

Social Media: Boon or Bane?

Kristin Jazz Lumapas Telen¹, Alex S. Compas²

^{1,2}University of the Visayas, Cor D. Jakosalem St Cebu City, Philippines,6000
Email address: kristintelenn@gmail.com¹, acompas@uv.edu.ph²

Abstract—This research focuses on how first year college students in Cebu Roosevelt Memorial Colleges (2023-2024) utilize social media for Social Studies discussion of contentious issues. It looks at how much they use it to understand controversial topics and engage in class discussions. The study utilizes a quantitative descriptive correlational design. The findings reveal that there is a correlation between variables. The findings revealed a significant correlation between students' self-reported social media usage and critical thinking. The students' high level of critical thinking tendencies can lead them to become cautious of material provided via social media platforms, thereby validating the sources, authenticity or even seeking an equally opposing viewpoint. The findings indicated that students who possess the ability to think critically excel in comprehending contentious topics in social studies. Moreover, those who can assess information effectively are more inclined to engage in conversations regarding social studies issues. These outcomes have the potential to assist educators in refining their teaching methods for students, enabling them to grasp subjects more profoundly and participate in lively discussions during classes.

Keywords— Social media, student engagement, social studies, controversial topics, class engagement.

I. INTRODUCTION

Students are urged to develop thinking skills and independence by analyzing complex issues within the realm of social studies. While social media showcases diversity, it also underscores the importance of promoting discussions and conducting source assessments. When utilized thoughtfully, social media aids in broadening understanding and encouraging dialogue, thus enriching the teaching of social studies. Educators hold a position in preparing students to navigate social media effectively and cultivate informed citizenship by nurturing critical thinking abilities and promoting responsible online behavior.

Despite the fact that social media is being used more frequently in academic settings for information gathering, teamwork, and idea sharing (Al-Rahmi et al., 2014; Al Khalifa & Garcia, 2013), little is known about how these platforms specifically affect college students' engagement with controversial Social Studies topics. Prior research has revealed the overall educational advantages of social media, including the promotion of significant dialogues (Manu et al., 2021), the elevation of motivation and lesson accomplishments (Bal and Bicen, 2017), and the enhancement of cooperative learning (Ansari and Khan, 2020). Nonetheless, few studies specifically examine the connection between using social media and participating in controversial social studies issues in class. By examining successful methods for incorporating social media into Social Studies lessons to encourage student participation in contentious debates, this research seeks to

close this gap. This study aims to investigate how social media affects students' attitudes and participation in controversial subject discussions within Social Studies Education by examining how educators can use social media to promote critical thinking abilities, discern credible information, and engage in polite, productive discourse.

The Department of Information and Communications Technology Act, Republic Act No. 10844, establishes state policy for ICT (information and communication technology). This study supports the goals of RA 10844, which include boosting ICT use in education, acknowledging its role in nation-building, and improving important public services. In particular, in an effort to determine how social media usage affects students' comprehension of controversial social studies subjects, the study looks into how it relates to student participation in the classroom.

Students at Cebu Roosevelt Memorial Colleges are constantly engaged with social media. The researcher has noticed a growing trend among students on campus to use social media sites to help with teaching and learning, both inside and outside of the traditional classroom. Students are using online resources such as Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, news websites, e-books, academic databases, and webpages as information sources when they participate in the learning process. Compared to classrooms without online social networking, students felt more connected to their instructor and peers when they used social media (Hamid et al., 2015). They further believed that social media improved their understanding of the course material. Furthermore, Greenhow and Askari (2015) emphasized how social networking sites can support constructivist methods by fostering the co-creation of information and increasing connections between educators, parents, and students. But while students used social media for conversation and knowledge exchange, a recent survey of university students in Hong Kong found that they were frequently distracted by the entertainment and social aspects of the platform (Tang et al., 2015). Similarly, according to Balakrishnan and Gan (2016), students are relying more and more on readily available information from social media and the internet. Their dependence on these websites weakens their capacity for learning and research because it takes up more of their time and lessens their focus in class, which affects their academic achievement (Hoffmann & Bublitz, 2017).

With social media's positive and negative effects on student involvement in the classroom, this study primarily intends to evaluate how first-year college students use social media to participate in class discussions on controversial Social Studies topics and to build a framework for student

engagement. By emphasizing the development of digital literacy, teamwork, and information verification abilities, the framework seeks to address issues around social media's effect on student involvement.

Theoretical Conceptual Framework of the Study

The purpose of this study is to ascertain how students' participation in class discussions on contentious social studies topics is influenced by social media. Two significant theories offer a crucial framework for understanding this research.

Social Constructivism. In 1968, Lev Vygotsky proposed the social constructivism theory of learning. According to this theory, human perception, communication, and understanding of reality are facilitated by language and culture. In other words, concepts are acquired through language and then interpreted and understood through interactions and

experiences in cultural contexts (Akpan et al., 2020). Knowledge is consequently co-produced as well as socially created since it requires a group of individuals to have language and culture in order to build cognitive structures. Constructivists view knowledge as something that students create on their own using the experiences they collect from their surroundings, whereas social constructivists view knowledge as something that students create in cooperation with classmates, teachers, and other students. Language plays a major role in shaping children's understanding of the world. This includes interactions between individuals and the physical world, which is merely perceived by the senses. Language also plays a cultural, meaningful, and significant role in shaping children's understanding of the world (Hein 1991, as cited in Akpan et al., 2020).

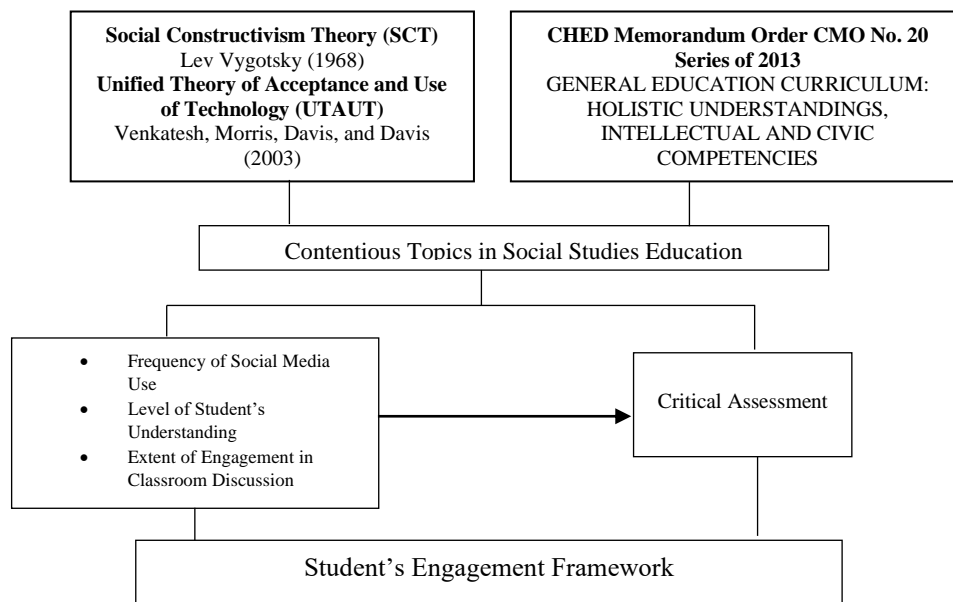


Figure 1. Schematic Diagram of the Theoretical Framework of the Study

Online resources and social media use offer a platform for group learning. Students can participate in debates, exchange viewpoints, and collaboratively create understanding related to controversial social studies topics. Social media's interactive features facilitate idea sharing and cooperative understanding building within online communities. Social constructivism holds that language and culture are essential components of education. Social media sites and other online environments provide a forum for students to engage in language-based discourse on controversial subjects. Due to the various cultural viewpoints and experiences that are involved, the wide range of students taking part in online debates can help us understand these issues better.

Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT). Venkatesh, Morris, Davis, and Davis developed the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) model in 2003 as a comprehensive synthesis of prior TAM-related research. According to UTAUT theory, effective use of technology requires behavioral intention. The likelihood of technology adoption is directly impacted by four

key constructs: performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions. Performance expectancy is characterized as the "extent to which an individual perceives that using the system." It is the belief that the use of a particular technology or method will, to some extent, be advantageous or performance enhancing to the individual. Construct used in this research to measure how the new technology would help him or her in their learning. Expected effort is characterized as "the degree of ease associated with using a system" (Venkatesh et al., 2003). This focuses on how easy people perceive the technology to be to learn and use. If it seems complex or confusing, they'll be less likely to try it. However, the impact of this construct diminishes in significance with prolonged technology usage, as indicated by studies conducted by Gupta, Dasgupta, and Gupta (2008), as well as Chauhan and Jaiswal (2016). Social influence is defined as "the extent to which an individual perceives that influential others believe that he or she should adopt the new system" (Venkatesh et al., 2003). This considers how much pressure people feel from others to use

the technology. If their colleagues or friends are all using it, they may feel obligated to follow suit. Enabling conditions are defined as “the extent to which individuals believe that the organization’s technological infrastructure is available to support the use of the system” (Venkatesh et al., 2003). This refers to the resources and support available to help people use the technology effectively. Initially, facilitating conditions positively influence the intention to use, but their significance diminishes after the initial use. Understanding how students use social media in the context of social studies education is made easier with the help of the UTAUT model. The primary characteristics of the UTAUT model can impact students’ behavioral intentions to use social media for controversial social studies themes.

The CHED Memorandum Order 20 Series of 2013 outlines the revised General Education (GE) framework that is in accordance with the K–12 curriculum and criteria for college readiness. It defines the objectives, standards, proficiencies, foundational courses, and electives for General Education (GE), which are applicable to all degree programs in Philippine higher education institutions, both public and private. The GE framework aims to develop civic abilities in addition to critical, analytical, and creative thinking. GE subjects prepare students with the skills they need to understand and address challenging social and environmental issues in the twenty-first century. In line with the CMO, the use of social media for discussions on local and global issues encourages active involvement and diverse viewpoints among students. Social media is a global tool that encourages the objective of preparing students for a world that is increasingly interconnected by enabling them to expand their understanding of worldwide issues. In line with these objectives, the CMO 20 Series of 2013 presents a framework for understanding how social media could improve college students’ engagement with contentious topics in Social Studies.

Literature Review

The study by Manu et al. (2021) investigated students’ perceptions of social media as a teaching tool. The study revealed that educators should be mindful of students’ perspectives and teach them the benefits of different online sources. Similarly, the study of Bal and Bicen (2017) determined the purpose of students’ social media use and also their perspectives on education. Students had an important role in the acquisition of information on social media, and this provided effective learning, which means easy sharing of information (Bal and Bicen, 2017). The study also reported that the information that students get through the groups contributes to their lesson achievements and together with other multimedia tools, increases their motivation. The study by Dragseth (2019) summarizes the pedagogical benefits of social media and reflects on the challenges and successes of social media related to student engagement in and out of the classroom and student feedback on social media contributions to learning. According to the study, integrating social media into undergraduate and graduate courses aids in improving student engagement and developing interpersonal networks by

teaching students how to integrate course material into real-world situations. Exercises, including weekly social media posts, help students engage in formal-informal learning, applying material outside the classroom. In a study conducted by Ansari and Khan (2020), the researchers examined the application and usefulness of social media and mobile devices in transferring the resources and interaction with academicians in higher education institutions. This study found that using online social media for collaborative learning had a significant impact on online knowledge sharing behavior as well as interactivity with peers and teachers. Additionally, interactivity with teachers and peers and online knowledge sharing behavior has seen a significant impact on students’ engagement, which consequently has a significant impact on students’ academic performance. Ansari and Khan (2020) showed that using online social media for collaborative learning makes students more creative, dynamic, and research-oriented, which is purely in the domain of knowledge.

Kim et al. (2014) examined the methods students used to assess the reliability of the information they obtained from these sources. The study offers a brief overview of the most recent developments in the use of social media as a source of information. It also clarifies the process that the undergraduate students took to assess data from social media, including rarely examined social networking and video-sharing websites. The results provide insight into the social media platforms that are commonly used as information sources, as well as the assessment and application of the information obtained through social media. It appears that undergraduate students frequently use a variety of social media sites to locate and obtain information. Apart from employing some evaluating techniques similar to those employed for conventional resources, learners appeared to have formulated autonomous approaches (such as scrutinizing disclaimer notes) to assess the caliber of data obtained via social media (Kim et al., 2014). In the study of Mao (2014), students showed positive attitudes and beliefs about social media use in education. The findings of the study suggest that using social media as an effective learning tool and adapting students’ prior knowledge of using these tools requires significant efforts in designing, supporting, and engaging with students along the way.

In a study by Nygren, Folkeryd, Liberg, & Guath (2020), the researchers investigate how 400 students determine the trustworthiness of false, biased and credible news. What is clear from this study is that the issues rose as crucial in terms of information handling – who, what, how and why – are useful for assessing digital news. It is still evident that different types of news and various types of misinformation call for various types of assessments. In education, there is a need to find ways to support various ways of assessing the credibility of information, while also being aware of the possibility that even with the correct attention an incorrect conclusion could still be made.

Previous studies emphasize the potential of social media as an educational tool that impacts students’ engagement and their learning outcomes. In the study of Manu et al. (2021), the researcher emphasized that educators should be mindful of

students' perspectives and teaches them the benefits of different online sources. Dragseth (2019) emphasized that social media can be beneficial to teaching as it increases student engagement and real-world connections. Meanwhile, social media makes the sharing of information easier, which can foster engagement among students and develop their critical thinking skills. Social media also fosters collaborative learning among peers and teachers, which has a positive impact on student engagement and academic performance. Bal and Bicen (2017) revealed that, social media can facilitate effective information acquisition that will help enhance student motivation and lesson achievement. Kim et al. (2014) highlight how students evaluate the credibility of information from social media. Understanding the context of the information can enhance educational interventions to improve critical evaluation skills, which are essential in understanding controversial issues. Students also demonstrate positive feedback toward social media in education; however, the need for careful design and scaffolding should be highlighted to enhance learning experiences (Mao, 2014). Nygren et al. (2020) explored the different ways students evaluate the credibility of various types of news. In connection with this study, there is a need for various assessment methods that are particularly helpful in navigating diverse perspectives and biases on controversial issues.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to assess the extent of utilization of social media to first year college students' class engagement in dealing with contentious topics in Social Studies in Cebu Roosevelt Memorial Colleges, SY 2023-2024.

The study specifically aims to respond to the following queries:

1. To what extent do students engage with various social media platforms to consult for information on contentious topics in social studies?
2. What is the students' level of understanding of contentious topics within the field of social studies education?
3. What is the respondents' extent of engagement in class discussion and activities related to contentious topics in social studies?
4. To what extent do students critically assess information from social media in the context of contentious topics in social studies education?
5. Is there a noteworthy correlation between the critical assessment level of the respondents and their:
 - 5.1 extent of social media usage
 - 5.2 level of understanding in contentious topics
 - 5.3 extent of engagement in classroom engagement.
6. What student engagement framework can be proposed?

This research is significant because it aims to provide insights on the impact of social media on students' perceptions and class engagement in contentious subjects within the field of social studies. This knowledge is essential, specifically among educators, in order to formulate teaching approaches that allow the learners to gain a more comprehensive understanding of these topics.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study investigates the relationship between social media use among college students and their engagement in controversial topics in Social Studies.

Study Design

This study is a quantitative research design that utilizes a descriptive correlational method. A quantitative research design is appropriate for this study since it provides numerical data for correlation analysis and enables the measurement and statistical analysis of factors, including the level of engagement and frequency of social media use. The descriptive-correlational design describes how students use social media for information, and it examines the potential relationship between social media use and information assessment techniques.

Population of the Study

This study involved 282 first-year students enrolled in CRMC during the 2023-2024 academic year, selected from a total of 1,064 students using proportional random sampling and the Krejcie and Morgan formula. Participants, aged 18 or above, were randomly recruited, mentally well, willing to participate, and had signed informed consent.

The researcher used proportional random sampling in determining the sample size of the respondents.

TABLE 1. Population of the Respondents

Department	Population	%	Sample	%
College of Teacher Education (CTE)	124	11.65	33	11.70
College of Criminal Justice Education (CJE)	405	38.06	107	37.94
Psychology Program	90	8.46	24	8.51
College of Commerce (COC)	315	29.61	84	29.79
College of Computer Studies (CCS)	130	12.22	34	12.06
Total	1,064	100	282	100

Data Gathering Tools

The researcher used a 42-item questionnaire adapted from Gupta and Bashir (2018), Byford, Lennon, and Russell (2009), and Osharive (2015). To assess students' engagement with social media and online resources on contentious Social Studies topics, the questionnaire from Gupta and Bashir (2018) was used. The Byford, Lennon, and Russell (2009) questionnaire was a modified version of Guyton and Hoffman's (1983) survey, measured perceived understanding of contentious Social Studies topics. The Osharive (2015) questionnaire assessed students' critical evaluation of information from online resources and social media. Responses were rated on a 5-point scale from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5).

Data Gathering Procedure

This section explains this study's data collection procedures and statistical analysis.

Pre-Data Gathering. Permission for the study was first obtained from the Dean of Graduate Studies of Education at the University of the Visayas, followed by a letter to the

school head for distributing questionnaires. Approval letters were also given to the deans of the different college departments in CRMC. For data collection, the researcher utilized an adopted survey questionnaire. The researcher submitted a proposal to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure ethical guidelines were followed and participants were protected.

Actual Data Gathering. The researcher asked permission from the students beforehand and personally distributed questionnaires in classrooms. A letter of informed consent was given to the respondents, explaining the study's purpose, procedures, and rights. The content was carefully explained, assuring participants of confidentiality.

Post-Data Gathering. Data collected from the survey questionnaires were coded, organized logically, and presented in categories with corresponding frequencies of responses.

Data Analysis

Means and standard deviations were used to measure how often and extensively students use social media and online platforms for information on contentious Social Studies topics. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation determined the significant correlations between social media engagement and students' perceptions and classroom engagement, as well as the extent of online resource use and its impact on their perceptions and classroom engagement.

Ethical Considerations

This paper has undergone review by the UV-IRB, bearing reference number 2024-064. Strict privacy and confidentiality protocols were followed, ensuring that all data and questionnaires were securely stored. The identities of respondents were kept confidential in the research publication. Data protection was maintained in accordance with the DATA PRIVACY ACT of 2012. Informed consent forms were given to all participants in the study.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The aim of this study is to assess first-year college students' extent of use of social media and their engagement in contentious topics in Social Studies. It focuses on the important correlations between their social media usage, critical assessment skills, understanding of contentious issues, and class engagement.

Respondents' Level of Social Media Usage on Contentious Topics

The data in table 2 presents the students extent of use of social media for information on contentious social studies topics.

Table 2 shows students' high degree use social media for information on contentious social studies topics, with a mean score of 3.91 and a standard deviation of 0.90. The respondents often use social media for research, with a mean of 4.05, underscoring its importance in their studies. Bal and Bicen (2017) agree that social media is an effective way of acquiring new information and supporting learning. On the other hand, students often use SNS to learn about controversial issues in social studies as indicated by a mean of

3.96. For academic group discussions, people usually utilize social media since it enhances collaboration (Dragseth 2019). A low average of 3.80 shows students often simply read news on social media. Rosengard et al. (2014) found that students come across news on social media by following reporters and news organizations, even when they are not looking for them directly.

TABLE 2. Extent Students Engage with Various Social Media Platforms to Consult for Information on Contentious Topics in Social Studies

Statement	Mean	SD	Description
I use social networking sites to do research work relating to contentious topics in social studies	4.05	0.96	Agree
I use social networking sites for online academic group discussion of contentious topics in social studies	3.95	0.85	Agree
I use social networking sites to learn about contentious topics in social studies.	3.96	0.88	Agree
I use social networking sites for reading news.	3.80	0.90	Agree
I use social networking sites to share new ideas.	3.82	0.92	Agree
Overall Mean	3.91	0.90	High

Legend: 4.21 – 5.00 (Strongly Agree/Always/Very high); 3.41 – 4.20 (Agree/Often/High); 2.61 – 3.40 (Neither Agree or Disagree/Sometimes/Moderate); 1.81 – 2.60 (Disagree/Rarely/Low); 1.00 – 1.80 (Strongly Disagree/Never/Very Low)

Respondents' Level of Understanding in Contentious Topics

The survey results in Table 3 provide insights into students' understanding of navigating controversial topics in social studies. The overall mean of 3.61 indicates students have high understanding of contentious topics in Social Studies. The majority of the respondents with a mean of 4.1 agree that it is important to learn how to handle conflict and controversy. This is similar to the assertion made by Ho et al (2017) that the discussion of controversial topics help students consider different perspectives. On the other hand, in terms of enjoyment in dealing with controversy, the student's response was neutral with a mean of 3.31, this response may indicate of the need for further learner support in dealing with these topics. Respondents were also neutral in terms of feeling competent and including all controversial issues in Social Studies class discussions. This can be interpreted to mean that there may be need to develop effective ways of building confidence among learners regarding these areas as suggested by the average scores of 3.33 and 3.39 respectively.

The average score of 3.77, with a standard deviation of 0.93, indicates that students are highly engaged in class discussion and activities related to contentious topics in Social Studies using social media. The data also revealed that social media is perceived positively as a tool for collaborative learning, with an average score of 4.09 indicating agreement on the facilitation of this form of learning. According to Ansari and Khan (2020), using social media helps students become more creative and dynamic, as well as engage in global discussions for collaborative learning. There was also unanimity among the respondents; the mean of 4.06 shows that their learning becomes more convenient when they use social media platforms.

TABLE 3. Students' Level of Understanding of Contentious Topics within the field of Social Studies Education

Statement	Mean	SD	Description
No issue should be automatically excluded from the social studies classroom.	3.39	0.90	Neither Agree or Disagree
Students need to study controversial issues.	3.60	0.93	Agree
Tertiary social studies texts deal adequately with controversial issues.	3.55	0.75	Agree
I enjoy dealing with conflict and controversy in social studies education.	3.31	0.95	Neither Agree or Disagree
The stability of our nation depends on consensus among citizens about its most important issues.	3.70	0.81	Agree
It is important to teach students how to deal with conflict and controversy.	4.11	0.86	Agree
It is only by examining all sides of an issue that a person can develop rational and deeply held convictions.	3.79	0.87	Agree
Dealing with controversial issues in Social Studies confuses and frustrates students.	3.49	0.89	Agree
I feel competent to discuss about controversial issues.	3.33	0.96	Neither Agree or Disagree
Teachers should develop a systematic method for teaching about controversial issues.	3.85	0.88	Agree
Teachers should protect themselves and not teach about an issue that is controversial within the community in which they teach.	3.48	1.02	Agree
School systems should have a formal policy supporting the teaching of controversial issues.	3.87	0.87	Agree
It is sometimes better to ignore the conflict within an issue and just teach the "bare facts."	3.46	1.08	Agree
Overall Mean	3.61	0.91	High

Legend: 4.21 – 5.00 (Strongly Agree/Always/Very high); 3.41 – 4.20 (Agree/Often/High); 2.61 – 3.40 (Neither Agree or Disagree/Sometimes/Moderate); 1.81 – 2.60 (Disagree/Rarely/Low); 1.00 – 1.80 (Strongly Disagree/Never/Very Low)

Additionally, users tend to accept technology if it is easy to understand and use, as per the UTAUT model (Venkatesh et al., 2003). Moreover, information through social media is readily available and can be understood by everybody because of its user-friendly nature. However, students responded with a mean of 3.57, saying that using social media and online resources is distracting while studying. In line with Mao (2014), respondents raised concerns regarding distraction, internet safety issues, multitasking during online tests, misinformation, and irrelevant advertisements.

Respondents' Level of Engagement in Class Discussion and Activities

Table 4 indicates respondents' engagement in class discussions and activities on contentious social studies topics. There are concerns about social media being distractive when someone wants to concentrate on his or her studies as well as giving their attention fully where it's needed the most, like doing exams online (Mao 2014). The mean neutral response on financial concerns of 3.32 indicated further research is necessary regarding whether learners were unaware of potential costs or had not thought about the implications for financial purposes.

TABLE 4. Respondents' Level of Engagement in Class Discussion and Activities Related to Contentious Topics in Social Studies

Statement	Mean	SD	Description
Social media help me exchange opinions regarding contentious topics.	3.94	0.89	Agree
(...) help me learn collaboratively with others.	4.09	0.78	Agree
(...) make my learning more convenient.	4.06	0.86	Agree
(...) help me co-create knowledge.	4.03	0.88	Agree
(...) help me become an independent learner.	3.77	0.98	Agree
(...) cause intrusion on my privacy.	3.56	0.86	Agree
(...) cause misuse and domination.	3.65	0.92	Agree
(...) raise my parents' concerns.	3.57	0.99	Agree
(...) require formal training.	3.76	0.96	Agree
(...) is more time consuming.	3.73	0.99	Agree
(...) help me gain more info on different controversial issues in social studies.	3.96	0.86	Agree
(...) give better chance for access new to resources.	4.05	0.80	Agree
(...) broaden my global views of world issues.	4.05	0.86	Agree
(...) distract me from studying.	3.57	1.06	Agree
(...) increase my addictive potential.	3.62	0.98	Agree
(...) raise my financial expenses	3.32	1.05	Neither Agree or Disagree
(...) cause difficulty to manage learning activities	3.44	1.08	Agree
(...) improve my research skills.	3.92	0.84	Agree
(...) improve my interest in lifelong learning	3.83	0.88	Agree
The information I get from social media and online resources reduce the cost of learning	3.51	1.01	Agree
Overall Mean	3.77	0.93	High

Legend: 4.21 – 5.00 (Strongly Agree/Always/Very high); 3.41 – 4.20 (Agree/Often/High); 2.61 – 3.40 (Neither Agree or Disagree/Sometimes/Moderate); 1.81 – 2.60 (Disagree/Rarely/Low); 1.00 – 1.80 (Strongly Disagree/Never/Very Low)

Respondents' Level of Critical Assessment of Information Social Media

The data in Table 5 revealed how students evaluate information from social media regarding contentious social studies topics. A mean score of 3.76 with a standard deviation of 0.74 indicated the high extent of respondents' critical assessment of information from social media in the context of contentious topics in Social Studies.

A mean score of 4.05 indicates that students depend heavily on social media platforms for assignments, neglecting other sources. The study by Mao (2014) revealed that students use social media to collaborate on assignments, share resources for schoolwork, and learn about a new topic. Students also responded that they often engage in academic discussion on social media and evaluate information relating to controversial topics in Social Studies, with a mean of 3.94. In a neutral response with a mean of 3.11, students responded that they sometimes rely on Wikipedia. This outcome underscores the need for students to cultivate a more robust skill in source evaluation.

According to Selwyn and Gorard (2016), most learners perceive Wikipedia as an additional resource, where they turn for a start and sometimes a clarification, but not necessarily their main source of information.

TABLE 5. Respondents' Extent of Critical Assessment of Information from Social Media in the Context of Contentious Topics in Social Studies Education

Statement	Mean	SD	Description
I engage in academic discussions on social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Tiktok, and YouTube) and to assess information relating to contentious topics in social studies education.	3.94	0.96	Agree
I make use of Messenger to disseminate knowledge to my class mate.	3.91	1.00	Agree
I Solely rely on information gotten from Wikipedia to do my assignments without consulting other sources.	3.11	1.23	Neither Agree or Disagree
I Solely rely on information gotten from social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Tiktok, and YouTube) to do my assignments without consulting other sources.	4.05	1.10	Agree
Overall Mean	3.76	0.74	High

Legend: 4.21 – 5.00 (Strongly Agree/Always/Very high); 3.41 – 4.20 (Agree/Often/High); 2.61 – 3.40 (Neither Agree or Disagree/Sometimes/Moderate); 1.81 – 2.60 (Disagree/Rarely/Low); 1.00 – 1.80 (Strongly Disagree/Never/Very Low)

Correlation of Social Media Use and Student Engagement

The data in Table 6 presents correlation between pairs of variables.

TABLE 6

Pairs of Variables	r	P-value	Decision on Ho $\alpha = 0.05$	Interpretation
Level of Critical Assessment and Extent of Social Media Usage	0.270	<.001	Reject Ho	Significant
Level of Critical Assessment and Level of Understanding in Contentious Topics	0.410	<.001	Reject Ho	Significant
Level of Critical Assessment and Extent of Engagement in Classroom Engagement	0.677	<.001	Reject Ho	Significant

In terms of the level of critical assessment and extent of social media usage, the P-value is .001 while the correlation coefficient (r) is 0.270. This indicates that the P-value is smaller than the 0.05 level of significance. This finding allows the researcher to reject the null hypothesis, which stated that there is no significant relationship between the respondents' level of critical assessment and their extent of social media usage with various online resources when consulting information on contentious topics in social studies. The results from the data also reveal that there is a positive correlation between students' critical assessment skills and their level of understanding of contentious social studies topics. The correlation coefficient (r) is at 0.410, while the P-value is .001. This indicates that the null hypothesis should be rejected since the P-value is less than the 0.05 level of significance. This means that there is a significant correlation between the students' level of critical assessment and their level of understanding of contentious topics in social studies. In addition, the data also reveals that there is a significant

relationship between the students' extent of engagement in the classroom. The P-value is .001, while the correlation coefficient is 0.677. The P-value is smaller than the level of significance of 0.05, which allows the researcher to reject the null hypothesis. There is, in fact, a significant correlation between students' level of critical assessment and their engagement in classroom discussions on contentious social studies topics. Based on the findings, this allows the researcher to conclude that those students who have stronger critical thinking skills are more likely to participate actively in the discussion of contentious issues.

An output of the study is the student engagement framework designed to address the influence of social media on student participation in discussions about contentious Social Studies topics. Additionally, it aims to improve students' skills in information verification, collaboration, and digital literacy.

Limitations

The general applicability of the study may be limited due to its sample size of 282. The ability to capture long-term changes in the usage of social media may also be limited due to its 6-month time frame. The data can also contain biases, as respondents can incorrectly represent their behavior. Another limitation of this study is the possibility of excluding other variables that affect students' perceptions and interest levels in classroom activities.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings from the data, social media platforms are frequently utilized by students in order to gain information on contentious Social Studies topics. Social networking sites served as a source of information and a way to facilitate academic group discussions. Such platforms are collaboration spaces and tools where students can also both provide and receive knowledge, information, or insights from others. Further, reading news through social media is also prevalent, offering students multiple approaches to gain exposure to up-to-date information.

The respondents also expressed neutrality in terms of enjoyment of engaging with controversial topics in social studies as well as feeling competent in discussing controversial issues. Similarly, students also responded neutrally in terms of including all controversial topics in the social studies class discussion. These findings indicate that there might be a potential lack of understanding among the students with regards to understanding complex issues. Moreover, lack of knowledge in this area might be an indicator that students neither feel competent nor incompetent when discussing controversial topics. In addition, the neutrality expressed by students in terms of enjoyment in engaging with controversial topics may indicate that they are selective towards topics in which they are interested to gain their engagement. Nonetheless, respondents also gave similar views on the importance of teaching controversial issues to students, as well as, on how to handle these issues.

Social media enables students to interact with significant trends and group discussions online. This allows them to

construct personal views and knowledge on the different controversial issues. This is also aligned with the theory of constructivism by Vygotsky (1968), which holds that knowledge is built through interaction with people and by gaining experiences with them. Based on the results, students view social media as an important tool for learning about controversial issues in Social Studies.

The UTAUT model by Venkatesh et al. (2003) stated that users are more likely to engage in technology if users find it easy to use. The results show consistency with this theory. Respondents stated they frequently utilize social media because it is convenient to use. Besides allowing users to have quick and easy access to information, social media sites also offer users access to new and varied resources that they can use to deepen their understanding of local and global issues. However, students also view social media as a tool that causes distraction from studying. Social media as a distraction might take away students' focus on the lesson as well as their engagement in school-related activities.

Many students also heavily rely on social media platforms for assignments, potentially neglecting other sources. Moreover, there was a neutral response among students in terms of relying solely on Wikipedia for assignments. Since students often use these platforms, this highlights the importance of teaching.

The results of this research, however, have indicated strong concerns about the evaluation of such sources' relationship between students' self-reported social media usages and critical thinking. The high level of critical thinking tendencies may lead the students to become more skeptical about information shared via the social media platform, thereby confirming the sources, authenticity, or more so, trying to seek an equally different view.

The study showed a strong link between students' critical assessment skills and their comprehension of contentious social studies topics. This implies that students proficient in analyzing information grasp complex social issues better. Additionally, there's a correlation between students' critical assessment skills and their engagement in classroom discussions on social studies topics, suggesting that those who can effectively analyze information are more likely to participate actively.

Social media can act as a double-edged sword as far as student engagement with controversial topics in Social Studies is concerned. Social media provides students with a space where they can collaborate and interact, as well as access to a variety of views. On the other hand, the quality of information gotten from social media is an important aspect that needs evaluation. Students also shared that social media causes distraction when they are doing school assignments. This negative impact of social media can draw students' focus away from the lesson and class engagement.

Ultimately, effective teaching strategies should be developed that would help fortify the teaching of controversial issues, critical assessment capabilities, and further orientations on what and how to use credible sources. Social media, with such guidance, can then become an enriched rather than denied tool in the service of Social Studies education.

Recommendations

From the findings obtained in the study, the following are recommended:

1. There is a need for teachers to provide an effective teaching strategy for teaching controversial topics in Social Studies to gain student engagement in the lesson.
2. Students should be taught to evaluate online resources such as fact-checking, credibility assessment, and bias recognition.
3. Teachers should help students explore a wide variety of sources online, such as academic journals, educational databases, and reputable news websites.
4. There is a need for students to be engaged in collaborative activities, such as group discussions on social media, to promote collaboration.
5. Teachers should promote a safe and respectful classroom atmosphere so that students will be encouraged to engage in discussions of controversial topics in social studies.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Akpan, V.I., Igwe, U.A., Mpamah, I.C., & Okoro, C.O.(2020) Social Constructivism : Implications On Teaching And Learning. British Journal of Education Vol.8, Issue 8, pp.49-56, September 2020 Published by ECRTD- UK. Print ISSN: ISSN 2054-6351: Online ISSN: ISSN 2054-636X
- [2]. Al-Rahmi, W. M., Othman, M. S., & Musa, M. A. (2014). The improvement of students' academic performance by using social media through collaborative learning in Malaysian higher education. *Asian Social Science*, 10(8), 210.
- [3]. Ansari, J. a. N., & Khan, N. A. (2020). Exploring the role of social media in collaborative learning the new domain of learning. *Smart Learning Environments*, 7(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40561-020-00118-7>
- [4]. Bal, E., & Bicen, H. (2017). The purpose of students' social media use and determining their perspectives on education. *Procedia Computer Science*, 120, 177–181. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.procs.2017.11.226>
- [5]. Balakrishnan, V., & Gan, C. L. (2016). Students' learning styles and their effects on the use of social media technology for learning. *Telematics and Informatics*, 33(3), 808–821. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2015.12.004>
- [6]. Brandtzaeg, Petter Bae, and Asbjørn Følstad. 2017. "Trust and Distrust in Online Fact-Checking Services." *Communications of the ACM* 60(9), 65–71. <http://dl.acm.org/citation.cfm?id=3122803&CFID=800929196&CFTOKEN=84803175>
- [7]. Brooks, S. (2015). Does personal social media usage affect efficiency and well-being? *Comput. Hum. Behav.* 46, 26–37. doi: 10.1016/j.chb.2014.12.053
- [8]. Byford, J., Lennon, S., & Russell, W. B. (2009). Teaching Controversial issues in the social Studies: A research study of high school teachers. *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas*, 82(4), 165–170. <https://doi.org/10.3200/tchs.82.4.165-170>
- [9]. Chauhan, S., & Jaiswal, M. (2016). Determinants of acceptance of ERP software training in business schools: Empirical investigation using UTAUT model. *The International Journal of Management Education*, 14(3), 248–262. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijme.2016.05.005>
- [10]. Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. SAGE.
- [11]. Dragseth, M. R. (2019). Building student engagement through social media. *Journal of Political Science Education*, 16(2), 243–256. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15512169.2018.1550421>
- [12]. Giunchiglia, F., Zeni, M., Gobbi, E., Bignotti, E., and Bison, I. (2018). Mobile social media usage and academic performance. *Comput. Hum. Behav.* 82, 177–185. doi: 10.1016/j.chb.2017.12.041
- [13]. Greenhow, C., & Askari, E. (2015). Learning and teaching with social network sites: A decade of research in K-12 related education. *Education and Information Technologies*, 22(2), 623–645. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-015-9446-9>

- [14]. Gupta, B., Dasgupta, S., & Gupta, A. (2008). Adoption of ICT in a government organization in a developing country: An empirical study. *The Journal of Strategic Information Systems*, 17(2), 140-154.
- [15]. Gupta, S., & Bashir, L. (2018b). Social Networking Usage Questionnaire: Development and validation in an Indian Higher Education context. *The Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education*, 214–227. <https://doi.org/10.17718/tojde.471918>
- [16]. Hamid, S., Waycott, J., Kurnia, S., & Chang, S. (2015). Understanding students' perceptions of the benefits of online social networking use for teaching and learning. *the eInternet and Higher Education/the eInternet and Higher Education*, 26, 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jheduc.2015.02.004>
- [17]. Ho, L., McAvoy, P., Hess, D., & Gibbs, B. (2017). Teaching and Learning about Controversial Issues and Topics in the Social Studies. *The Wiley Handbook of Social Studies Research*, 319–335. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118768747.ch14>
- [18]. Hoffmann, C. R., & Bublitz, W. (2017). Pragmatics of social media. In *De Gruyter eBooks*. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110431070>
- [19]. Jaska, E., & Werenowska, A. (2018). The availability and use of media information sources in rural areas. *Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference "Economic Science for Rural Development"/Economic Science for Rural Development*. <https://doi.org/10.22616/esrd.2018.013>
- [20]. Jeong, S., and Hwang, Y. (2016). Media multitasking effects on cognitive vs. attitudinal outcomes: a meta-analysis. *Hum. Commun. Res.* 42, 599–618. doi: 10.1111/hcre.12089
- [21]. Kim, K., Sin, S. J., & Yoo-Lee, E. Y. (2014). Undergraduates' use of social media as information sources. *College & Research Libraries/College and Research Libraries*, 75(4), 442–457. <https://doi.org/10.5860/crl.75.4.442>
- [22]. Koessmeier, C., & Büttner, O. B. (2021). Why are we distracted by social media? Distraction situations and strategies, reasons for distraction, and individual differences. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.711416>
- [23]. Mao, J. (2014). Social media for learning: A mixed methods study on high school students' technology affordances and perspectives. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 33, 213–223. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2014.01.002>
- [24]. Manu, B. D., Ying, F., Oduro, D., & Boateng, S. A. (2021). Student engagement and social media in tertiary education: The perception and experience from the Ghanaian public university. *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, 3(1), 100100. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2020.100100>
- [25]. Mondahl, M., & Razmerita, L. (2014). Social Media, Collaboration and Social Learning: A Case-study of Foreign Language learning. *The Electronic Journal of e-Learning*, 12(4), 339–352. <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1035665.pdf>
- [26]. Nygren, T., & Guath, M. (2019). Swedish teenagers' difficulties and abilities to determine digital news credibility. *Nordicom review*, 40(1), 23-42.
- [27]. Nygren, T., Folkeryd, J. W., Liberg, C., & Guath, M. (2020). Students assessing digital news and misinformation. In *Lecture Notes in Computer Science* (pp. 63–79). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-61841-4_5
- [28]. Osharive, P. (2015). Social media and academic performance. In *Conference Paper- January*.
- [29]. Pilot, M., Church, K., and de Oliveira, R. (2014). "An in-situ study of mobile phone notifications," in *Proceedings of the 16th International Conference On Human-Computer Interaction With Mobile Devices & Services*, (Association for Computing Machinery), Toronto, ON, CA. 233–242.
- [30]. Redmond, P., Heffernan, A., Abawi, L., Brown, A., & Henderson, R. (2018). An online engagement framework for higher education. *Online Learning*, 22(1). <https://doi.org/10.24059/olj.v22i1.1175>
- [31]. Reuters. 2016. "Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2016." <http://www.digitalnewsreport.org/>.
- [32]. Rosen, L. D., Carrier, L. M., and Cheever, N. A. (2013). Facebook and texting made me do it: media-induced task-switching while studying. *Comput. Hum. Behav.* 29, 948–958. doi: 10.1016/j.chb.2012.12.001
- [33]. Rosengard, D., Tucker-McLaughlin, M., & Brown, T. (2014). Students and social news. *Electronic News*, 8(2), 120–137. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1931243114546448>
- [34]. Silverman, Craig. 2015. "Lies, Damn Lies and Viral Content. How News Websites Spread (and Debunk) Online Rumors, Unverified Claims and Misinformation." *Columbia Journalism School*. http://towcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/LiesDamnLies_Silverman_TowCenter.pdf.
- [35]. Silverman, Craig, Ellie Hall, Lauren Strapagiel, Jeremy Singer-Vine, and Shaban Hamza. 2016. "Hyperpartisan Facebook Pages Are Publishing False and Misleading Information at an Alarming Rate." *Buzzfeed News*, October 20. https://www.buzzfeed.com/craigsilverman/partisan-fb-pagesanalysis?utm_term=.gaWbVjmqo#etJ0Wk37V.
- [36]. Tinapay, A. O., & Tirol, S. L. (2021). Social Learning Perspectives in School Policies in a Higher Education Institution. *Nat. Volatiles & Essent. Oils*, 8(5), 9666-9686.
- [37]. Tinapay, A. O., & Tirol, S. L. (2021). Teachers' Primary Roles in the New Normal: Through the E-Learning Perspective. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*, 6(10), 90-91.
- [38]. Tinapay, A., Tirol, S., Cortes, J. A., & Punay, M. (2021). Attitude of learners towards science and their science process skills in the case of the spiral curriculum: A. *International Journal of Research*, 10(15), 13-24.
- [39]. Tinapay, A.O., Desabille, I.N., Tirol, S.L., Samillano, J.H. (2023). Practical Research Teachers' Technological, Pedagogical, and Content Knowledge (Tpack) and Competencies: A Literature Review. *Eur. Chem. Bull.* 12(4), 3140-3160
- [40]. Tirol, S. L. (2022). Spiral Progression Approach in the K to 12 Science Curriculum: A Literature Review. *International Journal of Education (IJE)*, 10, 29-44. <https://doi.org/10.5121/ije.2022.10403>
- [41]. Tirol, S.L. (2023). Science Teachers' Competence on Model-Based Inquiry: A Review of Related Literature. *Eur. Chem. Bull.* 2023,12(5), 2886-2902
- [42]. Tang, J. K. T., Yau, H., Wong, S., & Wong, S. (2015). The impacts on learning via social media: A study on post-secondary students in Hong Kong. In *Communications in computer and information science* (pp. 195–208). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-662-48978-9_19
- [43]. Venkatesh, V., & Davis, F. D. (2000). A theoretical extension of the technology acceptance model: four longitudinal field studies. *Management Science*, 46(2), 186–204. <https://doi.org/10.1287/mnsc.46.2.186.11926>
- [44]. Venkatesh, V., Morris, M. G., Davis, G. B., & Davis, F. D. (2003). User acceptance of information technology: Toward a unified view. *MIS quarterly*, 425-478.
- [45]. Venkatesh, V., Thong, J. Y., & Xu, X. (2016). Unified theory of acceptance and use of technology: A synthesis and the road ahead. *Journal of the association for Information Systems*, 17(5), 328-376.
- [46]. Westerman, D., Spence, P. R., & Van Der Heide, B. (2013). Social media as information source: recency of updates and credibility of information. *Journal of Computer-mediated Communication*, 19(2), 171–183. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcc4.12041>