

EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT'S ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AT JHANG

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ABSTRACT

Technological improvements have led students and young people to dominate the internet, particularly social media. One wonders how they balance using social media and being up to date on study. The impact of media on educational performance can be both positive and negative, and it is important to consider various factors when assessing its influence. Educational programs and content delivered through media can positively influence students' learning experiences. Platforms like educational television programs, online courses, and interactive learning apps can provide supplementary resources that enhance students' understanding of academic subjects. This research analyzed the effects of social media use on educational performance among undergraduate level students in the district Jhang. The present study was conducted in Jhang. District Jhang still has only two educational institutes offering undergraduate and post-graduate degree programs. The researcher chose the University of Jhang (UOJ) conveniently for their research. The target population consisted of undergraduate students at the University of Jhang. The sample consisted of 150 undergraduate students (75 males and 75 females). For the purpose of data collection, a questionnaire was used, and SPSS software was utilized for the analysis of the data. The study revealed several key insights regarding students' use of smartphones and social media. It was found that less than half (47.3%) of the students spent 3-5 hours daily on social media. The most popular social media sites among students were YouTube (92%), WhatsApp (86%), Facebook (76%), Instagram (74.0%), Snapchat (66.7%), TikTok (54.0%), and Twitter (54.0%). A majority (55.3%) of students used social media for educational purposes, and 39.3% found it motivational for recreation and entertainment. Most of the students agreed that social media creates awareness of new trends (3.85 ± 1.06), provides the latest knowledge and information (3.75 ± 1.20), is essential for learning and skill acquisition (3.73 ± 1.12), and

facilitates global cultural awareness (3.69 ± 1.11). Students acknowledged some negative impacts of social media, including health issues due to addiction (3.41 ± 1.22), diminished academic performance (3.35 ± 1.21), and deteriorating writing abilities (3.14 ± 1.14). Universities should encourage students to utilize social media for academic purposes while teaching them how to use it responsibly and sensibly.

Keywords: Social media, students, time spent, achievement, academic performance

Introduction

Social media has become a crucial part of students' life in the modern digital era, functioning as a conduit for communication, disseminating information, and providing entertainment. Social media platforms have become widely integrated into the everyday routines of young person's due to the widespread use of smartphones and simple internet access (Sun, 2023). Therefore, it conserves different human resources such as money, time, and effort, leading to a remarkable influence on social interactions in their everyday lives (Alnjadat et al., 2019). From an educational standpoint, it is utilized for sharing and gathering knowledge, as well as supervising study and experimentation. It enhances student learning and family connections by enhancing the performance of electronic books through the integration of students using social media tools for collaboration. It enhances students' abilities and enhances communication skills with experts through the use of social media (Nurudeen et al., 2023). The previous few decades have seen rapid technological growth, which has resulted in profound changes to society all around the world. Because of advances in technology, barriers to communication have been greatly removed, and new mediums are continually being developed in order to link audiences all over the world. The use of social networking sites has mushroomed into a global phenomenon that has reached nearly every part of the globe. Students, particularly those in Pakistan, are increasingly using social networking sites, which raises some serious ethical concerns in this day and age of rapid technical growth (Hasnain et al., 2015).

Social media may be characterized as online systems that allow users to establish open or semi-open profiles in a limited system, befriend others and explore their webs of connections and those of other users. In the past, communication and free flow of ideas has been limited by distance, nationality and religious boundaries. These barriers have, however, been eliminated with the introduction of digital networking where information sharing is free and unhindered. Apps such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp have transformed communication around the world and turned to be the giants in social media. Over the past few years, social media usage has risen exponentially not only in the professional working world, but also in academic society. The use of the platforms by students, especially, has become more and more personal and academic (Raut & Patil, 2016).

The utilization of Social Networking Sites (SNSs) in an educational environment holds significant importance. According to Rao (2017), social media platforms have been observed to facilitate the acquisition of knowledge and foster collaboration among individuals, particularly in the context of educational learning. This has the potential to establish an e-educational system that effectively facilitates students' engagement in extracurricular activities. In Connolly's (2011) study, the author examines the additional benefit of social media, which involves the establishment of long-lasting relationships with authentic individuals. For example, Facebook has the potential to alleviate the sense of isolation that students often encounter while residing in college or university dormitories. According to

Durden (2007), human beings are fundamentally influenced by social norms, and social media platforms possess the capacity to serve as a global means of interpersonal communication.

These websites have made it easier to establish new connections and exchange information in different situations (Coyle & Vaughn, 2008). Due to this, social media has proved to be a crucial instrument in stimulating debate on critical issues in society like changes in the environment, political events, emerging trends and cultural values (Asur & Huberman, 2010). An increasing duration of engagement with social media may adversely impact kids' academic performance. Concurrently, some research has shown that pupils' academic performance improves (Amin et al., 2016).

Due to its popularity, it is not surprising that social media has changed the lives of people and their social interactions. Social networks such as Facebook, to give an example, have become part of the life of students, and they provide great opportunities in terms of educational communication and collaboration with faculty members. Such platforms are especially common in the Western educational setting, as the students often utilize them to communicate with lecturers and their peers (Sudha & Kavitha, 2016).

Academic performance is the capability of a student to effectively achieve the learning goals of their course work and be able to utilize that learning in various real-life situations. Some of the issues that affect the success of a student include the workload of the course, time management capability and attitude to learning. It is also necessary to balance these factors efficiently to receive high academic achievements and be ready to pursue professional activities in the future (Putra et al., 2024).

Research on the effects of social media use on educational performance among undergraduate level students in District Jhang is limited, thus highlighting a significant research gap in existing literature. Much research has investigated how social media affects students' academic performance worldwide, there is a dearth of specific research focusing on this issue within the context of District Jhang, Pakistan. Given the universal nature of social media and its increasing integration into daily life, particularly among the younger demographic, understanding its effects on educational performance is crucial. Moreover, District Faisalabad presents a unique socio-cultural environment that may influence how social media is utilized and its subsequent impact on students' academic outcomes. This study investigates the correlation between social media usage and academic achievement among undergraduate students in District Jhang. The goal is to develop strategies and guidelines to help students succeed academically in the modern digital era.

Objective

To investigate the multifaceted “impact of social media” on “undergraduate students”.

To examine the “purposes for which students use social media (e.g., communication, entertainment, information seeking, earnings, or fame)”.

To learn about “social media positive and negative effects” on “students' academic Performance”.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Karpinski (2009) said that social media negatively impacts students' academic performance to a much higher extent than the benefits gained from using social media platforms.

Individuals worldwide have become more dependent on the internet, resulting in a greater frequency of social media use among students. Users of SNS, i.e. Facebook and WhatsApp often allocate less time to their academics compared to non-users, resulting in poorer GPAs. Wang et al. (2011) concluded that the use of SNS is continuously expanding, and it is our working assumption that technology plays a significant role in the equation for the success of today's students. The findings derived from the survey questionnaire reveal that 45% of the participants acknowledged dedicating 6-8 hours daily to the act of monitoring social media platforms. Additionally, 23% of the respondents reported spending over 8 hours, while 20% allocated 2-4 hours, and a mere 12% devoted less than 2 hours to this particular activity. The study's findings suggest that despite the widespread use of social media among university students and the significant amount of time they spend on social media platforms, there exists a detrimental aspect to their utilization of these platforms.

Dhiman (2022) found that a negative association exists between students' utilisation of SNSs and mobile applications and their academic achievement. The study highlights a significant correlation between these variables. He recommended that students be encouraged to employ their mobile devices for academic activities instead of engaging in social media or texting while studying in the library. It is imperative to promote a reduction in children's social media usage and increase their engagement with literary works, such as novels and books. The heightened utilisation of social media among students has been associated with a decline in their academic performance. Hence, it is imperative to promptly acquaint students with the library's assortment of educational resources.

Haider (2023) found that students utilized social media networks primarily for educational purposes (65.3%) and information-seeking (63.3%), while a considerable proportion of the students also had some extent purpose of entertainment (78.7) and time passing (62.0). A significant proportion (60.0%) of the participants believed that social media networking platforms offer highly valuable information. He concluded that most students agreed that social media is creating awareness among students of new trends (40.0%) and is a source to get the latest knowledge and information (32.7%). The excessive utilization of social media has been associated with adverse effects, including social media addiction, which has been found to have a detrimental impact on individuals' health (47.3%). Additionally, it has been observed that students' academic performance is negatively affected by their high engagement with social media (37.3%). The study results indicate that university students who utilized social media for up to three hours experienced a favorable influence on their academic performance. It is recommended that students utilize social media in a restricted and productive manner.

Masalimova et al. (2023) examined the impact of SNSa on the academic performance of university students. The peer-reviewed articles for this study were sourced from the SCOPUS database. The analysis included the 22 articles that met the inclusion criteria. Two researchers conducted a content analysis of the articles based on their predetermined analysis criteria. The findings indicated that studies have consistently documented beneficial and statistically significant effects of SNS on academic performance. Nevertheless, certain research has documented the adverse impact of SNS on academic performance. The findings pertaining to the publication year of the examined article demonstrated a progressive rise from 2019 to 2022. The findings additionally indicated that all of the research assessed utilised quantitative data gathering methods, and the majority of participants fell within the range of 100 to 300. Furthermore, the primary data source utilised to assess academic performance was the Grade Points Average, with the majority of the research being carried

out in Saudi Arabia. The results of this study provide new insights into current literature and have important implications for academics about the influence of SNSs on academic achievement.

Zhang et al. (2024) concluded that there is a variety of social media activities that students engage in regularly, and this could help them to develop. The study showed that using social media had a favourable impact on academic achievement. Collaborative learning profoundly influences the correlation between social media use and academic achievement. The quality of family connection profoundly influences the correlation between social media engagement and academic achievement. Mental well-being significantly impacts the interplay among collaborative learning, family cohesiveness, and academic accomplishment.

Methodology

The universe of the current study was District Jhang. There were two public educational institutes for undergraduate and postgraduate degree programs, namely University of Jhang and College of Veterinary and Animal Sciences (CVAS). The researcher chose the University of Jhang conveniently for their research. The target population consisted of undergraduate students at the University of Jhang.

The sample consisted of 150 undergraduate students (75 males and 75 females). According to Creswell (2012), a sample size of 100 to 200 participants is commonly sufficient for survey research in education when the population is not extremely large and the focus is on general trends rather than highly precise population estimates. Similarly, Gay et al. (2011) suggest that a minimum of 100 participants is generally acceptable for quantitative studies, especially when the goal is to identify significant patterns or relationships. Data were collected through a validated and pre-tested questionnaire. Collected data were analyzed by using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Socio-economic characteristics of the respondents

Socio-economic indicators	Categories	f	%
Gender	Male	75	50.0
	Female	75	50.0
	Total	150	100.0
Age groups	18-20	44	29.3
	21-24	87	58.0
	25 & above	19	12.7
	Total	150	100.0
Residence	Rural	90	60.0
	Urban	60	40.0
	Total	150	100.0
Income	Up to 50000	81	54.0
	50001-75000	40	26.7
	Above 75000	29	19.3
	Total	150	100.0

Gender: The use of digital technology that has a significant influence on the lives of students in this era of digitalization may provide a new kind of education. The use of effective tools to support learning can be affected by gender. Kabali et al. (2015) reported that the male students had more use of cell phone as compared to female students. Table 1 reveals that half (50.0%) of the sampled students were males, and another half were females. Mazman and Usluel (2011) reported that female students were spending more time for communication, emotional expression and relationship maintenance. However, male students used social media for entertainment, gaming and information-seeking purpose.

Age: According to Table 1, 29.3% of the students were between 18 and 20 years. The majority of students (58.0%) were between the ages of 21-24 years. Respondents aged 25 and older comprised the smallest percentage of the sample (12.7%).

Residence: Research studies have shown a significant association between students' residence and the use of social media. This topic has gained considerable attention in recent years as social media platforms have become increasingly popular among the student population (Ojo, 2022). Table 1 further indicates that 60.0 percent of the participants originated from rural family backgrounds, whereas 40.0 percent came from urban backgrounds.

Income: Table 1 specifies that over half of the participants (54.0%) had up to Rs. 50000 monthly household income, 26.7 percent had Rs. 50001-75000 monthly household income and 19.3 percent had above Rs. 75000 monthly household income.

Table 2: Classification of the participants concerning time spent on social media

Time spent on social media (hours)	f	Percent	Mean (hours)
Up to 3	45	30.0	4.52
>3-5	71	47.3	
>5	34	22.7	
Total	150	100.0	

Table 2 reflects that 30.0 percent of the respondents were spending up to 3 hours daily on social media networking sites. However, 47.3 percent of the students spent >3-5 hours and 22.7 percent spent above five hours daily on social media networking sites. This means that most of the students spend 3-5 hours on social media. The average duration of social media usage is 4.52 hours. According to Wang et al. (2011), 45% of the participants acknowledged dedicating 6-8 hours daily to the act of monitoring social media platforms. Additionally, 23% of the respondents reported spending over 8 hours, while 20% allocated 2-4 hours, and a mere 12% devoted less than 2 hours to this particular activity. The study's findings suggest that despite the widespread use of social media among university students and the significant amount of time they spend on social media platforms, there exists a detrimental aspect to their utilization of these platforms.

Table 3: Classification of the participants concerning their motives for using social media

Motives for using social media	f	Percent
Educational	83	55.3
Recreation and entertainment	59	39.3
Chatting or gossiping	47	31.3
Communicate with family and relatives	51	34.0
Communicating with teachers/class fellow	42	28.0

According to the data presented in Table 3, a significant percentage of the students who were sampled (55.3%) utilized social media platforms for educational purposes. Additionally, 39.3% of the participants reported that social media served as a source of motivation for recreational and entertainment purposes. Furthermore, 31.3% of the respondents indicated that the excessive use of social media platforms led to increased chatting or gossip among students. 34.0% and 28.0% of respondents indicated that they utilized social media to communicate with family & relatives, and teachers or classmates, respectively.

Table 4: The categorization of individuals based on their perception that social networking plays a significant role in facilitating social interaction

Response	f	Percent
To a great extent	101	67.3
To some extent	45	30.0
Not at all	4	2.7
Total	150	100.0

According to Table 4, a significant number of respondents (67.3%) think that social networking is an important aspect of social connection, while 30.0% think it gives some kind of social engagement.

Table 5: Participants' perceptions about the positive impact of social media on academic performance (n = 150)

Impact	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	S.D.	Rank
	%	%	%	%	%			
Social media is creating awareness among students of new trends	5.33	2.67	23.33	39.33	29.33	3.85	1.06	1
Social media is the source to get the latest knowledge and information	8.67	6.67	18.67	32.67	33.33	3.75	1.20	2
Social media is essential for youth to get learning and skills	8.67	7.33	8.00	54.67	21.33	3.73	1.12	3
Social media is a great facilitator to create awareness among youth to	9.33	2.67	20.00	46.00	22.00	3.69	1.11	4

Impact	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	S.D	Rank
	%	%	%	%	%			
develop global cultural								
Social media have a positive impact on students achievements	8.00	3.33	22.67	44.67	21.33	3.68	1.07	5
Students submitted their assignments through social media	7.33	12.00	12.00	49.33	19.33	3.61	1.14	6
Social media is a cheap way to connect people all over the world	10.00	6.67	19.33	44.00	20.00	3.57	1.14	7
Social media is a basic need of students	13.33	6.00	17.33	46.00	17.33	3.48	1.21	8

Scale: 1= strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree

The table illustrates the participants' perspectives regarding the positive influence of social media on academic achievement. The results of the study indicate that a significant proportion of the participants expressed agreement with the statements: "social media is creating awareness among students of new trends" (mean = 3.85, standard deviation = 1.06), "social media is the source to get latest knowledge and information" (mean = 3.75, standard deviation = 1.20), "social media is essential for youth to get learning and skills" (mean = 3.73, standard deviation = 1.12), and "social media is a great facilitator to create awareness among youth to develop global cultural" (mean = 3.69, standard deviation = 1.11). The participants ranked these statements as the top four in terms of agreement. The mean values of the aforementioned impacts were found to lie between the responses categorised as 'neutral' and 'agree', with a tendency towards the agree category.

However, social media had a positive impact on students' achievements (3.68 ± 1.07), Students submitted their assignments through social media (3.61 ± 1.14) and social media is a cheap way to connect people all over the world (3.57 ± 1.13) were ranked as 5th to 7th, respectively. The mean values of these impacts also fell between the 'neutral' and 'agree' responses but tended towards the agree category. Nevertheless, social media is a basic need of students (3.48 ± 1.21), which was ranked lowest, and the mean value tended towards the neutral category.

Based on the findings of the study, it can be inferred that a significant proportion of the student population holds the view that social media platforms play a crucial role in fostering awareness among students regarding emerging trends, as well as serving as a valuable source of up-to-date knowledge and information. The observation was made that social media plays a crucial role in facilitating the acquisition of knowledge and skills among young individuals. Additionally, it serves as an effective tool for raising awareness among youth, thereby fostering the development of a global cultural understanding.

Above discussed results were in line with Latif et al. (2019), who found that social

media platforms play a significant role in creating awareness among students about new trends. These platforms provide an accessible and interactive space for students to stay updated and informed. Through social media, students can discover and explore various topics, ideas, and trends in real-time. Social media platforms allow users to share and disseminate information quickly. Students can follow accounts, pages, or groups related to their areas of interest and receive updates about new trends, innovations, and developments in various fields.

Table 6: Participants' perceptions about the negative impact of social media on academic performance (n = 150)

Negative impact	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	S.D.	Rank
	%	%	%	%	%			
Social media addiction poses many health issues.	12.00	10.00	16.67	47.33	14.00	3.41	1.22	1
The students' performance suffered because they spent so much time on social media.	8.67	22.00	14.00	36.67	18.67	3.35	1.21	2
Writing abilities among students have suffered because of social media.	10.67	16.67	30.67	32.00	10.00	3.14	1.14	3
Online social networks distract me from my studies.	16.00	20.00	30.67	27.33	6.00	2.87	1.23	4
Students utilize social media even in class.	15.33	22.00	31.33	26.00	5.33	2.84	1.11	5
The use of social media is nothing more than a waste of time.	10.00	32.00	35.33	16.67	6.00	2.77	0.99	6
My academic performance has suffered as a result of my addiction to social media websites.	22.00	26.67	22.00	28.00	1.33	2.60	1.14	7

The above table represents the participants' perceptions about the negative impact of social media on students' academic performance. It was found that participants had some extent thinking that 'social media addiction poses many health issues' (3.41 ± 1.22), The students' performance suffered because they spent so much time on social media (3.35 ± 1.21) and writing abilities among students have suffered because of social media (3.14 ± 1.14) were ranked as 1st to 3th, respectively. The mean values of above-discussed impacts fell between the 'neutral' and 'agree' responses but tended towards the neutral category.

However, Online social networks distract me from my studies (2.87 ± 1.23), students utilize social media even in class (2.84 ± 1.11), use of social media is nothing more than a waste of time (2.77 ± 0.99) and academic performance has suffered as a result of their addiction to social media websites (2.60 ± 1.14) were ranked as 4th to 7th,

respectively. The mean values of these impacts also fell between the ‘disagree’ and the ‘neutral’ responses but tended towards the neutral category.

Akhtar (2013) pointed out that social media addiction among students can give rise to various health issues, impacting their well-being and overall quality of life. Excessive time spent on social media has been found to have a negative impact on students' academic performance. Social media platforms are designed to be highly engaging and addictive, often leading to constant distractions. Students may find it challenging to concentrate on their studies when they are frequently checking notifications, scrolling through feeds, or engaging in online conversations. This distraction can impede their ability to focus, absorb information, and complete academic tasks efficiently.

Table 7: Respondents' views about social media used negatively affected their mental well-being (e.g., stress and anxiety)

Response	f	Percent
No	72	48.0
Yes	78	52.0
Total	150	100.0

Table 7 reflects that slightly over half (52.0%) of the respondents acknowledged a negative impact, while forty-eight percent students reported no such effect. These results are similar to Keles et al. (2020), who found strong associations between excessive social media use and increased levels of depression, anxiety, and psychological distress among adolescents and young adults.

Table 8: Respondents' views about overall impact of social media on their academic performance

Impact	f	Percent
Negative	66	44.0
Positive	84	56.0
Total	150	100.0

Table 8 indicates that 44.0 percent of respondents saw social media as having a detrimental effect on their academic performance, while over half (56.0%) felt it had a beneficial influence. Al-Rahmi and Othman (2013) assert that social media significantly influences students' academic performance, with effects that may be either beneficial or detrimental.

Table 9: Bi-variate analysis (Testing of hypotheses)

H1: Female students will spend more time to social media than male students.			
Variables	Chi-square value	Gamma	Remarks
Gender * Time spent on social media (hours)	9.45**	-0.382**	Accepted
H2: Higher the income of the students, the more time will be spent on social media.			
Income * Time spent on social media (hours)	24.53**	0.465**	Accepted

H3: The use of social media among students significantly influences their academic performance.			
Impact on academic performance* Time spent on social media (hours)	8.28*	-0.359**	Accepted
H4: Use of social media significantly influences social interaction.			
Social media influence social interaction* Time spent on social media (hours)	9.06*	-0.309*	Accepted
H5: High exposure to social media content is associated with increased levels of anxiety and depression.			
Social media use negatively affected mental well-being (e.g., stress and anxiety) * Time spent on social media (hours)	6.97*	0.302*	Accepted

* = significant, ** = highly significant

H1: The chi-square test indicates a significant association ($\chi^2 = 9.45$, $p = .009$) between the gender of the students and the time they spent on social media. The statistical analysis (Gamma statistics) revealed a significant and negative association between the variables ($\lambda = -0.382$, $p = .003$). It indicates that female students were spending a greater amount of time on social media in comparison to male students. So, the hypothesis # 1 is proved. In a similar vein, Aqsa and Imran (2019) discovered that Pakistani female students report spending a much greater amount of time on social networking sites on a daily basis than male students.

H2: The chi-square test indicates a significant association ($\chi^2 = 24.53$, $p = .000$) between the students' household income and the time they spent on social media. The statistical analysis (Gamma coefficient = 0.465, $p = .000$) revealed a significant and positive association between the variables. It means, high income family's students were spending more time with social media. So, hypothesis 2 is proved. Similar findings were reported by Vannucci et al. (2017), who discovered that among teenagers and young adults, greater socioeconomic level was positively correlated with increasing digital engagement and social media usage.

H3: The Chi-square value ($\chi^2 = 8.28$, $p = 0.016$) indicates a statistically significant association between time spent on social media and students' perception of its impact on academic performance. The Gamma coefficient (-0.359), which is negative and highly significant, implies a inverse relationship: as time spent on social media increases, the likelihood of students perceiving it as having a positive impact decrease. Consequently, the hypothesis "The use of social media among students significantly influences their academic performance" is proved. Stollaket al. (2011) also investigated the links amongst the social media usage and its influence on educational presentations. The outcome reveals a compelling conclusion that a significant correlation exists between students' grade point average (GPA) and the amount of time they spend on social networking sites (SNSs). It has been established that students who spend a greater amount of time on social media tend to experience a decrease in their grade point average (GPA).

H4: The statistical analysis, specially, the Chi-square value (9.06, p -value = 0.011), show a statistically significant at the 0.05 level. This confirms that there is a significant association between time spent on social media and students' perceptions

of its influence on social interaction. The Gamma coefficient (-0.309, p-value = 0.046), also indicates a significant and inverse relationship. It means, excessive time spent on social media may not continue to enhance social interaction and could even reduce the quality of face-to-face engagement. Consequently, the hypothesis “Use of social media significantly influences social interaction” is proved. This aligns with the findings of Pempek et al. (2009), who observed that college students often use social networking platforms like Facebook to maintain existing relationships and enhance peer communication.

H5: The Chi-square test (6.97, p-value = 0.031), indicating a statistically significant association between time spent on social media and perceived negative mental health effects. The Gamma coefficient (0.302, p-value = 0.022) also indicates a positive and significant relationship. This means as the time spent on social media increases, so does the likelihood of students reporting stress, anxiety, or other negative mental effects. So, the hypothesis “High exposure to social media content is associated with increased levels of anxiety and depression” is accepted. These results are similar to Keles et al. (2020), who found strong associations between excessive social media use and increased levels of depression, anxiety, and psychological distress among adolescents and young adults.

Conclusions

It was concluded that the university students use social media and the internet extensively, and the majority of them do so via cellphones. Socioeconomic characteristics including income, gender, and rural background greatly impact consumption trends. Longer social media use was more common among female students and high-income undergraduate students also spending more with social media. A mixed pattern of use was clear in the fact that although many students used social media for informative and instructional objectives, a sizable fraction also used it for leisure and pleasure. Additionally, the research discovered that social media had both beneficial and negative effects on academic achievement of university students. Although a lot of students said that technology improved awareness, information access, and peer interaction, excessive usage was linked to decreased academic attention, anxiety, and decline in writing abilities. Students also acknowledged the value of social networking in fostering relationships, but many also voiced worries about how it may affect their mental health and in-person relationships. Overall, the research emphasizes the need to use social media in a balanced and intentional manner, as well as with institutional support and direction, to ensure that it plays a positive role in students' academic and personal growth.

Recommendations

Based on the study findings, some recommendations for students and policymakers are given below:

Promote Balanced Usage: Study results indicated that around half of the students used >3-5 hours daily on social media networking sites. So, parents and teachers should encourage students to balance their time on social media with other activities to prevent addiction and adverse health effects.

Educational Integration: It was found that most of the students reported that they used social media for educational and informational purposes, but a considerable number also engaged with it for entertainment. So, it is recommended that integrate social media into the curriculum to utilize its potential for educational purposes, ensuring students engage with relevant and up-to-date content.

Time Management Workshops: Offer workshops on effective time management to help students allocate appropriate time for social media, academics, and leisure.

Connect with classmates: Use social media platforms to connect with your classmates and build a supportive online community. Students can create groups or join existing ones to share study resources, ask questions, and collaborate on projects.

Instructor-Led Computer Labs: Set up computer labs with instructors to guide students on effectively using social media for research and educational purposes.

Promote Positive Content: Encourage creating and sharing positive, educational, and informative content on social media platforms.

Research and Monitoring: Policymakers should fund ongoing research to monitor the impact of social media on student health and academic performance, adjusting policies as needed to address emerging issues.

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