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Empowering ESL Students: Harnessing the Potential of Social Media to Enhance Academic Motivation in Higher Education

Abstract: *Numerous studies have been conducted to determine how social media usage affects students' academic motivation as a result of its extensive use around the world. However, it has largely gone unnoticed when it comes to learning English as a second language (ESL). Thereby, this study examines the influence of social media usage on the academic motivation of ESL students. Conducted among 353 participants in Karachi's higher education institutions, which employed quantitative research methods. Findings showed substantial social media usage and its significant contribution to boosting the students' academic motivation. This study highlights the overlooked potential of social media as an instrument to boost ESL students' engagement and performance. Recognizing this impact can guide educators and policymakers to harness social media's benefits. This area merits further research to abundantly comprehend the relationship between social media use and academic motivation, enhancing the educational experiences of ESL students.*

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Introduction

In the vast landscape of educational theories and practices, the importance of academic motivation as an integral driving force behind students' learning endeavours is overwhelmingly recognized and valued

(Zaccoletti et al., 2020). This acknowledgement extends across diverse learning environments, educational levels, and geographic boundaries, testifying to its universal relevance and indispensability in shaping students' educational trajectories. Intricately interwoven with the very fabric of education,

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academic motivation is observed as an influential catalyst that significantly determines the degree of effectiveness, efficiency, critical thinking and overall success of a student's learning process (Berestova et al., 2022). In simple terms, to understand this complex relationship, one might envisage academic motivation as the fuel that powers the educational engine of a learner. With adequate motivation, the engine runs smoothly, taking the learner along a path of fruitful discoveries and scholarly accomplishments. Among the education fraternity, a profound and shared belief exists, which is echoed and reinforced by a substantial proportion of pedagogical professionals. This belief, substantiated by scholarly research and practical observations, posits that students, especially younger learners, who exhibit marked degrees of academic motivation are distinctly predisposed towards achieving commendable results in various educational contexts (Bond & Bedenlier, 2019). These individuals, propelled by an internal zeal for knowledge and learning, tend to manifest an enhanced performance, thereby carving a niche for themselves in the realm of academic excellence.

The belief's far-reaching implications extend to teaching practices and methodologies, essentially defining the fundamental ethos of educators across the spectrum of instructional-learning settings. This shared conviction propels teachers to take proactive steps and make unwavering efforts to enhance and stimulate their students' academic motivation. These efforts are not limited to just fueling their intellectual curiosity but also encompass ensuring a sense of fulfilment and satisfaction that students derive from their learning experiences (Abdelrady & Akram, 2022). From traditional brick-and-mortar classrooms to modern digital learning platforms, the continuous endeavour of educators worldwide to boost the academic motivation of their students bears testimony to the universal and timeless significance of this critical aspect of education (Akram et al., 2021).

Dedicated teachers have a variety of efficient strategies at their disposal to create a welcoming and productive educational environment, while also addressing the distinct characteristics and requirements of young adolescents. By employing a variety of strategies, teachers can create respectful and inclusive interactions that promote students' full potential. Furthermore, they can design activities that are both authentic and engaging, challenging students to excel academically. In accordance with Akram and Abdelrady (2023), these proactive measures are crucial in recognizing and accommodating the unique qualities and needs of young adolescents. By employing a diverse array of teaching methods, educators can ensure that every student feels valued and supported, which in turn fosters a conducive environment for optimal learning. The utilization of respectful and inclusive practices promotes mutual respect and empathy among students, fostering positive social interactions and promoting a sense of belonging within the classroom (Sancar et al., 2021). By challenging students to stretch their capabilities and providing meaningful and authentic learning experiences, teachers can ignite students' curiosity and motivation, empowering them to reach their full potential. In addition, Trolian and Jach's (2020) study brings an interesting point to light, emphasizing the positive correlation between a student's dedication to their studies and the resulting academic performance. When students demonstrate a clear and unwavering commitment to their academic duties, not just superficially but at a profound level, investing not just time but also effort and energy, they often witness superior academic outcomes. This consistent investment into their educational pursuits could be characterized as diligent and conscientious, reflecting a tenacious adherence to their responsibilities and an unyielding drive to achieve their objectives (Akbari & Sahibzada, 2020).

Such students tend to outperform their counterparts, the ones who perhaps lack the same degree of commitment or enthusiasm towards their studies. These students, for a variety of reasons, might not prioritize their academic responsibilities as stringently. They might not devote the necessary time and energy towards their education, often resulting in less optimal academic performance (Tasgin & Coskun, 2018). However, the distinction between these two sets of students isn't simply black and white. It's a spectrum of varying degrees of commitment and effort. Some students might waver between high periods of motivation and lower ones, while others might steadily maintain a middle-of-the-road approach. Thus, understanding the factors that influence this spectrum – personal circumstances, teaching methods, subject interest, among others – is also essential.

In the present day and age, the proliferation of various cutting-edge technologies and the ubiquitous presence of social networking sites such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have solidified their status as integral facets of the lives of a vast majority of young individuals (Verduyn et al., 2020). Notably, these platforms predominantly operate in the English language, further cementing their prominence and global influence. Recognizing this is essential to know the significant role played by young adults and teenagers in the widespread advertising and promotion of these social network sites, as they actively contribute to their ever-expanding reach and pervasive impact across the world (Yoon et al., 2019).

A wealth of previous research studies has yielded valuable insights into the far-reaching effects of social network sites on individuals, particularly teenagers and adults, in numerous aspects of their lives (Azizi et al., 2019; Verduyn et al., 2022). These studies have unravelled a multitude of significant findings, illuminating the profound influence these digital platforms exert on users' behaviours, emotions, and overall well-being.

Furthermore, an exploration of social network site usage specifically within the context of education, has uncovered compelling evidence suggesting that these platforms can serve as a compelling substitute for conventional ways of interacting personally (Alismaiel et al., 2022). In this context, they have proven themselves to be a viable and effective medium for fostering robust and meaningful student-teacher engagement, facilitating seamless information dissemination, and promoting interactive learning experiences. These noteworthy discoveries gleaned from prior research underscore the vast potential of social network sites to revolutionize communication practices within the educational landscape, offering a dynamic and innovative means of connecting with and supporting students (Azizi et al., 2019).

The influence of social media usage on students' academic performance has been the subject of a multitude of extensive and in-depth empirical studies conducted across diverse academic disciplines (Elareshi et al., 2022). These studies, spanning a significant period of time, have sought to explore the multifaceted impact of social media on various aspects of student performance, encompassing not only traditional academic metrics but also encompassing psychological, cognitive, and socio-emotional dimensions. By employing a variety of research methodologies, including surveys, experiments, and longitudinal analyses, researchers have endeavoured to unravel the intricate relationships between social media engagement and student outcomes (Mishra, 2020).

Empirical studies have delved into critical aspects of the student experience, exploring the influence of social media on their academic tasks. One of the main topics of these investigations, like the one carried out by Bond et al. (2020), is the impact of distractions stemming from social media and the resultant multitasking on students' capacity to maintain concentration and focus. Continuous notifications, the lure of trending topics, and constant engagement can lead to an inability to

centre one's attention on academic tasks, which has become an area of considerable concern and study. Furthermore, researchers have cast their investigative lens on the role played by social media platforms as avenues for sharing information and tools for collaborative learning. This aspect touches on the brighter side of social media, looking beyond the challenges and distractions they present (Zachos et al., 2018). It emphasizes the platforms' potential to be instrumental in augmenting the acquisition of knowledge and bolstering engagement in academic activities.

This use of social media as a dynamic educational tool leverages the interconnected nature of today's digital age. It helps facilitate the exchange of ideas, insights, and knowledge, fostering a dynamic and stimulating academic environment. Here, social media doesn't merely serve as a communication tool but emerges as an academic aid, a space that could potentially inspire creative thinking, foster intellectual curiosity, and enhance the overall academic experience (Kind & Evans, 2015). Thus, while social media can often be a source of distraction for students, it also offers significant potential as an academic tool. Balancing these two aspects – minimizing distractions while maximizing learning potential – becomes a critical area for educators and students alike to navigate.

Moreover, researchers have examined the role of social media platforms as information-sharing and collaborative learning tools, exploring their potential to boost knowledge attainment and academic engagement. Studies have also looked into how social media use affects students' study practices, time management abilities, and general academic achievement. Furthermore, social media's effect on how pupils communicate with one another and peer relationships has been a crucial focus of investigation (Farrell & Brunton, 2020). Researchers have explored the effects of online social networks on social connectedness, social support, and the development of social skills among students. In addition, investigations have looked at the

dangers and difficulties that could come with cyberbullying, social comparison, and the effect of social media on behavioural wellness (Ansari & Khan, 2020).

Despite the wealth of empirical studies examining the impact of social media usage on various aspects of student performance, the investigation of its influence on the academic motivation of ESL (English as a Second Language) students has remained remarkably scarce. Surprisingly, there has been limited research dedicated to exploring how social media engagement affects the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that drive ESL students' desire and commitment to learn. Recognizing that academic motivation plays a pivotal role in fostering improved academic performance within the specific context of second language acquisition (Wu et al., 2020), the need for comprehensive research in this area becomes increasingly apparent. By delving into the intricate relationship between social media usage and ESL students' academic motivation, researchers can shed light on potential avenues for enhancing language learning experiences and outcomes for this particular group of learners. But Khan, M.A. et al (2017) have said that sometimes media acts as a tool in the hands of capitalists to fulfil their agenda for the promotion of sales etc.

Numerous research studies have brought to light the dissatisfaction students often experience regarding their level of academic engagement, which can stem from various factors such as inadequate professional development (Akram, 2020) and limited access to resources. Correspondingly, multiple studies have highlighted students' discontentment with their academic engagement levels (Akram & Yang, 2021). Considering the paramount importance of student motivation in driving successful language acquisition, it becomes crucial to explore the role of social media in facilitating the English language learning context. The extent to which students utilize social media platforms to augment their language learning experience exerts a substantial impact on their motivation to learn and thrive. Accordingly,

the present study endeavours to shed light on this intricate relationship between social media usage and English language learning motivation, encompassing a wide range of dimensions and implications. By delineating a set of well-defined research objectives, this study aims to comprehensively investigate the multifaceted aspects of integrating social media into the English language learning process, uncovering valuable insights that can inform educational practices and enhance student engagement and success.

1. To understand how extensively students use social media platforms.
2. To analyze the association between social media platforms engagement and academic drive in English language learning.

Theoretical Framework

In recent years, the world has experienced a digital revolution, with social media taking centre stage in transforming many aspects of our lives. These platforms have not just redefined communication and interaction; they've also impacted fields like education, creating new paradigms and opportunities. The focal point of this research is to probe the question of how the utilization of social media platforms can impact these students' drive to succeed academically, which has grown increasingly relevant in our digitally interconnected era. Guiding this exploration is the self-determination theory, a widely recognized framework for understanding human motivation and personality. This theory offers a comprehensive perspective on the role of intrinsic and extrinsic motivators in determining human behaviour. It contends that individuals are driven by a need to grow, attain goals, and internalize values, which can be influenced by social and cultural contexts.

As we investigate the connection between social media use and the educational drive of ESL students, the self-determination theory will be our touchstone. It will help us understand how external factors, like social media, can influence the internal drives of these students and what that means for their learning journey. By combining the modern phenomena of social media with the classic principles of the self-determination theory, this study aims to shed light on an area that is of growing importance in today's educational landscape. Through this research, we seek to offer valuable insights that could help educators, students, and policymakers to navigate the evolving world of digital education effectively.

The self-determination theory, which Deci and Ryan established in 1985, contends that when people's demands for relatedness, competence, and autonomy are met in a specific learning activity or environment, their levels of intrinsic motivation rise. This theory provides a framework for understanding how social media usage can impact the academic motivation of ESL students. One aspect of social media that can affect ESL students' academic motivation is the need for competence. Social media platforms offer numerous opportunities for students to engage with English language content, such as educational videos, articles, and forums. By actively participating in these online platforms, ESL students can enhance their language skills and develop a sense of competence in their English proficiency (Xiuwen & Razali, 2021). This increased sense of competence can positively impact their academic motivation by fostering a belief in their ability to succeed in their language-learning endeavours.

Another aspect of self-determination theory that is relevant to the influence of social media on ESL students' academic motivation is autonomy. Social media provides ESL students with a platform where they can independently explore and engage with English language resources that align with their personal interests and learning styles. Unlike traditional classroom settings, social media platforms offer a more personalized and autonomous learning experience (Al-Adwan et al., 2022). This autonomy in choosing and accessing language learning materials can significantly enhance ESL students' motivation, as they feel a sense of

ownership and control over their learning process. Furthermore, social media facilitates relatedness, which is another fundamental aspect of self-determination theory. ESL students can connect with peers and language communities from around the world through social media platforms (Ansari & Khan, 2020). These connections provide opportunities for collaborative learning, sharing experiences, and seeking support. The sense of belonging and social interaction fostered by social media can positively influence ESL students' academic motivation by creating a supportive learning environment and a sense of community.

However, it's crucial to remain cognizant that the influence of social media on ESL students' academic motivation is not entirely positive. Excessive use of social media can lead to distractions, time mismanagement, mental health and a lack of focus on academic tasks (Abi-Jaoude et al., 2020; Hou et al., 2019). The potential negative impact of social media on academic motivation should be acknowledged and addressed in educational settings. In conclusion, the influence of social media usage on ESL students' academic motivation is a complex and multifaceted topic. By examining this phenomenon through the lens of self-determination theory, we can better understand how social media can fulfil the needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness, thereby impacting ESL students' intrinsic motivation. However, in order to effectively promote the academic motivation of ESL students, it is imperative to strike a balance between the advantages and potential disadvantages of social media usage.

Research Methodology

Research Design

In order to comprehensively examine and gain insights into the impact of social media usage on the academic motivation of ESL students in higher education, a carefully chosen quantitative research design was employed as it offered the most appropriate and effective means of presenting findings through numerical representation. The decision to select a quantitative design was based on its compatibility with accurately depicting the outcomes of the study, as emphasized by Bloomfield and Fisher (2019).

Participants

The research population encompassed the entirety of students currently enrolled in universities located in Karachi, ensuring a comprehensive representation of the target group. Employing the method of purposive sampling, the researcher deliberately selected a specific demographic of respondents to participate in the data collection process, as highlighted by Etikan and Bala (2017). To this end, surveys were distributed to 623 students in a focused manner, with the intention of obtaining meaningful insights. However, it is noteworthy that the complete survey responses were provided by a subset of 353 students.

Instrument

To comprehensively assess the extent of social media utilization and its impact on the academic motivation of ESL students, a closed-ended survey questionnaire was meticulously designed. This questionnaire consisted of two distinct scales, each specifically tailored to measure and gauge different aspects of the subject matter. The utilization rate of social networking sites (SNS) was one aspect explored, while the influence of these platforms on academic motivation was another crucial dimension investigated. By incorporating these comprehensive scales, the survey questionnaire aimed to capture a holistic understanding of the topic at hand.

The social media usage scale (SMUC) was derived and modified from the work of Koc and Gulyagci (2013), consisting of a total of ten distinct items. To evaluate their level of engagement, students were requested to provide ratings for each item using a Likert-type scale that encompassed a range from 1, indicating a complete absence of usage

(Never), to 5, representing a constant and consistent presence (Always).

In order to investigate the academic motivation of students in English language classes, the researchers employed the Academic Motivation Scale (AMS), which was adapted from Fairchild et al.'s (2005) original work. The AMS utilized a comprehensive 28-item version, enabling a thorough examination of the subject. To gauge participants' responses, a Likert scale with five points was employed, where the beginning place indicated "Strongly disagree" and the last point represented "Strongly agree," thereby facilitating a nuanced evaluation of their level of agreement or disagreement with each item.

Instrument Reliability

To ensure the reliability of the research instrument, the questionnaire underwent a thorough evaluation of its face validity by an English department professor from the university mentioned earlier. It is important to note that the professor's identity was carefully obscured to preserve obscurity. Following this evaluation, a pilot study involving a sample of fifty students was conducted, serving as a foundation for assessing the questionnaire's dependability. The results of the pilot study, which are outlined in the succeeding section, provided crucial insights. Table 1 displays the outcomes of the calculations employed to determine the Cronbach Alpha Reliability Coefficient for each item. This table presents significant findings regarding the reliability of the questionnaire. Notably, the Cronbach Alpha Coefficients for all the items collectively yielded a strong value (Ercan et al., 2007), with an overall coefficient of 0.71, indicating the questionnaire's suitability for the subsequent comprehensive study.

Table 1

Questionnaire Reliability

Scales	No of Items	Standardized Alpha Value	Alpha Value
Social media usage scale	10	0.76	0.81
Academic Motivation scale	28	0.79	.80

Results

Objective No. 1. Utilization of Social Media Platforms

In order to gauge the students' level of engagement with social networking sites (SNS), the researchers conducted an analysis utilizing Descriptive Statistical tests, specifically Mean and Standard Deviation. The results revealed that the Mean values for all the questionnaire items exceeded 3, with a specific average of 3.01 (as indicated in Table 2). This indicates that students' utilization of SNS is not only substantial but also falls within the adequate range, given the criterion established by Lee et al. (2015) which suggests that a Mean value of M ≥ 3 signifies satisfactory usage. These findings provide compelling evidence that the students are actively and proficiently utilizing SNS platforms.

Objective No. 2. Influence of SNS Utilization on Students' Academic Motivation

To comprehensively investigate the effect of social media usage on students' academic motivation, a rigorous analysis was conducted using the linear regression test through the SPSS software (see Table 2). The results of this analysis uncovered a noteworthy finding, demonstrating that the extent to which students allocate their time on SNS platforms holds a significant influence on their motivation to learn English as a second language, with a statistically significant correlation observed at the 0.05 level of

significance. This substantial association between SNS usage and academic motivation further validates the stated objective of the study and reinforces the significance of the research findings.

Table 2

Linear Regression Analysis

Academic motivation			
Independent Variable	**β**	**p-value**	**R-Square**
Social media usage	.32	.00**	.45

Discussion

This research has yielded illuminating insights into the association between social networking site (SNS) usage and academic motivation among students, particularly those learning English as a second language. The study employed statistical tests, such as Mean and Standard deviation, to measure the level of SNS utilization among the student population. The outcome of this analysis, illustrated by a mean score exceeding 3 for all the items on the questionnaire, suggests a substantial engagement with these platforms by the students. This is an indication that the students' interaction with SNS is not just sporadic or minimal, but rather consistent and meaningful. Notably, this finding aligns with the results of other studies in the field. Findings, such as those by Van Den Beemt et al. (2020) and Verduyn et al. (2022) have reported similar patterns of active SNS engagement among students. This concurrence across different research efforts lends credence and strength to the findings. It provides a degree of reliability and generalizability to the observed patterns, suggesting that this is not an isolated incident limited to this particular research cohort but a broader trend evident across various student populations.

Therefore, the inference that can be drawn from these shared findings is that the students' active engagement with social networking sites is a common phenomenon, not confined to a specific demographic or geographical context. This understanding is crucial as it provides a baseline for the further exploration of the impact such engagement might have on their academic motivation, and specifically on their pursuit of English language learning. By acknowledging this wider trend, future research and interventions can be designed with a more comprehensive understanding of the students' digital behaviour.

In the pursuit of a more nuanced understanding of the influence of social media usage on students' academic motivation, a more advanced statistical analysis was implemented. Specifically, a linear regression test was carried out, using the renowned tool for statistical analysis, the (SPSS). The objective of this further analysis was to examine if there exists a noteworthy connection amid the duration of time students spend on social media platforms and their motivation to learn English. Linear regression is a powerful tool that can model the relationship between two variables. In this instance, it helps estimate how variations in the time spent on social media platforms (the independent variable) might be associated with changes in the students' drive to learn the English language (the dependent variable).

Upon running this linear regression analysis, the data produced results that painted an enlightening picture. The use of social networking sites and the students' motivation for their academic work were found to be statistically related. This finding was confirmed with a significance level set at 0.05, a commonly accepted threshold in statistical analysis to determine the likelihood that the relationship observed could have occurred by chance. This significance level indicates that the probability of the observed association between SNS usage and academic motivation occurring by chance is less than

5%, providing robust evidence to support the finding. Therefore, this analysis substantiates the claim that social media platform usage does indeed have a noteworthy influence on students' motivation to learn the English language. This notable finding forms a crucial aspect of the overall understanding of the interplay between social media usage and academic motivation, creating the basis for potential future research and policy-making in this area.

This significant association highlights the role of SNS usage in influencing students' motivation to learn English. It suggests that the amount of time students allocate to these platforms has a tangible effect on their overall academic motivation in the context of language learning. These results offer evidence in favour of the study objectives, demonstrating that the impact of Social media usage on academic motivation cannot be disregarded. Social media usage's connection with students' academic motivation, specifically in the context of language learning, has been highlighted in previous research. Shahzad and Bilal (2019) conducted a study that yielded similar findings, emphasizing the influence of time spent on social networking sites (SNS) such as Twitter and Facebook on students' overall academic motivation. Their research shed light on the significant role played by these platforms in shaping students' motivation levels when it comes to language learning. These findings complement the current study, reinforcing the notion that social media usage can significantly influence students' academic motivation, not only in general educational contexts but also in language learning specifically. It emphasizes the need to consider the impact of social media platforms when designing interventions and strategies to enhance students' educational drive in the realm of language learning.

The implications of these findings are significant for both educators and students. Understanding the influence of SNS usage on academic motivation can help educators design effective strategies to harness students' engagement and enhance their language learning experience. By acknowledging the

impact of SNS on motivation, educators can leverage these platforms as supplementary tools for language instruction, integrating relevant and engaging content that aligns with students' interests and preferences.

Additionally, students themselves can benefit from these findings by being mindful of their SNS usage and its potential impact on their academic motivation. Students need to reconcile their SNS activities with their academic obligations in order to succeed, ensuring that SNS usage does not detract from their overall educational goals.

It is essential to keep in mind, though, that this study concentrated exclusively on the situation of learning the English language and may not necessarily extend to other academic fields or linguistic circumstances. Further research is warranted to investigate the bond between social media usage and academic motivation in diverse educational settings. The study's findings, in light of the setting of learning English as a second language, offer important new information about the impact of SNS usage on students' academic motivation. The findings underscore the significant association between SNS usage and educational drive, emphasizing the need for educators and students to recognize and navigate the impact of SNS on language learning. By understanding this relationship, stakeholders can harness the potential of SNS platforms to foster a positive and motivating learning environment.

Conclusions

This research has uncovered important insights into the relationship between students' engagement with SNS platforms and their academic motivation, particularly in relation to English language learning. A primary finding of the study is that students have shown a notable level of active participation with these digital platforms. This assertion is corroborated by the mean scores from the study's questionnaire items, which exceed the value of 3, denoting a substantial and meaningful use of SNS among the students. In addition to this, the study

embarked on a further exploration using a linear regression test, a powerful statistical tool for understanding the relationship between variables. The test was instrumental in unveiling a significant relationship between the duration, students invest in SNS platforms and their inspiration to learn the English language. This finding is pivotal because it provides empirical evidence to support the study's initial objective.

Thus, these findings serve not only as a validation of the research objectives but also as a basis for actionable suggestions. They underscore the profound role that social networking sites can play in shaping students' motivation towards language learning. These insights can inform the creation of educational strategies that leverage SNS as tools for enhancing students' engagement and success in learning the English language. The research findings can also inspire further studies on this topic, with the aim of comprehensively understanding the dynamics of digital technology and language learning in today's interconnected world.

The results of this study show that students demonstrate active participation with social networking sites (SNS), as indicated by their mean score above 3 for all questionnaire items. This suggests that students utilize SNS adequately. Additionally, the results of research employing a linear regression test show a substantial correlation between the time students spend using social media platforms and their motivation to learn English. These findings support the study's objective and emphasize the impact of SNS usage on educational enthusiasm to learn the English language and offer the following suggestions.

1. Educators should raise awareness among students about the potential impact of excessive SNS usage on their academic motivation. Providing information about effective time management and self-regulation strategies can help students strike a balance between SNS activities and their academic responsibilities.

2. In addition, educators can harness the motivational aspects of SNS platforms by integrating relevant and engaging content into language learning activities. By incorporating interactive and collaborative tasks that utilize SNS features, students can enhance their language skills while staying motivated.

3. It is important to promote digital citizenship among students, emphasizing the responsible and ethical use of SNS platforms. Educators should guide students on maintaining a healthy SNS usage habits, encouraging them to use these platforms as a supplement to their academic pursuits rather than a distraction.

4. The impact of SNS usage on academic motivation may vary across different contexts and academic disciplines. Thereby, further research is needed to see the insights regarding the association between social media usage and academic motivation in diverse educational settings. By doing so, a deeper knowledge of how SNS can be successfully used to boost student motivation will be provided.

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