IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT
The nexus of social media use and academic performance has been extensively researched in higher education worldwide. This study aims to investigate the impact of social media on students' academic performance in higher education in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). The primary objective was to assess how social media usage affects students' academic performance. Using a quantitative research approach within the positivist tradition, we conducted a cross-sectional study. Data was collected through a questionnaire administered to a sample of 309 students by using a convenient sampling technique. The results revealed a range of findings, highlighting the significant negative consequences of excessive social media use on academic performance. The linear regression analysis indicated that social media usage adversely affected students' learning habits, CGPA, ability to express ideas, skills, language proficiency, study routines, assignments, academic interests, knowledge, research, and communication skills in higher education of AJK.
Keywords: Social Media, Academic Performance, Students, Higher Education, Entertainment

INTRODUCTION

Recently, social media has become an omnipresent force in the lives of students in higher education. Students have unprecedented access to global communication, information, and entertainment due to different platforms like Social Media Sites (SMS), including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube (Ansari & Khan, 2020; Lacka, Wong, Haddoud, & Education, 2021; Mishra, 2020). This usage of social media fosters many benefits to students. They explore the learning opportunities for their academic pursuits that vividly impact their academic performance. We aimed to examine the impact of social media on the academic performance of students in higher education of AJK. Like many developing countries, Pakistan faces challenges related to technological infrastructure and adoption of technology in the public and private spheres (Malik et al., 2020; Shakoor, Fakhar, & Abbas, 2021). However, the usage of technology has significantly grown in higher education for the last two decades (Shafiq & Parveen, 2023). Due to excessive use of technology, Ramzan, Bibi, and Khunsa (2023) argued that students are increasingly relying on social media tools for academic purposes which have significant implications on academic performance. They use social media for academic activities, such as research, thesis writing, assignments, and organizing study plans. These research resources are helpful for their daily routine academic activities. Similarly, they use social media for non-academic ends of fun and

entertainment. Several studies conducted on the impact of social media and academic performance suggest some negatives and positives (Amjad, Aslam, & Tabassum, 2024; Mukhtar et al., 2023). As some studies suggest, excessive use of social media negatively affects students' concentration, time management, and overall academic productivity (Zhang et al., 2024). However, other studies argue that it is a better tool for learning and academic growth (Kokab, Arif, & Qaisar, 2023).

Study Context: A similar trend is observed in higher education of AJK. Students in higher education use social media extensively for both academic and non-academic purposes (Abdullah & Kauser, 2023). However, due to lack of research on the phenomenon, it is hypothesized that excessive time spent on social media may negatively affect students' academic performance. This article seeks to examine the complex relationship between social media usage and academic performance in higher education, exploring both the positive and negative consequences for their academic performance. Through a comprehensive analysis, we aimed to shed light on how social media shapes academic performance among students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research has shown that university students are increasingly using social media worldwide (Sahoo., 2024; Littlejohn, 2024; Khaliq, 2019). Students spend a significant amount of time on social media sites (SMSs) for both academic and non-academic purposes. According to Hussain (2014), social media provides students with a platform to exchange information by connecting with various individuals and groups. Similarly, Ariefdjohan et al. (2024) noted that students at all levels of education—whether in schools, colleges, or universities—rely on SMSs. University students dedicate considerable time to social media platforms while searching for research papers, reading articles, and gaining knowledge (Khatri, 2021; Khaliq, 2012). These platforms, including Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, Snapchat, TikTok, and Twitter, serve as tools for learning and networking, with students spending hours engaging with them (Sin & Kim, 2013; Islam et al., 2021; Khaliq, 2019; Shahzad et al., 2020). However, it is evident that a large portion of time spent on these platforms is devoted to non-academic activities. Hofer (2007) highlights that students often allocate more time to entertainment and socializing than to academic pursuits. Recent estimates indicate the massive scale of social media engagement, with Facebook attracting over 750 million daily users (Sin & Kim, 2013; Khaliq, 2024; Abdullah & Shoaib, 2021), YouTube receiving over 3 billion views each day (Islam et al., 2021; Khaliq, 2024), and Twitter generating over 177 million tweets daily (Sin & Kim, 2013). This data underscores the significant role of social media in students' daily lives, often beyond academic goals.

Technology has revolutionized the way people interact and simplified tasks, even for those using affordable mobile phones (Baruah, 2012; Abdullah, Usmani, & Shoaib, 2023). A survey estimated that social media users in Pakistan have surpassed 25 million, with a significant portion of this number consisting of youth, particularly students (Nisar & Shafiq, 2019; Ullah, Abdullah, Ahmad, & Ali, 2017). According to social media audience insights, approximately 15–20 million male users and around 5–6 million female users are active in Pakistan (Anjum, Ali, Ahmed, & Azam, 2024). Notably, two-thirds of Pakistani social media users are under the age of 25, highlighting the widespread popularity of these platforms among the youth (Zafarani & Liu, 2013; Abdullah et al., 2015). The availability of affordable internet and the shift to online education during the COVID-19 pandemic have further fueled the rise in social media usage, especially at the school, college, and university levels (Talan, Doğan, & Kalinkara, 2024). In Pakistan, service providers have played a key role in facilitating easy internet access by offering special deals and promotions aimed at increasing connectivity (Anjum et al., 2024; Shahzad et al., 2015). For example, mobile network companies in Pakistan have recently introduced subscription-free internet bundles that allow subscribers to access platforms such as Twitter, WhatsApp, and Facebook. These offers have particularly appealed to students, leading to a significant increase in internet usage (Talan et al., 2024; Abdullah & Ullah, 2022). Students, in general, are among the most frequent users of technology, with a particular affinity for social networking sites (Ruleman, 2012; Abdullah & Ullah, 2016). Research shows that students spend up to 10 hours a day using various technological devices (Chou & Hsiao, 2000; Heiberger & Harper, 2008). Islam et al. (2024) further observed that

social networking has become an integral part of daily life for both the general population and students, influencing their routines and habits.

Academic performance reflects how well a student benefits from an academic program, typically evaluated through examinations at the end of a semester, session, or program completion (Flad, 2010; Abdullah et al., 2015). It emphasizes the importance of maintaining the right mindset to enhance academic achievement (Littlejohn et al., 2024; Abdullah & Nisar, 2024). Understanding how students engage with their studies and manage tasks assigned by teachers is crucial. In today's educational landscape, social media plays a significant role, offering students opportunities to enhance their learning and access the latest information through various platforms (Gikas & Grant, 2013). Scholars have pointed out that the use of social media can have both positive and negative effects on students' learning outcomes (Ariefdjohan et al., 2024). As the use of social media (SMS) continues to grow among students, concerns arise about its impact on their academic performance. In the education system, students are typically evaluated based on their examination results or CGPA, which serves as a measure of academic success (Haertel, 2005). To achieve better academic outcomes, many students turn to social media for both academic and non-academic purposes (Ali, & Dmour, 2021). Students frequently use social media for assignments, exams, and other educational tasks (Sorensen, 2000). However, not all students have access to social media, especially in areas where internet connectivity and technology is limited (Shakoor, Fakhar, & Abbas, 2021). In Pakistan, however, affordable and widespread access to both the internet and technology allows students in universities to make extensive use of social media for academic purposes (Shafiq, & Parveen, 2023; Motlik, 2008). Given this context, we conducted the present study in one of the universities of AJK.

Objectives of the Study

This study was guided by the following research objective.

To examine the impacts of usage of social media on students' academic performance in AJK.

Conceptualization

The following hypothesis was formulated and tested.

Social media is predictor of learning habits, CGPA, expression of ideas, skills, language, language, language, language, language, language, studies, assignment, academic interests, and knowledge, research and communication skills among students.

Dependent Variable

Use of social media

Independent Variables

Academic performance consisted of the following variables as predictors.

Learning habits, CGPA, expression of ideas, skills, language, studies, assignment, academic interests, and knowledge, research and communication skills.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study, we used quantitative research design in the positivistic tradition to examine the impact of social media on the academic performance of students. To measure this, we conducted a cross-sectional study with students in one of the universities of AJK. The purpose of using this research method was to measure the outcomes and exposures of the study participants regarding the topic at hand. We conducted this study with students in higher education at AJK. There are five public sector universities of AJK including a women's university. Due to the nature of the study and time constraints, it was impossible to focus on all the universities or higher education institutions (HEIs) of AJK. Thus, we selected one of the universities that is easily accessible for data collection. This university comprises six faculties, however, we selected the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities (FSS&H) for this research. It comprised 11 departments where 1928 students were enrolled in BS degree programs. We excluded 3 departments located other than the main campus. Thus, a total of 1350 students were included in the study from 8 departments located at the city campus. We determined a sample size of 309 using the Taro Yamane formula. We collected data by employing a non-probability convenient sampling technique. Although the population was known for each Department, however, we opted for non-probability due to the homogenous characteristics of the population. We collected data by using a questionnaire designed on a mixed scale containing 35 items. After pre-testing, the reliability of the questionnaire was checked and the value of Cronbach Alpha ranged from 0.74 to 0.86 and overall, 0.85. The data was collected between

May to July 2022 from students. The data collected was checked and entered on software, i.e. Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS). We run univariate and bivariate analyses on data. In univariate, the frequency distribution of demographic variables was determined, tabulated, and interpreted. In bivariate analysis, we ran a linear regression model on the data, and the hypothesis was tested. The results of hypothesis testing were tabulated and interpreted with the help of a literature review.

KEY FINDINGS
Results and discussions comprise two sections. In the first section, results of univariate analysis (frequency distribution) were tabulated and interpreted. In the second section, results of hypothesis testing were presented and discussed with the help of literature.

Demographics
The demographic information of respondents is provided in table 1 while table 2 shows the nature of devices and sources along with connectivity.

Table 1

Frequency Distribution of Residence, Age, Education and Department.

Referents	Residence		
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Rural	149	48.2	48.2
Urban	160	51.8	51.8
Total	309	100.0	100.0
	Gender		
Girls	216	70.0	70.0
Boys	93	30.0	30.0
Total	309	100.0	100.0
	Age		
18-24	298	96.4	96.4
25-31	10	3.2	3.2
32 and above	1	0.3	0.3
Total	309	100.0	100.0
	Education		
BS	309	100.0	100.0
Total	309	100.0	100.0
	Department		
Sociology	31	10.0	10.0
Education	28	9.1	9.1
English	43	13.9	13.9
Islamic Studies	60	19.4	19.4
Mass Communication	47	15.2	15.2
Economics	51	16.5	16.5
IR	49	15.9	15.9
Total	309	100.0	100.0

Table 1 shows the demographic information of students on residence, age, gender, education, and Department. According to data, 96 percent of students are found in the age bracket 18-24 years, 3 percent in 25-31, and 3 percent in more than 32 years. The education of students is described as 100 percent are enrolled in BS program in which 70 percent are girls and 30 percent boys. Data was collected from different Departments of Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, i.e. 10 percent students from Department of Sociology, 9.1 percent from Department of Education, 13.9 percent from Department of English, 19.4 percent from Department of Islamic Studies, 15.2 percent from Department of Mass Communication, while 16.5 percent from Economics and 15.9 percent

from Department of International Relations (IR). The residence of students is found to be 48.2 percent belongs to rural areas and 51.8 percent belongs to urban areas.

Table 2

Frequency Distribution of Device Used, Internet Access, Social Networking Site.

Referents	Frequency	Devices Percent	Valid Percent
Computer	55	17.8	17.8
Android Phone	183	59.2	59.2
Tablet/PC	4	1.3	1.3
1 & 2	1	0.3	0.3
iPhone	59	19.1	19.1
1 & 3	5	1.6	1.6
All of the above	2	0.6	0.6
Total	309	100.0	100.0
		Internet Access	
Yes	285	92.2	92.2
No	24	7.8	7.8
Total	309	100.0	100.0
		Social Media Sites	
Yes	257	83.2	83.2
No	52	16.8	16.8
Total	309	100.0	100.0

Table 2 manifests the information of devices and connectivity of students through which they access social media sites. Data revealed that students use social media by means of different devices. Majority of students, 59.2 percent use Android Phones, 19.1 percent use iPhone, 22.1 percent use Computer, Tablets/PC or use both computer and android phones while 8 percent use all these devices when using social media. The data illustrates that majority of students, 92.2 percent, have access to the internet while only 7.8 percent have partial or no access to the internet. A large proportion of students, 83.2 percent, have knowledge and awareness about social media sites (SMS) while only 16.8 percent either have no access or partial access to the SMS.

Hypothesis Testing

The following hypothesis was tested, and results are interpreted for the readers.

Social media is predictor of learning habits, CGPA, expression of ideas, skills, language, studies, assignment, academic interests, and knowledge, research and communication skills.

Table 3

Predictors of Educational Performance of Students in Higher Education.

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.791	.168	.234	4.723	.000
	Learning Habits	.092	.046	.113	2.007	.046
	CGPA Score	-.010	.048	-.012	-.211	.833
	Express Ideas	-.012	.043	-.015	-.280	.780
	Writing, Speaking Skills	-.005	.046	-.006	-.112	.911
	Use of Language	-.039	.033	-.062	-1.162	.246
	Affect Study	.408	.055	.408	7.474	.000
	Online Learning	.049	.054	.051	.913	.362
	Assignments	-.015	.055	-.017	-.280	.780
	Academic Interests	-.036	.021	-.093	-1.714	.088
	Waste of Time	-.037	.045	-.045	-.810	.419
	Improve Knowledge	-.039	.050	-.047	-.793	.428
	Research	-.024	.055	-.025	-.447	.655
	Communication Skills	.015	.059	.014	.245	.807

a. Dependent Variable: Use of social media

The above table shows that the use of social media has significantly affected the learning habits among students. Similar findings are given by Abdullah and Kauser (2022). They maintained that excessive use of social media badly affected the learning of students. They further stated that students find some other interests in SMSs rather to search for academic purposes. On the other hand, there is a significant effect on the CGPA score of the students. This shows that social media has helped students achieve higher CGPAs. It denotes that online training has been helpful for the students. Research also reveals that online education helped students to increase their CGPAs during the pandemics (Ali & Dmour, 2021; Balcı & Çalışkan, 2022). However, it is noted that students are unable to express their ideas and feelings while their skills are not enhanced despite using social media excessively. Demirbilek (2015) maintained that the skills of students using social media tools were not improved. Thus, SM has no positive effect on the language learning of the students. Similar findings are given by Hamid, Waycott, Kurnia, and Chang (2015). They argued that social media has not been effective for students to improve their language skills. Consequently, use of social media badly affected the learning of the students (Wickramanayake, 2022). Moreover, the use of social media has made online learning easier for the students. It is also highlighted that online education benefited the students as they got some exceptional treatment during the pandemics (Iivari, Sharma, & Ventä-Olkkonen, 2020). The results further revealed that use of social media has no significant effect on the students' assignments and academic interests. It is argued that use of social media has not been utilized affectively by students in preparing their assignments (Tess, 2013). By the same token, results indicate that use of social media is just wastage of time that does not improve their learning, research, and communication skills. Alexander (2014) substantiated that social media has not been utilized by students for research purposes and communications and, thus, it badly impacted their learning skills. Based on the results, it is argued that the use of social media by students has worsened their academic performance.
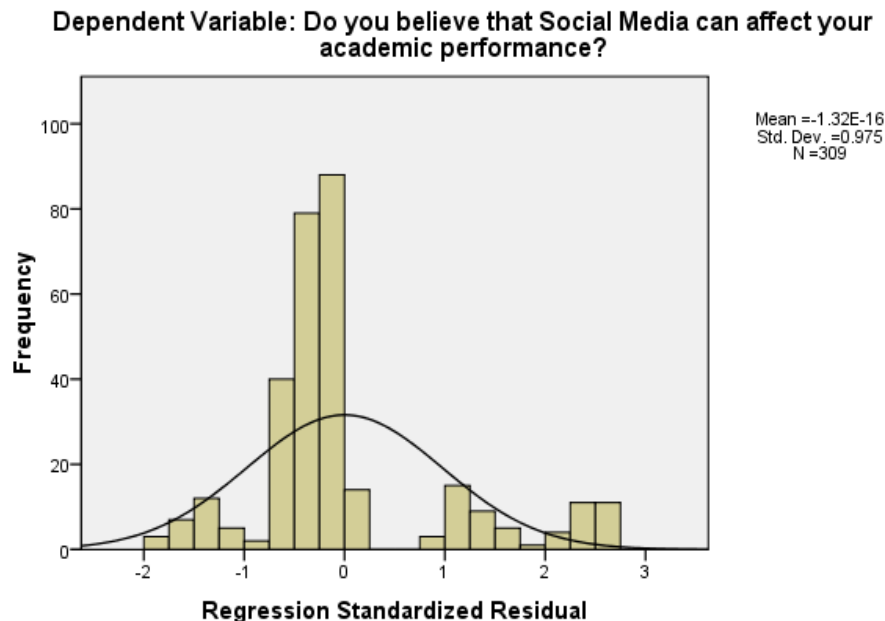
Figure 1: Social Media as Predictor of Academic Performance.

Conclusion

The use of social media has significantly affected the lives of people in general and students in particular the world over. It is argued that the use of social media significantly impacts students' academic performance in higher education. We found a mixed bag of findings that serious repercussions of excessive use of social media affect academic performance both negatively and positively. A wide range of benefits of social media sites are sharing information and ideas, improving skills, and using SMSs for academic activities. Despite the benefits, students misuse social media sites and spend most of their time hunting entertainment and gaming activities that negatively affect their academic performance. Results of the linear regression model show that the use of social media has negatively affected learning habits, CGPA, expression of ideas, skills, language, studies, assignments, academic interests, knowledge, research, and communication skills among students in higher education of AJK.

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