Influence of social media utilization and parent adolescent communication on academic- achievement of secondary school students in south Ethiopia

Markos Malimo Setena[*]

[*] Department of Psychology, Dilla University, Ethiopia

Abstract

This research investigated how the use of social media and the nature of parent–adolescent communication affect students' academic performance at Hodo Public Secondary School. The key questions guiding the study were: (1) Do social media usage and parent–adolescent communication predict academic outcomes? (2) To what degree do students engage in social media use and communication with parents? and (3) Are there gender differences in social media utilization? A cross-sectional design was employed, applying both stratified and simple random sampling techniques. From a total of 487 students, 253 participants were selected, including a 10% contingency, along with nine teachers chosen for interviews. Primary and secondary data were gathered and analyzed. Quantitative data were treated using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, and percentage) and inferential tests (linear regression, one-sample t-test, and independent t-test) in SPSS Version 20. Qualitative data were coded, categorized, and organized into concepts based on notes and audio recordings. The findings demonstrated that both social media use and parent–adolescent communication significantly predicted academic achievement (p = .034, F(2,216) = .101). The study also found significant differences in the extent of social media usage (M = 1.90, SD = 2.63; t(219) = 1.498, p = .046) and parent–adolescent communication (M = 2.57, SD = 3.50; t(219) = 1.736, p = .012). However, no meaningful difference was observed between male (M = 65.97, SD = 3.950, n = 152) and female students (M = 65.97, SD = 3.950; t(67) = 1.576, p = .049) in terms of social media usage at the .05 significance level. Overall, the results suggest that both social media engagement and parent–adolescent communication exert a significant influence on secondary school students' academic performance. Therefore, parents, teachers, school counselors, and policymakers should collaborate to create awareness programs that encourage responsible social media use and enhance students' educational outcomes.

1   Introduction

1.1   Background of the Study

Several research findings have consistently revealed that senior secondary school students often perform poorly in their academics (Kolawale & Dele, 2012; Aina & Olanipekun, 2014). Aina and Olanipekun (2015) further pointed out that the declining performance in both secondary and higher education is a matter of serious concern. This issue is not only worrisome to students but also to parents, teachers, and education stakeholders across the globe. In Ethiopia, one of the measures introduced to address the problem is the School Improvement Program, which aims to raise the standard of teaching and enhance students' academic results (MoE, 2016).

A range of factors inside and outside the learner's environment can affect academic success, among which the use of social media and the quality of communication between parents and adolescents

are increasingly critical. Social media has become an integral part of modern life and exerts a particularly strong influence during adolescence, a period marked by evolving parent–child communication patterns (Smetana *et al.*, 2015). While supportive parenting is important for promoting independent functioning, inappropriate handling of parental roles may negatively affect learners' academic outcomes and behavior (Suizzo, 2020).

Nalwa and Anand (2018) describe social media as a digital communication tool that enables users to interact, exchange, and discuss information, ideas, personal messages, and multimedia content through internet-based platforms. Similarly, Ahn (2019) defines it as a medium that fosters interaction among people within virtual communities where they generate, share, and exchange knowledge and ideas. Students often engage in these platforms to seek new information, share knowledge, participate in research networks, and pursue academic interests as part of online learning communities (Kuppuswamy & Narayan, 2018). The growth of social media has brought both advantages and disadvantages to society (Dhaha & Igale, 2013).

According to other evidence, its negative consequences become more evident when students multitask with social networking platforms during classes, which leads to reduced academic focus and lower achievement (Nicole, 2017).

Parents also have a crucial role in shaping adolescents' development. The boundaries and quality of their communication significantly influence adolescents' behavior (Rodríguez-Fernández *et al.*, 2019). Strong parent–child communication can act as a protective factor against risky behavior (de Looze *et al.*, 2012) and contributes to positive developmental outcomes (Grolnick *et al.*, 2015). Academic achievement has been linked to effective parental communication (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). Research shows that parental involvement and warmth from both parents support adolescents' school engagement and performance (Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014). Some studies highlight a positive connection between parental communication and academic outcomes (Brajša-Žganec *et al.*, 2019; Otani, 2020), though others indicate little or even negative associations when communication is lacking (Bronstein

et al., 2015).

Parent–child discussions also transmit values, beliefs, and emotions, which influence adolescents' behavior (Hollmann *et al.*, 2016). Positive communication has been associated with improved school performance in adolescents (Trung & Ducreux, 2013).

Academic achievement generally refers to how well students handle their academic responsibilities and complete school tasks (Kimberly *et al.*, 2019). Ward, Stoker, and Murray-Ward (2016) similarly defined it as an educational outcome that indicates the extent to which learners and institutions meet their learning objectives. Such achievement is typically measured through semester averages or examination scores and is a concern for low-performing learners at both secondary and tertiary levels (Kolawale & Dele, 2012).

As a result, the researchers feel that further study is needed to better understand the influence of social media utilization and parent-adolescent communication on academic achievement among secondary school students. Therefore, the primary goal of this study is to examine the impact of social media utilization and parent-adolescent communication on academic achievement among Hodo secondary school students in the Kembeta Temaro zone of southern Ethiopia.

1.2   Statement of the Problem

In today's world, rapid technological advances are reshaping everyday life, with social media becoming a dominant presence in the routines of students and significantly altering their behaviors. At present, the majority of young people and learners maintain Facebook accounts. As Kuppuswamy and Narayan (2018) observed, students are often so deeply engaged in these platforms that they spend nearly the entire day online. This high level of involvement brings several academic drawbacks, as learners may abandon their studies in favor of chatting, texting, or gaming. Similarly, Nicole (2017) emphasized that students who are addicted to social media frequently devote their time to conversations unrelated to schoolwork, pay little attention during instructional hours, and find it difficult to concentrate while studying. Research also

shows that students often multitask across different sites and consume large amounts of information at once (Nalwa & Anand, 2018; Nicole, 2017). Even within classrooms, some learners remain preoccupied with messaging or browsing Facebook while lessons are in progress.

Other investigations have revealed additional challenges. For instance, Obi, Bulus, Adamu, and Sala'at (2012) highlighted that constant use of these networks negatively affects English usage and grammar. Students commonly rely on abbreviations and shortened forms in chats, such as "4" for for, "U" for you, and "D" for the, which then surface in academic writing and harm classroom performance.

Beyond the issue of social media, ineffective or absent communication between parents and adolescents is another key factor contributing to school-related difficulties. Poor communication within families often produces adjustment challenges for students, including negative attitudes toward learning, reduced motivation, low self-concept, poor performance, and misbehavior. Moreover, exposure to negative experiences on social networking sites has become common among adolescents, raising concerns for educators about its potential to lower students' self-esteem and undermine academic outcomes when coupled with weak parent–child communication (Satir, 2013).

However, there were no studies done on the aforementioned issues concurrently in the same study. In addition, the researcher undertook this study because there haven't been any local studies in this field. Most of the researchers focused on examining the effects of parental adolescent communication on academic achievement and social media utilization on academic achievement among university students, except for a few studies carried out at secondary schools with small sample sizes. Furthermore, no studies have been conducted on the simultaneous effects of social media utilization and parent-adolescent communication on academic achievement. Thus, this study is designed to fill the previous research gaps and meet the needs of local research. The researcher believes that more studies are needed to increase awareness of how to use social media and parent-adolescent

communication to improve academic achievement. Without such efforts, social media utilization and communication between parents and adolescents related to academic achievement will continue to be significant challenges for secondary school students in Ethiopia. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the relationship between social media utilization, parent-adolescent communication, and academic achievement among students at Hodo Public Secondary School. Based on this objective, the researcher formulated the following research questions:

- Is the intensity of social media utilization and parent-adolescent communication predictive of academic achievement among study participants?

- What is the extent of social media utilization and parent-adolescent communication among the study participants?

- Is there a gender difference in terms of social media utilization?

1.3　Operational Definitions

- **Academic Achievement**: In this study, academic performance refers to students' first-semester results in the 2020 academic year. It is measured by each learner's Semester Average Achievement (SAA), calculated on a 100% scale.

- **Parent-adolescent communication**: This term describes the interaction between adolescents and their parents (biological or non-biological) who provide both responsiveness and demands. For the purposes of this research, it is defined operationally as a ratio-level variable, measured by participants' total scores on the Parent–Adolescent Communication Scale during the data collection phase.

- **Social media utilization**: This refers to the engagement with online technological platforms that enable individuals to connect regardless of distance. In the present study, it is operationally framed as a ratio-level variable, assessed through participants' total scores on the Social Media Utilization Scale gathered during the data collection period.

2 Conceptual framework (relationship) between the variables

The researcher briefly discussed the contents of the framework for investigating the impact of social media usage and parent-adolescent communication on the academic achievement of secondary school students. In this study, the independent variables (IV) were social media utilization and parent-adolescent communication, which were believed to influence academic achievement (DV). Additionally, Figure 1 below illustrates the connection between the demographic variable (sex) and social media usage.
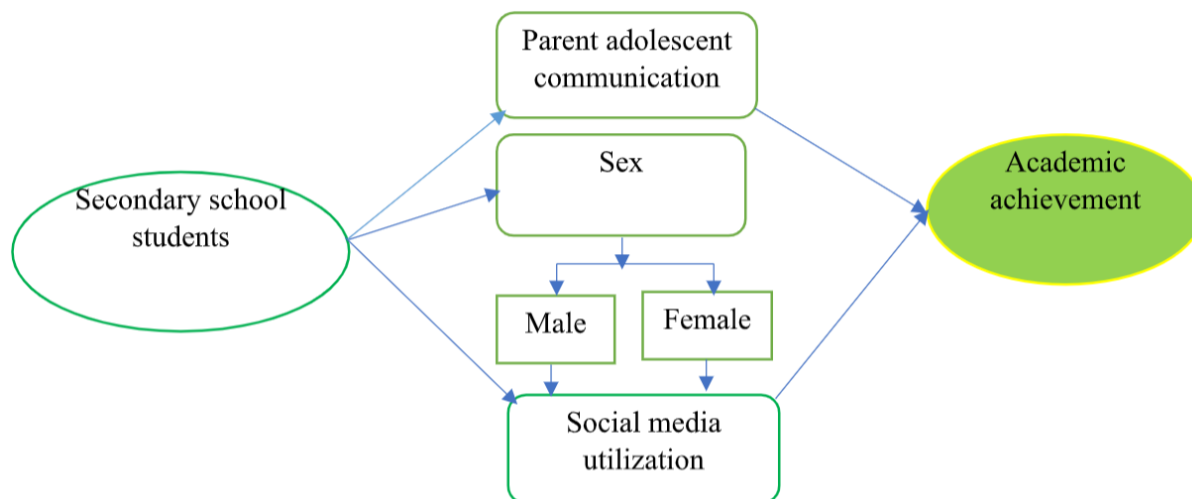

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework on the influence of Social Media Utilization and parent-adolescent communication on Academic Achievement

3 Research Design and Method

3.1 The Study Area

This research was conducted at Hodo Public Secondary School, located in the Kembata-Tembaro Zone of the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region (SNNPR). Geographically, the school lies about 329 km southwest of Addis Ababa, 187 km west of Hawassa, 56 km west of Durame, and 31 km east of the Omo River (Tembaro Woreda Transport Office). The school was intentionally chosen over other public and private institutions in the zone because many of its students are heavy users of social media. In this setting, learners frequently access social media through mobile phones, making use of free Wi-Fi provided at school and services from local internet cafés. Concerns raised by teachers, principals, and the wider school community regarding this trend served as the main reason for selecting Hodo Secondary School as the study site.

3.2 Study Design and Period

From April 1 to April 30, 2020, in this study, the researcher applied a cross-sectional research design to collect data at a single point in time to analyze and interpret in connection to qualitative data collected from selected teachers. It allows the researcher to apply surveys, questionnaires, and interviews to gather data from participants as well as explore characteristics, behaviors, or attitudes within a specific time frame.

3.3 Study Participants

There were 3 principals (2 males and 1 female), 37 teachers (26 males and 11 females), and 487 students (309 males and 178 females) who were available during the data collection period.

Table 1: Population frame

Grade	Sections											
	A			B			C			D		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Ninth	44	28	72	48	24	72	40	32	72	36	36	72
Tenth	37	13	50	31	18	49	34	16	50	39	11	50

3.4 Sample and Sampling Techniques

To select participants for this study, a mixed probability sampling technique involving stratified and simple random sampling was used. In stratified sampling, the researcher divided the students into strata based on grade level, gender, and sections. Using simple random sampling, sample students were then selected from each grade level and section in proportion to their representation in the population. The number of sample students from each grade level and section was determined by multiplying 0.52. The table below displays the proportion of the sample size from each grade and section. Individual students were then selected using simple random sampling, similar to a lottery method. In this case, every student in the population had an equal chance of being selected. In the subsequent process, pieces of paper with "Yes" and "No" written on them were placed in a box, corresponding to the total number of students in each section. Students were then asked to randomly select one piece of paper. The final sample consisted of 253 students from both grade levels. Only those who chose "Yes" were included in the study.

Table 2: Sample Frame

Grade	Sections												Grand Total
	A			B			C			D			
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
9th	23	14	38	25	12	37	21	17	38	19	19	38	150
10th	19	7	26	16	9	25	18	8	26	20	6	26	103

To get information researcher expected to get subgroups or subsets of the population which is called a sample. In line with this concept out of 487 populations, 253 samples were selected including 15% percent contingency by Yemane, T. (1967) sample size determination formula.

$$n = \frac{NZ^2P(1-P)}{E^2(N-1)+Z^2P(1-P)}$$

Key: n = sample population

N = total population

Z = $z - score$

P = proportionality

E = alpha significance level

3.5 Data Collection Instrument

This study relied on both primary and secondary sources of information. Primary data were collected directly from participants to capture original and relevant characteristics (Kothari, 2007). The main tool used was a structured questionnaire distributed to 253 students, of which 219 completed usable responses. In addition, in-depth interviews were carried out with nine teachers. Secondary data were gathered through a review of students' Semester Academic Achievement (SAA) reports obtained from the school records office. These combined methods helped examine how social media use and parent–adolescent communication affect academic performance.

3.6 Methods of Data Collection

To gather reliable and well-organized information, the following procedures were used: the Likert scale survey questionnaire and an in-depth interview.

Questionnaire

Social media usage was assessed using a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire adapted from Helou and Ab-Rahim (2014) and Mingle & Adams (2015). Before administration, the instrument was reviewed by an English language specialist, adjusted for clarity, and translated into Amharic to ensure accessibility for respondents. The finalized tool consisted of 15 items, for example: "I use social media to keep in touch with my relatives."

Parent–adolescent communication was evaluated using another five-point Likert-scale questionnaire adopted from Mehmood and Taswir (2013) and Wanajak (2011). Like the previous tool, it was revised and translated into Amharic with the help of experts. This scale contained 10 items, such as: "I sometimes feel afraid to ask my parents for what I need."

In-depth Interview

In-depth interviews were used as a qualitative method to capture participants' perspectives in detail and provide a comprehensive understanding of the research issue. For this purpose, nine teachers (seven men and two women) were chosen randomly. Each interview lasted about 30 minutes, allowing respondents sufficient time to express their views on the topic.

Document Observation

The researcher also reviewed students' academic records to triangulate data. Semester results were collected from the school's record office using student roll numbers obtained during questionnaire completion. Any participant who did not provide their roll number was excluded from this part of the analysis. This method enabled comparison of self-reported behaviors with actual academic achievement.

3.7 Data Collection Procedure

The researcher first prepared the close-ended items, adapting and refining them before translating the questionnaires into Amharic with the assistance of language experts to ensure clarity. Ethical clearance was then secured from the Psychology Department of Dilla University, which granted permission to access the required data and documents. Afterward, arrangements were made with school principals to identify suitable times when students could complete the survey without disrupting their classes. Prior to distribution, participants were briefed on the purpose of the study and given clear instructions on how to respond. Questionnaires were completed under the supervision of the researcher and assistants, with sufficient time allotted to allow participants to fully understand and answer the questions.

3.8 Data Analysis

The study applied both quantitative and qualitative approaches to analyze the collected data. Quantitative responses were carefully checked, coded, and entered into SPSS version 20 for processing. Analysis involved both descriptive and inferential methods, such as linear regression, one-sample t-tests, and independent t-tests.

For the qualitative component, data from interviews were first coded, categorized, and organized into themes. Notes and audio recordings were transcribed word-for-word in Amharic by the researcher. During translation, attention was also given to tone, expressions, and body language used by respondents to preserve meaning.

4 Results

4.1 Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

According to data gathered from 219 participants as shown in Table 1, the majority (67.1%) of students in the study area are found in late adolescents (16 to 18 years) old. This indicates the majority of students in the study area are found in late adolescence.

Table 3: Demographic variables on the effect of social media utilization and parent-adolescent communication on academic achievement of high school students, south Ethiopia (219)

Age	N	$\%$	Sex	N	$\%$	Grade Level	N	$\%$
16-18 (Late adolescence)	147	67.10	Male	67	30.60	Ninth	115	52.50
19-22 (Early adulthood)	51	23.30	Female	152	69.40	Tenth	104	47.50
Above 22 (Middle adulthood)	15	6.80	Total	219	100.00	Total	219	100.00
Below 15 (Early adolescence)	6	2.70						
Total	219	100.00						

n=frequency, %=percentage

Regarding sex, the majority of participants were males which constituted 69.4%, and the remaining 30.6% females. The implication of the above finding the majority of participants were male in the study area.

4.2 Influence of Social Media Utilization and Parent-Adolescent Communication on Academic Achievement

In Table 4, social media utilization has a statistically significant impact to academic achievements, F (2,216) =.101, p =.034.

Table 4: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	$df1$	$df2$	$Sig.$ F-Change	
1	.031^a	.001	-.008	14.227	.001	.101	2	216	.304	2.089

a. Predictors: (Constant), Parent-adolescent communication, social media utilization
b. Dependent Variable: Academic achievement

R Square

The Model Summary Table shows how well the regression line accounts for the overall variation in the dependent variable. As presented, the R value for the two predictors parent–adolescent communication and social media use was .101, meaning that together they explained 1.01% of the variance in academic achievement. Regarding the Durbin–Watson test, one of the key assumptions of regression is that the observations remain independent. When data are collected over time, successive responses may become correlated. To check this, the Durbin–Watson statistic is expected to range between 1.5 and 2.5. In this study, the obtained value was 2.089, which falls within the acceptable range, indicating that autocorrelation was not present.

4.3 Overall Interpretation/Reporting of the Results of Regression Analysis on Academic Achievement

In summary, a stepwise multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine whether social media use and parent–adolescent communication significantly influence students' academic achievement. The model suggested that the combined predictors accounted for a small, non-significant proportion of variance (β = .001, F(2,216) = .101, p = .304).

At the same time, an ANOVA test (see Table 4) was used to further assess the relationship. The results indicated that social media utilization had a statistically significant effect on academic achievement (β = .001, F(2,216) = .101, p = .034).

In support of this, one participant of the interview, male and aged 41, from teachers, affirmed that:

"Excessive use of social media can lead individuals to lose focus on what is important to them. Concerns have been raised by many school teachers and the general public due to the lack of regulations or guidelines provided by school officials regarding inappropriate use of technology. As high school students, their primary focus should be on their education, and it is not beneficial for their academic life if they prioritize social media or use it in an unbalanced manner. However, I cannot definitively state that it is detrimental to their academic life when used poorly. It may negatively impact their academic life if they utilize social media in a way that is not aligned with their educational goals, such as spending excessive time on non-academic activities like chatting, sharing, and liking posts, rather than seeking out crucial information for their studies."

However, other participants of the interview, one participant of interview sex: male and aged 34 from teachers: stated that:

It is impossible to determine the impact of using social media on academic life, as there are both benefits and drawbacks. On one hand, it provides access to valuable information for academics, social activities, and entertainment. On the other hand, it can be seen negatively as it often distracts students from studying. Therefore, the impact of social media on academic performance depends on the user's experience and intentions. It is important to acknowledge that social media can both present opportunities and challenges. While it offers access to academic information, unintentionally spending excessive time on it can hurt an adolescent's academic life.

Table 5: One-Sample $t-test$ Summary on Social Media Utilization and Parent-Adolescent Communication

Variables	Mean	Standard deviation	N	r	t	df
Social media utilization	1.90	2.63	219	.046	1.498	-.054
Parent-adolescent communication	2.57	3.50	219	.012	1.736	.393

$P* <.05$

According to Table 5, one sample t- test demonstrated significant difference between the social media utilization and parent adolescent communication among the students. The extent social media utilization and parent adolescent communication among was, 95%CI, social media utilization (M =.1.90, Sd = 2.63), t (219) = 1.498, and parent adolescent communication (M =.2.57, Sd = 3.50), t (219) p =.012,) which implied that there is a statistically significant difference in extent social media utilization and parent adolescent communication among study participants.

In addition to this, one participant of interview sex: female and aged 30 from teachers: said that:

The use of social media by students at our school, whether for academic purposes or personal enjoyment, is not overemphasized. Students access social media both through the school's Wi-Fi and their mobile data. Additionally, the interviewees noted that parents stay updated on their children's academic progress and maintain communication

with the school. We organize familiar parent days at the beginning and end of the school year, and when necessary, we contact parents to address any current issues that assist us in managing and supporting students at their respective academic levels.

In contradict to this, one participant of interview sex: male and aged 52 from teachers: said that:

Despite the claims of other informants, the entire school community is not effectively utilizing social media for academic information or entertainment due to the absence of a centralized network and inadequate school Wi-Fi. It can be argued that our community lacks social media usage because there are no funds, preventing students from accessing cell data or online connectivity. Furthermore, parent-school communication is deficient. Only a small number of parents attend parent-teacher conferences, and some parents make impersonal phone calls to address their children's issues. Additionally, certain parents choose not to attend these

conferences and evade their responsibilities. Consequently, this highlights the poor interactions or *orientations between parents and adolescents at home.*

4.4   Gender Differences in terms of Social Media Utilization

Table 6: Independent sample $t-test$ on social media utilization interns of gender

Social media Utilization	Male			Female			95% CI for MD		r	t	Df
	Mean	Sd.	N	Mean	Sd.	N					
	65.73	3,292	152	65.97	3.950	67	.267	.483	.049	1.576	212

$P* <.05$

Thus, the above finding reveals that there was no statistically significant difference between academic achievement among males and females (M = 65.73, SD =3.292, N = 152; M = 65.97, SD = 3.950, N = 67) at a.05 significant level. This indicates that there were no statistically significant differences between the mean score of academic achievement among male and female participants.

In addition to this, one participant in the interview, a male aged 35, said that:

I don't understand the gender difference in terms of social media usage. It might be determined by an individual's purpose and goals for using social media and their perceptions of its outcomes, but biological sex cannot make a difference in terms of social media usage. Whenever there is an opportunity, there is also a challenge. Having access to information for academic purposes is a major advantage of social media, but unintentionally spending too much time on it is a negative aspect of social media usage and can be seen as an influence on academic life for adolescents.

In contrast to this, one participant in the interview sex, a male aged 52 from teachers, said that:

In my opinion, males tend to use social media more than females because females may often be occupied with helping their mothers in the kitchen and other household tasks. Additionally, males are likely to spend more time outside of their homes, which grants them the freedom to socialize with their peers on social media sites. These factors contribute to gender differences in social media utilization.

5   Discussion

5.1   The Extent of Social Media Utilization and Parent-Adolescent Communication

Findings from this study indicate a statistically significant difference in how participants engage with social media and communicate with their parents. The actual results showed only slight deviations from expected values. In recent years, parents have demonstrated limited awareness of how technology shapes adolescents' relationships. Nonetheless, it is important for parents to understand this influence, as doing so helps them maintain supportive relationships with their children and guide their choices regarding decision-making and media use (Currie, 2014; Toombs, 2014).

5.2   Influence of Social Media Utilization and Parent Adolescents' Communication on Academic Achievements

The results also suggest that both social media engagement and parent–child communication play measurable roles in shaping students' academic outcomes. Oche and Aminu (2016) noted that many learners fall behind academically due to spending excessive time on social platforms. Similarly, Obi, Bulus, Adamu, and Sala'at (2012) observed that heavy reliance on these sites negatively affects grammar and language skills, while Abaleta (2014) reported that overuse can impair students' ability to communicate clearly and hinder learning. Internet dependency has become a worldwide concern, often leading students to prioritize online activities over personal or educational responsibilities, which ultimately damages academic success.

In contrast, Camilia, Sajoh, and Dalhtu (2013) found that social media can benefit learning, with about three-quarters of students in their study reporting that they used these platforms for school-related tasks. Likewise, Kaplan and Haenlein (2016) pointed out that social media can foster personal growth, creativity, and technical skills. Harrath and Alobaidy (2016) further argued that when used purposefully, media consumption may enhance academic outcomes. Beyond social media, effective communication between parents and adolescents has been linked to improved self-esteem, academic achievement, and moral reasoning (Hartos & Power, 2012). On the other hand, Brown and Iyengar (2018) stressed that the absence of parental guidance, acceptance, and autonomy support puts adolescents at a disadvantage, leaving them without essential skills for academic success.

5.3 Gender Differences in terms of Social Media

The study also revealed no significant differences between male and female students in terms of social media engagement. Lenhart (2015) reported a similar trend, noting that both genders generally participate in online activities at comparable rates. Nonetheless, gender as a demographic factor does influence the types of platforms students prefer: while males show more interest in LinkedIn, females are more likely to favor Facebook personal pages (Lenhart *et al.*, 2013). According to social role theory, such differences arise because men and women are socialized into distinct responsibilities and behavioral patterns. Men tend to emphasize independence, intellectual pursuits, and competition, whereas women focus more on interpersonal and communal roles.

Earlier studies, however, have documented contrasting findings. Some research has suggested that females use social media more frequently than males, while others reported that men dominate internet use due to lower privacy concerns. For instance, Cho *et al.* (2019) found that older female users from individualistic cultures expressed stronger privacy concerns compared to men. Similarly, Akyildiz and Argan (2012) observed that male students in Turkey spent more time on Facebook than females. Tufekci (2018) showed that women were several times more likely than men to partici-

pate in online networking sites. Perrin (2015) also noted that American women gradually surpassed men in social media use. In Ethiopia, Mohammed (2014) documented significant gender-based differences in the frequency of online activity. Tham and Ahmed (2016) reached a similar conclusion in their study of secondary school students, emphasizing notable gender variations in social media practices.

Taken together, these findings imply that while social media can both support and hinder academic life, the balance depends largely on how it is managed. Tham and Ahmed (2016) suggested that the responsibility lies mainly with parents, who should help ensure that adolescents use social media constructively without compromising their studies.

6 Conclusion

The findings of this research can be summarized in three key points:

1. Both social media usage and communication between parents and adolescents significantly influence students' academic performance.

2. Notable differences exist in the extent of social media engagement and parent–child communication among the participants.

3. No meaningful gender-based differences were found in social media use.

Overall, the results highlight that social media activity and the quality of parent–adolescent interaction are important determinants of academic achievement among secondary school learners. This underlines the responsibility of stakeholders—including parents, teachers, counselors, school leaders, community members, and government institutions—to develop strategies that address challenges linked to digital device usage. Moreover, parents and guardians are encouraged to foster open, supportive communication to promote students' success.

The Study's Strengths and Limitations

This research stands out as the first of its kind conducted in Ethiopia, making it a valuable contribution to the field. However, certain limitations must be acknowledged. The study focused solely on one school site, which restricted the diversity of participants and locations. Furthermore, the

reliance on self-reported data introduces the possibility of bias. Consequently, the outcomes of this research should not be generalized to all secondary school students in the Kembata Tembaro Zone or across Ethiopia.

Declarations

I, Markos Malimo Setena, affirm that the study entitled "*The Influence of Social Media Utilization and Parent–Adolescent Communication on Secondary School Students' Academic Achievement*" was entirely conducted by me.

Ethical Approval and Consent to Participate

Prior to data collection, formal approval was obtained from the Department of Psychology, Institute of Education and Behavioral Science, as well as from the school administration. The objectives of the study were clearly explained to participants, and written informed consent was secured before participation. Confidentiality of all responses was strictly maintained throughout the process.

Availability of Data

The data for this study was available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Consent for Publication: Not applicable

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