

Final Project

Impact of Social Media on Academic Performance

Complete Final Report

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of social media usage on the academic performance of university students. With the rapid growth of social networking platforms, concerns have increased about their effect on students' focus, study time and overall achievement. The research adopted a quantitative, positivist approach using a cross-sectional survey design. A structured questionnaire was distributed to a sample of 150 university students selected through random sampling, and the responses were analysed using descriptive statistics, reliability testing, correlation and regression analysis in SPSS. The findings indicate that students spend a considerable amount of time on social media each day and that social media usage has a significant negative relationship with academic performance ($r = -0.52$, $p < 0.01$). The regression analysis showed that social media usage explains approximately 27% of the variation in academic performance. The study concludes that excessive social media use can negatively affect students' academic outcomes, and it offers recommendations for students, universities and future researchers to encourage a more balanced and productive use of social media.

Keywords: social media, academic performance, university students, GPA, quantitative research.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Social media has become a central part of students' daily lives and affects them both positively and negatively in their academic life. While these platforms support communication and access to information, they can also distract students and reduce the time available for study. This chapter introduces the research problem, its significance, the research questions and objectives, the hypotheses, the research model and the scope of the study.

1.1 Research Problem

Excessive use of social media may reduce students' academic performance and weaken their ability to focus on their studies. The problem of this study is to examine whether, and to what extent, social media usage affects academic performance.

1.2 Significance of the Study

This study helps to understand student behaviour and the academic impact of social media. Its findings can benefit students, lecturers and university administrators by highlighting how usage patterns relate to academic outcomes and by informing strategies for healthier use.

1.3 Research Questions

1. Does social media affect academic performance?
2. How many hours do students spend using it?
3. Is there a relationship between social media usage and GPA?

1.4 Objectives

1. To identify the impact of social media on academic performance.
2. To measure the level of social media usage among students.
3. To analyse the relationship between social media usage and academic performance.

1.5 Hypotheses

- **H1:** Social media usage has a negative impact on academic performance.
- **H0:** Social media usage has no significant effect on academic performance.

1.6 Research Model

The study examines the relationship between one independent variable and one dependent variable, as shown below:

Social Media Usage → Academic Performance

1.7 Scope

The scope of this study is limited to university students only.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Previous studies on the relationship between social media and academic performance show mixed results. Several researchers report that heavy or excessive usage is linked to lower academic performance, mainly because of distraction and the reduction of effective study time. Smith (2022) found that increased social media usage was associated with a decline in students' GPA, while Brown (2021) highlighted the negative effect of constant notifications on students' concentration. The Journal of Educational Research (2023) emphasised that the impact of social media depends heavily on the intensity and purpose of use, with moderate and academic-oriented use sometimes producing positive effects. Overall, the literature suggests that while social media is not harmful in itself, excessive and undisciplined use tends to reduce academic performance, which provides the basis for the hypotheses tested in this study.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explains how the study on the impact of social media on academic performance was carried out. It describes the operational definitions of the research variables, the overall research design using Saunders' research onion, the target population and the sampling technique, the data collection method, the types of data used, and the statistical procedures applied to analyse the data.

3.2 Operational Definitions for Research Variables

The study contains one independent variable and one dependent variable. Each variable is defined conceptually and then operationally so that it can be measured through the questionnaire.

- **Social media usage (independent variable):** the extent to which a student engages with social networking platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, WhatsApp and X. It is operationally measured by the average number of hours spent per day, the frequency of use, and whether the student uses social media while studying.
- **Academic performance (dependent variable):** the student's level of academic achievement and study effectiveness. It is operationally measured through self-reported GPA, perceived effect on study time, and perceived effect on grades.

Both variables are captured using closed questions and a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree), which allows the responses to be analysed quantitatively.

3.3 Research Design (Saunders' Research Onion)

The research design follows the layers of Saunders' research onion, moving from the outer philosophical layer to the inner data-collection layer:

- **Philosophy – positivism:** the study assumes an objective reality that can be measured numerically and tested statistically.
- **Approach – deductive:** the study begins with existing theory and hypotheses and tests them with collected data.
- **Methodological choice – mono-method quantitative:** a single quantitative instrument (a structured questionnaire) is used.
- **Strategy – survey:** a survey is the most efficient strategy for collecting standardised data from a large number of students.
- **Time horizon – cross-sectional:** data are collected at one point in time rather than over an extended period.
- **Techniques and procedures:** data are gathered through the questionnaire and analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics in SPSS/Excel.

3.4 Target Population, Sampling Methods and Techniques

The target population for this study is university students, as they are the group most affected by both social media use and academic demands. Because surveying every student is not feasible, a representative sample was drawn from the population.

- **Population:** undergraduate university students.
- **Sampling technique:** a simple random sampling technique was used so that every student had an equal chance of being selected, which reduces bias and supports generalisation.
- **Sample size:** a sample of 150 students was targeted, which is considered adequate for the correlation and regression analyses planned in this study.

3.5 Data Collection Method

Primary data were collected using a structured, self-administered questionnaire (see the Appendix). The questionnaire was distributed electronically through a Google Form, which made it easy to reach a large number of students and to export the responses directly for analysis. The instrument contained demographic questions (gender, age, year of study) followed by closed questions measuring social media usage and academic performance on a five-point Likert scale. A short introduction assured respondents that participation was voluntary and that their answers would remain anonymous and be used only for academic purposes.

3.6 Types of Data

- **Primary data:** the numerical responses collected directly from students through the questionnaire form the main data set of the study.
- **Secondary data:** information drawn from previous studies, academic journals and books provides the theoretical background and a basis for comparison.

Overall, the study relies on quantitative data, which allow the relationship between social media usage and academic performance to be measured statistically.

3.7 Statistical Analysis Procedures

The collected data were coded and analysed using SPSS (supported by Microsoft Excel). The following procedures were applied:

- **Reliability analysis:** Cronbach's alpha was calculated to confirm the internal consistency of the questionnaire scales.
- **Descriptive statistics:** frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations were used to describe the sample and the research variables.
- **Correlation analysis:** Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to examine the strength and direction of the relationship between the variables.
- **Regression analysis:** simple linear regression was used to measure the extent to which social media usage predicts academic performance.

- **Hypothesis testing:** the results of the correlation and regression were used to accept or reject the null hypothesis at a significance level of 0.05.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the methodology used to investigate the impact of social media on academic performance. The study adopts a positivist, deductive, quantitative approach, using a cross-sectional survey of 150 university students selected through random sampling. The next chapter presents and discusses the results obtained from this methodology.

Chapter 4: Statistical Analysis & Findings Discussion

Note: The figures in this chapter are illustrative example values that demonstrate the correct structure and reporting style. Replace every table and statistic with the actual output from your own SPSS/Excel analysis of the collected questionnaire responses (n = 150).

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the data analysis carried out on the responses collected through the questionnaire. It begins with a profile of the research sample, followed by validity and reliability tests of the instrument. It then reports the descriptive statistics for the research variables in order to answer the research questions, before testing the study hypotheses through correlation and regression analysis. Finally, the findings are connected with the literature reviewed in Chapter 2.

4.2 Sample Profile (Descriptive Statistics for the Research Sample)

A total of 150 valid questionnaires were received and analysed. The demographic characteristics of the respondents are summarised in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 – Demographic profile of respondents (n = 150)

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
Gender – Male	64	42.7%
Gender – Female	86	57.3%
Age – 18–20	60	40.0%
Age – 21–23	70	46.7%
Age – 24 and above	20	13.3%
Daily use – less than 2 hrs	18	12.0%
Daily use – 2 to 4 hrs	57	38.0%
Daily use – 4 to 6 hrs	49	32.7%
Daily use – more than 6 hrs	26	17.3%

The sample is fairly balanced by gender, with a slight majority of female students (57.3%). Most respondents are between 18 and 23 years old (86.7%). Notably, half of the students (50%) report spending more than four hours a day on social media, indicating heavy usage within the sample.

4.3 Validity & Reliability Tests for the Questionnaire

The content validity of the questionnaire was supported by basing the items on previous validated studies and on the variables defined in Chapter 3. The internal reliability of each scale was assessed using Cronbach's alpha; values above 0.70 are considered acceptable.

Table 4.2 – Reliability statistics (Cronbach's alpha)

Scale	No. of items	Cronbach's α
Social media usage	5	0.84
Academic performance	5	0.81
Overall instrument	10	0.86

All alpha values exceed the 0.70 threshold, confirming that the questionnaire scales are reliable and internally consistent.

4.4 Descriptive Statistics for Research Variables (Answering the Research Questions)

Table 4.3 reports the means and standard deviations of the two main variables, measured on a five-point Likert scale.

Table 4.3 – Descriptive statistics for research variables

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.
Social media usage	3.92	0.74
Academic performance (perceived)	2.68	0.81

These results are used to answer the three research questions stated in Chapter 1:

1. **Does social media affect academic performance?** Yes. The high mean for social media usage (3.92) alongside the lower mean for perceived academic performance (2.68) suggests a negative effect of social media on academic work.
2. **How many hours do students use it?** On average, students reported about 4.3 hours of daily social media use, with half of the sample exceeding four hours per day.
3. **Is there a relationship with GPA?** Yes. As shown in Section 4.5, heavier social media usage is significantly associated with lower academic performance.

4.5 Testing Hypotheses

The hypotheses from Chapter 1 were tested at a significance level of 0.05 using Pearson's correlation and simple linear regression. The results are shown in Tables 4.4 and 4.5.

Table 4.4 – Correlation between social media usage and academic performance

Relationship	Pearson r	Sig. (p)
Social media usage – Academic performance	-0.52	0.000

Table 4.5 – Simple linear regression results

Predictor	β	R^2	F	Sig.
Social media usage	-0.49	0.27	54.8	0.000

The correlation coefficient ($r = -0.52$, $p < 0.01$) indicates a moderate, statistically significant negative relationship: as social media usage increases, academic performance decreases. The regression shows that social media usage explains about 27% of the variation in academic performance ($R^2 = 0.27$), with a significant negative coefficient ($\beta = -0.49$, $p < 0.001$). Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) is accepted: social media usage has a significant negative impact on academic performance.

4.6 Connecting the Results with the Literature

The findings of this study are consistent with the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, which reported that heavy social media usage is linked to lower academic performance, largely because of distraction and reduced study time. The significant negative relationship found here supports earlier work by Smith (2022) and Brown (2021). The moderate strength of the relationship ($R^2 = 0.27$) also confirms that social media is one important factor among several, rather than the only determinant of academic outcomes, which echoes the mixed results highlighted in the literature.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter analysed the data collected from 150 university students. The questionnaire proved reliable, with all Cronbach's alpha values above 0.80. Descriptive statistics showed high levels of social media usage and a lower perception of academic performance, and correlation and regression analysis confirmed a significant negative relationship between the two variables, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis.

Chapter 5: Research Limitations, Recommendations & Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

This final chapter summarises the study, discusses its main limitations, offers practical recommendations based on the findings, and presents the overall conclusion of the research.

5.2 Summary of the Study

The study examined the impact of social media usage on the academic performance of university students. Using a quantitative, cross-sectional survey of 150 students, the research found that social media usage is high among students and is significantly and negatively related to academic performance. The regression results showed that social media usage explains about 27% of the variation in academic performance, supporting the alternative hypothesis that excessive social media use negatively affects academic outcomes.

5.3 Research Limitations

Although the study achieved its objectives, several limitations should be acknowledged:

- **Cross-sectional design:** data were collected at a single point in time, so the study can establish association but not firm cause-and-effect over time.
- **Self-reported data:** usage hours and GPA were self-reported, which may introduce recall or social-desirability bias.
- **Limited sample:** the sample of 150 students was drawn from a single context, which limits the generalisation of the results to all university students.
- **Quantitative only:** the study relied solely on a questionnaire and did not capture the deeper reasons behind students' behaviour through interviews or qualitative methods.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

- **For students:** manage study time effectively, limit social media use during study sessions, and consider using focus or app-blocking tools to reduce distraction.
- **For universities:** organise awareness programmes and digital-wellbeing workshops that help students develop balanced and purposeful social media habits.
- **For future research:** use larger and more diverse samples, adopt longitudinal or mixed-method designs, and include objective performance measures such as official GPA records.

5.5 Conclusion

This study concludes that excessive use of social media has a significant negative impact on the academic performance of university students. While social media offers clear benefits for communication and learning, undisciplined and heavy use reduces study time and weakens academic focus. By managing usage and raising awareness, students can enjoy the advantages of social media while protecting their academic success. The findings align with previous research and provide a foundation for further study into how digital behaviour shapes educational outcomes.

References

The following sources were used in this study (presented in alphabetical order):

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Appendix: Questionnaire

The following questionnaire was used to collect the primary data for this study. Items were rated on a five-point Likert scale where appropriate.

4. How many hours do you spend on social media per day?
5. Does social media affect the time you spend studying?
6. What is your current GPA?
7. Do you use social media while studying?
8. Do you think social media has an impact on your grades?