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**RESEARCH PAPER**

# Academic Usage of Social Media by University Students in Pakistan: Merits, Demerits and Challenges

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**ABSTRACT**

The current study is to assess the social media usage for academic purpose by university students in Pakistan and its benefits, advantages, drawbacks, shortcomings, disadvantages as well as challenges for social networking sites in Pakistan. The country is facing bans on social media sites which is harming the right of freedom of expression of the society. Keeping in considerations all these challenges and situations the study is designed to do by using the survey technique and opinion of 200 hundred students from different universities was collected on the phenomenon as well as the data for commanding the social media by authorities was qualitatively analyzed. The conceptual framework was set in line to uses and gratification theory and examined accordingly. The study concludes that academic accomplishments by social media were increased in recent years but still social media is used for entertainment purpose at large and suggested that no social media forum should be banned.

## Introduction

The social media use is increasing day by day with different perspectives and motives. The studies showed that social media sites and apps are also used for academic purpose and this trend is in accumulative phase with high speed, but there are various challenges for social media users in Pakistan, especially imposing bans on social sites by authorities continuously (Muzaffar, et. al. 2020)Although there are various merits and demerits of social media usage for academic determination but authoritative approach is becoming big reason to discourage the world-wide confirmatory media modes. This study presents a detailed view about the usage of social media for academic purpose and its merits and demerits, as well as challenges of authoritative mindset in the contemporary Pakistan (Muzaffar, et. al. 2019 )

In today's world social media has wedged foremost stay in students' minds which causing drastic impacts on students' educational performances, positively and negatively. Therefore, it was important to reconnoiter trending issues facing students in terms of academic performance impacted by social media. Students at all levels of learning now had divided attention to studies, as a result of available opportunities to be harnessed from social media. Whether these opportunities promote studies were question that needs to be answered. Thus the problem of this study was to investigate the influence of social media networks on the academic performance of the students at University level. The study was done by using the survey technique with the conceptual framework formed in accordance with uses and gratification theory which explained that individuals motivated to chose the media mode according to their desires and used to fulfill their goals and needs (McQuail, 2010). The masses were changed with advent of new technologies and modes of media but they adopted them according to their needs and desired content instead of relying on specified content presented by the media outlets. The choice of people prevailed in choosing

the media form but media content, especially of social media, attracted and impacted them at large (Sandoval-Almazan & Gil-Garcia, 2014).

Social media usage was eventually up-swung and entire world had recognized its need in the every field of life. It had acquired acceptance of masses by passageway and stretched attention of every age group. The interaction glassy of individuals for social media have been increased people has accepted its usage with possible easy feedback. The concepts had been presented that key-focus of social media was interaction with communities as well as individuals and entities but it distressed individuals' life at different level. It might vary due to various perspectives; time by time, user's capabilities and capacities, mental approaches, using manuals, social media modes, and using habits but it affect at large scale or low scale. It had been explained as, "with the rise of digital and mobile technologies, interaction on a large scale became easier for individuals than ever before; and as such, a new media age was born where interactivity was placed at the center of new media functions. One could now speak to many, and instant feedback was a possibility, where citizens and consumers used to have limited and somewhat muted voices, now they could share their opinions with many" (Manning, 2014).

Social media have occupied significant standing in monotonous-life exclusively of teenage students. Linkage of academia with social has been enhanced in last two decades. The students are using social media sites and apps frequently and habitually. The usage of social media by teenagers has been increased and enhancing utilization of social media affecting studies, positively or negatively (Rasheed, 2020). The teenagers were not only using the social media forums with negative perspectives but there were various positive usages of social media including educational purpose (Siddiqui & Singh, 2016). The using of journalistic code of ethics in "New Media" (web-journalism) became reason to enhance rely on cyber reportage and masses not only remained with New Media but also used social media sites parallel to New Media to accomplish their desires (Tariq, Ahmad & Javed, 2021). The negative usage of social media definitely affected the academic activities of teenagers but the positive usage also impacted the routine life as well as educational accomplishments of young students (Rasheed, 2020).

Social Media has not been demarcated with single viewpoint, but it has several stances and outlooks. It was described as collaborative and talkative medium which functioned by internet and operated for communication and interactions. It also transformed thoughts and ideas with others. Bolotaeva & Cata (2010) defined social media as networking sites or applications used as web-based public service which sanctions people to exchange data. It was declared as phenomenon rather than applications that transformed interaction patterns and also used for world-wide communication by individuals as well as groups (Edosomwan et al., 2011). Siddiqui (2016) presented a view that social media made impacts upon students as that "the social media that has an enormous impact on our society. Many of the social media sites are most popular on the web. Some social media sites have transformed the way where people communicate and socialize on the web. Social networking sites render the opportunity for people to reconnect with their old friends, colleagues and mates. It also helps people to make new friends, share content, pictures, audios, videos amongst them. Social media also changes the life style of a society". The social networking site facebook was the forum ranked at top according to usage in Pakistan. Whatsapp was at second, instagram third, twitter fourth and tiktok was fifth (similarweb, 2023).

Social Media impacted the individuals and groups at large, positively and negatively, globally as examined and concluded by the scholars. The study done by Donohue (2020) explained that 66 percent of 16 plus age students used the social media for educational purpose and figures showed that they scored more numbers in exams as compared to those students who remained only with their class lectures and traditional study methods. Rennie & Morrison (2013) concluded that educational institutions were growingly using social

media for marketing of their institutes. They showcased their developments to catch students. Teachers as well as students gained latent benefits of social media in their teachings and studies. It was also clinched that 75 percent students used youtube and micro blogging websites and apps to attain the information of their studies. The study done by Howard et al. (2011) kept hard line on usage of social media that as popularity of social media nurtures, none can deny that social media is essential for students. The studies also showed that teenagers used social media forums to enjoy maximum freedom which they had not in real world, especially at home (Michikyan, Subrahmanyam & Dennis, 2015).

Social Media also have some negative impacts too. Urbansky et al. (2011) explored that teenagers attracted teenagers at large and they became addicted of social media just like drug users, they delayed their meeting with friends and attracted towards alcohol at large. A viewpoint was presented that fluency in social media usage created hurdles for academia including students. The same results was concluded in another study that continuous connectivity of students with social media made them dependable upon digital forums. The extra activities on social media affected the students' academic positions (Martin et al., 2018). It was established by the studies that extra usage of social media, students became addict of its content and lose their concentration on studies which lead to decrease in academic performances.

The studies showed that social media affected the students in positive as well as negative manner. The social media was recognized with the basic component of networking of the populace as individual with other individuals. This promoted the connectivity of people and provided them chances to make new friends and gain expertise from these friends. Same time, the social media users spend their time on social media and ignored the routine work which effected their performances in many respect.

The studies presented a view that there might be positive impacts was made by the social media use on students. Social Media helps to meet people they may not have met outside the social media forums. It also helps to share ideas beyond the geographical boundaries. It provides open opportunity for all writers and bloggers to connect with their clients. Another positive effect of social networking sites is it unite people on a huge platform for the achievement of specific goals. This brings positive change in the society.

Social media teaches students the skills they need to survive in the business world. Being able to connect and maintain contact with many people in many industries is an essential component of building one's career or building a business. It has also increased the rate and quality of collaboration for students. They are better able to communicate with each other, share information quickly, which can increase productivity and help them learn how to work better in groups. By spending more time working with new technologies, students become more familiar with computers and other electronic devices. With a growing focus on technology in education and grades, this will help students develop skills that will help them throughout their lives that will also help them improve grades. The ease and speed with which users can upload informative data videos or has resulted in a greater amount of sharing of creative works. Being able to get instant feedback from friends and teacher on their creative outlets helps students refine and develop their artistic abilities and can provide much needed confidence or help them decide what career path they may want to pursue.

The studies presented a view that the social media effected the students negatively in many respect. One of the negative affected of social media is that it make people addicted. People spend lots of time in social networking sites which can divert the concentration and focus from the task. Social media can easily affected the kids; the reason is sometimes people shares photos, videos on media that contain violence and negative things which can affect the behavior of kids or teenagers. It also abuses the society by invading on people's privacy. Social lies like family ones also weaken as people spend more time connecting to new people.

Some people used their images or videos in social sites that can encourage others to use it false fully.

Students today rely on access to information, especially on social media and the web in general, to provide answers, which may reduce the focus on learning and retaining information. Students who try to do a lot of work, check social media sites while studying, reduce academic performance. Distractions from YouTube, Facebook or Twitter have significantly reduced their ability to focus on their work. Private information is available online and students have forgotten the need to filter the information they post because the Internet does not appear to be unknown. Many colleges and potential employers investigate an applicant's social media profiles before accepting or interviewing. Most students do not constantly review the content of this online publication, which can have negative consequences over months or years.

The situations showed that the social media sites were banned in Pakistan continuously. One after one sites were disrupt by Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) with officially announced bans (PTA, 2010a). Recently, Twitter is banned in Pakistan and other social media sites like facebook, instagram, tiktok, youtube, etc. had been faced bans various times (PTA, 2010b). There was another rumor that Pakistani government was planning to ban all the social media sites in the country including facebook, Youtube, Instagram, etc. It was reported that an outgoing member of the upper house of the parliament filed a resolution for banning the social media sites in the country, blaming for excessive usage of freedom of expression (The Eastern Herald, 2024). It was also reported that Pakistan shutdown the internet services in the country just on the day of polling of general elections. It was condemned by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) and other national and international organizations as well, (Madhur, 2024). The international community also discouraged and condemned the shutdown of internet particularly at the day of polling of the general elections in the country.

## Literature Review

Selwyn (2012) stated that social media is a term used to describe usage that allows people to share their thoughts and ideas. Also mention existing forms of content. Social media is a way for people to connect and communicate with each other, exchange ideas, exchange ideas, discuss matters and information about an online community through social media represents the collection. Chen & Kim (2013) found that young people use social networks to build and nurture friendships. Bolotaeva & Cata (2010) assessed that social networking application/site as a public web-based service allows people to create and create their own personal account and profile and find another user if They have a personal profile, and can read and comment. Brandtzæg et al. (2010) defined that joint group communication and sharing community spaces are a huge amount of motivation for university students and should therefore play an important role in motivating their experience and learning. Gürcan & Peker (2015) connected that social media has positive effect on students; students use social media for their study purposes, social media has a positive impact. Dewing (2010) concluded that students use these apps to create study groups to meet their educational needs, communicate with their teacher, share data, and discuss study topics. Ju et al. (2014) explained that in recent years, social media websites have become commonplace. Providing young people with a new way to communicate with each other and with the world after the creation of Facebook and MySpace, social media became popular between 2004 and 2006.

## Material and Methods

The study was done by using the mix method. Survey technique was used to collect the students' opinion regarding impacts of social media. Two hundred students of five different universities were surveyed and their opinion on the under study phenomenon was gathered while data for commanding the social media by authorities was qualitatively analyzed. The conceptual framework formed in accordance with uses and gratification

theory which explained that individuals motivated to choose the media mode according to their desires and used to fulfill their goals and needs (McQuail, 2010). The masses were changed with advent of new technologies and modes of media but they adopted them according to their needs and desired content instead of relying on specified content presented by the media outlets. The choice of people prevailed in choosing the media form but media content, especially of social media, attracted and impacted them at large (Sandoval-Almazan & Gil-Garcia, 2014).

**Results and Discussion**

The basic purpose of this study was to explore the scenario of social media effects on educational performance of the young students and to explore the components of social media linkage with educational performance of young students. It was resulted that the students using the social media sites like WhatsApp etc. for their educational need and almost all the students participated were engaged to use the WhatsApp. The educational situation was turned disastrous towards dependency upon social media in post COVID-19 world internationally and the use of social networking increased with high ratio but the social media use in routine was presenting different scenario of the linkage.

The scenario presented in the survey was clearly showed the negative effects of social media on students' educational performance. The linkage of the academia with social media was observed increasing at student end as well as institutional end. The young students were going to familiar with the new social media Apps and sites to fulfill their educational needs and requirements. The survey presented another view of international cartelization in shape of digital data usage. Almost all the students were using internet, rather by mobile data or Broadband, and the data usage was going in benefit of mobile companies as well as of internet companies which provides data internationally. The survey showed a scenario that the 65.5 percent students were using the mobile data to work online and 34.5 percent were using Broadband services for this purposes which clearly showed the dependency upon mobile companies for the linkage with the rest of the world.

The survey presented another view that the youth was going to habitual for using the social networking sites and Apps. The excessive use of social media was affecting the attitude, daily routine, activities, recreational events and academic situation. The virtual education was increasing and routine academic scenario was also increased it dependency upon virtuality. As the dependency increased the linkage of academia and social media sites ultimately increased.

Although the educational requirements to social networking sites had been increased but still the social media was used for the entertainment at large. The students used social media sites for entertainment purpose at large which they had showed by answering the question in this regard. The fifty percent students in the survey were responded in favor of the option entertainment for showing the concern about the purpose of the usage of social media and only percent fifteen percent students answered as that they used social media only for educational purpose on another question. Students had opinion that the social media would not be helpful to increase academic grades and they had to depend upon traditional way for academic improvement.

The study answered the research questions "Is social media affecting the Students' academic grades positively?" and "Is social media affecting the Students' academic grades negatively?" as that the social media was affecting the students' academic performance as well as grades negatively which was clearly shown by the answers of the responding university students.

**Conclusion**

The study was resulted that the students using the social media sites like WhatsApp etc. for their educational need and almost all the students participated were engaged to use the WhatsApp. The educational situation was turned catastrophe towards dependency upon social media in recent years and use of social networking was increased with high ratio during last three years which presented hard scenario of the linkage between students and social media as well. The results presented a view of negative effects of social media on students' educational performance but the position linkage between the academia with social media was observed increasing at student end as well as institutional end too. The young students were going to familiar with new social media Apps and sites to fulfill their educational needs and requirements. The young students were going to habitual for using the social networking sites and Apps. The excessive use of social media affected the attitude, daily routine, activities, recreational events and academic situation. The virtual education was increasing and routine academic scenario was also increased it dependency upon virtual learning. As the dependency increased the linkage of academia and social media sites ultimately increased. Although the educational requirements to social networking sites had been increased but still the social media was used for the entertainment at large. The students used social media sites for entertainment purpose at large which they had showed by answering the question in this regard. The fifty percent students in the survey were responded in favor of the option entertainment for showing the concern about the purpose of the usage of social media and only percent fifteen percent students answered as that they used the social media only for educational purpose on another question. Students had opinion that the social media would not be helpful to increase academic grades and they had to depend upon traditional way for academic improvement.

**Recommendations**

The study was done only with students grades concerns and students linkage with social media and suggested to expand the topic with academic performances and teacher, students relationship as well as dependency of academia upon virtually in the recent years at large which would be helpful to understand the whole situation. The study recommended that social media forums should not be banned in the country and keeping in mind the Article-19 of the Constitution of Pakistan there must be freedom of expression for all citizens so that they can express their views as they think.

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