



IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA USE ON STUDY HABITS AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of social media use on the study habits and academic performance of university students, comparing public and private universities in Faisalabad. Data were collected from 300 students through a 30-item, five-point Likert scale questionnaire. Descriptive and inferential analyses revealed that while social media facilitates academic collaboration, resource access, and online discussions, it is predominantly used for entertainment, leading to distractions, procrastination, and reduced focus. Students from private universities demonstrated more disciplined usage patterns, correlating with better academic outcomes. The findings suggest that balanced, purposeful social media use can support learning, but excessive recreational use undermines academic performance. Policy recommendations are offered to promote responsible digital engagement in higher education.

Keywords: Social media, study habits, academic achievement, public sector

Introduction

Social media has become an integral part of students' daily lives, profoundly influencing academic engagement and study habits. Research indicates that these platforms offer both opportunities and risks: they can inspire learning, foster collaboration, and provide access to personalized resources, yet they also contribute to distractions, reduced concentration, and procrastination (Wheeler et al., 2008; Liccardi et al., 2007).

Developing effective study habits—structured, consistent learning routines—is essential for academic success (Stella & Purthshothaman, 1993). Social media's widespread adoption over the past two decades has reshaped how students communicate, access information, and collaborate on academic tasks (Pempek et al., 2009). While these tools can enhance engagement, excessive non-academic use can harm academic performance (Kirschner & Karpinski, 2010).

With the rise of e-learning and blended models, students increasingly rely on social media to supplement formal instruction (Manca & Ranieri, 2016). However, prolonged and unregulated use risks cognitive overload and poor time management (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017). As higher education embraces digital transformation, understanding the dual impact of social media on learning outcomes has become crucial for educators, policymakers, and students alike.

Developing a study habit involves setting up a particular time slot that is unbroken and planned to focus on learning. Without it, a person becomes self-limiting and fails to progress. One may determine how much one will learn, how far one wants to go, and how much one wants to achieve by one's study habits. All of these might be determined throughout one's life



with the aid of their study habits. According to Stella and Purtsiothaman (1993), the researchers categorized the students' performance as high, average, and low achievers.

The popularity and adoption of social media have had a significant impact on academic communication, information sharing, and learning procedures. Over the past two decades, students' interactions, learning, and engagement with educational information have been altered by social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, TikTok, and Twitter (Pempek et.al, 2009). These platforms promote collaborative learning and information sharing, but they also provide possible distractions that might impair students' study habits and academic achievement (Junco, 2012).

University students use social media regularly, which influences their time management, cognitive processes, and academic engagement. Numerous scholars propose that social media contributes to the development of a better educational experience. Social media encourages cooperation, interaction, and access to learning resources (Pempek et. al, 2009). However, excessive or non-academic use might result in worse academic performance, procrastination, and diminished attention (Kirschner & Karpinski, 2010). This contradiction necessitates a qualitative, in-depth analysis of how university students' usage of social media influences their study habits from a comparative perspective.

Furthermore, as technology and pedagogy have advanced, the purposes of social media have also evolved. As a result, students now depend on social media to enhance traditional teaching techniques due to the rise of e-learning and blended learning models (Manca & Ranieri, 2016). However, because prolonged social networking can lead to cognitive overload and lower productivity, there are worries that students won't be able to manage their social and academic lives (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017).

Given social media's growing influence on academic conduct, it is important to comprehend its implications. Not every student uses these platforms to maximize their educational advantages; instead, many struggle with time management and distractions, which leads to less-than-ideal academic results (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017). The need to investigate the influence of study habits and performance is highlighted by the ongoing reliance on social media for academic conversations and information acquisition. Evaluating the advantages and disadvantages of social media in academic contexts is now crucial for educators, policymakers, and students as higher education institutions embrace digital change.

Therefore, it is evident that learners who struggle academically might still have bad and ineffective study habits and strategies (Ehsan & Sultana, 2020). If students are aware of their learning styles or patterns, they will be better able to understand why they sometimes get frustrated with traditional study methods. Ehsan & Sultana (2020) contend that good study habits are essential for academic achievement since they pave the way for a prosperous academic future. One can improve grades, get admission to more esteemed institutions, and even receive a scholarship if one develops productive study habits. This will lead to a prosperous career. Regardless of their educational background, students must establish productive study habits. As a consequence, students develop greater self-direction and ultimately succeed academically.

Statement of the Problem

The rapid growth of social media has significantly influenced the lives of university students, reshaping how they engage with academic activities and manage their time. While social media provides platforms for collaboration, information sharing, and educational opportunities, its frequent use can lead to negative outcomes such as reduced focus,

procrastination, and poor time management. Even though students are using social media with more passion, there aren't many thorough comparative studies looking at how different student groups' use of it impacts their study habits and academic achievement. In order to shed light on how these variables interact and change depending on the situation, this study intends to examine the link between university students' use of social media, study habits, and academic achievement in the local context.

Objectives of the Study

Objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To find out the effect of social media usage on the study habits of university students.
2. To find out the academic performance of university students.
3. To compare the effect of social media usage on study habits and academic performance of male and female students.
4. To compare the effect of social media usage on study habits and academic performance of public and private universities.

Research Questions of the Study

Research questions are as follows:

1. What are the effects of social media usage on the study habits of students at the university level?
2. What is the academic performance of students in public and private universities?
3. Is there any difference in the effect of social media usage on the study habits of male and female students?
4. Is there any difference in the effects of social media usage on the study habits of students in public and private universities?

Significance of the Study

Given the prevalence of digital technology in educational settings, it would be very advantageous to do a comprehensive study on how social media affects students' study habits and academic performance. This element is crucial, particularly when it comes to comprehending the dependence of learners and the expectations of educators and stakeholders for the most effective ways to address them. The results of the study will help students better understand how they use social media and how it could impact their academic achievement. By understanding the benefits and drawbacks of social media use, students may devise ways to optimize their online engagement for learning purposes while minimizing distractions. Students who comprehend how social media influences their study habits will be able to apply self-regulation strategies that improve academic achievement and productivity.

Thus, this study highlights the function of social media in educational settings. It assists educators in creating successful lesson plans that leverage digital platforms to advance learning. With a better knowledge of how students use social media for learning, teachers may create more dynamic and interesting ways to educate on these platforms while reducing their negative effects. University administrators and legislators can use the study's findings to create policies governing the usage of social media in educational settings. Policies that strike a balance between the advantages of technology and successful teaching methods are necessary, given the growth of online education and digital resources. The institutions may run awareness campaigns to teach students how to use social media responsibly and provide them with tools to help them become more digitally literate.



Literature Review

Study habits—structured, intentional patterns of learning—play a critical role in academic achievement (Nagaraju, 2004). Efficient habits foster literacy, critical thinking, and self-regulation, while poor habits lead to underperformance (Rabia et al., 2017). Factors such as age, family background, motivation, and cognitive abilities influence the development of these habits (Kaur & Pathania, 2015; Sikhwari, 2016).

Social media introduces new dynamics into study practices. Platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter enable collaborative learning, resource sharing, and academic networking (Pempek et al., 2009). Yet, they also compete for students' attention, contributing to time mismanagement and procrastination when used excessively (Junco, 2012). Research shows mixed outcomes: while some students leverage social media for academic purposes, others report performance declines due to distraction (Kirschner & Karpinski, 2010).

Multiple studies underscore the need for balance. For example, Sakirudeen and Sanni (2017) found that note-taking, library use, and time management—offline study skills—remain essential for academic success, even in digitally connected environments. Similarly, Rezaie-Looyeh et al. (2017) and Singh (2011) highlight that awareness of one's study patterns can help mitigate the negative effects of social media and improve performance. Overall, the literature points to the importance of guiding students toward intentional, academically focused social media use.

According to Kaur and Pathania (2015), age, family wealth, and education all had a substantial impact on college students' study habits. According to their research, academic success and study habits are strongly correlated. It implies that a student's age, family income, and level of education all have an impact on how they form their study habits and are linked to their academic achievement. However, cognitive characteristics like intellectual capability predict academic success. The effects of non-cognitive elements, such as study methods, motivation, study habits, and attitudes toward academic success, have been the subject of several studies. The results of the study suggest that students' academic development may be significantly impacted by positive research attitudes and productive study practices (Sikhwari, 2016).

According to Tus et al. (2020), students are showing a reasonable degree of teacher acceptance, embracing instruction, overcoming reluctance, and adopting effective approaches, as well as continuing to improve their study habits and learning attitudes. These may be the outcome of the great training and procedures the college offered, as well as the experience of their families. Aquino (2011) examined the viewpoints and constructive and destructive study habits of the first-year students. The research suggests that students may fare better academically if they cultivate effective study habits. Furthermore, university students' interactions were examined by Sakirudeen & Sanni (2017). The results also showed a high relationship between note-taking, library usage, and time management and students' academic success in their topics. This suggests that these components will improve kids' academic performance. According to Azzopardi and Camilleri (2018), teachers need to be aware of research trends and the perceived difficulty of certain courses to encourage higher academic achievement. The findings demonstrated that there was no appreciable difference between the students' research habits and the mean evaluation score at the end of the first year of the course.

According to Rezaie-Looyeh et al. (2017), there is a substantial correlation between students' study habits and academic achievement. Students may be able to enhance both their



learning habits and academic performance if they are more conscious of the link between their study habits and academic success.

According to Issa et al. (2012), students' daily reading habits have an impact on their ability to study and, ultimately, their academic achievement. It is often known that pupils' reading habits and overall academic success are related. Singh (2011) investigated upper secondary students' study habits and academic achievement. The findings showed that students' study habits and academic performance were not significantly impacted by gender. Ogbodo (2010) examined the motivations behind parents' decisions to send their children to college to continue their education. Learners are exposed to a variety of situations in college, which affects their behavior. Learning, then, is a behavioral shift. Their ability to think, develop physically, manipulate others, and form interests and values are a few instances of this shift. Depending on the circumstances at home and at university, the transition might be simple or complex. The educated elite frequently read for pleasure or leisure. Periodically reading periodicals helps students prevent mental exhaustion, calm their minds, and maintain discipline while attending college. Most of the time, its ability to promote relaxation and sleep following tiresome reading in the library or classroom contributes to healthy habits. Reading, according to Dadzie (2008), is the ability to grasp written language and use that comprehension for one's personal growth. This means providing context to information that has been recorded during the course of an individual's life, whether or not it has been written. People read for many different purposes, including pleasure, leisure, relaxation, information, and knowledge.

Research Methodology

Nature of Study

This quantitative study examined the relationship between social media use, study habits, and academic performance among university students, comparing public and private institutions. A survey method was employed.

Population/Sample of the Study

The population comprised students from public and private universities in Faisalabad. A purposive sample of 300 students—150 from a public university and 150 from a private university—was selected from sub-campuses.

Instrument of the Study

A self-developed, five-point Likert scale questionnaire with 30 items was designed based on the study objectives. It contained three sections: (1) demographic information (gender, university type, academic level), (2) social media usage (frequency, duration, purpose), and (3) study habits and academic performance (self-reported routines, CGPA, concentration, time management).

Reliability and Validity of the Instrument

Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, yielding a coefficient of 0.747, indicating acceptable internal consistency. Content validity was confirmed by expert review, and revisions were made according to feedback. The reliability coefficient is shown in Table 1:

Table 1

Reliability Statistics of the Scale

N	Cronbach's Alpha
30	0.747

Data Collection

After validation and pilot testing, researchers personally administered the questionnaire in the selected institutions.

Data Analysis

Suitable statistical techniques were used to analyze data. Descriptive statistics such as frequency count, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used to interpret data. Inferential statistics, like the independent sample t-test, were used to compare the influence of social media on male and female students, and students at public and private universities. Version 26 of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the data.

Results

Descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation) summarized responses, while inferential tests—*independent samples t-test*—examined differences by gender and institution type. Significance was set at $p < 0.05$.

Table 2

Demography of Respondents

Demographic Variables	F	%
Gender		
Male	150	50.0
Female	150	50.0
Universities		
Riphah International University, Islamabad, Faisalabad Campus	150	50.0
University of Education Lahore, Faisalabad Campus	150	50.0
Departments		
Natural Sciences	153	52.6
Social Sciences	97	32.3
Arts & Humanities	50	16.7
Semesters		
Semester2	30	10.0
Semester3	32	10.7
Semester4	32	10.7
Semester5	35	11.7
Semester6	20	6.7
Semester7	36	12.0
Semester8	115	38.3

The demographic data shows an equal distribution of gender among the respondents, with 150 males (50.0%) and 150 females (50.0%) participants. An equal number of students were also drawn from both Riphah International University, Islamabad, Faisalabad Campus, and University of Education, Lahore, Faisalabad Campus—150 respondents (50.0%) each. Department-wise, most respondents belonged to Natural Sciences (153, 52.6%), followed by Social Sciences (97, 32.3%), and Arts & Humanities (50, 16.7%). In terms of semester classification, the majority were in Semester 8 (115, 38.3%), while others were fairly evenly

spread across Semester 2 (30, 10.0%), Semester 3 (32, 10.7%), Semester 4 (32, 10.7%), Semester 5 (35, 11.7%), Semester 6 (20, 6.7%), and Semester 7 (36, 12.0%).

Social Media Usage and Study Habits

Students reported frequent use of platforms such as Facebook and Twitter ($M = 4.32$, $SD = 0.62$), primarily for entertainment ($M = 4.67$, $SD = 0.52$). Many acknowledged distractions from notifications ($M = 4.44$, $SD = 0.64$) and study time interruptions ($M = 4.01$, $SD = 1.06$). While some engaged in academic discussions ($M = 4.29$, $SD = 0.89$) and accessed educational content ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 0.96$), the perceived overall effect on study habits was negative.

Table 3

Effect of Social Media on the Study Habits of the Students

Statements	N	Mean	SD
I use social media platforms frequently [e.g., Facebook, Twitter, etc.]	300	4.32	0.62
I spend a significant amount of time on social media each day.	300	3.38	1.49
I will not perform well in my academics even if I stop using social media.	300	4.10	0.88
Sometimes I use social media to understand what I have been taught in my class.	300	4.11	0.95
I use social media more for entertainment than for academic purposes.	300	4.67	0.52
Social media platforms help me access educational content and materials.	300	3.97	0.96
I use social media for educational purposes [e.g., finding academic content, participating in a study group]	300	3.59	1.56
I use social media a lot.	300	3.67	1.31
Social media becomes boring as I grow older.	300	4.46	0.68
I make use of WhatsApp to disseminate knowledge to my classmates.	300	4.22	0.80
My social media usage distracts me from my study time.	300	4.01	1.06
I get distracted by notifications from social media while studying.	300	4.44	0.64
The usage of Google Scholar for research has helped me improve my grades.	300	4.22	0.73
I used materials obtained from blogging sites to complement what I have been taught in class.	300	4.13	1.02
I engage in academic discussions on social media platforms.	300	4.29	0.89
My academic performance is impacted when I spend too much time on social media.	300	3.68	0.59
Online social networks distract me from my studies.	300	3.00	0.83
There is no improvement in my grades since I became engaged in social networking sites.	300	3.86	0.42
Addiction to online social networks is a problematic issue that affects my academic career.	300	3.59	0.69
I believe social media can improve learning experiences if used properly.	300	3.42	0.84
I usually have unlimited access to Facebook, and this has affected my academic performance negatively.	300	3.40	0.87
I engage in academic discussions on Twitter, and this has improved my academic performance.	300	3.25	0.80



My academic performance would improve if I reduced my use of social media.	300	3.38	0.71
I feel more connected to my academic community [e.g., Classmates, professors] through social media.	300	3.22	0.97
Social media use has had a positive impact on my academic performance.	300	3.24	0.96
Social media usage is an essential tool for my academic life.	300	3.60	0.75
The time I spend online on social media takes away from my time studying.	300	3.42	0.82
My unlimited access to Facebook through my cell phone has affected my academic performance negatively.	300	3.50	0.92
I solely rely on information obtained from Google Scholar to do my assignments without consulting other sources.	300	3.61	0.74
I have noticed a decrease in my academic performance when I spend more time on social media.	300	3.80	0.40

Table 3 indicates that students frequently use social media (Mean = 4.32, SD = 0.62), primarily for entertainment rather than academic purposes (Mean = 4.67, SD = 0.52), which often distracts them from their studies (e.g., distraction by notifications: Mean = 4.44, SD = 0.64). While some students use platforms like Google Scholar (Mean = 4.22, SD = 0.73) and blogging sites (Mean = 4.13, SD = 1.02) to support their learning, the overall impact of social media on academic performance is perceived as negative—many acknowledge that social media usage distracts them (Mean = 4.01, SD = 1.06) and that their academic performance would improve if they reduced its use (Mean = 3.38, SD = 0.71). Although there is some engagement in academic discussions online (Mean = 4.29, SD = 0.89), and social media is seen as moderately useful for accessing educational content (Mean = 3.97, SD = 0.96), most students agree that excessive use negatively affects their focus and performance. It proposes the need for a more balanced and intentional use of social media to minimize distractions and enhance its educational benefits.

Academic Performance

CGPA distribution showed 19% in the low range (2.60–3.00), 51% moderate (3.10–3.50), and 30% high (3.60–4.00).

Table 4

Academic Performance of the Students

CGPA	Frequency	Percent
2.60-3.00	57	19.0
3.10-3.50	153	51.0
3.60-4.00	90	30.0
Total	300	100.0

Table 4 exhibited the academic performance of the respondents. It revealed that 19% respondents had poor academic performance with a low CGPA rate of 2.60-3.00, 51% respondents had a moderate level of educational performance with a CGPA rate of 3.10-3.50, whereas 30% respondents had high educational performance with a CGPA rate of 3.60-4.00.

Comparative Analyses

University type: Private university students reported stronger study habits ($M = 3.91$) than public university students ($M = 3.66$), $t(298) = 6.602$, $p = 0.001$. Academic performance differences were not significant ($p > 0.05$).

Gender: No significant gender differences were found for study habits or academic performance ($p > 0.05$).

Table 5

University-wise Difference in Social Media Usage on the Study Habits of Students

Sector	N	Mean	Sd	df	t	p
Private	150	3.91	0.26	298	6.602	0.001*
Public	150	3.66	0.40			

$P < 0.05$

Table 5 shows the difference in social media usage on the study habits of the respondents of public and private sector universities. It expressed a highly significant variation between both of the sectors with private sector statistics ($M=3.91$, $SD=0.26$) while public sector statistics ($M=3.66$, $SD=0.40$), $t(298)=6.602$, $p=0.001^*$. The results indicated that private sector university students have a highly significant effect of social media on their study habits in comparison to the public sector university students.

Table 6

University-wise Difference in Social Media Usage on Academic Performance of Students

Sector	N	Mean	Sd	df	t	p
Private	150	4.12	0.71	298	0.250	0.803
Public	150	4.10	0.67			

$P > 0.05$

Table 6 revealed the impact of social media use on respondents' academic achievement at public and private universities. It expressed no significant variation between both of the sectors with private sector statistics ($M=4.12$, $SD=0.71$) while public sector statistics ($M=4.10$, $SD=0.67$), $t(298)=0.250$, $p=0.803$. The findings showed that there are no significant variations in the effects of social media on students' academic performance at private and public sector universities.

Table 7

Social Media Usage Difference on Study Habits of Male & Female Respondents

Gender	N	Mean	Sd	df	t	P
Male	150	3.79	0.34	298	0.427	0.670
Female	150	3.77	0.38			

$P > 0.05$

Table 7 shows the difference in social media usage on the study habits of the male and female respondents. It represented no significant difference between both of the respondents with male student statistics ($M=3.79$, $SD=0.34$) while female student statistics ($M=3.77$, $SD=0.38$), $t(298)=0.427$, $p=0.670$. The results specified that male and female respondents have almost similar effects of social media on their study habits.

Table 8*Social Media Usage Difference on Academic Performance of Male & Female Respondents*

Gender	N	Mean	Sd	df	t	p
Male	150	4.12	0.71	298	0.250	0.803
Female	150	4.10	0.67			

 $P > 0.05$

Table 8 shows the difference in social media usage on the academic performance of the male and female respondents. It represented no significant difference between both of the respondents with male students' statistics ($M=4.12$, $SD=0.71$) while female students' statistics ($M=4.10$, $SD=0.673$), $t(298) = 0.250$, $p=0.803$. The results specified that male and female respondents have almost similar effects of social media on their academic performance.

Conclusions

Using a comparative perspective by gender and institution type (private vs public), the research sought to determine how university students' usage of social media affects their study habits and academic performance. The results showed that social media usage and study habits were significantly correlated. Study habits were probably poorer among students who reported using social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and YouTube more often. These included insufficient reading time, procrastination, and lack of concentration. This implies that students who use social media excessively may get distracted from their schoolwork and develop poor time management skills.

This study examined the effects of social media use on study habits and academic performance among public and private university students in Faisalabad. Findings indicate that while social media can enhance learning through academic discussions, resource sharing, and collaboration, it is predominantly used for entertainment, leading to distractions, procrastination, and reduced focus.

Private university students demonstrated stronger study habits than their public university counterparts, but no significant differences were found in academic performance between institution types or genders. These results underscore that the impact of social media is shaped more by how it is used than by demographic factors.

Overall, social media is neither inherently beneficial nor harmful; its influence depends on the user's ability to regulate usage and prioritize academic engagement. Promoting digital literacy and self-regulation strategies is essential for maximizing benefits and minimizing negative outcomes.

Discussion

The findings confirm prior research that social media exerts both positive and negative influences on students' academic lives. While some students benefit from its collaborative and informational potential, many experience decreased concentration and increased procrastination due to recreational overuse.

Private university students exhibited more disciplined study habits, likely linked to structured use and greater digital literacy, whereas public university students appeared less influenced, possibly due to fewer online distractions. However, academic performance did not differ significantly between institution types, indicating that factors beyond study habits—such as prior academic preparation—may play a role.

Gender comparisons revealed minimal differences in impact, though qualitative trends suggested that female students may demonstrate greater self-regulation despite frequent use. This aligns with literature suggesting gender-specific patterns in online engagement.



Overall, the results reinforce the importance of digital self-regulation and purposeful engagement. Rather than restricting access, higher education institutions should foster digital literacy programs that encourage academic use of social media and minimize non-productive online behavior.

Recommendations

Introduce Digital Literacy Programs: Develop workshops to train students in managing social media use effectively, emphasizing its academic potential while reducing recreational distractions.

Monitor Academic Progress: Implement regular academic tracking and provide targeted support for students whose performance is affected by excessive social media use.

Institution-Specific Interventions: Design tailored strategies for public and private universities that address their unique infrastructure, resources, and student behaviors.

Gender-Sensitive Approaches: Incorporate awareness sessions that address different patterns of use among male and female students, promoting balanced engagement.

Promote Academic Platforms: Encourage the use of academically oriented social networking tools such as Google Scholar, ResearchGate, and LinkedIn Learning as productive alternatives to purely recreational sites.

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