

TikTok Addiction and Academic Procrastination Among College and University Students in Pakistan

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Abstract

TikTok is a social media app that features short-form videos ranging from a few seconds to several minutes. For gratification purposes, college and university students have increasingly engaged in watching these videos. According to existing studies, excessive use of this app leads to academic procrastination; however, such studies are scarce in the Pakistani context. Therefore, the objective of this study was to explore the impact of TikTok addiction on academic procrastination among Pakistani college and university students (N = 222), aged 15 to 35, who had been using TikTok for at least one year. A purposive sampling technique and a cross-sectional correlational design were employed. The findings indicated a significant and positive effect of TikTok addiction on academic procrastination, accounting for 9% of the variance. Implications are discussed for student welfare at the end of study.

Keywords: TikTok Addiction, Academic Procrastination, Students.

Introduction

The world is rapidly modernising, and smartphones—products of this era—continue to evolve with new features. Among the most widely used applications are social media platforms, which have transformed into extensions of traditional word-of-mouth networks. They allow anyone with internet access to share opinions, build relationships, and access information. However, social media addiction has been linked to adverse mental health outcomes, such as increased depression, aggression, and reduced academic performance (Akpuokwe et al., 2024; Fathurrahman et al., 2024; Khan et al., 2024; Nisar et al., 2019; Shahid et al., 2024).

TikTok, developed in China in 2016, has become one of the most popular platforms, hosting diverse content including dance, comedy, pranks, and educational videos. It enables users to

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create and explore short videos lasting from a few seconds to several minutes (Anderson, 2020; Schukow et al., 2022; Shutsko, 2020). Over time, TikTok's role has expanded to include activism, brand marketing, and talent discovery (Abbas et al., 2022; Di Leo, 2022). It is especially popular among Generation Z, who make up nearly 60% of its approximately 700 million users, drawn by its interactive features (Ceschan, n.d.).

Despite its popularity, concerns are growing about TikTok addiction and its effects on users' well-being, particularly among young adults (Hassan, 2023; Wang & Shang, 2024). TikTok addiction is characterised by excessive use, time distortion, stress when unable to access the app, and disruptions to daily life (Brand et al., 2024; Conte et al., 2024; Yang, 2023). Studies indicate that such addiction is linked to academic procrastination—the habitual delay of academic tasks—and increased stress (Liu & Li, 2024; Slimani, 2024).

High levels of procrastination among university students are well-documented, with 33.47% reporting that it negatively affects their academic performance (Muslikah & Andriyani, 2018). Recent research has confirmed that excessive TikTok use is associated with academic procrastination and stress (Miedzobrodzka & van Koningsbruggen, 2024; Tiking et al., 2024). A study in Pakistan further validated a significant positive relationship between TikTok addiction and academic procrastination among university students (Manzoor et al., 2024).

While global research on this issue is growing, limited studies have addressed it within the Pakistani context. Therefore, this study aims to examine the impact of TikTok addiction on academic procrastination among Pakistani college and university students aged 15 to 35, promoting student well-being and academic success.

Hypothesis

1. TikTok addiction is likely to significantly and positively predict academic procrastination in college and university students in Pakistan.

Methodology

The study utilized a cross-sectional correlational research design. A purposive random sampling method was employed to select 222 college and university students between the ages of 15 and 35. Eligibility criteria required participants to be male or female students currently enrolled in a college or university, to have owned a smartphone for at least one year, to have been using TikTok for the past year, and to be both citizens and residents of Pakistan.

To assess social media addiction, the Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS), a six-item Likert scale developed by Andreassen et al. (2016), was administered. The English-language format of the scale makes it particularly suitable for Pakistan's higher education context, where English serves as the medium of instruction. Academic procrastination was measured using the Procrastination Assessment Scale for Students (PASS), developed by Solomon and Rothblum (1988). This instrument comprises 44 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale and evaluates procrastination across a range of academic tasks. Higher scores reflect higher levels of procrastination. The scale demonstrated strong internal consistency, with a reported Cronbach's alpha of 0.93.

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the institutional research ethics committee before data collection commenced. Permissions to use the standardised scales were secured from their respective authors. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS Version 26.

Results

Table 1: Participants' Characteristics (N=222)

Participants' Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Gender				
Male	140	63		
Female	82	37		
Age			24.95	3.27
Educational Level				
Intermediate	32	14		
Bachelor	105	47		
Master	72	32		
PhD	13	6		
Socioeconomic Status				
Lower Class	60	27		
Middle Class	135	61		
Upper Class	27	12		

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

The above table shows that the mean age of the participants is 24.95 with a standard deviation of 3.27. The study includes 140 male participants (63%) and 82 female participants (37%). In terms of educational enrollment, 32 participants (14%) are intermediate students, 105 (47%) are enrolled in bachelor's programs, 72 (32%) in master's programs, and 13 (6%) in PhD programs. Regarding socioeconomic status, 60 participants (27%) belong to the lower class, 135 (61%) to the middle class, and 27 (12%) to the upper class.

Table 2: Correlational Analysis (N=222)

Variables	1	2	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.TikTok Addiction	-	.30*	16.84	5.23
2.Academic Procrastination			93.14	22.83

Note: * $p < .05$

The table above depicts TikTok addiction is significantly associated with academic procrastination.

Table 3: Regression Analysis (N=222)

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>P</i>	<i>R</i> ²	<i>F</i>	95% <i>CI</i>	
							<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>
					.09	22.63		
Constant	70.71	4.93		.001			60.98	80.44
TA	1.33	.28	.30	.001			.78	1.88

Note: *** $p < .001$, *LL*= Lower Level, *UL*= Upper Level, TA= TikTok Addiction

The above table shows that TikTok addiction is a positive and significant predictor of academic procrastination, accounting for 9% of the variance.

Discussion

The hypothesis of the study is proved as TikTok addiction significantly and positively predicts academic procrastination according to regression analysis using SPSS version 26. This finding aligns with a recent study involving 448 adults aged 18 to 35 years ($M = 24.45$, $SD = 3.76$), which reported a significant positive relationship between problematic TikTok use and academic procrastination (Rogowska & Cincio, 2024). Our results are further supported by research showing that short-form video content, such as that on TikTok, impairs attentional control and contributes to procrastination among college students (Xie et al., 2023). Similarly, previous studies have found that an inability to regulate TikTok usage adversely affects academic performance and increases procrastination behaviours (Miedzobrodzka & Koningsbruggen, 2024). In the Pakistani context, recent findings also confirmed a significant and positive effect of TikTok addiction on academic procrastination among university students (Manzoor et al., 2024).

Cultural factors may further exacerbate this issue. In countries like Pakistan, a general lack of awareness regarding the negative consequences of excessive digital media consumption may contribute to the overuse of platforms like TikTok. This overuse, in turn, increases the risk of academic procrastination and hampers academic achievement.

Conclusion

TikTok addiction is shown to be a significant predictor of academic procrastination. Using SPSS Version 26, regression analysis revealed that TikTok use accounts for 9% of the variance in academic procrastination scores among college and university students in Pakistan. These findings contribute to the existing body of knowledge and provide a valuable reference for future research. They also underscore the importance of addressing TikTok addiction in academic settings.

Implications

The implications of this study are relevant for students, educators, and policymakers. It fills a notable research gap in the Pakistani context and encourages further exploration into the connection between social media use and academic outcomes. The findings highlight the need for raising awareness about the risks of excessive TikTok usage. Educational institutions should take proactive steps by offering workshops, seminars, and webinars aimed at promoting healthier digital behaviours and supporting student mental health. Counselling and psychotherapy services should be accessible for students experiencing addiction or procrastination issues. Furthermore, national policies could be developed to help regulate excessive social media use among youth. Parental involvement is equally essential, as parents play a key role in monitoring their children's digital habits and supporting their academic and emotional well-being.

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