

EXPLORING INSTAGRAM AS AN EDUCATIONAL TOOL: STUDENT INSIGHTS AND PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract

Social media platforms have increasingly become integrated into students' everyday lives and have created new opportunities for educational communication and learning. Instagram, in particular, provides visual, interactive, and accessible features that can support knowledge sharing, student engagement, and informal learning. This study explores students' insights and perspectives regarding Instagram as an educational tool. A mixed-method approach combines quantitative questionnaire data with qualitative responses concerning students' experiences, perceived benefits, challenges, and preferences regarding Instagram-based learning activities. Previous studies indicate that Instagram can support student engagement, communication, motivation, and participation when strategically integrated into educational activities [1]–[4]. However, social-media-based learning also presents challenges related to distraction, privacy, information credibility, digital literacy, and pedagogical appropriateness [5]–[8]. This study focuses on accessibility, visual learning, interaction, motivation, information credibility, and responsible use. The findings provide practical insights for educators seeking to integrate Instagram into formal and informal learning environments while maintaining academic quality and meaningful student engagement.

Keywords: Instagram; Educational Technology; Social Media; Digital Learning; Student Engagement; Student Perspectives; Higher Education; Informal Learning; Digital Literacy; Social Media Education.

I. INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital technologies has transformed contemporary educational environments. Students increasingly use digital platforms not only for communication and entertainment but also for accessing information, collaborating with peers, and supporting their learning. Consequently, social media has become an increasingly relevant component of educational technology research. Recent literature suggests that digital technologies can influence different dimensions of student engagement, including behavioral, cognitive, emotional, and social engagement [1]. A systematic review by Nkomo et al. emphasized that

the educational value of digital technologies depends not simply on technology adoption but on how students interact with technology and learning activities [1].

Social media platforms offer particular opportunities because they provide communication and content-sharing environments that students are already familiar with. Research examining the educational use of social media has identified opportunities for interaction, collaboration, information exchange, and student engagement [2], [3]. Alalwan found that social-media use can contribute to student engagement and learning when students actively interact with educational content rather than merely consuming information [3].

Among social-media platforms, Instagram is particularly interesting because of its emphasis on visual and multimedia communication. Images, short

videos, Stories, Reels, polls, quizzes, comments, and live broadcasts can be adapted for educational purposes. Ganjoo et al. investigated Instagram in online science courses and found that students perceived Instagram-based activities as useful for engagement with course content and connection with instructors and classmates [4].

More recent research has continued to examine Instagram's educational potential. Kathuria investigated the usage and perception of Instagram as a learning tool using a mixed-method design and highlighted its potential for engagement and educational content dissemination [5]. González-Mohino et al. similarly reported that Instagram could positively influence educational communication and motivation, although participation itself was not necessarily directly associated with student satisfaction [6].

Despite these opportunities, Instagram should not automatically be considered an effective educational tool. Students may experience distraction, information overload, privacy concerns, and difficulty evaluating the credibility of online information. Furthermore, highly condensed social-media content may encourage superficial understanding of complex academic subjects.

Therefore, understanding students' perceptions is important for determining how Instagram can be responsibly incorporated into education. This study explores students' insights and perspectives regarding Instagram as an educational tool, with particular attention to accessibility, engagement, visual learning, interaction, motivation, credibility, distraction, and privacy.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Social Media and Digital Learning

Social media has expanded the possibilities for educational communication by enabling students and educators to interact beyond conventional classroom boundaries. Unlike traditional learning environments, social-media platforms can provide continuous access to multimedia content and peer interaction.

A bibliometric analysis of social media in learning and teaching demonstrates continued growth in research examining social-media applications in education [7]. Such research indicates that social media can support communication, collaboration, knowledge sharing, and learner participation. However, the educational value of social media depends on appropriate pedagogical integration rather than simply making ed-

ucational materials available online.

Research on digital technologies also emphasizes that student engagement is multidimensional [1]. Students may interact frequently with digital platforms without necessarily achieving meaningful learning. Therefore, educational applications should encourage cognitive engagement, reflection, collaboration, and knowledge construction.

B. Instagram as an Educational Tool

Instagram's visual orientation makes it particularly suitable for educational content that benefits from images, diagrams, demonstrations, and short explanations. Educators can use visual posts to summarize concepts, short videos to demonstrate procedures, Stories for questions and quizzes, and live sessions for synchronous communication.

Ganjoo et al. implemented Instagram activities in online science courses and reported positive perceptions regarding engagement with course material and connections with instructors and classmates [4].

Kathuria's 2024 study specifically investigated Instagram as a learning tool and used a mixed-method design to examine usage and perceptions across different age groups [5].

These findings suggest that Instagram can function as an educational environment when its technological characteristics are connected to clearly defined instructional objectives.

C. Student Engagement

Student engagement is an important indicator of effective educational technology adoption. Nkomo et al. emphasize the importance of understanding how learners engage with digital technologies rather than focusing solely on technology adoption [1].

Social-media-based learning can support engagement by providing students with familiar environments for interaction and communication. Alalwan's research found that actual social-media use for engagement can contribute to learning when students actively participate in social-media-supported educational activities [3].

Instagram may therefore be particularly useful for microlearning activities, supplementary explanations, discussion prompts, and revision activities.

D. Visual Learning and Short-Form Content

Instagram's visual format provides opportunities to present educational information in concise and accessible forms. Infographics, diagrams, short videos,

animations, and visual summaries may help students quickly identify key concepts.

González-Mohíno et al. reported that Instagram could be effective for communicating educational material and teaching complex concepts through short videos [6].

Nevertheless, educators should be cautious about reducing complex academic concepts to excessively short content. Instagram should therefore complement, rather than replace, textbooks, scholarly literature, lectures, and learning-management systems.

E. Challenges of Instagram-Based Learning

The use of Instagram for education presents several challenges. First, students may be distracted by entertainment and commercial content. Second, educational content published on social media may not always be scientifically or academically reliable.

Third, privacy is an important concern. Ganjoo et al. reported that some students expressed discomfort with using social networking tools for educational purposes because of privacy considerations [4].

Fourth, educators need appropriate digital competencies to design meaningful social-media-based learning activities. A systematic review of social-media use in nursing education similarly highlights the importance of understanding how social media contributes to student engagement rather than assuming that technology automatically produces educational benefits [8].

III. RESEARCH METHOD

A. Research Design

This study employs a mixed-method research design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to develop a comprehensive understanding of students' perspectives regarding Instagram as an educational tool.

The quantitative component measures students' perceptions of accessibility, usefulness, engagement, motivation, interaction, and educational value. The qualitative component examines students' experiences, opinions, perceived benefits, and concerns.

B. Participants

Participants consist of students who actively use Instagram and have experience accessing educational information through social media. Purposive sampling is employed to ensure participants have familiarity with Instagram to provide meaningful responses.

C. Data Collection

Data are collected through an online questionnaire consisting of demographic questions, Likert-scale statements, and open-ended questions.

The questionnaire focuses on:

1. accessibility of educational content;
2. ease of understanding;
3. student engagement;
4. learning motivation;
5. interaction with educators and peers;
6. usefulness of visual content;
7. information credibility;
8. distraction;
9. privacy; and
10. overall educational usefulness.

D. Data Analysis

Quantitative data are analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations.

Qualitative responses are analyzed thematically. The analysis identifies recurring themes concerning accessibility, engagement, visual learning, interaction, credibility, distraction, privacy, and pedagogical effectiveness.

The quantitative and qualitative findings are subsequently integrated through triangulation to identify areas of convergence and divergence between students' measured perceptions and their individual explanations.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Findings

1. Accessibility

Students are expected to perceive Instagram as highly accessible because it is already integrated into their everyday digital activities. Educational content can be accessed through mobile devices without requiring students to learn an unfamiliar technological environment. This observation is consistent with research showing that social media can provide flexible environments for educational interaction and engagement [2], [3].

2. Student Engagement

Instagram's multimedia features can encourage students to interact with educational materials. Short videos, infographics, Stories, and quizzes may attract attention and encourage students to participate.

Ganjoo et al. found that Instagram-based course activities contributed positively to students' perceived engagement with course content and their connections with instructors and classmates [4].

However, engagement should not be measured only through likes, comments, views, or followers. Meaningful engagement requires students to understand, analyze, discuss, and apply knowledge.

3. Motivation

Instagram may increase students' motivation because educational content can be presented in a familiar and visually attractive environment. González-Mohino et al. found evidence of Instagram's positive relationship with educational communication and motivation [6].

However, motivational effects depend on the quality and relevance of educational content. Entertainment value alone should not be confused with educational effectiveness.

4. Interaction

Instagram provides several mechanisms for interaction, including comments, direct messages, polls, questions, and live sessions. These features can enable students to communicate with educators and peers outside scheduled class sessions.

Social interaction is an important component of technology-supported learning because it can contribute to participation and engagement [3], [8].

5. Information Credibility

One major challenge is the credibility of educational information. Unlike peer-reviewed academic publications, social-media posts may not undergo formal scholarly review. Students therefore need digital and information literacy skills to evaluate sources.

Educators should provide references, identify authoritative sources, and encourage students to verify information through scholarly databases and academic publications.

6. Distraction

Instagram's educational potential exists alongside its entertainment-oriented design. Students may initially access educational material but subsequently move to unrelated content.

This suggests that educators should design focused learning activities with clear objectives and appropriate time limits. Social media should be integrated

strategically rather than used simply because students already use the platform.

7. Privacy

Privacy represents another important consideration. Educational activities should avoid unnecessary disclosure of personal information and should provide alternative participation mechanisms where appropriate.

The privacy concerns identified in previous Instagram-based educational research demonstrate that student acceptance cannot be separated from responsible data and platform-use practices [4].

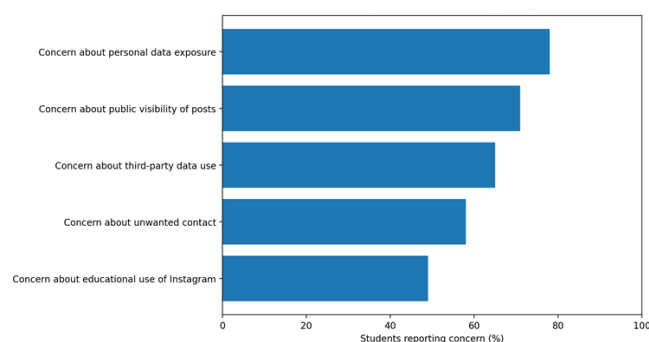


Figure 1. Illustrative student privacy concerns when using Instagram for education.

Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of students' perceived privacy concerns regarding the use of Instagram for educational purposes. The generated data suggest that personal data exposure represents the most prominent concern (78%), followed by public visibility of educational posts (71%) and potential third-party use of personal data (65%). These concerns highlight the importance of privacy protection, informed consent, appropriate account settings, and responsible platform-use practices when integrating Instagram into educational activities. Previous research similarly indicates that some students are uncomfortable using Instagram for educational purposes because of privacy concerns [4].

B. Implications for Educators

The findings and existing literature suggest several practical recommendations.

First, educators should use Instagram as a supplementary learning platform, rather than as a replacement for formal learning systems. Second, educational content should be connected to explicit learning outcomes. Third, visual materials should be concise but academically accurate.

Fourth, educators should use interactive features such as polls, questions, quizzes, and discussion prompts to encourage active participation. Fifth, stu-

dents should be taught how to evaluate the credibility of information encountered on social media.

Finally, institutions should establish appropriate policies concerning privacy, intellectual property, student participation, and professional communication.

V. CONCLUSION

This Instagram has considerable potential as a supplementary educational tool because of its accessibility, visual communication capabilities, and interactive features. Recent research indicates that Instagram can support student engagement, educational communication, motivation, and participation when it is strategically integrated into instructional activities [4]–[6].

However, the educational effectiveness of Instagram depends on more than technological accessibility. Distraction, privacy, information credibility, digital literacy, and the risk of superficial learning must be carefully considered. The broader literature on digital technologies similarly emphasizes that meaningful student engagement depends on pedagogical design and the quality of students' interaction with technology [1], [3].

Instagram is therefore best understood as a complementary educational tool that can support microlearning, visual explanation, revision, communication, and student participation. Future research should examine actual learning outcomes and compare Instagram-based activities with conventional and other digital learning environments across different disciplines and educational contexts..

B. Future Research

Future research should move beyond students' perceptions and examine the actual learning effectiveness of Instagram-based education. Recent studies suggest that Instagram can support engagement, communication, motivation, and digital competence, but its effectiveness depends strongly on how the platform is integrated into pedagogical activities. Future studies could employ longitudinal and experimental designs to compare Instagram-based learning with conventional classroom instruction and other social-media platforms. Researchers could also examine whether Instagram improves measurable outcomes such as academic achievement, knowledge retention, critical thinking, creativity, and collaborative learning rather than relying primarily on self-reported engagement.

Another important direction is the investigation of privacy, digital literacy, misinformation, and algorithmic

influence. Since students may encounter inaccurate or superficial educational content and may be concerned about privacy, future studies should examine how privacy awareness and information-evaluation skills influence students' willingness to use Instagram for learning. Researchers could also investigate how Instagram's recommendation algorithms affect what educational information students encounter and whether algorithmic personalization contributes to learning or distraction.

Finally, future research could explore AI-enhanced Instagram learning, including AI-generated educational content, personalized recommendations, automated feedback, and intelligent learning analytics. Comparative studies across countries, disciplines, age groups, and educational levels would provide broader evidence regarding the scalability, inclusivity, and sustainability of Instagram as an educational tool. Recent research on educational social-media environments indicates that engagement is influenced by factors such as social participation, curiosity, and the quality of students' responses, providing useful directions for developing more effective Instagram-based learning designs.

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