

## **IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Despite the unhealthy impact of social media many students are engrossed in spending most of their hours on social media sites which includes the most popular Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Social media has embedded a negative image upon many minds however it is also perceived as a pathway to develop vital knowledge and social skills among students beyond their campus walls (Wang, Chen and Liang, 2011). Social media has equal positive or negative aspects but many students are using these sites on a regular basis. Over the years many studies have been conducted over the impact of social media on academic performance of students and it demonstrates a strong relationship between the two variables. Therefore, our research aims to study the relationship between the social media and students' academic performance in Pakistan.

**Keywords:** Social media usage; Academic Performance; Facebook; GPA

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Since the last few decades technology has grown immensely and has brought major changes globally. Communication barriers have been reduced through technological advancement and new mediums are being introduced to connect global audiences. Social networking has become an international trend and has spread its reach to almost every corner of the world. With these advancements a major concern arises as in this age of huge technological development social networking sites are becoming more and more popular among students especially in Pakistan. Statistics for 2011 suggested that around 20,431,000 Pakistanis were using internet on a regular basis (DAWN, 2011). However, the question remains that whether Facebook has any impact on student's academic performance. There are handfuls of studies showing negative relationship between Facebook and its impact on academic performance including one which suggests how children with lower attention span focused more on Facebook and children with higher attention span spent less time on Facebook (Paul, Baker and Cochran, 2012).

Several research studies have been conducted across the world examining the effect of social media on the academic performances of students. Up to our knowledge, only a handful of studies have been conducted in Pakistan on this issue. Previous researches were mostly based on one social networking site such as Facebook. A research was done by Madge, Meek, Wellens and Hooley (2009) based on the universities in the U.K. The study showed negative relationship between Facebook and the academic performance of students. However, the study didn't focus on which students were using Facebook and what time of the day they used it the most. Moreover, the sample used for the study was homogenous thereby restricting their research findings. Another research by Asdaque, Khan and Rizvi (2010) was conducted on 100 undergraduate students of two federal universities in Pakistan. The research focused on the use of internet and its effects on academic performance. The results suggested a negative relationship. However, the study was carried out in the same cultural environment and within the same city; therefore it did not identify which social networking sites were being used. Moreover, it did not highlight at what time of the day it was being used the most which resulted in poor academic performance among students.

Further work on this area comprises of a study conducted by Bashir, Mahmood and Shafique (2008) at one of the university in Pakistan which focused on the internet usage by undergraduates, graduates and post graduate students. The study analyzed a sample of 300 users and the analysis assessed the relationship of internet with experience, frequency and places of

internet usage. The results suggested a positive relationship among students and internet usage, and 63 percent of the total students mentioned that they used internet regarding academic related work only. Nevertheless, this study only focused on internet usage rather than specific impact of social media on academic performance. Majority of these studies were carried out at least 5 years ago. As the time passed, the use of social media has increased. Therefore, more extensive study is required to critically analyze this situation.

In light of this, our objective is to investigate the effect of social media on academic performance of students and to determine whether it has a negative or positive relationship. We plan to conduct out research in order to learn how the use of Social Networking Sites (SNS) has an impact on a student's academic performance.

## **2.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESIS**

### **Literature Review**

#### ***Social Media***

Social media is a phenomenon that has been developing in a rapid pace. Different scholars have described it in a different way and as Jacka and Scott (2011: 5) say “there is no single recognized definition of social media”. Drury (2008: 1) defines social media as “online resources that people use to share content: video, photos, images, text, ideas, insight, humor, opinion, gossip, news”. Safko and Brake (2008) further defined social media as “activities, practices, and behaviors among communities of people who gather online to share information, knowledge, and opinions using conversational media. Conventional media are Web-based applications that make possible for one to create and easily transmit content in the form of words, pictures, videos, and audios”. Different researcher explained their perspective regarding social media and we support Drury's definition as it explains the role of social media in a precise statement. Social media has certainly become a global platform where sharing data internationally has become an international trend.

Since the last few decades technology has grown immensely and has brought major changes globally. Communication barriers have reduced through technological advancement and new mediums are being introduced to connect global audiences. Social networking has become an international trend and has spread its reach to almost every corner of the world. According to a survey conducted in 2014 there were 15.4 million people using Facebook which represented 8.5

percent of the total population (Haque, 2014). However, with these advancements a major concern arises as in this age of huge technological development social networking sites are becoming more and more popular especially among students.

### ***Academic Performance***

Academic performance is the dependent variable of our research and is defined as the performance a student has maintained in his/her academic career. Academic performance at university level is considered up to the mark if the student has persistently maintained his GPA. However, external factors may affect on student's academic performance such as social media usage. In light of this, our objective is to investigate the effect of social media on academic performance of students and to determine whether it has a negative or positive relationship.

### ***Social media usage and Academic performance***

Over the years many studies have been conducted and social media has depicted both positive as well as negative effect on the academic performance of the students. There are certain factors that influence the relationship between social media and academic performance such as how long students use social networking sites? What time of the day do they use these sites the most? A handful of studies have discussed the relationship between these variables internationally as well as in Pakistan. A research was done by Madge, Meek, Wellens and Hooley (2009) based on the universities in the U.K. The study showed negative relationship between Facebook and the academic performance of students. However, the study didn't focus on which students were using Facebook and what time of the day they used it the most. Moreover, the sample used for the study was homogenous thereby restricting their research findings. Whereas according to Pasek, More and Hargittai (2009) the use of Facebook has a positive relationship with academic performance. According to their research the students with higher grades tend to spend more of their time on Facebook. Furthermore, Paul, Baker and Cochran (2012) suggested that a negative relationship exists between time spent by students on social networking sites and their academic performance.

Internet usage has also become a concerning issue in Pakistan's society as the vast availability of social media has affected many sectors of the society. Statistics suggest that around 20,431,000 Pakistanis use internet on a regular basis and in 2011 1.9 million Pakistani used the popular

social media site such as Twitter which contributed to 1 percent of the total Twitter users (DAWN, 2011). Academic scholars in Pakistan conducted researches to examine the relationship between social media and academic performance. A research by Asdaque, Khan and Rizvi (2010) was conducted on 100 undergraduate students of two federal universities in Pakistan. The research focused on the use of internet and its effects on academic performance. The results suggested a negative relationship. Further work on this area comprises of a study conducted by Bashir, Mahmood and Shafique (2008) at one of the university in Pakistan which focused on the internet usage by undergraduates, graduates and post graduate students. The study analyzed a sample of 300 users and the analysis assessed the relationship of internet with experience, frequency and places of internet usage. The results suggested a positive relationship among students and internet usage, and 63 percent of the total students mentioned that they used internet regarding academic related work only. Nevertheless, this study only focused on internet usage rather than specific impact of social media on academic performance. Another study was conducted by Suhail and Bargees (2006) on the affect of social networking in Pakistan and they used the Internet Effect Scale (IES) for their study to determine the effect of certain factors consisted of seven dimensions namely: behavioral problems, educational problems, internet abuse, interpersonal problems, psychological problems and positive effects. Their research finding suggested positive as well as negative aspects of social media. The relationship between spare time spent on the internet showed positive relationship and suggested that the time spent on internet has affected student's interpersonal, educational, psychological and physical factors. On the other hand, the study also recommended that internet can also help students to enhance their academic performance.

Usage of internet has also been associated with physical and mental health as well as can have adverse impact on family life. According to Akhtar (2013) excessive usage of internet can become an addiction especially among students and it can cause academic problems. The author suggested that internet addiction can cause a fall in time spent on studies, major drop in grades, low interest in extracurricular activities and lack of interest in classes. Moreover, internet addiction among children has been associated with psychological and mental problems such as anxiety, depression and the feeling of loneliness. In certain researches social media has depicted a positive academic interaction and scholars have supported internet usage among students. However, adverse impact of social media has outweighed the positive aspects. First, excessive usage of social media has shown negative impact on student's physical, psychological and

family health. Moreover, excessive usage has also been associated with sleep deprivation, insomnia and chronic illnesses (O’Keeffe and Pearson, 2011).

Our research objective is to investigate the effect of social media on academic performance of students and to determine its negative impact on Pakistani students. Previous studies have not explored every medium of social media such as Twitter and Instagram and their impact on student’s academic performance. In order to understand the relationship between social media usage and its impact on academic performance we have developed the following hypothesis.

***Hypothesis 1:***

Social media has negative impact on academic performance.

In our theoretical model the independent variable is social media and dependant variable is academic performance.

Figure 1: Theoretical model of study



### **3.0 METHODS**

#### **Data and Sample**

The survey research study method was employed and a structured questionnaire was used to collect data from the desired sample. The data was collected from 171 students who were currently enrolled in the 7 known universities and other institutions classified in our research simply as “other” in the twin cities. Out of the 7 educational organizations 4 were private institutions. A total of 191 surveys were distributed from which we received 171 complete responses. Out of these 171 responses 109 respondents (63.7%) were females and the students were studying in different faculties. According to statistics, 84 respondents (49.1%) belonged to the management department, the students of humanities were 16 (9.4%), 9 (5.3%) were in computer science, 15 were in medical (8.8%) and the remaining 47 (27.5%) were classified as “other”.

#### **Measures**

All the responses were collected online and were accessed using 5-point Likert-type scale with anchors 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neutral, 4= agree and 5= strongly agree and 1= never, 2= rarely, 3= sometimes, 4= often and 5= always. Questions used for the questionnaire for both variables were adopted from multiple authors which included Ogedebe and Emmanuel (2012), O’Brien (2011), Gabre (2012) and Shah, Subramanian, Rouis and Limayem (2012).

#### ***Social Media Usage***

The questionnaire included 2 parts and 22 questions in total. The first part was regarding students’ social media usage. Out of the 22 questions, 10 questions were designed to measure the impact of social media usage on students. One of the sample questions asked was “I lose track of time while using social media” where 51 students (29.8%) out of 171 strongly agreed while 7 students (4.1%) strongly disagreed. Another question asked was “social media has become a part of my daily routine” only 3 students (1.8%) strongly disagreed while 78 students (45.6%) strongly agreed.

### **Academic Performance**

Out of the 22 questions, 6 questions were designed to measure students' academic performance. One of the sample questions was to measure the impact of social media usage on students' GPA. A question of significance that was asked was "my GPA has fallen during last semester" 30 (17.5%) of the respondents strongly disagreed while 19 (11.1%) strongly agreed. Another question was "how actively you participate in class" 12 (7%) of the respondents replied "rarely" while 47 (27.5%) replied with "always".

## **4.0 RESULTS**

### **Descriptive Statistics and Correlation**

The correlation between social media usage and academic performance ( $r = -0.239$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) states that the more students spend time on social media the poor they perform in university at a low level of significance. Social media has an inverse relationship with academic performance. Table 1 show the correlation values which suggests that if students spend maximum time on social media, then their academic performance will fall considerably proving the inverse relationship. However, the value of  $-0.239$  shows a weak relationship among the variables and therefore, there can be other factors that influence the relationship between social media usage and academic performance.

### **Regression Analysis**

Linear regression analysis was used to test our main hypotheses. Results indicated that social media usage has an impact on academic performance ( $\beta = -0.315$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Table 2 shows the reported beta and coefficient of determination values. These results support Hypothesis 1 for depicts that social media usage has a negative relationship with academic performance.

**Table 1** Correlation

<b>Academic Performance</b>	
<b>Social Media Usage</b>	
Pearson Correlation	-0.239**
Sig. value	0.002



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\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (Two-tailed)

**Table 2** Results of Regression analysis

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	Academic Performance	
	$\beta$	$\Delta R^2$
<b>Social Media Usage</b>	-0.317**	0.052

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N= 171

\*\*p <0.01

## 5.0 DISCUSSION

The data analysis was done using SPSS program to run correlation, regression and reliability tests in order to find the relationship between social media usage and academic performance of university students. The correlation between the two variables “social media usage” and “academic performance” suggests a negative correlation. According to our results, the usage of social media has an inverse relationship with academic performance of students. This suggests that the more students spend time on social media, the more their GPA is affected. Furthermore, students who tend to participate less in class are more engaged in using social media. Despite the fact that our analysis reports a negative correlation but the weak value also suggests that there are other factors that can have a significant impact on academic performance of students.

## 6.0 CONCLUSION

Our research has examined and evaluated the underlying impact of social media usage on student’s academic performance. With advancement in technology and increase in internet usage, social media has become a part of our daily lives. Our analysis was set out with the objective to assess student’s attitudes and behaviour patterns towards social media usage. As our results suggest, social media has an inverse relationship with academic performance. Social media platform is a vast field where communication barriers are diminishing and access to data has grown significantly. If social media is used in a positive manner it can help students and

youth in gaining knowledge that can be used to enhance their academic performance. Therefore, for future research it is imperative to further study the impact of social media usage on other variables such as student's goals, satisfaction with university policies and personality. The relationship with other factors can play a significant role in assessing the true correlation between social media usage and academic performance therefore; further study is required to clearly understand the true mechanisms between these two variables.

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