Social Media as a Supplemental Tool in Blended Learning

Cabendario, Eva Mae[1], Gleyo, Sayra Mae[2], Matias Piolo[3], Earl Jones G. Muico[4*]

[1,2,3]*Department of Teacher Education, UM Tagum College Philippines*
[4*]*Department of Arts and Sciences, UM Tagum College Philippines*

Corresponding Email: [4*]*ejm_131@yahoo.com*

Abstract: During the pandemic, various tools were used to supplement education in the blended learning platform. This study was initiated to explore the experience of students in their use of social media in blended learning. The study employed a qualitative design which involved 14 participants. An inclusion criterion was designed by the researchers to select the most suitable participants for the study. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the responses of the participants. Results show that social media platforms have negative and positive effects. Given that online class was an alternative to continue education during the Pandemic, social media can be a supplementary tool and has shown promising benefits.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Parents found it hard to motivate their children to learning during the pandemic. The transition to online modality introduced many concerns for stakeholders in educational institutions. First, teachers were not able to directly interact with parents [1]. Second, teaching students using the online modality requires intensive training [2]. Third, unstable internet connectivity interrupted online classes [3]. Despite these challenges, online classes remained the prevalent approach to continue teaching during the Pandemic.

The transition to the online modality gave rise to using different online platforms. Tiktok was used responsibly to positively influence the engagement of college students [4]. Tiktok can even be used to improve student vocabulary [5]. Aside from Tiktok, Discord was also used by teachers. Discord became a feedbacking platform used by teachers as well as a developing the vocabulary [6]. There is even a study that utilized Facebook to improve mathematic literacy [7]. Existing literature shows that online platforms became prevalent in online classes and even showed the positive effects to students.

Using various online platforms is not a new concept in teaching. Even before the pandemic, various platforms have been used [8-10]. The Pandemic forced the transition to online modality. This allowed teachers to use online platforms which included social media. Past research documented the benefits in using online platforms however these studies were conducted prior to the pandemic. Given the highly experimental context of a full online class, the researchers decided to pursue this study. This research aimed to understand the experience of students in using social medial as a supplemental tool.

2. METHODOLOGY

The study employed a qualitative design. Qualitative studies focus on the experiences of the participants. Such studies do rely on numerical data but on data extracted from audio, video, and text [11]. In relation to the conduct of qualitative studies, the researchers also complied with the ethical standards demanded. The study is specifically a phenomenology as it details the experience of the participants. Data was collected from interviews of participants which were identified based on an inclusion criterion.

A total of 15 students were identified as participants. For qualitative studies, reaching 12 participants is necessary to reach saturation of data [12]. Other qualitative studies conformed with this consideration [13-15]. From the 15 participants, seven belonged to the in-depth interview while eight belonged to the focus group. The data was extracted from the interview responses of which was analysed through thematic analysis. The thematic analysis was used to generate patterns in the data. This treatment was necessary to formulate the themes and core ideas. These are relevant since it is the representation of the phenomenon.

3. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The results show that there 2 main categories in the experiences of students in using social media as a supplemental tool. There are positive and negative effects. This shows that there two aspects in using social media use. One focuses on the positive while the other focuses on the negative. The result is then categorized into themes and core ideas for elaboration.

Table 1. The positive effects in using social media as a supplemental tool in online classes

Essential Themes	Core Ideas
Helpful in the learning process	• Offer a wide array of solutions • Helps in developing my skills • Helps students understanding lessons
Easily accessible	• Easy to find information • Information is a click away • Sources are readily available
Student convenience	• Assignments are accomplished faster • Activities are paperless

3.1 Helpful in the learning process

Using social media as a supplemental tool is **helpful in the learning process**. Students are offered a wide array of solutions. Students use social media for problem-solving [16]. Social media even helps students develop skills and understanding lessons. Social media is a platform that brings people together. This encourages open communication wherein learners are able express ideas freely. The freedom to express ideas entitles students to develop skills which even includes research [17]. Social media is beneficial in classes provided there is effective incorporation done by teachers [18].

3.2 Easily accessible

The transition to blended learning makes social media **easily accessible**. The participants agreed that information can be found easy. Students today are digital natives. [19]. This enables students to have an inclination in using applications related to information systems [20]. Making the use of social media easier to use for students of this generation. Students also found that information is a click away. Other studies share similar findings [21-22]. Sources being readily available is a major factor to be considered in accessibility of social media. Students concur to this even before the pandemic period [23-24].

3.3 Student Convenience

Students enjoyed various comforts in the blended modality. One of the many comforts turned out to be **student convenience** from using social media in online classes. Students accomplish their tasks faster. This is attributed to student collaboration. Student collaborate as evidenced in the positive relationship of social media use and collaborative learning [25-26]. Students also appreciate paperless activities. Switching to paperless activities turned out to be a practical support to students [27].

Table 2. The negative effects in using social media as a supplemental tool in online classes

Essential Themes	Core Ideas
Reliance to internet connection	• Hard to participate if internet is slow • Limited access to instructional materials • Difficulty in teacher student interaction
Distraction from other applications	• Watching other sites • Sudden popups • Using other applications
Change study habits	• Lost time from excessive social media use • felt relaxed and lazy

3.4 Reliance to internet connection

The use of social media has contributed much to facilitating student learning as part of the blended modality. However, there are some issues that emerged. One of which is the reliance to internet connection. Both recent and previous studies document that poor internet connection led to some difficulties on the end of the learner [28-31]. Students found it hard to

participate in social media because of internet connectivity issues [32-33]. There were even students that had limited to no access to instructional materials [34-35]. There were even cases on the struggle of interaction between students and teachers [36].

3.5 Distraction from other applications

Student also encountered other issues in using social media. As student use social media, students are susceptible to distractions coming from other applications. Social media was even described as a superficial distraction [37]. Instead of focusing in class, students do other things. It was found that students watch other sites. There were even some students who used other applications. Such distractions negatively impacted learning and reduced the focus of students [38].

3.6 Changed study habits

The shift to online classes results to changed study habits. Students mentioned that lost time from excessive social media use. The shift to an online platform contributed to more time on social media [39-40] the more time students had on social the less time students get to study [41]. Some students even mentioned that they relaxed making them lazy to study. This lack of motivation to study can be traced to self-regulation. It was found that students in an online platform found it hard to condition themselves for studying [42].

4. CONCLUSION

The study was able to uncover both positive and negative effects of social if used as a supplemental tool in learning. Students reaped the positive effects wherein the use of social media was **Helpful in the learning process, Easily accessible** and **Student convenience**. This shows that using social media as a supplemental tool can be helpful to students. However, there are negative effects to students (**Reliance to internet connection, Distraction from other applications** and **Change study habits**). There are promising benefits in using social however there are potential issues. As such, teachers should strike a balance in using social. This is done to mitigate the negative effects and balance it with the positive effects.

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