

Relationship between Social Media Engagement and Entrepreneurial Stress among Entrepreneurs

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ABSTRACT: Social media has become a necessary part of everyday life. Many businesses have sought to expand their reach through innovative means. One of which is the use of social media which has proven to be the most effective. Entrepreneurs and online vendors have gained success using platforms such as Instagram, Facebook Marketplace, WhatsApp Business etc., which enables them to market their products or services. However, the maintenance of an active digital presence comes at a cost. For those businesses managed by a single person or with minimal staff, it is especially high. This study has examined the relationship between social media engagement and entrepreneurial stress among business owners and online vendors to find out not just the impact of such engagement on stress levels but also the association between the two variables. A cross-sectional, quantitative research designed was used with a sample of 266 participants. Data was collected through standardised tools; Social Media Engagement Scale and Entrepreneurial Stress Index. IBM SPSS was used to conduct descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation and simple linear regression analyses. The results revealed a significant positive relationship between social media engagement and entrepreneurial stress as well as a significant predictive effect of such engagement on stress. These findings have suggested that while active engagement offers valuable opportunities, the demands associated may contribute to increased psychological strain, thus highlighting the importance of developing approaches to maintain an online presence while mitigating entrepreneurial stress.

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Introduction

The fast development of social media has changed the way entrepreneurs, and online vendors promote their businesses, reach customers, and stay visible in competitive markets. These platforms enable entrepreneurs to

communicate with larger audiences at a relatively low cost. It also helps them build customer engagement and strengthen brand presence, which is why social media engagement has become an important part of contemporary entrepreneurial strategy (Ainin et al., 2015; Odoom et al., 2017; Schaupp & Bélanger, 2014). At the same time, however, it has made entrepreneurs increasingly dependent on social media for business promotion, which, in turn, has created new psychological pressures. Maintaining an active digital presence often requires frequent content creation, continuous monitoring of customer engagement, and regular attention to advertising performance, and these demands may contribute to entrepreneurial stress (Kipkosgei, 2022). The shift plays an important role, as much of the literature available on social media engagement emphasizes the business and performance aspects, such as broader reach, improved sales outcomes, and customer interaction (Eze et al., 2021). However, far less attention has been given to the human cost of sustaining these marketing activities, especially for the entrepreneurs who manage both operational and promotional responsibilities themselves (Kawai & Sibunruang, 2025). This study examines whether social media engagement is associated with entrepreneurial stress among business owners and online vendors. In this sense, our study does not treat social media solely as a marketing asset (Barahona et al., 2018), but also as a possible source of psychological strain that, depending on their personal coping resources, may affect entrepreneurs.

Social Media Engagement

Social media engagement refers to the extent to which entrepreneurs or businesses actively interact with customers and participate in marketing activities through social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, WhatsApp Business, and YouTube (Trunfio & Rossi, 2021). Activities such as content creation, answering customer messages, product promotion, monitoring audience reactions, analysing engagement metrics, and maintaining online visibility are included as part of social media engagement. This is more than just posting something online. This is a representation of an ongoing process of interaction, relationship-building, communication, and participation between businesses and customers in the digital world. Research also shows social media engagement as a behavioural, emotional, and cognitive involvement individuals show toward online interactions and brand-related activities (Hollebeek & Brodie, 2014). Not only are likes or comments included in this kind of engagement, but it also involves attention, effort, responsiveness, and continuous participation in digital business activities. In regard to entrepreneurial settings, social media platforms are used to support marketing, networking, customer relationships, and business growth. Entrepreneurs rely on social media to increase market reach, maintain customer communication, and sustain brand presence in competitive markets (Ojo & Alias, 2021). Simultaneously, psychological strain may increase because entrepreneurs are expected to remain constantly available and responsive online.

Context of Social Media Engagement in Entrepreneurship

Social media has been deeply integrated into the daily operation of small online businesses; platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and WhatsApp Business are being used by entrepreneurs to not only promote their products or services, but also to answer customer inquiries, maintain business relationships, monitor market response, and trends. It makes the engagement more of a continuous process and not a one-time activity for promotion (Hollebeek & Brodie, 2014). A research study by Schaupp and Bélanger (2014) found that adopting social media shaped technological competence, client pressure, and environmental factors, resulting in marketing, customer service, internal operations, and sales outcomes in an entrepreneurial setting. For example, research on small-scale businesses in Nigeria (Ainin et al., 2015) found that brand visibility and customer reach improved because of social media activities; on the other hand, a study of SMEs in Ghana. Odoom et al. (2017) found vital changes

in sales growth and market reach. Impact becomes even more obvious in developing economies. Taking Nigeria as an example, research there shows that by using social media, small businesses have improved their customer reach and brand visibility. Research on Ghana's SMEs (Ainin et al., 2015; Odoom et al., 2017) indicates that social media brings a larger market and provides an increase in sales. It all makes it very clear that social media plays an important role as a growth tool and not something just to stay connected (Adegbuyi et al., 2015). It is not just a theory; rather, tangible outcomes such as better brand awareness, stronger customer connections, and higher sales keep coming up across studies and are a clear indication (Charles et al., 2021). Having limited staff and resources, small businesses tend to rely heavily on social media to reach widely and compete with rivals, and it is also quite affordable (Lee et al., 2025). Too much presence on social media also costs you, as managing every aspect of digital presence, marketing, customer service, and taking strategic decisions as a solo owner or a small team can mean an enormous workload and take a heavy toll on mental health (Simba et al., 2025). In our research, we are taking social media engagement as a workplace behaviour that has real psychological pressures. Although these digital practices help in growth, if they get out of hand, burnout and relentlessness become a part of your daily life (Tajvidi & Karami, 2017). The COVID-19 era made the value of social media quite significant and clear. (Kawai & Sibunruang, 2025) indicated that social media played a role in survival and not just growth because digital advertising became more resilient to demand shocks and less likely to close down. We like to label things as good or bad, but reality is not so simple, as everything has its own pros and cons, and it depends on its usage. Research like (Barahona et al., 2018) shows that social media is not inherently bad or good, as it can give you limitless opportunities and growth, or it can lead you to exhaustion and stress. It is expected of entrepreneurs to come up with creative content to engage, answer customer queries, and track results, all of which are important for success in the business, but it can also become extremely overwhelming (Wincent & Örtqvist, 2009). All in all, social media transformed itself from just a promotional activity to a crucial part of business for entrepreneurs, which helps them fuel business outcomes but not without some significant pressures that come from the interacting human side of the digital presence.

Entrepreneurial Stress as a Research Concern

Entrepreneurs face a lot of stress in daily life. Entrepreneurial Stress refers to the strain that one feels psychologically and experiences emotional pressures that come with the handling of the business (Rauch et al., 2018). It is commonly described by researchers as a reaction to business responsibilities that exceed the perceived capabilities, resources, and coping abilities of an entrepreneur (Arshi et al., 2021). An entrepreneur's role demands multiple difficulties such as financial uncertainty, being overworked, and most of all, responsibility for the entire business, which contributes to occupational strain (Farmer et al., 2011). The high expectation of social media engagement, which demands entrepreneurs to maintain constant online visibility, respond rapidly to customers, create engaging content, and continuously monitor social media performance, may intensify psychological pressures. Studies suggest that prolonged exposure to these demands can negatively affect entrepreneurs' emotional well-being, work-life balance, and overall psychological health (Kipkosgei, 2022). Entrepreneurial stress is, as a result, increasingly recognized, not merely as a temporary work-related difficulty, but rather as an important psychological consequence of modern entrepreneurial activity. The problem at hand is quite crucial, as over time, well-being, attention and focus, and performance are affected the most due to prolonged stress. Entrepreneurs get tested on their coping capacity due to constant visibility, response expectations, and monitoring performance (Neumann et al., 2022). This is why our recent research has called for a stronger focus on psychological outcomes, rather than focusing on performance results alone.

Objective of the Study

- ▶ To investigate the relationship between social media engagement and entrepreneurial stress among entrepreneurs.

Hypotheses of the Study

Based on the literature and theoretical framework, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- ▶ H1: Social Media engagement is positively associated with stress among entrepreneurs.
- ▶ H2: Social Media Engagement positively predicts Entrepreneurial Stress.

Methodology

Research Design

The current research design is a cross-sectional and quantitative used find out the relationship and predication of social media engagement and entrepreneur stress.

Sample

The target population consists of entrepreneurs and online vendors who actively use social media for business purposes, and the sample size consists of 266 participants. The sampling technique used is convenience sampling, which is appropriate for reaching entrepreneurs and online vendors who are available, accessible, and actively engaged in social media engagement. The female participants were 183 (68.8%), and males were 83 (31.2%), and the majority of them were under 25 years of age.

Assessments Measures

Social Media Engagement Scale

The Social Media Engagement Scale is a 12-item scale; it is designed to measure the multidimensional construct, consisting of affective, behavioural, and cognitive engagement. The scale is originally developed by Kim and Ko (2012), and its reliability is .7 Cronbach's α , higher scores display higher engagement, and lower scores represent lower engagement (Kim & Ko, 2012).

Entrepreneurial Stress Index

The scale is designed to assess the psychological strain experienced by entrepreneurs as a result of business-related demands, uncertainty, workload, and entrepreneurial pressures, and the scale was developed by Olawale Fatoki (2019); it is a 5-item scale. This scale's reliability is .84 Cronbach's α ; a higher score shows higher stress, and a lower score shows lower stress (Fatoki, 2019).

Statistics Analysis

The IBM SPSS software was used for analyzing statistics, which included (1) descriptive statistics (2) Cronbach's Alpha reliability to find the constant scores of the scales, (3) Pearson's Correlation analysis was used to find the relationship between Social Media Engagement and Entrepreneur Stress, and (4) Simple Regression analysis was used to discover the predictors of Social Media Engagement and Entrepreneur Stress.

Results

Table 1

Reliability analysis of Social Media Engagement Scale, and Entrepreneurial Stress Scale (N = 266)

Variables	Items	M	SD	α	Range		Skewness	Kurtosis
					Potential	Actual		
SME	12	42.75	9.59	.83	12-60	14-60	-.40	.29
ES	5	16.93	4.29	.62	5-25	8-25	-.13	-.93

Note: SME = Social Media Engagement, ES = Entrepreneurial stress.

The above table indicates the reliability results of the Social Media Engagement Scale, in which the value of Cronbach's alpha is ($\alpha = .83$), showing very good reliability. On the other hand, the entrepreneurial stress scale, in which the value of Cronbach alpha is ($\alpha = .62$), displays reliability that is acceptable. Skewness and kurtosis: both variables fall into the acceptable range ± 3 , signifying the data are normally distributed (DEMİR, 2022).

Table 2

Correlation Analysis between Entrepreneur Stress and Social Media Engagement (N = 266)

Variables	1	2
SME	-	.27**
ES	.	-

Note: SME = Social Media Engagement and ES = Entrepreneurial Stress. Pearson r values are reported

Pearson product correlation of entrepreneur stress and social media engagement was found to be statistically significant. This shows there is a weak positive relation between entrepreneur stress and social media engagement ($r = .27$), and there is an increase in social media engagement and an increase in entrepreneurial stress; it is statistically significant ($p = .27^{**}$).

Table 3

Regression Co-efficient of Social Media Engagement on Entrepreneur Stress (N = 266)

95%CI							
	B	SE	β	t	p	LL	UL
Constant	11.83	1.16	-	10.17	.00	9.54	14.13
SME	.119	.027	.266	4.49	.00	.06	.17
R	.26						
R ²	.07						
F	20.16						

Note: SME = Social Media Engagement

A simple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine whether social media engagement predicts entrepreneurial stress. The results indicated that the regression model was statistically significant, $F = 20.16$, $p = .00$, which indicates that social media engagement can play a significant role in entrepreneurial stress ($\beta = .266$, $p < .00$). These results clearly indicate a positive effect of social media engagement on entrepreneurial stress. Moreover, the $R^2 = .071$ shows the model explains 7.1% of the variance in entrepreneurial stress.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to (1) explain the relationship between social media engagement and entrepreneurial stress of fresh entrepreneurs and online vendors, and (2) test if social media engagement positively predicts entrepreneurial stress (Cardon & Patel, 2015). It was hypothesized first that social media engagement was positively associated with entrepreneurial stress among entrepreneurs and online vendors. It was also confirmed from the analysis that social media engagement significantly predicted entrepreneurial stress. This showed that entrepreneurs who engaged in marketing through social media were more likely to report higher levels of entrepreneurial stress (Ragu-Nathan et al., 2008). Existing research has shown that social media engagement activities improve brand visibility, customer reach, and sales performance for small businesses (Ainin et al., 2015; Odoom et al., 2017; Schaupp & Bélanger, 2014). However, this study expands on this literature with the addition of examining entrepreneurial stress.

The positive association indicates that higher levels of social media marketing activity were associated with higher levels of entrepreneurial stress. This suggests that although social media provides entrepreneurs with opportunities to promote their businesses and engage with customers, the demands associated with maintaining an online presence may also be accompanied by increased psychological pressure (Shahzad et al., 2021). This finding is consistent with previous research suggesting that social media-related demands can contribute to stress through factors such as continuous engagement, performance monitoring, and competition and pressure to maintain visibility (Shahzad et al., 2021).

The regression model explains approximately 7% of the variance in entrepreneurial stress, indicating that social media marketing activity accounted for a meaningful proportion of differences in entrepreneurs' reported stress levels (Shahzad et al., 2021; Yu et al., 2025). However, the proportion of unexplained variance also indicates that entrepreneurial stress is influenced by multiple factors beyond social media marketing activity.

Suggestions and Limitations

- ▶ The cross-sectional design is ideally appropriate for exploring associations rather than showing cause and effect. Longitudinal research should be opted for in future research.
- ▶ Convenience sampling was used to collect samples; this may limit how well the findings can be generalized with regard to larger, more established businesses. To increase generalizability and to reduce sampling errors, random sampling should be used for future research.
- ▶ The sample consisted of entrepreneurs from specific online business platforms such as Instagram businesses, Facebook marketplace sellers, online clothing stores, and handmade product vendors. For future research, the sample should be expanded to include large and more established businesses as well, further improving generalizability.
- ▶ The reliability of the Entrepreneurial Stress scale was lower than ideal. This measurement, albeit acceptable, may have affected the results. For future reference, more validated stress measures should be used.

Implications

This study will enable entrepreneurs to recognize that social media engagement is associated with increased stress. Periodically checking stress levels and adjusting their marketing strategies, when necessary, can benefit them more than constant engagement. This study will help in showing how to manage customer-focused social media use. It will enable entrepreneurs and online vendors to develop targeted, effective strategies to better manage customer interactions, as customer communication is associated with higher stress levels. This present study increases awareness of training on efficient social media management, customer communication methods, and setting healthy boundaries

to reduce entrepreneurial stress. It provides evidence about the psychological cost associated with social media engagement.

Conclusion

The present study examined the relationship between social media marketing activity and entrepreneurial stress among new business owners. The findings demonstrated a significant relationship between social media marketing activity and entrepreneurial stress, supporting the first hypothesis. Furthermore, regression analysis indicated that social media marketing activity significantly predicted entrepreneurial stress, providing support for the second hypothesis. These findings suggest that although social media marketing provides entrepreneurs with valuable opportunities for business promotion and customer engagement, the demands associated with maintaining an online presence may also be related to increased psychological stress. The results underscore the importance of social media marketing in entrepreneurial settings and its psychological effects. Social media is becoming an increasingly important aspect of modern business development, and structured approaches to managing online activity and maintaining appropriate boundaries around digital work can be of benefit to entrepreneurs. However, caution should be exercised in interpreting these findings due to the cross-sectional nature of the study that precludes causal conclusions.

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