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Influence of game-like social media features on the academic achievement of secondary school students in business education

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Abstract
Growing worry about declining study habits among secondary school students has drawn attention to the rising influence of game-like features on social media, which often compete with academic tasks. This study investigated how such features affect the academic achievement of students in Business Education in Anambra East. A descriptive survey design was adopted, and 100 junior secondary students were purposively selected. Data were collected with a validated questionnaire and analyzed using mean and standard deviation with a 2.50 cut-off point. The results showed that game-like elements on social media showed mixed academic effects. Students accepted that notifications distracted their focus (2.80), streak maintenance reduced study time (2.50), and competition for likes harmed performance (2.95), while claims about excessive checking (1.80) and skipping tasks (1.45) were rejected. Positive influences were widely acknowledged, including motivation from badges (3.40), collaborative challenges (3.10), instant feedback (2.80), engaging tutorials (2.90), and peer connection (2.53). Effective strategies included teacher guidance (3.30), balanced engagement (3.10), school integration of gamified tools (2.80), parental monitoring (3.60), and prioritizing educational features (2.75). Overall, the findings show that game-like features can distract or enhance learning depending on how they are managed. The findings suggest that game-like social media features can either hinder or enrich learning depending on their use, pointing to the need for structured digital engagement among students.

1. Introduction

The growing presence of social media in students' daily routines has created a learning environment where academic tasks compete with digital platforms designed to hold attention. This tension becomes more pronounced when social media incorporates game-like features such as points, badges, streaks, leaderboards, and instant feedback. These elements, which originally evolved in video game design, now shape how young people engage, persist and evaluate success online (Nwachukwu & Nwizu, 2024). In many secondary schools, particularly in places like Anambra East, teachers of Business Education are beginning to notice that students' online habits increasingly mirror these gamified patterns.

Game-like social media features are elements borrowed from video game design that make digital platforms more engaging, rewarding and sometimes addictive. They usually work by giving users small incentives that trigger quick bursts of satisfaction (Li et al, 2022). Think of things like streaks that reward daily activity, badges earned for completing tasks, points and likes that act as digital scores, or leaderboards that show who is "ahead." Game-like features in social media tend to shape behavior through instant feedback, colorful animations and progress cues that keep users coming back, which feels quite similar to how management support reinforces quality control in organizational settings.

Educators and administrators often rely on structured motivation, just as these digital cues rely on streaks or badges. This pattern aligns with views on effective resource mobilization in schools where supportive structures strengthen performance (Egwu & Mbonu, 2023). Similar emphasis on guided oversight is seen in research on 21st century pedagogy (Egwu, 2022) and internal quality assurance mechanisms (Egwuh, 2022). ICT studies also show that consistent feedback loops influence learners' engagement (Ikegbusi et al., 2021). The way game-like features build habits mirrors how management backing improves motivation under challenging conditions (Ikegbusi et al., 2025a). Project-based learning benefits similarly from structured encouragement (Ikegbusi & Egwu, 2024). Effective management roadmaps remain essential for sustaining such positive

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patterns (Egwu & Ekwe, 2024), while quality assurance research stresses the importance of supportive oversight (Ezugoh et al., 2023).

Vocational education studies add that structured guidance helps build employability skills (Ikegbusi et al., 2025b). Even principals' administrative competence reinforces the idea that supportive systems shape performance outcomes. According to Oni and Ngongpah (2025), gamified environments often boost students' willingness to participate in learning tasks by triggering curiosity and reinforcing task completion. When students experience social media platforms that mimic these structures, they may transfer similar persistence to school-related activities, especially when teachers integrate interactive tasks that resonate with students' digital habits. In Business Education, where simulations and practical exercises support learning, such motivation can foster improved note-taking, stronger task engagement and better retention.

Another positive influence is the social interaction fostered by these platforms. Leader boards, comment points and collaborative challenges can encourage peer-to-peer learning. Students often discuss business-related ideas, share summaries, or participate in group explanations when these activities are tied to social feedback. Smirani and Yamani (2024) argues that social interaction in digital environments creates a form of academic belonging that can support comprehension and reduce anxiety toward difficult subjects. When used intentionally, game-like social media features may therefore strengthen cooperative learning and help students feel more confident in Business Education tasks.

Still, the negative influences are hard to ignore. The same features that motivate engagement can also reinforce distraction. Points, streaks and endless reward cycles make students return to social media repeatedly, sometimes interrupting study time or weakening attention spans. Game-like features on social media can significantly disrupt academic focus among secondary school students, particularly in Business Education, where analytic reasoning and sequential problem-solving are essential (Ozeh et al, 2023). Gamified notifications and rewards create fast-paced gratification that contrasts with the slower, deliberate learning process (Allehaidan & Zainon, 2024). Emotional dependency also emerges, as students compare themselves through likes, rankings, and visible metrics, potentially affecting motivation (Adolphus et al., 2023). Such distractions parallel institutional inefficacy, where unmanaged systems reduce performance outcomes (Okonkwo & Idigo, 2022). Additionally, constant engagement can foster procrastination (Onwunyi et al., 2023) and diminish students' sustained attention, highlighting the need for guided use of gamified features in learning (Ochi & Boniface, 2022).

Students who become preoccupied with these online indicators may experience reduced academic confidence or unnecessary pressure. Fitri and Ananta (2025) observed that excessive engagement with reward-based social media features correlates with reduced academic self-regulation. When students feel compelled to maintain digital streaks or compete for online reactions, they may dedicate less energy to genuine learning.

This study is important because secondary school students now interact with social media platforms that include game-like features which shape how they think, focus, and learn. Features such as streaks, badges, AI leader boards, and instant feedback influence motivation and behavior, yet their specific effects on academic achievement in Business Education remain unclear (Ofozoba et a, 2025). While recent studies highlight the motivational value of gamified environments in general learning (Ikpat, 2025), very few examine how everyday social media use, rather than formal educational games, affects students' performance in school subjects. In contrast, Pérez-Juárez et al, (2023) found that digital distraction reduces students' concentration, but they did not explore how reward-based features contribute to this problem.

The study is also significant because Business Education requires steady attention, analytical thinking, and consistent practice. The quick-reward structure of social media may conflict with these academic demands. Existing research often treats social media as a single entity, overlooking how specific features shape student behavior. This gap can affect the design of effective learning interventions. This study aims to fill that gap by examining the direct and indirect influences of game-like social media features. Findings will provide educators with insights on strategies to reduce distraction, enhance motivation, and support more productive engagement with Business Education content. The following research questions include;

a. What negative influences do game-like features on social media have on the academic achievement of secondary school students in Business Education in Anambra East L.G.A?

b. What positive influences do game-like features on social media have on the academic achievement of secondary school students in Business Education in Anambra East L.G.A?

c. What strategies can enhance the effective and productive use of game-like social media features for learning Business Education among secondary school students in Anambra East L.G.A?

2. Method

The study adopted a descriptive survey design to investigate the influence of game-like social media features on the academic achievement of secondary school students in Business Education. This design was considered appropriate because it allows data to be collected at a specific point in time in order to describe the current state of phenomena and compare them against established standards (Nworgu, 2006). The descriptive survey enabled the researcher to gather relevant information from students regarding their interactions with social media features and their perceived academic outcomes.

The study was conducted in Anambra East Local Government Area of Anambra State, located in the Anambra North Senatorial District. The area is predominantly riverine, with agriculture and fishing as the main economic activities. Despite these occupations, schools in the area face challenges such as limited access to instructional resources, inadequate infrastructure, and increasing influence of social media on students' learning. These factors make Anambra East a suitable context for examining how social media affects students' academic performance in Business Education, particularly within a rural and resource-constrained educational setting.

The population of the study comprised all students in public junior secondary schools within the LGA. A sample of 100 students was purposively selected to focus on respondents with specific characteristics relevant to the study. Data were collected using a self-structured questionnaire divided into two sections: Section A captured respondents' personal data, while Section B contained items assessing the effects of game-like social media features on learning. Responses were measured on a four-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

To ensure validity, the instrument was reviewed by the project supervisor and two experts, one in Business Education and the other in Measurement and Evaluation from Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe. Their feedback informed modifications to improve clarity and relevance. Reliability was established through a test-retest method with 30 students from Awka South LGA, yielding a Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient of 0.75, indicating acceptable reliability. Data collection involved administering 100 questionnaires personally to respondents, all of which were completed and returned. Descriptive statistics, including mean scores and standard deviation, were used for analysis. A cut-off means of 2.50 was set, meaning items with mean scores equal to or above 2.50 were accepted, while those below were rejected. This method provided a systematic approach for evaluating the influence of game-like social media features on students' academic achievement in Business Education.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Result

3.1.1. Research Question 1

What negative influences do game-like features on social media have on the academic achievement of secondary school students in Business Education in Anambra East L.G.A? The following Table 1 presents the negative effects of features such as games on social media on the academic achievement of students in Business Education in Anambra East.

Table 1. Mean and standard deviation on the negative influences do game-like features on social media have on the academic achievement of secondary school students in Business Education

S/N	Items	∑X	Mean	Std. Dev	Decision
1	Notifications and alerts from social media make me lose focus on my Business Education assignments.	280	2.80	0.75	Accepted
2	I spend more time checking streaks, likes, and points on social media than studying Business Education.	180	1.80	0.97	Rejected
3	The urge to maintain online streaks reduces the time I dedicate to preparing for Business Education tests.	250	2.50	1.06	Accepted
4	I sometimes skip school tasks to stay engaged with gamified features on social media.	145	1.45	0.81	Rejected
5	Competing for likes, points, or rankings on social media negatively affects my performance in Business Education.	295	2.95	0.59	Accepted

Table 1 above highlights the negative effects of game-like features on social media on students' academic achievement in Business Education in Anambra East. Students agreed that notifications and alerts from gamified features on social media distract them from concentrating on their assignments, reflected in an accepted mean of 2.80. They also acknowledged that the urge to maintain online streaks reduces the time devoted to preparing

for Business Education tests, with a mean of 2.50. It is equally clear that competition for likes, points, or rankings embedded in social media negatively affects overall academic performance, shown by the highest accepted mean of 2.95. However, students rejected the claims that they spend more time checking streaks, likes, and points on social media than studying (1.80) or skip school tasks to stay engaged with gamified features (1.45). On the whole, items 1, 3, and 5 were accepted as negative effects of game-like features, while items 2 and 4 were rejected.

3.1.2. Research Question 2

What positive influences do game-like features on social media have on the academic achievement of secondary school students in Business Education in Anambra East L.G.A? The following Table 2 present positive effects of game-like features on social media on students' achievement in Business Education in Anambra East.

Table 2. Mean and standard deviation on the positive influences of game-like features on social media on the academic achievement of secondary school students in Business Education in Anambra East L.G.A.

S/N	Items	Mean	Std. Dev	Decision
6	Badges, achievements, and interactive features on social media motivate me to explore educational materials in Business Education.	3.40	1.01	Accepted
7	I use game-like group challenges and collaborative features on social media to discuss Business Education topics.	3.10	1.09	Accepted
8	Social media features that provide instant feedback or quizzes improve my understanding of Business Education concepts.	2.80	1.17	Accepted
9	I watch educational videos or tutorials on platforms that reward engagement, which enhances my learning in Business Education.	2.90	0.83	Accepted
10	Gamified interactions on social media help me connect with teachers and peers for discussions and guidance in Business Education.	2.53	0.81	Accepted

Table 2 above shows the positive effects of game-like features on social media on students' achievement in Business Education in Anambra East. The respondents agreed that badges, achievements, and other interactive gamified features motivate them to explore educational materials, reflected in the highest mean of 3.40. They also indicated that game-like group challenges and collaborative features on social media encourage participation in discussions on Business Education topics, with a mean of 3.10. It is evident that features providing instant feedback or quizzes improve understanding of Business Education concepts (2.80) and that educational videos or tutorials on platforms that reward engagement enhance learning (2.90). They further accepted that gamified interactions help them connect with teachers and peers for discussions and guidance in Business Education, shown by a mean of 2.53. Overall, all five items were accepted as positive academic influences of game-like features on social media, demonstrating that such features can promote motivation, collaboration, and interactive learning among secondary school students.

3.1.3. Research Question 3

What strategies can enhance the effective and productive use of game-like social media features for learning Business Education among secondary school students in Anambra East L.G.A? The following Table 3 present mean and standard deviation on strategies to enhance the effective and productive use of game-like social media features for learning Business Education among secondary school students in Anambra East

Table 3. Mean and standard deviation on strategies to enhance the effective and productive use of game-like social media features for learning Business Education among secondary school students in Anambra East L.G.A.

S/N	Items	Mean	Std. Dev	Decision
11	Teachers should guide students to use gamified educational pages on social media for learning.	3.30	1	Accepted
12	Students should be taught to manage their engagement with gamified features to balance social media and study time.	3.10	1.04	Accepted
13	Schools should incorporate gamified social media tools into Business Education lessons.	2.80	1.02	Accepted
14	Parents should monitor students' use of social media features that encourage excessive competition or constant checking.	3.60	0.86	Accepted
15	Students should focus on gamified features that enhance learning rather than those that promote entertainment alone.	2.75	0.94	Accepted

Table 3 above presents strategies for the effective and productive use of game-like social media features by secondary school students in learning Business Education in Anambra East. Respondents accepted that teachers should guide students to use gamified educational pages on social media for learning, reflected in a mean of 3.30. They also agreed that students need guidance to manage their engagement with gamified features

in order to balance social media use and study time (3.10) and that schools should incorporate gamified social media tools into Business Education lessons (2.80). Parental monitoring of features that encourage excessive competition or constant checking was highly endorsed, with the highest mean of 3.60. Additionally, respondents accepted that students should focus on gamified features that enhance learning rather than those promoting entertainment alone (2.75). Overall, all five strategies were considered effective for enhancing learning through social media by leveraging game-like features, demonstrating that proper guidance and monitoring can maximize their educational benefits while minimizing potential distractions.

3.2. Discussion

The findings of this study reveal both positive and negative influences of game-like features on social media on the academic achievement of secondary school students in Business Education in Anambra East L.G.A. Table 1 shows that notifications, streaks, and competitive elements such as likes and rankings can distract students from concentrating on their assignments, reduce time spent on preparing for tests, and negatively affect overall performance. This finding agreed with the work of Fitri and Ananta (2025), who reported that gamified notifications and constant engagement cues can interrupt study routines. In contrast, items indicating that students spend more time checking streaks or skip school tasks were rejected, suggesting that not all gamified interactions result in procrastination or neglect of schoolwork, a result that aligns with the study by Allehaidan and Zainon (2024), which observed that students often manage to balance engagement with learning despite gamified distractions.

Table 2 highlights the positive impact of gamified social media features on academic engagement. Features such as badges, achievements, collaborative challenges, instant feedback, and reward-based tutorials were acknowledged for enhancing motivation, participation, and understanding of Business Education concepts. This finding agreed with Smirani and Yamani (2024), who noted that gamified educational content improves students' engagement and concept retention. In a related study, Oni and Ngongpah (2025) found that instant feedback and interactive group challenges on digital platforms foster collaborative learning, while in contrast, Li et al, (2022) reported that the benefits of gamification may vary depending on students' self-regulation skills.

Table 3 presents strategies to optimize the educational potential of game-like features. Students agreed that teacher guidance, parental monitoring, balancing social media engagement with study time, and focusing on academically beneficial gamified features are essential for productive use. This finding aligns with the recommendations of Nwachukwu and Nwizu (2024), who emphasized structured supervision and integration of gamified tools in learning environments. In a related study, Ikpat (2025) highlighted that parental and institutional guidance is critical to ensuring that gamified digital interactions enhance learning rather than foster distraction.

3.3. Implication for Game Based Learning (GBL)

The findings of this study offer several meaningful implications for teaching and learning in Business Education, especially when viewed through the lens of Game Based Learning (GBL). The results show that game-like features on social media can distract students through constant alerts, streak maintenance, and competitive ranking, yet the same features can also motivate exploration, deepen engagement, and support collaborative learning. This balance between risk and opportunity mirrors GBL's core mission, which focuses on understanding how motivation and learning outcomes interact within game-influenced environments.

Students stand to benefit when they learn how to use these features in more structured and intentional ways. Guidance can help them tap into the motivational pull of badges, instant feedback, or challenge-based interactions without slipping into unproductive patterns of use. Instructors can also draw from the study by incorporating carefully designed gamified activities into Business Education lessons. Structured quizzes, digital challenges, or peer-collaboration tasks that echo familiar social media mechanics can make lessons more interactive and relatable, which supports GBL's emphasis on cognitive and psychological engagement.

Policy and curriculum designers gain useful insights as well. The study encourages the development of frameworks that promote responsible and academically focused use of gamified digital tools in schools. Such frameworks can help reduce distraction while enhancing students' emotional and cognitive involvement in learning, which aligns with GBL's multidisciplinary interest in designing effective and cost-efficient learning environments.

Future research directions emerge from the findings as well. Further work could explore which specific gamified features contribute most to improved motivation or understanding in Business Education, along with how negative behaviors such as compulsive checking can be minimized. The study therefore strengthens ongoing conversations in Game Based Learning by showing how everyday social media environments can become powerful educational tools when guided, monitored, and integrated thoughtfully into instructional practice.

4. Conclusion

The study showed that game-like features on social media influence students' learning in Business Education in complex but meaningful ways. Some features, such as notifications, streaks, and competitive rankings, tended to distract students or reduce the time they devoted to their studies. Other features, including badges, instant feedback, group challenges, and reward-based interactions, encouraged motivation, collaboration, and deeper engagement with Business Education concepts. The findings suggest that the impact of these features depends largely on how students use them and the level of support they receive from teachers, parents, and schools. The study also highlighted the value of guiding students toward productive digital habits. Students benefit when they learn to manage their engagement with gamified tools in ways that enhance learning rather than interrupt it. Teachers and schools have an opportunity to integrate structured game-like activities that align with curriculum goals, while parents play a role in monitoring excessive or distracting use.

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