

**THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON SPORT PARTICIPATION AMONG
ATHLETES OF UNIVERSITY OF BENIN**

Odine Favour JOEL

EDU2203444

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN KINETICS AND SPORTS SCIENCE

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF BENIN

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**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN
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REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF BACHELOR OF SCIENCE (EDUCATION)
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CERTIFICATION

We the undersigned certify that the project was carried out by **JOEL ODINE FAVOUR** with Matriculation number **EDU2203444**, of the Department of Human Kinetic and Sports Science, Faculty of Education, University of Benin.



Dr. Oriakhi, A.U.
Project Supervisor



Dr. Ani, R.F.
Project Coordinator

Date: 18th Dec., 2025

Date: 18-12-25



Dr. Oriakhi, A.U.
Head of Department

18th Dec., 2025

Date



18/12/25

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to God and my beloved parents, Mr. and Mrs. Joel.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The researcher sincere gratitude goes to God Almighty, for granting her grace and good health to complete this programme. The project completion is another milestone in her academic career. She sincerely appreciates the effort of my project supervisor, Dr. Oriakhi A.U for his support and guidance throughout the course of this project. It is pertinent at this junction to appreciate the effort of the Head of Department of Human Kinetic and Sport Science, Dr. Akugbe Unity Oriakhi for his leadership role in the department.

The researcher wishes to appreciate the Academic and Non-Academic Staff for their relentless service during the period of her academic journey in the department. She also wishes to appreciate her parents; Mr. and Mrs. Joel, for their unconditional love, trust, financial, moral and spiritual encouragement, which enabled her to successfully complete this programme.

Also, her gratitude goes to her siblings; Bro success, Godgift, and sis miracle Special thanks goes to her friends; Victor Esosa, Tayo Angel, Okwese Esther, and all her course mates for their encouragement and support throughout this journey. She says a big thank you.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the influence of social media on sports participation among student athletes of the University of Benin. Specifically, it examined the relationship between social media use and sports participation, gender, age, and level of study on the student athlete. A correlation research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised of 254 registered student athletes of the University of Benin during the 2024/2025 academic session, and the entire population was used as the sample. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled “Social Media and Sports Participation among Student Athletes of the University of Benin.” The instrument was validated by experts in Human Kinetics and a reliability of .719 was obtained.

Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson Product Moment Correlation, and Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) at a 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that there was no significant relationship between social media use and sports participation among student athletes of the University of Benin.

Furthermore, social media use did not significantly influence sports participation based on gender, age, or level of study. It was therefore concluded that social media use does not significantly affect sports participation among student athletes at the University of Benin. It was recommended, among others, that student athletes should maintain a balanced use of social media to avoid distractions and continue active participation in sports.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Student athletes' involvement in sports is an important part of their physical, mental, and social wellbeing. Ajoke et al. (2024) opined that playing sports at the college level not only improves general health but also makes people smarter and more emotionally strong, does better in school, and makes people better at getting along with others. Sports also help develop multiple intelligences by boosting skills like time management, problem-solving, and attention (Ullah et al., 2022).

Social media and its use has changed how young people, including student athletes, talk to each other, form identities, and act. Social media such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok provide places to explore one's identity, connect with others, and show off one's performance. These can affect the mental health, sense of connection, and even how engaged it is in school when used in moderation (Kim et al., 2017). However, using social media too much has been linked to distractions, inadequate exercise, and even addiction, all of these can hurt physical activity and make people less likely to play sports (Toy et al., 2020). Athletes that play sports have lower levels of social media addiction and better levels of life satisfaction than their non-athlete peers. This suggests that physical activity can protect against digital overuse (Amjad et al., 2024).

Facebook has been the most important for building fan communities and promoting college sports. It lets fans and players interact with college teams, which boosts school spirit and makes sporting events more visible (Yoon et al., 2016). With its focus on visual storytelling,

Instagram gives players a way to show off their personal accomplishments and team dynamics, which helps them feel more connected to their sport and validated by their peers. TikTok, a newer app, encourages people to be artistic and make videos that go viral, especially among younger people. It makes sports more popular and fun, but it may also make people focus more on performing than on actually taking part in the games. Social media has an effect on student players' ability to play sports at schools like the University of Benin that is both positive and negative. On the one hand, these platforms make it possible to connect with others, get noticed, and build communities. Unchecked use, on the other hand, can cause distractions and make people less motivated to be active. For college athletes to keep playing sports, they need to consume media in a balanced way and for their schools to have policies that encourage both digital literacy and athletic involvement.

Statement of the Problem

Sports is an important part of a student athlete's life because they help improve health, school performance, and mental well-being. Regular participation in sports builds fitness, discipline, teamwork, and focus, which are all important for personal growth and for keeping a strong sports culture at the university. However, at the University of Benin, many student athletes are now spending more time on social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. While these platforms can help athletes connect with others and gain exposure, they also take up a lot of time and lead to less physical activity.

This is a serious concern because when student athletes spend less time playing sports, it affects their physical fitness, ability to focus in school, and mental health. It can also weaken the sports culture at the university. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no study has fully

examined how Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok influence sports participation among student athletes at the University of Benin, especially while also considering gender, age, and academic level. This makes the study both important and necessary.

Research Question

The following research questions were raised to guide this study;

1. What is the relationship between social media and sport participation among athletes of university of Benin?
2. What is the relationship between social media and sport participation among athletes of university of Benin based on gender?
3. What is the relationship between social media and sport participation among athletes of university of Benin based on age?
4. What is the relationship between social media and sport participation among athletes of university of Benin based on level?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and will be tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between social media use and sports participation among athletes of the University of Benin.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between social media use and sports participation among athletes of the University of Benin based on gender.

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between social media use and sports participation among athletes of the University of Benin based on age.

H₀₄: There is no significant relationship between social media use and sports participation among athletes of the University of Benin based on level of study.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to find out the influence of social media on sport participation of students athletes in the university of Benin, specifically the study aims to;

1. examine the relationship between social media use and sports participation among athletes of the University of Benin.
2. determine the relationship between social media use and sports participation among athletes of the University of Benin based on gender.
3. investigate the relationship between social media use and sports participation among athletes of the University of Benin based on age.
4. assess the relationship between social media use and sports participation among athletes of the University of Benin based on level of study.

Significance of the Study

This study is important because it shows how social media is having a bigger effect on the sports that University of Benin students play. The results will be good for many people:

Administrators and sport managers at universities will learn more about how social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok affect how much students participate in sports. In order to

promote healthy digital habits and regular sports involvement, these results can help shape the creation of policies and programs.

Student athletes will have a better idea of how their use of social media might affect their physical exercise and participation in sports. With this information, they can change how they use technology in a healthier way and find a better mix between being online and being active.

Policymakers and people with a stake in education can use the study to help them come up with bigger plans to help students grow in all areas, get them to be less sedentary, and improve their health across all tertiary institutions.

Researchers and scholars will benefit from the study's addition to what is already known, especially because it fills in the gaps in what is known about how Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok affect sports involvement as a whole, which isn't a topic that has gotten much attention at Nigerian universities.

Scope/Delimitation of the Study

The main goal of this study is to assess social media and sport participation among athletes of University of Benin. It also examined the difference in relationship between social media and sport participation based on gender, age and level of students.

The study is delimited to student athletes of the University of Benin in the 2024/2025 academic session.

Definition of Terms

Sport Participation: Refers to the active engagement of student-athletes in organized physical activities, including training, competitions, and fitness routines, within the university setting. In this study, it includes frequency, duration, and intensity of sports involvement.

Social Media: Digital platforms that allow users to create, share, and interact with content and networks. In this study, the focus is on Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok.

Facebook: A social media platform used for sharing text, images, and videos, often in the form of status updates or group engagement. This study examines how Facebook use affects student-athletes' motivation and time allocation toward sports.

Instagram: A photo- and video-sharing platform that allows users to display visual content and interact through likes, comments, and stories. The study explores its role in shaping identity, motivation, and sport-related self-expression.

TikTok: A short-form video platform popular for entertainment and viral content creation. In this study, TikTok is examined for its impact on distraction, performance-centered posting, and time spent away from sports activities.

Student-Athletes: Students enrolled at the University of Benin who actively participate in organized sports activities, either competitively or recreationally, as part of their extracurricular engagement.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter was reviewed the related literature of the study under the following subheadings;

- Conceptual Framework
- Theoretical Framework
- Concept of Social Media
- Social Media and Sports
- Social Media, Sport Participation and Age
- Social Media, Sport Participation and Gender
- Social Media, Sport Participation and Level
- Concept of Sport Participation
- Social Media and Sport Participation
- Summary of Reviewed Literature

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is based on the interaction between social media use and sports participation among student athletes at the University of Benin. It is guided by the understanding that social media platforms specifically Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok serve both as tools for connection, promotion, and engagement, and as potential sources of distraction or reduced physical activity. The framework considers how variables such as gender, age, and academic level may influence or moderate this relationship. It assumes that student athletes' engagement with social media is purposeful and that this engagement can either enhance or

hinder their level of sports participation, depending on how the platforms are used. This framework provides a structure for investigating the nature of these relationships and supports the development of targeted strategies to encourage balanced digital habits alongside active sports involvement.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that underpins this study is Use and Gratifications Theory (UGT), which was first developed by Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler, and Michael Gurevitch in the early 1970s. This communication theory explores how individuals actively seek out specific media platforms and content to satisfy particular psychological and social needs. UGT asserted that users are active participants who consciously choose media that best serve their interests, whether for entertainment, information, social interaction or personal identity.

This theory provides a fitting foundation for examining the relationship between social media use and sports participation among student athletes at the University of Benin. Student athletes do not consume social media randomly; rather, they are driven by specific needs, such as maintaining social connections, gaining visibility for their athletic performance, and enhancing their personal brand. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok offer unique gratifications Facebook facilitates community building, Instagram emphasizes self-presentation and social validation, while TikTok supports creativity and virality. By choosing to engage with these platforms, student athletes are fulfilling individual motives that may either complement or conflict with their sports participation.

The relevance of the Uses and Gratifications Theory to this study is rooted in its capacity to explain how and why student athletes use different social media platforms and how this use might influence their level of physical engagement and sports involvement. UGT enables the researcher to interpret social media behavior not as a singular cause of reduced sports participation, but as a complex set of choices that interact with athletes' motivations, age, gender, and academic level. In this light, the theory is especially valuable because it accommodates variations in individual usage patterns, which aligns with the study's aim to explore the influence of social media across demographic variables.

Concept of Social Media

Social media refers to a collection of internet-based platforms that allow individuals and groups to create, share, and interact with content, ideas, and communities in real-time. These platforms including Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter (X), and others have transformed communication by enabling users to connect globally and instantaneously. Social media is not limited to personal interaction; it also plays a pivotal role in education, business, health communication, and cultural exchange. Modern scholars describe social media as a “suite of online communication tools” designed for networking, content generation, and feedback exchange, allowing users to express opinions, develop identities, and participate in virtual communities (Johnson & Roberto, 2021).

Recent discussions emphasize that social media has become deeply integrated into daily life, particularly among youth. It serves as a key space for information gathering, self-expression, peer interaction, and entertainment. This ubiquitous nature has made social media not just a tool, but a powerful cultural and social force influencing behavior, norms, and even political discourse

(Sehgal, 2021). With its emphasis on user-generated content and participatory communication, social media differs fundamentally from traditional media by giving users the ability to shape conversations, trends, and even social movements.

In contemporary academic discourse, social media is also being examined critically in terms of its effects both positive and negative. It fosters creativity, builds social capital, and offers marginalized groups platforms for visibility. However, it also raises concerns around addiction, misinformation, privacy, and psychological well-being, particularly in how it shapes identity and attention spans. Still, scholars agree that social media is a defining feature of the 21st-century communication landscape, continually evolving with technology and user behavior (Johnson & Roberto, 2021); (Sehgal, 2021).

Social Media and Sports

Social media has become a powerful tool in the world of sports, reshaping how athletes engage with their fans, how teams build their brands, and even how individuals participate in physical activity. For athletes, platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok offer not only spaces for self-expression and visibility but also significant psychological and performance implications. While these platforms allow athletes to connect with supporters and showcase achievements, excessive use can negatively affect performance due to distraction and mental fatigue. Research has shown that high social media activity, particularly near competition times, can lead to decreased athletic performance, as seen in professional tennis players who experienced performance declines linked to excessive tweeting before matches (Grüttner et al., 2020).

On a broader level, social media also influences general sports participation, especially among youth and young adults. Platforms often serve as sources of motivation, providing exposure to fitness routines, sports tutorials, and transformation stories that inspire followers to become more active. A recent study found that millennials were significantly more likely to engage in sports after interacting with sports-related content online, such as training videos and community challenges. Notably, 68% of respondents reported feeling more motivated to exercise after viewing others' sports achievements on social media (Abidin et al., 2024).

At the same time, researchers caution that overuse of social media may lead to reduced physical activity due to time displacement and addictive usage patterns. While platforms build community and motivation, they can also encourage superficial engagement with sports where users consume content about fitness but fail to participate actively. Additionally, social comparison and the pressure to maintain a curated athletic identity online can negatively impact mental health and self-esteem among both amateur and professional athletes (Snell et al., 2024).

Moreover, in the university context, participation in sports has been shown to mitigate the negative effects of social media overuse. Athletes often report lower levels of social media addiction and higher life satisfaction than their non-athlete peers, suggesting that sports engagement can serve as a protective factor against digital overconsumption (Amjad et al., 2024). Social media has both empowering and detrimental effects on sports participation and performance. When used mindfully, it can serve as a source of inspiration, connection, and promotion. But without moderation, it can undermine focus, reduce physical engagement, and place psychological pressure on athletes and fans alike.

Social Media, Sport Participation and Age

Age plays a significant role in shaping how individuals engage with social media and participate in sports, with patterns of influence varying across different age groups. Among young people, particularly millennials and Gen Z, social media has been found to positively impact motivation for sports participation. Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook serve as sources of inspiration by showcasing athletic achievements, fitness transformations, and peer engagement in sports-related activities. In a 2024 study, 68% of millennials reported being motivated to engage in physical activity after viewing sports-related content online, especially training videos and success stories shared by others in their age group (Abidin et al., 2024).

Similarly, adolescents and young adults perceive their social media interactions as motivational and informative. Platforms act as spaces to discover new sports, share training routines, and connect with communities of interest. These virtual communities often provide encouragement, social accountability, and identity reinforcement, especially in contexts where peer influence is strong (Braumüller, 2020). However, researchers also warn that excessive social media use among adolescents may contribute to passive behavior and reduce time spent on physical activities if not managed properly (Shan & Tong, 2024).

In contrast, older adults are engaging with sports and social media in increasingly meaningful ways, though their usage patterns differ. A study analyzing YouTube comments on videos of older athletes revealed a growing societal appreciation for active aging, with users often praising older adults' commitment to sports as both inspiring and socially significant (de Guzman et al., 2021). Sport participation among older adults has also been shown to enhance social capital and life satisfaction, particularly when combined with digital engagement, allowing

older individuals to remain socially connected and physically active (Kim et al., 2020). The relationship between social media, sport participation, and age is dynamic. Younger populations tend to be more influenced by peer-driven, visually engaging content that promotes physical activity, while older adults use digital platforms to extend community ties and find inspiration. In all age groups, moderated use of social media can foster engagement in sports, though overuse may yield negative effects such as distraction or reduced physical activity.

Social Media, Sport Participation and Gender

The relationship between social media, sport participation, and gender reveals both nuanced differences in digital behavior and persistent societal norms that affect athletic engagement. Studies increasingly show that men and women not only use social media differently but also interact with sports content in distinct ways, with important implications for their levels of participation and motivation. Research has found that while females generally use social media more frequently, males are more likely to use these platforms for sports-related purposes. In a study by French (2013), it was noted that male fans used social media primarily to express opinions and gather information related to sports, whereas females used it more for social interaction and communication with friends. This points to a gendered divide where men leverage social media as an extension of their sports fandom, while women use it more as a relational tool (French, 2013).

This gender difference extends to how male and female athletes are represented and perceived on social media. Research during the 2018 Commonwealth Games showed that even supposedly neutral descriptors such as “dedicated” and “talented” can carry implicit gendered meanings in their application to athletes, reinforcing subtle biases in how female athletes are

framed in online spaces (Yang et al., 2020). Despite increasing visibility, female athletes are still more likely to be portrayed in stereotypical or supportive roles, while male athletes are celebrated for their performance and dominance. These portrayals can impact not only audience perceptions but also participation patterns, as traditional gender-typing of sports remains stubbornly persistent (Hardin & Greer, 2007).

Among student populations, gender also influences the psychological effects of social media use in the context of sport. One recent study among high school students found that female students reported higher academic confidence but lower levels of happiness compared to male counterparts. While sports participation was positively associated with happiness across genders, the negative association between social media use and academic confidence was more pronounced among females (Shan & Tong, 2024). This suggests that gendered experiences of social media may influence not just participation in sports but also broader dimensions of well-being.

Furthermore, traditional media and societal expectations still create barriers to female participation in certain sports. Even with increased social media representation, cultural and gender-role expectations continue to influence the types of sports deemed “appropriate” for women, limiting their full engagement. The resilience of gender norms, reinforced through both media and peer networks, continues to shape participation behaviors and perceptions of capability and belonging (Zhihui, 2013).

Nonetheless, social media also provides an opportunity to challenge these stereotypes. With strategic use, platforms can highlight diverse female athletic identities, normalize women’s participation across a broader range of sports, and cultivate supportive communities. These

positive uses can be particularly empowering for younger females navigating their athletic identity. Gender plays a critical role in how social media shapes sports participation. While male and female users engage differently with sports content, both benefit from moderated and purposeful use of social platforms. The challenge lies in overcoming deeply rooted gender norms and using digital tools to create more inclusive, motivating environments for all athletes.

Social Media, Sport Participation and Level

The intersection of social media use, sport participation, and students' academic level presents a complex dynamic that affects behavior, well-being, and academic outcomes in various ways. As students progress through different academic levels typically from lower-level to upper-level undergraduate studies their engagement with both social media and extracurricular activities like sports shifts in response to evolving academic demands and social environments. One critical finding is that higher levels of social media usage are consistently associated with decreased academic confidence and increased distraction across all levels of study, but particularly among students in lower academic years. Shan and Tong (2024) found that high school students who spent more time on social media reported lower academic confidence, while sports participation was positively associated with happiness. These patterns likely persist into university, where new students are still adjusting to independent learning environments (Shan & Tong, 2024).

At the university level, academic pressure tends to increase with level of study, which can both motivate and hinder participation in physical activity. A study by Hussain et al. (2022) found that college students with higher academic stress who participated in sports demonstrated greater social intelligence, which acted as a buffer against mental health challenges. The

researchers emphasized that students involved in sports, particularly at higher academic levels, exhibited stronger coping skills, likely due to the structure and social benefits provided by athletic involvement (Hussain et al., 2022).

Interestingly, the impact of social media on academic performance may also vary by academic level. A large-scale study of undergraduate and postgraduate students revealed that those who actively engaged in social media-based learning activities outperformed peers in traditional coursework, suggesting that when integrated intentionally, social media can support academic success regardless of level. However, the effect was most evident among more advanced students who demonstrated better regulation of their online behavior (Santoveña-Casal, 2019). Additionally, student engagement has been found to mediate the relationship between social media use and academic performance. For example, a study by Su and Huang (2021) demonstrated that while social media use alone did not directly improve academic outcomes, higher student engagement more common among upper-level students was a key factor that enhanced academic performance in connection with moderated social media use (Su & Huang, 2021).

Academic level influences how students interact with both social media and sports participation. Lower-level students are more vulnerable to distraction and low confidence due to unstructured use of social media, whereas higher-level students are more likely to use social media strategically and benefit from sports as a tool for coping with academic stress. Therefore, interventions aimed at promoting balanced digital habits and sustained sports participation should be tailored according to students' academic level to maximize their effectiveness.

Concept of Sport Participation

Sport participation refers to the involvement of individuals in physical activities or organized sports, either recreationally or competitively. It encompasses a wide range of activities from casual, unstructured play to structured, competitive athletics, and has become a significant part of modern life with broad implications for health, education, and society. According to Vehmas (2012), sport participation is not only a vital contributor to individual well-being and public health but also plays a crucial role in promoting social capital and economic growth. It fosters community engagement, equality, and civic involvement through volunteer-based sport club systems. Sport participation is often facilitated by a combination of public institutions, private enterprises, and volunteer organizations, reflecting the cultural and structural diversity of each society.

The concept has evolved in recent years, with scholars noting the need for clearer definitions and models to accurately capture its scope and impact. For example, recent efforts like the Participation Re-Engagement (PRE) model proposed by Kay and Elliott (2024) argue for a more nuanced understanding of sport participation, particularly among youth. This model emphasizes phases such as enrolment, retention, dropout, and re-engagement to better reflect the fluid and dynamic nature of involvement in sports. Furthermore, sport participation is recognized as a human right under various international charters, including the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, underscoring its global relevance and the responsibility of governments to ensure access and inclusion (Veal, 2022).

The motivations and barriers to sport participation are influenced by numerous factors including personal interest, access to facilities, social influences, and broader socio-economic

conditions. As such, understanding sport participation requires a multidisciplinary approach that incorporates psychological, sociological, and policy-related perspectives. This holistic view is essential for developing effective interventions aimed at increasing physical activity and ensuring equitable access for all groups in society.

Social Media and Sport Participation

The relationship between social media and sport participation is multifaceted, with both positive and negative implications depending on the nature and intensity of social media use. In recent years, social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook have emerged not just as channels of communication, but as active drivers of engagement in sports culture particularly among young people and university students. Several studies show that social media can significantly enhance motivation for sport participation. A recent study involving millennials found a positive correlation between the frequency of social media use and participation in sports activities. Specifically, exposure to sports content such as workout videos, athlete achievements, and transformation stories served as a source of inspiration for 68% of participants, who reported feeling motivated to become more active after engaging with such posts (Abidin et al., 2024). Similarly, social interaction with online fitness communities fostered a sense of accountability and community spirit, which further encouraged consistent sports participation.

From a psychological perspective, sports participation appears to buffer the negative effects of social media overuse. Amjad et al. (2024) demonstrated that university athletes had significantly lower levels of social media addiction and higher levels of life satisfaction than non-athletes. The findings suggest that involvement in sports may serve as a protective factor against social media-related behavioral issues, including addiction and reduced well-being

(Amjad et al., 2024). However, the relationship is not universally positive. O'Reilly et al. (2012) observed that online discussions related to youth sport participation were limited, suggesting that social media, while prevalent, does not always directly translate into increased physical activity. Rather, its influence is more pronounced when sports-related content is actively curated and shared in engaging ways (O'Reilly et al., 2012).

University-specific findings also point to an important mediating role of social media. Kim et al. (2017) found that sports participation among college students was positively related to social media use, which in turn strengthened their attachment to college life and enhanced psychological well-being. In essence, social media acted as a bridge between sports engagement and a greater sense of belonging in the academic community (Kim et al., 2017).

On the flip side, excessive or unstructured social media usage has been associated with decreased physical activity. For instance, Toy et al. (2020) identified a significant negative relationship between social media addiction and sports participation among university students. Students who were more addicted to platforms like Instagram and TikTok were less likely to engage in regular physical activity, suggesting that time spent on social media may displace time that could be spent on exercise (Toy et al., 2020). Further complicating this relationship is the role of content type. Teng and Chen (2024) found that the kind of content students consumed on social media had a significant effect on their health behavior and sports involvement. Health-oriented and motivational content had a positive impact, whereas entertainment-focused or excessive scrolling behaviors did not yield the same benefits (Teng & Chen, 2024).

Social media is a double-edged sword in the context of sports participation. When used intentionally and in moderation, it serves as a powerful motivator and community-builder for

student athletes and recreational participants alike. However, unregulated use can undermine physical activity and contribute to sedentary behavior. As such, interventions and university policies should aim to promote constructive use of social media emphasizing athletic content, peer engagement, and digital literacy to harness its benefits while minimizing its risks.

Summary of Related Literature Reviewed

The reviewed related literature shows that social media has both good and bad effects on how students take part in sports. On the good side, platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok help student athletes connect with others, share their achievements, and feel more involved in their sport. Many students say that seeing sports content online like training videos or success stories makes them want to be more active. Social media also helps build a sense of community and belonging, which can improve students' mental health. Studies also show that student athletes who play sports regularly are less likely to get addicted to social media. They also feel happier and more satisfied with life compared to students who don't play sports. Being involved in sports helps them stay focused and avoid spending too much time online. Age and level of study also matter. Younger students and those in lower levels of study seem to be more affected by social media distractions than older or higher-level students. There are also differences between males and females in how they use social media and how it affects their sports activity.

On the bad side, spending too much time on social media can take away from time that could be used for physical activity. Some students get distracted, feel pressure to look perfect online, or simply waste time scrolling without gaining anything useful. This can lead to less sports participation and lower focus on school and fitness. Also, not all social media content is

helpful sports or health-related posts can inspire action, but random entertainment content may lead to laziness or overuse. In short, social media can help students get involved in sports, but it can also be a problem if not used wisely. The way students use social media, the kind of content they see, and their age, gender, and level of study all affect how it influences their sports life. Balanced use and support from schools can help students enjoy the benefits while avoiding the downsides.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methods and the procedure that will be employed in carrying this study. It will be arranged under this sub-headings

- Research Design
- Population of the Study
- Sample and Sampling Technique
- Research Instrument
- Validation of the Instrument
- Reliability of the Instrument
- Method of Data Collection
- Method of Data Analysis

Research Design

This study adopted a correlation research design. The design is suitable because it is used to find out if there is a relationship or connection between two or more variables.

Population of the Study

The population of this study consisted of 254 **registered student athletes** of the University of Benin for the 2024/2025 academic session. The male athletes are 149 and the female athletes are 105.

Sample and Sampling Technique

A multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted. In the first stage, student athletes were be stratified based on their faculty to ensure representation across disciplines. In the second stage, participants were proportionally selected based on gender and sport category to guarantee balance and inclusiveness. Using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination table.

Revised Table 3.1: Sample Size Representation by Faculty, Male and Female

Faculty	Sample Size	Male	Female
Education	60	35	25
Social Sciences	53	31	22
Management Sciences	41	24	17
Arts	31	18	13
Life Sciences	40	24	16
Physical Sciences	29	17	12
Total	254	149	105

Source: Author's Compilation (2025)

Research Instrument

The main instrument for data collection is a structured questionnaire titled:

“Social Media and Sports Participation among Student Athletes of the University of Benin.”

The questionnaire is divided into three major sections:

- **Section A:** Demographic Information – This section gathers data on respondents’ gender, age, level of study and sport type (individual, dual and team sport)
- **Section B:** Social media and sports participation among athletes of the University of Benin
- **Section C:** Sport Engagement Scale – All items are structured on a 4-point Likert scale:
 - Strongly Agree (SA) = 4
 - Agree (A) = 3
 - Disagree (D) = 2
 - Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1

The items in Sections B and C are designed to measure perceptions of the relationship between social media use and sports participation, with particular emphasis on gender, age, and level of study.

Validation of the Instrument

The questionnaire was subjected to content validation by the researcher’s supervisor and two lecturers in the Department of Human Kinetics and Sports and one expert in Educational Measurement and Evaluation. The experts reviewed the instrument for clarity of language, relevance of items, and alignment with research objectives. Their feedback was incorporated to ensure the instrument measures exactly what it is intended to measure and maintains logical flow.

Reliability of the Instrument

To establish the reliability of the questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted using 20 student athletes who are not part of the main study population. Data obtained from the pilot test was analyzed using the Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient to determine internal consistency. A coefficient of 0.70 or higher was considered acceptable, indicating that the items reliably measure the constructs of interest.

Method of Data Collection

The researcher, with the assistance of trained research assistants, administered the questionnaire directly to the selected respondents. Permission was obtained from the Sports unit and relevant faculty authorities prior to distribution. Respondents were briefed on the purpose of the study and assured of confidentiality and voluntary participation. Questionnaires were completed on the spot where possible to minimize non-response and ensure completeness.

Method of Data Analysis

Data collected was coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Both descriptive and inferential statistics was used. Descriptive statistic of frequency and percentages was used while inferential statistics of Pearson Product Moment Correlation (r) was used to test the hypothesis 1 corresponding to research question 1, while Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test hypotheses 2, 3 and 4 corresponding to research questions 2, 3 and 4; all set at 0.05 level of significance.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In this chapter, is the data analysis, interpretation of its results and discussion of findings

Presentation of Results

Research Question 1: Is there a relationship between social media use and sports participation among athletes of University of Benin?

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between social media use and sports participation among athletes of University of Benin

Table 1: Pearson statistics on relationship between social media use and sports participation among athletes

Variables	Mean	SD	r-value	p-value	Decision
Social media	20.94	1.891			Ho is accepted
Sports participation	48.68	3.184	.003	.968	

The data in table 1 showed a r-value of .003 which shows a positive weak relationship between social media use and sports participation among athletes of the University of Benin. Meanwhile the p-value of 0.968 which is greater than 0.05 level of significance means that the null hypothesis is accepted, hence, there is no significant relationship between social media use and sports participation among athletes of University of Benin.

Research Question 2: Is there any relationship between social media use and sports participation among athletes of University of Benin based on gender.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between social media use and sports participation among athletes of University of Benin based on gender.

Table 2: ANCOVA Statistics on relationship between social media use and sports participation among athletes of University of Benin based on gender

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	161.187 ^a	11	14.653	1.475	.141
Intercept	48711.207	1	48711.207	4902.847	.000
Gender	81.600	1	81.600	8.213	.005
Social media	80.546	10	8.055	.811	.619
Error	2404.340	242	9.935		
Total	604410.000	254			
Corrected Total	2565.528	253			

From the data in table 2, the ANCOVA table shows the type III sum of squares = 80.546, df=10, F=0.811 and p-value = 0.619 which is greater than 0.05 level of significance shows that the null hypothesis is accepted. Hence, there is no significant relationship between social media use and sports participation among athletes of University of Benin based on gender.

Research Question 3: Is there any relationship between social media use and sports participation among athletes of University of Benin based on age.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant relationship between social media use and sports participation among athletes of University of Benin based on age.

Table 3: ANCOVA Statistics on relationship between social media use and sports participation among athletes of University of Benin based on age

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	94.423 ^a	11	8.584	.841	.600
Intercept	58517.565	1	58517.565	5730.738	.000
Age	14.836	1	14.836	1.453	.229
Social media	74.980	10	7.498	.734	.692
Error	2471.104	242	10.211		
Total	604410.000	254			
Corrected Total	2565.528	253			

From the data in table 3, the ANCOVA table shows the type III sum of squares = 74.980, df=10, F=0.734 and p-value = 0.692 which is greater than 0.05 level of significance shows that the null hypothesis is accepted. Hence, there is no significant relationship between social media use and sports participation among athletes of University of Benin based on age.

Research Question 4: Is there any relationship between social media use and sports participation among athletes of University of Benin based on level of study.

Hypothesis 4: There is no significant relationship between social media use and sports participation among athletes of University of Benin based on level of study.

Table 4: ANCOVA Statistics on relationship between social media use and sports participation among athletes of University of Benin based on level of study

Source	Type III Sum		Mean Square	F	Sig.
	of Squares	Df			
Corrected Model	81.916 ^a	11	7.447	.726	.713
Intercept	62990.418	1	62990.418	6137.708	.000
Level of study	2.329	1	2.329	.227	.634
Social media	81.066	10	8.107	.790	.639
Error	2483.611	242	10.263		
Total	604410.000	254			
Corrected Total	2565.528	253			

From the data in table 4, the ANCOVA table shows the type III sum of squares = 81.066, df=10, F=0.790 and p-value = 0.639 which is greater than 0.05 level of significance shows that the null hypothesis is accepted. Hence, there is no significant relationship between social media use and sports participation among athletes of University of Benin based on level of study.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of research question 1 showed that there is no significant relationship between social media use and sports participation among athletes of University of Benin. This finding was contrary to that of Grüttner et al. (2020) whose research showed that high social media activity, particularly near competition times, can lead to decreased athletic performance, as seen in professional tennis players who experienced performance declines linked to excessive tweeting before matches.

The findings of research question 2 revealed that there is no significant relationship between social media use and sports participation among athletes of University of Benin based on gender. This affirms and as well negates the documentation of French (2013) who noted that male fans used social media primarily to express opinions and gather information related to sports, whereas females used it more for social interaction and communication with friends. This points to a gendered divide where men leverage social media as an extension of their sports fandom, while women use it more as a relational tool.

The findings of research question 3 showed that there is no significant relationship between social media use and sports participation among athletes of University of Benin based on age. This however negates the finding of Abidin et al. (2024) who in a 2024 study, showed 68% of millennials reported being motivated to engage in physical activity after viewing sports-related content online, especially training videos and success stories shared by others in their age group. However, researchers also warn that excessive social media use among adolescents may contribute to passive behavior and reduce time spent on physical activities if not managed properly (Shan & Tong, 2024).

The findings of research question 4 revealed that there is no significant relationship between social media use and sports participation among athletes of University of Benin based on level of study. This negates the documentation of Shan and Tong (2024) who found that high school students who spent more time on social media reported lower academic confidence, while sports participation was positively associated with happiness. These patterns likely persist into university, where new students are still adjusting to independent learning environments (Shan & Tong, 2024).

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter encapsulates the summary, conclusion as well as the necessary recommendations.

Summary

This study investigated the influence of social media on sport participation of student athletes in the University of Benin. It sought to determine the relationship between social media use and sports participation among UNIBEN athletes; relationship between social media use and sports participation among UNIBEN athletes based on gender; age; and level of study. To guide the study, four (4) research questions were raised with corresponding hypotheses tested at 0.05 level of significance.

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study was made up of 254 UNIBEN athletes who train daily using the University of Benin Sports Complex Facilities/Equipment. A sample size of 254 athletes were selected from the population making it a census population. The research instrument for the study was a self-constructed questionnaire. The statistical analysis was carried out using percentages for respondents' bio-data, Pearson statistics was used in analysing research question1 corresponding to hypothesis 1, Analysis of Co-variance (ANCOVA) was used in the data analysis of research questions 2, 3 and 4 corresponding to hypotheses 2, 3 and 4.

The findings of this research based on the research questions raised and hypotheses formulated showed the following:

- there is no significant relationship between social media use and sports participation

among athletes of University of Benin.

- there is no significant relationship between social media use and sports participation among athletes of University of Benin based on gender.
- there is no significant relationship between social media use and sports participation among athletes of University of Benin based on age.
- there is no significant relationship between social media use and sports participation among athletes of University of Benin based on level of study.

Conclusion

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that there is no significant relationship between social media use and sports participation among athletes of University of Benin, also on other extraneous variables of gender, age, level of study.

Recommendations

From the findings of this study, the following recommendations were put forth:

1. Student athletes should not allow their use of social media to distract them from their sports participation.
2. Male and female students should ensure to regularly participate in sports irrespective of the degree of their social media use.
3. Student athletes should not allow peer influence or their age group to dissuade them from sports participation as a result of interest in social media.
4. Social media use for academics at all levels should be balanced with sports participation among athletes.

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APPENDIX
APPENDIX I
QUESTIONNAIRE

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN KINETICS AND SPORTS

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY

Dear Respondent,

I am an undergraduate student of the above named Department. I am conducting a research

Titled:

“Influence of Social Media on Sports Participation among Student Athletes of the University of Benin.” Your responses will be treated with strict confidentiality and used solely for academic purposes. Kindly answer honestly.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Researcher

SECTION A: Demographic Information of Respondents

Gender Male () Female ()

Age 17 – 24 years () 25 years and Above ()

Level 100 () 200 () 300 () 400 () 500 ()

Sports Type Individual () Dual () Team ()

SECTION B: Main Questionnaire Items

SA = Strongly Agree | A = Agree | D = Disagree | SD = Strongly Disagree

	Items	SA	A	D	SD
	What is the relationship between social media and sports participation among athletes of the University of Benin?				
1.	Social media platforms help me stay informed about upcoming sports events and competitions.				
2.	I use social media to follow sports news, updates, and performance tips.				
3.	I engage in online sports communities and forums that improve my performance.				
4.	I use Facebook, Instagram, or TikTok to share my sports achievements.				
5.	Social media has improved my connection with other athletes and teams.				
6.	I get inspired by sports content creators and professional athletes on social media.				
7.	Social media provides opportunities to promote my sport and gain recognition.				
8.	I receive updates on training schedules and tournaments through social media platforms.				
9.	My level of sports participation has improved because of social media exposure.				

10.	I use social media to find mentors, coaches, or training programs.				
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SECTION C

Keys: Strongly Agree (SA) Agree (A) Disagree (DA) Strongly Disagree (SD)

	Sport Engagement Scale	SA	A	D	SD
11.	I am able to train for long period of time				
12.	I am very persistent in my sport activity				
13.	My sport activity is a self challenge				
14.	I am enthusiastic about my sport activity				
15.	I am proud of the work I do				
16.	I feel full of energy during my training and matches				
17.	When I get up in the morning I look forward to going to train				
18.	I am strong and vigorous in my sport activity				
19.	My sport activity is full of meaning and resolve				
20.	I am carried away by my sport activity				
21.	I am happy when I am engrossed in my sport activity				
22.	I feel inspired whilst carrying out my sport activity				
23.	I am oblivious to everything going on around me				

	when I train				
24.	I am absorbed in my sport activity				
25.	Time flies when I am training or competing				

APPENDIX II
DATA ANALYSIS RESULTS

GET

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DATASET NAME DataSet1 WINDOW=FRONT.

NEW FILE.

DATASET NAME DataSet2 WINDOW=FRONT.

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EXECUTE.

COMPUTE sports_participation=SUM (Item11 to Item25).

EXECUTE.

CORRELATIONS

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/PRINT=TWOTAIL NOSIG

/STATISTICS DESCRIPTIVES

/MISSING=PAIRWISE.

Correlations

[DataSet2]

Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
social_media	20.9370	1.89131	254
sports_participation	48.6772	3.18440	254

Correlations

		social_media	sports_participation
social_media	Pearson Correlation	1	.003
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.968
	N	254	254
sports_participation	Pearson Correlation	.003	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.968	
	N	254	254

UNIANOVA sports_participation BY social_media WITH Gender

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/INTERCEPT=INCLUDE

/CRITERIA=ALPHA(.05)

/DESIGN=Gender social_media.

Univariate Analysis of Variance

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: sports_participation

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	161.187 ^a	11	14.653	1.475	.141
Intercept	48711.207	1	48711.207	4902.847	.000
Gender	81.600	1	81.600	8.213	.005
social_media	80.546	10	8.055	.811	.619
Error	2404.340	242	9.935		
Total	604410.000	254			
Corrected Total	2565.528	253			

a. R Squared = .063 (Adjusted R Squared = .020)

UNIANOVA sports_participation BY social_media WITH Age

/METHOD=SSTYPE(3)

/INTERCEPT=INCLUDE

/CRITERIA=ALPHA(.05)

/DESIGN=Age social_media.

Univariate Analysis of Variance

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: sports_participation

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	94.423 ^a	11	8.584	.841	.600
Intercept	58517.565	1	58517.565	5730.738	.000
Age	14.836	1	14.836	1.453	.229
social_media	74.980	10	7.498	.734	.692
Error	2471.104	242	10.211		
Total	604410.000	254			
Corrected Total	2565.528	253			

a. R Squared = .037 (Adjusted R Squared = -.007)

UNIANOVA sports_participation BY social_media WITH Level

/METHOD=SSTYPE(3)

/INTERCEPT=INCLUDE

/CRITERIA=ALPHA(.05)

/DESIGN=Level social_media.

Univariate Analysis of Variance

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: sports_participation

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	81.916 ^a	11	7.447	.726	.713
Intercept	62990.418	1	62990.418	6137.708	.000
Level	2.329	1	2.329	.227	.634
social_media	81.066	10	8.107	.790	.639
Error	2483.611	242	10.263		
Total	604410.000	254			
Corrected Total	2565.528	253			

a. R Squared = .032 (Adjusted R Squared = -.012)

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.719	20