# Social Media as Predictor of Truancy among Undergraduate Students of University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria

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**Abstract:** Truancy, a practice that carries desire effects on the students in particular, has become prevalent among students across different levels of education. It is more worrisome considering the involvement of higher education students in truancy because they are expected to exhibit more seriousness towards school attendance owing to their age and previous academic experiences. This study therefore aimed to investigate social media as predictor of truancy behavior among undergraduate students of university of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. It also examined the level of social media usage and truancy behavior among students. The study is a survey of correlation type. The study's sample size was 381 respondents selected using both the convenience and simple random sampling techniques. The instrument used was a questionnaire type tagged "Social Media and Truancy Behavior Questionnaire". The instrument possessed a reliability coefficient of 0.91 having been subjected to the split-half method. Data was analyzed using the mean score and Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) statistics. The hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance. The results revealed that undergraduate students engage in moderate social media usage while their level of truancy behavior was high. Further, social media usage positively predicted truancy behavior among undergraduate students. It was concluded that the high prevalence of truancy behavior underscores the need for targeted interventions among undergraduate students. It is therefore imperative that the university management implements robust attendance monitoring systems and maintain responsible use of social across universities in order to minimize rate of truancy among undergraduates.

**Keywords**: Social media, Predictor, Truancy behavior, Level, Involvement, Undergraduate, Students.

## Introduction

Truancy, which could be viewed as the habitual unexcused absence from school, precipitates a plethora of deleterious consequences, encompassing academic, social, and legal domains. Significantly, it engenders a propensity for students falling behind in their coursework, culminating in poor academic performance, repeating the same class, and possible risk of premature school dropout (Bolu-Steve et al, 2022). Furthermore, truant

students are predisposed to experiencing diminished self-esteem and social isolation. More often than not, they may be at risk of diminished self-esteem and social isolation, an elevated risk of involvement in delinquent activities, including substance abuse and criminal behavior, which may ultimately eventuate in adverse long-term outcomes, such as higher unemployment rates and reduced earning potential. It is therefore imperative to investigate the predictors of truant behavior, especially in relation to social media engagement.

Truancy refers to the deliberate and unauthorized absence from school, whether it be for valid reasons or not. In this case, a student could be missing classes on their own free will. It does not include legitimate excused absences that could occur due to situations like illness or tragedy. In many states, absenteeism is clearly defined in the handbook of policies and procedures that guide the operation of institutions. Isah and Muhammad (2025) described truancy as the deliberate avoidance and unauthorized absence of students from school during the compulsory school-going years. It is also viewed as a delinquent and antisocial behavior because it involves staying off school, which is one of the several kinds of antisocial behaviors (Gungon&Kocturk,2023). The consequences of truancy behaviour are multifaceted. Isah and Muhammad (2025) inferred that students who engage in truancy in school have the propensity of exhibiting destructive behavior (such as timing wasting and unfulfilled career aspiration) and poverty in adulthood yet the phenomenon is widespread across different levels of education. Gump and Matthews (2017) defined truancy as a prevalent concern in the realm of education that is characterized by the consistent absence from school without valid explanations thereby casting a shadow over the academic landscape for undergraduates in tertiary institutions. Beyond the surface-level interpretation of "missed classes", truancy serves as a barometer for more profound challenges faced by students and the educational system at large. Tanko and Ajayi (2023) opined that truancy has become a medium through which delinquent behavior, juvenile crime and many social vices could be promoted and encouraged among undergraduates.

Truancy behavior among undergraduates can be viewed as a situation in which students develop and show aversive attitude and behavior towards learning. They absent themselves from classes using unnecessary excuses such as going to the toilet, fake suspension by the teacher or school authority and involvement in sports activities. Truancy behavior is a persistent concern in the academic sphere that is increasingly recognized as a complex phenomenon influenced by a myriad of factors. in Laos in 2015. Pengpid and Peltzer (2019) reported an overall 40.7% of the students agreed to have engaged in truancy in the past 30 days and attributed the behavior to externalizing behaviors, which are current alcohol use, lifetime amphetamine use, having been in a physical fight, and bully(especially, physical attacks).

Literature has classified truancy based on its frequency and severity. Olaleye and Ayorinde(2025)identified three types of truancy which include: Habitual truancy, occasional truancy and casual truancy. Habitual truancy describes a situation when a student (truant) constantly absents from school without the due knowledge or consent of his/her parents or the school authorities. Students in this category miss numerous full days of school academic activities on campus. Their frequencies of absenteeism have become regular behavior or habit. Occasional truancy describes when a student is not constantly and continually staying away from school suggesting the students' level of absenteeism from school without the permission of authority is irregular. Occasional truants may be difficult to track because of the fact that their presence or absence is not regular unlike habitual truants. Casual truancy is the type that occurs when the students absent themselves from school seldomly; it is neither regular nor constant but happens by chance. It is noteworthy to state that students in this category may even be partially present in school but later stay away probably to avoid unpleasant situation during school hours. Wang and Scanlon (2023) highlight digital truancy as one the common practices among undergraduates and it is characterized by students disengaging from online classes or educational platform: a form that underscores the impact of technology on attendance behavior. By acknowledging and categorizing these different types of truancy, this research can offer a more granular understanding of the diverse factors contributing to the phenomenon.

Some undergraduates are involved in truancy because they do not feel the need for regular school attendance. Olaleye and Ayorinde (2025) identified some possible causes of truancy among undergraduates which include student factor, family factor (lack of parental supervision, poverty, misuse of substance and alcohol, lack of family support, household problems, broken homes, and households care duties), school factor, and community factor. Other factors mentioned include different teaching and learning styles, teacher's absenteeism, low teacher expectations, poor discipline and poor communication between teachers and students also play a great important role in the exhibition of truancy by undergraduates. Also, student's homework or assessment tasks, ailments, social incompetence, abnormal physical and mental health, lack of self-esteem, poor peer relationships, poor academic performance are some of the factors that contribute to truancy. The digital age has ushered in a shift, transforming the traditional classroom experience and introducing new challenges in maintaining student's classroom engagement. This reflects in the amount of time and attention students give to social media interaction at the expense of meaningful academic engagements requiring attendance at school.

. The adverse effects of truancy cannot be overemphasized as it impacts students, communities and families. Onekama et al (2020) opined that if truants are left unchecked, their attitude could lead to other more terrible vices like petty theft, burglary,

smoking, drug abuse and addiction, teenage pregnancy and academic underachievement. Afande and Maina (2015) opined that truancy could be costly to undergraduates, which might result in reduced earning capacities. The role of social media in influencing undergraduate students' behavior cannot be downplayed considering the amount of time they spend and unguarded exposure to different contents.

Social media refers to the means of interactions among people in which they create, share, and/or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks (Global Social Statistics, 2023). Social media is being used in various forms by many platforms for numerous reasons. Many people define social media as applications on their smart phones, tablets or computers. It is a tool that is becoming quite popular these days because of its user-friendly features. It has become an integral part of the lives of people of all ages around the world as it enables people to communicate easily and across distances. The accessibility of social media introduces a dimension that extends beyond the physical confines of the campus. The virtual realm becomes a space where students negotiate their identities, establish connections, and encounter diverse influences that can impact their attitudes towards education. Social media are web-based or personal device-based applications that connect users with online resources or with each other. Among the best-known examples globally are Face book and, more recently, twitter. Social media have undergone an exponential growth globally over the last six years. According to Data Reportal (2023), 15 social media platforms have at least 400 million active users in July 2023: Facebook has 3.07 billion monthly active users, WhatsApp has at least 2 billion monthly active users, Instagram has 2 billion monthly active user, and X (Twitter)'s reported potential advertising reach was 666 million in July 2023. It is worrisome to note that students tend to face a lot of emotional and psychological problems arising from irregular school attendance, lack of personal and interpersonal skills to cope with school work as a result of social media usage often times. Okeya-Olayinka and Martins-Adediran(2025) found that the level of social media usage among undergraduate students is frequent and high

Understanding the intersection of social media usage and truancy is crucial in unraveling the contemporary challenges faced by undergraduates. Students are exposed to social media platforms on a daily basis, they use desktop computers, laptops, tablets and most especially mobile phones to actively engage in social media platforms for chatting, blogging, content sharing and online learning purposes (Okeya-Olayinka & Martins-Adediran, 2025). Thus, students spend much of their study time on social media rather than in their academic undertakings which seems to have an adverse effect on their study time, diverting their attention from their studies (Ndaku, 2013). Chen and Xiao (2022) found that constant availability of social media platforms served as a persistent distraction, contributing to occasional truancy among undergraduates. The

influence of online interactions, notifications, and digital content can divert students' attention from academic commitments.

Truancy has become a contemporary issue that cut across all academic levels in Nigeria. It is disheartening to note that the phenomenon has become alarming among undergraduate students with their level of involvement in truancy daring the effects on academic and career fulfillments. Some researchers have carried out research on the relationship between peer influence and social media usage as predictors of truancy behavior among undergraduate and their findings have been helpful to the conduct of this present research. Onyeaka et al (2020) reported the overall prevalence of past 30-day truancy in countries were 22.9%, 36.5% and 45.9% for Benin, Ghana and Liberia respectively. The study further stated that the reported truancy rates are significant considering the damages the situation portends. Akinwalere and Adeosun (2022) studied social media usage and preference among tertiary institution students at Olabisi On banjo University Ago-Iwoye and the study indicated that 79.2% agreed to actively use social media and the practice prevented them from regular school attendance. Okeya-Olayinka and Martins-Adediran (2025) revealed that undergraduate students' use of social media was at high level. Johnson et al (2019) investigated peer influence and social media: Predictors of truancy among university students. The study found that excessive use of social media platforms may be indicative of deeper disengagement from academic responsibilities, exacerbating the likelihood of persistent truancy. The study further found that male students engage more in truancy than females. Wang and Smith (2021) examined the phenomenon of social truancy driven by online peer interactions. The study highlights how students may skip classes to align with social dynamics established in virtual spaces, therefore emphasizing the need to understand and address the influence of digital peer relationships on attendance behaviors. Turner and Johnson (2023) reported positive relationship between social media platform-specific trends and behaviors that contribute to the manifestation of truancy in the digital realm. The present study thus examined social media usage as predictor of truancy behaviour among undergraduate students of university of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria.

**Research Questions**

1. What is the level of social media usage among undergraduate students of university of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria?

2. What is the level of truancy among undergraduate students of university of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria?

Research Hypothesis

$H_0$. Social media usage will not significantly predict truancy behaviouramong undergraduate students of university of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria.

**Method**

Design: This study is a descriptive survey of correlation type. The approach is considered appropriate for this study since the researchers focused on collecting information from a representative sample of university students and thereafter conducted correlation analysis.

Population and Sampling Procedure**:** The population of for this study comprised all students of the University of Ilorin which was estimated 50,000 as of 2024/2025 academic session (University of Ilorin, 2025). In accordance with The Research Advisor (2006), a sample size of 381 was selected at 95% Confidence Level and 5.0% Margin of Error. The convenience sampling technique was adopted to select the participants at the various campus motor parks and auditorium when undergraduate students usually gather in large number for particular activities. The respondents were thereafter selected randomly thereby giving every member of the population equal opportunity of participation.

Instrument: The instrument used to collect data was a questionnaire type tagged "Social Media and Truancy Behavior Questionnaire (SMTBQ)". The researcher developed the instrument after consulting literature.The scoring was patterned in the modified four-point Likert scale response format of "Very True of Me", "True of Me", "Rarely True of Me" and "Never True of Me".  The questionnaire was divided into three sections (A, B, and C). The first section consisted the demographic data while the second contained items on the use of social media, and third section consisted items on truancy behavior. The aggregate score for section B and C was used to determine the levels of students' involvement in social medial use and truancy behavior. The reliability of the instrument was decided using the split-half method while the two scores obtained from a single administration was subjected to the Cranach Alpha formula. The result yielded r=91, which was considered adequate for reliability level. Before its administration, the university ethical committee equally approved the instrument.

Data Collection: The researchers administered the questionnaire to the selected sample after seeking the permission of the university authority and informed consent of the participants; hence there was no coercion in the course the exercise.

Data Analysis: Percentage was used for the descriptive statistics while Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistics tools were employed to test the research hypotheses. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

**Research Question 1:** What is the level of undergraduate students' involvement in the use of social media?

**Table 1:** **Mean Standard Deviation and Rank Order Analysis on the Respondents'**
**Level of Involvement in the use of Social Media**.

| As far as I am concerned, I: | Mean | S.D. |
|---|---|---|
| stay online a lot | 3.21 | .786 |
| am never bored whenever I am on any social network | 3.19 | .456 |
| complete given academic task easily using social media | 3.11 | .596 |
| spend more hours online than reading | 2.97 | .577 |
| seek assistance from online friends about my problems | 2.94 | .616 |
| prefer to always study with other students on social media | 2.82 | .603 |
| use social media to discuss likely examination questions | 2.74 | .646 |
| stay online to while away stress | 2.70 | .671 |
| enjoy surfing the internet with peers during lecture hours | 2.70 | .647 |
| get valid information about anything in the society on social media | 2.67 | .464 |
| express my feelings clearly on social media networks | 2.66 | .479 |
| often post updates or photos on social media | 2.62 | .702 |
| use social media to seek validation from others | 2.59 | .528 |
| share my expertise more effectively with other friends on social media | 2.56 | .494 |
| attend virtual class to physical class | 2.53 | .706 |
| **Aggregate Mean** | **2.80** | |

**Decision Indices:**

1.00-2.00 = Low

2.01-3.00 = Moderate*

3.01-4.00 = High

Table 1shows that the aggregate mean score is 2.80 which falls within the moderate category. This implies that university undergraduate students' involvement in social media is moderate.

**Research Question 2:** What is the level of truancy behavior among undergraduate students of University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria?

**Table 2: Mean, Standard Deviation and Rank Order Analysis on the Respondents' Level of Truancy Behaviour**

| As far as I am concerned, students: | Mean | S.D. |
|---|---|---|
| believe in photocopying classmate notes than attending classes | 3.41 | .642 |
| prefer hanging out to attending classes | 3.36 | .630 |
| do not bother if they are absent from school | 3.32 | .621 |
| mostly enjoy staying outside the class | 3.31 | .652 |
| unnecessarily skip classes | 3.28 | .584 |
| have friends that keep them away from school | 3.25 | .541 |
| enjoy friend's company more than staying in class | 3.22 | .541 |
| enjoy playing outside the class during school hours | 3.19 | .560 |
| prefer watching football match to being in class | 3.17 | .497 |
| do not see the need for regular school attendance | 3.13 | .640 |
| make absenteeism a habitual behaviour | 3.05 | .723 |
| prefer partying to being in class | 2.87 | .548 |
| form clique to exhibit truancy behaviour | 2.84 | .678 |
| love staying away from school | 2.81 | .596 |
| deliberately stay out of classes to spite lecturers | 2.73 | .667 |
| **Aggregate mean** | **3.13** | |

**Decision Indices:**

1.00-2.00 = Low

2.01-3.00 = Moderate

3.01-4.00 = High*

Table 2 shows that the aggregate mean score are 3.13 which falls within the moderate category. This implies that university undergraduate students' truancy behavior is high.

**Hypotheses Testing**

**Hypothesis Three:** Involvement in Social media use will not significantly predict truancy behaviour among undergraduate students of University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria.

**Table 4: PPMC Analysis Showing Relationship between Social Media and Truancy Behavour of the Respondents**

| Variables | N | Mean | Std. D | df | r | p-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Social Media | 381 | 42.65 | 5.63 | 379 | .157[*] | .002 |
| Truancy Behaviour | 381 | 47.06 | 6.29 | | | |

* Significant, p<0.05

Table 4 shows calculated r-value of .157and p-value of .002 which is less than 0.05 level of significance. This implies that the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies there is significant positive prediction between involvement in social media useand truancy behaviour among undergraduate students of University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria.

**Discussion**

The finding showed that undergraduate students of university of Ilorin engaged in moderate level of social media use. This indicates that undergraduate students of University of Ilorin do not use social frequently. This finding is not in tandem with Akinwalere and Adeosun (2022) and Okeya-Olayinka and Martins-Adediran (2025) who reported frequent and high social media usage among students. The variation in the previous and present findings could be attributed to the difference in the locale of the two studies. While the present study was conducted in Ilorin, Okeya-Olayinka and Martins-Adediran (2025) carried out their study in the University of Ibadan which is more cosmopolitan and a first-generation university where internet facility might be more available compared to Ilorin.

The finding revealed high level of truancy behaviour among undergraduate students of university of Ilorin, Nigeria. The finding suggests that the respondent alluded to frequent engagement in absenting themselves from academic activities. Bolu-Steve et al (2022) opined that truancy engenders a propensity for students falling behind in their coursework, culminating in, repeating the same class, and possible risk of premature school dropout. Afande and Maina (2015); Isah and Muhammad (2025) opined that truancy behaviour could lead to other more terrible vices like petty theft, burglary, smoking, drug abuse and addiction, teenage pregnancy poor academic performance. The finding is consistent with the study conducted by Onyeaka et al (2020) which reported high prevalence of truancy in three West African countries (Ghana, Benin, and Liberia). One may not be amazed by the similarity between the previous and present studies because students generally tend to often exhibit aversive behaviour towards school owing to several factors such as poor learning environment, bullying, poor teaching methods, lack of guidance and a host of others.

The result of the hypothesis tested showed that social media usage significantly predicted truancy behaviour among undergraduates of university of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. This implies that the more students engage in social media usage the likelihood

of engaging in truancy behaviour. influenced truancy. This agrees with the earlier study ofJohnson et al (2019) which found that excessive use of social media platforms may be indicative of deeper disengagement from academic responsibilities, exacerbating the likelihood of persistent truancy.

## Conclusion

The study's findings suggest a significant correlation between social media usage and truancy behavior among undergraduate students at the University of Ilorin, Nigeria. The moderate level of social media engagement, coupled with the high prevalence of truancy, underscores the need for targeted interventions addressing underlying factors such as social media usage. These results align with existing researches, especially in Nigeria, emphasising the importance of contextual considerations in addressing student truancy behaviour and the need to maintain moderate social media usage.

## Recommendations

- The University Management and National University Commission should collaborate to integrate social media literacy into the university curriculum to help students use social media responsibly and balance academic responsibilities with social media engagement.
- Universities should provide academic support services like mentorship, counseling, and tutoring to help students balance between social media usage and regular school attendance.
- School authorities should introduce mandatory social media literacy courses for all undergraduates about responsible social media use, time management, and the potential negative effects of truancy behavior.

- University management should implement robust attendance monitoring systems across all universities in order to minimize rate of truancy among undergraduates.

- School counsellors should create programmers that specifically address the influence of social media on truancy behavior.

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