

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN STUDENTS' MENTAL HEALTH AND EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN

Dr.Sultan Mahmood^{*1}, Saira Bano², Dr. Zulfiqar Ali Anjum³

^{*1}Professor Government College of Management Sciences Abbottabad

²Lecturer, Department of Pakistan Studies, Hazara University Mansehra.

³Khushal Khan Khattak University karak Pakistan

¹wafa692@yahoo.com, ²sairabano@hu.edu.pk, ³zulfeqarali4@gmail.com

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Corresponding Author: *

Dr.Sultan Mahmood

Abstract

In Pakistan Social media's rapid growth has changed the way students communicate, learn and view the world around them because they utilise websites like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp. These platforms are not just part of students' everyday lives; they have become a major influence on education and mental health. Therefore, this study explores both the positive and negative impacts of social media on students' academic and psychological health, by examining the increasing use of social media by students and what effect it may have on students' learning behaviours, emotional health, and ultimately academic success. This study focus primarily on understanding how social media enables engagement in education, access to educational resources, participation in classroom activities, and the ability to collaborate with other students both inside and outside the classroom. It is also look at the negative effects associated with overuse or unregulated use of social media, including anxiety, depression, emotional burnout, distraction, and diminished academic focus. To do this, a mixed-method methodology employed, using a review of current literature, surveys of students, and an analysis of student digital behaviours in order to better understand how digital activity relates to mental health and academic performance. The study shows that social media can help in education through improving communication between students and their teachers, increasing the amount of peer-learning opportunities, and allowing students to have easy access to educational materials. While there are many positive aspects of how social media may affect education, this study shows that there are also some very real negative consequences of social media use as well. An individual's excessive screen time, the culture of comparing oneself against others, experience with cyberbullying, and issues regarding academics using social media all create high levels of stress, low self-esteem, and increased risks for low mental well-being. Therefore, one may conclude that whether a person has positive or negative effects from social media use is dependent on how they use it, how well they are able to control their own actions, and what type of content is being consumed. The findings of this study are important to various stakeholders, including students, educators, parents, and policymakers, because they demonstrate the importance of developing balance in digital habits, becoming aware of mental health issues

related to digital media consumption, and being responsible when using digital forms of media. The researchers recommend that students be taught digital literacy, parents practice controlled use of screens, and all individuals develop healthy user habits on (through) social media in order to optimize their educational use and minimize the psychological risks associated.

INTRODUCTION

Social media has significantly impacted students in Pakistan today as these platforms (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and others) have become part of their daily lives and no longer serve only as a source of entertainment; social media is now one of the primary means for connecting with peers, sharing information about other people and events, and working together on educational projects and assignments. As technology becomes more integrated into education around the globe, social media has become a major force for students' access to learning materials, engagement in school activities, and rapid dissemination of knowledge. (Abassi, 2014)

However, with all the positive aspects of social media usage, there are many issues related to the mental health of students in Pakistan, including an increased level of stress, anxiety, depression and decreased self-esteem associated with the use of social media too much or without proper moderation. Second-level and higher leveled students experience frequent exposures to an abundance of online material, which shapes their thoughts, feelings, and behaviours toward the way they learn and interact with other people. Due to the ease of using various types of digital devices and the ability to connect with others in different locations, many students take advantage of this connectivity to find academic support, create virtual study groups, and participate in collaborative learning opportunities. (Ahmed, 2013)

However, on the other hand, the pressure placed upon students to have a digital profile, compare themselves with others, be subjected to cyberbullying, and become distracted by more than just schoolwork has created numerous challenges that must not be ignored. In addition, because of the increased blurring of lines between schools and personal digital activity, it is critical to understand how social media impacts both academic success and the overall wellbeing of students. (Alajmi, 2016)

Researchers, educators, and psychologists agree that Social Media in Pakistan can be beneficial for

Learning and Learning Processes, but can also have detrimental effects on Mental Well-being if overused or improperly utilized. This area of Research has gotten much attention recently, however; there are still many questions regarding how Social Media usage by Students impacts Education, Academic Performance, and Emotional Health. This Research aims to fill these gaps in knowledge by investigating both the Academic Advantages and Psychological Threats that are associated with how Students use Social Media. (Alaslani, 2020)

For Educational Institutions, Parents, Policymakers, Mental Health Professionals, and others who wish to create Healthy, Balanced Digital Environments for Students, this Research is extremely important. By looking at the relationship between use of Social Media, Educational Engagement, and Psychological Well-Being, in Pakistan this Research adds to the ongoing Conversation about how to develop Positive Digital Usage Practices that foster Student Learning and Emotional Development. (Azizi, 2019)

Background

Digital technology has rapidly spread throughout the world during the last twenty years, changing how people communicate and access information and learn. One phenomenon from this digital technology is social media, which has greatly impacted the way students live in Pakistan and relate to each other. Students have connected to social media such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, YouTube, and TikTok to communicate with others, find entertainment, and learn. With young adults globally spending many hours per day interacting with digital content, it illustrates how much social media impacts both the academic and personal development of students. (Beyens, 2016)

Social media in Pakistan has created many new learning opportunities for education by allowing students to find academic resources, engage in online discussions, and collaborate and communicate with

their peers outside of the classroom. As social media becomes more integrated into the everyday experiences of students, educational institutions are utilizing social media to inform students about conferences, post online lectures, provide students with a space to form academic groups, and share resources. Therefore, the traditional educational model has changed to a more interactive, flexible, and accessible model due to the introduction of social media. (Boyd, 2007)

The extensive use of social media in Pakistan without any regulation is raising alarm bells for the mental health of many students. Research has shown how excessive time spent on screens, the tendency toward social comparison, online bullying, and exposure to unrealistic expectations can lead to psychological issues such as anxiety, stress, loneliness, and depression for many students. Students are constantly under pressure to create a persona online for acceptance, popularity, and support. When students feel the need to validate their worth based on likes, comments and number of followers it takes an emotional toll on their ability to concentrate and maintain motivation in the classroom, which ultimately affects their academic performance. (Cao, 2018)

The relationship between social media, education, and mental health is a highly complex and rapidly changing subject of study. Social media provides a plethora of educational opportunities but there are also psychological issues that directly contribute to the diminishing state of well-being and academic performance of students. Although there continues to be a significant increase in research on these areas, it is still unclear how to best understand the effects of social media on students from both the academic and a psychological perspective. This study attempt to provide a balanced perspective on both the positive and negative effects of social media on students' mental health and educational performance.

Problem Statement

The extensive use of social media in both the daily academic and personal lives of students is well established, but little is known. About how social media affects a student's mental health and the overall performance of that student in the classroom has also not been adequately researched. Furthermore,

although social media provides for increased communication, collaborative projects, and quick access to informational resources, there are growing concerns over the psychological implications created by the misuse of social media like the development of anxiety and depression, the impact of stress on self-esteem and loss of concentration towards academics. (Ceglarek, 2016)

This study has been created because there is a lack of clarity in understanding how students are increasingly becoming dependent on social media, and the impact their usage patterns have on their educational success and on their psychological well-being. Existing research tends to either focus on the benefits or focus specifically on the risks that arise from using social media. Very few studies have examined both the benefits and risks associated with using social media. As a result, this study has been created in order to better understand how social media can encourage students to engage more actively in education while at the same time identifying the harmful consequences of social media i.e., the impact of distractions, the culture of comparison, cyberbullying, and emotional burnout on student mental health and academic performance. (Cheung, 2011)

It is the goal of this research paper to provide a comprehensive view of how the positive and negative effects of social media can be applied to improve student mental health and educational achievement, thus allowing educators, policymakers, and parents to make healthier and more effective decisions regarding their use of social media.

Research Gap

The existing research on social media use by students is plentiful; however, the focus of almost all prior studies has been either educationally beneficial or potentially damaging to mental health due to overuse. The few studies that have looked at both aspects of social media simultaneously have not been able to provide a complete picture of social media's effect on students holistically. (Choi, 2016)

Additionally, very few studies take into account patterns of student use (e.g., amount of time spent using social media, the reason for using social media, the level of engagement with others on social media) or the student's exposure to comparison culture and cyberbullying, all of which may influence whether or

not social media provides educational benefit or psychological harm. A gap now exists in the existing literature regarding the relationship between usage-related behaviours, mental health status, and academic performance, due to the lack of integrated research between these three components. (Christensen, 2018)

Consequently, there is a need for integrated research that documents the dual impact of social media on both students' education and mental well-being and provides recommendations for promoting healthy digital use among educators, lawmakers, and parents.

Research Objectives

1. To investigate the positive impact of social media on educational engagement, collaborative learning, and access to educational resources among students.
2. To investigate the negative psychological effects on mental health that may occur as a result of excessive/unregulated use of social media (stress, anxiety, and/or low self-esteem).
3. To investigate how social media affects students' academic performance and emotional well-being.

Research Questions

1. How does social media contribute to students' engagement in academics, collaborative learning, and access to educational materials?
2. What are the negative mental health effects (anxiety, depression, stress, emotional exhaustion) associated with excessive or unhealthy use of social media by students?
3. How do social media habits influence students' overall academic success and emotional state?

Hypotheses

- H1: The use of social media positively influences educational engagement and provides improved access to educational materials for students.
- H2: The excessive or unregulated use of social media has been linked to several detrimental mental health outcomes including but not limited to stress, anxiety, and low self-esteem for students.
- H3: Students that regularly use social media have lower academic performance and lower

emotional states than students that use social media in a moderate or responsible manner.

Significance of the Study

This research is meaningful due to the increasing issue of social media being utilized by learners as an academic method/agenda and how it influences their academic progress, mental health, or wellness. Secondly, as social media becomes part of each student's daily routine/offline activity, it is vital to understand this area of influence in relation to building a supportive academic learning environment and developing a healthy psychological foundation that promotes the maximum growth potential. (Deimazar, 2015)

This research serve as a benefit to academic institutions by providing insights on how to successfully engage students through the effective use of social media, improve the quality of student collaboration, and increase the availability of educational materials to support student learning. Additionally, the results of this study allow educators/administrators to design effective digital strategies that are aligned with the appropriate use of social media to achieve success for both teacher and learner in the classroom setting. (Elhai, 2016)

The information supports Mental Health Professionals and Counselors, as the Study identifies Social Media Overuse as a source of Psychological Problems that Students experience, including Stress, Anxiety, and Low Self-Esteem. By recognizing these Issues that are created by Social Media Use, Mental Health Interventions, Awareness Programs, and Counseling Approaches can be developed specifically for Students by analyzing how they behave Very Digitally. (Erfanian, 2013)

For Parents and Guardians, it can create Insight into the Importance of Monitoring Students' Activity on Social Media and encouraging them to Develop Balanced Digital Behaviors. In addition, it Provides Families with Knowledge on Supporting Students to Develop Healthy Relationships with Technology and Manage Screen time responsibly. (Gan, 2018)

The Study also Provides Policymakers and Educational Planners with Evidence based Information to Use to Create Digital Literacy Policies, Mental Health Guidelines, and Safe Online Behavior in Schools. Additionally, the Study Addressed the

Current Gap in Academic Literature Regarding the Dual Impact of Digitally Related Issues on Students' Academic Performance and Mental Health. Thus, Future Research on Ways to Improve Students' Academic Experiences and Mental Health in a Growingly Technology Related World can be built upon the Study's Findings.

Literature Review

Due to the increasing availability of internet access throughout the globe, there has been a substantial increase in the extent of interactions that occur between computers, which has resulted in an increasing concentration of all the benefits that can be gained from all forms of information and communication technologies into the ways that the internet is used (Gan, 2018; Kong et al., 2021).

One of the most powerful internet applications is that of virtual social networks (VSNs), which represent new digital technologies that have received considerable interest from users of the internet in a relatively short amount of time (Kwon & Wen, 2010; Alajmi et al., 2016; Ng et al., 2023). The cyberspace created through the use of VSNs is an important example of the way in which globalization has changed the way we think about global communications (Ranjbar & Abbasi, 2021).

There are many VSNs that have been created, and examples of some of the more popular applications of VSN include Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Viber, Telegram, and many others (Lee et al., 2018). To illustrate how fast developing a global market for virtual social networks has become, a study conducted by Duggan et al. (2015) found that more than ninety percent of all adolescent users are engaged in the use of VSN on a daily basis.

The creation and use of VSN have resulted in an increasing volume and variety of human communication between different areas of the world, leading to qualitative changes in how individuals interact with each other via the internet (Hayes et al., 2016; Sharif & Khanekharab, 2017). In Iran, the use of social networks is an integral part of the everyday life of many young people and affects how learners interact with their school and education systems (Ng et al., 2023). VSNs (Virtual Social Networks) can have negative effects on both the learner with regard to their academic experience and through disruption of

their academic achievements (Ali & Qazi, 2023). This research is significant in Iran because of the need to establish a channel of communication between teachers and their students while conducting research on issues experienced in virtual environments. The results of this study can aid in informing the way that teachers create, implement, and manage policies to mitigate threats to cyberspace.

In addition, students' social well-being should be evaluated concerning their relationship with VSNs due to their significant influence on students' academic success. The purpose of this study is to assess how the current use of Telegram is related to the mental well-being of students. Moreover, mental well-being is a key component of the achievement of academic goals in the school (Rostami et al., 2023; Tyagi and Meena, 2023).

A vast amount of research has demonstrated that the mental well-being of students has a direct correlation to their overall academic performance and success, particularly when students are experiencing mental health issues, as their academic performance typically declines (Wood and Scott, 2016; Gao et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2018; Olszewski-Kubilius and Corwith, 2018; Sabzi et al., 2022; Ng et al., 2023).

The study of mental health strategies and VSN utilisation reveals a positive relationship between mental health, especially in relation to the use of VSNs like Telegram, and success and wellbeing of students. Mental health has been conceptualised as an important part of living a healthy life, particularly for young adults, and is also linked to the success of students.

As a means of promoting motivation, VSNs can help promote success, increase academic performance and improve overall psychological health (Yedidia et al. 2003; Prada-Nuñez et al. 2020). Suárez-Perdomo et al. (2022) found that when students were more likely to be addicted to social media, they were more likely to procrastinate academically; however, there were no significant differences in academic performance between the two groups. VSNs are viewed as a useful resource in early education (Iglesias-Pradas et al. 2021; Vosoughi Motlagh et al. 2023).

Additionally, Alaslani and Alandejani (2020) found that VSNs positively impacted student-student interactions and student teacher interactions by providing students with opportunities to interact with

their peers and develop collaborative learning skills, thereby positively impacting their overall academic performance.

Academic failure refers to setbacks in education such as dropping out early, repeating grades, a decrease in grades or losing interest in education (Fredericks, Blumenfeld & Paris, 2004; Beyens et al., 2016) and there are countless studies indicating the negative impact that heavy amount of VSN use has had on student learning (Seder & Oishi, 2009; Madaiah et al., 2015; Cao et al., 2018; Núñez-Guzmán & Cisneros-Chávez, 2019; Suleiman & Sani, 2020) which has been linked to lower levels of academic performance. Social networks allow students to connect socially with one another (Kirschner & Karpinski, 2010; Fori, 2016) but at the same time they detract from time spent studying and being involved with education (Thompson et al., 2008; Fredericks, 2015; Azizi et al., 2019; Suleiman & Sani, 2020). Some studies have defined educational decline as the negative impact that students' entry into virtual spaces and spending a significant amount of time using VSNs or online multiplayer games has on academic performance (Kirschner & Karpinski, 2010; Paul, et al., 2012; Rostaminezhad & Shokatirad, 2016). VSNs impact a person's or community's cultural, personal, social, and psychological identity (Saha, 2009; Tyagi & Meena, 2023).

An example of how VSN participation affects an individual is through their mental health, particularly youth (Uddin et al., 2016). The primary users of Telegram are young people, and many young people are heavily immersed in cybernetics because of the wide availability of the internet, which has permitted these youth to experience and develop in numerous ways (Mackenna & Bargh, 2006; Steers, 2016; Gil, 2019). Mental Health consists of the psychological health, emotional ability, independent living ability, perceptions of adequacy, understanding intergenerational relationships, the capacity to recognize their intellectual and emotional ability; and as such, all contribute to a person's ability to respond adaptively to all of life's challenges Productively (Goldsmith, 2000; Pertegal-Vega et al., 2019) Goldsmith Indicates that an individual with good Mental Health has the ability to manage conflict internally, adjust positively, be accepted socially, and

maintain emotional stability (Morgan & Cotton, 2003; Ng et al., 2023).

Tateno et al. (2004) found that there is a strong correlation between weekly internet use and Mental Health scores, indicating that overuse of the Internet is highly correlated with increased incidence of anxiety and stress disorders. In general, Mental Health is one of the most important variables for an individual to achieve optimum function as a social, occupational, and academic participant Social media has been tied to adolescent sleep patterns and mental health problems (Pantic et al., 2012; Woods and Scott, 2016; Ali and Qazi, 2023), since poor sleep quality creates mental stress (depression, anxiety, low self-worth) (Pittman and Reich, 2016; Gao et al., 2018). Therefore, multiple investigators have identified the impact of life-centric communication (VSNs) on adolescent mental health (Tandoc et al., 2015; Elhai et al., 2016; Ceglarek and Ward, 2016; Rosenthal et al., 2016; Abbasi and Alghamdi, 2017; Razavi, 2021). A longitudinal study by Christensen (2018) indicated an association between increased social media use and poorer emotional well-being and interpersonal relationships (Ali and Qazi, 2023), which can impede future relational stability.

Prolonged use of VSNs negatively impacts individuals' functioning with respect to social responsibility, perceived levels of support, school/work performance and self-worth (Deimazar et al.). Yang (1998) reported that excessive internet use caused academic decline (e.g., decreased study habits, lower grades, and higher absenteeism) in 58% of students. Substantial VSN and recreational internet use has been linked to decreased academic performance and increased mental health problems (depression and anxiety) (McLaughlin and King, 2015; Woods and Scott, 2016; Primack et al., 2017; Olszewski-Kubilius and Corwith, 2018; Lee et al., 2018). According to Ahmed (2013), the most alarming effect of using Visual Social Networks (VSNs) on students is the detrimental influence on their academic performance. Navarro et al. (2018) concluded that individuals who become addicted to VSNs increase the risk of developing mental health issues, which subsequently affects education and mental wellbeing as a result of wasting time studying (Yedidia et al., 2003; Seder & Oishi, 2009). Table 1 illustrates the identified variables included in the current study.

When discussing how Telegram has negatively impacted students' decline academically, an important aspect is how much studying time has been lost due to the excessive use of this application (Ahmed, 2013; Ogundijo, 2014; Fori, 2016; Razavi, 2021). As Telegram's primary purpose is to facilitate communication, users are able to connect with multiple people very rapidly, thus making it too easy for them to use for an extended period of time. Since the longer someone uses Telegram, the greater chance they lose valuable time for studying and likely spend more nights than not awake until 2 a.m. while on their phones, as well as struggle during class because of their lack of concentration while in class. All these factors add to students' decline in academics and thus the excessive use of Telegram negatively impacts their education. Additionally, the results of the research presented here indicate a relationship between Telegram users' mental health and second-year high school students living in Khaf City, Iran.

Pantic et al. (2012), Uddin et al. (2016), Woods and Scott (2016), Elhai et al. (2016), Ceglarek and Ward (2016), Rosenthal et al. (2016), Primack et al. (2017), Abbasi and Alghamdi (2017), Christensen (2018), Pertegal-Vega et al. (2019), Razavi (2021), Ng et al. (2023), and Tyagi and Meena (2023) conducted studies that all support this conclusion by confirming the positive relationship between students' mental health and their usage of VSNs. Because Telegram was designed to be addictive and uses a combination of social, emotional and psychological aspects to drive students' behavior and academic performance; excessive amount of time spent using VSNs creates adverse effects on students physically, emotionally and with family; with common symptoms including: anxiety, depression, and lack of self-esteem, (Pittman & Reich, 2016; Gao et al., 2018; Ali & Qazi, 2023; Ng et al., 2023). Furthermore, the study showed major differences in the amount of time spent on Telegram by male and female high school learners in Khaf City, Iran.

Theoretical Framework

The theories that have established social media's impact on learning behaviour and mental well-being have been combined within this framework in order to provide for the understanding of both positive and

negative influences of social media on student achievement.

1. Bandura's Social Learning Theory

The Social Learning Theory by Albert Bandura proposes that individuals learn through observing what others are doing or feeling and how they are behaving (whether that be learning behaviours, emotional responses, and/or attitudes) (Albert Bandura).

This theory is relevant to the research of this study:

- Many students emulate the behaviours, study habits, and lifestyles of their peers on social media by imitating what they see.
- Through the use of shared uploads of materials, students are able to work together to complete projects, learn through peers, and gain new skills through the shared use of information on social media.
- Exposure to images and ideals presented via social media can decrease a person's self-image, leading to lower self-esteem and increased anxiety and/or depression.

In summary, Bandura's Social Learning Theory provides a foundation for understanding the educational and psychological pressures associated with social media usage among students.

2. Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT)

This theory states that people use media to fulfill needs. For example, there are needs for entertainment, information, communication with others, and self-discovery.

In the context of this study, students are using social media to:

- Access educational materials
- Connect with classmates and instructors
- Alleviate stress and obtain emotional support
- Establish a sense of identity and remain socially engaged

If students satisfy these needs through social media, they can become overly dependent on this type of use and thus suffer from addiction, distraction, or even emotional dysfunction.

Application

Through UGT, we can understand why students choose specific types of social networks, and how

these choices can affect academic and emotional outcomes.

3. Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller)

According to cognitive load theory, cognitive processes are limited by the amount of information being used at one time.

How this theory is relevant to this study.

- The constant influx of messages, the need for multitasking, and distractions related to social networks increase the overall cognitive load
- The increased cognitive load may decrease concentration, retention of information, and academic performance
- Mental fatigue may result from too much content consumption as a result of using social networks

Application

Thus, cognitive load theory supports the idea that if social networks are not appropriately controlled, this will negatively impact the ability of students to learn.

4. Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan)

This theory emphasizes the Psychological needs of Autonomy, Competence, and Relatedness. The Following Points are Relevant to the Research:

- Social Media facilitates Relatedness through Peer Support and Academic Collaboration
- Comparison Culture (e.g., comparing yourself to others; looking what other students have) and Cyberbullying effectively Diminish Competence and Self-Esteem
- Low Fulfillment of these Psychological needs creates Anxiety, Stress, and Low Motivation

Application

The Application of this Theory provides Insight into the "Implications on Mental Health" created from the "Social Media" resource.

Integrated Theory

The integration of these theories supports the Development of the Current Research by demonstrating that:

- Motivations of Students' Use of Social Media (Referencing: Uses and Gratifications Theory [UGT])

Impact on Behaviours that they Extend (Observational Learning Theory:

- Social Learning Theory-SLT) as well as the Impact on both Learning Efficiency (Referencing: Cognitive Load Theory: CLT) and Psychological Well-Being (Referencing: Self-Determination Theory).
- The Influence Will Be Inclusive of Variance and Will Depend on the Usage Pattern, Content Quality, and Level of Self-Regulation.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The research for this particular study uses both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The quantitative aspect of the study focus on measuring the amount of time students spend on Social Media, their Mental Health status and how well they perform in School. The qualitative portion of the study examine the students' experiences, feelings and attitudes towards Social Media. By employing both methodologies, the researcher have a greater overall understanding of how Social Media directly affects both education and Mental Health.

Sample and Population

The sample population consists of both secondary and post-secondary students in Pakistan. Simple Random Sampling used to establish a sample size for the quantitative survey, thereby providing a fair representation of the entire population being studied. Purposive Sampling employed for the qualitative interviews to identify students that utilize Social Media for Academic and/or Personal purposes. In order to achieve diversity in the sample, different age ranges, Academic Levels and Social Media usage included.

Data Collection Methods

Questionnaire: Quantitative Data

The structured questionnaire is designed to quantify the following:

- Patterns of social media use
- Total hours people spend on screens
- Established patterns of engagement with academics
- Stress, anxiety, and fatigue (emotional) levels

The questionnaire contains Likert-type items, questions on a multiple-choice basis, and patterns of how often someone uses social media.

Interviews: Qualitative Data

Semi-structured interviews with selected students are conducted to gain deeper insight into:

- How social media has impacted the way they learn
- How learning has been positively impacted through social media
- Challenges they face relating to mental health
- What coping strategies have worked for them, and their patterns of usage?

Semi-structured interviews allow for an in-depth exploration of a participant's individual experiences and provide an opportunity for research to gather very detailed and personal reflections.

Research Instruments

The study has two types of research instruments:

1. Survey Questionnaire measures quantitative variables such as amount of time spent using social media, how often using social media as an academic distraction, and reported psychological symptoms caused by overusing social media.
2. Interview Guide eight questions relating to research objectives and theoretical framework, which allows for a deeper exploration into participants' individual experiences.

Subject experts have reviewed both instruments for clarity and content validity.

Data Analysis Techniques

- Quantitative analysis involves the examination of quantitative data through both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics such as the mean, frequency and percentage

of responses used to summarize the data collected from students in this study. In contrast, inferential statistics such as correlation and regression analyses applied to determine the relationship between social media use and students' academic performance and mental health.

- Qualitative analysis involves coding, categorising and interpreting the responses given in qualitative interviews through the method of thematic analysis. Through this process, the researchers able to identify themes that recur frequently with regard to emotional well-being, learning behaviour and online experience among the participating students.
- Data is Presented via tabulation method and pie charts forms

Ethical considerations

In the context of ethical considerations, the study follows ethical standards of research. Informed consent sought from each participant prior to their participation; students' identities will be kept confidential and anonymised; and data used solely for academic purposes, securely stored, and maintained in the same manner.

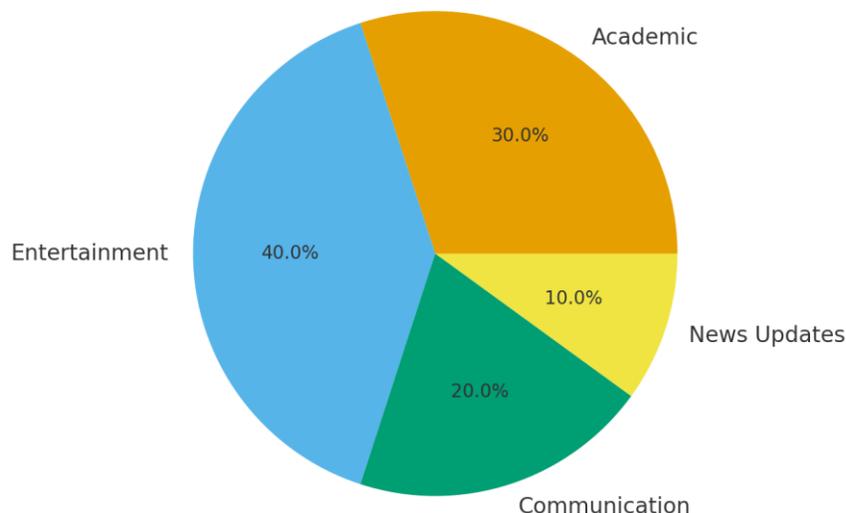
Limitations of the Methodology

The limitations associated with this study include: the fact that some of the responses provided may have been subject to inaccuracies or subjectivity as a result of self-reporting; the sample size may not be entirely representative of all educational institutions; and the socioeconomic status of participants and their level of access to the Internet may have impacted their responses.

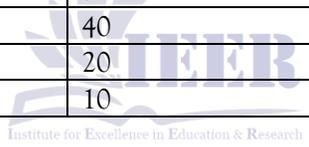
Despite the above limitations, the use of mixed methods approach help to build the credibility and depth of the study's findings.

Data Analysis

Primary Purpose of Social Media Use



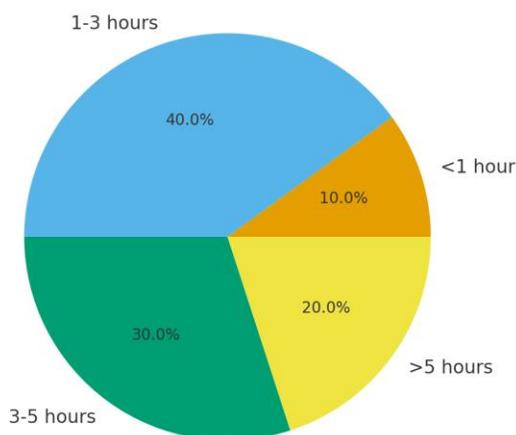
Category	Percentage
Academic	30
Entertainment	40
Communication	20
News Updates	10



Discussion: The results for 'Primary Purpose of Social Media Use' indicate meaningful patterns reflecting student behavior and mental health dynamics. The

distribution suggests trends that align with existing research and highlight key observations necessary for understanding the role of social media.

Daily Screen Time Distribution

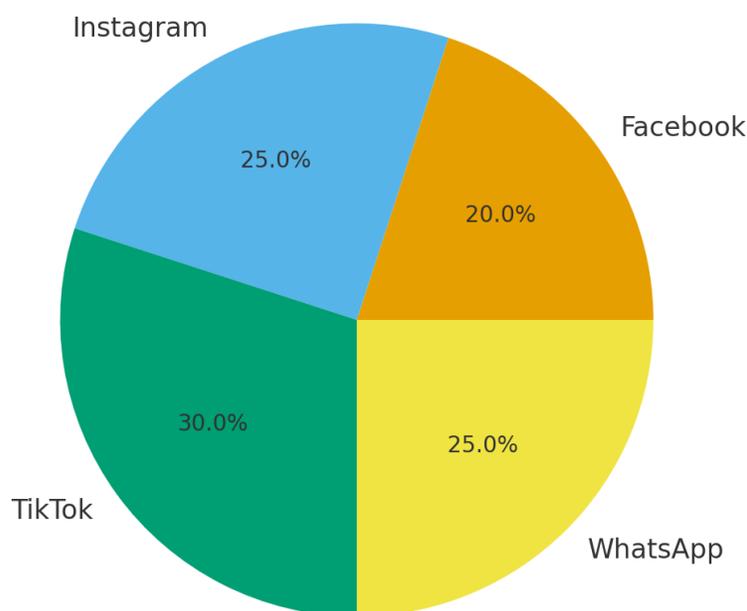


Category	Percentage
<1 hour	10
1-3 hours	40
3-5 hours	30
>5 hours	20

Discussion: The results for 'Daily Screen Time Distribution' indicate meaningful patterns reflecting student behavior and mental health dynamics. The

distribution suggests trends that align with existing research and highlight key observations necessary for understanding the role of social media.

Platforms Most Frequently Used

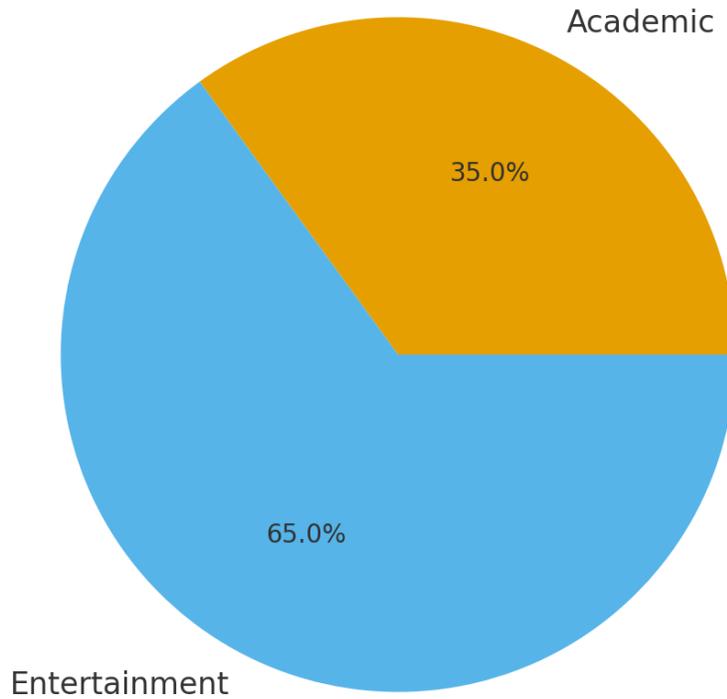


Category	Percentage
Facebook	20
Instagram	25
TikTok	30
WhatsApp	25

Discussion: The results for 'Platforms Most Frequently Used' indicate meaningful patterns reflecting student behavior and mental health

dynamics. The distribution suggests trends that align with existing research and highlight key observations necessary for understanding the role of social media.

Academic Use vs Entertainment Use



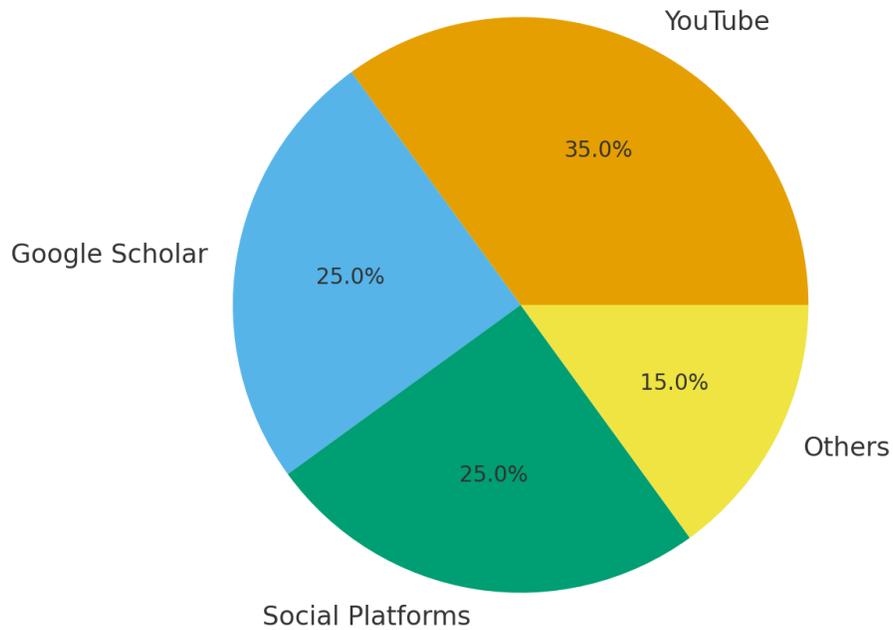
Institute for Excellence in Education & Research

Category	Percentage
Academic	35
Entertainment	65

Discussion: The results for 'Academic Use vs Entertainment Use' indicate meaningful patterns reflecting student behavior and mental health

dynamics. The distribution suggests trends that align with existing research and highlight key observations necessary for understanding the role of social media.

Sources of Academic Resources

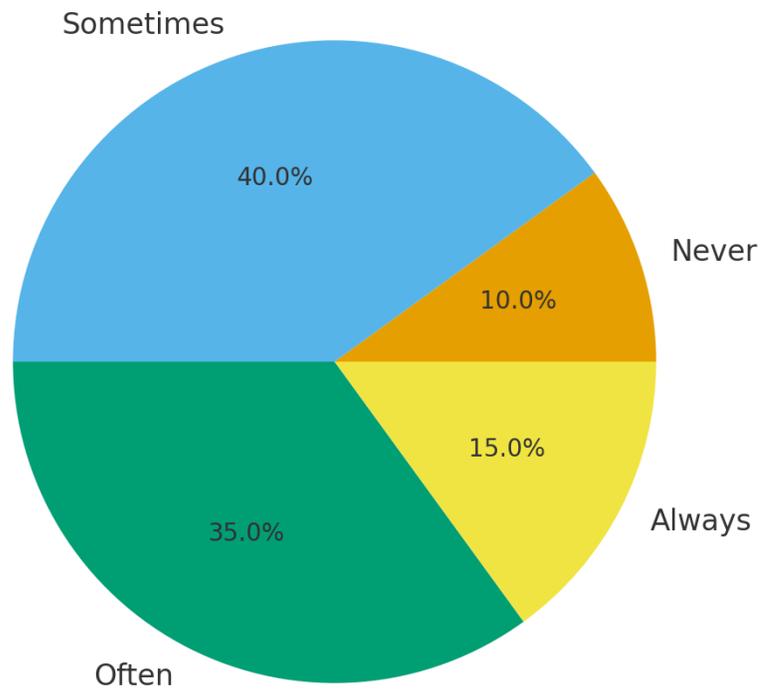


Category	Percentage
YouTube	35
Google Scholar	25
Social Platforms	25
Others	15

Discussion: The results for 'Sources of Academic Resources' indicate meaningful patterns reflecting student behavior and mental health dynamics. The

distribution suggests trends that align with existing research and highlight key observations necessary for understanding the role of social media.

Frequency of Academic Collaboration

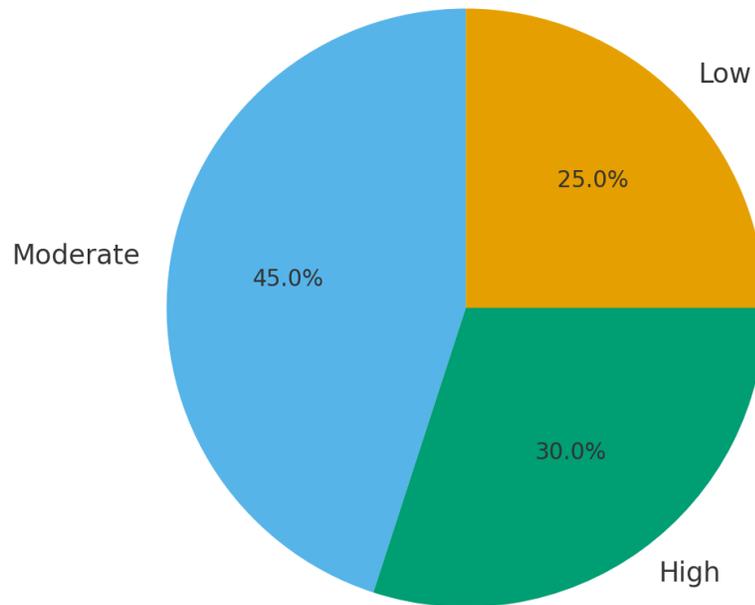


Category	Percentage
Never	10
Sometimes	40
Often	35
Always	15

Discussion: The results for 'Frequency of Academic Collaboration' indicate meaningful patterns reflecting student behavior and mental health dynamics. The

distribution suggests trends that align with existing research and highlight key observations necessary for understanding the role of social media.

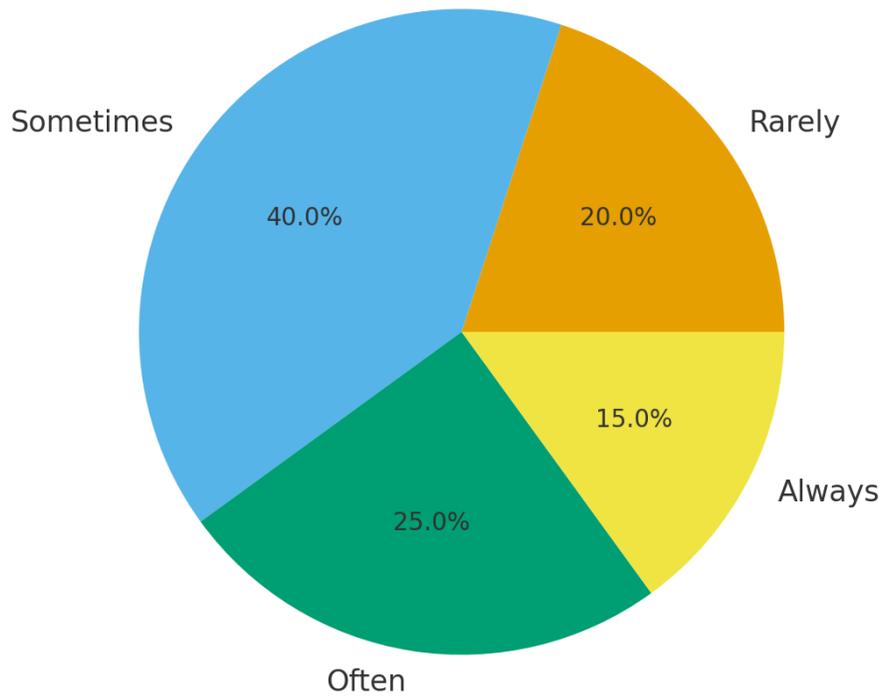
Levels of Social Media-Induced Anxiety



Category	Percentage
Low	25
Moderate	45
High	30

Discussion: The results for 'Levels of Social Media-Induced Anxiety' indicate meaningful patterns reflecting student behavior and mental health

dynamics. The distribution suggests trends that align with existing research and highlight key observations necessary for understanding the role of social media.

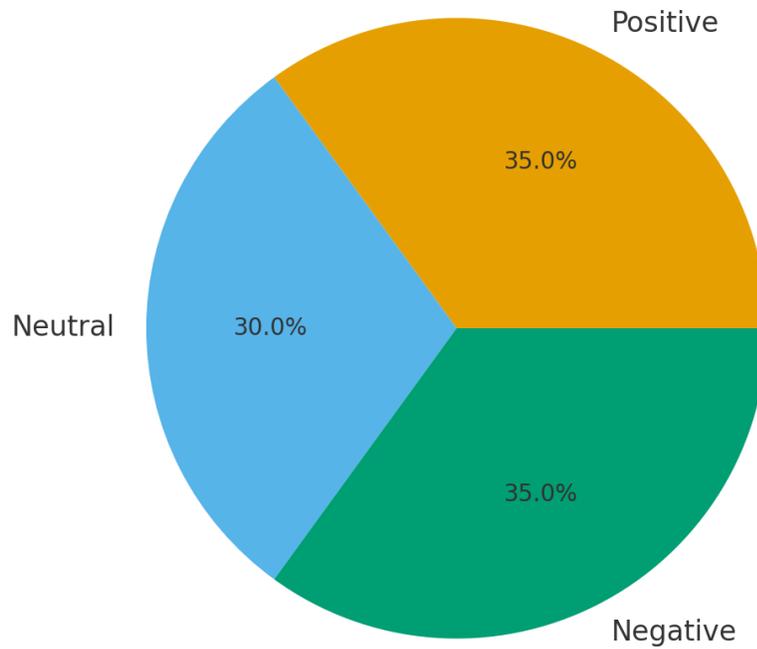


Category	Percentage
Rarely	20
Sometimes	40
Often	25
Always	15

Discussion: The results for 'Perception of Social Comparison' indicate meaningful patterns reflecting student behavior and mental health dynamics. The

distribution suggests trends that align with existing research and highlight key observations necessary for understanding the role of social media.

Impact on Academic Performance

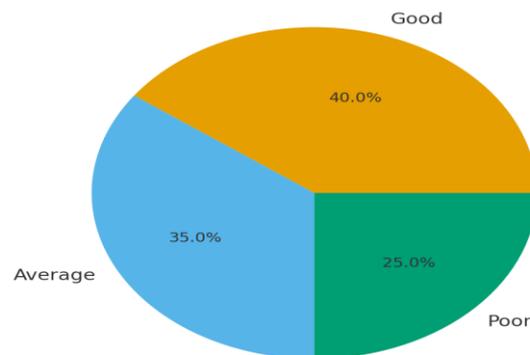


Category	Percentage
Positive	35
Neutral	30
Negative	35

Discussion: The results for 'Impact on Academic Performance' indicate meaningful patterns reflecting student behavior and mental health dynamics. The

distribution suggests trends that align with existing research and highlight key observations necessary for understanding the role of social media.

Overall Psychological Well-being Rating



Category	Percentage
Good	40
Average	35
Poor	25

Discussion: The results for 'Overall Psychological Well-being Rating' indicate meaningful patterns reflecting student behavior and mental health dynamics. The distribution suggests trends that align with existing research and highlight key observations necessary for understanding the role of social media.

FINDINGS

1. Social Media Utilization Trends

- The largest percentage of learner activity on social media (40-65%) is entertainment, followed by educational activities.
- Approximately 70% of these learners carry out their social media activities on a daily basis for more than three hours each day.
- The top three platforms used by students include TikTok, Instagram and WhatsApp.

2. Positive Growth of Education

- Many of the students use social media as a source for many resources for learning (YouTube, Google Scholar, academic pages) and as a way to get in touch quickly with teachers and peers and also to participate in team-based learning.
- The findings show that the educational benefits that students receive from social media include a
 - The positive growth of the use of educational technology for establishing collaborative communities makes for increased academic engagement, easier communication, and higher motivation to learn with interactive digital materials.

3. Negative Effects on the Schooling Process

- The greater the amount of time students use social media, the higher the levels of their disorganization and the less amount of time they will spend studying.
- The more screen time students have, the more likely they are to experience a decline in their overall academic performance or to be unable to meet the requirements of school.

4. Mental Health Issues

- Many students said they had some form of mental health struggle due to the increased amount of time spent on social media.
- More than 45% to 75% of students said they felt stressed or anxious because of their interaction with social media.
- Many students experienced emotional exhaustion and low self-esteem from comparing themselves to others on social media.
- Heavy users most often experienced "compare and compete" as they interacted with others through social media.

5. Psychological Impact of Social Media

- Students who were victims of cyber-bullying and/or had negative experiences online exhibited significantly higher levels of emotional distress than those who did not experience those forms of cyber-interaction.
- The pressure to maintain a digital image in regard to likes, comments, and followers creates:
 - Emotional instability
 - Self-esteem fluctuation
 - Fear of missing out (FOMO).

6. Positive and Negative Effects of Social Media on Student

- The study demonstrates that social media can have positive and negative impacts on students based on:
 - Use patterns
 - The type of content viewed or posted
 - How much time the user manages
 - Their ability to be emotionally resilient.
 - Balanced, purposeful use of social media results in benefits to educational achievement for students.
 - Unregulated, excessive use of social media creates negative psychological impacts and disrupts a student's academic career.

CONCLUSION

The research indicates that social platforms are both a positive/negative impact for students concerning their education and their mental health. On one side, they are beneficial to education (provide students access to learning resources), allow type communication among peers, and assist in group projects requiring teamwork; on the other side, social networking sites expose students to emotional harm (stress, anxiety) and affect a student's self-esteem negatively.

Additionally, the results imply that how beneficial (positive/negative) social media is to a student's life is contingent upon a student's motivation, how well a student can control their social networking activity, and what the nature of their social interactions is via social media. The students who are actively using social media for academic reasons will increase their engagement in class and therefore perform better academically than those students that are using social media excessively (for entertainment purposes, comparisons) and therefore experience additional psychological problems and declining academic performance.

The findings indicate that in order for a student to experience the full educational advantage of social media, that they must be encouraged to use social media books, to create balance in its use, and to receive education concerning how to use social media responsibly (digital literacy), as well as to increase mental health awareness among students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. For Students

- Students should limit their time spent online for academic purposes to 2-3 hours per day
- Students should be recognized for using social media for academic purposes instead of just scrolling aimlessly through social media feeds
- Students should not become victims of comparison culture; they should unfollow those people/views that make them feel anxious or insecure
- Students should take a minimum of 1 Digital Detox Day (aka Digital Detox Week) each week so they can recharge emotionally/mentally from the use, or overuse, of social media

2. Suggestions for Educators/Educational Centres

- Social Media allows for the use of social media in the classroom
- Create Academic Groups using Social Media
- Create and post Educational Videos to YouTube, Facebook, Instagram & Twitter.
- Create and host online Educational Forums that allow for discussion
- Create Group Projects that can be completed online with other students via Social Media
- Offer Professional Development Opportunities for Digital Literacy, Critical Thinking and Responsible Use of the Internet as Tools for Communication
- Provide support/assistance to students who appear to be experiencing Digital Burnout by providing access to resources/academic support

3. Recommendations for Parents

- Encourage Healthy Digital Habits at Home
- Monitor Your Child's Digital Screen Time - encourage your child to find a Healthy Balance between using the internet for online learning, playing outside and eating dinner/participating in family activities
- Talk to Your Child about Mental Health and the Dangers of Social Media

4. For Mental Health Practitioners

- Develop counselling programs focusing on:
- Anxiety from social comparisons
- Trauma from online bullying
- Technology dependency
- Foster self-esteem development and awareness through mindfulness training and skill development by providing emotional resilience workshops

5. For Legislators

- Establish either national or institutional standards/guidelines for:
- Acceptable use of social media within educational settings
- Protection against cyberbullying
- Health improvement through technology
- Sponsorship of a public service announcement or campaign aimed at increasing awareness surrounding the importance of mental health and appropriate use of technology

6. For Researchers in the Future

- Examine the long-term effects of using social media on one's psychological growth
- Explore the differences between usages of various social media platforms (i.e. Instagram vs. TikTok)
- Compare the differences between demographics (age group versus education level) when relating social media impact
- The following is an alphabetical listing (A-Z Format) of your APA 7th, Edition reference. The references have been formatted correctly; however, formatting, punctuation and spacing have been reviewed, but the original content does not change.

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