

Social Media Problematic Use and Academic Procrastination: A Correlational Quantitative Study of Adolescents in Pakistan

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Abstract

Studies across the globe have shown not only the detrimental effects of social media problematic use on mental health but also on academic procrastination. However, there is a lack of comprehensive literature on the impact of social media problematic use on academic procrastination among adolescents, particularly in Pakistan. This study aims to investigate the association between social media problematic use and academic procrastination among adolescents aged 12 to 19 enrolled in private and public schools and colleges in Pakistan. A cross-sectional correlational research design was employed, using purposive sampling to collect data from 150 adolescents. Participants had to have used social media for at least one year. The Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS) and the Academic Procrastination Scale were used to assess the variables. Ethical guidelines in accordance with the APA's 7th edition were strictly followed. Findings indicate a positive and significant relationship between social media problematic use and academic procrastination among adolescents in Pakistan. The study highlights the importance of developing interventions and educational policies aimed at reducing social media problematic use to improve academic outcomes.

Keywords: Social Media Problematic Use, Academic Procrastination, Adolescents.

Introduction

Social media plays a key role in human society; it serves as a source of information, a means of communication, enhances educational activities, and plays a significant role in business as well (Okoro, 2012). However, problematic use of social media has been proven to be detrimental, as shown by both past and recent studies. Social media problematic use can cause

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clinical distress in daily life, leading to negative emotions and adverse mental health outcomes. It is also associated with academic procrastination among adolescents, resulting in a decline in academic performance (Al-Menayes, 2015; Mahmoud, 2023).

Academic procrastination, a type of domain-specific behavior, refers to the tendency of adolescents to delay or postpone completing academic tasks—such as studying for exams, doing homework, or writing essays—even when they are aware of the need to complete these tasks and have a specific deadline (Zacks & Hen, 2018). Social media problematic use and academic procrastination are critical issues affecting adolescents' academic performance and well-being. Studies reveal that excessive use of social media is linked to higher levels of academic procrastination, which in turn negatively impacts academic achievement. For instance, a study involving 965 undergraduates at Nnamdi Azikiwe University found that 33.47% exhibited high levels of academic procrastination, with social media problematic use significantly predicting both procrastination and lower academic performance (Anierobi et al., 2021). Similarly, research at Semarang State University highlighted a correlation between the intensity of social media use and academic procrastination, emphasizing the need for institutional policies to address this issue (Muslikah & Andriyani, 2018).

In Saudi Arabia, a cross-sectional study of 697 students at Taif University revealed moderate levels of academic procrastination, with social media problematic use, daily usage hours, and phone use during lectures being significant predictors (Al Shaibani et al., 2020). Furthermore, a study in the Philippines demonstrated that academic procrastination fully mediates the relationship between social media problematic use and academic achievement, underscoring the detrimental effects of procrastination on learning outcomes (Caratiquit & Caratiquit, 2023).

Literature Review

The detrimental effects of problematic social media use are well-documented. It is evident that such use negatively impacts not only mental health but also academic performance among adolescents in schools and colleges. A previous study examined how adolescents' use of media and technology relates to academic procrastination and achievement. Data from 1,278 students revealed that increased media use lowered academic performance, with procrastination mediating this effect. These findings highlight the negative academic impact of media use and suggest areas for further research (Türel & Dokumacı, 2022).

Similarly, a study of 345 Najran University students found that 73% used social media for more than four hours daily, resulting in increased psychological alienation and academic procrastination. The study emphasizes the need for educational and family interventions to address the adverse psychological, social, and academic outcomes of excessive social media use among youth (Hammad & Awed, 2023). Another study involving 370 Turkish middle school students investigated the impact of problematic social media use (PSU) on academic procrastination (AP), with self-control as a moderating factor. Results indicated that PSU significantly increased AP, while higher self-control reduced this effect (Üztemur & Dinç, 2023).

According to Suárez-Perdomo et al. (2024), academic procrastination—defined as delaying tasks such as studying and completing assignments—is strongly associated with problematic social network use. Their study of 1,784 Spanish students identified three procrastination profiles (low, moderate, high), showing that higher levels of procrastination were linked to more academic delays and more problematic use of social networks. Additional research conducted in Urmia high schools found that problematic social media use indirectly reduces academic achievement by increasing procrastination, academic stress, and poor sleep quality (Ahmadi & Zeinali, 1970). Recent studies in Pakistan distinguish between regular and problematic use of social media. While regular use may not be harmful, problematic use has

been linked to aggressive behavior and academic procrastination (Fareed et al., 2024; Manzoor et al., 2024; Shahid et al., 2024).

Although numerous studies have explored the relationship between problematic social media use and academic procrastination, there is limited research specifically targeting adolescents in Pakistan. To address this gap, it is essential to examine this association within the cultural context of adolescents in Pakistan.

Hypothesis

1. Social media problematic use is likely to be positively and significantly associated with academic procrastination among adolescents in Pakistan.

Methodology

A cross-sectional correlational research design was employed in this study, utilizing purposive sampling to select participants. The sample consisted of 150 adolescents aged 12 to 19, all Pakistani citizens currently enrolled in private and public schools and colleges in Pakistan and owning a smartphone with social media access.

Study Measures

The Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS), a six-item Likert scale with strong internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.80$), was used to measure levels of problematic social media use, with higher scores indicating greater problematic use (Andreassen et al., 2017). Academic procrastination was assessed using the 25-item Academic Procrastination Scale, which measures the frequency of procrastination behaviors on a 5-point Likert scale and has strong internal consistency ranging from 0.83 to 0.90 (Yockey, 2016).

Ethical Consideration and Procedure

Ethical guidelines aligned with the APA's 7th edition were strictly followed. Permission from the relevant department and authors was obtained before starting data collection, ensuring participants' privacy, informed consent, and protection from physical or psychological harm, while maintaining data integrity to prevent falsification or manipulation. Once the data were collected, the authors' participation was acknowledged, and the data were entered into SPSS version 27 for analysis.

Results

Table 1: Characteristics of Participants (N=150)

Participants Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age			16.49	1.89
Gender				
Boys	120	80		
Girls	30	20		
Academic Level				
School Students	95	63		
College Students	55	37		

Note: *M*=Mean, *SD*= Standard Deviation

The table above shows that out of 150 participants, 120 (80%) were boys and 30 (20%) were girls, with a mean age of 16.49 (*SD* =1.89). Regarding academic level, 95 (63%) were school students, and 55 (37%) were college students.

Table 2: Relationship between the Study Variables (N=150)

Variables	1	2
1. Social Media Problematic Use	-	.74**
2. Academic Procrastination		-

Note: ** $p < .01$

The table above shows social media problematic use is positively and significantly related to academic procrastination.

Discussion

It was hypothesized that social media problematic use would be significantly and positively associated with academic procrastination among adolescents in Pakistan. The correlational analysis of the study confirmed this hypothesis. These results are supported by research conducted in Nigeria, which found that social media problematic use is positively associated with academic procrastination among undergraduate students (Anierobi et al., 2021). Another study aligns with the findings of the current study, indicating that among adolescents in Pakistan, TikTok scrolling problematic use is positively and significantly related to academic procrastination (Manzoor et al., 2024).

One possible reason for academic procrastination could be the gratification provided by social media apps, particularly through short videos. A recent study shows that among adolescents in Pakistan, Instagram Reels problematic use is positively and significantly associated with academic procrastination (Khawar et al., 2025). Other contributing factors may include compulsive behaviors such as chatting, posting photos, uploading videos, and other social media-related activities. Additionally, there is a lack of awareness in Pakistani society regarding the excessive use of social media apps and their potential detrimental effects, which further aggravates the issue.

Conclusion

A quantitative correlational study design and purposive sampling technique were adopted to collect data from 150 adolescents aged 12 to 19, currently enrolled in public in private schools and colleges in Pakistan, who have been using social media for at least one year. The objective of the study was to examine the positive and significant relationship between social media problematic use and academic procrastination. The results affirmed the hypothesis, thereby addressing a gap in the literature within the Pakistani context and providing useful implications.

Implications

The findings of this study support its objectives and highlight the need for practical interventions for adolescents in Pakistan struggling with social media problematic use and academic procrastination. First, promoting help-seeking behavior among students is crucial. They should be encouraged to seek psychological support from mental health professionals. Universities can support this by organizing seminars, webinars, and workshops featuring mental health experts to enhance student well-being and performance. Furthermore, workshops should be conducted to train parents in helping their children develop critical skills such as time management and decision-making, which can reduce academic procrastination and improve academic outcomes. Parents should also be encouraged to create a supportive and emotionally secure environment to motivate their children to succeed academically. Awareness programs should be introduced to educate parents on the importance of actively supporting their children in managing academic responsibilities and mitigating the negative impact of excessive social media.

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