns. The study discusses how adolescents' online behaviors often reflect their offline experiences and emphasizes the need for parental guidance and digital literacy education. While SNS can provide platforms for learning and collaboration. The author suggests that educators and parents should encourage responsible social media use by promoting awareness of privacy settings, healthy online interactions, and time management strategies.

**Nesi & Prinstein (2015)** findings suggest that engaging in social comparison—evaluating oneself against peers online—is associated with increased depressive symptoms, particularly among girls. Similarly, seeking validation through social media feedback correlates with higher levels of depression, especially among adolescents with lower social status. The study highlights that popular teens experience different social media pressures, with their online presence reinforcing their social standing but also making them more vulnerable to negative feedback. The authors suggest that interventions should focus on teaching adolescent's healthier social media habits, including self-regulation strategies and critical thinking about online interactions. The study also calls for more research into how different personality traits influence the impact of social media on mental health. **Keeffe et al. (2011)** emphasizes the role of parents in guiding children's online behavior, recommending open discussions about digital literacy, privacy settings, and responsible online engagement. Pediatricians are encouraged to counsel families on healthy media use, setting boundaries, and recognizing signs of problematic social media habits. The article calls for further research on how evolving digital trends shape adolescent well-being and family dynamics. **Ohannessian & Vannucci (2020)** adolescents who use social media to engage in risky online activities, such as cyber bullying or exposure to harmful content, are more likely to exhibit externalizing behaviors offline. The findings highlight the need for parental monitoring and digital literacy programs to help young adolescents navigate online spaces responsibly.

## RESEARCH GAP
Although several studies demonstrate a link between social media usage and academic performance, there is a paucity of research investigating how parent-adolescent communication influences this relationship. The quality and kind of parental guidance may substantially affect whether social media usage improves or detracts from academic success. Secondly, the gender disparities in social media utilisation and its academic ramifications are little researched. Although some research indicates that females utilise social media primarily for educational objectives, whereas boys predominantly participate for pleasure, limited studies offer a thorough examination of how these disparities affect academic achievement. A comprehensive study of gender-specific engagement patterns can provide customised advice for parents and educators. Third, current research predominantly examines

older adolescents (16-18 years), resulting in a lack of representation for early adolescents (10-15 years). Numerous research depend on self-reported metrics, potentially introducing bias. This study addresses research gaps, so enhancing the understanding of teenage digital behaviour and academic accomplishment, and provides practical recommendations for strengthening parental communication tactics and digital literacy initiatives.

### Importance of the Study
The swift increase in social media use among early adolescents has ignited continuous discourse on its impact on academic performance. As digital platforms increasingly serve as a key medium for communication, entertainment, and information, comprehending their impact on adolescent learning outcomes is essential. This study is critically important across several dimensions—academic, parental, educational, and policy-related—by elucidating the influence of social media usage, modulated by parent-adolescent communication and gender, on academic performance. Given that several parents face challenges in managing their children's screen time, it is crucial to comprehend how transparent and constructive communication may beneficially impact social media behaviours. The results will assist parents in formulating more effective techniques to help their children balance internet activity with academic obligations.

### Research Problem
The extensive utilization of social media by early adolescents has elicited apprehensions over its effect on academic performance. Some research show that social media facilitates learning through cooperation, information accessibility, and knowledge sharing, while others claim that excessive use results in distractions, reduced study time, and inferior academic performance. A critical although inadequately examined element in this interaction is parent-adolescent communication. Parents significantly influence their children's social media behaviours, however the quality and efficacy of this advice differ considerably. Some parents employ an authoritarian style characterised by stringent regulations, whilst others adopt a more permissive or disengaged attitude. The degree to which parental communication alleviates the adverse impacts of social media or amplifies its advantages is uncertain. Moreover, the impact of gender disparities in social media activity on academic achievement has not been sufficiently examined. Research indicates that boys and girls utilise social media distinctively—boys often participate in gaming and enjoyment, whilst females focus on communication and educational assistance—necessitating more investigation into the impact of these disparities on academic achievement. Comprehending the role of gender on social media's effect on learning might facilitate the customisation of treatments to meet particular requirements. Considering that digital behaviours established at this time might influence long-term educational results, it is essential to examine how early adolescents interact with social media and how parental communication and gender dynamics affect their academic achievement. This study aims to investigate the critical question:

*Objectives*
1. To examine the impact of social media among adolescents' academic achievement.
2. To investigate gender differences in social media usage patterns and their effects on academic performance.
3. To provide recommendations for parents and educators to promote responsible social media use.

## ANALYSIS, FINDINGS AND RESULTS

The study emphasizes the necessity for digital literacy programs in school that advocate for ethical social media use while also using social media as a beneficial learning instrument. Educational institutions and instructors can get advantages by comprehending how to utilise digital platforms to improve student engagement and academic achievement while reducing distractions. This study analyses the intricate relationship among social media, parent-adolescent communication, and gender, providing valuable insights that can facilitate more effective educational interventions and family support systems, thereby ensuring that social media functions as an instrument for academic improvement rather than an obstacle to achievement. This study adopts a quantitative research design to explore the relationship between social media use and academic achievement among early adolescents, with a focus on the moderating effects of parent-adolescent communication and gender. Primary data was collected through a structured questionnaire administered to a sample of 200 students, selected using stratified random sampling. The study offers empirical information that can aid policymakers in formulating suitable regulations for teenage internet participation. Policymakers may utilise the data to formulate age-appropriate social media usage guidelines, advocate for digital well-being programs in educational institutions, and support parental awareness campaigns to cultivate responsible technology utilization.

**Table: 1:** Mean and Std. Deviation of the respondent's perception towards the social media

| Items | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|---|---|---|
| Digital Awareness | 2.68 | 0.975 |
| Trust & Openness | 2.54 | 1.221 |
| Rules & Restrictions | 3.17 | .956 |
| Usage Patterns | 3.66 | 1.118 |
| Social Expectations: | 2.97 | 1.168 |
| Peer Influence: | 2.67 | 1.215 |
| Self-Perception | 3.82 | 0.687 |
| External Distractions | 3.19 | 0.789 |

The respondents' perceptions toward social media reveal varying levels of agreement across different factors. **Self-perception** recorded the highest mean (3.82, SD = 0.687), indicating that individuals strongly acknowledge the role of social media in shaping their self-identity. **Usage patterns** also received a high mean score (3.66, SD = 1.118), suggesting frequent engagement with social media in different ways. **External distractions** (3.19, SD = 0.789) and **rules & restrictions** (3.17, SD = 0.956) reflect a moderate level of agreement, highlighting the potential for social media to divert attention from important tasks and the influence of parental or institutional control over its use. **Social expectations** (2.97, SD = 1.168) and **peer influence** (2.67, SD = 1.215) received moderate ratings, suggesting that while societal norms and peer pressure impact social media usage, they are not dominant concerns. **Digital awareness** (2.68, SD = 0.975) indicates a relatively lower level of knowledge regarding the risks and benefits of social media. Lastly, **trust & openness** (2.54, SD = 1.221) recorded the lowest mean, suggesting that respondents are less likely to openly discuss their social media habits or trust online interactions. The standard deviation values indicate a mix of consensus and variability among responses, with higher deviations in areas like trust & openness and peer influence, signifying diverse perspectives on these aspects.

**Table 2:** Problems of social media

| Problems | Mean | Std. Deviation | Mean Rank | Rank |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Social Pressures | 3.99 | 1.175 | 3.78 | I |
| Cyber bullying & Online Harassment | 2.99 | 1.021 | 3.33 | V |
| Peer Comparison & Mental Health | 3.02 | 1.056 | 3.45 | IV |
| Parental Influence Variability | 3.21 | 1.238 | 3.69 | II |
| Distractions & Multitasking: | 3.17 | 1.345 | 3.57 | III |
| Decline in Reading & Writing Skills | 2.65 | 1.167 | 3.01 | VI |
| No. of. Respondents | 200 | Chi-Square | 4.231 | |
| Kendall's W | 0.006 | df | 5 | |
| | | Sig. | 0.368 | |

- **Chi-Square Test (4.231, p = 0.368)**: Since the significance value is **greater than 0.05**, it suggests that the ranking of problems does not show a statistically significant difference. This means there is **no strong agreement among**

**respondents** regarding which problem is the most severe.

- **Kendall's W (0.006)**: A very low value indicates weak consensus among respondents in ranking these problems.

### *Implications for the Study*

**Educational Implications:** Schools can leverage the study's findings to design **digital literacy programs** that educate students on responsible social media use. Teachers can integrate social media into learning activities in a way that maximizes its benefits while minimizing distractions. Additionally, educators can use gender-based insights to **develop tailored engagement strategies** that support both male and female students in using social media as an academic tool.

**Policy Implications:** The study provides evidence-based recommendations for policymakers to establish **social media guidelines for adolescents**. Policies can encourage responsible digital usage through school-based awareness programs, parental education initiatives, and regulations that promote balanced screen time. The research also supports the need for **gender-sensitive policies** that address the distinct ways boys and girls engage with social media in relation to their learning experiences.

### *Recommendations and Suggestions*

The recommendations focus on fostering responsible digital behavior, improving parent-adolescent communication, and addressing gender-specific needs in social media engagement.

1. **Enhancing Parent-Adolescent Communication:** One of the most crucial recommendations is for parents to adopt **active and supportive communication strategies** rather than restrictive control over social media use.
2. **Implementing Digital Literacy and Awareness Programs in Schools:** Schools should also encourage collaborative learning through digital platforms by incorporating social media into academic projects, research activities, and group discussions. This ensures that students use social media as an educational tool rather than a distraction.
3. **Gender-Sensitive Social Media Guidelines:** Given the study's findings on gender differences in social media usage, educators and parents must develop **gender-sensitive strategies** that cater to different engagement patterns. While girls may benefit from programs that promote self-regulation in social interactions, boys might require structured guidance on balancing gaming or entertainment-based social media engagement with their academic responsibilities.
4. **Encouraging Self-Regulation and Time Management:** Adolescents should be encouraged to develop **self-regulation skills** regarding their screen time. Schools and parents can introduce self-monitoring tools or time management applications that help students track their social media use and balance it with their academic work. Workshops on self-discipline and prioritization can be integrated into school programs to help students make conscious decisions about their online activities.
5. **Establishing School-Parent Collaboration:** Schools should work closely with parents by conducting **regular seminars and workshops** on social media awareness. Parent-teacher meetings can include discussions on students' digital engagement patterns and provide personalized advice on managing social media use at home. When parents and schools work together, it becomes easier to reinforce healthy digital habits among students.
6. **Policy Recommendations for Regulating Adolescent Social Media Use:** Policymakers should focus on creating **guidelines for age-appropriate digital engagement**. Regulations that promote digital well-being—such as limiting advertisements targeted at young users, providing social media usage recommendations for different age groups, and promoting safe online spaces for educational engagement—should be implemented at a national level. By implementing these recommendations, all stakeholders—parents, educators, and policymakers—can contribute to creating a **balanced digital ecosystem** where social media enhances rather than hinders academic achievement.

### *Educational and Policy Implications*

The study also underscores the **need for digital literacy education in schools**. While social media is often viewed as a distraction, it can also be leveraged as a **powerful educational tool** when used effectively. Schools should incorporate **responsible social media usage training** into their curriculum, helping students learn how to use digital platforms for research, collaboration, and knowledge acquisition. From a policy perspective, the study calls for **structured guidelines** on adolescent social media usage. Policymakers should consider implementing regulations that promote **digital well-being**, including recommendations on daily screen time, awareness campaigns on online safety, and parental education initiatives. Such measures can help create a **safe and productive digital environment** for young users.

## CONCLUSION

The study emphasizes that while social media has the potential to enhance learning, misuse and lack of guidance can lead to negative outcomes. The key to managing social media's influence lies in effective parental communication, informed educational policies, and responsible adolescent usage. Ultimately, the goal is not to eliminate social media from adolescents' lives but to ensure that it serves as a constructive force in their academic journeys. By fostering open dialogues between parents and children, promoting digital literacy in schools, and implementing supportive policies, we can create an environment where adolescents can benefit from social media without compromising their academic success. Social pressures are perceived as the most serious issue, followed by parental influence

variability and distractions/multitasking. Cyber bullying and literacy decline are seen as relatively less concerning in comparison. However, the low significance and Kendall's W value suggest a lack of strong agreement among respondents regarding the ranking of these problems. The findings highlight both the benefits and drawbacks of social media in shaping students' academic trajectories, emphasizing the need for effective parental mediation, responsible usage, and gender-sensitive approaches. One of the **key** takeaways from this study is that social media itself is not inherently detrimental to academic performance. Instead, its effects depend on how it is used, the extent of parental involvement, and the nature of adolescent engagement. While excessive and unregulated social media consumption can lead to distractions, well-managed use can provide valuable learning opportunities. Platforms like YouTube, educational forums, and collaborative study groups on social media can enhance students' knowledge, improve communication skills, and create peer learning environments. However, without proper monitoring, social media can also lead to procrastination, reduced study time, and lower academic performance.

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