

SCROLLING OR STUDYING? HOW SOCIAL MEDIA AFFECTS THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF 11–12-YEAR-OLD LEARNERS

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Abstract: This study explores how social media affects the academic behavior of 11–12-year-old students. The findings show that students use their phones in a mostly balanced way for communication, entertainment, and sometimes learning. However, using phones during homework can reduce concentration, even if students do not always notice it. Overall, social media is neither fully harmful nor fully beneficial; its impact depends on how consciously students use it.

Keywords: social media, academic performance, young learners, attention, phone use, learning habits, distraction.

VARAQLASHMI YOKI O'QISHMI? IJTIMOIIY TARMOQLAR 11–12 YOSHLI O'QUVCHILARNING AKADEMIK NATIJALARIGA QANDAY TA'SIR QILADI?

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Annotatsiya: Ushbu tadqiqot ijtimoiy tarmoqlarning 11–12 yoshli o'quvchilarning o'quv faoliyatiga qanday ta'sir ko'rsatishini o'rganadi. Natijalar shuni ko'rsatadiki, o'quvchilar telefonlardan asosan muvozanatli tarzda — muloqot, ko'ngilochar faoliyat va ba'zan ta'limiy maqsadlarda foydalanadilar. Biroq uy vazifalarini bajarish jarayonida telefondan foydalanish diqqatning pasayishiga olib kelishi mumkin, hatto o'quvchilar buni har doim ham anglab yetmasalar ham. Umuman olganda, ijtimoiy tarmoqlar na to'liq zararli, na to'liq foydali hisoblanadi; ularning ta'siri o'quvchilarning ulardan qay darajada ongli foydalanishiga bog'liq.

Kalit so'zlar: ijtimoiy tarmoq, akademik samaradorlik, yosh o'quvchilar, diqqat, telefondan foydalanish, o'rganish odatlari, fikrni chalg'ituvchi vosita.

ЛИСТАТЬ ИЛИ УЧИТЬСЯ? КАК СОЦИАЛЬНЫЕ СЕТИ ВЛИЯЮТ НА АКАДЕМИЧЕСКУЮ УСПЕВАЕМОСТЬ УЧАЩИХСЯ 11–12 ЛЕТ?

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Аннотация: В данном исследовании рассматривается влияние социальных сетей на учебное поведение учащихся 11–12 лет. Результаты показывают, что учащиеся в основном используют телефоны сбалансированно: для общения, развлечения и иногда для обучения. Однако использование телефона во время выполнения домашнего задания может снижать

концентрацию, даже если учащиеся не всегда это осознают. В целом социальные сети не являются полностью вредными или полностью полезными; их влияние зависит от того, насколько осознанно учащиеся ими пользуются.

Ключевые слова: социальные сети, академическая успеваемость, младшие школьники, внимание, использование телефона, учебные привычки, отвлекающий фактор.

INTRODUCTION

In today's digital age, social media has become a fundamental part of young learners' everyday lives. For children aged 11–12, who are at a critical stage of academic and cognitive growth, these platforms significantly influence education by shaping how they access information, study, stay motivated, focus, and interact with peers. Although social media can foster collaboration and creativity, it can also distract learners and reduce concentration.

Background: Electronic media has long been discussed for its influence on children's cognitive and academic development. One of the early concerns in this area comes from Kirkorian, Wartella, and Anderson (2008), who argue that early, uncontrolled exposure to media can negatively affect children's cognitive development and academic achievement. Their review highlights that children's learning processes are especially sensitive during early developmental stages, underscoring the importance of the quality and control of media exposure.

In educational settings, similar concerns are also observed with the use of digital devices. McCoy (2016) states that students may miss instruction, lose attention, or distract others when using digital devices for non-class-related purposes. This shows that even when technology is part of everyday learning environments, it can still distract learners if it is not used in a focused and purposeful way.

Recent research on social media use also supports the idea that not only access, but also patterns of usage matter. Kee, Tai, Ng, Jia, and Parameswaran (2025) found that habitual or impulsive engagement with social media significantly reduces sleep quality, attention span, and academic performance. This suggests that automatic and uncontrolled usage patterns can negatively affect students' ability to maintain focus and perform well academically.

At the same time, some studies show that social media does not always lead to negative outcomes. Kirschner and Karpinski (2010) found that frequent Facebook use is associated with lower academic performance and reduced study time among university students, indicating a negative relationship between heavy use and academic success. However, Hou, Qin, and Xu (2024) report that social media can also have positive effects on academic performance when it supports online learning behavior and prosocial interaction, especially among children and adolescents.

These findings suggest that the impact of social media on academic performance is complex and multifaceted. It depends on how often it is used, how it is used, and whether it supports or interrupts learning processes. Most previous studies have focused on older students, while younger learners remain less explored. Students aged 11–12 are still in a critical stage of developing self-discipline, concentration, and independent learning habits. At this stage, social media use may have a stronger influence on their study routines, attention span, and task completion.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate how social media influences the learning experiences of 11–12-year-old students. It specifically examines whether social media acts more as a supportive educational tool or whether its distracting effects are more dominant. In addition, the

study seeks to identify the patterns of social media use that contribute to learning, the ways it may interfere with academic focus, and practical strategies that can help both teachers and students maintain a balanced use of digital technologies.

OBJECTIVES

This paper provides a detailed look at the following objectives:

1. Identify how social media influences the academic performance of 11–12-year-old learners

2. Determine why 5th–6th-grade students become distracted by social media while studying

3. Explore practical strategies for balancing scrolling and studying without negative effects

Figure 1. Research objectives of the study

Fifth- and sixth-grade students at School No. 9 in Andijan were selected as the participants of this study. Previous research by Kirschner and Karpinski (2010) shows that heavy social media use can negatively affect study habits and academic performance, while Hou, Qin, and Xu (2024) explain that social media can also support learning when used for educational interaction. McCoy (2016) further highlights that digital device use in classrooms can reduce attention and interrupt learning processes. In addition, Kee et al. (2025) report that habitual or impulsive social media engagement can reduce sleep quality, attention span, and academic performance.

Usually, students' academic performance is measured through grades, homework, and classroom participation. However, social media changes how students manage their time and attention outside the classroom, especially at the fifth- and sixth-grade level, where learners are still developing self-discipline and independent study habits. This underscores the importance of understanding how digital behavior influences attention, motivation, and task completion in early learning stages. Based on this idea, the study examines whether social media serves primarily as a supportive learning tool or as a distraction for young learners, particularly in terms of academic focus and classroom behavior.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research was designed as a mixed-method study, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to understand students' social media use and its impact on learning. Data were collected through surveys, interviews, and classroom observations in order to gain both numerical results and real classroom insights. The study was conducted at School No. 9 in Andijan during regular English and subject lessons to observe students' natural behavior in learning environments.

The participants were 11–12-year-old fifth-grade students, consisting of six learners: three girls and three boys. They were selected based on their age, grade level, and access to mobile devices. This allowed the study to capture early patterns of social media influence on academic engagement in a realistic school context.

This study used a survey-based approach, but the data were not collected in a single day. Instead, the process took place over two weeks, which helped obtain more honest and reliable answers from students. Before giving the final questionnaire, the researcher spent time preparing the students step by step.

During regular lessons, students were asked oral questions similar to those in the survey. These questions were about their phone usage, study habits, and social media behavior. At first, this created a very active classroom environment, and sometimes it was difficult to fully control the class, as students were excited and wanted to share their opinions.

In the beginning, many students were not ready to admit their real habits. Similar to how people often do not notice their own mistakes, students also did not clearly recognize how much time they spent on their phones or how it affected their learning. However, over time, the researcher created a safe and supportive atmosphere. Students were encouraged to answer honestly, not to feel afraid of giving “wrong” answers, and to understand that their habits would be respected rather than judged.

The researcher also made it clear that even if students used their phones a lot or depended on them for homework, they would not be criticized. Instead, the purpose was to understand their habits and help them improve their learning. After building this trust over two weeks, the final 25-question multiple-choice survey was conducted. Because of this preparation stage, students were more open and honest in their responses.

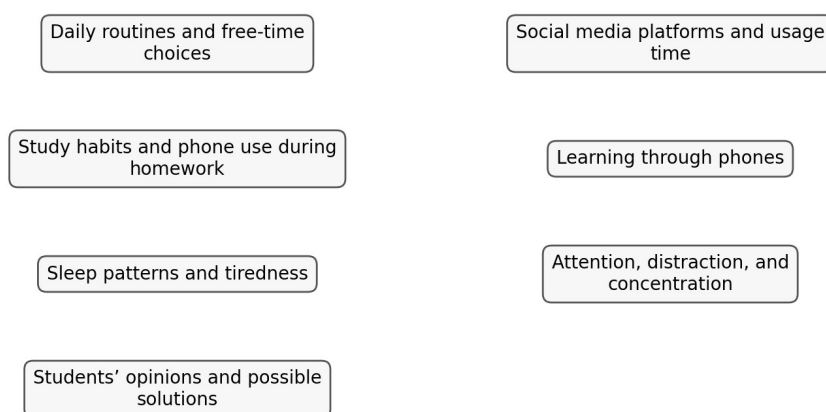


Figure 2. Key areas covered in the questionnaire

The data were collected in a familiar classroom environment, which helped students feel comfortable. Overall, this two-week preparation, combined with the final survey, allowed the researcher to collect more realistic and meaningful data rather than surface-level answers.



Figure 3. Learners' reading and phone-use behavior during study time



Figure 4. Students' use of smartphones and social media communication



Figure 5. Phone use as a potential distraction during study



Figure 6. Social media and digital communication among learners



Figure 7. Students' reading and phone-use practices in the classroom

Results

The results show that social media has a moderate influence on students' academic behavior. Most learners use their phones regularly, but their usage is generally balanced with other activities such as reading and resting. This indicates that traditional habits persist alongside digital engagement.

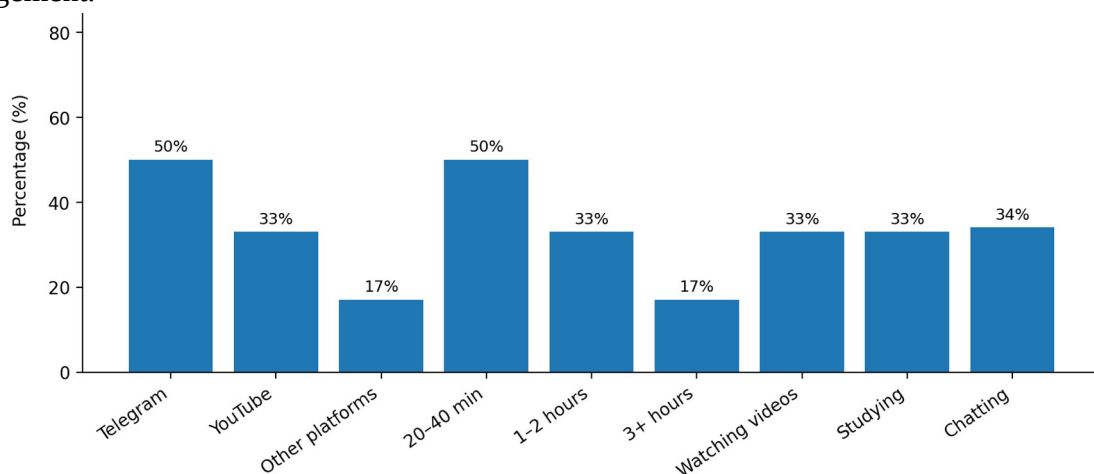


Figure 8. Questionnaire results on phone usage patterns

The data in this chart show how students use their phones in daily life. First, regarding platforms, most students prefer Telegram, while YouTube is also widely used. Only a small

number of students use other platforms such as TikTok or Instagram. This suggests that students mainly use applications that are either practical for communication or useful for watching videos.

Looking at daily phone usage, most students spend a moderate amount of time on their phones, usually between 20 and 40 minutes or up to one to two hours per day. Only a small percentage of students use their phones for more than three hours. This shows that, in general, phone use is neither excessive nor uncontrolled.

When it comes to activities, students use their phones almost equally for watching videos, chatting with friends, and studying. This is an important finding because it shows that phones are not used only for entertainment. In real life, students often watch videos to relax, chat to stay connected with friends, and sometimes use their phones to search for information or complete homework tasks. The chart suggests that phones play a mixed role in students' lives. They are used both for fun and for learning, which means their impact depends on how and when they are used.

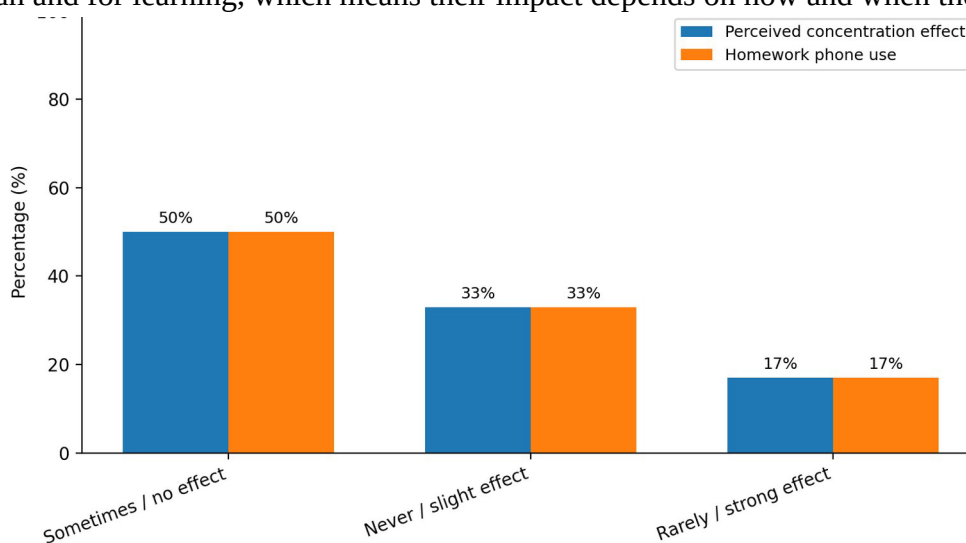


Figure 9. Phone use and its impact on concentration

The data show a clear connection between students' phone use and their study habits. In everyday life, many students use their phones while doing homework, though not all do so regularly. About half of the students admitted that they sometimes check their phones during study time, while others said they do this rarely or not at all. This suggests that using a phone while studying is quite common, even if it is not a constant habit for everyone.

When it comes to concentration, students' opinions are mixed. Some of them believe that phones do not affect their focus at all. However, others admitted feeling slightly distracted, and a smaller group reported a strong negative effect. This difference shows that students are not always fully aware of how their phone use influences their attention. In real life, it is common for students to think they can do several things at once, for example, studying while replying to messages or watching short videos. Although this feels easy, it often reduces their ability to concentrate without them noticing it immediately.

The results highlight a clear pattern: even when students do not feel distracted, phone use during homework can disrupt their focus and make studying less effective. This reflects a typical modern situation in which phones are always nearby, and students need self-control to use them more productively.

The results give a clearer picture of how phone use fits into students' daily routines beyond just studying. When looking at sleep habits, most students seem to follow a relatively stable schedule. Half of them go to bed before 10 p.m., while others sleep slightly later. Only a small

group stays up after 11 p.m. This suggests that, for now, phone use is not significantly disrupting their sleep patterns, which is often a concern at this age.

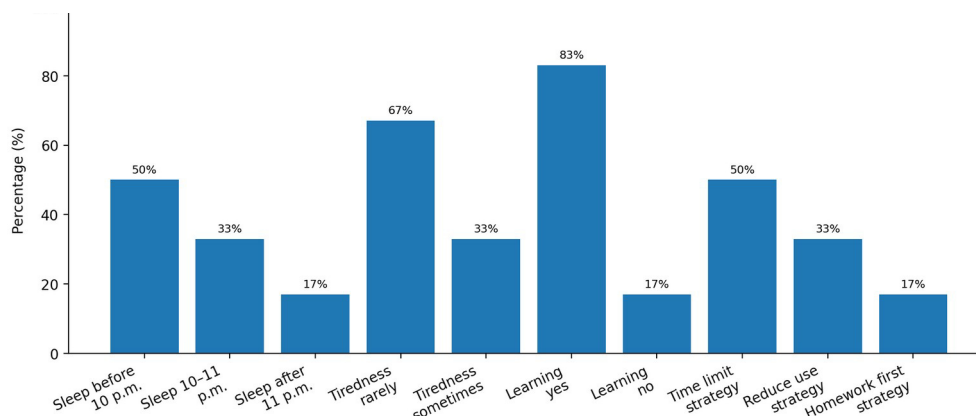


Figure 10. Lifestyle and learning outcomes of phone use

In terms of physical condition, most students reported rarely feeling tired after using their phones. Only some of them mentioned occasional tiredness. In real life, this may mean students do not immediately notice the physical effects of screen time, especially if their use is brief or occurs earlier in the day.

One of the most interesting findings concerns learning. A large majority of students said that they have learned something through their phones. This shows that digital devices are not only used for entertainment, but also as a source of information. For example, students may watch short educational videos, search for explanations, or check answers while doing homework. This reflects how naturally technology has become part of their learning process.

At the same time, students demonstrated awareness of the need to manage their habits. Most students suggested setting time limits, while others suggested reducing phone use or finishing homework before using their devices. These responses show that students are not completely dependent on their phones and are already considering ways to control their use.

The findings suggest that phone use is already a normal part of students' daily lives, but it is not yet causing serious negative effects on sleep or physical well-being. At the same time, it plays a noticeable role in learning and information access. This highlights the importance of guiding students to use their phones more consciously, so that the positive aspects can be strengthened while avoiding possible problems in the future.

Overall, the results show that students use their phones in a balanced way for communication, entertainment, and, at times, learning. Their use is mostly moderate, not excessive. However, phones can still affect study habits, especially when students use them during homework, which can reduce focus even if they do not always notice it. At the same time, phones also have positive sides, such as helping students learn new things and not strongly affecting sleep or health at this stage. In general, phones are neither fully helpful nor harmful; their effect depends on how students use them.

DISCUSSION

The results are closely connected to the two-week observation period. At the beginning, students were not fully aware of their phone habits. When they were first asked questions, many gave general or "safe" answers instead of real ones. However, over time, students started to think more about their behavior. During the survey, some students were surprised by their own answers.

A few even said they did not realize how much time they spent on their phones. This shows that the survey helped them become more aware.

At first, it was not easy to involve students in these discussions. Some were not interested, and others were not ready to be honest. Also, classroom control was sometimes difficult because students became too active. Another challenge was that students did not want to admit their habits. Like many people, they did not see their own mistakes. This changed when they felt safe and understood that they would not be judged.

After some time, students became more open and honest. They understood that the goal was to help, not to criticize. As a result, the survey itself became a learning experience. Students started to notice how their phone use affects their attention and study habits. This process also had a small positive effect.

During these two weeks, students became a bit more careful with their phone use. However, there were some limitations. The process required time and patience, and the number of participants was small. Even so, the results still give useful insights. Overall, this study shows that social media affects students and that they can learn to control it. With the right support, students can develop better habits. This also supports previous research showing that awareness can improve learning behavior.

CONCLUSION

This study showed that social media has both positive and negative effects on young learners. It is neither completely harmful nor completely helpful. Students use their phones not only for fun but also to learn new things. Many of them watch educational videos and get useful information. This shows that social media can support learning when used effectively.

At the same time, phones can distract students, especially during homework. Even if students think phones do not affect them, their habits show that phone use can reduce focus and make studying harder. One of the most important results is that students became more aware of their behavior. During the study, they began to notice their own habits and consider how to improve them.

In the end, the problem is not the phone itself, but how it is used. If students learn to manage their time and attention, they can use social media effectively.

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