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### FAMILY ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIAL NETWORKING USAGE IN EMERGING ADULTS: A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY

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#### ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to investigate the relationship between family environment and social networking usage in emerging adults. It was hypothesized that family environment and social networking usage in emerging adults was correlated with each other. It was also hypothesized that family environment will likely to predict social networking usage controlling for covariates in emerging adults. For this purpose, a correlational study with a cross-sectional research design was used. Non-probability convenient sampling strategy was used to recruit the sample of N=213 from emerging males and females adults with the age range of 18-25 years (M=20.62 & SD=1.460) from Lahore. Family Environment Scale (FES) (Bhatia & Chada, 1993) Social networking usage questionnaire (SNQ) (Gupta & Bashir, 2018) were used. Results shows that family environment and social networking usage have negative correlation with each other. Also indicates that family environment predicts social networking usage. Increasing educational level or knowledge about effective usage of social media can help to balance its usage. Introducing awareness programs for adolescents and adults on how to minimize social networking usage and using it in productive and balanced way along with balancing family relationships can be beneficial. **Keywords:** Family environment, social networking usage, emerging adults

INTRODUCTION

Family environment refers to the social and structural properties of the global family environment. It includes interactions and relationships within the family members, particularly levels of conflict and cohesion between family members, their adaptability, their organization, and how family members communicate with each other (Lewondowski al.. 2010). Family et interaction environment include or relationship between family members particularly level of cohesion and conflict, adaptability, and quality of communication (Wallace, 2017). Family environment with proper communication, well defined roles, and cohesion promotes healthy family environment (Lewondowski et al., 2010). Healthy family environment is when family members do not hesitate to call upon each other for help whenever they needed, take care of other's need, provide space to each other, allow each other to express their ideas or opinions, set clear boundaries (Procentese et al., 2019).

Family environment with poor communication or communication gap, high level of conflicts, and high affective and behavioral control leads to poor family environment (Lewondowski et al., 2010).

Social media means the websites and online tools that promote communication between users and providing the opportunities to individuals to share information, and their opinions and interest. People use social media to interact with others, to express their opinions and interests and for many other reasons like entertainment, communication, and searching for information (Swar & Hameed, 2017). Emerging adults are more likely to use social media sites (Bjornsen, 2018).

#### Theoretical Framework *Hertlein's Multitheoretical Model*

According to Hertlein's multitheoretical model, the ecological effects that are related to features of social media, the changes that occurs in family structure due to use of social media and the changes that occur in family processes due to use of social media are interconnected and interdependent (Procentese et al., 2019). Ecological effects are accessibility, affordability, acceptability, accommodation, anonymity, ambiguity etc. Is someone have access to social media or not, it is affordable for them or not, content on social media is acceptable for them or not, they fake their identity on social media or show their real identity, or one can easily express his/her opinions on social media or in face-to-face interaction influence the structure and in the process of relationships (Hertlein, 2012).

Changes in structure of family refers how family members are ordered to fulfill their needs. Changes that use of social media cause in structure of family include redefinition of rules (like stop the use social media when all family members are sitting together and how much time should be spent on social media), reassignment of roles (household duties) and redefinition of boundaries (like which picture is to be shared on social media or which is to be kept private). Changes that use of social media cause in family processes include redefinition of intimacy (selfdisclosure increases while communicating online), new ways of communication and new rituals (Hertlein, 2012). Thus, the redefinition of new ways of communication and to the consequences they can cause in the functionality of the family, influence the perception of parents about their influence on relationships and communications with their emerging adults and vice versa (Procentese et al., 2019).

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The three components of the model are interlinked. First, different aspects of technology affect both the structure and process of family relationships. Second, alterations in the structure of family relationships cause changes in the processes of family relationships and vice versa. Anonymity (an ecological factor) in computer-mediated communication, for example, can reinforce social group's boundaries. In another example, rules regarding the use of cell phone or social media may result in changes to the way that emerging adults interact with their friends and family (structure to process changes). A parent may assume that, by giving access to social media (one of the ecological factors), their children will openly discuss their plans. As cell phones increase accessibility and, in this era, people are more using WhatsApp rather than calls or text messaging, parents become anxious if their children do not communicate when they are late and not able to reach home timely. Due to this parent frequently send messages to ensure the safety of their children (ecological to process changes). Due to repeated messages of parents, children might feel, and they rudely behave with their parents. Once the parent knows the child is not respecting the rules, his or her response to the child may change (from fear to anger), and maybe they establish new rules and regulations (process to structure) (Weisskirch, 2011).

The period between adolescence and adulthood is emerging adulthood. Emerging adults want to explore thing and develop their identity (Bjornsen, 2018). Family is important factor and plays important role in the development of children Brown, 2022). Family environment is the interaction between family members to fulfill their needs, take decisions with mutual understanding, assign roles, and communicate their issues with each other (Wallace, 2017). Social networking usage includes the use of online tools to communicate with family, friends or share their opinions and interests (Swar & Hameed, 2017). How family members interact influence the usage of social media in emerging adults.

#### Rationale

This research explores the relationship between family environment and social networking usage. The advancement of technology and launch of new social media applications has drawn the

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attention of adults and adolescents. Various new features and updates make everyone compelled to get attracted more to social media. Most of the adults and adolescents like are busy exploring new things on social media. I used social media frequently and switch applications to get myself engaged in it. My family sometimes complained about my excessive attention to online platforms rather than spending some time with family. Even sitting in a family gathering, I have an urge to use social media. Social media has become an important part of our life. It is the main interacting and communication tool all over the world. Its usage affect interaction within the family (Nayambura, 2020). More social networking usage affects the family environment in various ways. Sometimes people like to spend more time on online social platforms. This research will explore this phenomenon indigenously. It will be a valuable addition to the existing literature. This research will fill the present gaps by adding something new to literature. **Hypothetical Model** 

#### **Objectives of the research**

To investigate the relationship between family environment and social networking usage in emerging adult.

To examine the predicting role of family environment on social networking usage in emerging adult controlling for covariates.

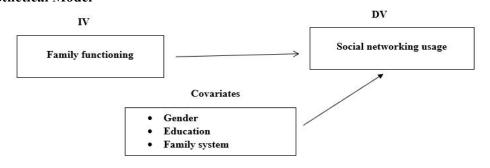
To study the predicting role of demographic variables in social networking usage in emerging adults.

#### Hypothesis

There would be a negative relationship between family environment and social networking usage in emerging adults.

Family environment would negatively predict social networking usage in emerging adults.

Demographics would predict social networking usage in emerging adults.



#### Method

Cross-sectional correlational research design was used in order to explore the relationship between family environment and social networking usage in emerging adults.

#### Sample and Sampling Strategy

For drawing appropriate sample size, G-power formula was used. N= 213 emerging adults were taken for data collection. The sample was recruited by non-probability convenient sampling, responses were collected via online and in person modality of data collection from emerging male and female adults with the age range of 18-25 years (M= 20.62 & SD=1.460) to assess the relationship between family environment and social networking usage in emerging adults. The sample was drawn on the basis of the following specified inclusion and exclusion criteria.

#### Inclusion/ exclusion Criteria

Data was collected from males and females having age between 18 to 25 years.

Those individuals were taken who use social media.

Only University students were taken.

Young adults with any type of diagnosed psychiatric disorder like depression, schizophrenia etc. were not included

Young adults with any chronic physiological illness, including hypertension etc. were also not included

#### **Assessment Measures**

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The assessment measures used in this research are as follows

#### **Consent Form**

Sociodemographic Information Sheet Family Environment Scale (Bhatia & Chada, 1993) Social Networking Usage Questionnaire (Gupta & Bashir, 2018)

#### **Consent Form**

Consent forms, sometimes called release forms, are legal documents that serve as written permission to send or receive information among participating parties. They often inform them of associated use risks and release the provider from associated claims.

#### Sociodemographic Information Sheet

An information sheet was used to collect the basic and essential information regarding participant's socio-demographics comprising their age, number of siblings, birth order, family income, gender, education, and family system.

# Family Environment Scale (Bhatia & Chada, 1993)

It consists of 69 items. This questionnaire uses a 5-point scale i.e., strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree. These items were categorized into three categories. There are three dimensions i.e., Relationship Dimensions. Personal Growth Dimensions, and System Maintenance Dimensions. There are subscales for each dimension. Relationship Dimension include four subscales i.e., Cohesion, Expressiveness, Conflict, and Acceptance and Caring. The subscales in "Personal Growth Dimensions" are Active Recreational Orientation and Independence. System Maintenance Dimensions include 2 subscales i.e., control and Organization. However, the complete scale's reliability coefficient was calculated using the Spearman –Brown Prophecy model and the Reliability. The Family environment scale coefficient is .95.

# Social Networking Usage Questionnaire (Gupta & Bashir, 2018)

Social networking usage questionnaire is used to measure social networking usage. This questionnaire has 19 items. This questionnaire used a 5-point scale with Always =1, often=2, sometimes=3, rarely =4, never = 5. The purpose of this questionnaire is to check daily usage of social networking sites by participants. Cronbach's alpha reliability of this questionnaire is .83.

#### Procedure

Firstly, informed consent was taken from participants. Data was collected from adults online and physically. The permission from Institute of Applied Psychology, Punjab University was taken for the purpose of conducting research. Permission from authors of the scales was taken. The participants were initially provided full assurance regarding the confidentiality of the data shared. The nature of the research and the aims were clarified. Then, the participants were provided personal information sheet, perceived proposal rejection scale, rejection sensitivity scale, and psychological well-being scale. It was ensured that all the participants were comfortable and willing to participate. The measures were administered individually. All the queries of the participants related to the research were fully entertained. The average estimated time to fill the sheet was 15 minutes. The findings were reported to the best of accuracy and precision.

#### **Ethical considerations**

In order to plan this study, some ethical deliberation was conserved in mind

Permission was sought from the concerned authorities.

Written consent was sought from the participants and the participants were briefed about the goal of the study.

On the questionnaire, the purpose of the research was clear for participants.

The participants had the right to leave the study at any moment if they felt uncomfortable. Information/data collected from the participants was kept confidential.

Participants were ensured that responses will be used only for the academic purpose.

Findings were reported to the best of accuracy and precision. Correct representation of the results was ensured.

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#### Results

The findings of the current investigation are presented to explore the relationship between family environment and social networking usage in emerging adults. The data analytic strategy began with reliability analysis using Cronbach's alphas for scales. In the second step, Pearson product moment correlation was used to assess the relationships between family environment and social networking usage in emerging adults. Multiple hierarchical regression analysis was done to establish the predicting role of family environment on social networking usage controlling for covariates in emerging adults.

#### Table 1

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Family	v environment an	d social	networking	usage in	emerging	adults	(N = 213)	)
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Variables	М	SD	Range	А	
Cohesion	34.07	6.37	24 - 68	.74	
Expressiveness	28.05	3.35	15 - 28	.72	
Conflict	50.01	4.76	39 - 63	.73	
Acceptance and Caring	33.65	4.31	22 - 44	.85	
Social networking usage	50.60	10.48	20 - 72	.79	

*Note. M*=*Mean; SD*=*Standard Deviation; value;*  $\alpha$  = *Cronbach alpha.* 

Table 1 shows Cronbach's alpha reliability,

number of items, mean, standard

deviation and minimum and maximum ranges for family environment and social networking usage in emerging adults. The Cronbach's alpha reliability of Cohesion scale is .74 indicating that scale is highly reliable. Expressiveness scale tuned out to be highly reliable .72 that is above the acceptable range of .70. The alpha reliability of Conflict scale is .73 that is acceptable. The alpha reliability of acceptance and caring tuned out to be highly reliable .85 that is above the acceptable range of .70 that is also acceptable reliability. The Cronbach's alpha reliability of social networking usage scale is .79 indicating that scale is highly reliable. Coefficient alpha of .70 is acceptable for new scales (DeVellis, 2003).

#### Table 2

Pearson correlation for family environment and social networking usage in emerging adults (N=213)

				0 0	0	0	( )	
Variable	Μ	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.Education	1	.43		06	07	12	.08	14*
2.Cohesion	34.07	6.37			04	.08	.41**	.12
3.Expressiveness	28.05	3.35				01	.05	.01
4.Conflict	50.01	4.76					16*	23**
5. Acceptance and Caring	33.65	4.31						.25**
6. Social networking usage	50.60	10.48						

*Note.* \*p < .05; \*\*p < .01; M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviatio

Results indicated that gender was nonsignificantly related to social networking usage. Education was a significantly negatively related to social networking usage.

Results also indicate that cohesion was nonsignificantly related to social networking usage. Expressiveness was also non-significantly related to social networking usage. Conflict was significantly negatively related to social networking usage. Acceptance and caring were significantly positively related to social networking usage.

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#### Table 3

Multiple hierarchical Analysis of family environment and social networking usage in emerging adults (N = 213)

Variable	В	95% C.I for B		SE B	β	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$
		LL	UL				
Step 1						.12	.12**
(Constant)	64.62***	41.77	87.47	11.59			
Education	-1.83	-5.53	1.87	1.88	07		
Step 2						.24	.12***
(Constant)	88.26***	56.70	119.82	16.00			
Education	-3.52*	-7.09	.05	1.81	14*		
Cohesion	.09	15	.33	.12	.06		
Expressiveness	34	76	.09	.22	11		
Conflict	64***	93	35	.15	29***		
Acceptance and caring	.37*	.01	.73	.18	.15*		

#### *Note:* $\beta$ = *beta*

Table 3 showing the predicting relationship of family environment on social networking usage in emerging adults. Assumption was fulfilled. The tolerance value fall within the acceptable range that is greater than .2 indicating no multicollinearity and there was independence of observation (Durbin-Watson = 1.17). Step 1 indicated the predicting role of control variable on social networking usage overall model was significant with 12% of explained variance with F(8, 204) = 3.44, p < .01 results indicated that education was non-significant predictor of social networking usage. Step 2 indicated the predicting role of independent variables controlling for on social networking usage overall model was significant with 24% of explained variance with F (12, 200) = 5.26, p < .00. Results indicate that cohesion and expressiveness were non-significant predictors of social networking usage while conflict is negative, and acceptance and caring was significantly positive predictor of social networking usage controlling for covariates.

#### Discussion

This study aimed to explore the association between family environment and social networking usage in emerging adults. Family environment plays important role in the social development of individual (Brown, 2022). Emerging adults are those individuals who are in between their adolescence and adulthood (Wallace, 2017). Emerging adults are the ones who try to explore different things and in this Modern Era, use of social media is at its peak. As when children near to enter their adulthood, they are provided with their own cell phones due to which in this age they want to explore every new thing including social media. Family environment either it is healthy or poor influences the social networking usage in emerging adults.

Correlation was between run family environment (cohesion, expressiveness, conflict, care and acceptance) and social networking usage to check the relationship between these two. The results of our research indicated that there was non-significant relationship between family cohesion and social networking usage. It means that family cohesion does not affect social networking usage. The results of our hypothesis are inconsistent with past literature. The result of a research highlighted that there is a negative significant relationship between family cohesion and social networking usage in youth (Sultana, 2017). Results are not in synchrony with hypothesis.

The results of our research indicated that family expressiveness and social networking usage were non-significantly related to each other. It means that family expressiveness does not affect social networking usage. The results of our research are inconsistent with previous research. Past research indicated that there is significant and negative relationship between family expressiveness and social networking site usage in adolescents (Sela et al., 2019). So, the hypothesis of our research is rejected. The inconsistent findings can be due to more social networking usage by family members, and they express their emotions at various social media platforms and even get connected with other family members through social media. And our sample is also indigenous so the differences can be due to the sample difference from previous research.

Result indicated that family conflict was significantly negatively related to social networking usage. Hypothesis was accepted. It means if there is more conflict between family and emerging adults, it decreases the social networking usage of emerging adults. As emerging adulthood is the time period when individuals are newly provided with cell phones, and they want to use social media as this is the era of internet. So, when conflict arises between family members and emerging adults, family members put restrictions on their usage of social media because for them this is the punishment that bothers emerging adults. This finding is in synchrony with previous study which also showed that when family conflicts increase, the first thing parents can do with their children is to put restriction on their cell phone or social networking usage (Nair, 2019).

Result indicated that family acceptance and caring was significantly positively related to social networking usage. Hypothesis was accepted. It means when there is more acceptance and care between family members, when emerging adults are unconditionally accepted by family members, their social networking usage increase. This is because acceptance is about recognizing and meeting the child's needs and rights and allowing children to have opportunity to do things on their own and emerging adulthood is the time period when individuals want to do new things without the

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pressure of parents, and it develops the feeling of autonomy in individuals. So, when family accept their children, they allow them to do things of their own interest that's why social networking usage of emerging adults increases. This is inconsistent with previous study which showed that when there is healthy family environment, the social networking usage of emerging adults decreases (Yayman & Biljin, 2020).

Regression was run to investigate the predictors of social networking usage. Family Cohesion is found as non-significant predictor of social networking usage. It means that family cohesion does not affect social networking usage. The results of our hypothesis are inconsistent with past literature. The result of a research highlighted that there is a negative significant relationship between family cohesion and social networking usage in youth (Sultana, 2017). The hypothesis of our research is rejected. The reason of these inconsistent findings can be due to sample differences as this research is conducted by collecting data from indigenous people. So, the findings can be different. As it is an age of technology and after the pandemic most of the people have started to use social media more frequently, many people shifted their business and studies to online mode. Many people use social media to earn money. So, this can be reason that it is not affected by family environment. Expressiveness is found as nonsignificant predictor of social networking usage. The reason for these results to deviate from past literature can be due to reasons that are mentioned above. Correlation is not significant between these variables, so the regression coefficient is also non-significant.

Result indicated that family conflict was predictor significant negative of social networking usage. Hypothesis was accepted. As emerging adulthood is the time period when individuals are newly provided with cell phones, and they want to use social media as this is the era of internet. So, when conflict arises between family members and emerging adults, family members put restrictions on their usage of social media because for them this is the punishment that bothers emerging adults. This finding is in synchrony with previous study (Nair, 2019).

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caring was significant positive predictor social networking usage. Hypothesis was accepted. This is because acceptance is about recognizing and meeting the child's needs and rights and allowing children to have opportunity to do things on their own and emerging adulthood is the time period when individuals want to do new things without the pressure of parents, and it develops the feeling of autonomy in individuals. So, when family accept their children, they allow them to do things of their own interest that's why social networking usage of emerging adults increases. This is inconsistent with previous study (Yayman & Biljin, 2020).

Result indicated that age was negatively correlated or negative predictor of social networking usage. It means with the increase of age, usage of social media decreases. This is because with the passage of time children become mature due to their experiences and get to know about the advantages and disadvantages of social media and have awareness about what is good for them or what is bad so they may realize that using social media does not benefit them, rather it is the wastage of time. This is consistent with previous study (Ospina, 2019).

that gender Result indicated was not significantly correlated with social networking usage and gender was also non-significant predictor of social networking usage. It means whether a male or female, there is no difference in their social networking usage. This is because when individuals are in emerging adulthood, whether they are males or females, both of them want to explore the new world and in collectivistic culture, this is the age when they get freedom so there is no gender difference. Previous study is consistent with this finding which also showed that there was no difference of social networking usage of both genders. Difference is in how they are using social media not in the level of usage (Vermeren, 2015).

Number of siblings is found as significantly positively correlated with social networking usage or significant positive predictor of social networking usage according to our results of this research. It means that having siblings affect differently on social networking usage of an individual. The results are also consistent with previous literature. In research conducted on children having siblings indicated that children

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with siblings have more positive media usage habits. So, number of siblings is a predictor of media usage (Devies & Gentile, 2012).

The results of the research indicated that birth order is significantly and positively related to social networking usage. It means that people with different birth orders vary in different media usage. The results of our research are consistent with past literature. One research indicated that children having middle birth order have significant relationship with different media usage. Children having youngest birth order have significant relationship with computer usage (Anand & Krosnick, 2005). So, the results of our hypothesis are confirmed. Moreover, birth order was found as nonsignificant predictor of social networking usage. It means that birth order does not impact social networking usage. The results of our research are inconsistent with past research which indicated that children having middle birth order have significant relationship with different media usage (Anand & Krosnick, 2005).

Result indicated that education was negatively correlated with social networking usage and a significant negative predictor of social networking usage. It means that people with various levels of education differ in using social media. With the increase of level of education, individuals reduce their social networking usage due to maturation and they want to focus on productive things. These findings are also consistent with past literature. In one research on social networking usage in two family generations, higher education found as a significant negative predictor of social networking usage in young generation (Tammisalo et al., 2022).

The results of the research indicated that family income is non-significantly related to social networking usage. It means that people belonging to various socioeconomic backgrounds do not differ in usage of social media. The results of our research are consistent with past research. One research on investigating the usage of different media by children is found to have non-significant relationship between family income and various media usage (Anand & Krosnick, 2005). So, the results of our hypothesis are confirmed. Moreover, family income is found as significant and negative

predictor of social networking usage. It means that having low family income is associated with high social networking usage. The results of our research are consistent with previous literature. In one research on role of family income in predicting social networking usage it is seen that children with low family income use more social media (You et al., 2021).

Findings indicated that family system was not significantly correlated with social networking usage and found as non-significant predictor of social networking usage. It means that family system does not affect social networking usage. The results of our research findings are inconsistent with previous literature. Past research indicates that people living in single families spend more time on social media as compared to people living in joint families (Hussain et al., 2020). So, our results are inconsistent with our hypothesis. The reason can be increased use of social networking usage after the coronavirus pandemic as many people shifted their business and studies to online mode. Many people use social media to earn money. So, the difference in results can be attributed to these factors.

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#### Conclusion

The results of the research confirmed that conflicts within the family are significantly negatively related to the use of social networks.

They also showed that caring and acceptance of the family are significantly related to the use of social networks.

Among demographic variables, age, number of siblings, birth order, and education are significantly related to social media use. Number of siblings and birth order are strongly related to social network use.

It is also noted that among demographic variables, age, number of siblings, family income, and education were found to be significant predictors of social network use among emerging adults.

Family income was found to be the strongest predictor of social media use among aspiring adults.

Conflict, acceptance, and supportive behaviors were found to be significant predictors of social media use among aspiring adults.

#### Limitations

Data were only gathered from emerging adults between the ages of 18 and 25.

Only one nation, Pakistan, was used to recruit the sample, which poses a danger to external validity by reducing the generalizability of our study's findings.

Confounding variables were not controlled. This can be a threat to internal validity.

Environment and some situation specific facets were not controlled in this research.

#### Suggestions

A large sample size could have helped to find better association between variables and better results.

This study can be repeated in the future by longitudinally examining these variables.

If confounding variables were controlled the results could have been much better.

Except emerging adults, other age groups can also be included in this research in future.

#### Implications

Despite the limitations within the research, the results of the research are encouraging as the research indicate a relationship between two

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family environment subscales i.e., conflict, acceptance and care with social networking usage. The results of our research are applicable in daily life.

By reducing the conflict within family, family can help the person reduce the usage of social media and carefully balancing its usage.

By enhancing care and acceptance within family, one can reduce social networking usage.

By increasing educational level or knowledge about effective usage of social media can help to balance its usage.

By introducing awareness programs for adolescents and adults on how to minimize social networking usage and using it in

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productive and balanced way along with balancing family relationships can be beneficial. This research is a valuable addition to literature as it is based on Pakistani sample and not much research exists with it in Pakistan.

This research can provide base for further research.

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