



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

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Abstract

This study examined the extent to which social media engagement and parent–adolescent communication contribute to the academic achievement of students at Hodo Public Secondary School. Specifically, the research addressed three central questions: (1) whether social media use and communication with parents predict academic performance; (2) the level at which students participate in social media and family communication; and (3) whether patterns of social media use vary by gender. A cross-sectional research design was implemented using stratified and simple random sampling procedures. From a population of 487 students, 253 were selected (including a contingency allowance), and nine teachers participated in interviews. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected. Quantitative analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, percentage) and inferential tests (linear regression, independent t-test, and one-sample t-test) through SPSS Version 20. Qualitative responses were transcribed, coded, and categorized into themes. Findings indicated that social media utilization and parent–adolescent communication significantly predicted academic achievement ($p = .034$, $F(2,216) = .101$). Significant variation was also observed in levels of social media use ($M = 1.90$, $SD = 2.63$; $t(219) = 1.498$, $p = .046$) and communication ($M = 2.57$, $SD = 3.50$; $t(219) = 1.736$, $p = .012$). However, no statistically meaningful gender difference was detected in social media use at the .05 level. Overall, the results suggest that both digital engagement and family communication patterns are influential factors in secondary school academic performance.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

A consistent body of literature indicates that many secondary school students experience unsatisfactory academic outcomes (Kolawale & Dele, 2012; Aina & Olanipekun, 2014). The continuing decline in performance at both secondary and tertiary levels has generated considerable concern among educators, families, and policymakers (Aina & Olanipekun, 2015). In response to such challenges, Ethiopia introduced initiatives such as the School Improvement Program to enhance instructional quality and strengthen student achievement (MoE,

2016).

Academic success is shaped by multiple interrelated influences operating within and beyond the school environment. Among the emerging factors receiving growing scholarly attention are social media engagement and the quality of parent–adolescent interaction. During adolescence—a developmental stage characterized by shifting autonomy and relational patterns—communication within families undergoes transformation (Smetana *et al.*, 2015). While supportive parenting fosters independence and adaptive functioning, ineffective parental involvement may undermine both behavior and aca-

demic outcomes (Suizzo, 2020).

Social media platforms have become embedded in daily life. Nalwa and Anand (2018) describe social media as internet-based communication systems that facilitate interaction, information exchange, and content sharing. Similarly, Ahn (2019) conceptualizes it as virtual community spaces where users generate and disseminate ideas and knowledge. Students frequently utilize these platforms to gather information, collaborate academically, and participate in digital learning networks (Kuppuswamy & Narayan, 2018). Nevertheless, the rapid expansion of social media has introduced both benefits and risks (Dhaha & Igale, 2013). Empirical findings suggest that academic difficulties may arise when students engage in multitasking during class time, diverting attention toward networking platforms rather than instructional activities (Nicole, 2017).

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

Rapid technological development has significantly altered contemporary social and educational environments. Among these changes, social media platforms have become deeply integrated into the daily routines of adolescents. A large proportion of secondary school students maintain active online profiles and frequently engage with platforms such as Facebook and other networking sites. Kuppuswamy and Narayan (2018) observed that students often devote substantial amounts of time to online interaction, sometimes at the expense of their academic responsibilities. When learners prioritize chatting, gaming, browsing, or posting over studying, their educational performance may be compromised.

Nicole (2017) further noted that excessive social

media involvement may weaken students' classroom concentration and reduce their ability to focus on instructional activities. Similarly, Nalwa and Anand (2018) highlighted that students frequently multitask across multiple digital platforms, dividing attention between academic tasks and online engagement. Such divided attention can hinder deep learning and retention of subject matter. In addition, Obi *et al.* (2012) reported that habitual use of informal abbreviations in online communication may negatively influence students' formal writing skills, as these shortened expressions sometimes appear in academic work.

Beyond digital influences, the quality of communication between parents and adolescents plays a vital role in shaping students' academic development. Ineffective or limited parent-child communication may contribute to reduced academic motivation, negative attitudes toward schooling, low self-confidence, and behavioral difficulties. Satir (2013) emphasized that exposure to negative experiences—whether online or within the family environment—may undermine adolescents' emotional stability and academic engagement.

Although previous studies have examined social media utilization and parent-adolescent communication separately, limited research has explored their combined effect on academic achievement, particularly within Ethiopian secondary school contexts. Most existing studies have concentrated on university populations or small-scale samples. Consequently, there remains a need for localized research investigating how these two factors jointly relate to students' academic performance.

Therefore, this study was designed to examine the relationship between social media utilization, parent-adolescent communication, and academic achievement among students at Hodo Public Secondary School. Based on this purpose, the following research questions were formulated:

- Is the power of social media usage and parent-adolescent communication predictive of academic achievement among study participants?
- What is the degree 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.

1.4 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.

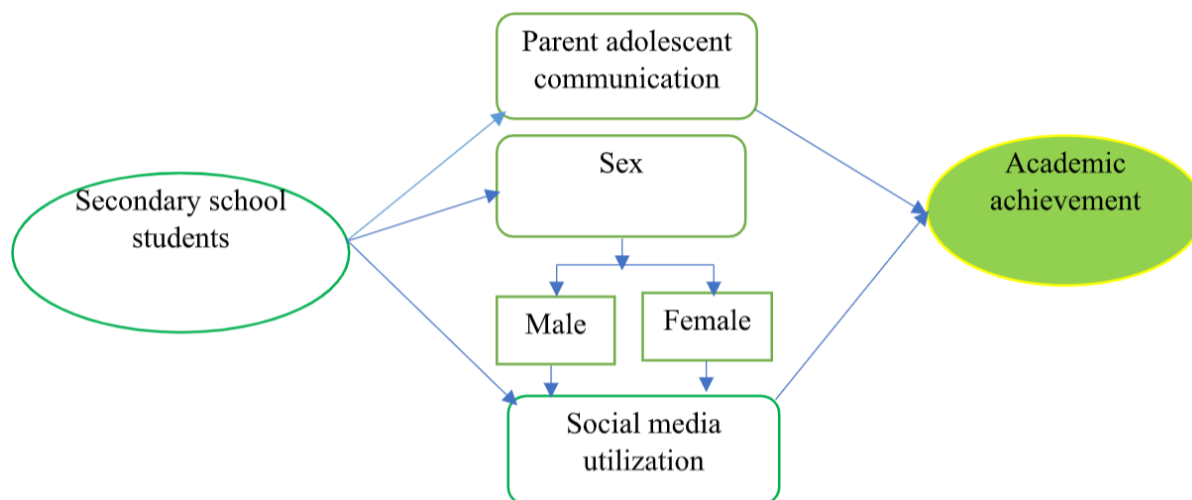


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework on the influence of Social Media Utilization and parent-adolescent communication on Academic Achievement

2 Research Design and Methods

The current study 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.

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.

2.1 Period and Study design

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

2.2 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

2.3 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.

To obtain the required data, the researcher selected a representative portion of the total population, commonly referred to as a sample. Consistent with this sampling principle, 253 participants were drawn from the total population of 487 students. The sample size was determined using Yemane’s (1967) formula for sample size calculation, incorporating a 15% contingency allowance to account for possible non-response or incomplete data.

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

- Key: n = sample population
- N = total population
- Z = z - score
- P = proportionality
- E = alpha significance level

Table 2: Sample Frame

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

2.4 Instrument of Data collection

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

2.5 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.

2.6 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.

2.7 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.

3 Results

3.1 Participants demographic characteristics

As presented in Table 1, the demographic data obtained from 219 respondents show that 67.1% of the participants fall within the 16–18 age range, which corresponds to late adolescence. This finding demonstrates that most students included in the study belong to the late adolescent developmental stage.

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.

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

3.2 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, $F(2,216) = .101, p = .034$.

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.

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

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.

3.3 Overall interpretation of “regression analysis on academic achievement”

In summary, “a stepwise multiple regression was performed to determine whether social media engagement and parent–adolescent communication had a significant impact on students’ academic performance”. The analysis indicated that, together, these predictors explained only a small and non-significant portion of the variance ($\beta = .001$, $F(2,216) = .101$, $p = .304$).

Additionally, an ANOVA (see Table 4) was conducted to further explore the relationship. Findings revealed that social media use had a statistically significant influence on academic achievement ($\beta = .001$, $F(2,216) = .101$, $p = .034$).

Supporting this, one interviewee—a 41-year-old male teacher—stated 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* – *t*est 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.”

3.4 Gender differences in terms of social media utilization

The results indicate that there was no statistically significant difference in academic achievement between male and female students at the 0.05 level of significance. The mean score for males was 65.73 (SD = 3.292, N = 152), while for females it was 65.97 (SD = 3.950, N = 67). These findings suggest that the average academic performance of male and female participants did not differ in a statistically meaningful way.

Table 6: Independent sample *t* – test on social media utilization interns of gender

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

*P** <.05

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”.

4 Discussions

4.1 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).

4.2 Influence of “social media utilization and parent–adolescent communication on academic achievement”

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 (Har-

tos & 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.

4.3 Gender differences in social media use

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 participate 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.

5 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.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

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.

Author's Declaration

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 for Participation

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.

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Availability of Data

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

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Consent for Publication

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