

Original Article

Social Media Dependence and Its Impact on Real Life connection in Pakistani Youth

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Abstract: In the contemporary world, social networks have become significant in the way the Pakistani young people communicate, socialize and acquire information. They offer entertainment, education and means of communication. Excessive usage is damaging to emotional health and real life interpersonal ties. This paper will discuss the impacts of reliance on social media on family and friendship satisfaction and the role played by loneliness and Fear of Missing Out (FoMO). Both surveys and interviews are used in the study. The statistics allow us to observe the usage of social media by people, their attitude, and the impact of using social media on relationships. The findings reveal that an increased reliance on social media correlates with an increased loneliness, increased FoMO and decreased satisfaction with the real-life communication. The study in Pakistan provides practical recommendations on how parents, teachers and counselors can support balanced digital practices, which can make young people emotionally healthy and in better relationships.

Keywords: Social Media Dependence, Real-Life Relationships, Relationship Satisfaction, Pakistani Youth, Loneliness.

Introduction:

No young Pakistani could refute the applicability of social media in the current time, because of the immeasurable contribution to communications, networking, and information access. Its usefulness is facilitated by the fact that it offers all of these advantages, the first one being entertainment, the second being knowledge, and the last one being potential connection avenues. Nevertheless, it has created questions on the potential psychological and social effects of its excessive use. Overuse of social media and networking, according to research, leads to malaise in the emotional well-being due to the appearance of more states of loneliness, anxiety, and emotional disconnection with relatives and friends (Ahmed, 2023; Sarfraz, 2016).[18]The growing dependence on social media tends to preferability of the adolescents spending their

time online rather than living a real life; which tends to compromise their family cohesion and their satisfaction with relationships with peers.

Despite the positive evidence of most adverse consequences of social media addiction, there is limited studies that investigate the combined effect of social media addiction on family and peer relationships particularly in Pakistan. In this way, the research in this paper expects to explore the connection between factors, especially the loneliness and the Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) as mediators. Most of the researches that have been carried out to date are about quantitative correlation or particular local locations but fail to occupy the gaps in knowledge about how youth perceive the two social dimensions of digital and offline social spaces (Sarraz, 2024; Ali and Batool, 2021).[9,20] The other areas of research are gender difference and social media usage patterns, but the results have shown that men spend more time on the digital platforms which can develop more severe problems in relationships (Shahid et al., 2024).

The current study is aimed mainly at addressing these gaps with the help of mixed methods, that is, combining the data collected via surveys with qualitative information that explains how social media dependency influences the real-life satisfaction of relationships in Pakistani youth. The study pits pattern analysis against impact, emotional, and relationship outcomes and points out such important processes as loneliness and FoMO, which worsen the negative outcomes. The dynamics are relevant in understanding how to assist youth to ensure a balanced life between digital and real-life social interactions by coaching parents, educators, and mental health professionals.

The social and technological environments of Pakistan will give the framework of the research in this study which will bring in the theoretical and practical contributions on the research in the following supervision of ensuring that the youths can enjoy the perks of social media without the need to lose the important relations in the real world. [17]

Justification

Social media has become a daily life aspect, particularly among the youths today. On Pakistan, it is a popular form of chatting, entertaining, news and presenting oneself among the youth. Numerous reports discuss the ill-effects of excessive use, but little distinguishes between normal heavy-use and actual social-media dependence which has become a problem in its own right.

This work is important, as it does not only examine dependence but heavy use and the manner in which it undermines the relationships that people experience in real life. Family, emotional intimacy, and the community values are extremely strong in Pakistan, and therefore, it is important to comprehend this issue. The research not only verifies the presence of dependence but also researches on the deleterious nature of dependence to relationship satisfaction.

Significance of the Study

This study has academic and practical significance. It addresses a new social issue that directly strikes the Pakistani youth. The findings will assist parents in the wise usage of drugs and harmful addiction. Early addictive behaviors will be identified and, therefore, families can be enabled to react promptly to enhance communication and family bonds. Psychologists and counselors can also receive valuable information regarding the impact of dependence on emotion and relationships, and apply it to develop culturally appropriate counseling and intervention. The findings can be used by universities and colleges to organize awareness campaigns and digital-well-being programs that can cultivate moderate use of social-media and improve actual real-life communication between students.

This paper contributes to the media researcher and digital psychology in Pakistan by identifying dependence as a separate phenomenon of normal use and concentrating on relationship satisfaction.

Objectives of the Study

1. Evaluate the extent to which the young Pakistanis rely on social media and the impact it has on their relationships in the real world.
2. Research dependence and its impact on satisfaction in family and friends.
3. Examine such psychological impacts as loneliness and FoMO and their undermining of real-life relationships.

Research Questions

1. What is the level of social media dependence among Pakistani youth, and how does it influence their real-life interpersonal relationships?
 2. How does social media dependence affect family relationship satisfaction compared to peer relationship satisfaction?
- .To what extent do loneliness and Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) mediate the relationship between social media dependence and weakened real-life social connections?

Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses are proposed for testing the association between social media dependency and real-world relationships among Pakistani adolescents:

- H1:**
- The correlation between social media dependency and familial relationship quality is notably high among Pakistani adolescents.
- H2:**
- Pakistani adolescents' peer relationships are significantly correlated with social media dependency.
- H3:**
- The more they utilize social media the more they feel lonely and it influences the emotional state of the young Pakistani generation.
- H4:**
- FoMO is one of the key factors that lead Pakistani children to spend much time and use social media too often.

Scope of the Study

The purpose of the research is to understand the effect of overuse of social media platforms on the adolescents aged 15 to 30, specifically on their relationship with each other and with their families, emotional wellbeing, and loneliness. The study concentrates on the outcomes of overuse of the social media platforms by the Pakistani youths aged between 15 and 30 years, including both students and working-age individuals. Though the research work is based on the collection of numerical and descriptive data, it does not focus on the social media usage of older users and the demograph.

Literature Review

Social interaction has been greatly affected with the rapid incorporation of digital technologies in everyday life and more so among the youth. Today social media are the primary arenas of social interaction and communication as well as self-expression. Although the platforms offer communication and exchange of information opportunities, when overused or compulsively, they may have negative social and psychological consequences. Social Media Addiction (SMA) refers to a type of behavioral and emotional dependence that is characterized by compulsive use, inability to control, and proceeds to use it in spite of the adverse effects. This idea is founded on the results of the research by Kuss and Griffiths (2017) regarding the addiction to social networking sites.[1]

Their study revealed that in their addictive behaviors, individuals are increasingly depending on online confirmation of their worth, which can gradually diminish their self-esteem in real life and reduce their degree of contentedness in face to face relationships. SMA is also associated with increased emotional distress, reduced life satisfaction, and poor interpersonal functioning (Andreassen et al., 2017; Marino et al., 2018). These findings indicate that addictive use of social networking sites can disrupt the normal functioning of social life and affect the control of emotions.[3]

Considering these global tendencies, it would be important to explore SMA in Pakistan specifically because social, family, and cultural aspects can potentially make it more severe in the relationship of young people. The problem of social media addiction is a significant problem in Pakistan due to the fact that the country values interpersonal relations and family cohesion. Ahmad and Murad (2020) state that young Pakistani people who overuse social media decrease the amount of face-to-face communication significantly.[4] Similarly, Ali (2016) found out that addicts often become emotionally detached in discussions and get-togethers that family members have with each other, thus, reducing family satisfaction. The qualitative results of these studies suggest that the use of the internet continuously is perceived by family members as a barrier to effective communication and emotional attachment. The social media addiction also impacts the peer relations negatively.

Raza and Saleem (2019) state that young Pakistani adults who communicate with peers on a large scale report being less satisfied with peer relationships and socially more isolated.[6] International research, including Marino et al. (2018), who found out that teenagers with higher SMA levels had poor friendships and increased social anxiety, supports this pattern. Loneliness is one of the primary psychological consequences of social media addiction.[2] Hussain, Sarmad, and Rashid (2022) found that there was a positive correlation of high significance between SMA and loneliness among young adults in Pakistan ($r=.84$). The individuals who had more addiction scores indicated that they felt emptied emotionally and not actually supported socially even though they used the internet a lot.[7] This paradox of being alone but being digitally connected is supported by international research (Przybylski et al., 2013) demonstrating that high online activity and being digitally connected do not necessarily correlate with high levels of social fulfillment. Fear of missing out (FoMO) is yet another issue that leads to social media addiction. Ali and Batool (2021) note that the FoMO greatly forecasts the compulsive use of social media among Pakistani university students, which reduces their engagement in offline socialization among peers or family members.[8] The findings align with the findings of researchers across the globe who established that FOMO leads to dependence on social media (Blackwell et al., 2017).[10]

Theory SMA may be considered in the perspective of Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz et al., 1974).

According to this theory, individuals engage in media since they are in search of something that they desire to defeat in their lives. Individuals who have addictive behaviours will tend to turn to social media seeking

other people to validate them thus feeling better about themselves. This could make them less confident as they engage people in a face-to-face and eventually result in reduced satisfaction in relationships in their daily lives. The quantitative data on the frequency of the social media use along with the qualitative information concerning the emotional and relational sides of the experience will assist in shaping the whole image of the development of the SMA and form a superb argument in favor of the mixed methods approach to the study.

Although the number of studies that have investigated SMA has risen, the literature that has investigated the issue in Pakistan has been minimal. The gap in the literature is the lack of studies that have investigated the differences in excessive social media use and the clinically relevant levels of social media addiction in Pakistan. This study will be the first one to assist in filling this gap.[20] Besides offering a detailed discussion based on national and global results, this study will offer an insight into the significant role of culture, emotion and behaviour in influencing the manner in which the social media is used by the Pakistani youth.[11,21,18]

Theoretical & Conceptual Framework

This study aims at discussing Social Media Addiction (SMA) and its impact on how the relationship satisfaction is perceived amongst Pakistani adolescents. This is an extensive model of integrating psychological, social and behavioral determinants towards which it hypothesizes the reasons behind social media addiction.

Theoretical Foundation

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)

According to Bandura, the process through which we learn more about other people is by watching and being reinforced by others through imitation (1977).[13] Examples in social media Pakistani youth see other people, influencer and social media groups that makes the youth addicted to social media, check social media all the time and place social media above this real life, and seek the approval of social media. Then, these habits are strengthened by social validation through likes, comments, recognition, and it leads to unhealthy dependency which may result in the inability to have real-life social interactions (Hussain et al., 2022).

Social Comparison Theory (SCompT)

The Social Comparison Theory by Festinger (1954): It involves the comparison of oneself. The social media generally gives others a perfect image hence leading to upward comparison and consequently self-criticism, loneliness, and low self-esteem among Pakistani youth (Raza & Saleem, 2019).[14]

Attachment Theory

The implication of attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969/1982) is that the early emotional bonds are foretelling about the further relations. Attached individuals may also seek to address their emotional needs with the help of social media, which plays a substitute role for physical contact (Khan and Ali, 2021).[15]

Conceptual Framework

Independent Variable (IV):

- Social media dependence (frequency of use, compulsive monitoring, preference for virtual communication).

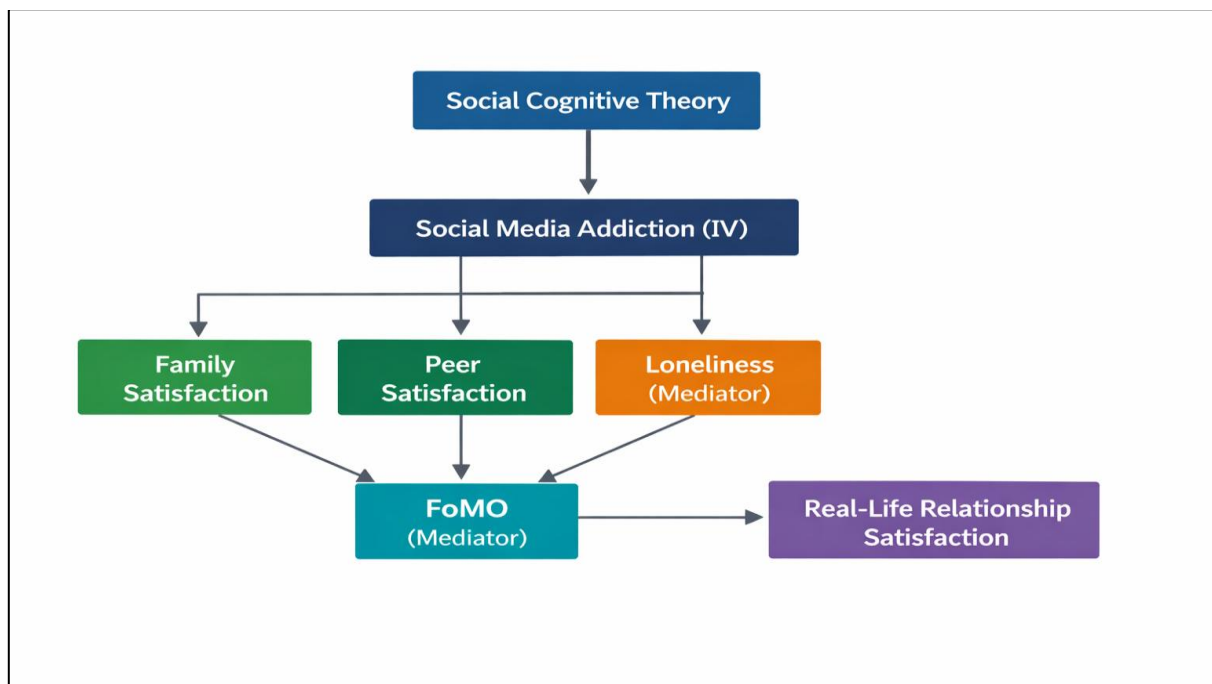
Dependent Variables (DV): Family

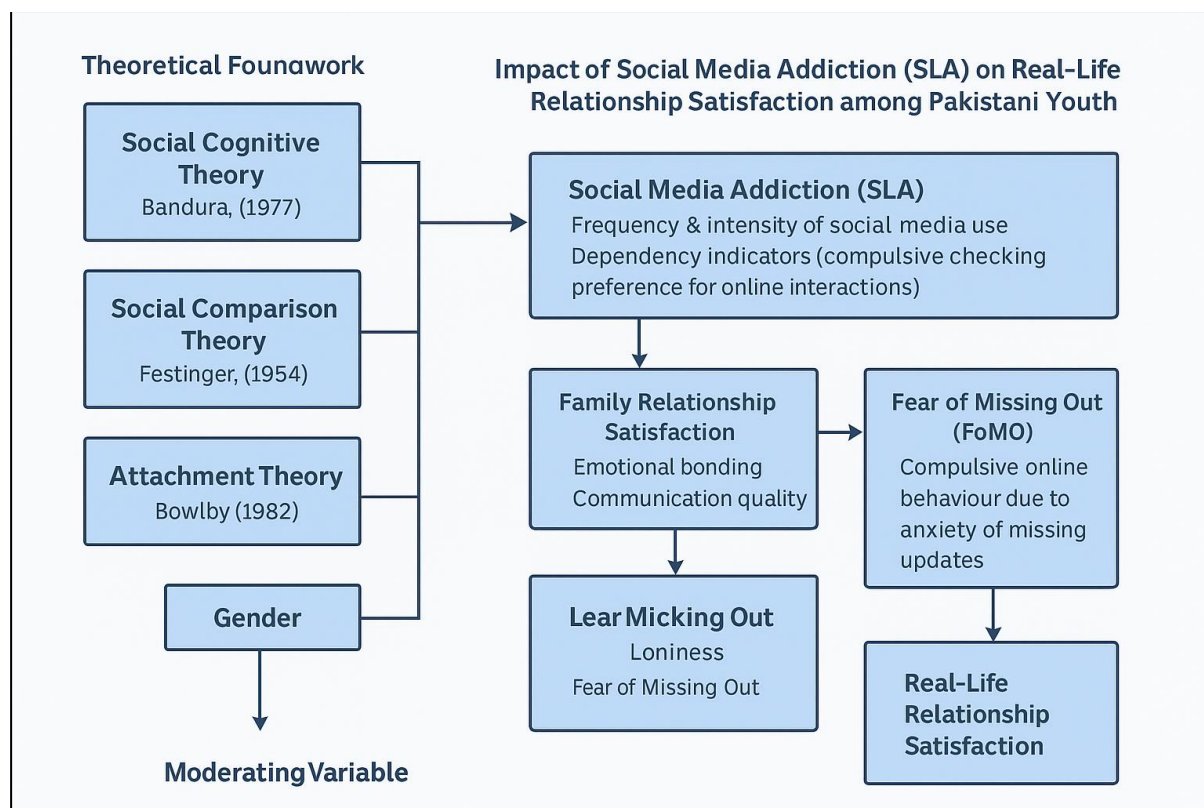
- Relationship Satisfaction; Peer
- Relationship Satisfaction.
- Arbitrating Variables:
- Loneliness
- Fear of Missing Out (FoMO).

Moderating Variable (Optional):

Gender (to evaluate gender specific effects of SMA in male and females) Theory and Constructs: Integration SCT gives insight into the formatig of addictive behaviorous. The rationale behind the reliance is explained by social comparison Theory that explains how it creates negative mental processes. Attachment theory: Vulnerability assessment is carried out and the reason why the emotional deprivation has a relationship with the observation has a relationship with the obsessive internet use leading to the end of personal relationship is explained.

Texture Diagram





Explanation

The antecedents of addition are loneliness and foMO. The theoretical assumptions offer a good psychological framework though which one can explain the outcomes of experiments.

Research Methodology

Research Design

Precedent: The methodology of this study is a mixed-method research both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection will be incorporated to explore the SMA and its impact on interpersonal relationships among Pakistani adolescents. The application of two methods will facilitate the validation and comparison of data (Crewel and Creswell, 2018).[16]

Population and Sample

The subject matter is youthful individuals that are in the age group of 15-30 years old and make use of the social media in Pakistan.

Participants: 57 respondents were asked to answer a Google Form. The sample was a wide and representative sample of the population in terms of gender, male and female students of various grade levels, as well as working adults, which allowed gathering accurate data.

The demographic categories considered in the study included:

Range: 15 18, 19 22, 23 26, 27 30.

Gender: Male and Female

Education Level: Matric, Intermediate, Undergraduate, Graduate, and Postgraduate

Occupation: Student, Employee, Student and Employee, Unemployed

Sampling Technique

Sampling technique: purposive sampling. Subjects: social media users. This research was really helpful for me and to people who are most likely to be addicts of social media.

Data Collection Instruments

Quantitative Instrument

Primary Data Collection Method: Google Forms. Questionnaire included 25 inquiries within 5 domains:

Section A: Social Media Dependence (7 items)

Section B: Family Relationships (5 items)

Section C: Peer Relationships (5 items)

Section D: Loneliness and Emotional Well-being (4 items)

Section E: Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) (4 items)

The questionnaire included a combination of:

Frequency-based scales (Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always)

Agreement-based Likert scales (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree)

Severity Level No Impact Slight Impact Moderate Impact High Impact Very High Impact.

Qualitative Instrument

Quantitative Data: No questionnaire materials were distributed, but the participants were asked to develop hypothetical answers and to explain their answers in relation to interpersonal conflicts, emotional reactions to social media communication, and personal experience of the perceived social behaviors in a face-to-face setting.

Data Collection Procedure

The trend was soon spread among the Pakistani youth, which was supported by social media platforms and through personal communication, 57 responses were obtained, and the respondents were not paid to take part in the research, they were notified about the purpose of the research beforehand, and the data remained anonymous and confidential.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Analysis:

Descriptive analysis with the help of frequency distribution, calculations of percentages and means were used in the statistical analysis. Hypothesis: Study the relationships between the number of times one uses social media daily, incidences of FOMO, and social exclusion or a feeling of being lonely.

Qualitative Analysis:

Responses were analyzed qualitatively. It resulted in three main categories, namely, emotional dependence on the technology, peer connections, and parental monitoring of the social media usage.

Ethical Considerations

We did everything the right way. it was not a compulsory thing to do, it was one of those heads ups that we can be cut off any time. stats. because it was just school and personal.

Justification of Methodology.

The analysis would be in-depth as well and it would have been done through the detailed exploration level to which media rely on their use of social media and the degree of how the different age categories have embraced technological adoption and its subtlety influence on human interaction. A combination of the two is this approach quantitative and qualitative approaches, provides a broad outlook with regards to the impact of social media addiction on Pakistani youth and supports the research hypothesis, responding to the research inquiry comprehensively. [22]

Findings & Data Analysis

Sample: The sample size was 57 participants of 15-30 years old who were contacted to complete an online survey in a standardized form. Outcome: quantitative and qualitative data were categorized and quantified, and the fear of missing out (FoMO) had a psychological implication.

1. Demographic Profile

Respondent gender distribution: 64.9 male, 33.3 female, 1 unspecified. Age

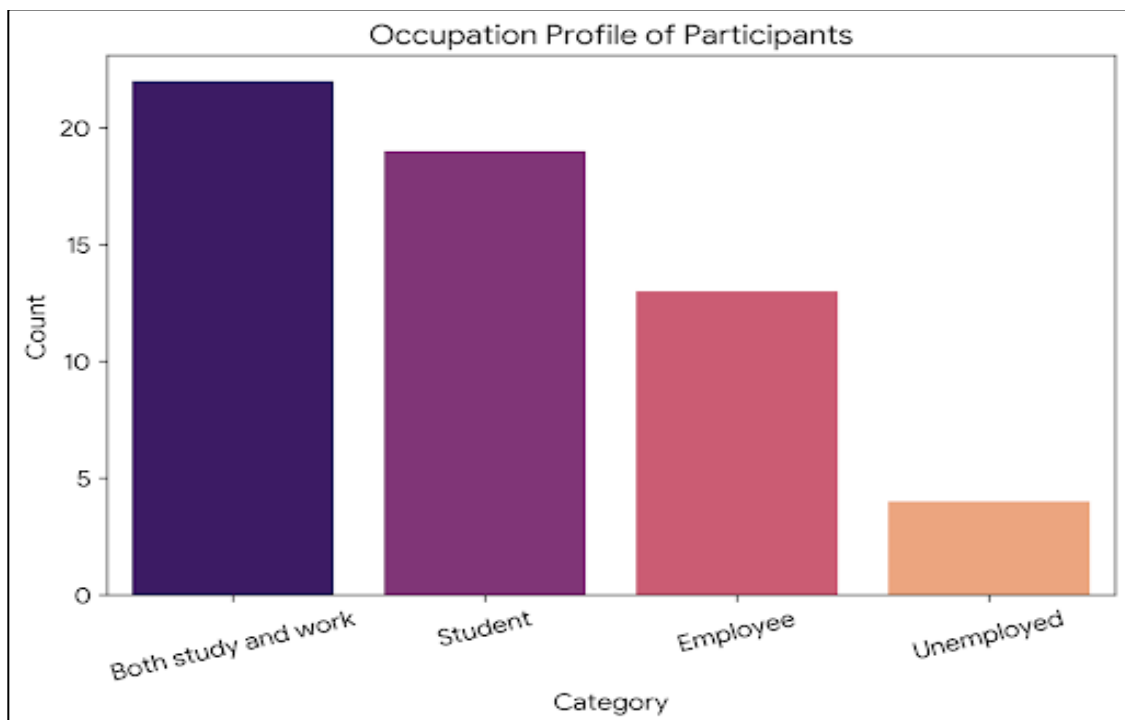
Distribution: The predominant age groups were 19-26 years, comprising

45.6% of respondents within the 19-22 years category and 38.6% within the 23-26 years category. Academic

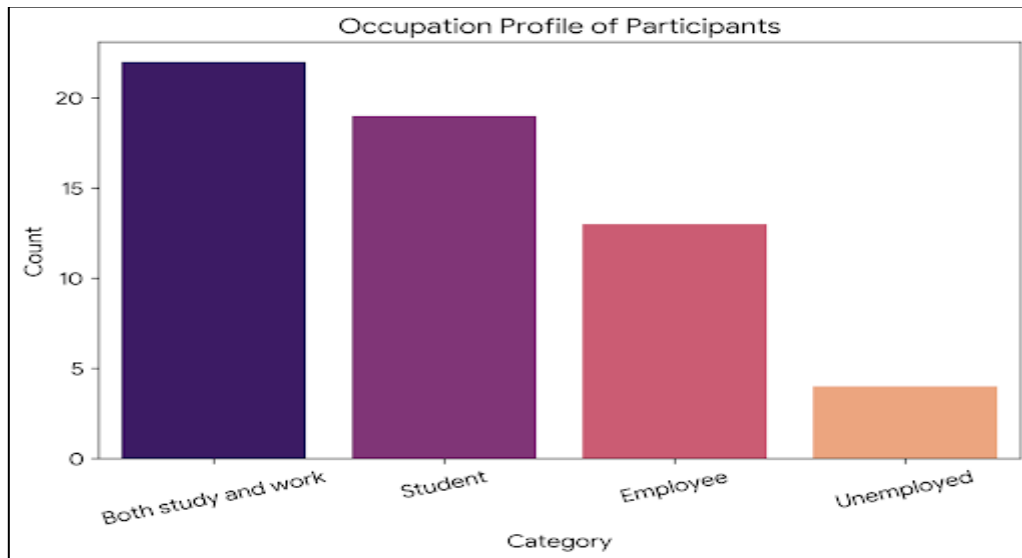
classification: The sample consisted of 52.6% undergraduate and 31.6% postgraduate

students. Some individuals held a certificate of intermediate or

matriculation.

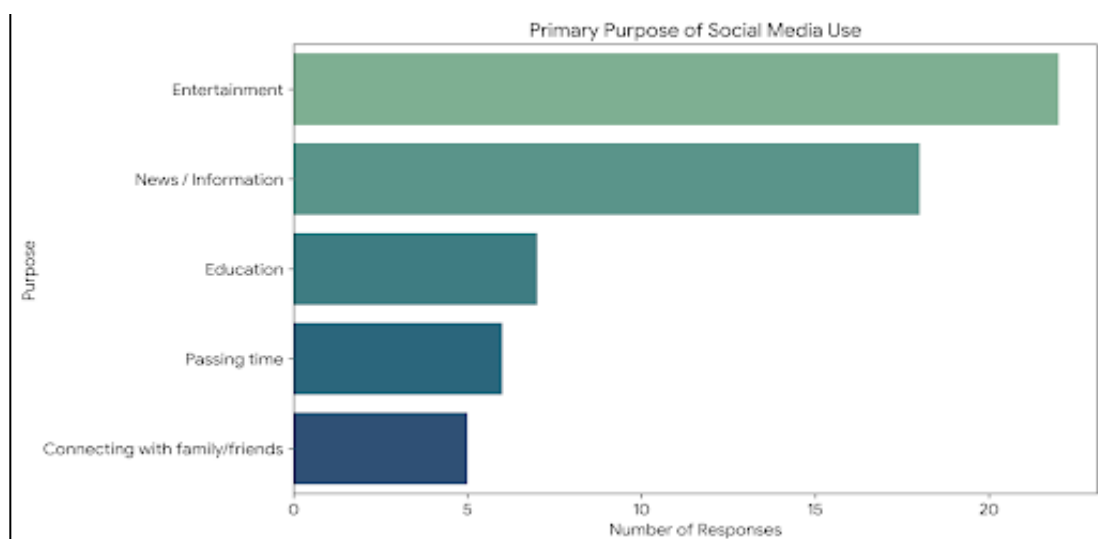


The demographic profile includes a primary category of students (38.6%) and a secondary category, comprising individuals who are simultaneously employed and enrolled in educational programs (33.3%). First they are all younger and they all are more educated and they are more exposed to social media so this is the perfect group to research because they are more involved with social media and they are more exposed to the impact it can have on human interaction.



2. Social Media Usage Patterns

The survey indicates that social media is a critical element for Pakistani teenagers. Among the sample, 40.4% reported spending more than six hours on social media daily, while 35.1% reported four to six hours of daily usage. First reason for using social media: 'killing time' (38.6%) second reason for using social media: 'contacting friends and family' (31.6%). Therefore, the data supports the conclusion that teenage individuals utilize social media primarily for social engagement and entertainment.



3.Satisfaction with Family Relationship.

Observation: Overuse of social media can also affect the family dynamics 42.1 spent most of his time on social media communication than face-to-face with family members, 22.8 did not prefer online communication with his family members, with most parental answers being neutral, which is 40.4, representing the parental attitude towards online communication, which was neither negative or positive.

4.Peer Relationship Dynamics

As can be seen, social media affects the human behavior, with 42.1% of the respondents attributing the experience to have been completely different, and it denotes that there is a significant difference in perspective. Moreover, 50.9 reported social media as the major distractor when talking to the peers, which supports the thesis of the present paper that social media can negatively influence the quality of human communication and interaction.

5.Emotional Well-Being and Loneliness.

Empirical evidence indicates that increased use of social media relates to more social disconnection and emotional disconnection. 45.6 of the students felt a little lonely and 28.1 of the students felt a little less lonely during online classes. This fact indicates the possibility of emotional detachment and social disconnection when people use technology to communicate with each other.

6.Fear of Missing Out (FoMO)

That is all i had to hang onto fo mo 35.1 of the participants argued that they had been affected negatively in their real-world social or familial life by FoMO at some time, and 33.3 said they had not. it was also reported that users wanted to follow social media accounts to be updated, 33.3 said they were interested, and 24.6 were actually following.

7.Effects of Addiction to Social Media.

Considering the presented summarized information, one can come to the conclusion that overuse, obsessional following and the feeling of being deprived of any events can harm the relationships both with a family and peers and the general state of mental health among Pakistani teenagers. However, the statistical data show that social media can be both a tool of social interaction and a way of entertainment of the younger demographical groups.

Summary

To conclude, my essay is that social media has a wonderful way to communicate with everyone and watch video, however, it also has some negative sides since you can lose touch of people and become depressed. The finding is consistent with the available literature on the impact of social media on the psychological well-being of adolescents in Pakistan (Ahmed, 2023; Raza and Saleem, 2019). This type of data affects parental choices on adolescent social media access.[19]

Conclusion

Purpose: This study was aimed at examining how social media addiction affected the relationship satisfaction of Pakistani teenage students. Statistically it is indicated that among certain youths over 85 percent develop indicators of internet addiction where they spend more time interacting with the internet than with the physical social world. According to Raza and Saleem (2019) and Ahmed (2023), the active use of social media can result in the lack of direct conversation with relatives and friends. Khan and Ali (2021) suggest that the disposition to use the internet excessively can be affected by personal behavioral styles and

emotional reasons, including insecurities during attachment. There were some differences between male subjects and their predispositions to social media addiction ($M=25.95$) and aggression ($M=84.32$), which is consistent with previous studies (Shahid et al., 2024).[12] To sum up, this discussion is important in highlighting the fact that despite these benefits, excessive use of social media can hinder emotional and social development among young people. SCT, Social Comparison Theory and Attachment Theory are theoretical frameworks which are applied in order to explain these implications. Moderation and knowledge of the physiological processes are necessary to bring emotional stability and create true human relationships in the technologically-oriented world.[22,23]

Recommendations

Overall, this paper suggests that frequent use of social media among underage users. The well being of Pakistani adolescents is greatly affected to eliminate this, i would include social, mental, and operational domains limited recommendations: Educational Campaigns to Adolescents: Educational community organizations and institutions are supposed to ease awareness programs to help adolescents understand the harmful effects of overuse of social media on mental health and interpersonal connections. to instruct them how to take it teach them how to undress the cell phones instruct them on how to create a balance between the Internet and off. Supervision and Communication: Caregivers ought to monitor the activities of their so-called children on social media and spread the information about the dangers of online interactions and online communication. An example is to restrict device usage, participation of family-oriented activities screen-free restraint in social media use are some of the measures that can improve allay negative impacts. Support Structures: Schools and youth centers catering to adolescents must have counseling programs to counter problems faced by students on social media sites, such as loneliness, anxiety, and FOMO. Indicatively, students may use the available mental resources like therapy or counseling, which would exemplify to them methods of coping with obsessive practices and uphold general health. Improve socialization: Academic and community efforts in the form of opportunities should aim at Personal communication, teamwork and leisure activities among teenagers. Sports, extra curricular activities and participation. Teenagers can also have their social skills improved with the help of project-oriented clubs, which will eliminate the degree of reduced social skills in teenagers need to rely on such platforms as Facebook and Twitter communication intentions. School: It should be offered in schools education about internet and social media security. Compliance with guidelines on internet usage, the use of digital health, and online behavior would help in progressive behavioral changes among students. Reader Guidance: It is recommendable to the users that they should demonstrate restraint in their social media usage through making a personal usage boundaries. Individuals ought to simply engage in conversation with one another, as opposed to talking behind one another they can practice to be conscious of each other on the internet can have and cannot disconnect of the screens and they can help a lot their life control time that they spent in the devices. Additional evidence and data acquisition: More empirical information might be necessary to evaluate the consequences of social media in the long run dependency on the personalities and on the society. in the long run there could be a comparison of the way does different intervention programs work. Overall, treating social media addiction demands a multi-faceted intervention and covers education, mental health support, parental involvement and legislature. Afterwards integration, the online use will reduce among Pakistani teenagers improved, reduced incidence of psychological disorders, and minimized services interpersonal skills.

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