
LEVERAGING SOCIAL MEDIA FOR BUSINESS LEARNING: OPPORTUNITIES AND ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR UNIVERSITY BUSINESS EDUCATION LECTURERS IN SOUTH EAST NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study was carried out to determine how social media is leveraged for business learning among University Business Education lecturers in South-East Nigeria, with emphasis on the opportunities it presents and the ethical implications involved. Four research questions in line with the specific purposes guided the study. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population for the study is 156 Business Education lecturers from eight public universities in South-East Nigeria. A sample of 56 lecturers was drawn using the purposive sampling method (7 lecturers from each of the 8 institutions). An interview guide with open-ended questions was developed and used for data collection. The data were thematically analyzed, and results were visualized using bar charts for clarity. The study found that social media platforms such as WhatsApp, YouTube, and Facebook are the most commonly used tools for teaching and learning, offering benefits such as increased student engagement, access to real-time business updates, and collaborative learning. However, concerns were also raised about ethical issues like misinformation, distractions, and privacy breaches. Based on the findings, it was recommended that institutions provide professional development for lecturers on ethical and pedagogical use of social media, while also embedding digital literacy and online responsibility into the curriculum.

Keywords: Leveraging, social media, Business Learning

Introduction

In recent years, social media has evolved from a simple communication tool to a powerful platform for education and professional development. In Business Education specifically, educators and students are increasingly incorporating platforms like LinkedIn, YouTube, WhatsApp, Facebook, and even TikTok into teaching and learning processes (Manca, 2020; Greenhow & Chapman, 2020). These platforms, according to Appel et al. (2020), provide new avenues for knowledge sharing, collaboration, professional networking, and engagement with real-time industry practices. As the world becomes more digitally connected, especially following the global shift toward online learning during the COVID-19

pandemic, leveraging social media has emerged as an effective means to enhance business learning both inside and outside the classroom (Al-Ali, 2020).

Leveraging, in this context, refers to the strategic and intentional use of digital platforms to achieve specific educational outcomes. According to Ransbotham et al. (2020), leveraging involves the intelligent application of technology to add value, optimize processes, and enhance outcomes in a specific domain. In this study, leveraging means the deliberate use of social media platforms by Business Education lecturers and students to support teaching, learning, and professional engagement. Social media, as defined by Appel et al. (2020), includes interactive platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp that promote user-generated content, collaboration, and digital networking. Operationally, social media in this study refers to tools such as WhatsApp, YouTube, Facebook, and LinkedIn, which Business Education stakeholders use to share educational materials, communicate efficiently, and facilitate teaching and learning activities. Business learning, according to Deng and Tavares (2021), is a structured process of building business competencies through theoretical instruction, practical experience, and applied knowledge. In this context, business learning refers to how students and lecturers engage with business-related concepts and skills using both formal and informal approaches, particularly through social media.

Several studies have demonstrated that social media plays a vital role in enhancing digital literacy, boosting student engagement, and fostering collaborative learning environments. For instance, Sarker et al. (2020) found that integrating social media into classroom activities helped students build critical digital skills such as navigating platforms, evaluating information credibility, and engaging in online communication. Abeysekera and Dawson (2021) showed that students who participated in course-related social media discussions were more engaged and actively involved in their learning, especially when the platforms used were familiar and accessible. Similarly, Zachos et al. (2021) emphasized that social media encourages a more collaborative learning process by allowing students and lecturers to share resources, co-create knowledge, and reflect together on business case studies and real-life scenarios. These tools also help bridge the gap between theoretical learning and real-world business practices, thereby promoting experiential learning where students apply concepts in authentic and practical settings (Zachos et al., 2021).

Despite its potential, the integration of social media into business learning remains inconsistent and not used appropriately in many developing countries, including Nigeria. Concerns such as data privacy, digital distractions, academic dishonesty, and the lack of institutional frameworks to support ethical and effective use persist (Eze et al., 2022). While

global research has identified both benefits and challenges, there is limited empirical evidence from Nigerian universities, particularly from the perspective of Business Education lecturers in South-East Nigeria. Given the increasing reliance on digital tools in higher education, understanding how this business lecturers leverage social media, the opportunities they identify, and the ethical dilemmas they encounter is essential for informing local policy, pedagogical innovation, and professional development. This study, therefore, aims to fill this gap by investigating the opportunities and ethical implications of using social media for business learning from the viewpoint of university lecturers in South-East Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

In an ideal academic environment, digital tools like social media should be effectively integrated into teaching and learning, especially in business education. These platforms should help lecturers and students exchange ideas, follow industry trends, develop soft skills, and collaborate on real-world business problems. When used properly, social media can foster a more interactive, flexible, and career-relevant learning experience. Universities are expected to support this by providing clear guidelines and training for educators to use these tools responsibly and purposefully.

However, the reality in many Nigerian universities, particularly in the South-East, is quite different. While lecturers and students do use platforms like WhatsApp, YouTube, and Facebook, these uses are often informal, inconsistent, or limited to communication and information sharing. In many cases, there are no clear institutional policies on how to use social media for academic purposes, and most lecturers have not received formal training in digital pedagogy. Ethical issues also arise such as academic dishonesty, misinformation, privacy breaches, and overdependence on unverified online content which can compromise learning quality. Despite the increasing availability of smart phones and internet access, the full educational potential of social media is far from being realized.

If this problem is not addressed, universities risk missing out on the many benefits that social media can offer in developing 21st-century business skills. The lack of structure may lead to misuse of these platforms, academic underperformance, and further digital divides among students and lecturers. Moreover, without ethical guidelines and digital literacy training, the educational environment may suffer from increased distractions, data misuse, and loss of academic credibility. This gap between what is possible and what is practiced calls for urgent academic attention and policy action.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of the study was leveraging social media for Business Learning: Opportunities and Ethical Implications for University Lecturers in South East Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Identify the types of social media platforms most commonly used by Business Education lecturers for teaching and learning purposes.
2. Examine how lecturers in South-East Nigerian universities leverage social media to enhance business learning outcomes.
3. Explore the perceived benefits and opportunities of using social media for business-related instruction.
4. Investigate the ethical issues and challenges lecturers encounter when using social media for academic purposes.

Research Questions

1. What types of social media platforms are most commonly used by Business Education lecturers for teaching and learning purposes?
2. In what ways do lecturers in South-East Nigerian universities leverage social media to enhance business learning outcomes?
3. What are the perceived benefits and opportunities of using social media for business-related instruction?
4. What ethical issues and challenges do lecturers encounter when using social media for academic purposes?

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research design. Qualitative research design is a designed that involves collection of numerical data and the application of statistical tools to answer research question and test hypotheses. (Leedy and Ormrod, 2019). This research design is appropriate because it helps to deeply understand how Business Education lecturers in universities use social media for teaching and learning. It also allows the study to explore the ethical challenges they encounter in the process. A qualitative approach is especially useful here because it focuses on gathering detailed, personal experiences and perspectives. This makes it ideal for examining complex issues in education that cannot be easily measured with numbers, such as how lecturers think, feel, and respond to using digital platforms in their teaching. The population for the study is 156 Business Education lecturers drawn from eight public universities in South-East Nigeria. The distribution of lecturers across the institutions is

as follows: University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN) – 20 lecturers; Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT), Agbani – 17 lecturers; Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka – 27 lecturers; Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam – 23 lecturers; Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu-Alike Ikwo, Abakaliki – 16 lecturers; Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki – 13 lecturers; Imo State University, Owerri – 19 lecturers and Abia State University, Uturu – 21 lecturers. These eight universities were selected because they offer Business Education programmes and they are located in South-East Nigeria, an educationally active region with a growing emphasis on digital learning.

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select 56 lecturers from the population for in-depth interviews. 7 lecturers were selected from each of the 8 university to ensure institutional representation and diverse viewpoints. The purposive sampling technique was appropriate because the selected lecturers have relevant teaching experience and are likely to have engaged with social media for instructional purposes. Instrument for Data Collection was a semi-structured interview guide, designed to capture participants' perspectives on: Platforms commonly used, Ways social media is integrated into teaching. Benefits and learning opportunities, Ethical challenges encountered. This instrument allowed flexibility for follow-up questions and deeper insights during the interviews. Interviews were conducted face-to-face and via Zoom or WhatsApp voice calls, depending on the preference and availability of participants. Each interview lasted approximately 25–35 minutes and was audio-recorded with consent. The responses were later transcribed and analyzed thematically. Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring patterns and themes from the interview transcripts. Findings were presented using narrative summaries and bar charts to visually represent the frequency of certain responses or trends across institutions.

Results

Figure 1, the bar chart illustrates the frequency of social media platforms used by Business Education lecturers in universities across South-East Nigeria, based on responses from 56 participants. The findings show that WhatsApp is the most commonly used platform, with 42 lecturers indicating its use for teaching and learning purposes. This is followed by YouTube (38 mentions), which many lecturers described as useful for sharing instructional videos, tutorials, and recorded lectures. Facebook was mentioned by 30 lecturers, primarily for hosting class groups and discussions, while LinkedIn had 26 mentions, often highlighted for its professional relevance and use in connecting students with industry trends. Less frequently mentioned platforms include Instagram (15 mentions) and TikTok (12 mentions), which are

increasingly being used for short-form educational content, though some lecturers still expressed skepticism about their academic appropriateness. These results suggest that messaging apps and video-sharing platforms are the most favored tools among lecturers for integrating social media into business education. The pattern also reflects a preference for platforms that support communication, video-based instruction, and professional engagement, reinforcing the idea that lecturers are beginning to adopt a more diverse and strategic approach to digital teaching tools.

Figure 1

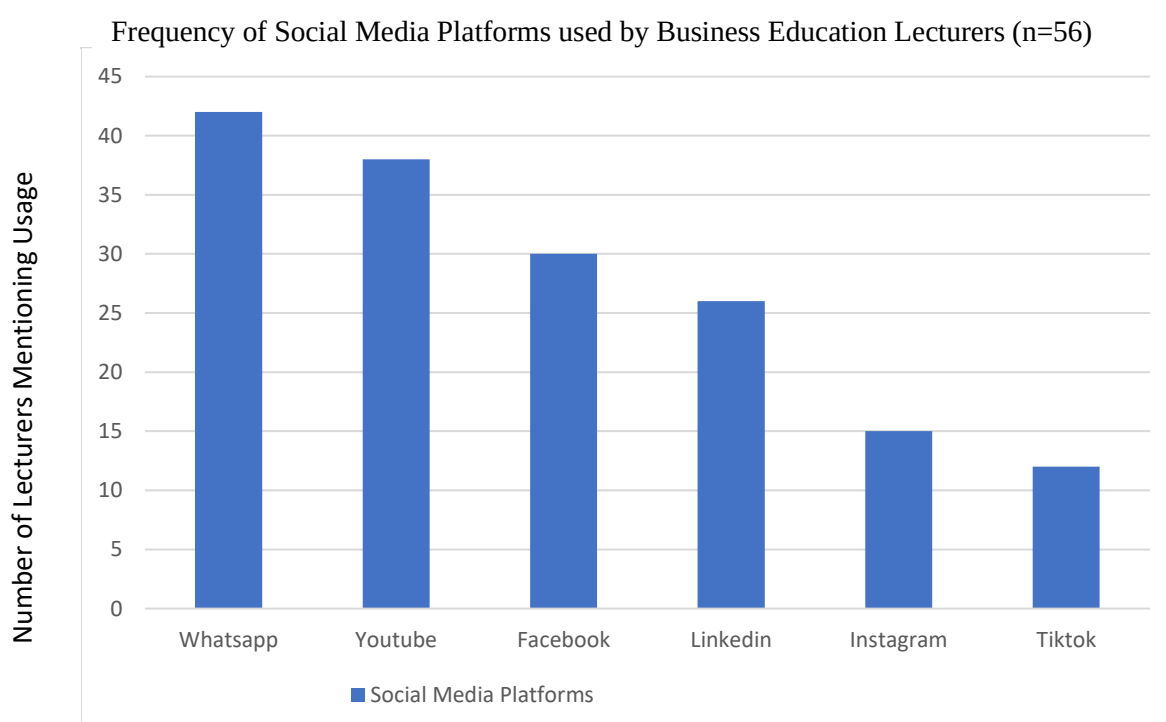


Figure 2 presents the various ways social media is integrated into business education teaching, as reported by lecturers across universities in South-East Nigeria. The most frequently mentioned use is sharing learning materials (45 responses), indicating that educators commonly utilize platforms like WhatsApp and YouTube to distribute course content. This is followed by facilitating discussions (38), where tools such as Facebook groups and WhatsApp forums support interactive learning outside the classroom. Hosting live sessions via Zoom, Facebook Live, or Instagram is also prominent (33 responses), enabling real-time engagement. Other notable uses include assessments and feedback (30), career guidance and mentoring (28), and collaborative group work (25). These results highlight the diverse and growing role of

social media in enhancing pedagogy, interaction, and student support within the business education ecosystem.

Figure 2

Frequency of Ways social media is Integrated into Teaching by Business Education Lecturers (n=56)

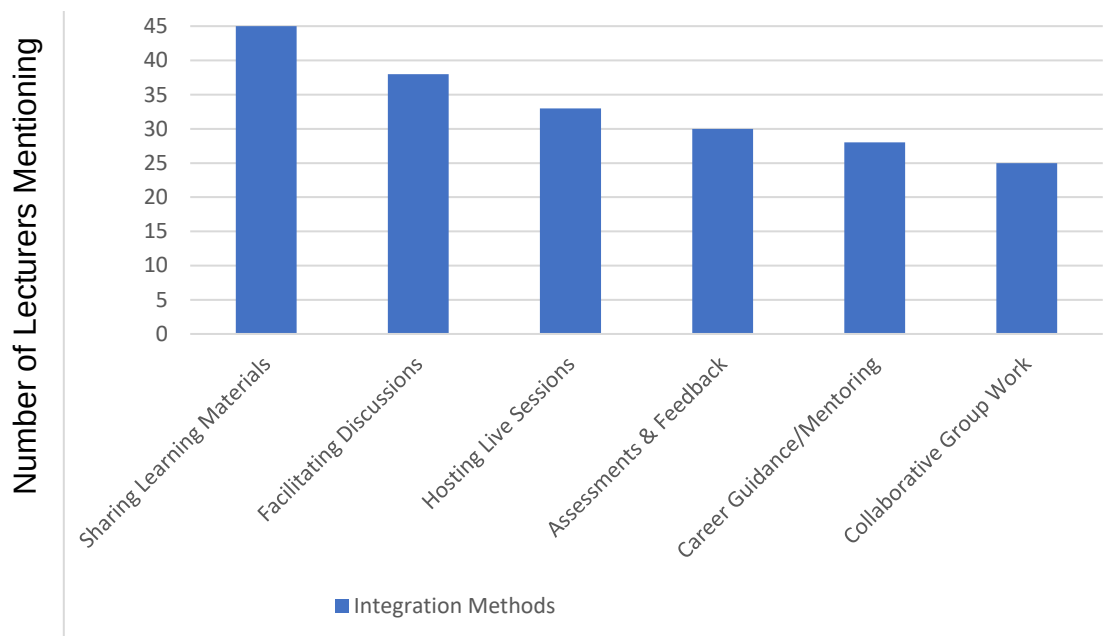


Figure 3 illustrates the major benefits and learning opportunities that Business Education lecturers perceive in using social media for teaching and learning. Among the respondents, increased student engagement was the most frequently mentioned benefit, cited by 48 participants. This highlights the role of social media in capturing students' attention and promoting interactive learning environments. Real-time access to industry trends was also highly valued, with 35 mentions, reflecting lecturers' appreciation for how platforms like LinkedIn and Twitter help students stay current with evolving business practices. Furthermore, 40 respondents noted improved digital literacy as a key advantage, indicating that social media use enhances both students' and educators' ability to navigate digital tools effectively. Access to diverse learning resources (41 mentions) and broader collaboration opportunities (32 mentions) also featured prominently, highlighting the global and networked learning potential social media provides. Lastly, enhanced creativity and innovation, with 39 responses, was recognized as a valuable outcome, suggesting that social media fosters a dynamic environment for generating and sharing new ideas. These findings suggest that when properly leveraged,

social media can serve as a powerful pedagogical tool in Business Education, promoting deeper engagement, professional development, and real-world relevance in academic settings.

Figure 3

Frequency of Perceived Benefits and Learning Opportunities of social media in Business Education (n=56)

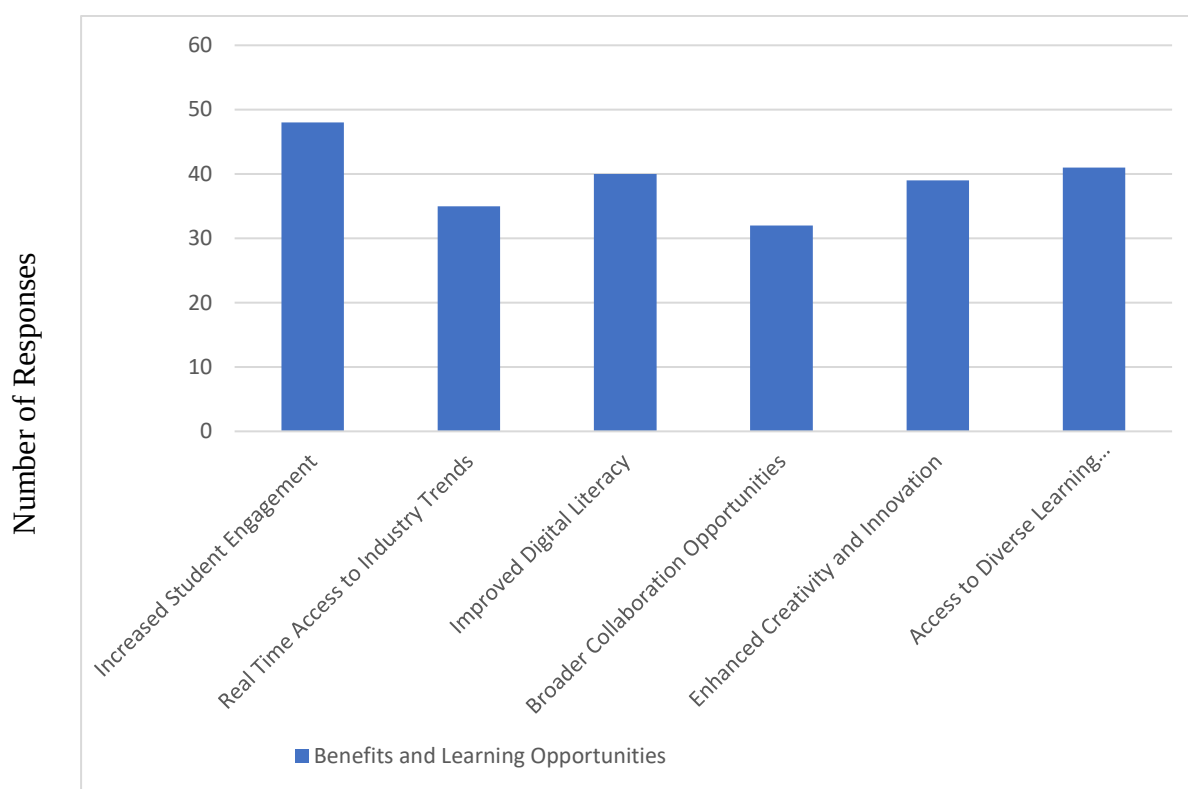
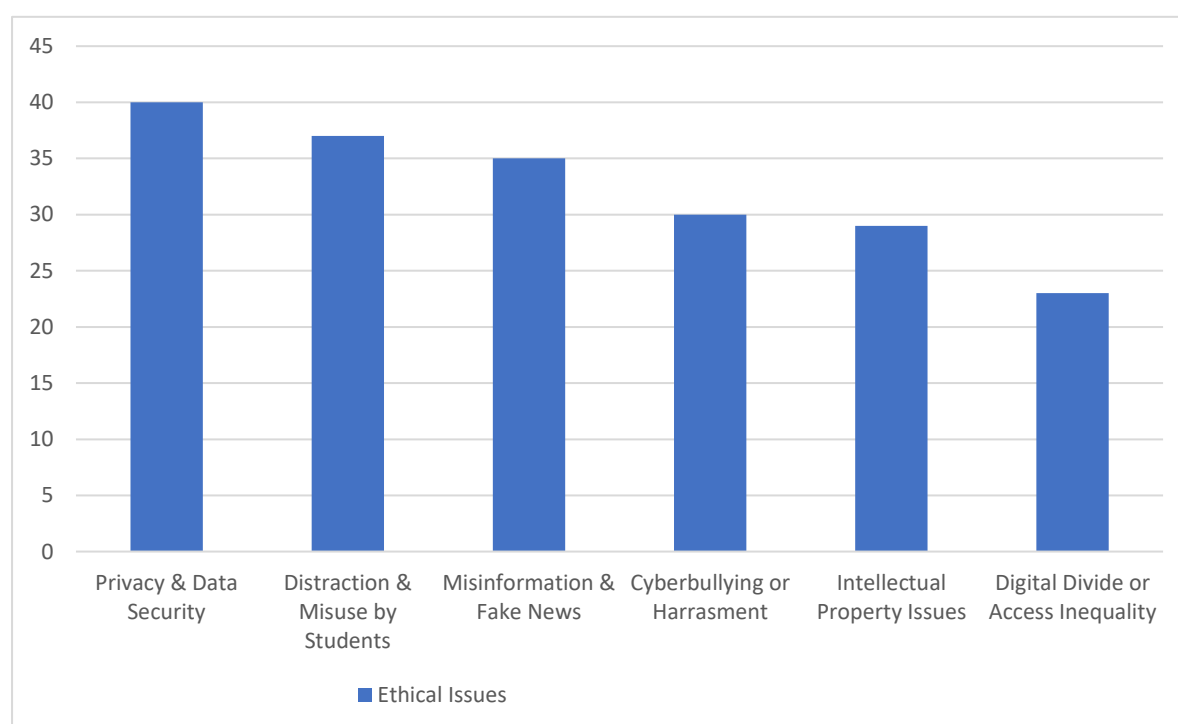


Figure 4 presents key ethical concerns raised by business education lecturers regarding the use of social media in teaching and learning across selected universities in South-East Nigeria. The most frequently cited concern was privacy and data security, mentioned by 40 respondents. This reflects the apprehension about the exposure of personal or institutional information when using platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, or YouTube in an educational setting. Following closely, distraction and misuse by students was reported by 37 respondents. This highlight fears that students might engage with non-educational content or become addicted to social media, negatively impacting learning outcomes. Misinformation and fake news, flagged by 35 participants, also emerged as a significant issue, showing that the spread of unverified content can compromise academic integrity and credibility. Other notable concerns included cyber bullying or harassment (30 mentions), especially on open or less regulated platforms; intellectual property issues (29 mentions), where lecturers worry about

unauthorized use of their teaching materials; and digital divide or access inequality (23 mentions), pointing to inequitable access to devices and internet connectivity among students. This figure highlights the complex ethical landscape of integrating social media into formal business education and suggests the need for institutional guidelines, digital literacy training, and policy safeguards to mitigate these challenges.

Figure 4 Frequency of Ethical Challenges Encountered (n=56)



Discussion of Findings

The findings from the interview responses and bar chart analysis revealed that WhatsApp, YouTube, and Facebook are the most commonly used social media platforms among Business Education lecturers in universities across South-East Nigeria. These platforms were consistently cited as the most accessible, familiar, and effective tools for communicating with students, sharing instructional materials, and facilitating online discussions. This trend aligns with the observations of Greenhow and Chapman (2020), who reported that WhatsApp and Facebook are popular among educators in low-resource settings because of their ease of use, wide reach, and ability to support synchronous and asynchronous learning. WhatsApp, in particular, was noted for its simplicity and affordability, making it ideal for both formal class communication and informal group discussions. Appel et al. (2020) also found that platforms like YouTube are increasingly utilized for educational purposes due to their multimedia

capabilities. Business educators often use YouTube to explain complex concepts using video demonstrations, industry-based case studies, and interviews with business leaders. The use of visual and audio formats helps students retain information better and relate theoretical knowledge to real-world applications.

Furthermore, the popularity of Facebook among lecturers in this study corresponds with the findings of Manca (2020), who highlighted the platform's potential for creating class groups, managing projects, and building learning communities. Its interactive features allow educators to post announcements, host live sessions, and encourage peer-to-peer learning. Less frequently used platforms, such as LinkedIn and TikTok, was acknowledged for their professional appeal and creative potential respectively, but was not as widely adopted for regular teaching purposes. This may be attributed to lower familiarity or perceived complexity in comparison to WhatsApp and Facebook. The findings suggest that Business Education lecturers favor platforms that are mobile-friendly, widely adopted by students, and suitable for sharing diverse educational content. This emphasizes the importance of integrating familiar digital tools into pedagogy to enhance engagement and support flexible learning environments, especially in the post-pandemic academic landscape.

Findings from the interview data and visual analysis revealed that Business Education lecturers integrate social media into their teaching strategies in multiple ways. These include sharing lecture notes and videos, facilitating real-time class discussions, assigning online group tasks, and curating industry-relevant content from platforms like YouTube and LinkedIn. Some lecturers also use WhatsApp and Facebook groups for attendance tracking, announcements, and encouraging peer-to-peer support. These practices reflect what Al-Ali (2020) describes as the pedagogical affordances of social media where platforms are not only used to disseminate content but also to foster interaction, critical thinking, and collaboration. By embedding these tools into their teaching plans, lecturers are expanding learning beyond the physical classroom, making it more dynamic and student-centered. The findings are also supported by Ransbotham et al. (2020), who emphasize that leveraging digital platforms in education involves the thoughtful redesign of instructional activities to create value. In this context, lecturers are strategically using social media to extend learning into more interactive and application-based formats. This aligns well with constructivist learning theories, where learners build knowledge through active engagement and collaboration.

Moreover, Deng and Tavares (2021) argue that the integration of digital tools like social media allows for contextual and real-time learning. For example, lecturers in the study mentioned that they regularly share current business trends, stock market updates, and case

studies via social media thereby helping students relate academic theories to evolving business realities. Overall, the findings indicate that social media is not merely used as a communication channel but has become a pedagogical instrument in Business Education. Its integration supports blended learning, fosters immediacy, and enables lecturers to meet students in the digital spaces they already occupy.

The findings from interviews and visual data analysis indicate that Business Education lecturers perceive several benefits from integrating social media into their teaching. Key benefits include: Enhanced student engagement and participation; faster communication and feedback; exposure to real-time industry trends; support for collaborative and self-directed learning, and increased accessibility to learning materials. Lecturers highlighted that students tend to participate more actively in discussions held via WhatsApp and Facebook, where they feel more relaxed compared to formal classroom settings. Platforms like YouTube and LinkedIn were noted for offering industry-relevant materials and expert talks that helped bridge the gap between academic learning and business practice. These findings are consistent with Greenhow and Chapman (2020), who assert that social media fosters participatory culture and active knowledge construction, especially in higher education contexts. Social media's informal and interactive nature allows students to be more involved in their own learning.

Additionally, Appel et al. (2020) point out that social media offers scalable and flexible environments where users can access and share multimedia resources, which enhances both comprehension and retention. This supports the lecturers' feedback that students retain more information when they engage with visual or interactive content on social platforms. From a professional development standpoint, lecturers mentioned that social media also benefits them by keeping them updated on trends, teaching methods, and professional networking. This supports Al-Ali (2020) who emphasized the dual benefit of social media for both learners and educators in maintaining relevance in a fast-changing digital environment. In summary, the lecturers' perspectives confirm that social media is not just a convenience but a catalyst for innovation, engagement, and relevance in Business Education. When used purposefully, it enriches the teaching-learning experience and prepares students for the evolving demands of the business world.

The findings revealed several ethical concerns expressed by Business Education lecturers regarding the integration of social media into academic settings. These concerns include: privacy and data security risks; distraction and time-wasting by students, blurred boundaries between formal and informal communication; misinformation and lack of content credibility, and potential for cyber bullying or harassment. Many lecturers were particularly

concerned about data privacy, especially on platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp where student information, discussions, or even grades could be exposed to unintended audiences. This aligns with the findings of Manca (2020), who noted that while social media offers pedagogical benefits, it also brings challenges related to maintaining professional boundaries and protecting user privacy. The issue of distraction was another major theme. Lecturers observed that students often drift from educational content to unrelated activities on social media, which negatively impacts focus and productivity. This supports Greenhow and Chapman (2020), who cautioned that without proper guidelines, social media use in education can result in more harm than good by diverting attention and reducing deep engagement with course materials.

Moreover, some lecturers expressed discomfort with the informality of communication on social platforms, which can undermine academic authority and blur the lines between student-teacher relationships. This is in line with Deng and Tavares (2021), who argued that educators must navigate a delicate balance when using social media to maintain both approachability and professionalism. There were also concerns about content credibility. As lecturers pointed out, students sometimes rely on unverified or misleading sources shared on social media, which can distort their understanding of key concepts. Appel et al. (2020) similarly emphasized the challenge of distinguishing quality information from misinformation in user-generated content environments. Lastly, issues of cyber bullying and inappropriate conduct were mentioned, especially in group settings where students may be subjected to ridicule or harassment. This emphasizes the need for institutions to create clear social media policies and ethical guidelines, a recommendation also made by Al-Ali (2020) in discussions about digital professionalism.

Conclusion

This study set out to explore how Business Education lecturers in South-East Nigerian universities are using social media to support teaching and learning, and what ethical concerns come with that use. The findings showed that social media platforms like WhatsApp, YouTube, Facebook, and LinkedIn are widely used by lecturers to share materials, communicate with students, and stay connected with current trends in the business world. Lecturers reported several benefits, such as improved student engagement, easier access to learning resources, and the ability to continue teaching even when physical classes are not possible. However, the study also brought to light real concerns especially around privacy, distractions, blurred boundaries, misinformation, and the potential for online misconduct.

These insights suggest that while social media holds great potential to enhance business education, it needs to be used thoughtfully and responsibly. Universities and educators must set clear guidelines on how these platforms should be used for learning, ensure that both lecturers and students are digitally literate, and build a culture of ethics and professionalism online. Finally, social media is not just a tool for entertainment or communication; it is becoming an important educational resource. When used properly, it can transform how we teach and learn in business education. But to fully benefit from it, we must be aware of the risks and take steps to address them.

Implications of the Study

The findings of this study have important implications for university business education lecturers in South East Nigeria, particularly in enhancing teaching effectiveness through the strategic integration of social media platforms. By leveraging tools such as collaborative online communities, discussion forums, and content-sharing applications, lecturers can create more interactive, student-centered learning environments that promote critical thinking, real-time engagement, and practical exposure to contemporary business practices. This suggests a need for capacity building in digital pedagogy, as lecturers must develop the requisite skills to effectively utilize social media for instructional delivery. Furthermore, institutions and policymakers are encouraged to provide supportive infrastructure, including reliable internet access, training programs, and institutional guidelines, to ensure that social media is harnessed productively for academic purposes.

In addition, the study highlights significant ethical implications that must be carefully addressed to ensure responsible use of social media in business education. Issues such as data privacy, academic integrity, cyberbullying, and professional boundaries between lecturers and students require the establishment of clear ethical standards and regulatory frameworks. Lecturers must be guided by professional codes of conduct that promote safe, respectful, and inclusive online interactions, while also educating students on responsible digital behavior. Consequently, universities in South East Nigeria should integrate digital ethics into their curricula and staff development programs, ensuring that both educators and learners are equipped to navigate the ethical challenges associated with social media use in academic contexts

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