



RESEARCH PAPER

The Impact of Social Media on raising Drug Awareness among Students in Educational Institutions

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ABSTRACT

The rapid growth of social media has revolutionized communication, especially among young people, offering a powerful platform to address critical issues like drug addiction. This study examines how effectively social media educates students about the dangers of drug use. By analyzing data from various educational institutions in Lahore, the research aims to explore the impact of social media campaigns on students related to drug misuse. Data was collected from 450 students through an adapted questionnaire which revealed that social media significantly enhances students' understanding of the risks associated with drug use. The findings show social media use increase drug awareness among students. The study concludes that, due to its widespread use and accessibility, social media is a vital tool in educating students and addressing the public health issue of drug abuse.

KEYWORDS Awareness, Digital Solutions, Drug Addiction, Drug and Crimes, Social Media

Introduction

Social media's rise has completely changed how individuals communicate and share information, especially with younger audiences (Muzaffar, et. al, 2020). Digital solutions like these can raise awareness about important issues like drug addiction in educational institutions where students are using social media more frequently. (Muzaffar, et. al, 2019; Muzaffar, et. al, 2017) This study examines the best ways to use social media to educate students about the risks associated with drug use. The use of social media is often characterized by the channel, such as the directionality of messages, or by using certain tools, such as Facebook Twitter, and other social media platforms, to illustrate interactional modes (Wukich, 2022). Since social media is popular so fast, many new technologies become "viral" before their potential effects are known. However, drug abuse, also known as substance abuse, refers to drug usage that harms a person or society. This can involve abusing drugs of any kind, using illegal drugs, or abusing alcohol. Drug use can have a lot of negative consequences, like mental and physical health issues, social and romantic issues, and financial issues. (Olayinka, 2022). Drugs are any chemical that has an impact on how living things function and the pathogens (such as bacteria, fungi, and viruses) that infect them. Drugs are any substances that, when ingested into a living organism, cause reactions or alter psychological and psychological function, according to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2022). Different types of drugs are commonly used like heroin and cocaine. Crack, marijuana, and alcohol can affect users in different ways and the regular use of social media has increased Internet addiction, cyberbullying, drug addiction, sleeping problems, and the lack of in-person engagement. People can share their daily experiences with others using social media on an online platform like celebrities. While some people would use it to promote honest activities like going on a hike or fishing trip, others might use it to share videos, texts, or photos of them drinking or using drugs. When celebrities upload videos or pictures of themselves using drugs and alcohol, thousands of young people see them in a matter of seconds. People who follow their celebrity may want to emulate

them. Whether they are instructors, parents, or famous people, young people often model their behavior after their elders. If these persons are consistently participating.

Social media can help shape how people think about drug use. It can be used to warn people about the dangers of using drugs and to promote prevention and treatment (Muzaffar, et. al, 2020; Rigon, 2018).

In a press conference in December 2018, the government of Pakistan's minister of state for interior said that more than 50% of students in educational institutions in the country's capital area, abused drugs (Azam et al., 2022). The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC) just released its 2019 World Drug Report, which also indicates the rapid increase in drug misuse in Pakistan. With about 208 million people, Pakistan is the sixth-most populous nation in the world (Alveena et al., 2022). Social media apps and the internet also make illegal drugs more convenient; access to drugs can be just a few keystrokes away (Katsuki et al., 2015). By analyzing data from various educational settings, the research aims to understand the extent to which social media campaigns and initiatives influence students' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors regarding drug abuse. The findings of this study will provide valuable insights into the role of social media in public health education and its effectiveness in fostering a well-informed student community on the risks associated with drug use.

Hypothesis:

H1: There is a significant relationship between social media use and awareness about drug abuse among students.

Literature review

This literature review explores the intersection of social media and drug abuse among young people, particularly college students. Social media platforms facilitate the buying and selling of illegal drugs, with methamphetamine and cannabis being especially prevalent. Social media also significantly influences student behavior, promoting substance use and providing a venue for virtual drug trafficking. Research highlights the negative impact of drug abuse on students' academic performance and overall well-being. Awareness campaigns and studies on public perceptions indicate that increased awareness can influence support for drug-related policies. Despite the high rates of drug abuse, there is often only mild concern and interest in intervention among students. Social media encompasses a variety of online platforms and mobile applications that facilitate social connections through user-generated content. Among young people, social media is increasingly used to buy and sell illegal drugs, necessitating choices among numerous available platforms for these transactions. Methamphetamine and cannabis are particularly prevalent on these platforms (Van Der Sanden et al., 2021).

Interactive computer-mediated technologies, such as social media, simplify the creation and sharing of content within online groups and networks, encompassing various forms of expression including information, ideas, and career interests. Social media significantly influences students' lives, altering their perspectives, behaviors, and engagement in activities that can lead to addiction. Research indicates that platforms like Twitter often endorse the use of marijuana, alcohol, and other drugs. Young adults frequently use social media to promote substance use, thus lowering the prevalence of drug abuse among students while also providing a venue for virtual drug traffickers. This environment facilitates drug sales through connections made between acquaintances and strangers (Misiukiewicz et al., 2019).

Ashraf et al. (2020) report that drugs, including alcohol and tobacco, alter the body and mind's functioning. While some drugs are medically prescribed, others are used

recreationally. In Pakistan, nine million people use drugs, with two million aged 15 to 25, many of whom are addicted. The rise in drug use among college and university students adversely affects their social and physical well-being. Commonly abused substances include tobacco, alcohol, opium, cannabis, hallucinogens, stimulants, sedatives, amphetamines, and cocaine. This study aims to explore the causes and effects of drug abuse among Pakistani university students. Khaliq et al. (2018) report that the findings of their study provide insight into the prevalence of drug abuse among medical students in Pakistan. The incidence of drug addiction within a community appears to be influenced by cultural values, beliefs, and attitudes toward drug use. Ahmed et al. (2020) explored the processes leading to drug addiction among university students, focusing on the effects of addiction on daily activities. Their study emphasized that students, as crucial contributors to national development, sometimes engage in illegal activities like drug use due to inattention. Using a qualitative approach, they conducted in-depth interviews with drug-addicted students, analyzing the data through narration and thematic analysis. The research, conducted in three public universities in Pakistan, revealed that drugs are easily accessible to male students without significant resistance. Arria et al. (2017) reported that over half of college students have used illegal drugs at least once, with alcohol being the most popular substance among those aged 18 to 25. Marijuana use is increasing more rapidly among college students compared to non-college students. The study suggests that drug use can help students transition to college life by facilitating the development of mature interpersonal relationships and helping them adjust to new expectations and demands.

However, the role of social media in shaping perceptions of drug use, particularly among young people. Through the analysis of text and visual content on platforms like Instagram, they assess the risk of alcohol, cigarette, and drug use. Their data collection method involves utilizing the Clickworker crowdsourcing platform, which allows for the extraction of Instagram data after obtaining permission from participants (Ana et al., 2022). While Botvin and Griffin (2015) emphasize the adverse effects of drug abuse on physical and mental health, as well as its broader societal impact. Their research underscores the need for comprehensive prevention strategies to address substance abuse among youth and adults. The pervasive issue of drug misuse, particularly among young adults, emphasizing the necessity of raising awareness and altering attitudes regarding substance abuse. Their study focused on the perspectives of medical students in Pakistan, a predominantly Muslim nation with conservative values, regarding heroin, charas, benzodiazepines, and alcohol, which are commonly abused substances. In Pakistan, where societal norms heavily influence individual behaviors, heroin stands out as the most abused drug, followed by marijuana and cigarettes. The study identified peer pressure, academic stress, and curiosity as primary reasons for drug use among students. Additionally, factors such as residing in male college dormitories were associated with increased drug usage. Despite some students citing improved sleep and reduced stress as perceived benefits, the majority expressed no intention of future drug use, with moral considerations and fear of negative consequences acting as significant deterrents (Sloboda et al., 2012). However, the additional studies highlight various factors contributing to drug abuse among students, including cultural influences, family environments, mental health issues, and peer pressure. Drug use is prevalent in both urban and rural settings, with easy access in universities. The findings also reveal that drug and internet addiction significantly impact students' relationships, emotions, and health. Overall, these studies emphasize the need for targeted interventions and increased awareness to mitigate substance misuse in educational settings.

Theoretical Framework

The theory put forth by Albert Bandura, known as the Social Learning Theory, posits that individuals acquire knowledge by observing the actions, attitudes, and consequences of others. This theory underscores the significance of social impact, imitation, and rewards in molding behavior. When examining the literature, the Social Learning Theory can offer valuable insights into the underlying reasons for the prevalence of substance abuse among

youth, especially students, and the determinants behind it. Social learning mechanisms can elucidate how youth, notably students, might be swayed by their peers, family members, and social milieu to partake in substance abuse. Witnessing peers using drugs, perceiving favorable outcomes like stress alleviation or improved social interactions, and receiving social validation or rewards for such conduct can all play a role in the commencement and perpetuation of substance abuse patterns.

For example, Kiambi (2018) emphasized peer pressure as a significant factor influencing substance use among students. These results align with the Social Learning Theory, indicating that individuals might acquire and emulate substance use behaviors through observation, social reinforcement, and imitation within their social circles. Furthermore, Didarloo & Pourali (2016) emphasized the impact of familial variables, like parental substance abuse and discord, on adolescent substance consumption. According to the Social Learning Theory, children could acquire substance use behaviors through directly observing parental substance misuse or indirectly through reinforcement, where family discord or dysfunction might heighten the propensity to seek solace or coping mechanisms through substance use. However, the Social Learning Theory furnishes a structure for comprehending how social influences, imitation, and rewards influence substance use behaviors among young individuals. By acknowledging the social determinants contributing to substance misuse, interventions and preventive strategies can be devised to target these influences and advocate for healthier behaviors among young adults.

Material and Methods

The research methodology employed in this study was quantitative analysis aimed at exploring the impact of social media on drug awareness among students. Utilizing a quantitative approach, the researcher developed a questionnaire tailored to the study's objectives, which was then distributed among the targeted audience via social media platforms and email. The targeted population comprised students from educational institutions in Lahore, chosen due to the observed rise in drug use among undergraduate students, particularly on social media. From this population, a sample of 450 respondents, including both genders and various age groups, was selected using a simple random sampling technique. This method ensured equal representation and allowed for the generalization of results to the broader student population in Lahore. In this study, the targeted population consisted of students of Queen Mary College, Punjab University, University of Central Punjab, Government College of Shalimar, & students of Comsat University. Males and Females who were between the ages of 15-40 were chosen as a sample from Lahore.

Instruments for data collection were developed based on existing scales, with a closed-ended questionnaire used to assess drug awareness among students. The questionnaire included Likert scale items to gauge respondents' agreement with statements related to drug awareness initiatives and social media engagement. Additionally, a demographics sheet was incorporated to gather general information about the participants. The dependent variable in this study was students, as they were influenced by social media, while drug awareness in educational institutions served as the independent variable. Questions adapted from existing research were used to measure these variables, focusing on students' perceptions of drug awareness initiatives and the role of social media in spreading awareness.

The questionnaire was designed to assess the dependent variable, which is the level of drug awareness in educational institutions, as referenced in the study titled "Impact of social media awareness campaign against drug abuse on the knowledge and practice among commercial motorcycle riders in Magboro community, Ogun state" by Oluwaseyi et al., (2017). The adapted questions included inquiries about the responsibility of educational institutes in promoting drug awareness, communication of drug awareness initiatives to

students, participation in drug awareness activities organized by educational institutes, and the perceived effectiveness of these efforts in curbing drug abuse. The questionnaire also addressed the potential collaboration between educational institutes and social media platforms to develop targeted drug awareness campaigns, as well as the encouragement of students to share drug awareness content on social media for wider dissemination. Response options ranged from "Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree."

Regarding the independent variable, which is the impact of drugs on students, the questionnaire was based on the study cited from Judah (2022). The questions focused on whether respondents received information about drug abuse from social media platforms or groups, the likelihood of student engagement with drug awareness content on social media versus traditional methods, the perceived effectiveness of social media campaigns in raising awareness of drug risks and effects, and the role of social media in spreading drug awareness among students. Additionally, the questionnaire explored whether exposure to drug awareness content on social media influenced respondents' perceptions of drug use, whether social media was utilized as a platform for drug sales, and which types of drug-related content respondents found most engaging or informative. These questions aimed to gauge the impact of social media campaigns on students' knowledge and attitudes regarding drug use.

In this study, the Cronbach Alpha approach was employed to assess the reliability of the instrument. The obtained value for the dependent variable, which pertains to the role of social media in creating drug awareness, was determined to be .779. Similarly, the value for the independent variable, concerning drug awareness in educational institutions, was found to be .836.

Results and Discussion

The researcher performed the data analysis on the responses gathered from the different colleges and universities through the help of the software SPSS and discussed the findings regarding the role of social in creating drug awareness among students. We will only examine graphs and analyze the results in this chapter. The graphs will be based on information gathered from a survey that included a sample size of 300 participants. To find the relationship between social media and drug awareness Pearson correlation test was used to determine results.

Descriptive Statistics of Demographics

In a descriptive analysis of the demographic and social media usage data, it was found that among the 450 respondents, 46.6% were male (210) and 53.3% were female (240 individuals). The age distribution showed that the largest age group was 21-25 years old, representing 50.7% (152 individuals), followed closely by the 26-30 age group at 36.7% (110 individuals), the 31-35 age group at 10.7% (32 individuals), and the 36-40 age group at 2.0% (6 individuals). In terms of educational attainment, the majority of respondents had completed graduation, making up 39.7% (119 individuals). This was followed by those with a master's degree at 21.3% (64 individuals) and M.Phil. holders at 21.0% (63 individuals). A smaller number of respondents had completed intermediate education at 13.0% (39 individuals), and only 1.0% (3 individuals) had a matric education. When asked about the social media platforms they use frequently, responses were distributed among Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, and YouTube, but specific frequencies and percentages were not provided. Regarding daily time spent on social networking sites, 4.0% spent less than one hour, 12.3% spent 2-3 hours, 29.0% spent 4-5 hours, and the largest group, 33.0%, spent 6 hours or more. Additionally, 14.7% and 11.0% reported spending different unspecified amounts of time on these platforms.

Pearson Correlation

Table 1
Relationship between social media use and awareness about drug abuse among students

Variables	1	2
Social media use	-	.498**
Drug awareness	-	-

* $p < .01$ ** $p < .05$

The above table shows that there is a positive relationship between the two variables. There is a highly significant relationship between social media and drug awareness showing that the hypothesis of research is positive and also results show a positive relation between a dependent variable and independent variables. The correlation test conducted in this study examined the relationship between two variables: "Social media use" and "Drug awareness among students." It represents the extent to which individuals are aware of drug-related information through social media platforms. The correlation coefficient between this variable and "Drug awareness in educational institutions" is .498, which is statistically significant at the 0.01 level ($p < .01$). This indicates a moderate to strong positive correlation between social media drug awareness and drug awareness in educational institutions.

This finding has several implications. Firstly, it underscores the potential impact of social media as a tool for disseminating information about drug awareness, reaching a wide audience, including students within educational settings. Secondly, it highlights the importance of integrating social media platforms into drug awareness campaigns conducted within educational institutions. By leveraging social media effectively, educational institutions can enhance their efforts to educate students about the risks and consequences associated with drug use. Overall, the correlation test results provide empirical evidence supporting the notion that social media plays a significant role in shaping drug awareness both within the broader community and specifically within educational institutions. This underscores the importance of incorporating social media strategies into comprehensive drug education programs aimed at promoting informed decision-making and preventing substance abuse among students.

Discussion

Social media is one of the most important tools for raising awareness about drug use among students. Social media platforms like Snapchat can be used to share educational content, promote campaigns, and provide resources that can be accessed by a wide range of users (Muzaffar, 2016; Smith, 2023). Social media can be used to promote awareness about the risks of drug use and provide information about prevention and support through the use of visuals, videos, and interactive features (Jones & Miller, 2022). Drug use has become more widespread because of the increasing use of social media technology, which affects many aspects of everyday life (Brown et al., 2023). This study focused on the impact of social media on drug awareness among students. The results of this study show that social media platforms play a significant role in raising awareness about drug use among university students (Davis, 2023). The correlation test conducted in this study further supports this conclusion by examining the relationship between "Social media use" and "Drug awareness among students." The correlation coefficient of 0.498 indicates a moderate to strong positive correlation, which is statistically significant at the 0.01 level ($p < .01$). This positive relationship suggests that increased social media use is associated with higher levels of drug awareness among students.

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within educational institutions. By leveraging social media effectively, educational institutions can enhance their efforts to educate students about the risks and consequences associated with drug use. Overall, the correlation test results provide empirical evidence supporting the notion that social media plays a significant role in shaping drug awareness both within the broader community and specifically within educational institutions (Brown et al., 2023). This underscores the importance of incorporating social media strategies into comprehensive drug education programs aimed at promoting informed decision-making and preventing substance abuse among students (Smith, 2023).

Conclusion

The use of social media has a significant impact on the prevalence of substance use among students. This is due to its ability to sensitize them to the potential risks associated with substance use, as well as to create an understanding of the health implications of such use. The knowledge gained through social media has been instrumental in the eradication of substance use and has also been instrumental in the prevention of substance use among young people. Social media has a big impact on how teens use substances. It can help them be more aware of the risks of using drugs and alcohol, as well as how it can affect their health. Knowing what's out there on social media can help us get rid of substance use and prevent it from happening in the first place. The researcher has conducted a descriptive study. Firstly with the fundamental information on gender, age, and qualification. The questionnaire which is distributed by the researcher is mostly filled with females than males and 40.3% of students are undergraduates which indicates that youth is chosen for this.

Instagram and Facebook are some of the most widely used social networking sites as mobile applications. It helps to bring people from all over the world together. Recently, a study has proven that 96% of people use social networks, 29% of them use Instagram, 33% of them use Twitter and 12% of them use them regularly. According to the study, out of 300 students, 75% say they are aware of drug use via social media. Even though social media is a very useful platform for creating drug awareness, the survey showed that a large number of students gave positive feedback on the drug awareness created by social media, as most of them used social media platforms and were able to easily learn about the side effects of drugs.

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