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Relationship between Social Media Usage and Students' Engagement in Academics at University Level

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Abstract: The use of social media can be seen in every walk of life and its impacts are evident as it has been emerged as a great source of communication and information nowadays. The study aimed to understand whether social media helps or distracts students in learning and participating in academic activities. The objectives of the study were to identify the usage of social media among students; to find out the students' engagement in academics and to analyze the relationship between social media usage and students' engagement in academics at university level. This study was descriptive, and survey method was used. The population of the study was consisted of fourteen hundred thirty-four (1434) students from all the departments of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, University of Kotli AJ&K. the researchers selected three hundred (300) students as a sample by using simple random sampling technique. Researchers collected and analyzed validated questionnaire data from all departments using SPSS to study students' experiences and well-being. The researcher used frequency, mean, standard deviation and Pearson's Correlation for the analysis of data. Students use social media for academic success, skill-building, and entertainment, but valid privacy concerns arise due to platforms collecting personal data and tracking activities. It is recommended that the university administration may organize workshops and seminars about social media usage and students' engagements in academic, in this way students may know how to use social media platforms a positive way.

Keywords: Social Media, Students' Academics, Students' Engagement

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Introduction

Human interaction has always relied on communication, but with the emergence of social media, it took on entirely new dimensions and dynamics. Social media has made it possible for people to communicate in real time and instantly connect with people around the world. Social media use among students is on the rise. Nearly 95% of teenagers own a smartphone, according to the Research Center, and 45% of them report using the internet nearly constantly (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). Early in the twenty-first century, social media emerged, revolutionizing communication and information sharing in ways that could last a lifetime (Ortiz-Ospina, 2019).

Social media really started taking off back in 1979 with Usenet. It was this cool network where folks could post articles and share news. Fast forward to the 1990s, and we saw a bunch of social networking sites pop up, like Six Degrees and Black Planet. These platforms gave users the chance to connect with each other and chat about all sorts

of things, even getting involved in public policy discussions and building contact networks. Ever since social media platforms burst onto the scene in the 21st century, the way we communicate and share information has really transformed (Ortiz-Ospina, 2019). These changes seem like they are here to stay. Social media has woven itself into the fabric of our daily lives, shaping how we interact, do business, and connect with one another.

Social media has really transformed the communication, contact, and connecting mode. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), it has made the communication easier and faster, enabling one to connect from anywhere in the world. Social media has really become an essential part of modern society, offering constant benefits.

Social media contributes a lot to the engagement of students by creating avenues for communication, collaboration, and resources. Such avenues as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram offer opportunities for relating with other students and lecturers beyond the class setting. Interaction among the students enhances the learning process by enabling the students to share ideas, and get feedback within no time (Zekaj, 2023). It helps in the sharing of ideas for academic projects and group assignments, creating a community among students and a sense of teamwork (Lawson et al., 2021). Social media can be a respected tool for staying knowledgeable about academic events, resources, and opportunities. Many educational institutions use social media to distribute important information, such as deadlines, workshops, and academic news (Perez et al., 2023). This accessibility helps students stay engaged with their academic environment and maintain motivation. However, it is essential to manage social media use effectively to prevent distractions and ensure it contributes positively to academic performance (Purnama, & Asdlori, 2023).

The findings of earlier research on social media's effect on student performance have been conflicting. Both positive and negative effects on student knowledge sharing have been observed in certain experimental studies. One side of the studies show that the social media promotes collaboration and information sharing during the learning process, which leads to improved performance, according to some studies (Sivakumar et al., 2023). On the other hand, studies also show that the social media can result in reduced in-person communication and distractions, which negatively impacts knowledge sharing (Sivakumar et al., 2023). In order to determine how social media can be used to improve student knowledge sharing, more research needs to be conducted.

The current research complements existing knowledge about the use of social media among students for learning purposes by encouraging behaviors that improve academic performance and helping others. It aimed at understanding the role of social media in the lives of students, considering the reputation it holds as a personal motivator for influencing knowledge sharing and learning. Excessive use of social media will lead to poor time management, which lowers the productivity in class.

Statement of the Problem

As more social media tools are seamlessly woven into a student's life, the focus of their conversation around their presence is ever relevant in discussing impacts on academic engagement. Among university-going students, social media becomes part of day-to-day activity in university as well as impacts numerous dimensions that determine the general learning experience or a social context at University of Kotli AJ&K. Increasing use of most popular social networking sites by university students has emerged. This has also raised questions concerning its impact on student engagement. With little understanding at the University of Kotli, AJ&K, students widely use social media platforms for communication, entertainment and educational purposes. However, the extent to which social media usage affects students' academics engagement remain unclear. This study examined the relationship between social media usage and students' engagements in academics in University of Kotli, AJ&K.

Objectives of the Study

Following are the objectives of the study.
1. To identify the usage of social media among university level students.
2. To assess the students' level of engagement in academics at university level.
3. To examine the relationship between social media usage and students' engagement at university level.

Research Questions

Following are the research questions of the study.

1. To what extent there is a usage of social media among university students?
2. What is the level of students' engagement in academic at university level?
3. To what extent there is a relationship between social media usage and students' engagement at university level?

Review of the Related Literature

Social Media

Social media is basically all those online platforms and apps where we can create, share, and interact with content in real time. It's pretty amazing how these platforms help us communicate, connect, have fun, and share information with people all around the world. The big names like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter (which is now called X), TikTok, LinkedIn, and YouTube are well known by the masses (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Social media is a whole range of internet-based applications built on Web 2.0 technology. This tech lets users dive in, create, edit, and share all sorts of stuff—like text, images, videos, and even audio. But it is super important to voice that social media is apart from social networks. As Scott (2009) points out, social media is like this huge online "super community" where social interactions happen, while social networks are more about specific connections on those platforms, like the ones you find on Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn.

These days, social media has really taken the spotlight as the go-to tool for communicating with large audiences. It is a kind of overshadowing traditional media—think TV, newspapers, and radio.

Types of Social Media

When we talk about social media, it is interesting to see how different platforms can be grouped into various categories. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) had a pretty solid approach to this. They looked at things like social presence and how people present themselves online, which led them to identify several types of social media. You have got your blogs, social networking sites, collaborative projects, content communities, virtual social environments, and even virtual gaming spaces.

Scott (2009) took a slightly different angle. He zoomed in on the tools that social media platforms offer for users to share their opinions. He listed a bunch of platforms, including social networking sites, blogs, video and image sharing sites, chat rooms, discussion forums, rating sites, mailing lists, wikis, social bookmarking sites, and those handy smartphone apps. Then there's Sharma and Verma (2018), who categorized social media based on what these sites aim to achieve. Their list includes social networking sites, blogs, discussion forums, video sharing, content sharing, social bookmarking, podcasts, and wikis.

Social Networking Sites

Boyd and Ellison (2010) describe a social networking site as this online space where people can do a few key things. First off, they can set up a public or semi-public profile, put together a list of other users that they're connected to, explore their connections and see who else is linked within that platform.

People have all sorts of reasons for diving into social networking sites. It might be to keep in touch with family, meet new folks, hang out, or just stay updated on the latest news and events (Brandtzæg & Heim, 2009). Take Facebook, for instance. It's one of the biggest players in the social media game, letting users connect and share stuff with their family, friends, and colleagues.

Now, for students, social media platforms like Facebook can be really useful when it comes to their studies. They help spark online discussions, make group projects easier, and give access to a ton of educational materials, which really makes learning feel more interactive and, honestly, a lot more accessible. By engaging with social media, students can keep up with academic happenings, swap ideas, and share knowledge that goes way beyond just what they learn in class (Clement, 2020).

Engagement

When we talk about "engagement" in education, we are really referring to how interested, curious, and involved students are in their learning. It is kind of a big deal because engagement plays a crucial role in helping students hit their academic and personal goals. When students are engaged, they are better equipped to tackle the challenges of today's world, and they can actually benefit intellectually and financially from earning a higher education degree (Kuh, 2009). So, it makes sense that fostering engagement should be a priority in schools and universities.

Engagement is a core part of the learning experience that directly affects students' motivation, interest, and success in academics (Hospel & Galand, 2016). There are different kinds of engagement to consider, like behavioral, emotional, cognitive, social, and even psychological aspects (Wong, & Liem, 2022).

Higher levels of engagement in education are linked to a bunch of positive outcomes e.g. academic performance, increased motivation, a greater interest in learning, higher attendance rates, and even fewer dropouts (Fredricks et al., 2004; Hospel & Galand, 2016). By creating a supportive and inclusive atmosphere, using innovative teaching methods, and recognizing students for their achievements, students can really make a difference (Kahu, 2011; Motevalli et al., 2020). It is all about making learning a more engaging experience for everyone involved.

Students' Engagement

Student engagement is all about how much attention, motivation, and active participation a student brings to his/her learning journey. It is really about how involved and interested he/she is in his/her education, both in the classroom and beyond. When students are engaged, they are not just going through the motions; they are genuinely motivated to dive into their academic activities and work towards their goals (Fredricks et al., 2004).

There are different flavors of student engagement—like behavioral, emotional, cognitive, social, and psychological engagement (Wong, & Liem, 2022). A lot of things play into how engaged a student feels. Think about the teacher-student relationship, the overall learning environment, the teaching strategies used, the autonomy given to students, and, of course, feedback and recognition. All these elements can really make a difference in keeping students invested (Wentzel, 1991; Motevalli et al., 2020; Kahu, 2011; Hattie & Timperley, 2007). The more engaged students are, the more they tend to thrive academically, which sparks even more motivation and interest in learning—just as Fredricks et al. (2004) and Hospel and Galand (2016) pointed out.

So, why is student engagement so crucial? Well, it's a key part of the learning process. Educators have a big role in boosting engagement. They can do this by creating welcoming and supportive learning environments, using fresh and innovative teaching methods, encouraging students to take charge of their own learning, providing chances for teamwork, and showing appreciation for students' achievements (Kahu, 2011; Motevalli et al., 2020). When educators focus on enhancing student engagement, they are not just helping students do better in school—they are also helping them develop a lifelong love of learning and reach their full potential.

Students Engagement at University Level

When we talk about student engagement at the university level, we are really looking at how actively students dive into their learning experiences. It is not just about showing up for classes — it includes joining in on discussions, turning in assignments on time, and collaborating with peers in groups. The more engaged students are, the better they grasp the material, remember it, and ultimately, they tend to do well academically. These students are usually the ones who take the initiative to study hard and explore additional resources or extracurricular activities to make the most of their education (Kuh, 2009).

Student engagement is a pretty big deal when it comes to academic success. It is all about how involved students get in their learning — think motivation, interest, and participation (Fredricks et al., 2004). Those who are truly engaged often see better grades and fewer dropouts.

Universities can really help boost this engagement with some smart strategies. Creating a supportive learning environment, offering chances for students to get involved, and sparking interest and motivation can all make a big difference. Approaches like student-centered learning, cohort-based classes, and tech-driven learning tools can really help students meet their educational goals and prepare for their careers (Fredricks et al., 2004; Kuh, 2009).

But engagement is not just about hitting the books. It is also tied to how students feel connected to their university community. Engaged students often experience a greater sense of belonging and satisfaction, which, in turn, can lead to lower dropout rates and higher graduation rates than those who are less involved (Trowler, 2010). So, it is not just about academics; it is about building that community and connection, too.

Relationship between Social Media usage and Students engagement

The relationship between social media and student engagement is pretty complicated. There are both upsides and downsides to consider. Nowadays, social media is a huge part of our lives, especially for students. When we think about how students use social media in academic settings, it really creates a great opportunity for them to connect and share knowledge, which can make their learning experience even better. Research by Mäntymäki and Riemer (2016) points out that students are really getting into social media because it allows them to reach out to many people and collaborate online with ease.

Students are using social media for all sorts of things—like looking for info, teaming up with classmates, and discussing what piques their interest. Graduate students, in particular, are tapping into platforms like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, ResearchGate, Academia.edu, and Slideshare to boost their research and academic projects. This trend is opening up more chances for them to share knowledge (Ahmed et al., 2019).

In this digital age, social media is really acting as a spark for that student engagement and motivation. It gives students a boost of intrinsic motivation, which can lead to more creativity and academic involvement. Plus, these platforms let them connect with others studying similar topics, join in on academic discussions, and discover educational tools that ramp up their cognitive engagement. So, in a way, social media acts like an extension of the classroom, letting students collaborate and dive into class materials beyond the school's walls (Junco, 2012). That said, social media makes it easier for students to share resources and collaborate on group projects, which can, in turn, boost class participation and create a sense of involvement in their learning.

The community vibe that social media brings can really help students feel emotionally connected, giving them a sense of belonging. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter can be great for sharing experiences, seeking support, and helping each other out. This emotional connection can drive greater motivation and persistence in their studies (Kuh, 2009). While social media can really amp up student engagement, it is not all sunshine and rainbows. Some studies have found that spending more time on social media can actually lead to lower levels of academic engagement. Students who are glued to their social media feeds often find it harder to engage with their academic work.

To sum it up, the link between social media use and student engagement is pretty multi-faceted. Sure, social media can help students build relationships and communicate better, but it can also lead to shallow connections and feelings of isolation if not used wisely.

Research Methodology

This study focused on quantitative research and had a descriptive approach. The researchers relied on cross sectional surveys to gather information. The total population they looked at included 1,434 students from various departments within the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities at the University of Kotli in AJ&K. To narrow it down, they opted for a random sampling method and selected 300 students to form their population. The researchers developed their own questionnaire, which had two main parts: one on Social Media Usage by University Students and another on Students' Engagement in Academics, with 15 questions in each section. They made sure that the questionnaire was valid (by three experts) and reliable (checking it with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.87). Then, they went out, collected the data in person. After that, they crunched the numbers using SPSS, diving into mean scores, frequencies, standard deviations, and even Pearson's correlation.

Results

The findings are presented in tabular form for clarity and ease of understanding.

Table 1

Social Media usage among Students

Sr. No.	Statements	Mean
1	I find social media platforms easily.	3.41
2	I use social media to learn new skills.	4.24
3	Social media helps me to stay updated.	4.42
4	I feel more connected to people because of social media.	4.39
5	I use social media to organize events.	4.20
6	I use social media to find recommendations of places to visit.	4.17
7	I believe social media influence my decision making.	2.30
8	I use social media as a distraction in some times.	4.39
9	I feel that my privacy is at risk when using social media.	4.49
10	I use social media for research purposes.	4.34
11	I use social media mainly for fun.	2.23
12	I use social media to discuss assignments with peers.	4.49
13	I often compare myself to what others post on social media.	3.00
14	I use social media to communicate with others.	4.45
15	I limit my social media platforms to maintain a healthy balance in my life.	2.34
	Average of Social Media usage among Students	3.79

If we take a look at Table 1, we can dig into how university students are using social media these days. The data shows that students are not really buying into the idea that social media influences their decision-making—like, they rated that statement a low 2.30. They also do not seem to think they are just using social media for fun, scoring it at 2.23. And when it comes to keeping a healthy balance by limiting their platforms, they give it an average score of 2.34, too. As all mean scores of these statements were less than 2.5 which ultimately means students disagreed with those statements.

On the other hand, they partially agreed with the idea that they can find social media platforms easily, giving that a score of 3.41. And they also admitted to comparing themselves to others on social media, which got a score of 3.00. But for the other statements, their average scores were over 3.5, suggesting they actually agreed with those pretty solidly. When we pull it all together, the average score for their social media usage came in at 3.79. That definitely indicates that these students are pretty active on social media.

Table 2

Students Engagement in Academics

Sr. No.	Statements	Mean
1	I attend all my classes regularly.	4.54
2	I set specific goals for my academic performance.	4.64
3	I help other students with their studies.	4.64
4	I contribute to group projects.	4.44
5	I often collaborate with classmates.	3.94
6	I manage my time effectively.	4.01
7	I participate in study groups.	4.16
8	I enjoy learning new things.	4.59
9	I feel confident in my academic performance.	3.81
10	I find the course material engaging.	3.68
11	I seek support from my teachers.	4.67
12	I always seek help from my teachers.	4.07
13	I attend extra-curricular activities at university.	3.64
14	I use resources at university to enhance my learning.	3.78
15	I feel that university environment fosters my academic success.	3.65
	Average of Students' Engagement in Academics	4.15

Looking at Table 2, we can see some interesting stats that really give us a peek into how students are getting involved in their studies. The average score across all the statements was over 3.5, which is a pretty good sign that, overall, students are mostly on board with what is being asked of them. And when we step back and look at the overall average for Students' Engagement in Academics—sitting at 4.15—it really shows that the students feel like they are quite engaged in their academic work.

Table 3

Correlation between Social Media usage and Students' Engagement in Academics

Variables	Mean	SD	p	r
Social Media Usage	3.79	.23	0.01	.261
Student Engagement in academics	4.15	.22		

Table 3 indicates the relationship between Social Media usage and Students Engagement in academics. Table 3 further shows that there was a significant correlation found between Social Media Usage (Mean= 3.79, SD=.23) and Students' Engagement in Academics (Mean=4.15, SD=.22) as p=0.01<0.05. The value of person correlation r=.261 indicates a weak and positive relationship between Social Media Usage and Students' Engagement in Academics.

Conclusions

Following conclusions are drawn on the basis of results.

1. It is concluded that there is an agreement among students regarding their use of social media though they are not really buying into the idea that social media influences their decision-making. They also do not seem to think they are just using social media for fun and keeping a healthy balance by limiting their platforms.
2. It is concluded that the results show high levels of engagement in academic activities, with students regularly attending classes, setting specific academic goals, and supporting peers in their studies. Group work, study group participation, and time management among others are also prominent in most students.
3. Results suggest a week correlation of constructive use of social media with being actively engaged in academics, meaning students are using the digital platforms and their institutions' support to become academically successful.

Recommendations

Following recommendations are made on the basis of conclusions

1. As the results of the study indicated that the students were unable to keep a healthy balance by limiting their social media platforms it is recommended that university may organize workshops and seminars about keeping a balance in social media usage in academic. The departments may also workout to include social media as a subject into curricula in this way students may know how to use social media platforms in a positive.
2. Moreover, the university administration is recommended to offer such programs for developing a strong critical thinking and decision-making sense among students by using social media platforms.
3. As the results suggest a positive and significant relationship between social media usage and students' engagement in academics, hence, the parents and teachers are recommended to allow the students to use social media platform to engage them in their academics.

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