

# Impact of YouTube and Educational Social Media on Students Academic Achievement

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## ABSTRACT

The prevalence of digital platforms has profoundly changed the learning culture of students across the higher education system. Educational social media platforms and YouTube are also becoming common as complementary learning materials and can provide an explanation of the material in the form of video tutorials, short-form learning videos, or a learning community with peer support. It is necessary to know their academic applicability, especially when digital learning has become part of the daily learning process. The research design was a qualitative and descriptive study founded on a comprehensive examination and synthesis of peer-reviewed articles and theoretical frameworks, as well as documented practices of YouTube and educational social media. The relevant researches that were released in the area of educational technology and higher education were analyzed systematically to determine occurrences of themes and patterns in terms of learning processes and academic outcomes. Qualitative analysis demonstrates that YouTube can be used to achieve better conceptual learning with the help of visual explanations, repetitive learning capabilities, and self-paced learning. Academic social media resources facilitate the active process of education, as they allow learning together, sharing information, and interacting with peers. The use of short-form educational videos helps to revise and be motivated faster, but the overload of the non-academic content, distractions, and shallow learning were found to be the most problematic. The results indicate that social media used in education, especially YouTube, has a positive impact on the academic performance of students in the case of a purposeful and critical approach. They rely on the quality of the content, self-regulation of the learners, and digital literacy. The research mentions that educators and institutions should direct students on desirable academic utilization of digital platforms and respond to the challenges that come with it.

**Keywords:** YouTube; Educational Social Media; Academic Achievement; Digital Learning; Microlearning; Multimedia Learning; Higher Education; ICT in Education; Student Engagement

## INTRODUCTION

Due to the rapid development of digital technologies, the teaching and learning experiences in higher education have transformed drastically. Students are becoming less and less restricted to classrooms, books and teacher delivery of information; more and more they are getting access to academic information via digital platforms which allow flexibility, autonomy and multimodal interaction. Two of these platforms include YouTube and educational social media, which have become some of the active informal learning platforms that are added to formal education. YouTube has been developed as a video-sharing site in general to one of the biggest open-access

educational repositories in the whole world. It contains a vast amount of educational material, such as lectures, tutorials, demonstrations, and concept-explanation videos in fields spread all over. The video-based format helps the learner to visualize abstract concepts and repeat tough parts as well as learn at their own speed. Research findings continue to show that multimedia instructions, including images, audio, and documentation, improve the comprehension and remembering of concepts, especially where a complex thing is being explained (Kay, 2012; Mayer, 2009). Also, the capabilities of pausing, rewinding, subtitles, and playback speed enhancement facilitate self-regulated learning as students get to have control in the learning processes.

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Social media Learning platforms like Instagram, Facebook, Telegram, and WhatsApp have become more academically relevant in addition to YouTube. These sites promote collaborative and social learning through allowing the students to share resources, engage in discussions, explain their concerns, and receive peer support. According to research, learning communities built on social media allow interaction and knowledge building when applied with academic purpose (Manca and Ranieri, 2016; Greenhow and Lewin, 2016). Moreover, the emergence of short learning material, which can be referred to as microlearning, facilitates rapid revision and enforcement of ideas, especially at the time of examinations (Khan, 2020). Higher education experience has been particularly vulnerable to the internet, as the availability of the internet and universal access to smartphones have only increased the dependency of students on YouTube and education social media. In recent years, this trend has intensified as digital platforms have become an essential part of students' daily study routines. Studies in other fields document that the use of video-based learning in the form of an auxiliary teaching tool improves motivation, interest, and understanding (Burke and Snyder, 2021; Deng and Yu, 2022). Nevertheless, obstacles related to digital platforms, such as distraction, superficial learning, misinformation, and cognitive overload, are also mentioned by scholars in the case of uncontrolled or entertainment-orientated use (Carr, 2010; Sweller, 2011; Raut and Patil, 2020).

## 1.2 Research Gap

In spite of the large amount of research that has been conducted on YouTube, as well as on educational social media, that studies each of them as a learning tool, the body of research is still rather disjointed, field-specific, or short-term oriented. Not many integrative, qualitative studies have examined the overall impact that YouTube and educational social media have on the academic performance and learning behaviors of students in higher education. In addition, the interactive effectiveness of the long-form instructional videos and short-form microlearning-based content in a single learning environment is under researched.

## 1.3 Rationale and Significance

Due to the growing role that YouTube and educational social media play in the sphere of higher education, it is evident that a thorough, theory-based examination is required that will consolidate the literature and help to determine the overall academic impact of these two phenomena. The proposed project will fulfill this requirement because it adopts a qualitative and descriptive approach to the research that would analyze these platforms as a whole rather than individually. This research adds to the literature of educational technology by illuminating the pedagogical advantages as well as the issues of informal digital learning spaces, which help in promoting more effective instruction design and digital literacy.

## 1.4 Aim and Objectives of the Research

This research intends to use YouTube and social media in higher education in relation to the academic performance of the students.

The specific objectives are:

- To investigate how YouTube can be used as an additional learning tool.
- To investigate the contribution of educational social media to the facilitation of academic activity and group learning.
- To determine the perceived benefits and challenges of video-based and social media-mediated learning.
- The aim of the research is to examine the effects of these platforms on the learning behaviors and academic performance of students.

## 2. Review of Literature

The literature review is a critical assessment of the academic literature concerning the application of YouTube and the educational social media in higher education, with special consideration given to the learning process, student engagement, and academic performance. Instead of mentioning the studies one by one, the literature is synthesized on a thematic basis to determine overwhelming trends, areas of agreement, and gaps. In this way, it is possible to better understand how digital platforms can be used as educational resources and how they influence the learning process of students.

## 2.1 YouTube as a Supplementary Learning Resource

There is a considerable literature that attests to YouTube as a useful alternative learning tool in tertiary education. Video-based learning has proved to be better in terms of understanding because abstract or complicated notions are represented in a visual manner in the form of demonstrations and examples based on the real world (Kay, 2012; Mayer, 2009). These types of representations are especially useful in those areas where spatial, procedural, or conceptual knowledge is necessary, and a textual explanation might not suffice. In literature across fields, it is noted that students find YouTube to be a flexible and accessible platform for learning. According to researchers, students often resort to YouTube to review challenging subjects, refresh the lessons in the classroom, and study before exams (Burke and Snyder, 2021; Deng and Yu, 2022). Self-paced learning and self-regulated learning are favored by the control of playback and the ability to revisit and engage in learning asynchronously that is directly linked with academic success. Nonetheless, the literature also stresses the fact that the educational reality of YouTube depends on the quality of content and controlled use. According to Bermejo (2009), the content produced by the users is diverse in terms of accuracy and design of instructions, leading to reliability issues. Therefore, a number of researchers support the idea of using instructor-selected playlists or directed viewing guidelines to achieve the highest possible learning results and reduce the possibility of misleading.

## 2.2 Educational Social Media and Collaborative Learning

Social media in education has been studied extensively in relation to the collaborative and social learning theories. It has been shown that informal academic communication on such platforms (Facebook, WhatsApp, Telegram, and Instagram) expands learning beyond the four physical classrooms and institutional learning management systems (Manca and Ranieri, 2016; Greenhow and Lewin, 2016). Such sites allow students to engage actively in debates and share academic materials, as well as receive peer assistance in time. The constructivist approach to knowledge building takes place in the

social media contexts and includes dialogue, shared problem solving, and reflection. Research indicates that students who academically use social media show increased levels of engagement and that they feel more connected as part of learning communities (Junco, 2012). This social connectedness is especially valuable in a tertiary education institution, where a learner might feel isolated, especially when in blended or online learning environments. Meanwhile, scholars warn that the educational value of social media is only presented when used in a deliberate and structured manner. Social media could easily change its direction to distraction and non-academic interaction without the help of academic guidance, which has the potential of compromising learning results (Raut and Patil, 2020). This two-sidedness accentuates the relevance of pedagogical mediation.

## 2.3 Microlearning and Short-Form Educational Content

The latest literature seeks to highlight the increasing effect of microlearning via short learning content on websites like YouTube Shorts, Instagram Reels, and other social media apps. Microlearning entails a fast and targeted delivery of content, which is more likely to be digested quickly, which is why it is particularly applicable to revision, reinforcement, and just-in-time learning (Giurgiu, 2017; Khan, 2020). According to the research, short-form educational videos can be successfully used to maintain the interest and motivation of the learners, particularly in situations where the attention span is limited and the cognitive load is high. This kind of content enables the learners to revise major concepts in a very short time without having to spend a lot of time studying. Nevertheless, researchers also warn against over-dependence on microlearning, as it can promote superficial learning provided it substitutes proper conceptual learning (Sweller, 2011; Rosen, 2016). Consequently, the literature began to pay more attention to the complementary role of microlearning, stating that the short-form content needs to support, not replace, long-form instructional content.

## 2.4 Digital Learning Platforms and Academic Achievement

Studies testing the correlation between digital platforms and academic success indicate that the

difference has an overall positive, though situation-specific, result. Learning based on video has been linked with better conceptual knowledge, memorization, and academic achievement when it is incorporated in an in-depth manner in learning activities (Kay, 2012; Nouri, 2016). On the same note, social media in education has been attributed to increased academic activity that, in turn, facilitates learning by facilitating and motivating greater participation (Junco, 2012). Nevertheless, the results of the research are not consistent. Other researchers describe neutral or conflicting outcomes, with the most notable points being that academic performance is based on a combination of many interacting variables such as learner motivation, self-management, teaching strategy, and learning environment. Digital platforms, therefore, have become more and more regarded as facilitating conditions of learning as opposed to determining success in school.

## 2.5 Challenges and Limitations of Digital Learning Platforms

Although YouTube and educational social media have pedagogical possibilities, their use is characterized by well-documented challenges. The issues that are typical in the literature include distraction due to entertainment-related materials, misinformation exposure, and decreased sustained attention and cognitive overload (Carr, 2010; Sweller, 2011). Content recommendations based on algorithms can also be more focused on popularity than on instructional quality and restrict critical engagement. Scholars stress that the main approaches to the challenges include building students' digital literacy and critical analysis skills and the active participation of instructors in the process of content curation and learning design.

## 2.6 Summary of Literature and Research Gap

The literature reviewed has shown that YouTube and educational social media can provide outstanding potential to improve learning with the help of visual description, collaboration, flexibility, and interest. However, current studies are mostly fragmented, platform-based, or quantitative performance attained. One of the evident gaps is the absence of integrative and qualitative research, which investigates the role of

YouTube and educational social media as a combination to determine the effects on the learning behaviors of students and their academic performance in higher education. To fill this gap, the current research has chosen a qualitative descriptive research design that seeks to aggregate existing literature to offer a comprehensive picture of the education purpose of YouTube and educational social media.

## METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Research Design

In the current research, the research design was qualitative and descriptive because it aimed to explore the contribution of YouTube and educational social media to the academic learning and performance among students. This design was believed to be suitable, as the study aims at knowing the practices of education, the process of learning, and the academic views and not to quantify the outcomes and find the causal relationship. The qualitative descriptive method provides a detailed synthesis and interpretation of the research findings done by other scholars in their academic setting. It is a non-experimental study that does not require manipulation of variables and primary data. Rather, it is aimed at the examination of existing academic literature so that a comprehensive explanation of the phenomenon in question might be created.

### 3.2 Sources of Data

This paper only used secondary data, which was based on peer-reviewed sources of scholarly works. These were scholarly journal articles, books, and conference papers and reports issued by one of the recognized academic publishing firms and global organizations on matters of education and education technology. Academic databases like Google Scholar, journals covered by the Scopus index, journals covered by Web of Science, and publications available in reputable academic presses were used to access relevant literature. Articles that concentrate on YouTube as a learning tool, social media in learning, microlearning, digital learning behavior, and academic performance in higher education were searched.

### 3.3 Selection Criteria for Literature



To ensure relevance and scholarly rigor, the literature was selected using clearly defined inclusion and exclusion criteria.

#### **Inclusion Criteria:**

- Studies related to the educational use of YouTube and social media
- Research situated in higher education or comparable learning contexts
- Peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, and authoritative reports
- Literature addressing learning processes, student engagement, or academic achievement

#### **Exclusion Criteria:**

- Non-academic or opinion-based sources
- Studies focusing solely on entertainment or non-educational use of social media
- Literature lacking clear relevance to teaching-learning processes
- This systematic selection enabled the inclusion of credible and contextually relevant studies.

### **3.4 Data Analysis Technique**

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the chosen literature. This procedure was done by thoroughly reading and rereading the chosen studies in order to come up with common concepts, patterns, and themes of YouTube and educational social media in higher education. Such themes as conceptual understanding, student engagement, collaborative learning, self-regulated learning, microlearning, and difficulties related to digital platforms were identified and synthesized. Instead of being statistically comparative, the analysis was more conceptually based on relationships and interpretative insights being reported in the literature. This strategy made it possible to integrate the various academic views into an analytical narrative.

### **3.5 Trustworthiness and Rigor**

As an approach to making the study more credible, the literature published in various fields and different educational environments was reviewed. Comparing the results of other studies assisted in providing consistency and minimizing bias. The literature selection and analysis process were also clearly

documented which enhanced the methodological rigor and transparency of the study.

### **3.6 Ethical Considerations**

Since the research was conducted only using secondary data and available academic sources in the public, formal ethics approval was not needed. However, ethical research ethics were upheld by citing all the sources and crediting the original authorship, and plagiarism or misrepresentation was avoided.

### **3.7 Scope and Limitations**

The qualitative descriptive method presents abundant conceptual information on the role of YouTube and educational social media in education. Nonetheless, the empirical data and statistical analysis are not presented in the study, and this can be a limitation to generalization. The outcomes are subject to the breadth and accessibility of the available literature and might not comprehensively represent the emerging or fast-changing digital learning practices. In spite of these shortcomings, the research design fits the purpose of the study, trying to synthesize the existing knowledge, reveal research gaps, and reflect on the implications for the educational practice.

## **DISCUSSION**

One of the main points brought about in the literature is how YouTube and educational social media can be used to facilitate self-regulated learning. Self-regulation refers to the capacity of learners to plan, keep track of, and evaluate their learning activities. According to the reviewed studies, the following features can enable the students to have more control over their learning processes: video replay, selective viewing, and on-demand access. This independence allows the learners to have a revisit of the difficult concepts a number of times, alter the pace of learning, and learn at their own pace. This advantage can be applied especially in higher education, where students are supposed to be more proactive towards their academic development. Social media and YouTube, therefore, seem to serve as facilitators that contribute to a sense of independence in the learner as opposed to passive learning of some content. The other theme that is common in the literature is the change in

learning behavior of students with a rise in dependency on digital platforms. The tendency of students to choose more visual and compact learning resources is becoming more popular, which is indicative of a change in the overall dynamics of attention and media consumption. Although this change positively affects accessibility and motivation among learners, it raises the question of decreased involvement in extensive reading and profound analysis. According to the discussion, teachers have to balance the need to take advantage of digital platforms to suit the interests of learners and retain the opportunity to apply critical thinking, reflection, and prolonged engagement with academic texts. It is also noted during the discussion that the functions of educators are transformed in the digital learning settings. Instead of being mere content transmitters, instructors are becoming more and more facilitators, curators, and guides in using digital resources. Several times the role of an instructor in choosing quality YouTube content, designing learning processes based on the use of social media, and demonstrating skills in critical evaluation is mentioned in the literature. The lack of pedagogical advice can lead students to have difficulties with their ability to differentiate between valid educational material and offensive or poor resources. Thus, the effectiveness of YouTube and learning social media as a pedagogic tool is strongly associated with purposeful instructional design and academic oversight. Institutionally, the results indicate that YouTube and social education media are part of inclusive and flexible education. Digital platforms lessen the barriers in terms of time, place, and access to resources and are especially applicable among students with varying socioeconomic and linguistic groups. Access to educational resources in more than one language and format facilitates wider access to higher education. Nevertheless, it is also stated that due to unbalanced access to a stable internet connection and devices, some learners may still be deprived of these advantages, reflecting a persistent problem with the digital divide. Quality assurance and credibility are other significant issues brought out in the literature on the use of YouTube and social media in academics. There are also problems of accuracy and consistency since most of the educational materials on such sites are not carefully checked by peers. It makes the role of digital literacy education even more critical, as it allows

students to understand how to assess different sources critically, cross-check information, and use and utilize digital media in an ethical and responsible manner. Scholars do not argue against the use of platforms; instead, they recommend introducing the concept of digital literacy to university curricula as a strategy that will allow maximizing the advantages and minimizing the risks. Lastly, it is highlighted in the discussion that the educational value of YouTube and social media must be seen as part of a learning ecosystem. These platforms do not exist in solitude; their functionality requires their connection with formal curricula, assessment, and institutional learning support systems. YouTube and educational social media are potentially useful tools to make the learning process richer and more significant when they are correlated with scholarly objectives and suggested by pedagogical models. On the other hand, their educational worth can be undermined when applied in an unstructured and unguided way. In general, the broadened discussion supports the opinion that YouTube and social media for learning are not necessarily positive or negative influences on academic learning. Their impact is based on patterns of usage, mediating instruction, and the critical ability of learners. This subtle insight is part of the continuing discussions about educational technology, as well as forms the basis of informed development of the policies and practices related to higher education.

## 5. Conclusion and Implications

### CONCLUSION

This paper has investigated how YouTube and social media in education influence academic learning and performance among the students in higher educational institutions by conducting a qualitative synthesis of the available literature. The analyzed literature suggests that online platforms are now part of modern learning facilities that assist learners outside the confines of the classrooms (Kay, 2012; Greenhow and Lewin, 2016). YouTube was always listed as an effective additional learning tool due to its capability to demonstrate complicated academic issues in the form of multimedia explanations. The previous studies indicate that visual and auditory integration improves the conceptual knowledge, decreases the working memory, and facilitates the memorization in case the instructional material is created properly

(Mayer, 2009; Kay, 2012). There are other attributes like replay and learner-paced learning that also facilitate self-regulated learning, enabling the student to repeat the material based on personal requirements (Deng and Yu, 2022). Education uses social media tools in conjunction with video-based systems to foster peer interaction, informal academic discourse, and knowledge building. Social constructivist research approaches emphasize that social interaction and collaborative meaning-making facilitate learning (Vygotsky, 1978; Manca and Ranieri, 2016). Research indicates that academic-oriented social media utilization is related to the increased engagement and motivation among higher education students (Junco, 2012; Greenhow and Lewin, 2016). Nevertheless, the scholarly advantages of YouTube and educational social media are not automatic but conditional as well, which is also clear in the literature. Researchers caution that the unregulated use of platforms can also result in distraction, superficial interaction, misinformation, and cognitive overload, and this restricts the depth of learning and critical thinking (Carr, 2010; Sweller, 2011; Raut and Patil, 2020). These results support the need to proceed with the application of digital platforms into academic life in a guided and purposeful way. On the whole, the research finds that YouTube and educational social media serve not as the outcome determinants but as the facilitating learning platforms. Learner self-regulation, instructional design, and institutional support systems mediate their influence on education.

## 5.2 Implications for Educational Practice

The research results have significant implications for learning and teaching in higher education. Teachers can improve learning by strategically incorporating the use of the YouTube in instructional design by using curated video material based on course learning objectives. According to the research, the guided viewing, reflection exercises, and discussion-based follow-up make students critical when engaging with video-based learning resources (Mayer, 2009; Burke and Snyder, 2021). Collaborative learning communities may also be supported with the help of educational social media platforms. It has been shown by the previous researches that academic social media groups, which are moderated, promote communication, peer-to-peer learning, and informal support, especially in blended and online learning

(Manca and Ranieri, 2016; Junco, 2012). Nevertheless, teachers are essential in establishing academic standards, overseeing relationships, and reducing noise. The research indicates to students the increasing importance of digital literacy and self-regulated learning skills. Students should be prepared to assess the validity of online information, process and handle the cognitive load, and balance between microlearning and in-depth academic activity (Rosen, 2016; Sweller, 2011).

## 5.3 Implications for Institutions and Policy

At the institutional level, higher education institutions may consider formally recognizing YouTube and educational social media as part of the broader academic learning ecosystem. Providing professional development for faculty can help instructors design pedagogically informed digital learning activities and integrate informal platforms productively into formal curricula (UNESCO, 2020). From a policy perspective, the findings underscore the need for educational policies that promote responsible and ethical use of digital media. Investment in digital infrastructure, inclusion of digital literacy within curricula, and support for inclusive access can help maximize the academic benefits of digital platforms while addressing concerns related to equity and quality (UNESCO, 2020).

## 5.4 Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, this study contributes to the field of educational technology by offering an integrative perspective on the academic role of YouTube and educational social media in higher education. By synthesizing existing research, the study demonstrates that these platforms can enrich learning experiences, foster engagement, and support academic achievement when used purposefully and critically. At the same time, it cautions against uncritical adoption and emphasizes the importance of pedagogical guidance, digital literacy, and institutional support. This balanced perspective provides a foundation for informed practice, policy development, and future research in digitally mediated higher education learning environments (Kay, 2012; Greenhow & Lewin, 2016).

## 6. Limitations of the Study and Directions for Future Research

### 6.1 Limitations of the Study

Although this paper will offer a qualitative synthesis of all the available studies on the subject of YouTube and educational social media in higher education, some limitations should not be ignored. To begin with, the research relies purely on secondary data, as it is based on the scholarly literature that has been published previously. Consequently, the results are descriptive and reliant on the depth, quality, and nature of the available researches instead of being based on primary empirical information. Second, a significant portion of the literature reviewed represents settings in which access to digital infrastructure and the technological resources is comparatively stable. As a result, the results might not be the most effective in terms of learning in situations with low internet connectivity, digital divide, or institutionalization. Also, due to the rapid development of educational technologies and social media platforms, some of the studied articles do not adequately consider recent capabilities of the platform or new learning practices. Third, the paper is generalized on higher education, and analysis is not confined to a specific discipline or a geographical location. Although this adds to overall relevance, it could also restrict drawing the conclusions that are context-specific. Depending on disciplines, cultures, and institutional context, learning outcomes in relation to YouTube and social media as educational tools might differ (Manca and Ranieri, 2016; Greenhow and Lewin, 2016).

### 6.2 Future Research Recommendations

Based on the results and limitations of the current research, some recommendations for future studies are provided. Future research can take the form of empirical research such as surveys, experimentation, or mixed methods to investigate the direct connection between the use of digital platforms and academic success in certain higher education settings. These kinds of studies can present better evidence about the outcomes of learning and causality. More studies can also consider the discipline-related applications of YouTube and the use of social media in education since the learning requirements and teaching methods

vary in different disciplines, including science, humanities, teacher education, and professional courses. The longitudinal studies of the prolonged effects of the continuous use of digital platforms on the learning behaviors, motivation, and academic growth will also be helpful. Furthermore, it is important that future studies are based on digital literacy and critical evaluation skills by examining how students determine the credibility of the content they read and their ability to overcome distractions within an algorithm-based setting (Carr, 2010; Sweller, 2011). The analysis of the views of educators and institutional policies concerning the integration of digital platforms can also help strengthen the knowledge about digital platform use that is effective and responsible. Lastly, inter-regional, inter-institutional, and inter-educational systems research would provide a more extensive insight into how contextual influences influence the pedagogic role of YouTube and social media and, thus, persuade worldwide and inclusive education.

### Disclosure of Conflict of Interest:

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest associated with this study.

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