# Lecturers' and Students' Perceptions of Social Media Integration in Higher Education: Evidence from Selected Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

Although social media is widely used in Nigerian higher education, the perspectives of key academic stakeholders on its integration into teaching have not been fully explored. This study examines how lecturers and students at selected tertiary institutions view the integration of social media, focusing on its educational value, risks, and the institutional conditions required. A quantitative survey gathered data from 155 respondents across four institutions in North-West and North-East Nigeria. The results show that both groups are generally positive. Lecturers, however, are more cautious about issues such as distractions, academic integrity, and the lack of policy frameworks, while students are more enthusiastic about using platforms such as WhatsApp and YouTube. Major barriers include poor internet connectivity, high data costs, and a lack of guidelines. Successful integration depends on strong institutional investment in infrastructure, policy, and digital literacy, rather than on individual efforts alone. This study contributes to the literature on educational technology in sub-Saharan Africa and offers insights for institutional leaders, curriculum designers, and policymakers.

**Keywords:** Social media integration; lecturer perceptions; student attitudes; higher education; digital pedagogy; institutional policy; Nigeria

## INTRODUCTION

Social media has transformed communication, collaboration, and information-seeking practices globally. Higher education is included in this transformation. Students worldwide enter classrooms already engaged in digital networks, sharing notes via WhatsApp, viewing YouTube tutorials, and discussing assignments in Facebook groups, frequently without institutional involvement. Although technology and student engagement are prevalent, a clear academic framework for social media use remains largely absent.

The disconnect between students' informal digital practices and formal educational design highlights a structural issue. Institutions have yet to leverage the engagement students demonstrate on social media, and this delay impacts the quality and relevance of education. This challenge is particularly pronounced in Nigeria, where smartphones and WhatsApp have become essential to both daily life and academic activities.

Existing research has predominantly examined student usage of social media platforms. For example, studies have shown that students frequently use WhatsApp for peer communication and resource sharing (Bouhnik & Deshen, 2014), that YouTube facilitates self-directed learning (Greenhow & Lewin, 2016), and that social media engagement is a defining aspect of student life in sub-Saharan Africa (Chawinga & Zinn, 2016). However, these investigations primarily focus on the student perspective.

Lecturers play a central role in curriculum design, instruction, and the selection of digital tools for classroom use. Despite this, limited research has explored their perspectives, representing a significant gap in the literature. If lecturers perceive social media as distracting or as a threat to academic integrity, they are unlikely to adopt it, regardless of student interest. Even those who recognise its potential benefits may hesitate in the absence of

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institutional support. Perceptions directly influence practice; thus, understanding lecturers' beliefs, rather than solely their usage patterns, is essential for comprehensive integration planning.

This gap is particularly evident in Nigeria, where most research on educational technology has concentrated on student behaviour and access (Bello & Aliyu, 2022; Nwachukwu & Onyenankeya, 2017), with less attention given to academic staff's professional judgments. Nigerian institutions encounter unique barriers, including inconsistent power supply, variable connectivity, and limited digital policy frameworks. These challenges heighten the significance of lecturer attitudes, as their willingness to support social media integration can determine its success or failure in contexts of unreliable infrastructure. The present study addresses this gap by analysing survey data from 155 lecturers and students across four tertiary institutions in two geopolitical zones of Nigeria. It examines how both groups perceive social media integration within conventional teaching, treating lecturers and students as distinct stakeholder groups whose perceptions may diverge in professionally meaningful ways. Capturing both perspectives and the tension between them provides a more comprehensive understanding of social media integration in Nigeria's higher education context.

This study is based on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which posits that perceived usefulness and ease of use are the primary factors in technology adoption (Davis, 1989). Teo (2011) expanded this idea, showing that social influence and supportive conditions also affect whether teachers accept new technology. This is especially important in places where institutional support and peer expectations matter. Together, these frameworks help explain the differences in attitudes found in this study.

The paper is organised as follows: Section 2 reviews the literature on how stakeholders view educational technology, lecturer attitudes toward digital tools, and institutional barriers to social media integration in developing countries. Section 3 explains the methodology. Section 4 presents the results. Section 5 discusses the findings, Section 6 covers policy implications, and Section 7 concludes.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Stakeholder Perceptions of Educational Technology

Stakeholders' feelings about technology often outweigh technical factors. In education, digital tool adoption depends on beliefs: that it improves learning, addresses more problems than it creates, and is worth the effort. Understanding how different groups form these beliefs is central to technology adoption in higher education.

Perceptions of educational technology are neither uniform nor stable. They vary by role, experience, institutional context, and prior exposure to digital environments. Teo (2011) found that among pre-service teachers, perceived usefulness was the strongest predictor of technology acceptance, but that this relationship was significantly moderated by social influence — what colleagues and supervisors think about a tool shapes how individuals evaluate it. In higher education, where professional norms and departmental cultures are powerful, this moderating effect has direct implications for how social media integration is likely to be received.

Students generally hold more favourable attitudes toward educational technology than lecturers. Moran, Seaman, and Tinti-Kane (2011) found that university students not only used social media extensively but also actively sought to have institutions incorporate these platforms into formal instruction. Comparable patterns have been documented in African contexts: Mtebe and Raisamo (2014) found that students in Tanzanian universities expressed considerably more enthusiasm for digital learning tools than faculty, and that this attitudinal gap was itself a primary obstacle to institutional adoption.

Yet enthusiasm does not always lead to effective use. Margaryan, Littlejohn, and Vojt (2011) found that, though students use social media heavily, most lack developed skills for using digital tools in academic settings. Students may want social media in the classroom without fully grasping what integration entails—a nuance that studies measuring attitude alone miss.

Lecturer perceptions are diverse. Some see digital tools as transformative, extending the classroom and fostering collaborative, student-centred learning. Others regard social media as distracting, a threat to rigour, and a blurring

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of professional and personal boundaries. Selwyn (2012) observed that most academics are neither enthusiastic adopters nor outright resisters, but cautious experimenters who use digital tools selectively. Reducing stakeholder perceptions to a simple binary risks missing this complexity.

**Lecturer Attitudes Toward Digital Tool Adoption**

Teachers are the most consequential variable in any technology integration initiative. A lecturer who is unconvincing, unsupported, or overwhelmed will keep a digital tool at the margins of their practice — consciously or not. Understanding what drives this pattern, and under what conditions it changes, is one of the more practically significant questions in the field.

Ertmer (1999) distinguished between first-order barriers to adoption — external constraints such as inadequate equipment, poor connectivity, and lack of time — and second-order barriers, which are internal and attitudinal: beliefs about teaching and learning, low technological self-efficacy, and resistance to changing established routines. Second-order barriers are harder to address because they are less visible and cannot be resolved solely through infrastructure investment. Providing a lecturer with a reliable internet connection does not change a deeply held belief that face-to-face instruction is pedagogically superior to digitally mediated alternatives.

This distinction is particularly relevant to social media. Unlike purpose-built platforms such as Moodle or Blackboard, social media tools carry associations — informality, entertainment, social distraction — that many lecturers find difficult to reconcile with formal academic practice. Prescott (2014) found that UK lecturers who used Facebook personally were not necessarily more willing to use it for teaching, perceiving a fundamental incompatibility between the platform's social register and the expectations of academic discourse. Familiarity did not confer educational legitimacy.

In sub-Saharan African universities, attitudinal challenges are compounded by structural pressures. Oye, Iahad, and Rahim (2012) found that Nigerian university lecturers acknowledged the potential of digital tools but felt insufficiently trained to use them effectively — suggesting that lack of confidence, rather than lack of access, was the operative barrier. This aligns with Bandura's (1997) research on self-efficacy: perceived competence with a technology is among the strongest predictors of its actual classroom use. A lecturer who doubts their ability to manage an online discussion or structure a YouTube-based activity is unlikely to attempt it, regardless of their theoretical openness to the idea.

The relationship between age, experience, and technology adoption is less straightforward than often assumed. Younger lecturers are not automatically more willing adopters. Early-career academics — still establishing professional authority and navigating institutional expectations — may be more cautious about departing from conventional formats than experienced colleagues who have a settled professional identity and less to lose from pedagogical experimentation (Teo, 2011). The challenge for institutions, therefore, is not simply to overcome resistance but to understand its sources and create conditions in which lecturers feel competent, supported, and professionally validated in their integration efforts.

**Institutional Barriers to Social Media Integration in Developing Country Higher Education**

Positive stakeholder attitudes are necessary but not sufficient for effective social media integration. Institutional conditions can make meaningful engagement practically impossible — and this is nowhere more apparent than in the higher education systems of developing countries, where the gap between digital aspiration and digital reality is often considerable.

Infrastructure is the most frequently cited barrier, and for good reason. Reliable internet connectivity is the basic prerequisite for social media–supported learning, yet in many Nigerian and broader African institutions, it cannot be assumed. Chawinga and Zinn (2016) found that bandwidth limitations in Malawian universities forced students to restrict digital learning activities to off-campus locations with commercial data access. In Nigeria, inconsistent power supply compounds connectivity challenges, making sustained digital engagement during teaching hours genuinely difficult (Adedoja et al., 2013). These are structural constraints, not minor inconveniences, and they can render even well-designed integration strategies unworkable.

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Cost is an equally significant barrier in low- and middle-income contexts. Data subscriptions in Nigeria remain expensive relative to average income, and the burden of internet access falls largely on individuals. Ezeani and Igwesi (2012) identified cost as one of the most consistently cited deterrents to the adoption of digital learning tools among Nigerian students. When accessing a WhatsApp learning group or a YouTube tutorial requires a significant portion of a weekly data budget, the economics of participation become a genuine obstacle. This material dimension of the digital divide deserves more attention in integration literature that has tended to foreground attitudinal barriers.

The absence of institutional policy frameworks represents a third major obstacle. Many tertiary institutions across sub-Saharan Africa have no formal guidelines governing academic social media use, creating uncertainty for both lecturers and students. Tess (2013) identified this policy vacuum as one of the most underappreciated barriers to integration, noting that institutions have effectively left individual lecturers to navigate complex ethical and pedagogical questions — about privacy, data protection, and appropriate online conduct — without institutional guidance or support.

Uneven digital literacy further complicates the situation. Waycott et al. (2010) found significant variation in digital competency among both students and staff, with many users proficient in the social functions of platforms but far less confident in their educational applications. In developing country contexts, where formal digital skills training has historically been limited, the gap between social and academic digital literacy can be substantial.

Finally, institutional culture shapes what is possible in ways that are difficult to quantify but easy to observe. In many Nigerian tertiary institutions, lecture-based pedagogy is not merely dominant — it is the implicitly expected norm. Departing from it invites scepticism from colleagues and, sometimes, from students who equate academic rigour with formal face-to-face instruction. Kirkwood and Price (2014) found that technology integration is most durable when it emerges from a genuine shift in pedagogical philosophy rather than being imposed from above. Cultivating that shift within cultures that have not historically prioritised digital innovation remains one of the central leadership challenges in developing-country higher education.

# METHODOLOGY

## Study Area

This study was conducted across four tertiary institutions in two geopolitical zones of Nigeria. Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria; Federal Polytechnic Kaura-Namoda; and Kaduna Polytechnic are located in the North-West, while the University of Maiduguri represents the North-East. The institutions were selected to reflect the diversity of types, sizes, and academic orientations within the Nigerian higher education system. ABU enrols over 40,000 students and is among Nigeria's largest federal universities. Kaduna Polytechnic is one of the country's largest polytechnics. Federal Polytechnic Kaura-Namoda offers ND and HND programmes across several disciplines, and the University of Maiduguri is the primary university in the North-East. Together, they constitute a contextually representative setting for examining stakeholder perceptions of social media integration.

The dataset used here is drawn from the same survey instrument and respondent pool as an earlier publication by the authors (Musa et al., 2024), which examined patterns of social media use in these institutions. The present paper focuses entirely on perception-related data — how lecturers and students perceive the educational value, risks, and institutional conditions associated with social media integration. Deriving thematically distinct contributions from a single dataset is consistent with established practice in survey-based educational research (Abdulmalik & Anka, 2024).

## Research Design

A quantitative survey research design was employed. Survey methodology enables the systematic collection of attitudinal data from a defined population and facilitates structured comparison between respondent groups —

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in this case, lecturers and students (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This design was particularly appropriate given the study's focus on perceptions and beliefs across multiple institutional contexts.

**Population and Sample**

The study population comprised students and academic staff from the four selected institutions — the two primary stakeholders in any teaching and learning arrangement. Including both groups enabled a comparative analysis of how those who deliver instruction and those who receive it differ in their perceptions of social media integration.

A total of 155 respondents participated, recruited through purposive and convenience sampling. Questionnaires were administered both physically and electronically. All 155 instruments were returned valid, yielding a 100% response rate. Table 1 presents the institutional distribution.

Table 1: Distribution of Questionnaires Across Institutions

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria | 45 | 42 |
| 2 | Federal Polytechnic Kaura-Namoda | 40 | 39 |
| 3 | Kaduna Polytechnic, Kaduna | 35 | 35 |
| 4 | University of Maiduguri | 35 | 39 |
| | **Total** | 155 | 155 |

**Data Collection Instrument**

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire organised in five sections. Section one addressed demographic characteristics. Section two examined access to digital devices and to the internet. Section three explored social media registration and usage patterns. Section four — central to this paper — investigated respondents' perceptions of social media's impact on teaching and learning, the implications of its official adoption, and the challenges associated with its academic use. Section five gathered open-ended responses on preferred platforms, challenges encountered, conditions required for institutional adoption, and general observations. The instrument combined closed-ended Likert-scale items with open-ended questions, the latter of which were subjected to thematic analysis.

**Data Analysis**

Quantitative data were analysed using IBM SPSS version 22. Frequency distributions and percentages were used to summarise responses and identify attitudinal patterns across the five-point Likert scale items (Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree). Open-ended responses were analysed thematically, with recurring ideas grouped into meaningful categories to complement the quantitative findings.

## RESULTS

Findings are organised around four analytical themes: respondents' digital access profile, perceptions of social media's educational impact, attitudes toward formal institutional adoption, and identified barriers and enabling conditions. Interpretation and discussion of these findings are reserved for Section 5.

**Demographic Profile of Respondents**

Lecturers constituted a slight majority (51.6%, n = 80), with students accounting for 48.4% (n = 75). Male respondents comprised 61.3% (n = 95). The dominant age group was 40–49 years (55.5%, n = 86), reflecting a predominantly mid-career sample. Among students, 58.7% were at the 400-level or above. Lecturers were

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distributed across early-career (less than 5 years, 51.3%) and more experienced categories (11–20 years, 35.0%), providing attitudinal range across professional stages.

**Access to Digital Devices and Internet Connectivity**

Universal smartphone ownership (100%) establishes the foundational condition for social media engagement across the sample. Laptop ownership stood at 82.6% and active data plan access at 79.4%. Residential internet access was reported by 96.8% of respondents. Ownership of tablets (48.4%) and e-book readers (31.0%) was comparatively limited, confirming that smartphones are the primary digital access point in this context.

Table 2: Respondents' Access to Digital Devices and Internet Connectivity (n = 155)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Own a smartphone | 155 (100%) | 0 (0.0%) |
| Own a laptop/notebook computer | 128 (82.6%) | 27 (17.4%) |
| Smartphone with active data plan | 123 (79.4%) | 32 (20.6%) |
| Internet access at residence | 150 (96.8%) | 5 (3.2%) |
| Own a tablet device | 75 (48.4%) | 80 (51.6%) |
| Access to a desktop computer with internet | 59 (38.1%) | 96 (61.9%) |
| Own an e-book reader | 48 (31.0%) | 107 (69.0%) |

**Social Media Registration and Academic Use**

WhatsApp (96.8%) and Telegram (96.8%) recorded the highest registration rates, followed by Facebook (89.7%) and Instagram (79.4%). Niche platforms — Keek, Path, and Tango — recorded negligible uptake. For academic use specifically, WhatsApp dominated (86.2%), followed by Facebook (44.8%) and YouTube (41.3%). Most respondents (55.5%) spent three to four hours daily on social media; a further 20.6% exceeded four hours. Accessing academic materials (79.4%) was the leading purpose, followed by socialising (75.5%) and news consumption (72.3%).

Table 3: Most Frequently Used Social Media Platforms for Academic Purposes (n = 155)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| WhatsApp | 134 | 86.2 |
| Facebook | 69 | 44.8 |
| YouTube | 64 | 41.3 |
| Other platforms | 32 | 20.6 |
| Educational forums (e.g., Google Classroom, Moodle) | 27 | 17.4 |
| Telegram | 21 | 13.5 |
| Instagram | 21 | 13.5 |
| Twitter/X | 11 | 7.1 |

**Perceived Impact of Social Media on Teaching and Learning**

Agreement rates on items relating to social media's educational value were consistently high. Complete consensus (100%) was observed on two items: acceleration of academic information sharing and efficient course

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material distribution—a degree of unanimity that is analytically significant in attitudinal research. Agreement rates for peer learning support (96.8%) and student-lecturer interaction (92.9%) were similarly strong.

Risk perceptions present a more differentiated picture. Irresponsible online behaviour attracted 96.8% combined agreement, while 76.2% agreed that distraction is a genuine concern, with 20.6% remaining neutral. This coexistence of educational endorsement and risk acknowledgement reflects conditional rather than unconditional acceptance of social media as a pedagogical tool.

Table 4: Perceived Impact of social media on Teaching and Learning (n = 155)

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Social media speeds up the sharing of academic information | 102 (65.8%) | 53 (34.2%) | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Social media helps lecturers share course materials efficiently | 91 (58.7%) | 64 (41.3%) | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Social media supports peer learning outside the classroom | 86 (55.5%) | 64 (41.3%) | 5 (3.2%) | 0 | 0 |
| Social media equips students with digital skills | 86 (55.5%) | 48 (31.0%) | 11 (7.1%) | 5 (3.2%) | 5 (3.2%) |
| Social media strengthens student-lecturer interaction | 80 (51.6%) | 64 (41.3%) | 11 (7.1%) | 0 | 0 |
| Social media removes barriers to self-expression | 80 (51.6%) | 64 (41.3%) | 0 | 11 (7.1%) | 0 |
| Social media may encourage irresponsible online behaviour | 75 (48.4%) | 75 (48.4%) | 16 (10.3%) | 0 | 0 |
| Social media encourages student collaboration | 75 (48.4%) | 75 (48.4%) | 5 (3.2%) | 0 | 0 |
| Social media increases student motivation and engagement | 69 (44.5%) | 69 (44.5%) | 16 (10.3%) | 1 (0.6%) | 0 |
| Social media can distract students from academic work | 59 (38.1%) | 59 (38.1%) | 27 (17.4%) | 5 (3.2%) | 5 (3.2%) |

SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; N = Neutral; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree

**Perceived Implications of Official Social Media Integration**

Responses to the outcomes of formal adoption were uniformly positive on access and relational items. Improved course material access and enhanced idea-sharing each recorded 100% combined agreement. Bridging classroom and real-world knowledge attracted 93.5% agreement. Institutional management support was affirmed by 86.4%, though 13.5% neutrality signals residual uncertainty about leadership commitment.

Financial concern runs consistently through these responses. Some 76.2% agreed that official integration may burden families through data costs, and 72.3% doubted adequate government support for internet and device provision — reflecting awareness of the economic conditions under which integration would occur rather than opposition to the idea itself.

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Table 5: Perceived Implications of Official Social Media Integration (n = 155)

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Official use would strengthen stakeholder relationships | 91 (58.7%) | 59 (38.1%) | 5 (3.2%) | 0 | 0 |
| Official use would bridge classroom and real-world knowledge | 86 (55.5%) | 59 (38.1%) | 11 (7.1%) | 0 | 0 |
| Willingness to participate in social media-based learning groups | 86 (55.5%) | 59 (38.1%) | 0 | 11 (7.1%) | 0 |
| Official use would improve access to course materials | 80 (51.6%) | 75 (48.4%) | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Official use would improve student-lecturer idea-sharing | 80 (51.6%) | 75 (48.4%) | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Official use may place financial burden on families | 59 (38.1%) | 59 (38.1%) | 32 (20.6%) | 5 (3.2%) | 0 |
| Institutional management would support integration | 43 (27.7%) | 91 (58.7%) | 21 (13.5%) | 0 | 0 |
| Government may not adequately support costs | 37 (23.9%) | 75 (48.4%) | 27 (17.4%) | 16 (10.3%) | 0 |

SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; N = Neutral; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree

**Challenges of Using Social Media for Academic Purposes**

Infrastructure and economics dominate the barrier profile. Poor internet connectivity (89.7%) and high data costs (82.6%) recorded the strongest combined agreement scores in this section. Academic integrity concerns ranked highest of all: 92.9% agreed that shared content may be plagiarised or misused. Absence of institutional policies (82.6%), insufficient technical skills (83.2%), and privacy concerns (79.4%) complete a multifaceted picture of structural and institutional obstacles.

Table 6: Challenges of Using social media for Academic Purposes (n = 155)

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Academic content may be plagiarised or misused | 37 (23.9%) | 107 (69.0%) | 11 (7.1%) | 0 | 0 |
| Insufficient technical skills limit effective use | 43 (27.7%) | 86 (55.5%) | 21 (13.5%) | 5 (3.2%) | 0 |
| Lack of institutional policies affects formal use | 37 (23.9%) | 91 (58.7%) | 21 (13.5%) | 6 (3.9%) | 0 |
| Privacy and personal data security concerns | 37 (23.9%) | 86 (55.5%) | 11 (7.1%) | 16 (10.3%) | 5 (3.2%) |
| Cyberbullying and online harassment are risks | 43 (27.7%) | 80 (51.6%) | 27 (17.4%) | 5 (3.2%) | 0 |

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| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Social media can distract students from academic work | 43 (27.7%) | 75 (48.4%) | 27 (17.4%) | 11 (7.1%) | 0 |
| Poor or unreliable internet connectivity | 80 (51.6%) | 59 (38.1%) | 5 (3.2%) | 5 (3.2%) | 6 (3.9%) |
| High cost of internet data | 80 (51.6%) | 48 (31.0%) | 11 (7.1%) | 5 (3.2%) | 6 (3.9%) |

SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; N = Neutral; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree

**Conditions Required for Institutional Adoption**

Reliable internet connectivity was the most frequently cited enabling condition (38.5%), followed by institutional Wi-Fi and affordable data support (19.2%), and digital literacy training (15.4%). Policy frameworks and awareness programmes were cited less frequently in qualitative responses, though both registered strongly in the Likert-scale data — suggesting that open-ended respondents tended to prioritise tangible, immediately actionable conditions over regulatory ones.

Table 7: Conditions Required for Institutional Adoption (n = 26)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Reliable internet connectivity | 10 | 38.5 |
| Institutional Wi-Fi / affordable data support | 5 | 19.2 |
| Training for lecturers and students on digital tools | 4 | 15.4 |
| Provision of devices and technical infrastructure | 3 | 11.5 |
| Institutional policies and guidelines | 2 | 7.7 |
| Awareness programmes on effective social media use | 2 | 7.7 |
| **Total** | 26 | 100 |

**General Observations**

Thematic analysis of general comments produced four patterns. Affirmation of social media's educational value was most common (36.0%), closely followed by calls for regulation and responsible use (28.0%), access-related concerns (20.0%), and observations about student misuse (16.0%). The pairing of educational endorsement with regulatory concern mirrors the conditional acceptance pattern in the closed-ended data, pointing to a coherent rather than contradictory attitudinal position across the sample.

Table 8: General Observations on social media in Higher Education (n = 25)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Social media enhances teaching and learning | 9 | 36.0 |
| Need for regulation and responsible use | 7 | 28.0 |
| Lack of access to devices or internet among students | 5 | 20.0 |
| Misuse of social media by students | 4 | 16.0 |
| **Total** | 25 | 100 |

Source: Fieldwork (2024)

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# DISCUSSION

### Digital Access as a Baseline Condition

Universal smartphone ownership confirms that the foundational technological precondition for social media–supported learning is in place across the sample — consistent with the broader pattern in Nigerian higher education, where mobile devices have become the primary digital access point in contexts where desktop infrastructure remains limited (Adedoja et al., 2013). The lower ownership of tablets (48.4%) and e-book readers (31.0%) reinforces this point: any integration strategy must be designed around mobile-first use, not specialised hardware.

The access data, however, requires careful reading. High residential internet access (96.8%) sits alongside poor connectivity and high data costs as the two most widely cited barriers — an apparent contradiction that resolves when one recognises that residential internet in the Nigerian context typically means intermittent, data-capped mobile connectivity rather than the stable broadband that sustained academic engagement requires. Device ownership is not equivalent to functional educational access.

### Perceptions of Educational Value: Consensus and Conditionality

The complete consensus on information sharing and course material distribution reflects lived academic experience rather than abstract endorsement. WhatsApp groups that distribute lecture notes, YouTube videos that clarify concepts, and Telegram channels that circulate past questions are everyday realities in Nigerian tertiary institutions — not aspirational scenarios. Respondents' near-unanimous endorsement of social media's communicative utility is grounded in what they already do informally.

This is consistent with TAM's central proposition that perceived usefulness drives technology acceptance (Davis, 1989). Repeated direct experience of social media facilitating something valuable produces high usefulness ratings. The critical question, as Teo (2011) noted, is whether perceived usefulness translates into structured pedagogical adoption or remains confined to the informal margins. The present findings suggest it has not yet made that transition — and the pattern of conditional acceptance illuminates why. The 96.8% agreement that social media may encourage irresponsible behaviour and the 76.2% agreement on its distractive potential did not generate negative attitudes; they generated qualified ones. Respondents accept social media's educational value while implicitly insisting that its risks must be managed. This aligns with Selwyn's (2012) characterisation of academic engagement with digital tools as selective and conditional rather than wholesale.

### The Lecturer–Student Attitudinal Dynamic

The neutrality on distraction risk (20.6%) and institutional management support (13.5%) is most plausibly attributed to the lecturer subgroup, given that experienced academics approach pedagogical tools with greater professional caution than students. This is consistent with Ertmer's (1999) second-order barrier framework: professional identity and belief systems are deeper obstacles to adoption than infrastructure. A lecturer who has taught effectively for fifteen years using conventional methods has more professionally invested in those methods than a student who has experienced no alternative. Restructuring teaching around WhatsApp discussions or YouTube assignments is not a technical adjustment for that lecturer — it is a challenge to established professional practice.

The data does not support a reading of lecturer resistance. What it suggests is that lecturer acceptance is more conditional than student enthusiasm, and that the conditions lecturers require — institutional endorsement, policy guidance, digital literacy support, reliable infrastructure — are precisely the enabling conditions the data identifies as most urgently absent. Oye et al. (2012) found the same pattern among Nigerian university lecturers: attitudinal openness coexisting with a felt need for institutional validation before formal adoption. The present findings extend that observation specifically to social media integration.

### The Economic Dimension of Integration

The financial concerns expressed — 76.2% agreeing that integration may burden families, 72.3% doubting government support — deserve more analytical weight than much of the educational technology literature

accords them. Studies produced in well-resourced contexts tend to treat internet access as a given and focus on attitudinal barriers. In the Nigerian context, economic constraint is a foreground reality, not background noise.

When participation in a WhatsApp learning activity requires depleting a significant portion of a weekly data budget, the economics of engagement become a genuine access issue. Ezeani and Igwesi (2012) identified cost as the most consistently cited deterrent to the adoption of digital learning among Nigerian students. The present findings confirm that concern persists — and extends to lecturers, who bear data costs in their own professional communication. Integration strategies that do not address cost directly, through subsidised data, institutional Wi-Fi, or device provision, are not strategies for the context as it actually exists.

**Academic Integrity, Policy Vacuum, and the Limits of Individual Initiative**

The highest combined agreement score in the entire challenges section — 92.9% agreeing that content shared on social media may be plagiarised or misused — points to a concern that is both widely held and poorly managed institutionally. In contexts where informal content circulation on WhatsApp is already normalised, the boundary between resource sharing and academic misconduct is genuinely difficult to maintain without institutional structures to support it.

The policy vacuum compounds every other challenge. With 82.6% agreeing that the absence of guidelines hinders formal use, the data identify institutional inaction—not individual attitude—as the binding constraint. Tess (2013) identified this vacuum as among the most underappreciated integration barriers, and Kirkwood and Price (2014) demonstrated that technology adoption is most durable when supported by institutional frameworks rather than left to individual initiative. Without policies that define permitted use, assign oversight responsibility, and specify consequences for violations, both lecturers and students are left to navigate complex ethical territory unaided — and most will choose not to.

**Enabling Conditions and Systemic Requirements**

The enabling conditions data do not suggest that integration requires a change in stakeholder attitudes — those are already broadly favourable. What it requires is coordinated institutional action across four dimensions simultaneously: infrastructure, economics, digital literacy, and policy. The 38.5% of open-ended respondents who prioritised reliable connectivity were not making a modest request. They were identifying the precondition without which every other dimension of integration remains theoretical.

Digital literacy training (15.4%) warrants particular emphasis, given Margaryan et al.'s (2011) finding that familiarity with social media does not confer educational competence. Training that addresses both technical and pedagogical dimensions — helping lecturers design purposeful digital activities and helping students engage critically and responsibly — is likely to produce more durable integration outcomes than infrastructure investment alone. The relatively low frequency of policy references in the open-ended data (7.7%) reflects the tendency to prioritise tangible over regulatory conditions; it should not be read as evidence that policy matters less. The Likert-scale data makes its importance unmistakable. Piecemeal responses to any single dimension — connectivity without policy, or training without infrastructure — are unlikely to produce the systemic change the situation demands.

**Implications For Policy and Practice**

The findings of this study expose a structural gap between what stakeholders are ready to do and what institutions have prepared them to support. Closing that gap requires deliberate, simultaneous action at multiple levels. The following recommendations are directed at the three groups best positioned to act: institutional policymakers, curriculum designers, and educational technology practitioners.

**Implications for Institutional Policymakers**

The most urgent policy implication is also the most straightforward: Nigerian tertiary institutions need formal social media integration policies. The finding that 82.6% of respondents identified the absence of institutional

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guidelines as a significant barrier is not a peripheral concern — it is a governance failure with direct pedagogical consequences. Without policy guidance, lecturers default to caution, and students default to informality. Neither serves the institution's educational mission.

An effective policy need not be prohibitive. What it must do is establish clarity on four fronts: which platforms are sanctioned for academic use; what constitutes appropriate conduct in digital academic spaces; who bears responsibility for oversight and moderation; and how academic integrity violations arising from social media use will be addressed. These are not technically complex questions, but they require deliberate institutional engagement. Institutions in other African contexts — such as the University of Cape Town's digital learning guidelines — offer adaptable templates for Nigerian institutions navigating this process (Czerniewicz & Brown, 2014).

The financial dimension requires equal attention. That 76.2% of respondents identified potential family financial burden as a concern is not hypersensitivity — it reflects the reality that shifting academic activities to data-dependent platforms without institutional support effectively penalises those least able to absorb additional costs. Institutional Wi-Fi expansion, negotiated data subsidies with telecommunications providers, and device lending schemes are practical mechanisms for addressing this equity concern. Telecommunications partnership models already being explored by some Nigerian universities merit serious attention from polytechnic administrators operating with tighter technology budgets (Nwagwu, 2020).

Policy without accountability structures is, however, policy in name only. Institutions must establish review cycles, designate responsible officers within ICT directorates or academic affairs units, and create feedback mechanisms through which lecturers and students can report what is and is not working. A policy document that sits unmonitored in an institutional handbook produces no educational change.

**Implications for Curriculum Designers**

Curriculum designers determine whether social media becomes a meaningful pedagogical instrument or a peripheral addition. The attitudinal conditions for meaningful integration are already in place — both groups are broadly willing. What is missing is a curricular architecture that gives that willingness somewhere purposeful to go.

This means embedding social media activities into course designs that align with specific learning outcomes rather than adding them as novelties. A WhatsApp discussion structured around a case study, moderated by a designated student facilitator, and assessed as part of a participation grade is a fundamentally different intervention from an informal class group chat. The former creates accountability, encourages preparation, and develops collaborative communication skills that graduate employers value. The latter reproduces informal patterns that already exist and adds no academic value. Curriculum designers must make this distinction explicit in course documentation and assessment frameworks.

YouTube and comparable video platforms offer particular potential for flipped classroom designs, in which students engage with instructional content independently before contact sessions focused on discussion and application. This model has been implemented effectively across East and Southern Africa, but adoption in North-West and North-East Nigerian institutions remains limited (Asiimwe & Grönlund, 2015). Given that YouTube ranked third among respondents for academic platform use (41.3%), the behavioural foundation for structured flipped learning already exists.

Assessment design is the most critical lever. Social media use remains informal in many Nigerian institutions, partly because it is rarely assessed, and unassessed activities are rationally deprioritised by students. Embedding digital participation into assessment schemes requires careful design, particularly given that 92.9% of respondents flagged plagiarism and misuse as concerns. Assessments that require individual critical engagement with collaboratively gathered digital material — rather than submission of shared content — offer one proven approach (Deng & Tavares, 2013).

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**Implications for Educational Technology Practitioners**

Educational technology practitioners in the Nigerian context face a specific challenge: the infrastructure they are asked to build upon is unreliable, and the users they support have widely varying digital competencies. Both realities demand pragmatic, context-sensitive responses rather than the importation of integration models designed for better-resourced environments.

On infrastructure, the priority is stability, not sophistication. Respondents did not request cutting-edge learning management systems. They requested reliable connectivity — overwhelmingly, at 38.5% of open-ended responses. Practitioners should resist implementing complex platform solutions until basic connectivity is secured. A functional institutional WhatsApp group on a stable connection will produce better learning outcomes than a feature-rich system that loads intermittently. In infrastructure-constrained environments, simplicity is a pedagogical virtue.

Regarding competency, the finding that 83.2% of respondents agreed that insufficient technical skills limit effective use — across a sample with 100% smartphone ownership — confirms Margaryan et al.'s (2011) observation that ownership and usage do not equate to educational competency. Training programmes must address two distinct audiences with distinct needs. For lecturers, the priority is pedagogical: designing structured digital activities, managing online discussions productively, and maintaining professional boundaries in digital spaces. For students, the priority is strategic: using platforms critically and selectively, evaluating digitally sourced information, and engaging responsibly in collaborative digital environments.

These programmes must not be delivered as isolated workshops. Beetham and Sharpe (2013) argue that sustainable digital capability requires scaffolded, ongoing development embedded in authentic academic contexts. Practically, this means integrating digital skills modules into first-year induction, embedding platform guidance into course syllabi, and establishing peer support networks where digitally confident students assist others.

Academic integrity must be addressed at the design stage, not as an afterthought. WhatsApp — used academically by 86.2% of respondents — offers limited built-in mechanisms for managing plagiarism or verifying the authenticity of work. Practitioners should collaborate with curriculum designers to identify assessment types that are less susceptible to integrity violations and to explore how plagiarism-detection tools can be integrated into digitally mediated assessment workflows. Where technical capacity is limited, design solutions — requiring individually authored reflections on collaboratively gathered material, for instance — can achieve comparable protective outcomes.

Social media integration in Nigerian higher education will not succeed as a collection of isolated initiatives. It requires coordinated action across policy, curriculum, and technology, sustained by institutional leadership that treats digital transformation as a central educational priority. The attitudinal conditions for that transformation are present. What is needed is the institutional will to act on them.

## CONCLUSION

This study investigated how lecturers and students in selected Nigerian tertiary institutions perceive the integration of social media into conventional teaching modes — not how they use it, but what they believe about its educational value, its risks, and the conditions required for its formal adoption. The distinction is consequential. Behaviour and belief do not always align, and designing integration strategies based solely on usage data — without understanding the attitudinal landscape — is one reason well-intentioned educational technology initiatives so frequently stall.

The findings are broadly encouraging. Both lecturers and students hold positive perceptions of social media's educational potential, with complete consensus on its role in accelerating information sharing and distributing course materials. These are not abstract endorsements—they reflect platforms and practices already embedded in respondents' academic lives. The gap is not attitudinal; it is institutional. What respondents are effectively

signalling is that their institutions have not yet created the conditions for informal digital engagement to become a structured pedagogical practice.

The lecturer–student comparison adds important nuance. Lecturers are not resistant to integration, but their acceptance is more conditional and professionally considered than student enthusiasm suggests. A lecturer who requires clear policy guidance before restructuring their teaching around digital platforms is not being obstructive — they are asking a reasonable question about institutional accountability. The finding that this question remains largely unanswered across the institutions studied is, perhaps, the single most significant implication of the research.

Theoretically, the study confirms TAM's relevance while exposing its limits. Perceived usefulness is high, yet formal integration has not followed — because the facilitating conditions that Teo (2011) identified as equally necessary remain largely absent. Prestridge (2012) observed the same gap between teacher enthusiasm and institutional capacity in Australian schools; in the Nigerian context, this gap is further widened by infrastructural and economic constraints that most educational technology frameworks developed in well-resourced settings do not adequately account for.

The study carries acknowledged limitations. The sample was effectively drawn from three rather than four institutions, restricting geographic breadth. Self-reported data reflects stated beliefs rather than observed classroom behaviour. The cross-sectional design cannot capture attitudinal change over time. Future research should employ mixed-methods that combine surveys with interviews and classroom observation, longitudinal designs that track shifts in perception, and discipline-specific investigations, since the pedagogical conditions for social media integration are unlikely to be uniform across, for example, engineering and health sciences programmes.

What this study ultimately contributes is an empirically grounded account of where Nigerian tertiary institutions stand in relation to social media integration — and a clear indication of what must change for the gap between aspiration and practice to close. The attitudinal foundation exists. The willingness is genuine. What remains is the institutional work: policy frameworks, digital infrastructure, training capacity, and a shift in institutional culture toward treating digital transformation as a core educational responsibility rather than a peripheral one. That work is overdue.

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