

SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE AND STUDENTS' ESL ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE: A CASE STUDY OF UNIVERSITIES IN LAHORE

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Abstract

A large number of empirical researches on student academic performance and its potential antecedents have been conducted within the setting of higher education. However, the significance that social media usage plays in students' ESL (English as a Secondary Language) academic performance is largely ignored. As a result, the purpose of this study was to investigate the impact that students' usage of social media had on their ESL academic performance. This study carried out by the participation of 247 students of undergraduate level from public and private universities in Lahore city. By employing a quantitative research method, the findings indicated that social media usage plays a significant role in enhancing students' ESL academic performance. The findings further followed by the discussion, implications and the constraints of the study.

Keywords: Social media, ESL learners, academic performance, quantitative study, higher education.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, one of the most essential channels of communication has evolved into the various forms of social media (Albanna, Alalwan, & Al-Emran, 2022; Tafesse, 2022). However, the purpose of social networking is to facilitate communication between individuals, regardless of the physical distance between them. This makes it possible for individuals to easily share information, files, images, audios, and videos; writing and sending messages; create blogs; and engage discussions in the real time (Habes et al., 2021). The fact that these platforms make it possible to communicate with one's friends as well as one's coworkers in such an efficient manner is what gives rise to the term "social." Additionally, it fortifies the links that bind the people who make up those systems. Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram, and Youtube are among the most popular websites on the internet. There are also many additional websites. The use of social forums and websites provides a means of communicating directly with other individuals on a social level and in the media. They are playing a significant and crucial role in the process of making decisions in a variety of contexts across the global world, including economically, politically, socially, and educationally.

In connection with educational procedures, it has been observed that the teaching-learning process makes use of assistance from a variety of social network websites (Akram & Aslam et al., 2021; Al-Adwan et al., 2022). In relation to the ESL learning, teachers encourage the students to use numerous modalities of synchronous and asynchronous communication platforms to assist learning, such as WhatsApp, Google classroom, YouTube, Facebook, and Zoom, amongst others (Akram & Yang et al., 2021; Abdelrady & Akram, 2022). These alternatives unquestionably alleviate the additional strain placed on parents in terms

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of providing resources for their offspring. It was suggested that teachers use social networking websites as a means of engaging with their students through informal study groups on platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook, as well as through official pages on the websites of higher education institutions.

The use of social media in higher education has been the subject of a variety of reviews and points of view, all of which agree on the existence of four significant benefits. Among these are the improvement of relationships, the enhancement of learning motivation, the provision of individualized instructional materials, and the development of talents to work in collaboration (Rifkin et al., 2011). This indicates that involvement in activities involving social networking has the potential to increase student contact and is employed in order to increase students' participation in class, particularly the participation of pupils who are more reserved by nature. Students have the opportunity to participate in online group learning with minimal or no preparation required to speak up in front of their classmates in traditional classroom settings (Akram et al., 2022). However, previous research has found that accessing social networking sites can be connected with a higher risk of academic disengagement on the part of students. They discovered a negative effect and influence when an excessive amount of media is used in a manner that does not academically assist learning or the process of it (Feng et al., 2019). Other researches looked into the issue and came to the conclusion that there was either no significant connection between the use of social networking sites and student academic performance or that there was (Van Den Beemt, Thurlings, & Willems, 2020).

In addition, numerous empirical research on students' academic performance and its potential antecedents have been carried out over the years, such as elements associated to the classroom instructor (Pawlak et al., 2021; Nguyen et al., 2022), context-related factors (Bardach et al., 2020), students' personal factors in promoting students' academic performance (Seoane et al., 2020; Akram & Yingxiu, 2019), and family related factors (Khanam, Akram, & Kamran, 2022). However, the influence that students' participation in ESL-related online communities has on the quality of their academic work in higher education context has very seldom been investigated. While students' use of Social Media has a strong association with their academic engagement and motivation (Fathi & Mohammaddockht, 2021). Yet, it has been hard to figure out how the use of social media affects the academic performance of students studying English as a second language (ESL) at higher education levels. In order to address this knowledge gap, this study was carried out to look at the following goals.

1. To determine the extent to which higher-level students use social media.
2. To explore the association between the use of social media and the academic performance of students studying English as a second language.

Hypotheses of the study

H1: Gender significantly affects the social media use of students.

H2: Social media use of students significantly correlates with their grades.

H3: Disciplines significantly affect the social media use of students.

RESEARCH METHOD

The information required for this study was obtained by means of a survey questionnaire that was distributed to a total of 247 undergraduate students during the academic session of 2021-2022. The ages of the responders ranged anywhere from 18 to 32 years old. There were a total of 208 males and 139 females included in the sample. In order to collect the necessary data for the study, a quantitative approach involving questionnaires was utilized. In the survey, the students were given the instruction to provide information on their experiences as well as the impact of using social media on ESL academic performance achieved through collaborative learning.

Instrument

The survey questionnaire with closed-ended questions was developed with the intention of determining the extent to which the students make use of social media. The questionnaire, which consisted of eight items and was derived from Koc and Gulyagci (2013), was changed slightly. The students gave each item a rating based on a Likert-type scale that ranged from 1 (never) to 5 (always), with 1 meaning never and 5 meaning always. On the other hand, students' academic performance was measured with respect to their CGPA scores, categorized into five aspects, i.e., ranging from equal to or less than 3.0,

i.e., ≤ 3.0 to equal to or greater than 4.5, i.e., ≥ 4.5 .

Cronbach's alpha, which was used to evaluate the reliability of the items, yielded a score of 0.96, which denotes "Excellent" reliability. Acquire the data, as they are thought to be trustworthy if the Cronbach value is greater than sixty percent (Ravinder & Saraswathi, 2020).

Sampling Technique

Cronbach's alpha, which was used to evaluate the reliability of the items, produced a score of 0.96, which indicates "Excellent" reliability. This score was obtained from the evaluation. Acquire the information because it is thought to be credible if the Cronbach value is greater than sixty percent. Out of which, only 247 students responded the questionnaires accurately.

DATA ANALYSIS

The T-test, the ANOVA test, and the Post-hoc test were used to assess the data that was collected.

Research Objective 1

The students' rate of participation in social media was determined by applying descriptive statistical tests, such as the mean and the standard deviation, to the data collected from them. The average score of all of the questions on the survey was greater than three, specifically 3.01 (as seen in table 1 below). The findings point to the fact that pupils utilize social media appropriately, as the mean is greater than three (Fisher & Marshall, 2009)

Table 1. Descriptive analysis

S. No.	Items	Mean	SD
1	I find it hard to concentrate on my studies while using social media applications.	3.8	1.6
2	After waking up, the first thing I do is get onto my social media accounts.	3.9	1.23
3	I can't sleep well because I spend the majority of my time on social networking sites.	3.6	1.44
4	Whenever I feel down or sad, I log into my social media accounts to feel better.	3.76	1.22
5	My close friends and family members believe that I am addicted to using social networking sites.	3.45	1.65
6	I feel anxious when I cannot use social networking sites.	3.88	1.34
7	I wanted to reduce the amount of time I spent on social networking sites, but I was unable to do so.	3.54	1.56
8	I am connected with all my friends and classmates via social media accounts.	3.3	1.90

Hypothesis 1

A T-test was used in order to investigate whether or not there is a significant difference in the frequency with which people of different genders use social media (shown in table 2). According to the findings, there was no discernible difference between the number of hours spent on social media spent by male and female students (i.e., $T = 0.99$; $p = .23$) at the alpha level of .05. As a result, the hypothesis regarding the prevalence of social media use in relation to gender was found to be rejected. In addition, the female students obtained a higher mean than the male students, which suggests that the prevalence of social media use was higher in female students than in male students. This was the case because the female students were more likely to use social media.

Table 2. T-test Analysis

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	T	Sig
Male	108	2.90	1.11	325	0.99	.23
Female	139	3.10	1.21			

Hypothesis 2

A T-test was utilized for the purpose of determining whether or not there is a significant gap in the frequency with which various fields make use of social media (shown in table 3). The findings suggested that there is a significant difference between subjects studying social sciences and those studying natural sciences with regard to the use of social media (i.e., $T = -0.67$; $p = .02$) at the alpha level of .05. As a result, the hypothesis regarding the percentage of people who use social media in relation to the different fields was validated. In addition, students majoring in the social sciences achieved a higher mean than students majoring in the natural sciences. This finding suggests that prevalence of social media use was greater in students majoring in the social sciences.

Table 3. T-test Analysis

Disciplines	N	Mean	SD	Df	T	Sig
Social Sciences	108	3.21	1.11	325	-0.67	.02
Natural Sciences	139	3.01	1.21			

Hypothesis 3

In order to find out how much students' utilization of social media explain their ESL academic performance, a linear regression analysis was employed. The findings indicated that students' usage of social media was significantly associated with their ESL academic performance, as the obtained p-value was less than 0.5. On account of this, the hypothesis was accepted successfully.

Table 2. linear regression Analysis

ESL Academic performance			
Independent Variable	β	p-value	R-Square
Social Media Usage	.24	.00**	.39

DISCUSSION

This study attempted to achieve two distinct goals at the same time. To begin, we looked into the academic achievement of ESL students in higher educational institutions. Second, the feasibility of a two-factor hypothetical model was studied in order to explain the relationship between students' social media usage and their ESL academic achievement, as well as to identify the most significant components of the process and the most successful path forward. The study's findings provide statistical support for the conception of the ESL academic performance mechanism that students demonstrate as they advance in their schooling. The data revealed that pupils make effective use of the various social media platforms. This observation is in line with findings from other studies, such as (Safapour, Kermanshachi, & Taneja, 2013; Ainin et al., 2015).

In addition, the hypothesis of the study also affirmed that students' social media usage positively influences students' ESL academic performance. The beneficial impacts of students' use of social media on their academic achievement were also highlighted by Baragash and Al-Samarraie (2018). As they put it, "while students create their study groups on any particular social network sites, they start a discussion to exchange personal thoughts, ideas, information, and they used this group for communicating with one another as well as with their respective teachers," offering a providing guidance and recommendations to friends and classmates on the social networking sites regarding the projects and the assigned tasks. Teachers often relied on this channel to disseminate important information about their classes, supplementary materials, and homework assignments. As a result, it aids in imparting knowledge and is put to use to improve academic performance at a variety of levels (Safapour, Kermanshachi & Taneja, 2019). In addition, through engagement with more seasoned professionals and fellow students on social networking sites (SNSs), students can improve their reading and comprehension skills. As opposed to that, according to the findings of Tartari et al. (2019), there was not a significant correlation found between the amount of time students spend on social networking sites and their overall academic accomplishment. Based on their findings, it was demonstrated that

student use of social networks like Facebook has a detrimental effect on the learning goals that they set for themselves. This may be ascribed to whether or not the educational activities are well-designed in relation to the level of enhancing the level of engagement shown by the pupils and whether or not they are made available to all learners. Because of this, It is advised that students be encouraged to utilize social networking sites (SNSs) for educational purposes, which will ultimately change the students' perspective regarding the usage of SNSs. This can be accomplished by encouraging students to use SNSs for educational purposes.

According to the findings of this survey, the percentage of female students who use social network sites is significantly higher than that of male students. This conclusion of the study demonstrates uniformity with the findings of some of the earlier research. Thelwall and Kousha (2014) were responsible for the research for one of them. They found, in each of their separate studies, that female members' frequency of use of social networking sites was significantly higher than that of male members. They came to the conclusion based on the findings that female students use social networking sites for the purpose of expressing themselves in regard to their family relationships. They did this by communicating with one another using the social networking service WhatsApp. Less males than females were discovered to be members of the aforementioned social networking sites.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study contribute to a greater understanding of the significant impact that students' use of social media plays in explaining their ESL academic accomplishment. The study further advocates for additional research to be conducted, as well as the inclusion of elements that play a role in enhancing the academic performance of students, the consideration of factors related to the students' demographics, the use of a larger sample size for the purpose of gaining more clarity, and the discovery of additional components with which to measure the factors that influence a student's ESL academic performance as a direct result of their use of social media by higher education institutions in the future.

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