

Social Media: Perceptions and Utilization among Gen Z Student Nurses in a Private School

ABSTRACT

Aims: To determine the relationship between social media perceptions and utilization among Gen Z student nurses in a private school in Iloilo, Philippines.

Study design: Descriptive-Correlational design.

Place and Duration of Study: College of Nursing of a private institution in Iloilo, Philippines, between September 2025 and March 2026.

Methodology: The total population of Gen Z student nurses is 2076, and with the Raosoft calculator, 325 student nurses from the College of Nursing were determined as the sample size. The study used an adopted instrument to measure the perceptions and utilization of gen Z student nurses toward social media, conducted through an online form. An ethical clearance was obtained prior to the conduct of the study.

Results: Findings showed a positive perception towards social media among Gen Z student nurses, as it was viewed as a tool for enhancing communication among students. However, it was also perceived as a potential distraction in academic courses. Social media utilization was more inclined toward informal uses and academic communication, while its exclusive employment for academic usage was less observed in comparison. Furthermore, the perception of Gen Z student nurses on social media has a significant relationship with its actual utilization.

Conclusion: The perception of Gen Z student nurses influences how they utilize social media as it was evidently perceived and applied for academic interaction and personal engagement, while having limitations on its total integration in the formal academic setting. This suggest that embracing social media in education may provide a supportive academic space for student nurses in the program with institutional and academic guidance.

Keywords: Social Media Perception, Social Media Utilization, Gen Z Student Nurses

1. INTRODUCTION

Generation Z, commonly defined as individuals born after 1995, are considered digital natives who grew up with smartphones and digital technologies (Rosenberg et al., 2025). Social media has become a primary platform for communication, information sharing, and content consumption among this generation (Hu et al., 2022). In nursing education, these platforms are increasingly used as supplementary learning tools because their visually engaging and concise content can enhance collaboration, communication, and access to academic information when used appropriately (Elkatmiş, 2024; Giroux & Moreau, 2022). Despite these benefits, social media also presents challenges. Studies show that students often use these platforms mainly for entertainment and social interaction rather than academic purposes (Bich Diep et al., 2021; Kolhar et al., 2021). Excessive use may also affect attention, motivation, and critical evaluation of information (Berdida, 2023; Cieslak, 2023). In the Philippines, social media is generally viewed positively and used as a supplementary academic tool; however, many students still utilize it primarily for personal purposes, and concerns regarding unreliable digital information remain (Lim, 2022; Tayaben, 2025; Soliva et al., 2024). Although research on Generation Z and social media continues to grow, findings remain inconsistent. Many studies focus on frequency of use or general perceptions without examining specific outcomes such as academic use, academic communication, and personal use. Local research within the Philippine nursing education context also remains limited. The goal of this study is to determine Generation Z nursing students' perceptions of social media and examine their relationship with academic use, academic communication, and personal use.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research Design

The quantitative descriptive-correlational research design was used. Descriptive research design was utilized to find out characteristics of a population under study without giving emphasis to the cause and effect of the variables (Clarete et al., 2023). Correlational design examined the relationship of a single group that contains between two or more variables without manipulation (Devi et al., 2023). This design was appropriate because the study aimed to determine relationships between variables without manipulating them. No causal inference was intended.

2.1. Study Setting

This study was conducted at a chosen prominent, private academic institution in Iloilo City. The institution has a student population that includes Gen Z first-year to fourth-year student nurses that were the target respondents of the study. The data collection was done online to be convenient for the selected respondents. This selected private academic institution also fits as the study setting, as they have an enough number of student nurses who fits in the criteria of the desired respondents.

2.2. Population and Sampling

The study was directed towards the Gen Z student nurses from first to fourth year level, enrolled in the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program at a selected private academic institution in Iloilo City. These participants were chosen for this study since they represent the population of individuals who share similar patterns of engagement with social media platforms and have a common learning environment, thereby making them appropriate

representatives for the research to be done. The sample size of the study was determined using the Raosoft Sample Size Calculator with a common margin of error of 5% and a confidence level of 95% (Raosoft INC., 2004). These were selected as standard parameters in social science research to ensure adequate representativeness and acceptable sampling precision. The study utilized stratified random sampling, in which the population was categorized into four subgroups based on the year level of BSN students. This approach minimized sampling bias and improved internal validity sampling.

Fig. 1. Sampling Size of the Study

Raosoft		Sample size calculator
What margin of error can you accept? <small>5% is a common choice</small>	5 %	The margin of error is the amount of error that you can tolerate. If 90% of respondents answer yes, while 10% answer no, you may be able to tolerate a larger amount of error than if the respondents are split 50-50 or 45-55. Lower margin of error requires a larger sample size.
What confidence level do you need? <small>Typical choices are 90%, 95%, or 99%</small>	95 %	The confidence level is the amount of uncertainty you can tolerate. Suppose that you have 20 yes-no questions in your survey. With a confidence level of 95%, you would expect that for one of the questions (1 in 20), the percentage of people who answer yes would be more than the margin of error away from the true answer. The true answer is the percentage you would get if you exhaustively interviewed everyone. Higher confidence level requires a larger sample size.
What is the population size? <small>If you don't know, use 20000</small>	2076	How many people are there to choose your random sample from? The sample size doesn't change much for populations larger than 20,000.
What is the response distribution? <small>Leave this as 50%</small>	50 %	For each question, what do you expect the results will be? If the sample is skewed highly one way or the other, the population probably is, too. If you don't know, use 50%, which gives the largest sample size. See below under More information if this is confusing.
Your recommended sample size is	325	This is the minimum recommended size of your survey. If you create a sample of this many people and get responses from everyone, you're more likely to get a correct answer than you would from a large sample where only a small percentage of the sample responds to your survey.

2.3. Instrumentation

An adopted questionnaire from the existing literature was used in order to gather needed data. The instrument was divided into two (2) parts and used a 5-point likert scale: (1) Students' Perception on Social Media with a scale of 5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 2 = Disagree, and 1 = Strongly Disagree. (2) Utilization of Social Media questionnaire in terms of Academic Usage that used a range scale of 5 = Very Likely, 4 = Likely, 3 = Neutral, 2 = Unlikely, and 1 = Very Unlikely. In Academic Communication and Personal Usage, Likert scale ranged from 5 = Always, 4 = Often, 3 = Sometimes, 2 = Rarely, and 1 = Never. Validity was evaluated by three expert registered nurses holding a master's degree. Cronbach's alpha values of the instruments ranging from 0.727 to 0.889 indicates acceptable to good internal consistency reliability.

2.4. Data Gathering Procedure

An approval was obtained from the Dean of the College of Nursing and the institutional research committee of the selected private school in Iloilo City. The data collection was conducted during the second semester of the academic year 2025–2026. Data were gathered using an online questionnaire created through Google form. The respondent's verified school account was used to access the questionnaire. The online survey contained an informed consent form that explained the purpose of the study and emphasized the protection of participants' rights and integrity. The responses were stored securely in a password-protected Google Drive, which was accessible only to the researchers and the research adviser.

2.5. Data Analysis Procedure

The collected data were encoded in Microsoft Excel and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, were used to summarize and describe the respondents' data. Prior to analysis, negatively stated items were reverse coded to ensure consistency in the direction of responses in the 5-point Likert scale. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to assess the normality of the data. Since the results indicated a non-normal distribution ($p < 0.05$), Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient (Spearman's Rho) was used to determine the significance of the relationship between Generation Z nursing students' perceptions of social media and their social media utilization in terms of academic use, academic communication, and personal use. All statistical analysis was conducted at a 0.05 level of significance.

3. Results and Discussions

Gen Z nursing students showed a generally positive perception of social media in academic settings, with an average mean score of 3.80 out of 5. The highest score ($M = 4.30$) indicated that social media helps students communicate more effectively in class. It was also scored highly for facilitating collaboration ($M = 4.27$) and improving communication between students and instructors ($M = 4.25$). These results show that students mainly view social media as a communication and collaboration tool for learning. However, lower scores were given to preferring social media over the university learning management system ($M = 3.04$) and recognizing it as a possible distraction ($M = 2.98$). Overall, the findings suggest that Gen Z nursing students value social media's benefits but do not see it as a replacement for formal academic platforms, demonstrating digital maturity. This finding is consistent with the previous study by Parrott and Okojie (2024) that shows social media can enhance student engagement, communication, and collaborative learning through interactive platforms beyond the traditional classroom. Table 1 shows the data.

Table 1. Distribution of mean responses on students perceptions on social media, specific indicators (n=325)

Students Perception Indicators	Mean	Standard Deviation
I think social media can improve communication among students in a course.	4.30	0.72
I think social media can be used to help students collaborate in higher education courses.	4.27	0.75
I think social media can improve communication between students and instructors.	4.25	0.80
I think social media can be useful in my courses.	4.16	0.79
I do not want to use social media in any of my courses.*	3.62	1.01
I would prefer to use social media in my courses rather than the university learning management system (e.g., TRACS).	3.04	0.99
I think social media would be a distraction in higher education courses.*	2.98	0.95
Overall	3.80	0.52

**Item was reverse scored*

The results indicate that Gen Z student nurses demonstrated a favorable level of social media utilization, with an overall mean score of 4.29 out of 5, suggesting that social media is widely integrated into their academic and personal activities. The academic usage subdomain obtained an overall mean of 4.12, indicating that social media is commonly used for academic-related activities. The highest mean score (M= 4.33) shows that students frequently use social media to communicate with academic instructors. In contrast, the lowest mean score (M=3.95) indicates that students are less likely to participate in online discussions involving only fellow students without the lecturer present. This result suggests that students still prefer some level of instructor presence in academic engagements. The academic communication subdomain recorded an overall mean of 4.28, indicating that social media is consistently used for communication related to academic matters. The highest mean score (M=4.48) reflects that students most frequently communicate within the same course through social media. Meanwhile, the lowest mean score (M=3.93) suggests that communication with instructors through social media occurs less frequently, highlighting a stronger reliance on peer-to-peer communication. The personal usage subdomain obtained the highest overall mean score of 4.48, indicating very frequent personal engagement with social media. The highest mean score (M=4.58) shows that students always use social media to communicate with friends, while the lowest mean score (M=4.33) indicates that students frequently browse content unrelated to course materials. Despite being the lowest indicator in this category, the score still reflects strong personal engagement. Overall, Gen Z student nurses extensively utilize social media. These highlight that social media primarily functions as a supplementary tool for academic communication and a major platform for personal interaction among Gen Z student nurses. Table 2 shows the data.

Table 2. Distribution of mean responses on utilization of social media, specific indicators (n=325)

Utilization of Social Media Indicators	Mean	Standard Deviation
Academic Usage		
How likely would you use social media to communicate with your instructors (e.g., instead of email) if that was an option?	4.33	0.76
How likely would you use social media to access course notes and other materials if that was an option?	4.30	0.65
How likely would you use social media to participate in online discussions that include both instructors and students if that was an option?	4.25	0.76
How likely would you use social media to view a course schedule if that was an option?	4.23	0.71
How likely would you join a social media group for students in your courses if that was an option?	4.08	0.78
How likely would you use social media for your science courses?	4.02	0.77
How likely would you use social media to play games that are related to course material if that was an option?	3.97	0.89
How likely would you use social media to take quizzes related to course material if that was an option?	3.96	0.87
How likely would you use social media to participate in online discussions that include only other students, without instructors if that was an option?	3.95	0.89
Academic usage overall	4.12	0.57
Academic Communication		
How often do you communicate with other students in your courses through your social media account(s)?	4.48	0.66
How often do you communicate with other students in your major through your social media account(s)?	4.36	0.72
How often do you use your social media account(s) to review content related to your courses?	4.35	0.69
How often do you communicate with course instructors through your social media account?	3.93	0.89
Academic communication overall	4.28	0.61
Personal Usage		
How often do you communicate with friends through your social media account(s)?	4.58	0.65
How often do you access your social media account(s)?	4.54	0.69
How often do you use your social media account(s) to view content unrelated to your courses?	4.33	0.83
Personal usage overall	4.29	0.51
Overall Utilization of Social Media	4.29	0.51

Results showed a statistically significant moderate positive correlation between perception and overall social media utilization ($r_s = 0.445, p < 0.001$). A moderate positive significant relationship was found between perception and academic usage ($r_s = 0.543, p < 0.001$). Meanwhile, academic communication ($r_s = 0.299, p < 0.001$) and personal usage ($r_s = 0.287, p < 0.001$) showed significant but weak positive correlations. The findings indicate that more positive perceptions of social media are associated with greater utilization, particularly for academic purposes. The strongest relationship was observed in academic usage, suggesting that perception most strongly influences task-oriented academic activities. All variables were significantly correlated at the 0.001 level, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis.

Table 4. Relationship between Perception and Utilization of Social Media in terms of Academic Usage, Academic Communication, and Personal Usage

	Utilization of Social Media			
	Academic Usage	Academic Communication	Personal Usage	Overall
Perception	$r_s = .543 (p < .001^{**})$	$r_s = 0.299 (p < .001^{**})$	$r_s = 0.287 (p < .001^{**})$	$r_s = 0.445(p < .001^{**})$

***.* Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed).

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study the following conclusions are drawn. The respondents of this study were mostly female student nurses, which is consistent with the typical population of nursing students in which females mostly predominate among all nursing schools. In terms of year level, the majority of the respondents were first-year student nurses, while the least number were from the third-year level. Gen Z student nurses demonstrated a highly favorable perception of social media as an academic tool, but still perceives it a potential distraction in their focus learning. This showed a clear awareness of the difference between the formal use of social media in their academics and its use for entertainment, indicating that they have the ability to identify usage patterns and engage responsibly in social interactions online.

In addition, they also showed an extensive and multifaceted use of social media. This is evident by a high level of utilization among the Gen Z student nurses not only with personal usage but also with academic utilization. Furthermore, it is mostly utilized by Gen Z student nurses to socialize and browse content unrelated to their courses. Lastly, the results showed that students' perception and utilization of social media significantly influenced how they utilize it in both their academic and personal activities. However weaker correlation observed in academic communication and personal usage suggests that it may also be shaped by other factors. Social media does not only serve as a platform for interaction but also a digital environment that facilitates knowledge exchange and peer support among students. Overall, the findings affirm that while social media holds academic potential, its effectiveness depends on structured integration, digital responsibility, and guided utilization within nursing education context.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings indicate that Generation Z nursing students demonstrate positive perceptions of social media and use it as a supplementary tool for academic learning and communication. Student nurses are therefore encouraged to utilize social media responsibly by participating in course-related discussions, sharing academic resources, and communicating with classmates while maintaining appropriate time management to prevent academic distractions. Nursing educators may consider integrating social media as a supplementary communication tool while maintaining the learning management system as the primary platform for formal instruction. Faculty-guided class groups may be used to share announcements, reminders, and clarifications about lessons while promoting responsible online communication and protection of patient confidentiality when referring to clinical experiences. The researchers also suggest that the College of Nursing administration may consider developing guidelines on responsible and professional use of social media in nursing education. In addition, administrators may encourage faculty members to participate in webinars, seminars, and conventions organized by the Association of Deans of Philippine Colleges of Nursing (ADPCN) to stay updated on innovations in nursing education and the effective use of digital platforms in teaching and learning. Lastly, future researchers are recommended to include participants from different universities to obtain broader perspectives. Future studies may also examine additional factors such as digital literacy, academic motivation, and self-regulation, and may utilize qualitative or mixed-methods approaches to gain deeper insights into students' experiences and patterns of social media utilization.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest related to this study.

the summary. Finally, Author F served as the adviser, overseeing the overall progress and completion of the study, providing constructive feedback and guidance for improvements.

CONSENT

The authors confirm that informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to the data collection process

ETHICAL APPROVAL

This research was reviewed by the Iloilo Doctors' College Institutional Research Ethics Committee (IDIREC) and received ethical clearance prior to the conduct of the study

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