

Perception of Mindfulness and self-awareness practices in Mitigating Negative Effects of Social Media usage on Academic Performance of Management Students

Bhavya Saini¹, Anand Jaiswal²

ABSTRACT

This study explores the perception of mindfulness and self-awareness practices in mitigating the negative academic effects of social media usage among Indian management students. Based on in-depth interviews with ten participants, the research employs a qualitative design with thematic analysis to capture nuanced behavioural patterns and internal cognitive strategies. Findings reveal three primary user groups: low social media users with strong self-regulation, moderate users with conscious boundaries, and excessive users struggling with distraction. Themes such as self-awareness, emotional regulation, digital moderation, and mindfulness-based efforts emerged as pivotal in managing academic focus. Participants practicing even intermittent mindfulness reported temporary improvements in concentration and stress relief, though only those with high self-awareness consistently maintained academic performance. Offline anchors such as sports and peer interactions also contributed to reduced screen dependency. The study concludes that intrinsic self-regulation and reflective awareness—not complete digital abstinence—are the key to preserving academic engagement in a connected environment. These insights provide evidence to guide future wellness programs and curriculum designs that integrate lifestyle-appropriate mindfulness practices for student populations.

Keywords: *Mindfulness, Self-awareness, Social media usage, Academic performance, Management students, Digital well-being*

INTRODUCTION

The digital environment is omnipresent. For students in higher education, especially those pursuing management, digital exposure is no longer optional. Social media platforms dominate not just leisure time but also academic life (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017). Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, and similar platforms claim hours from daily routines (Andreassen et al., 2012; Primack et al., 2017). There are undeniable advantages in networking, accessing real-time information, and collaborating in academic communities (Junco, 2012). The concern lies in patterns of overuse and the disruption of academic intention. Students enrolled in management programs often manage layered schedules. (Rosen et al., 2013).

They are involved in academic learning, project-based evaluations, internships, extracurricular leadership, and entrance exam preparations. Within this multitiered ecosystem, constant digital engagement becomes both a tool and a trap (Pantic, 2014). Social media has behavioral hooks (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017).

Design features such as infinite scrolling, frequent notification algorithms, recommendation engines, and reward-based feedback systems make disengagement difficult (Andreassen et al., 2012). This leads to diminished study consistency, fragmented attention, late-night screen exposure, and degraded sleep quality (Levenson et al., 2017). Students multitask during lectures, shift between academic tabs and digital networks, and often use social platforms as procrastination spaces (Rosen et al., 2013).

The dopamine response loop encouraged by likes, comments, and follows enhances the desire for repeated checking (Andreassen et al., 2012). Academic goals, which require long-term focus and cognitive absorption, come into direct conflict with short-term digital gratification (Pariser, 2011). Attention fatigue becomes frequent. Procrastination habits deepen. Emotional reactivity spikes (Pantic, 2014). Academic performance depends not only on intelligence or skill, but also on behavior regulation (Goleman, 1995). The capacity to sit through long periods of focused study, retain complex information, make connections across disciplines, and

¹ Scholar, TERI School of Advanced Studies, bhavya.saini@terisas.ac.in

² ✉Professor, TERI School of Advanced Studies, ajaiswal.rs.mcc13@itbhu.ac.in

perform under pressure relies heavily on cognitive discipline (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). When attention is diverted repeatedly, neural circuits of sustained attention are weakened (Primack et al., 2017).

The brain begins to prefer short bursts of interaction (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017). This affects not just information absorption but also critical thinking, memory retention, and problem-solving (Junco, 2012). Social media's emotional impact adds another layer of difficulty. Constant comparison with curated representations of peers can lead to dissatisfaction, anxiety, and depressive moods (Pantic, 2014). These emotional responses reduce academic motivation. A student who scrolls through images of success, fun, or productivity while personally feeling overwhelmed may fall into a loop of inadequacy (Primack et al., 2017). That sense of failure becomes internalized. Self-worth and academic confidence drop. With poor sleep, reduced motivation, weakened focus, and increased anxiety, students experience burnout or disengagement (Levenson et al., 2017).

The structural design of social media is intentionally addictive (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017). Content is tailored through algorithms that reinforce existing preferences. Echo chambers are formed. Attention is kept through hyper-personalized content (Pariser, 2011). The mind becomes increasingly reactive. Emotional habits replace reflective habits. Academic performance, which depends on sustained cognitive and emotional regulation, declines as digital stimulation dominates students' time (Goleman, 1995). The need for a psychological reset becomes evident.

Mindfulness provides a method for psychological recalibration. It teaches attentional control, moment-to-moment awareness, and disengagement from compulsive thought patterns (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). Meditation, focused breathing, and body scans train the mind to observe without reacting. Students who practice mindfulness learn to pause before reacting to a notification or urge to check social media (Goleman, 1995).

Self-awareness complements mindfulness. While mindfulness trains attention in the present, self-awareness helps students reflect on their emotional and behavioral patterns. It helps identify distractions and triggers. Once these are known, students can make informed choices about how and when to use digital tools (Goleman, 1995). Mindfulness and self-awareness together enhance self-regulation. Emotional reactivity decreases. Procrastination patterns are noticed and interrupted. Academic focus is reclaimed (Kabat-Zinn, 1990).

Although research on mindfulness has grown rapidly, few studies connect it specifically with social media-related academic challenges among management students (Primack et al., 2017). Management education emphasizes decision-making, strategy, time discipline, and leadership under pressure. These are skills eroded by constant digital interruptions (Rosen et al., 2013).

Management students face career-oriented anxieties and multitasking expectations. Social media offers a tempting escape from stress, but this escape often reduces academic resilience. Integrating mindfulness in their routines could rebuild that resilience (Pantic, 2014). It becomes essential to explore whether these practices can realistically offset the negative effects of constant digital use. There is also a scarcity of practical studies that recommend actionable, evidence-based techniques. What form of mindfulness practice is most effective? What barriers do students face in adopting them? Are simple breathing routines enough, or do they need deeper cognitive restructuring through prolonged training? (Kabat-Zinn, 1990).

More focus is being laid on understanding those gaps. It seeks to evaluate perceptions of mindfulness and self-awareness strategies from the perspective of students who are navigating both academic pressure and digital overload. If proven effective, these practices could be incorporated into academic life as regular skill-building activities. Institutions could provide dedicated mindfulness workshops or integrate them into coursework.

The academic impact of reduced distraction is measurable. Grades improve. Comprehension deepens. Assignments are delivered on time. Participation increases (Junco, 2012). Emotional stability reduces dropout rates and builds confidence (Primack et al., 2017). By understanding how students perceive and apply mindfulness and self-awareness, we can arrive at a framework of behavioral management that balances digital life with academic responsibilities. This study explores those possibilities through the lived experience and feedback of management students.

Research Questions and Objectives

The Study is built around four main research questions: What are the primary ways in which excessive social media usage affects academic performance among management students? How do mindfulness and self-awareness practices influence students' capacity to manage distractions caused by social media? Which mindfulness techniques are most effective in enhancing focus, emotional stability, and productivity in management students? What challenges arise in adopting mindfulness and self-awareness practices, and how might these challenges be mitigated?

The objectives that guide this inquiry are:

1. To examine the relationship between patterns of social media use and academic performance metrics among management students.
2. To evaluate the influence of mindfulness practices on attention control, emotional regulation, and academic consistency.
3. To determine the extent to which structured self-awareness routines can reduce procrastination and improve study behavior.

Significance

The increasing integration of social media into academic life poses serious consequences for student performance, particularly among management students who navigate high-pressure academic environments. While digital platforms offer collaborative opportunities, they also contribute to attention fragmentation, procrastination, and mental exhaustion (Rosen et al., 2013). The addictive nature of social media and its impact on mental well-being has been well documented. (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017).

However, much of the existing research focuses on general populations or examines productivity in the context of workplace environments. There is insufficient emphasis on students enrolled in management education, who are often balancing academic requirements with internships, competitive exams, and career anxieties. (Andreassen et al., 2012). Their specific challenges—time scarcity, high multitasking loads, and goal-oriented stress—make them a vulnerable group for digital distraction (Primack et al., 2017).

The significance of this study lies in focusing on these overlooked dynamics. It bridges the gap between generalized discussions on social media overuse and its distinct impact on students engaged in management programs. By assessing how mindfulness and self-awareness practices are perceived and applied in this context, the research highlights practical strategies that could strengthen academic resilience. (Kabat-Zinn, 1990).

Mindfulness, as a behavioral discipline, cultivates focus in present moment and reduces reactivity to distractions (Goleman, 1995). It directly targets the cognitive overload caused by rapid digital consumption and helps rebuild mental clarity and emotional regulation. Self-awareness enables learners to recognize their behavioral triggers, emotional fluctuations, and unproductive habits, thereby improving decision-making about digital engagement (Pantic, 2014).

Although several institutions offer workshops on meditation or yoga, few have embedded structured mindfulness-based interventions into management curricula (Junco, 2012). The outcomes of this research could guide universities in formulating support systems that address cognitive health as part of academic development. Such systems are critical at a time when mental health challenges are surging in student populations globally (Levenson et al., 2017).

The study also holds broader relevance for educational policymakers. If mindfulness and self-awareness can be shown to mitigate the academic consequences of social media overuse, it may justify funding for psychological wellness programs and time management training in higher education (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017). Moreover, it offers implications for instructional design—suggesting that digital hygiene, emotional intelligence, and reflective practice deserve equal emphasis alongside technical and managerial content (Goleman, 1995).

At a personal level, this study empowers students with tools to reclaim cognitive control, improve academic focus, and enhance emotional stability. It contributes not just to academic performance but to long-term personal development in a world increasingly dominated by digital noise (Pariser, 2011). By focusing on lived student perceptions, the research provides a practical, student-centered lens into habit change and academic recovery.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The rapid proliferation of social media has deeply influenced the academic experiences of students, particularly those in management education. While social media facilitates communication, networking, and informal learning, it also introduces distractions that impair academic performance through reduced concentration and poor time management (Rosen et al., 2013). Management students—who often juggle rigorous coursework, internships, and leadership expectations—may be especially vulnerable to these effects (Rithika & Selvaraj, 2013).

Studies consistently show that excessive engagement with platforms like Instagram, WhatsApp, and Facebook interferes with sustained focus and structured study routines. Rostaminezhad et al. (2019) found that even when students are aware of the risks, they struggle to regulate their digital behavior, leading to chronic procrastination and academic inefficiency. Rithika and Selvaraj (2013) observed that higher time spent on social media correlates with lower academic grades, suggesting a direct trade-off between digital engagement and academic outcomes.

Lau (2017) extended this discussion by emphasizing the cognitive consequences of multitasking with social media during study sessions. Continuous task-switching induced by notifications and compulsive checking behavior can lead to cognitive overload, impairing memory retention and reducing learning depth. This challenge is particularly pronounced for management students, whose academic success depends heavily on sustained attention and case-based analytical thinking. Abdulahi et al. (2014) further showed that excessive Facebook use among students at Asia Pacific University resulted in poor academic engagement, reinforcing that social media distractions erode structured learning habits.

The implications of digital overuse are not limited to academic underperformance; mental health outcomes are also closely tied to social media behavior. Zewude et al. (2025) found a strong link between high social media usage and increased levels of anxiety and depression among students. Emotional strain from online comparison, cyberbullying, or fear of missing out (FOMO) can diminish students' motivation and impair cognitive function, thereby worsening academic performance.

In response to these challenges, mindfulness and self-awareness practices have emerged as potential buffers against digital distractions. Mindfulness—defined as present-moment, nonjudgmental awareness—has been linked to enhanced focus, emotional regulation, and reduced digital dependency (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). Weaver and Swank (2023) demonstrated that mindfulness training helped students regulate emotional responses and reduce time spent mindlessly scrolling, thereby restoring academic concentration. These findings hold promise for management students, whose academic responsibilities require both emotional control and efficient cognitive processing.

Chiang and Sumell (2019) observed that students who practiced mindfulness exhibited greater cognitive flexibility and attention control, allowing them to better resist impulses to check social media during academic tasks. Similarly, Luo et al. (2024) found that combining mindfulness with a growth mindset led to improved time management and self-control, both critical for navigating the workload typical of management education. They emphasized that students who develop a belief in their capacity to grow are more likely to persist in minimizing distractions, even when tempted by social media stimuli.

Mehmood and Siu (2020) provided further evidence that integrating mindfulness into students' routines supports academic discipline. Their study indicated that students who regularly practiced mindfulness techniques were better able to detect when digital use interfered with their productivity and were more effective in reorienting their focus toward academic priorities. This aligns with calls for structured mindfulness programs within university curricula, particularly in high-pressure academic fields.

Zewude et al. (2025) also underscored the importance of social support and self-regulation as protective factors. Students with strong interpersonal networks and higher self-discipline were less likely to succumb to social media distractions and showed better academic outcomes. This perspective supports Luo et al. (2024), who advocate for blended interventions that combine internal strategies like mindfulness with external structures like peer accountability and institutional support systems.

Together, these studies point toward a multidimensional framework for mitigating the negative academic effects of social media use. Management students, due to the complexity of their academic journey, may benefit greatly from adopting mindfulness, enhancing self-awareness, and building support structures. These tools equip them to regulate digital behavior, manage stress, and prioritize academic responsibilities. Importantly, institutional efforts to integrate these practices into academic environments can help students develop sustainable study habits while navigating the realities of a hyperconnected world.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section presents a theoretical framework to explain the role of mindfulness and self-awareness practices in mitigating the negative effects of social media usage on academic performance of management students, as shown in Fig. 1, grounded in established behavioral and cognitive theories.

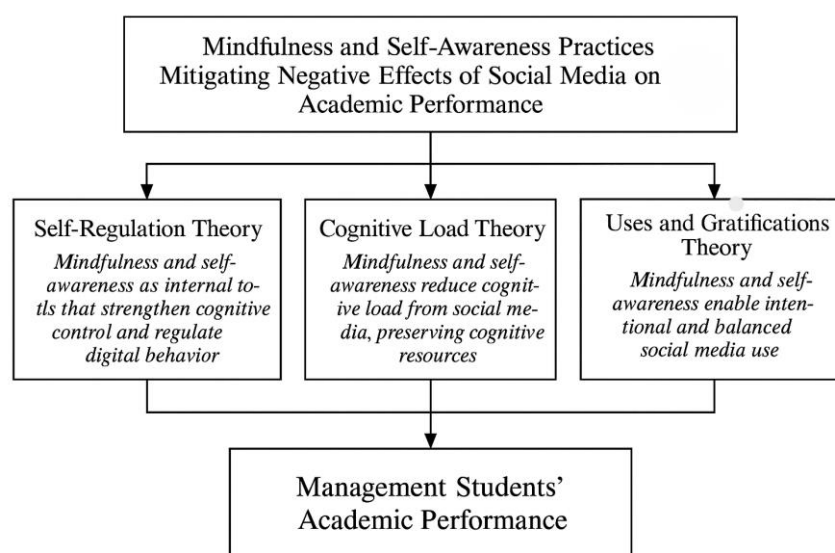


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

Self-Regulation Theory (SRT)

Self-Regulation Theory posits that individuals have the capacity to control their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors in order to achieve personal goals (Zimmerman, 2000). In academic environments, self-regulation includes setting goals, maintaining attention, managing time, and using metacognitive strategies to monitor progress. For management students, excessive social media use can disrupt this regulatory process by diverting attention and reducing cognitive control. Mindfulness and self-awareness serve as internal tools that support students in identifying distractions, refocusing attention, and intentionally managing their digital behavior to align with academic objectives. Previous studies have shown that self-regulated learners perform better academically due to their ability to resist distractions and sustain goal-directed behavior (Boekaerts, Pintrich, & Zeidner, 2005). Mindfulness training enhances the metacognitive aspect of self-regulation by helping students notice the onset of distraction, including compulsive social media use, and reorient attention to task-related activities (Tang et al., 2007). Thus, Self-Regulation Theory offers a clear lens for understanding how mindfulness and self-awareness strengthen cognitive control mechanisms, enabling management students to counteract the adverse academic effects of social media.

Cognitive Load Theory (CLT)

Cognitive Load Theory emphasizes the limited capacity of working memory and the detrimental impact of extraneous cognitive load on learning and performance (Sweller, 1988). Continuous social media engagement introduces interruptions and fragmented attention that increase cognitive load, thereby reducing the efficiency of academic learning processes. For management students juggling demanding coursework, such overload can diminish information retention, lower concentration, and affect academic outcomes. Mindfulness practices are designed to streamline cognitive processing by anchoring attention in the present moment and reducing unnecessary mental clutter (Zeidan et al., 2010). Self-awareness further helps individuals recognize mental overload and take corrective action, such as turning off notifications or taking mental breaks. Studies have shown that students trained in mindfulness techniques experience lower perceived stress and improved cognitive performance during academic tasks (Zenner, Herrnleben-Kurz, & Walach, 2014). Thus, CLT supports the argument that mindfulness and self-awareness mitigate the extraneous load induced by social media, preserving cognitive resources for academic functions.

Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT)

Uses and Gratifications Theory explains that media consumers actively seek content to fulfill specific psychological, emotional, or social needs (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973). Unlike passive media exposure models, UGT views individuals as goal-oriented users who engage with media—including social platforms—for purposes such as communication, information-seeking, self-expression, or relaxation. Among management students, social media usage is not uniformly harmful; its effects depend on the motivations and awareness behind its use. Students with higher self-awareness are more likely to use social media in a balanced way that aligns with academic and professional goals. Mindfulness promotes intentional use by helping students pause, reflect, and question whether social media use at a given moment is serving a meaningful purpose or merely habitual. Research suggests that mindful social media use is associated with lower emotional exhaustion and greater academic engagement (Ding, Zhang, & Wang, 2020). UGT thus contextualizes the perception of social media not as inherently negative but as variably impactful depending on user intention and consciousness. This framework supports your study's exploration of how mindful and self-aware management students perceive and navigate the influence of social media on their academic lives.

METHODOLOGY

The study investigates the role of mindfulness and self-awareness in mitigating the negative effects of social media usage on academic performance among management students. The research adopts a qualitative approach that emphasises understanding participants lived experiences, focusing on the subjective meaning they assign to their digital habits and mindfulness practices. With this perspective, the research aims to gather insights that reflect how participants themselves perceive the intersection of their social media use, mindfulness practices, and academic performance.

Data Collection and Theoretical Framework

Participants in this study are management students from India, aged 19 to 29 years, currently enrolled in graduate and postgraduate business programs in Tier-1 cities and metropolitan areas. A purposive sampling method is used to select students who have varying levels of social media engagement and varying degrees of familiarity with mindfulness practices. This sample is purposefully diverse to ensure that a wide array of perspectives is represented, especially concerning social media usage and the perception of mindfulness as a tool for improving academic outcomes.

A total of 10 participants are selected. The size of the sample is deliberately kept small to allow for deeper, individualized exploration through semi-structured interviews. Each participant is informed about the objectives of the study, and written informed consent is obtained before the interviews. All interviews are audio-recorded with the participants' consent, transcribed verbatim, and pseudonyms are used to maintain anonymity and confidentiality. The data collection method is primarily based on qualitative in-depth interviews, with each interview lasting between 3 and 4.5 minutes. The interviews are guided by open-ended questions, focusing on

the participants' social media habits, their academic behaviors, emotional responses during social media engagement, and their experiences with mindfulness or self-awareness practices. These interviews aim to allow participants to reflect on their daily routines and articulate the impact they perceive their digital habits and mindfulness efforts have on their academic life.

Thematic analysis, based on Braun and Clarke's six-step framework, is employed for data analysis. These steps involve-

1. Familiarizing oneself with the data
2. Generating initial codes, searching for themes
3. Reviewing themes
4. Defining and naming themes
5. Producing the report

Data Analysis

The data is manually coded, where recurring patterns in participants' responses are identified and grouped under broader thematic categories. Thematic frequency bar charts and a 4-quadrant importance matrix were also created to visually represent the distribution and significance of themes within the data.

In addition to thematic analysis, sentiment analysis is used to explore the emotional tone present in the interviews. The responses from participants are analyzed for positive, negative, and neutral sentiments, particularly regarding their views on social media use, mindfulness practices, and their academic performance. Sentiment analysis enables the identification of underlying emotions and attitudes toward digital engagement, offering a deeper insight into how participants feel about the impact of their digital habits on their academic success. It also helps capture the nuances of participant attitudes toward mindfulness and its perceived effectiveness in regulating social media use. Sentiment analysis is particularly useful in distinguishing between individuals who view mindfulness positively as a tool for improving focus and those who may feel more ambivalent or skeptical about its benefits.

Content analysis helps identify key topics or ideas that participants consistently discuss, shedding light on various aspects of their social media engagement and mindfulness practices. It is particularly useful for uncovering the specific terms or references students use to describe their relationship with social media and mindfulness, helping to clarify the ways they understand and engage with these concepts. This analysis provides a more granular level of understanding by categorizing participants' responses based on specific topics such as academic focus, distraction, relaxation, mindfulness, and time management.

A combination of these qualitative methods, including thematic, sentiment, and content analysis, allows for an examination of the data, highlighting both the overt and subtle ways in which mindfulness practices, self-awareness, and social media use intersect in the lives of management students. These approaches provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the complexity of students' digital behaviors and their perceptions of mindfulness as a means of improving academic outcomes. This methodological approach is designed to generate rich, and complex data that can capture the varied experiences of management students in relation to their digital habits and mindfulness practices. The aim is to provide insights into how mindfulness and self-awareness can be integrated into students' routines to mitigate the negative effects of social media on academic performance, offering potential interventions for educational institutions looking to improve student outcomes in the digital age.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

One of the most prevalent themes that emerged from the analysis was the role of social media as a distraction during study hours. All participants, without exception, reported that social media had the potential to disrupt their academic focus. This theme was discussed in a variety of contexts: from distraction during study sessions to interruptions caused by notifications during classes or late-night scrolling. Table 1 below summarizes key

emotions and sentiments expressed by management students regarding their social media usage, particularly in relation to academic performance, mindfulness, and self-awareness. The statements reflect a range of perspectives—from disengagement and self-discipline to guilt, distraction, and attempts at digital moderation. These insights give an understanding of how social media impacts focus, productivity, and emotional well-being among students.

Table 1: *Emotional and Cognitive Responses of Management Students to Social Media Usage*

Emotions / Sentiments	Exemplary Statements
Disinterest / Detachment	"I do not use typical social media apps like Instagram or Facebook, as I don't have an account."
Self-awareness	"I think I have high self-awareness, and because of that, either I give up if I can't do anything last minute, or... I know what all I can do and how long it will take."
Guilt / Regret	"While using the app, I usually don't know how fast time actually goes... after closing the app, I feel a sense of guilt because I have wasted two hours."
Addiction / Compulsion	"I have uninstalled Instagram various times in a week, but I always come back downloading it again."
Desire for Improvement	"I think I have to reduce my screen time to about one hour, or a bit lesser than that. I mean, the lesser, the better, obviously."
Mindfulness (temporary)	"In school, they used to make us do meditation... it would make me feel more calm and peaceful... but I would not practice them again or follow through."
Justification / Rationalization	"I don't feel it really impacting me in my academics or in my cricketing career."
Procrastination	"If I am procrastinating due to social media, I will remind myself of the important tasks I have and the things I need to do."
Recognition of Distraction	"Usually, when I am on YouTube or Netflix, that takes up a lot of time... I can use that time for more productive work."
Desire for Focus / Mental Clarity	"When you are studying, your clarity should be completely focused on one thing... self-awareness helps you to do the work better."
Connection / Social Interaction	"I use Instagram every day. It's a way to connect with other people."
Frustration / Lack of Control	"I try to reduce my screen time, but it isn't working."
Positivity / Entertainment	"Sometimes it's good, like if you're watching some movies... if it's some content you like, then it affects your mood positively."
Low Impact Perception	"I don't think my digital habits affect me that much."

Social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube were most cited as the sources of distraction. WhatsApp, in particular, was frequently mentioned as a major source of distraction during study sessions. Several participants described their tendency to check their phone frequently for messages, which resulted in interrupted study time. A few participants also mentioned that they would open Instagram or Facebook to “take a break” from their studies, only to find themselves engaged for extended periods, leading to a huge loss of time. This theme aligns with existing literature that highlights the distractive potential of social media platforms in academic settings (Rostaminezhad et al., 2019; Rithika & Selvaraj, 2013). In many cases, participants admitted that their social media habits had led to wasted study time and loss of concentration, which they were unable to recover, thus affecting their academic performance.

Impact on Academic Performance

A key finding was the varied academic impact of social media use. Participants reported different levels of impact, from deterioration in academic performance to no discernible effect, largely dependent on their personal use and self-regulation strategies.

Four participants in particular reported a noticeable decline in academic performance due to excessive social media use. They described instances where their grades slipped after long hours of social media engagement, particularly during exam preparation periods. These participants often acknowledged that they struggled to concentrate on their coursework due to the constant need to check social media updates, leading to reduced study hours and poor time management. One participant mentioned how their social media use spiraled out of control during periods of academic stress, thus compounding their academic challenges. In contrast, another

participant, who practiced digital discipline, reported maintaining consistent academic performance despite moderate social media use. This participant actively employed strategies like turning off notifications and setting specific times for social media use, which they believed helped them balance their academic responsibilities and digital engagement. They noted that by limiting social media use during study hours, they were able to sustain a high level of focus, which allowed them to perform well in their academic tasks.

This divergence in responses supports the idea that while social media can negatively affect academic performance, self-regulation and mindful management of digital engagement can mitigate these impacts. These findings reflect prior research that underlines the potential for social media to both enhance and hinder academic outcomes depending on usage patterns (Lau, 2017; Abdulahi et al., 2014).

Mindfulness and Self-awareness

Mindfulness and self-awareness emerged as critical themes that potentially mediate the negative effects of social media on academic performance. While only one participant reported regularly practicing mindfulness, this individual demonstrated self-control over their social media habits. This participant had incorporated daily mindfulness practices, such as meditation and focused breathing, which they attributed to enhancing their ability to stay focused and reduce distractions from social media.

The participant reported that mindfulness allowed them to gain greater awareness of their behavior, enabling them to recognize when they were becoming distracted by social media. As a result, they were able to refocus and prioritize their academic tasks. This finding aligns with research suggesting that mindfulness practices can improve cognitive control, which may help students better manage distractions and enhance academic performance (Weaver & Swank, 2023; Chiang & Sumell, 2019).

On the other hand, many participants acknowledged that while they had heard of mindfulness and had engaged in some form of mindfulness practice, they did not do so consistently. Some participants reported that they had attended institutional mindfulness sessions or participated in brief meditation exercises, but these efforts were not sustained. They noted that without consistent practice, the benefits of mindfulness were short-lived, and they struggled to apply mindfulness techniques during stressful or distracting situations. These responses suggest that mindfulness, while beneficial, requires regular practice to be effective in mitigating the negative effects of social media on academic performance.

Sentiment Analysis and Emotional Tone

Sentiment analysis conducted on the interview transcripts revealed an interesting contrast in the emotional tone expressed by the participants in Fig. 2. Majority of participants expressed neutral sentiment and another significant portion showed frustration or disappointment regarding their social media habits, particularly when discussing its negative impact on their academic performance.

There was an evident sense of regret among some participants who felt that their social media use had detracted from their academic focus and success. Sentiments of guilt were particularly evident among participants who reported falling behind in their studies due to excessive digital engagement.

However, those who practiced self-awareness and had a more disciplined approach to social media use expressed a more positive emotional tone. These participants spoke about feeling in control of their academic life and were more optimistic about balancing digital engagement and academic responsibilities. Some participants also expressed contentment with the few instances when they had successfully used mindfulness techniques to manage distractions and stay focused.

The sentiment analysis, therefore, highlights a clear emotional divide between students who struggle with social media-induced distractions and those who are able to manage their use effectively through self-regulation or mindfulness. It supports the idea that emotional regulation, which can be fostered through mindfulness, plays a critical role in managing digital distractions and maintaining academic focus.

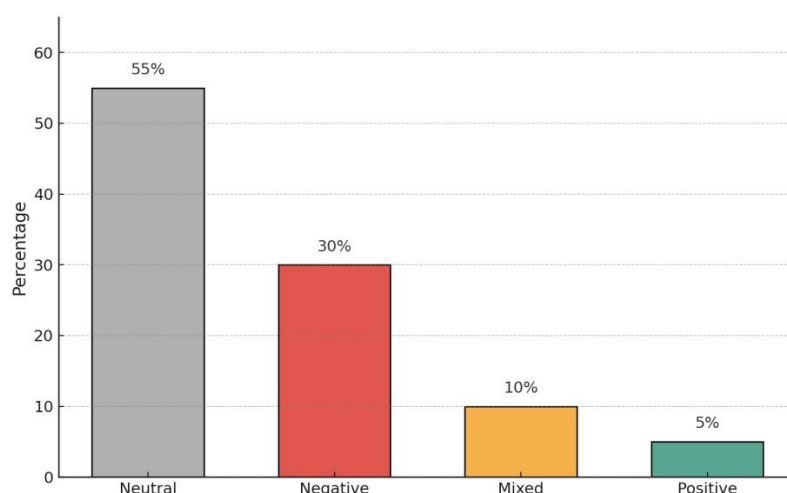


Figure 2: *Hierarchy Chart of Sentiment Analysis*

Content Analysis and Themes

Content analysis of participants' responses as in Fig. 3 revealed key behavioral trends related to social media use and academic performance. The word Cloud also employed to analyze the verbatim responses from participants. This method allows for the systematic examination of the frequency and context in which specific words, phrases, or concepts appear within the interviews.

The Figs. 4-5 and Table 2 identified themes includes Low Social Media Usage, Moderate Usage with Control, Excessive Usage & Distraction, Mindfulness Efforts, Self-Awareness & Regulation, Academic Impact, Emotional Effects, and Engagement in Sports or Other Offline Activities. Each of these themes is analyzed based on their frequency of mention and the subjective importance attributed by the participants. This allows for an understanding of how students manage their digital engagement and perceived effect on their academic performance.



Figure 3: *Word Cloud of Content Analysis*

Frequent references to time management and task prioritization were common among students who had a higher degree of self-awareness. These students often described how they used specific strategies, such as creating study schedules or allocating time for social media breaks, to ensure that their digital habits did not interfere with their academic goals.

Table 2: *Key Findings based on themes*

Mindfulness & Self-Awareness Practices	Key Findings	Social Media Usage & Its Academic/Emotional Impact	Key Findings
Self-awareness & Regulation	Many students recognize their screen habits and use self-awareness to manage time and academic pressure.	Low Social Media Usage	Students with minimal social media use maintain high focus and report minimal digital interference.
Mindfulness Efforts	Meditation and focus apps are explored, especially in school settings, but consistency in practice is low.	Moderate Usage with Control	Some students use social media daily but set boundaries, avoiding major academic or emotional disruption.
Sports or Offline Anchors	Outdoor activities and sports serve as natural ways to stay grounded and reduce digital dependency.	Excessive Usage & Distraction	High usage causes time loss, concentration dips, and repeated attempts to quit apps like Instagram.
		Academic Impact	Mixed experiences: some maintain performance, others report shorter attention spans and procrastination.
		Emotional Effects	Emotions include guilt, temporary pleasure, frustration, and recognition of developing dependence.

In contrast, participants who reported lower academic performance frequently mentioned time mismanagement and procrastination. They often spoke about feeling overwhelmed by the constant demands of social media notifications, which they felt took away valuable time from studying. Many of these participants described cycles of procrastination, where they would delay starting academic work and then waste time scrolling through social media, further exacerbating their feelings of stress and academic anxiety.

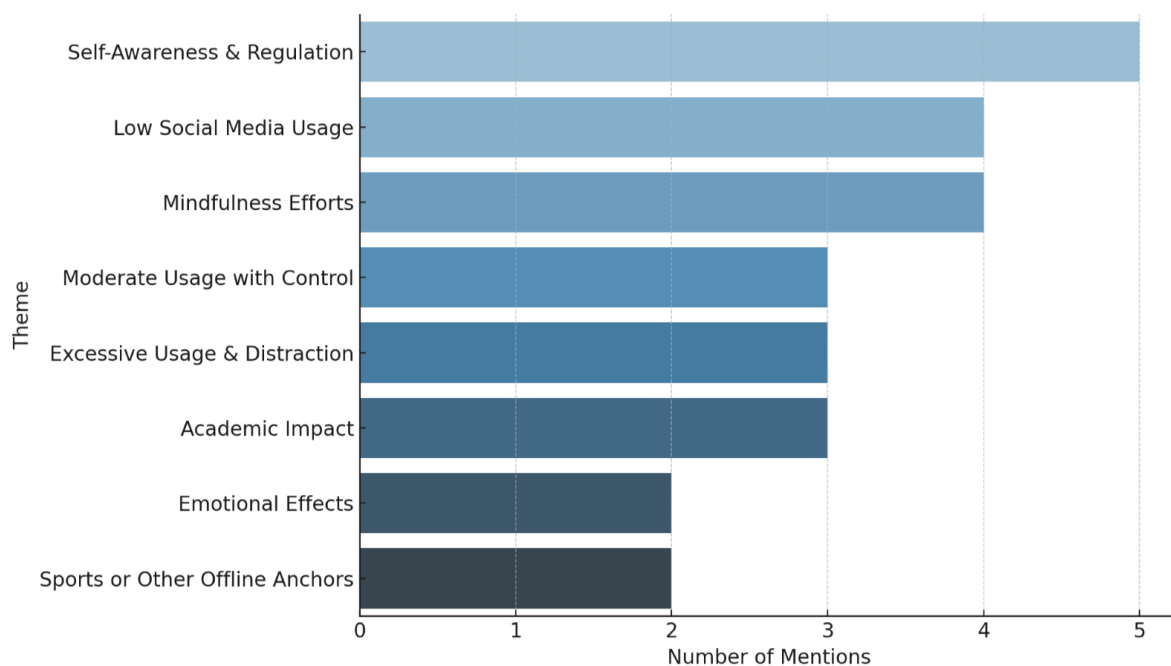


Figure 4: *Bar Chart of Thematic Analysis*

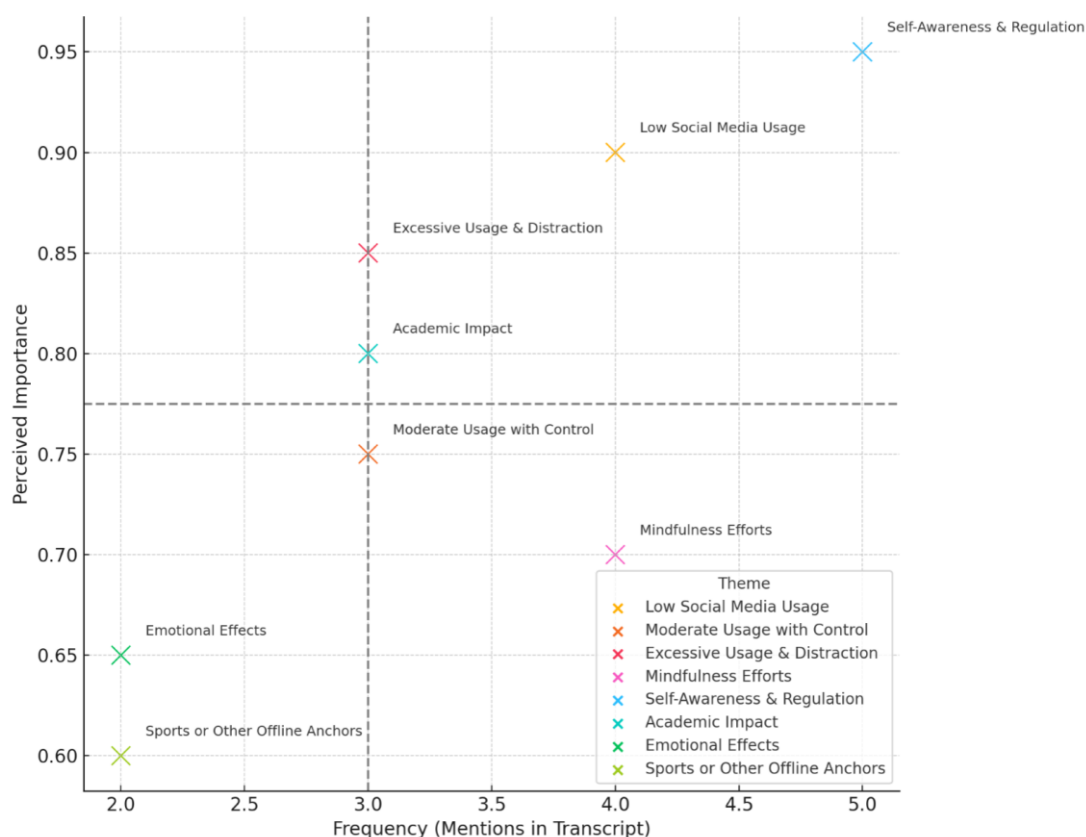


Figure 5.4: Quadrant importance matrix

In Fig. 5, the 4-quadrant importance matrix shows a breakdown of the frequency of themes reported by participants. To strengthen the findings, the identified themes are cross-referenced with the observed behavioral tendencies to assess correlations between social media usage and perceived academic impact. These behavioral patterns underscore the importance of self-regulation and time management in mitigating the negative effects of social media on academic performance. The data suggest that students who can manage their social media engagement by setting boundaries and employing self-regulatory strategies tend to experience less disruption to their academic focus and performance.

CONCLUSION

Social media is embedded in the daily routines of management students. Most participants identified it as a primary source of distraction during study hours. The negative impact of this distraction varied based on individual levels of self-awareness and digital discipline. Students who lacked control over their usage patterns experienced procrastination, decreased focus, and lower academic performance. Participants who practiced mindfulness or maintained awareness of their habits were able to set boundaries, regulate screen time, and minimize academic disruption.

The findings confirmed the presence of a cognitive gap between intention and behavior. Even with knowledge of the consequences, some students struggled to disconnect from social media. This gap widened in the absence of emotional regulation, time management skills, and structured study environments. Mindfulness emerged as a stabilizing force for one participant who exhibited strong focus, time control, and reduced stress. However, most participants viewed mindfulness as a vague concept without consistent application. Students demonstrated that self-regulation strategies were often informal. These included keeping phones away during study, avoiding notifications, or allocating fixed times for digital use. These natural coping mechanisms aligned with improved academic focus and reduced emotional fatigue. Social media consumption, when left unchecked, resulted in fragmented attention spans, interrupted cognitive processing, and delays in academic task completion. Students reported anxiety, guilt, and sleep disturbances after prolonged digital exposure.

Despite the general negativity around social media, participants did not express desire for complete digital withdrawal. Platforms such as WhatsApp and LinkedIn were seen as essential tools for academic coordination and career networking. Entertainment-based platforms like Instagram or Snapchat were perceived as more addictive. The balance between necessary and non-essential usage determined the degree of academic disruption. Self-aware students made active decisions to limit use based on purpose.

Mindfulness, though sparsely practiced, showed potential in increasing present-moment focus. The few participants who engaged in meditation, breathing exercises, or quiet reflection were more attuned to emotional and behavioral triggers. They demonstrated a higher capacity for refocusing after distraction and a more adaptive academic rhythm. Self-awareness appeared to function independently of mindfulness for some students, especially those relying on internal cues and personal discipline rather than structured mental training. Sentiment analysis showed dominant emotions of regret, anxiety, and self-blame among participants with high digital consumption. Positive sentiments were expressed by those who felt in control of their habits and demonstrated time management.

LIMITATIONS

This study has a few limitations that should be acknowledged. One major limitation is the small sample size, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the use of convenience sampling could introduce bias, as the participants may not fully represent the broader student population. The study also followed a non-interventional design, which limits the ability to draw causal relationships between mindfulness practices and academic performance. Despite these limitations, the findings still offer meaningful insights that can inform future research and the development of practical interventions aimed at improving student well-being and academic outcomes.

FUTURE WORK

The findings have several implications for educational institutions. Mindfulness programs, when introduced in ways that align with students' lifestyles and motivations, may offer a scalable, cost-effective solution to improve students' ability to manage social media distractions. Furthermore, fostering self-awareness and self-regulation skills can empower students to take ownership of their digital habits and academic success. Conduct further studies using behavior-tracking tools such as screen log analysis and attention-monitoring software to build on self-reported patterns.

Future research should focus on expanding the participant sample to include a more diverse range of students from different institutions, including those from non-metropolitan areas. Longitudinal studies that track changes in digital behavior and academic performance over time would also be valuable in establishing causal relationships. Structured mindfulness interventions, combined with digital behavior tracking, should be tested to assess their effectiveness in reducing distractions and improving academic outcomes.

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