



Social Media as a Tool for Improving English Proficiency Among Students of the Shehu Sule College of Nursing Sciences Damaturu

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Abstract

This study explores the role of social media in enhancing English proficiency among students at the Shehu Sule College of Nursing Sciences, Damaturu. Despite the growing use of digital platforms in education, limited research has examined their specific impact on language learning in this context. This study addresses this gap using a quantitative approach by distributing an online questionnaire via college students' WhatsApp groups. A total of 104 students participated in the study, and data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and frequency distribution. Google Docs spreadsheets were used for chart visualization. Findings reveal a gender disparity, with 79.8% of male and 20.2% of female respondents. The frequency of social media usage varied, with 42.3% using it daily, 36.5% several times a week, 18.3% occasionally, and 2.9% infrequently. WhatsApp was the most preferred platform (42.4%), followed by Facebook (20.7%), YouTube and Instagram (17.4% each), and TikTok (2.2%). Key learning activities included watching educational videos (28.0%), following language-learning groups (26.2%), reading posts (20.9%), and language exchanges (14.2%), while podcast listening was less common (10.7%). Students reported improvements in vocabulary (41.4%), grammar (50.0%), and pronunciation (55.7%), with 47.2% experiencing increased motivation. Additionally, 70.2% of respondents support integrating social media into formal education, while 21.2% advocate a cautious approach. The study recommends promoting female engagement, developing tailored learning resources, incorporating emerging platforms, enhancing interactive activities, and formally integrating social media into English curricula. These findings underscore social media's potential as an effective supplementary tool for language learning.

Keywords: *Social Media, English Proficiency, Language Learning, Educational Technology*

INTRODUCTION

In the digital age, social media has become a powerful tool for education, offering students new ways to engage with learning beyond traditional classroom settings. In language acquisition, these platforms provide opportunities for continuous exposure to English, allowing learners to practice vocabulary, pronunciation, and communication skills in a dynamic, interactive environment. The integration of social media into language learning aligns with sociocultural theory by [Vygotsky \(1978\)](#), which emphasizes the role of social interaction in cognitive development and connectivity learning [Siemens's \(2005\)](#) theory, which highlights digital networks as key facilitators of knowledge acquisition. Despite these theoretical foundations, there remains a limited understanding of how social media specifically enhances English proficiency among nursing students who require specialized language skills for medical communication, technical terminology, and professional interactions.

Social media encompasses a broad range of digital platforms that enable communication, networking, and information sharing. [Kaplan and Haenlein \(2010\)](#) defined it as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, allowing

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the creation and exchange of user-generated content." Platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube, and Telegram provide nursing students with access to educational resources, peer discussions, and informal learning opportunities. [Bryant et al. \(2006\)](#) highlighted how these tools facilitate rapid, cost-effective interactions, while [Gikas and Grant \(2013\)](#) emphasized the role of mobile devices and social media in extending learning beyond classroom walls. [Raut and Patil \(2016\)](#) and [Hughes \(2009\)](#) further underscore social media's potential to foster engagement, self-directed learning, and academic collaboration.

At Shehu Sule College of Nursing Sciences, Damaturu, English is the primary language of instruction, with proficiency in the language essential for academic success and professional competence. Nursing students must navigate complex medical literature, communicate effectively in clinical settings, and master technical terminology—skills that require strong English language skills. Social media offers a flexible, interactive learning environment where students can enhance their linguistic abilities through video-based learning, discussion forums, real-time communication with peers and experts, and exposure to authentic English content. However, while the general role of social media in education has been widely explored, research on its impact on English language learning among nursing students remains scarce.

This study seeks to address this gap by examining how nursing students at Shehu Sule College of Nursing Sciences use social media as a language learning tool. Although social media provides numerous benefits, including accessibility and engagement, concerns such as distractions, misinformation, and the informal nature of interactions warrant further investigation. The study aims to:

1. Assess the level of social media engagement among nursing students with English language learning.
2. Identify the most frequently used social media platforms to improve English proficiency.
3. Analyze the impact of social media activities on students' vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation skills.
4. Examine challenges faced by students in using social media for language learning.
5. Provide recommendations for integrating social media into formal English language instruction in nursing education.

This study contributes to the growing discourse on digital learning in nursing education, offering insights into how social media can be strategically leveraged to enhance English proficiency. The findings will not only highlight the educational potential of social media and propose structured strategies to mitigate its limitations, ensuring that nursing students can effectively develop the language skills required for their academic and professional growth.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Media and Language Learning: Theoretical Foundations

The integration of social media into language learning has gained significant attention recently. Researchers have explored the role of language acquisition, intercultural communication, and pedagogical transformation, emphasizing both their benefits and limitations. Two key theoretical frameworks underpin the use of social media in language learning. [Krashen's \(1982\)](#) Comprehensible Input Hypothesis proposes that learners acquire language most effectively when exposed to input that is slightly beyond their current proficiency level. Similarly, [Vygotsky's \(1978\)](#) Sociocultural Theory emphasizes the role of social interaction in learning. Social media platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and podcasts provide learners with abundant comprehensible input through videos, discussions, and real-life conversations. Watching medical tutorials or English-language health discussions allows nursing students to absorb technical vocabulary in context, thus

improving their listening comprehension and pronunciation.

Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory emphasizes the role of social interaction in cognitive development. Social media fosters collaborative learning, where students engage in discussions, share knowledge, and receive peer feedback. WhatsApp study groups and Facebook academic forums enable nursing students to exchange ideas, clarify concepts, and practice medical English in a supportive community. This aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), in which learners benefit from guidance provided by more knowledgeable peers or instructors.

Impact of Social Media on English Language Proficiency

Social media provides learners with exposure to authentic language use, interactive engagement, and multimedia-based learning experiences. Several studies have highlighted its effectiveness in enhancing four core language skills. Based on listening and pronunciation, Alm (2015) found that audiovisual content on YouTube improved learners' pronunciation and listening comprehension. For nursing students, medical-themed videos help them grasp the correct pronunciation of technical terms and understand different English accents used in healthcare settings. In speaking skills, live discussions on platforms like Clubhouse and Twitter Spaces create opportunities for real-time spoken interactions, boosting fluency and confidence in English communication (Plana et al., 2013).

Looking at reading and writing skills, Blackstone et al. (2007) argue that blogs and online forums enhance structured writing skills, improving coherence and cohesion in student essays. WhatsApp and Telegram discussions expose students to formal and informal writing styles and help them refine their writing competence. In terms of vocabulary and grammar, Kabilan et al. (2010) found that students engaged in frequent online discussions developed a richer vocabulary and improved grammatical accuracy. Exposure to professional health discourse on platforms such as LinkedIn and ResearchGate enhances nursing students' medical English proficiency.

Social Media in Medical English Learning

Nursing students require specialized English skills to effectively communicate in clinical settings, including understanding medical terminology, writing patient reports, and engaging in professional interactions. Studies have examined how social media contributes to medical English proficiency. Medical English forums, such as Medscape and Student Doctor Network, offer nursing students opportunities to engage in discussions, ask questions, and learn from healthcare professionals worldwide. Similarly, Desta et al. (2021) explained that educational videos and webinars hosted on platforms like YouTube and TED-Ed expose students to medical lectures and case study discussions, reinforcing subject-specific language in English. Furthermore, Mahmud and Ching (2012) highlighted the importance of interactive learning and peer collaboration, noting that LinkedIn groups and professional forums serve as virtual learning spaces where nursing students exchange ideas, seek mentorship, and practice technical writing in a medical context.

Challenges and Limitations of Social Media in Language Learning

Social media offers multiple advantages; however, its application in language learning is not without challenges. Zhang and Kenny (2010) cautioned against excessive social media use, which may lead to distractions, ultimately reducing the effectiveness of structured learning. Likewise, Alshuaibi et al. (2018) warn that unmoderated interactions on platforms like WhatsApp may expose learners to nonstandard grammar and slang, which could hinder formal language development. Additionally, Duke et al. (2017) emphasized the importance of critical thinking, noting that, unlike textbooks or academic journals, content shared on social media varies in quality

and accuracy, requiring students to distinguish between credible and unreliable sources.

Bridging the Research Gap: Social Media and Nursing Education

Although studies have confirmed social media's role in English language learning, research specifically targeting nursing and health-related students remains limited. [Giroux and Moreau \(2022\)](#) emphasized the need for structured integration of social media into nursing curricula to ensure that students use it effectively for language and professional development. [Hamade et al. \(2024\)](#) found a strong correlation between language proficiency and academic success among international medical students, highlighting the importance of language support services in healthcare education.

Research Direction

Social media has the potential to revolutionize English language learning by offering interactive, accessible, and engaging learning experiences. However, its effectiveness depends on its structured implementation, credible content, and student discipline. This study examines how nursing students at Shehu Sule College of Nursing Sciences, Damaturu, use social media to improve their English proficiency. By assessing social media engagement, its impact on language skills, and existing challenges, this study aims to provide insights into optimizing social media as a language-learning tool within nursing education. The findings will inform educators, policymakers, and students on best practices for integrating social media into academic curricula, ensuring that it serves as a meaningful enhancement rather than a distraction in language learning.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design and Sampling

This study employs a quantitative research design utilizing a stratified random sampling technique to ensure a representative selection of students with different academic levels. The target population comprises 807 students enrolled in various college programs. To determine an appropriate sample size, [Slovin's \(1960\)](#) formula was applied, resulting in a required sample of 103 students, all of whom participated in the study. This sample size is justified because it ensures statistical reliability while maintaining feasibility in data collection and analysis.

Data Collection Instruments

Data were gathered through a Google Forms survey, providing an efficient and accessible means for students to respond. The following structured questionnaire was included:

1. Likert-scale questions to assess students' self-perceived English proficiency, frequency of social media use, and perceived benefits and challenges.
2. Multiple-choice questions to identify social media usage patterns and demographic information.
3. Open-ended questions to capture qualitative insights into students' experiences and perspectives.

The use of Google Forms facilitated easy distribution, real-time response collection, and automatic data organization, thus improving data accuracy and efficiency.

Data Analysis Techniques

The analysis was conducted using Google Docs, with all findings presented as charts. The data analysis approach was as follows:

1. Descriptive Statistics:

- The frequency and percentage distributions were calculated and illustrated using a chart highlighting key trends in social media usage and its impact on English proficiency.
2. Visual Data Interpretation:
- The graphical representation of data enabled clear and intuitive insights, making it easier to observe patterns and relationships between social media engagement and language learning.

This study effectively communicates trends and patterns in a visually engaging manner, ensuring a clear presentation of the data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents an in-depth analysis of the data collected from students and instructors at Shehu Sule College of Nursing Sciences, Damaturu, on the role of social media in enhancing English proficiency. The findings are interpreted concerning previous research and relevant theoretical frameworks, offering a platform-specific analysis and acknowledging the self-reporting limitations inherent in survey-based studies. Additionally, the discussion highlights policy and implementation implications, ensuring a cohesive thematic flow.

Table 1. Gender

| Gender | Percentage (%) |
|--------|----------------|
| Female | 79.8% |
| Male | 20.2% |

The data reveal a striking gender disparity, with females constituting 79.8% of the group and males constituting only 20.2%. This significant difference suggests that women overwhelmingly dominated the study population, outnumbering men by nearly four to one. Such an imbalance may arise from several factors. It could reflect gender preferences in a particular profession or academic field in which women are traditionally more inclined to participate. Social and cultural influences may also play a role in shaping career choices and educational opportunities differently for men and women. In addition, targeted recruitment policies or institutional frameworks might have contributed to higher female representation.

Table 2. Impact of Social Media Use on Language Learning

| Category | Options | Percentage (%) | Key Observations |
|---|-----------------------|----------------|--|
| Frequency of Social Media Use in Learning English | Daily | 42.3% | Most respondents rely on social media daily for language learning. |
| | Several times a week, | 36.5% | Regular but slightly lower level of dependence. |
| | Occasionally | 18.3% | Used as a supplement to traditional methods. |
| | Rarely | 2.9% | Minimal reliance on social media. |

| Category | Options | Percentage (%) | Key Observations |
|--|---|----------------|--|
| Preferred Social Media Platforms for Language Learning | WhatsApp | 42.4% | Most preferred due to ease of communication. |
| | Facebook | 20.7% | Support educational groups and discussions. |
| | YouTube | 17.4% | Provide engaging multimedia content. |
| | Instagram | 17.4% | Improves pronunciation and listening skills. |
| | TikTok | 2.2% | Least preferred, possibly due to a lack of structured content. |
| Preferred Language Learning Activities | Watching videos | 28.0% | The most common method for audiovisual learning. |
| | Engaging with learning pages | 26.2% | Demonstrates interest in curated content. |
| | Reading posts in English | 20.9% | Helping with vocabulary and comprehension. |
| | Participating in language exchange forums | 14.2% | The interactive method is less utilized. |
| | Listening to podcasts | 10.7% | Least preferred, possibly due to limited awareness. |
| Impact of Vocabulary Development | Very High Impact | 23.1% | Social media significantly aids vocabulary growth. |
| | High Impact | 18.3% | Moderate influence on vocabulary. |
| | Neutral | 31.7% | Effectiveness depends on content quality. |
| | No Impact | 9.6% | Some learners find no benefit. |
| Impact of Grammar Skills | Very High Impact | 22.1% | Notable role in improving grammar. |
| | High Impact | 27.9% | Varies based on engagement level. |
| | Neutral | 27.9% | Mixed perceptions of effectiveness. |
| | No Impact | 9.6% | Concerns over informal language use. |
| Impact of Pronunciation Skills | Very High Impact | 24.0% | Video-based content enhances pronunciation. |
| | High Impact | 31.7% | Social media contributes positively. |
| | Neutral | 22.1% | Effectiveness varies by learner. |

| Category | Options | Percentage (%) | Key Observations |
|--|----------------------------------|----------------|---|
| Social Media and Learning Motivation | No Impact | 9.6% | Some find no benefit. |
| | Significant growth in motivation | 47.2% | Most respondents felt highly motivated. |
| | Motivation Increase | 50.0% | Enhances engagement. |
| | No Motivation Increase | 1.9% | Minimal disengagement. |
| Should Social Media Be Integrated into Formal Education? | No Impact | 0.9% | Very few respondents. |
| | Yes | 70.2% | Strong support for integration. |
| | Partially | 20.2% | Cautious but optimistic. |
| | Skeptical | 7.7% | Some doubts about effectiveness. |
| | No | 1.9% | Few oppose integration. |

The data present a compelling narrative on the role of social media in learning English, highlighting key trends in usage frequency, platform preference, learning activities, and perceived impact on language skills. To begin with, 42.3% of respondents use social media daily for language learning, suggesting its central role in their learning routine. Another 36.5% engaged several times a week, indicating a strong but slightly less frequent reliance. Meanwhile, 18.3% use it occasionally, treating it as a supplementary resource, whereas only 2.9% rarely use it, indicating minimal dependence on digital learning tools. In terms of platform preference, WhatsApp (42.4%) was the most preferred, likely due to its ease of communication and interactive nature. Facebook (20.7%) followed, offering educational groups and discussion forums. YouTube and Instagram each held 17.4%, suggesting that multimedia content plays a significant role in language acquisition. However, TikTok ranks the lowest at 2.2%, possibly because of its informal nature and lack of structured language-learning content.

In terms of language learning activities, the most common method was watching videos (28.0%), emphasizing the appeal of audiovisual content for pronunciation and comprehension. Engaging with learning pages (26.2%) also ranked high, demonstrating an interest in structured content. In addition, reading posts in English (20.9%) supported vocabulary and reading comprehension. However, participation in language exchange forums (14.2%) and listening to podcasts (10.7%) was less common, suggesting a preference for more visual and engaging methods. When considering its impact on language skills, social media plays a notable role in vocabulary development. While 23.1% reported a very high impact and 18.3% experienced a high impact, a notable 31.7% remain neutral, possibly due to the varying quality of online content. A small 9.6% report no impact, indicating that social media is not equally effective for all learners. Similarly, for grammar skills, 22.1% noticed a very high impact, and 27.9% a high impact, while an equal 27.9% felt neutral, reflecting mixed perceptions, possibly due to exposure to informal language. 9.6% reported no impact, highlighting concerns about grammatical inaccuracies in digital communication.

Likewise, pronunciation benefits from the visual and auditory nature of social media, as seen in 24.0% of respondents reporting a very high impact and 31.7% noting a high impact. However, 22.1% remain neutral, suggesting that effectiveness varies by learner, while 9.6% see no impact. Furthermore, social media proved to be a powerful motivational tool, with 47.2% experiencing significant motivation growth and 50.0% seeing some increase. Only 1.9% reported

no motivation increase, and 0.9% felt no impact at all, indicating that social media largely encourages engagement in language learning.

Finally, regarding its role in formal education, an overwhelming 70.2% support full integration, while 20.2% favor partial integration, reflecting a generally positive outlook. A small 7.7% of respondents remained skeptical, and 1.9% opposed the idea, possibly due to concerns about distractions and content reliability. This analysis underscores the growing importance of social media in English language-learning, particularly through its daily use, video-based content, and interactive platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook. While its impact on vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation varies, the overall findings suggest that social media is a valuable learning tool, enhancing engagement and motivation. The strong support for its integration into formal education further reinforces its potential as a mainstream educational resource.

Alignment with Previous Studies

The descriptive results of this study are consistent with findings from previous research that emphasize the effectiveness of social media in language learning. The high percentage of respondents (42.3%) who use social media daily for learning English supports [Kabilan et al. \(2010\)](#), who found that frequent online engagement enhances vocabulary and grammatical accuracy. The study also aligns with [Alm \(2015\)](#), who demonstrated that audiovisual content, such as YouTube videos, improves pronunciation and listening comprehension. Similarly, [Vygotsky's \(1978\)](#) sociocultural theory supports the role of WhatsApp and Facebook in fostering collaborative learning, as evidenced by students' preference for these platforms (42.4% and 20.7%, respectively). However, some aspects deviate from previous studies. For example, TikTok was the least preferred platform (2.2%) for language learning, despite its potential for engaging and comprehensible input, as highlighted by [Krashen's \(1982\)](#) Hypothesis. This contradiction could stem from TikTok's informal and entertainment-driven nature, which makes it less structured for academic learning.

Novel Insights and Discoveries

1. Gender Distribution in Social Media-Assisted Language Learning: The overwhelming representation of female respondents (79.8%) suggests a gendered trend in the use of social media for language acquisition. This finding, while not widely explored in previous literature, may indicate that female students are more inclined toward interactive and multimedia-based learning approaches. Further research should examine gender-based differences in digital learning preferences.
2. Preferred Language Learning Activities: Watching videos (28.0%) and engaging with learning pages (26.2%) emerged as the most popular activities, emphasizing the dominance of visual and structured content over text-based or interactive methods. This preference aligns with [Desta et al. \(2021\)](#), who highlighted that video-based learning significantly aids medical English acquisition. However, the relatively low engagement with language exchange forums (14.2%) and podcasts (10.7%) indicates a gap in learner interaction and auditory-focused learning, which could be further explored in pedagogical frameworks.
3. Impact of social media on Language Skills: This study highlights varying degrees of impact across language skills. Pronunciation improvement (24.0% very high impact; 31.7% high impact) had a more positive perception than grammar (22.1% very high impact; 27.9% high impact). This suggests that while audiovisual content aids spoken English, concerns about informal grammar usage on social media persist, as noted by [Alshuaibi et al. \(2018\)](#). Additionally, 31.7% of respondents remained neutral regarding social media's role in

vocabulary development, implying that its effectiveness depends on content quality, as discussed by [Duke et al. \(2017\)](#).

4. Motivation and Social Media Integration in Education: A strong majority (97.2%) reported some level of motivation increase due to social media, with 70.2% supporting its integration into formal education. This reinforces [Giroux and Moreau's \(2022\)](#) argument for the structured incorporation of social media into nursing curricula. However, 7.7% remained skeptical, indicating that concerns about credibility, distractions, and informal language use persist ([Zhang & Kenny, 2010](#)).

The findings of this study align with the existing literature on the benefits of social media in language learning, particularly in terms of vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation improvement, and motivation enhancement. However, contradictions arise regarding platform preferences, highlighting TikTok's underutilization despite its potential, and the neutral stance on the impact of grammar and vocabulary. This study also provides novel insights into gender differences and content engagement patterns, suggesting avenues for further research. To maximize social media's educational potential, structured integration, content moderation, and learner awareness of informal language risks should be prioritized.

CONCLUSIONS

This study provides critical insights into the role of social media in language learning at the Shehu Sule College of Nursing Sciences, Damaturu, and directly addresses the research objectives. The findings confirm that social media platforms significantly contribute to language skill development, particularly in vocabulary acquisition, grammar improvement, pronunciation enhancement, and learner motivation. These results reinforce the growing recognition of digital learning environments as essential tools for language acquisition. Additionally, the dominant role of platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube reflects current trends in technology-enhanced education, highlighting their potential for structured learning.

Beyond the immediate study context, the findings have broader implications for language education policies, particularly integrating social media as a supplementary learning tool. The strong support (70.2%) for formal integration into higher education suggests that institutions should explore structured approaches to incorporating digital platforms into curricula. However, challenges such as digital distractions, inconsistent content quality, and varying levels of student engagement necessitate the development of well-regulated frameworks to maximize the benefits while addressing potential drawbacks. To enhance the effectiveness of social media in language education, educators and policymakers should adopt a strategic approach. The key recommendations are as follows:

1. Bridging the Gender Gap: Given the disparities in social media engagement, targeted awareness programmes should encourage greater participation from female students. This can be achieved through mentorship programs, gender-inclusive learning communities, and policies that ensure equal access to digital learning tools.
2. Content Optimization: Institutions should collaborate with educators and linguists to develop high-quality, interactive, and structured educational materials tailored for social media. This includes short video tutorials, gamified exercises, interactive quizzes and discussion forums that enhance engagement while ensuring academic rigor.
3. Platform Expansion and Diversification: While WhatsApp and Facebook are the most utilized platforms, educators should explore the potential of emerging platforms like TikTok and Twitter to diversify language learning experiences. TikTok, for instance, can be

used for short, engaging pronunciation drills, while Twitter can promote microblogging exercises that enhance writing skills.

4. Curriculum Integration: To create blended learning models, institutions should develop structured lesson plans that incorporate social media as a complementary resource. For example, English language instructors can assign weekly interactive tasks on social media, such as discussions in WhatsApp groups, vocabulary challenges on Instagram, or collaborative storytelling projects on Facebook.
5. Teacher Training and Digital Literacy Enhancement: Educators should receive specialized training on effective social media-based teaching strategies, including content curation, digital engagement techniques, and methods to filter and assess credible educational materials online. This will help address concerns regarding inconsistent content quality and informal language use.

LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

While this study provides valuable insights into the role of social media in language learning, several limitations must be acknowledged. The reliance on self-reported data may introduce response bias, as students' perceptions of language improvement may not always align with objective proficiency measures. Additionally, the dominance of male respondents may affect the generalizability of the findings, and the study's focus on Shehu Sule College of Nursing Sciences, Damaturu, limits its applicability to broader academic contexts. External factors such as students' prior language proficiency, digital literacy, internet accessibility, and socioeconomic background may also influence engagement with social media for learning, yet these were not extensively analyzed. Furthermore, the study primarily examined student engagement with social media without objectively measuring language gains through standardized assessments.

To address these limitations, future research should adopt a more comprehensive approach. Incorporating objective proficiency measures, such as standardized language tests, pre- and post-assessments, or experimental designs, would provide a clearer understanding of social media's actual impact on language proficiency. Expanding the study population through cross-institutional or multi-regional studies would improve generalizability and offer insights into how different educational settings influence social media-based learning. A longitudinal approach is also necessary to explore the long-term effects of continuous social media engagement on language development, including retention rates, proficiency gains, and potential drawbacks such as dependency on informal learning methods.

Further studies should investigate platform-specific impacts by analyzing how different social media tools contribute uniquely to linguistic skills—for example, WhatsApp for conversational practice, YouTube for pronunciation, and Twitter for concise writing skills. Additionally, research should focus on developing educator-centered strategies to effectively integrate social media into curriculum design, examining best practices for structuring social media-based learning activities, balancing traditional and digital methodologies, and addressing challenges such as distractions and content credibility.

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