

## **Impact of Social Media on Student Engagement and Learning Outcomes at University Level**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The aim of the study was to determine the characteristics of social media on engagement and learning outcomes of university students. The sample was randomly selected and included all the registered students at university of Sargodha. Sixty student participants of self-support programs were selected together with 270 students of regular programs. The data was physically collected and the data analyzed with descriptive statistics, correlation, regression and t-test. The study concluded that the social media may bring two impacts on the life of students which are moderate and academic usage of the tool positively and negatively impact the academic performance respectively. All the students who were enrolled at the University of Sargodha formed the study population. The sample was chosen randomly. The sample consisted of 270 students of regular and self support program. Physical data collection was used to get quantitative data. The methods of data analysis are regression, correlation, descriptive statistics and t-test. Based on the findings of the study, there are two ways in which social media can impact the academic life of students. Though overuse of it adversely affects the per-performance of students, moderate and academic use of it improves the engagement and learning outcomes. The study points out that using social media in the field of education should be planned to ensure that the benefit of social media is achieved and the negative aspect is minimized.*

**Keywords:** Social media, student engagement, learning outcomes, learning, academic performance, university students, digital learning.

### **INTRODUCTION**

During studies, social networks such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and YouTube have become integral to the day of the students, being utilized socially and academically. Junco (2012) has concluded that social media use is positively related with student engagement because it increases the cooperation, dialogue and involvement in educational procedures. Likewise, Tess (2013) noted that social networking sites provide an interactive and student-oriented learning platform, which enhances classroom and extracurricular activities and engagements. The social media has turned into a re-revolutionary tool in education at the university. In modern society, social media platforms and their engagement (Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and YouTube) impact students in their everyday lives to study and socialize. Junco (2012) reports an improvement in team-work, communication, involvement of students in the process of education through social media usage which is positively correlated with student engagement. Likewise,

Tess (2013) observed that social networking sites offer a learning platform where students can interact socially, which is more student oriented leading to more participation in extracurricular and classroom activities. The sites help share resources, communicate and discuss ideas with students and teachers, which helps in behavioral, emotional and cognitive engagement needed to be an effective learner.

Despite the positive aspect of social media, its incorporation in a classroom offers both opposing-opportunities as well as challenges on the study of students. In their study, Kirschner and Karpinski (2010) reported that when used to excess the social media is capable of negatively affecting academic performance through dis-traction and time lost studying. On one hand, Greenhow and Lewin (2016) argued in the view that social media is potentially successfully used to enhance the collaborative, critical thinking and student motivation. It enables students to engage in the knowledge building process via online communities, discussions and creation of content. In a study conducted by Kirschner and Karpinski, (2010) it is observed that the over use of social media may have adverse effects on academic work since the person may be distracted and will lose time in studying. Greenhow and Lewin (2016) however, suggested that social media could be utilized to increase student motivation, critical thinking and collaborative learning. It enables students to participate in knowledge development, through online forums, discussions and content generation. The success of social media in the classroom however depends more as to how well students use the media and how it is assisted by instructors.

The social media are a significant instrument of learning and interaction amongst students in Pakistani universities. Learners study together by using Facebook pages and WhatsApp chats and even share lecture notes and prepare their studies. Ali et al. (2020) argue that social media is so influential in such developing nations as Pakistan. Also, Rasheed et al. (2021) concluded that the use of social media has a positive impact on communicating with students and access to learning resources, but they become dependent and distracted in case of overuse. It is against this reason that meaningful and balanced use is important.

The Pakistani universities have social media that is hugely involved in student integration and education. Students collaborate on a study plan through Facebook pages and WhatsApp groups to share notes on lectures and studies. Ali et al. (2020) report a significant influence by social media in developing countries such as Pakistan. Moreover, Ra-sheed et al. (2021) discovered that social media usage enhances student engagement and access to educational materials, but overuse of social media poses the risk of dependence on and distractions.

Thus, to formulate the possibilities of digital platforms that could be effectively employed in the name of higher learning, there is a dire need to consider how social media influences the level of engagement and learning in the University of Sargodha. The case study adds to the overall discussion on digital learning environments through the insightful information on the opportunities with the respect to limits on the implementation of social media in a local context.

### **Problem Statement**

The role of social media, its influence on the engagement and learning of students is a controversial issue in higher education in developing countries such as Pakistan. Apps such as Facebook and WhatsApp are becoming dependable among academically and collaboratively among students, but it remains unclear to what degree these tools can be used to their advantage to enhance meaningful communication and improved learning. Manca and Ranieri (2016) argue that while social media can help in cooperative education, the educational value of social media is generally diluted by the lack of organizational strategies addressing the methods of teaching; furthermore, Rosen et al. (2013) emphasized that social media may cause distraction, multitasking and low performance. Students of higher education tend to

increasingly use applications such as Facebook and WhatsApp, as a means of academic communication and collaboration; however, it remains unknown to what extent they could impact sufficient substantive interaction and enhanced learning. Manca and Ranieri (2016) make an argument that although social media has the potential to become a means of collaborative learning, the absence of organizational strategies of the teaching methods tends to diminish the level of education of social media. Moreover, Rosen et al. (2013) emphasized that the uncontrolled and excessive use of social media could be the cause of poor performance, interruptions, and multitasking.

To answer the question of whether or not social media is a valuable learning resource or an academic distractor and to offer evidence based suggestions about how social media can be used in a beneficial way in higher education, it is critical to carefully study the effects of social media on higher educational student engagement and learning. The rationale behind this is that the two-sided nature of social media imposes a vital distance in how people view the use of social media in changing the engagement of students and the learning processes in certain institutional setups. To conclude on the potential result of social media as a useful educational resource or as a distraction to the academic process of the university, there is need to systematically study social media's impact on university students engagement and learning. Also, recommendations based on evidence about how social media should be effectively used in higher education should be offered.

### **Research Objectives**

1. To explore the relationship between the use of social media by students of the university and their interest.
2. To investigate the impact of social media on learning outcomes of students in the university.
3. To identify the benefits, as well as the drawbacks of social media usage among university students in their participation and grades.

### **Research Hypothesis**

1. The statistical significance of the positive relationship between the use and participation of university students about social media is significant.
2. The social media plays the statistically significant role in learning outcomes of the university students.
3. The ways in which students are affected by the use of social media have a statistically significant effect on the results of their learning at a university.

### **Conceptual Framework**

<b>Independent Variables</b>	<b>Dependent Variables</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Social Media</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Student Engagement</li><li>• Learning Outcomes</li></ul>

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Boyd (2014) believes that social media tools create networked spaces that allow a learner to be engaged in the flow of information and its interaction with peers that influence the educational experiences. As Alishuaibi et al. (2018) suggest, education might incorporate different social media platforms to increase the learning outcomes and engagement. Morton et al. (2019) reported that more students who believed that social media was a valuable resource engaged in their education. One of the most significant facets of contemporary higher education has become the social media aspect. Group projects and exchange of information are becoming more common among students via Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp. Social media platforms have resulted in networked classrooms that students engage in peer discussion and exchange information, according to Boyd (2014), which affect their learning life. Alishuaibi et al. (2018) suggest using different social media platforms into school to enhance learners and their participation in school learning. Morton et al. (2019) found that more engaged students had the belief that social media was a helpful resource to enhance their studies.

Similarly, Kietzmann et al. (2011) observe the effects of social media to enable interactive communication and sharing of content which when applied appropriately would enable collaborative learning among students at universities. Student engagement has been identified to have a crucial role in academic success and one of the most valuable factors influencing student engagement has been termed as social media. According to Dabbagh and Kitsantas (2012), educating students through use of social media tools supports independent learning process as students are enabled to actively participate in their learning process.

Academic performance of students has been determined to rely on student involvement, and social media has been found to be one of the most important factors that determine student involvement. According to Dabbagh and Kitsantas (2012), social media sites allow students to be actively involved in the learning process. With group activities, online discussions and the process of sharing materials, students may get more interested in their behaviors and cognitions.

Student engagements can be divided into four dimensions: behavioral, emotional, cognitive, and social engagement; the final dimension was suggested by Wang et al. (2016), whereas the initial three ones were put forward by Frdricks et al. (2004). Another idea that the literature proposes is the deliberate incorporation of academics into the engagement and, therefore, are not the incidental or entertainment-related use of the social media platforms. The first three dimensions have been offered by Frdricks et al. (2004) whereas the final one was provided by Wang et al. (2016). There are four aspects that greatly contribute to the degree of the general student engagement and each of the aspects possesses original characteristics. Nonetheless, studies have also revealed that the participation level relies on whether academics are incorporated deliberately or not, and other usage types like missing in action and recreational use of social media.

Countless studies have investigated the association between the self-reported use of their academic achievement, by way of the self-reported GPAs, and the academic achievement by the university students. Investigations indicated that the students of the university who were using social media recorded lower grades in self-reports and spent less time per week studying compared to those that did not engage in social media usage although the overall number of hours spent on the site was diversified across the samples (Juncoo, 2012). Considering the role that social media plays in higher education, the study has brought out mixed results. Ainin et al. (2015) also argue that the use of social media has the potential to improve the academic performance of students through the opportunities to do collaborative learning and access to educational materials.

Conversely, unmonitored too much social media use could negatively affect on achievement. Paul et al. (2012) established that studying on social media and multitasking leads to lack of focus in the studies undertaken, low productivity and poor retention of information. Using cellphones can eliminate an additional distraction and improve students' focus when studying. Knowledge and ability to learn can be enhanced among students with the help of instant communication and their easy access to different learning materials. The benefits can, however, be maximized when teachers plan how to use the social media and have a specific academic purpose.

Conversely, too much and uncontrolled use of social media could have a detrimental impact on performance. Paul et al. (2012) report that the use of social media during study decreases concentration, academic performance and recall of information. By eliminating another distractor, removing cell phones may assist the kids in focusing more, allowing them to study better.

Students in developing countries, especially in Pakistan are highly affected by social media. Most of schools in Pakistan are providing services like social media to the students; the University of Sargodha is among the best schools in Pakistan that has also launched social media services to students. Social media has provided us with a special means of communicating and exchange of relevance information. This sheds light on the duality of social media both on the way it can be of significance to learning and the other aspect which is the threats that could be witnessed in case it is poorly utilized in an unregulated and undisciplined manner.

The social media is highly influencing students in poor countries, especially in Pakistan. The majority of Pakistani universities offer social media services to its students. The University of Sargodha, one of the best universities in Pakistan, has also begun providing facilities of social networking to the students. Social media can be of great benefit to the students. Improved relationships and communication among the students help them. Social media have enabled us to communicate in a special manner and share crucial information.

Social media is easily accessible, enables students to exchange raw materials with each other and results research easier amongst the students. Nevertheless, there are also some demerits included like obvious distraction, inculcation of laxity and dis discipline among students and also reduced face-to-face communication among the students. Students are expected to know how to use social media judiciously and avoid overusing and wasting it. Students have the possibility to share raw materials with another. Social media provide students with an opportunity to carry out research easier. It also has some drawbacks such as apparent distractions, motivating students to be irresponsible and out of control, and decreasing the time spent in face-to-face communication by the students. Pupils should understand how to utilize social media in a way that is both beneficial and detrimental.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

The researcher employed a quantitative research design in order to explore the effect of social media on learning and the student engagement at the University of Sargodha. Creswell (2014) recommends using quantitative research to prove hypotheses and investigate the trends in methodical and impartial manner. Consequently, this design aided the establishment of the degree to which the social media influenced academic attitude and academic achievement of students. A quantitative approach was considered suitable since it has made it possible to measure the relationship between the variables such as social media usage, engagement of students, and learning outcomes using statistical methods. Creswell (2014) indicates a quantitative research design is appropriate when it comes to testing a hypothesis and objectively and

methodically scrutinizing trends. This method therefore eased access to the level to which the social media influenced the academic performance and behavior of students.

The University of Sargodha, Government owned university in Sargodha, Punjab, Pakistan, offered a broad spectrum of academic subjects and students of multiple disciplines which made it a good study location to carry out research on the use of social media and its impact on academics. The entire University of Sargodha registered students of different departments and programs were the study population. There were 270 students in the sample, both regular and self-support programs. The questionnaire was ready to obtain the data on media use, student engagement and learning outcomes. The scales of the questions were made scaled to make analysis of the questions easier. The school was a very good place to conduct a research study on the use of the social media and its effects on academics due to wide variety of academic courses offered by the school and variety of students of different disciplines. The study population comprised all enrolled students in all departments and programs at the University of Sargodha (270 students- regular and self-support programs). The questionnaire was aimed at collecting data on learning outcomes, student engagement and media usage. It contained scale items and responses so as to make them easy to analyze data.

### **Data Analysis**

Statistical techniques (descriptive and inferential statistics) were used to process the gathered data. While inferential statistics, such as regression analysis and correlation, were employed to test the hypotheses, descriptive statistics, including means, frequencies, and percentages, were used to summarize the data. According to Field (2018), statistical analysis is required in quantitative research to determine the relationship between variables. This conversation helped draw conclusions about how social media affects student interactions and academic achievement at the university level

### **Hypothesis 1 – Relationship between Social Media Usage and Student Engagement**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Test Used</b>	<b>Correlation (r)</b>	<b>p-value</b>	<b>Result</b>
Social media usage & student engagement	Pearson Correlation	0.62	0.000	Significant

According to the results of the Hypothesis 1 study, in the group of 270 University of Sargodha respondents, the social media use, and engagement demonstrate a strong, positive correlation. The Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.62 and a p-value of 0.000 is statistically significant at the 1% level hence its association. This implies that, the higher media students use social media, the higher chances that they will be participate in educational activities. It demonstrates that the social connection is not the sole purpose of the social media usage, but also its significant contribution to increase the levels of engagement, participation in educational procedures and communication.

### **Hypothesis 2 – Impact of Social Media on Learning Outcomes**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Test Used</b>	<b>Beta (β)</b>	<b>t-value</b>	<b>p-value</b>	<b>Result</b>
Social media usage → learning outcomes	Regression Analysis	0.48	6.32	0.000	Significant

The outcome of Hypothesis 2 supports the fact that social media application has an extremely positive effect on the learning outcomes of students of the University of Sargodha. The regression coefficient, t-value and p-value determine the statistical significance of the relationship to be 0.48, 6.32 and 0.000, respectively. This indicates that social media influences the academic knowledge, exchange of information and collaborative learning of the students positively. Also, it suggests that social media may be applied in the academic arena and enhance students academic performance and access to learning facilities.

**Hypothesis 3 – Effect of Social Media Use learning outcomes**

Variables	Test Used	Correlation (r)	p-value	Result
Social media use & learning outcomes	Pearson Correlation	-0.55	0.000	Significant (Negative)

The Hypothesis 3 results indicate that social media application and academic achievement among the students of University of Sargodha are negatively correlated significantly. The negative relationship between parents and children such that the p-value of 0.000, which is significant and negative means this is a substantial and detrimental relationship. This implies that the poorer academic learning performance is associated with the excessive/non-academic social media use levels. It indicates that distractors, multitasking, and overuse of social media makes the students less active and less concerned with studies and less effective in attaining learning goals.

**DISCUSSION**

The results of the current study indicate that there is a sub-substantial favorable connection among the use of social media and student engagement with the value of  $r = 0.62$  ( $p = 0.000$ ). This suggests that the more periods spent on social media the higher the partaking, communicating, and interest levels of students in learning. This is further supported by the demographics that reveal a 35.2% number of students utilizing social media in the academic environment and 40.7% number of students spending between two to four hours a day using social media. The results substantiate the assumption that members use social media, especially Facebook (25.9%) and WhatsApp (37%), actively to have group discussions, coordinate activities and share study material which enhances participation in formal and informal learning.

The social media was also revealed to have a significant impact on the learning outcome with a regression coefficient of 0.48 with  $t = 6.32$  and  $p = 0.000$ . This implies that, when applied in the right context, social media has no extreme effects regarding academic knowledge and learning performance of students. The figures indicate that 35.2 percent of the students utilise social media in their studies and this highlights the utilisation of social media as an additional means of learning. The online community like YouTube offers a lot of educational information like learning materials, how-to guides, and lectures that facilitate in the understanding of intricate learning.

The results prove that individuals are able to learn new things and do get better at school (especially university status students) when they wisely utilize the media.

The research however found out that there also exists a considerable negative correlation ( $r = -0.55$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) between excessive use of social media and academic success. This suggests that kids' learning behaviors and academic performance are negatively impacted by increased non-academic or excessive

use. Based on the demographic statistics, 31.5% of students devote four to six hours a day on social media with 13% spending more than six hours, which often is used for amusement (24.1) and socializing (40.7) but not academic activities.

This imbalance brings about distractions, lack of focus and poor study techniques. The results of the study portray that, under most circumstances, there are two outcomes of social media, moderate use, and academic use: moderate use contributes to learning and engagement, and excessive use has a far-reaching negative influence on academic performance.

### **FINDING & CONCLUSION**

As shown by a recent research carried out at the University of Sargodha, social media is considerable in determining the level of engagement of students in the university. These findings showed that there was a great relationship ( $r = 0.62$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ) between how much students use social media and how much they are involved. This means that those students who engage in the usage of social media platforms tend to be more engaged in discussions and teamwork in classrooms and to communicate more often. The demographic findings also revealed a huge percentage (40.7) of students use social media two to four hours a day, indicating there is an average use of social media on university level.

Thus, we can say that social media when properly used can make students more engaged as the media helps to foster contacts and involvement in academic life.

The regression values indicate that the positive effects of social media on the academic achievements of learners are rather significant. This shows the measure to which social media can be utilised to improve the academic knowledge, learning materials and information sharing. The results indicate that social media has started to gain importance as a learning tool with 35.2 percentage of students using social media in studying. The most valuable academic communication and learning support sites (YouTube 22.2%, WhatsApp 37%) were also listed among the most important ones.

Hence, with social media fostering interaction and engagement in learning processes, we can conclude that used judiciously, it may assist students to get more integrated.

The results of the regression analysis indicate that using social media can significantly (in a positive way) influence the learning outcomes of students. This reflects the social media's potential in enhancing academic knowledge, learning resources, and sharing of knowledge. The results show that social media is becoming an important learning resource as 35.2% of students study using social media. YouTube (22.2%), WhatsApp (37%), and other websites were specified among the most important ones regarding the academic communication and learning assistance.

This means that, when used properly, social media can help students to get more engaged as it promotes interactions and engagement in educational processes.

Regression data show that social media is a great means of helping students improve their learning. This is an example of how learning resources, academic knowledge and knowledge sharing may be improved by social media. The findings reveal that, 35.2% of the learner rely on social media to study and this means that, social media is increasingly becoming an important teaching aid. The YouTube (22.2) and WhatsApp (37) were discovered to be some of the most significant websites in terms of academic communication and learning support.

### RECOMMENDATIONS / SUGGESTIONS

- Learners need be taught for using social media in a more effective as well as moderate way to ensure it facilitates their learning and not a distraction to their school work.
- To guarantee that students can distinguish between academic and non-academic content on social media platforms, digital literacy initiatives should be put into place.
- Learners have to be taught how to manage time effectively to ensure that they limit their daily use of social media to at most 46 hours which is also affecting their academic performances adversely.
- Universities ought to promote the usage of academic tutorials, lectures, and skill enhancement of the students via YouTube and other educational websites.
- To reduce the number of distractions during classes, the monitoring and guiding systems were developed.
- To support healthy use of social media and reduce its negative anti-academic largely consequential effects, the universities need to establish equitable digital learning policy.

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