

Socio-pedagogical guidance for the use of social media in universities

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ABSTRACT

In the context of the digitalization of higher education, social media have become an important tool for educational interaction and student socialization. However, their effective use requires a scientifically grounded understanding of the socio-pedagogical conditions that support their integration into the educational process. The purpose of this study is to identify and substantiate the conditions for the effective and safe use of social media in the university educational environment, as well as to develop methodological recommendations for their implementation. The empirical basis of the study included 148 students, with 135 and 127 responses to open-ended questions analyzed, respectively. Using content analysis, 257 and 312 semantic units were identified. The findings revealed that the primary ways social media are used include the organization of the learning process (42.8%), access to educational resources (22.6%), communication and collaboration (22.6%), and motivation and skills development (15.2%). Within the system of socio-pedagogical conditions, the most significant factors were pedagogical support (29.5%), digital literacy and communication culture (28.2%), a safe educational environment (23.7%), and the organization of student socialization (18.6%). Based on these findings, a student digital socialization program and methodological recommendations for its implementation were developed. The results indicate that the use of social media in the educational environment requires systematic pedagogical support. This is particularly important in the context of university digitalization, where social media are increasingly becoming an integral part of both academic and extracurricular student activities.

Keywords: Social media, Digital educational environment, Student socialization, Digital literacy, Socio-pedagogical support, University

Introduction

In the context of the digital transformation of higher education, social media have become an integral part of students' everyday

educational environment. They are used not only for communication but also for sharing academic information and participating in professional communities. The relevance of this study is determined by the growing influence of digital platforms on students' learning and socialization processes. International and national policy documents, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child [1], UNESCO's Framework for Digital Transformation of Education [2], and regulatory documents of the Republic of Kazakhstan [3-5], emphasize the importance of the safe and effective use of digital technologies in education [6-15].

Recent studies indicate that the digital transformation of higher education is strongly linked to the advancement of digital literacy

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and the capacity of educational institutions to adapt to emerging learning environments [16]. Digital platforms are progressively being recognized not merely as supplementary tools but as integral elements of contemporary educational ecosystems [15, 17-22].

Contemporary research indicates that the impact of social media on students is multifaceted. On the one hand, social media expand opportunities for educational interaction and professional communication [23-25]. On the other hand, researchers have identified risks associated with internet addiction, reduced quality of interpersonal communication, and disruption of academic activities [26]. At the same time, social media possess significant potential for fostering intercultural communication, social engagement, and students' educational involvement [27]. The digital educational environment and social media are gradually acquiring the status of independent agents of socialization alongside traditional social institutions such as the family and educational organizations. From a theoretical perspective, this process can be interpreted through Émile Durkheim's concept of socialization as the internalization of social norms and values under the influence of social institutions [28]. Empirical studies confirm that student engagement in digital environments is a multidimensional construct involving cognitive, behavioral, and emotional components [29]. These findings demonstrate that engagement is strongly influenced by the design of digital learning environments and the pedagogical strategies applied.

Under contemporary conditions, digital platforms have become new spaces where students' social norms, behavioral patterns, and communication practices are formed.

Despite the widespread use of social media in educational practice, the socio-pedagogical conditions necessary for their effective and safe use in the process of student socialization remain insufficiently explored. Existing studies highlight pedagogical support, digital literacy development, and the creation of a safe educational environment as key factors contributing to the effectiveness of digital interaction in higher education institutions [30-33].

Thus, a contradiction exists between the high level of student engagement with social media and the insufficient development of scientifically grounded socio-pedagogical conditions for their effective use within the university educational environment.

The purpose of this study is to identify effective ways of using social media in the educational process and to determine the socio-pedagogical conditions that facilitate successful student socialization within the digital educational environment.

The object of the study is the process of student socialization in the university's digital educational environment.

The subject of the study is the socio-pedagogical conditions and effective practices of social media use in the process of student socialization.

The research hypothesis is that the effective use of social media in the educational process, supported by appropriate socio-pedagogical conditions — including pedagogical support, digital literacy, a safe educational environment, and integration into the learning process — contributes to successful student

socialization, the development of communication skills, social engagement, and professional identity formation.

Materials and Methods

The study was conducted at the L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University from January to April 2026. The empirical stage involved 148 undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in various educational programs. The sample was formed on a voluntary basis in accordance with the principles of informed consent [34-41].

The methodological framework of the study was based on a mixed-methods approach, with a primary emphasis on qualitative analysis aimed at exploring effective ways of using social media in the educational process and identifying socio-pedagogical conditions that facilitate successful student socialization within the digital educational environment [42-46]. The primary research instrument was an author-designed questionnaire consisting of open-ended questions. This instrument enabled respondents to provide detailed answers and allowed the researchers to explore students' subjective perceptions of the role of social media in their educational and social activities [47-53].

Within the scope of the study, responses to the following two open-ended questions were analyzed:

- effective ways of using social media in the educational process;
- socio-pedagogical conditions that contribute to successful student socialization through social media.

Empirical data were processed using content analysis. The analysis of textual responses was conducted in several stages:

- initial reading and systematization of responses;
- identification of meaning units within respondents' texts;
- coding and grouping of meaningful text segments;
- development of categories and subcategories based on semantic similarity;
- quantitative calculation of the frequency of category occurrences;
- Interpretation of the findings in relation to the research objectives.

Each of the two questions was analyzed separately, allowing for the identification of specific semantic structures and students' perceptions of different aspects of social media use. The results of data structuring are presented through categorical analysis and are reflected in the corresponding tables of the study.

Thus, the applied methodology provided a comprehensive examination of both practical approaches to social media use in the educational environment and the socio-pedagogical conditions necessary for their effective and safe application in the process of student socialization.

Results and Discussion

As a result of the analysis of responses concerning the effective use of social media in the university educational environment, 135 student responses were included in the study, while 13 responses were excluded due to incomprehensible answers or the use of punctuation marks only (e.g., periods) (**Table 1**).

A total of 257 semantic units were identified and grouped into four main categories. The largest proportion belonged to the category “Organization of the Learning Process” (42.8%), which included educational chats and groups (31.5%) as well as planning and information-sharing functions (11.2%). This category highlights the central role of social media in structuring learning activities, particularly in the context of distance and blended learning.

The category “Access to Educational Resources” (22.6%) characterizes social media as an additional source of academic information that enables students to expand their access to educational content and adapt the learning process to their individual needs.

The categories “Communication and Collaboration” (22.6%) and “Motivation and Skills Development” (15.2%) played a more supportive role. The former is associated with interaction between students and instructors, whereas the latter relates to increasing student engagement and fostering professional

competencies. Within the category of motivation and skills development, two subcategories were identified: enhancing interest and engagement (8.9%) and professional development (6.3%). These findings suggest that social media not only support the educational process but also encourage students’ self-directed development, digital literacy, and professional skills, which are particularly important in the contemporary educational context.

Several key conclusions can be drawn from the analysis. First, the primary function of social media is associated with organizing the learning process and providing access to educational resources, accounting for nearly two-thirds of all identified semantic units (65.4%). Second, communication and collaboration play an important role, confirming that social media facilitates interaction among participants in the educational process. Third, although motivation and professional development represent a smaller proportion of responses, they have strategic importance for the development of twenty-first-century competencies. Finally, maximizing the effectiveness of social media use requires a purposeful approach that combines the sharing of educational materials, communication, and interactive activities while minimizing distracting content.

Table 1. Effective Use of Social Media in the University Educational Environment

Main Category	Frequency (%)	Subcategory	Frequency (%)	Examples of Effective Social Media Use in the University Educational Environment	Frequency (%)
Organization of the Learning Process	110 (42.8)	Educational Chats and Groups	81 (31.5)	Creation of educational groups and chats	32 (12.5)
				Sharing learning materials within groups	28 (10.9)
				Online discussions and consultations	21 (8.2)
		Planning and Information Sharing	29 (11.2)	Informing students about deadlines and schedule changes	17 (6.6)
				Posting announcements and news	12 (4.7)
Access to Educational Resources	58 (22.6)	Educational Content	39 (15.2)	Sharing lectures, videos, and learning materials	25 (9.7)
				Sharing links to articles and educational resources	14 (5.4)
				Watching instructional videos and short online courses	10 (3.9)
		Supplementary Learning	19 (7.4)	Independent learning through social media	9 (3.5)
Communication and Collaboration	58 (22.6)	Student-to-Student Interaction	31 (12.1)	Collaborative work on projects	17 (6.6)
				Discussion of assignments and exchange of experiences	14 (5.4)
		Student–Instructor Interaction	27 (10.5)	Rapid communication with instructors	15 (5.8)
				Feedback and responses to questions	12 (4.7)
Motivation and Skills Development	39 (15.2)	Increased Interest and Engagement	23 (8.9)	Gamification, polls, and challenges	14 (5.4)
				Motivational videos and examples	9 (3.5)
		Professional Development	16 (6.2)	Networking, LinkedIn, and participation in professional communities	8 (3.1)
				Development of creative and digital skills	8 (3.1)
Total	257 semantic units (100%)				

The analysis of responses concerning the socio-pedagogical conditions for the successful use of social media in student socialization revealed that, of the 148 responses collected, 21 were excluded because they lacked meaningful content. Consequently, 127 responses were included in the content analysis. Following the coding procedure, a total of 312 semantic units were identified.

The analysis resulted in four major categories: “Pedagogical Support and Management of Social Media” (29.5%), “Digital Literacy and Communication Culture” (28.2%), “Safe and Development-Oriented Educational Environment” (23.7%), and

“Organization of Student Socialization and Development” (18.6%) (**Table 2**).

The highest proportion of semantic units was assigned to the category “Pedagogical Support and Management of Social Media” (29.5%), highlighting the significant role of instructors and organizational-regulatory mechanisms in the educational use of social media. Closely related in importance was the category “Digital Literacy and Communication Culture” (28.2%), which encompasses the development of media competencies, online communication culture, and the responsible use of social media..

Table 2. Socio-Pedagogical Conditions for the Use of Social Media in Promoting Successful Student Socialization

Main Category	Frequency (%)	Subcategory	Frequency (%)	Socio-Pedagogical Conditions for the Use of Social Media in the University Educational Environment	Frequency (%)
Pedagogical Support and Social Media Management	92 (29.5)	Instructor Control and Participation	48 (15.4)	Instructor support	21 (6.7)
				Instructor monitoring	15 (4.8)
				Mentoring and moderation	12 (3.8)
				Communication guidelines	14 (4.5)
		Rules and Regulations	28 (9.0)	Rules for social media use	8 (2.6)
				Process management and organization	6 (1.9)
				Educational groups and chats	7 (2.3)
		Organization of Educational Communities	16 (5.1)	Educational communities	5 (1.6)
				Watching instructional videos and short online courses	10 (3.9)
		Supplementary Learning	19 (7.4)	Independent learning through social media	9 (3.5)
Digital Literacy and Communication Culture	88 (28.2)	Digital Literacy	37 (11.8)	Digital literacy	18 (5.8)
				Media literacy	10 (3.2)
				Critical thinking	9 (2.9)
				Respectful communication	12 (3.8)
		Communication Culture	29 (9.3)	Digital ethics	9 (2.9)
				Communication norms	8 (2.6)
				Information filtering	9 (2.9)
		Responsible Use	22 (7.0)	Conscious use of social media	7 (2.3)
				Responsible information consumption	6 (1.9)
Safe and Development-Oriented Educational Environment	74 (23.7)	Safe Online Environment	30 (9.6)	Safe environment	14 (4.5)
				Protection from bullying	8 (2.6)
				Friendly atmosphere	8 (2.6)
				Use for learning purposes	11 (3.5)
		Educational Orientation	25 (8.0)	Educational content	8 (2.6)
				Integration into the learning process	6 (1.9)
				Projects and assignments	8 (2.6)
		Collaborative Activities	19 (6.1)	Collaboration	6 (1.9)
				Discussions and interaction	5 (1.6)

Organization of Student Socialization and Development	58 (18.6)	Balance Between Online and Offline Activities	20 (6.4)	Balanced communication	11 (3.5)
				Connection with real-life experiences	9 (2.9)
				Professional networking environment	7 (2.3)
		Professional and Social Development	19 (6.1)	Skills development	6 (1.9)
				Socialization	6 (1.9)
				Platforms and technologies	7 (2.3)
		Infrastructure and Resources	19 (6.1)	Internet access and resources	6 (1.9)
				Specialized content	6 (1.9)
Total	312 semantic units (100%)				

The category “Safe and Development-Oriented Educational Environment” (23.7%) reflects students’ concern for creating conditions that support comfortable and secure online interaction. Respondents frequently referred to concepts such as “safe environment,” “friendly atmosphere,” “absence of bullying,” and “respectful communication.”

The smallest proportion was represented by the category “Organization of Student Socialization and Development” (18.6%). This finding may indicate that students tend to perceive social media primarily as a tool for communication and support of the educational process rather than as an independent environment for socialization and personal-professional development.

Overall, the findings suggest that students primarily associate social media with structured management and educational purposes, whereas their social-developmental function is perceived as less prominent. The findings of the present study confirm that social media within the university educational environment performs not only a communication function but also a significant instructional and organizational role. Contemporary systematic reviews indicate that, when appropriately integrated into the educational process, social media enhance student engagement, promote collaborative learning, and contribute to the development of digital competencies [30, 54].

In particular, the study by Perez *et al.* (2023), based on an analysis of 772 Scopus-indexed publications, demonstrated that social media serve as an effective tool for supporting learning, especially in terms of communication, collaboration, and the sharing of educational content [30]. Similar conclusions were reported in the systematic review conducted by Makkar (2023), which highlighted that social media strengthen students’ cognitive, behavioral, and emotional engagement while simultaneously presenting risks related to distraction and reduced concentration [54].

Furthermore, bibliometric analyses of social media use in higher education have identified student engagement, pedagogical support, and the digital learning environment as key determinants of effectiveness [55]. These findings are consistent

with the results of the present study, which emphasize the importance of pedagogical support and digital literacy as the primary socio-pedagogical conditions for the effective use of social media.

Al-Rahmi *et al.* (2022), using structural equation modeling, found that social media use is positively associated with student satisfaction and academic achievement when implemented within a pedagogically structured framework [31]. This evidence further supports the argument that the educational benefits of social media depend not merely on their availability but on their purposeful integration into the learning process.

Recent studies have also emphasized the dual nature of social media’s impact on education. Alongside their positive effects on learning motivation and student interaction, researchers have identified potential negative consequences, including distraction and reduced productivity when appropriate pedagogical regulation and digital self-regulation skills are lacking [56].

A comparison of the empirical findings of the present study with the results of international research suggests that the effectiveness of social media use in higher education is largely determined by the quality of pedagogical support and the level of students’ digital literacy. These factors appear to be essential prerequisites for maximizing the educational and socialization potential of social media within the university environment.

Practical implementation of the research findings

Based on the findings of the study, a set of practical recommendations was developed to promote the more structured and safe use of social media within the university educational environment and to support student socialization processes.

The practical implementation of the research outcomes includes the development of methodological recommendations and a student digital socialization program aimed at introducing the socio-pedagogical conditions identified in the study: pedagogical

support, digital literacy, a safe educational environment, and the organization of educational interactions.

• Methodological Recommendations

The methodological recommendations are addressed to instructors, students, and university administrators and are intended to enhance the effectiveness of social media use in the educational process.

For Instructors

The following recommendations are proposed:

- using social media as a tool for educational communication and support of the learning process;
- organizing educational chats, online discussions, and collaborative projects;
- developing and enforcing guidelines for digital interaction;
- Providing pedagogical moderation of educational online communities.

For Students

The recommendations include:

- developing digital literacy and critical thinking skills;
- adhering to the principles of digital ethics and online communication;
- managing time spent on social media effectively;
- Fostering responsible attitudes toward digital engagement.

For University Administration

The recommendations include:

- developing an institutional policy for social media use in the educational environment;
- creating a secure digital infrastructure;
- implementing digital literacy enhancement programs;
- Supporting initiatives aimed at the digital transformation of education.
- Student Digital Socialization Program

The proposed program is designed to foster students' digital culture and develop skills for the safe and effective use of social media within the educational environment.

Program Goal

To develop digital literacy and promote responsible social media use in the process of student socialization.

Program Objectives

1. To enhance digital and media literacy.
2. To develop communication skills in digital environments.
3. To prevent digital risks, including addiction, information overload, and cyberbullying.
4. To support the development of students' professional and social identities.

Forms of Program Implementation

- Lectures;
- seminar discussions;
- training sessions on digital communication;

- project-based and collaborative activities conducted through social media.

Expected Outcomes

1. Increased levels of students' digital culture and literacy.
2. Development of safe online behavior skills.
3. Enhancement of communication and professional competencies.
4. Improved effectiveness of student socialization within the digital educational environment.

The practical implementation of the research findings demonstrates the potential to transform social media from a spontaneous communication space into a managed educational resource. The adoption of the proposed recommendations and digital socialization program can contribute to more effective student socialization and to the development of a sustainable digital educational environment within the university.

Conclusion

The present study provided a comprehensive examination of the role of social media and the digital educational environment in the process of student socialization and identified the socio-pedagogical conditions necessary for their effective and safe use within the contemporary university context.

The theoretical analysis demonstrated that the digital educational environment functions as an important agent of socialization alongside traditional social institutions. It significantly influences the formation of students' communication practices, value orientations, and educational behaviors. In this context, social media perform not only informational and communicative functions but also serve as a space for fostering social engagement and professional development.

The analysis of the empirical data revealed that students most frequently associate social media use with the organization of the learning process, access to educational resources, and communication related to academic activities. Less frequently, social media are perceived as a means of developing professional skills and enhancing learning motivation. These findings suggest that digital platforms have become a routine and integral component of the university educational environment.

The results further indicate that the positive impact of social media depends not only on students' level of engagement but also on the conditions under which these platforms are used within the educational process. The most significant conditions identified in the study include digital literacy, pedagogical support, adherence to guidelines for online interaction, and the creation of a safe digital environment.

Based on the research findings, methodological recommendations and a student digital socialization program were developed. These materials may be applied in the organization of both curricular and extracurricular student activities.

Overall, the findings suggest that social media possess substantial educational potential; however, realizing this potential requires purposeful pedagogical organization and support. Future research may focus on examining the influence of social media on various aspects of student life, including academic achievement, professional identity development, and patterns of interaction within the digital educational environment.

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Ethics statement: This study was based on an anonymous voluntary survey. Prior to participation, all respondents were informed about the objectives of the study and provided informed consent. Participation was entirely voluntary, and no personally identifiable information was collected or processed. The study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles of the Declaration of Helsinki.

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