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The Correlation Between Social Media Engagement and Academic Performance of Students in Pakistan During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

The most recent crisis the world had faced was the COVID-19 pandemic. Countries had been compelled to halt educational activities. Pakistan too, had followed same online mode of teaching-learning using various social media platforms. Pandemic environment produced insecurities among the lives of students. Consequently, students experienced negative emotions like depression, stress, anxiety, panic, and low emotional stability. It was also indicated that students started using social media extensively that affected their academic achievements. For this reason, the current study aimed at investigating COVID-19 environment and its effect on students' use of social media and their academic performance. The study was descriptive in nature and survey design was employed. University students of Lahore were selected as sample after considering delimitations. A specially designed questionnaire was used as the tool of the study and used after ensuring validity and reliability. Data was collected after considering all the ethical concerns during the study. The findings of the study indicated a significant relationship between COVID-19 environment and use of social media. The relationship was also significant for COVID-19 environment and academic performance. A significant effect of COVID-19 environment resulted in the use of social media and academic performance too. The study suggested developing a certain online education model with improved mental and emotional health and progressive academic achievements for future researchers. Policy makers, educational administrators, academicians, and instructors may find the results beneficial to develop initiatives for the unstable educational situations during universal emergencies.

Keywords: Social Media, Education, Covid 19, Academic Performance

INTRODUCTION

The most recent crisis the world had faced was the COVID-19 pandemic. Countries had been compelled to halt educational activities in a structured environment (i.e., schools, colleges, universities) for limiting the dispersion of the virus. Representatives were in a fix of either closing institutions or keeping them open. The only reason was to restrict the outbreak of the virus. On the contrary, if they had kept the institutes open, that was due to continue dissipating quality learning.

The teaching learning scenario had turned into online learning in majority of the countries, including Pakistan. This in turn suspended the structured on-campus teaching creating an environment of distress and chaos for students and teachers. Pakistan too, had followed same online mode of teaching-learning using application, software, and social networking sites (Gonzalez et al, 2020). Such disturbed environment produced insecurities among lives of students. Consequently, students experienced negative emotions like, depression, stress, anxiety, panic, and low emotional stability (Charoensukmongkol & Phungsoonthorn, 2020a). It was suggested in a study that students if focus on their emotional intelligence can cope up with negative emotions and maintain their emotional stability (Charoensukmongkol & Phungsoonthorn, 2020b).

SOCIAL MEDIA, LEARNING AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Social media sources are the easiest and efficient means of propagating any kind of information from a decade (Aagaard, 2015). Social media has emerged as the main channel for mass digital communication across various groups over the last ten years. The strength of the internet for stimulating networking makes it efficient day by day for interacting with people having common interests, beliefs, and/or goals. Students opting self-regulation for their learning during online system of teaching, can anticipate their future of education better (Mou, 2021). Whereas social networking sites had grown significantly in few decades and are "growing more prevalent in higher education" (Demirbilek, 2015), this in turn became a new trend on the internet. Due to unbelievable technological developments and rapid evolution of social media websites, students' lives had been more and more entwined with their academic interests (Wang, Chen & Liang, 2011). New educational tools like social media, have made it possible for teachers to engage students more effectively within and after school educational activities, which will eventually improve their academic achievement (Al-Bahrani, Patel & Sheridan, 2015). Social media, however, can be both a blessing and a curse, and there is debate over the educational value of integrating it into classroom settings. Studies (Dabbagh & Kitsantas, 2012; Lau, 2016; Kuh, 2009) had indicated that social networking platforms may affect students' academic performance in good and bad ways.

Furthermore, Grossec and Bran (2016) stated that social networking platforms had become a method of transferring content and information online on a virtual platform. In this way, social media is now better comprehended by overseeing various examples. Those (Sutikno et al, 2016; Chugh & Joshi, 2017; Rehm et al, 2019; Blackhow et al, 2020) are:

- i) Communities producing content like Youtube,
- ii) Blog based communities like WordPress,
- iii) Integrated sites such as Wikipedia,
- iv) Social communities/networking as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, LinkedIn and
- v) texting or messaging software/applications like WhatsApp, BOITM, Skype

Jiao, Gao & Yung (2015) indicated that social media is utilized for both social and academic purposes. Academics have expressed an interest in social media in a variety of circumstances. One of these challenges, which has received restricted but increasing attention, for utilizing social media as an academic aid at under and postgraduate level (Gupta, 2014; Tess, 2013), and using cellphones in getting higher education (Romero, 2015; Blackhow & Galvin, 2020).

In higher education, academic performance is vital to teaching-learning practices. Researchers had used many indicators to measure academic performance like cognitive, affective, psychomotor, growth and development skills (Alamri, Almaiah & Al-Rahmi, 2020; Tus, 2020), grades (Zhoc, Webster, King & Chung, 2019), life skills, and study attitude (Tus, 2020). It is also evident in past studies that emotional stability has a direct relationship with the academic performance of the students i.e., predicts academic performance (Ali & Mohammed, 2020; Goh & Kim, 2020). Various studies had indicated that social networking sites and emotional stability have significant relationship with academic performance in higher education students (Zhoc, 2015).

Many adverse effects of social networking platforms were also thoroughly examined. Researchers had criticized usage of social networking sites in schools for its possible impacts on academic achievement (Masood, Luqman, Feng & Ali, 2020; Wu & Cheng, 2018). According to Roux and Parry (2017), social media usage throughout the day can be problematic and has adverse effects on academic performance. Consequently, learners had paid very limited time towards socialization in real life world because they were on social media mostly, inhibiting their interacting skills. Studies (Husnain, Nasreen, & Ijaz, 2015) focused on effect of social networking platforms towards education and lives of learners in Pakistan.

According to the study, adolescents' use of social networking sites could become a reason for harming their lives education (Tariq, Mehboob, Khan & Ullah, 2012). Students' grades worsened because of their excessive Facebook use during their academic time. Studies indicated that co-curricular activities of learners on social media platforms were associated with lower academic standing, was harmful to academic achievement (Andersson et al, 2014). Due to matters of privacy and security, instructors faced challenges in incorporating social media in the classroom (Sobahi et al, 2016). Teaching online is more challenging because teachers had to take a lot of care regarding everyone's privacy during virtual classroom sessions (Greenhow & Askrari, 2017; Greenhow & Chapman, 2020). It had also been indicated that learners who are more engaged in social media platforms contain impoverished mental wellbeing. The reason behind is the over-usage of cellphones and such media sites, in turn increase in saddening and harming attitude (Abi-Jaoude, Naylor & Pigantiello, 2020).

COVID-19 PANDEMIC, SOCIAL MEDIA, AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

During the COVID-19 epidemic, on-campus educational activities had been turned into online mode of education. Numerous advantages to adopting social networking applications in education were indicated, particularly those fostering prevention epidemic. We focused on the benefits of using social networking application in academics, yet found important for pointing out various flaws and inadequacies like

- i) The vast amount of information available online contain fake news, making it hard for pupils to sort through the genuine information.
- ii) The amount of time pupils spends in front of digital platforms.
- iii) The diminution or even absence of socialization and interactions, that impacted adversely on adolescents mental wellbeing.
- iv) a variety of health issues caused by excessive computer use.
- v) the new social divisions caused by digitalization.

COVID-19 had increased the use of digitalization for maintaining social and emotional stability among people (Kanekar & Sharma, 2020). The pandemic was supplemented by stringent restrictions on social connections as well as obligatory shutdown. Resulting in digitalization globally. As a result, people had been forced to count on online networks. Learning, socialization, and job can take place online, with great outcomes for cognitive wellbeing, and consumer stability. Appropriate utilization of online gadgets had a significant correlation with well-being. On the other hand, extensive watching is associated with varied adverse cognitive health outcomes, like poor emotional strength, isolation, despair with anxiety (Allen, Walter, & Swann, 2019). Young people believe that social media is a sort of addiction, they use it for the search of truth while this happend particularly during pandemic shutdown periods (Papademetriou, 2022).

To the best of our review, a few numbers of research had been taken out on use of social media in pandemic and its effect on academic performance of specifically university students in Pakistan. COVID-19 pandemic environment had affected globally on the lives of people. It had changed overall teaching learning scenario and transformed it to fully online mode of education (McKibbin & Fernando, 2020). Amid the fact that social media is also been utilized as an academic tool, still there found scarcity on the on-ground information regarding “How COVID-19 environment and the use of social media during pandemic affect academic performance of university students”. The present study pursued to respond to the above research question. Specifically, relationship and effect of use of social media in COVID-19 pandemic environment had been investigated on academic performance/grades of university students of Pakistan.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

PARTICIPANTS

The sample includes 200 university students (BS Level) – 120 males (60.0%), 80 females (40.0%) – participated voluntarily. All participants signed an informed consent and ethical considerations were observed during data collection i.e. anonymity and confidentiality. Results were examined anonymously. The age of participants was between 20 to 30 years.

INSTRUMENT

The questionnaire is specially designed to measure the correlation between the use of social media, students' emotional and academic performance during COVID-19 scenario. The section related to social media usage contains 12 related questions regarding the extent and type of social media. The section regarding COVID-19 scenario contains 12 items regarding environment faced by students during pandemic and emotional stance of the students. Moreover, the academic performance is measured against the CGPA they opt for in semesters during COVID-19 years. The items are made on likert rating scale matching the requirement of each section.

PROCEDURE

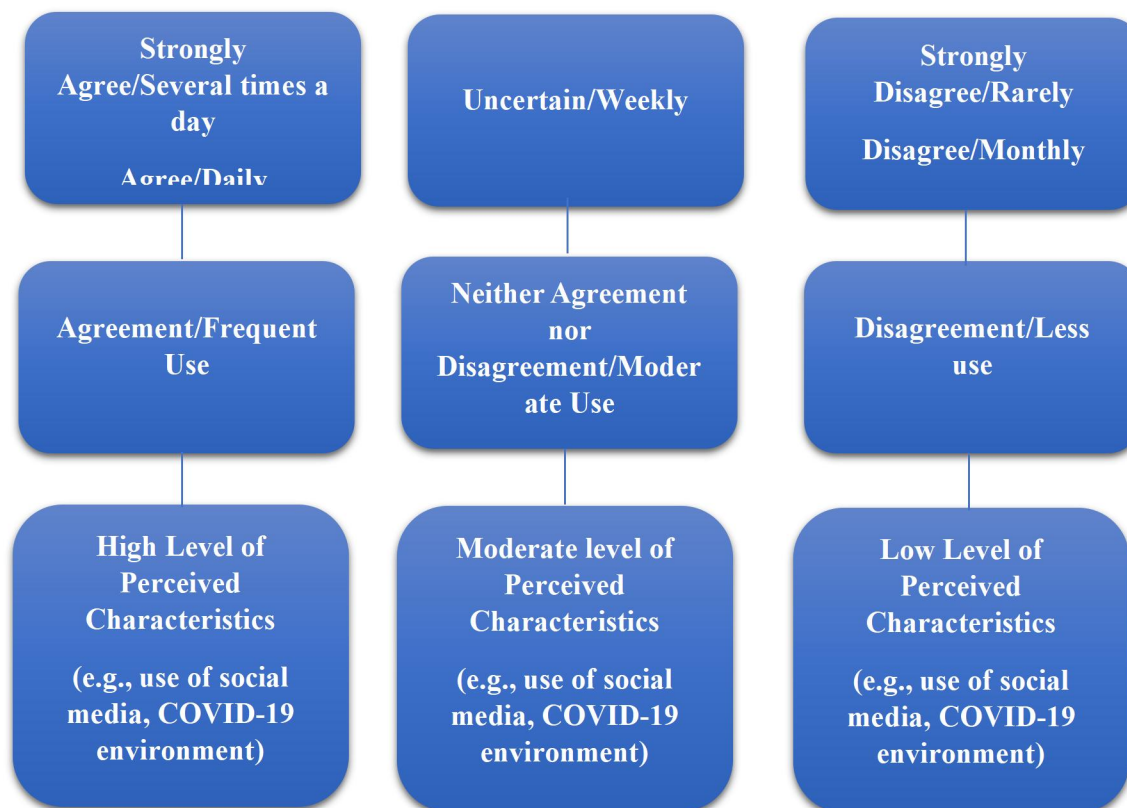
Researchers visited the campuses of the sampled universities and departments for the purpose of data collection. Participants were given 30 minutes to fill in the above-mentioned questionnaire as well as the informed consent. They were also assured by the researcher that their anonymity and confidentiality will not be disclosed before, during or after the completion of the research. The data was collected during summer/short semester i.e., in June and July 2022.

The statistical evaluation of the collected data was analyzed with SPSS version 26.0. The normality of the data was checked, and parametric tests were decided to be used to meet the objectives of the study. All variables were tested for descriptive analysis, while significance was also determined among the variables. Furthermore, correlation was measured between the dependent, independent, and mediating variables. Last but not the least, simple linear regression was utilized to diagnose the possible prediction of effect between the variables.

STATISTICAL PROCEDURES

Opinions of the participants regarding usage of mobile phones during COVID-19 pandemic period were measured on 5-point likert scale i.e., from several times a day (5) to rarely (1). Perception of students related to the COVID-19 environment were investigated on 5-point likert scale i.e., strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). Moreover, academic performance was calculated by CGPA presented by students as per the semester they opted during COVID-19 period. The responses were calculated with frequency percentages, mean response values and standard deviations. The extent of students' social media was investigated along with the type of social media used. High the mean values represented high extent of the usage. The details of the scale used are as follows:

Greater than or Equal to 4.45	= Several times a Day/Strongly Agree
4.45 to 3.45	= Daily/Agree
3.44 to 2.45	= Weekly/Uncertain
2.44 to 1.45	= Monthly/Disagree
Less than or equal to 1.44	= Rarely/Strongly Disagree



These types of scales were used in past studies to measure the level of opinions/perceptions regarding any phenomenon, variable, construct, or characteristics. Likert scale is an authentic scale for measuring perceptions, views, opinions, and extent of characteristics (Sullivan & Artino, 2013; Jebb & Tay, 2021).

STUDENTS' USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA DURING COVID-19

The perception of university students regarding social media were gathered by asking them that since when they are related to the social media and how often they use social media. They were also asked the extent of usage by naming the social media sites/applications. Mean score values and standard deviations were calculated on their responses to investigate the extent of the usage during covid-19. Results are underneath.

TABLE 1: PERCEPTION OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS REGARDING THEIR ASSOCIATION WITH SOCIAL MEDIA DURING COVID-19

Statements	5+ yrs	4-5 yrs	3-4 yrs	2-3 yrs	1-2 yrs	<1 yrs	Mean	St. D	Level
Percentages (n)									
Since when you are associated with social media services?	64.0 (128)	36.0 (72)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4.64	0.481	High Level

Above mentioned table illustrated the percentages and frequency of university students regarding their association with social media. Most of the respondents were regular and frequent user of social media i.e., 64% (n= 128) were using social media from more than 5 years while rest (36 %, n= 72) were using for 4-5 years. Overall mean response value (M= 4.64, S.D= 0.48) indicated a high level of social media usage among university students.

TABLE 2: EXTENT OF USAGE AS PER VARIOUS SOCIAL MEDIA TYPES

Sr.	Social media	Several times a Day	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Rarely	M	St.D	Extent of Use
Percentages (n)									
1.	WhatsApp	47.0 (94)	53.0 (106)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4.47	0.5	High
2.	Facebook	65.0 (130)	8.0 (16)	27.0 (54)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4.38	0.88	
3.	Youtube	36.0 (72)	46.0 (92)	9.0 (18)	9.0 (18)	0 (0)	4.09	0.9	
4.	Instagram	38.0 (76)	44.0 (88)	9.0 (18)	0 (0)	9.0 (0)	4.02	1.13	
5.	Snapchat	38.0 (76)	44.0 (88)	0 (0)	0 (0)	18.0 (36)	3.84	1.41	
6.	Google+	18.0 (36)	46.0 (92)	27.0 (54)	0 (0)	9.0 (18)	3.64	1.06	Moderate
7.	Others	27.0 (54)	17.0 (34)	20.0 (40)	9.0 (18)	27.0 (54)	3.08	1.56	
8.	Twitter	18.0 (36)	28.0 (56)	18.0 (56)	0 (0)	36.0 (72)	2.92	1.56	
9.	LinkedIn	27.0 (54)	17.0 (34)	0 (0)	0 (0)	56.0 (112)	2.59	1.82	
Total		34.89	33.67	12.22	2.00	17.22	3.67	1.20	High

The table showed that the overall mean for social media usage was high ($M=3.67$, $SD= 1.20$) among university students. Most of the students used social media several times a day (34.89%) or daily (33.67%). Among the listed social media sites and applications, the most used was WhatsApp (47%) several times a day or daily (53%). While Facebook was also one of the most used (65%) social media platforms in a day. Youtube (36%), Instagram (38%) and Snapchat (38%) were also used vividly in a day. The least used was LinkedIn (27%) in a day and daily (17%).

Students' Perception Regarding COVID-19 Environment

The perception of university students regarding COVID-19 was measured on 12 related items. They were asked about the threats and insecurities as well as their emotional state during the high time of pandemic. The results are below mentioned.

TABLE 3: PERCEPTION OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS REGARDING COVID-19 ENVIRONMENT

Sr	Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	M	St.D	Level of Perception
Percentages (n)									
1.	People has become financially unstable due to pandemic	73.0 (146)	27.0 (54)	0	0	0	4.73	0.44	High
2.	I have felt more worried about my personal health or safety	56.5 (113)	43.5 (87)	0	0	0	4.57	0.50	
3.	Pandemic environment has adversely affected my studies	51.0 (103)	48.5 (97)	0	0	0	4.52	0.50	
4.	COVID-19 is a threat to everyone's health	61.5 (123)	29.5 (59)	0	9 (18)	0	4.35	1.14	
5.	I have felt frustrated to remain indoor all the time	33.5 (67)	44 (88)	22.5 (45)	0	0	4.11	0.74	
6.	Pandemic environment has adversely affected my socialization	15 (30)	75 (150)	0	10 (20)	0	3.95	0.74	
7.	Academic learning has become ineffective for me	38 (76)	36 (72)	16 (32)	0	10 (20)	3.92	1.20	

during pandemic

8.	Pandemic environment has limited my mobility very much	8.5 (17)	75 (150)	9 (18)	7.5 (15)	0	3.85	0.67
9.	People have felt threat to go outside during pandemic	8.5 (17)	57 (114)	34.5 (69)	0	0	3.74	0.60
10.	COVID-19 has become a threat to my future	17 (34)	54 (108)	12.5 (25)	16.5 (33)	0	3.72	0.93
11.	I have felt more lonely or isolated	9.5 (19)	68.0 (136)	0	10.0 (20)	12.5 (25)	3.52	1.18
12.	I have felt more down or depressed	27.0 (54)	26.0 (52)	24.5 (49)	10.0 (20)	12.5 (25)	3.45	1.32
Total		33.25	48.63	9.92	5.25	2.92	4.04	0.83

The table indicated that most (81.88%) of the university students strongly agreed (M= 4.04, S.D= 0.83) about the effect of COVID-19 environment on their routine matters, emotional, financial and health stability. They were majorly worried about financial instability (100%, M= 4.73, SD= 0.44), personal health safety (100%, M=4.57, SD= 0.50), and studies (100%, M=4.52, SD=0.50). They also quite agreed that COVID-19 is a threat to everyone's health (91%, M=4.35, SD=1.14), and it affected their socialization (90%, M=3.95, SD=0.74) as they mostly remain indoor (77.5%, M=4.11, SD=0.74). They were also quite concerned about their academic ineffectiveness (74%, M=3.92, SD=1.20). University students also agreed that COVID-19 had limited their mobility (83.5%, M=3.85, SD=0.87), was a threat to go outside (65.5%, M=3.74, SD=0.60), and future (71%, M=3.72, SD=0.93). Most of them feel isolated (77.5%, M=3.52, SD=1.18) and depressed (53%, M=3.45, SD=1.32) too.

UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE DURING COVID-19 PERIOD

The academic performance of university students was calculated by collecting their CGPA in the semesters that were occurred in COVID-19 pandemic time i.e., from Spring 2020 to Spring 2022. Results are below mentioned.

TABLE 4: ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS DURING COVID-19.

Sr.	Semesters	2.00-2.25	2.25-2.50	2.50-2.75	2.75-3.00	3.00-3.50	3.50-3.75	3.75-4.00	M	St. D
Frequency Percentage (n)										
1.	Spring 2022	0	0	0	0	44.0 (88)	18.0 (36)	38.0 (76)	5.94	0.90
2.	Fall 2021	0	0	0	0	18.0 (36)	35.0 (70)	47.0 (94)	6.29	0.75
3.	Spring 2021	0	0	0	0	17.0 (34)	36.0 (72)	47.0 (94)	6.30	0.74
4.	Fall 2020	0	0	0	0	9.0 (18)	53.0 (106)	38.0 (76)	6.29	0.62
5.	Spring 2020	0	0	0	0	9.0 (18)	44.0 (88)	47.0 (94)	6.38	0.64
Total		0	0	0	0	19.4	37.2	43.4	6.24	0.73

The table shows the academic performance of the university students during COVID-19 pandemic period. The overall performance (M= 6.24, SD= 0.73) of university students was quite high during 5 semesters and as per total of 4.00 CGPA. The highest record CGPA was in the range of 3.75-4.00 (43.4%) and the second highest CGPA was in the range of 3.50-3.75 (37.2%). During the pandemic period none of the students got below average CGPA.

CORRELATIONAL ANALYSIS

To investigate the relationship among the variables i.e., use of social media, COVID-19 environment and students' academic performance, Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient was utilized. Furthermore, hypotheses of the study were also tested.

RELATIONSHIP AMONG USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA, COVID-19 ENVIRONMENT AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

The following table indicated the correlation among university students' use of social media, COVID-19 environment, and their academic performance in the pandemic period. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used for this purpose.

TABLE 5: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA, COVID-19 ENVIRONMENT, AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Variables		SM	CV	AP
Social Media	Pearson r	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)			
COVID-19 Environment	Pearson r	.575**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.005		
Academic Performance	Pearson r	.569**	-.199**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.005	

** . Correlation is significant at the level (2-tailed).

The table above shows the high level of positive correlation of academic performance with social media and negative with COVID-19 scenario. Furthermore, COVID-19 is also highly correlated with use of social media among university students. All the variables are significantly correlated at the 0.01 level of significance.

REGRESSION ANALYSIS

The relationship between COVID-19 and use of social media was significant, thus, it can be check for the effect. On the other hand, academic performance was also significant with COVID-19 so the effect can also be measured for the two.

Regression is a way to predict research variables effect or influence, for this study the COVID-19 environment will be tested for use of social media and for academic performance of university students.

TABLE 6A: LINEAR REGRESSION ANALYSIS FOR COVID-19 ENVIRONMENT PREDICTING USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA (N= 200)

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3.729	1	1.864	14.353	.001 ^b
	Residual	66.761	198	.342		
	Total	70.49	199			
	R ²	0.545				

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
(Constant)	1.286	.142			8.912	.000
COVID	-.124	.044	-.139		-2.843	.005

a. Predictor: (Constant), COVID-19

b. Dependent Variable: Social Media Use

A simple linear regression was calculated to predict COVID-19 environment on university students' academic performance. A significant regression equation was found (F (1,198), 14.353, p<0.001) depicting that COVID-19 is affecting academic performance. The above table indicated

R^2 for the COVID-19 was 0.545 that showed it has 54% variance on academic performance due to COVID-19 environment. COVID-19 environment had strong positive relation with social media usage and predicted the effect, thus resulting that the COVID-19 triggered the use of social media among university students.

TABLE 6B: LINEAR REGRESSION ANALYSIS FOR COVID-19 ENVIRONMENT PREDICTING ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE (N= 200)

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3.579	1	1.577	18.191	.005 ^b
	Residual	86.501	198	.437		
	Total	90.080	199			
	R^2	0.769				

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	7.849	.064		13.912	.000
COVID	-.395	.138	-.199	-2.862	.005

a. Predictor: (Constant), COVID-19

b. Dependent Variable: Academic Performance

A simple linear regression was calculated to predict COVID-19 environment on university students' academic performance. A significant regression equation was found ($F(1,198)$, 18.191, $p < 0.005$) depicting that COVID-19 is affecting academic performance. The above table indicated R^2 for the COVID-19 was 0.769 that showed it has 76% variance on academic performance due to COVID-19 environment. COVID-19 and academic performance had strong negative correlation and high effect indicating that COVID-19 environment affects academic performance of university students.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The present study was formulated to investigate university students' use of social media during pandemic and its effect on their academic performance. On the contrary, the effect of COVID-19 environment was also examined for use of social media and their academic performance. The study found a significant a strong impact of COVID-19 environment on university students' use of social media. The COVID-19 environment was evaluated as per their mental, physical, social, economic, and academic matters. The effect of pandemic environment was also found to significantly affect university students' academic performance, yet there was no significant impact of use of social media on their academics.

Many studies had aimed on the university students' psychological health during pandemic (Elmer, Mephem & Stadtfeld, 2020; Giusti et al, 2020; Son et al, 2020; Gonzalez et al, 2002). Many factors that are extracted from this study needs to be investigated i.e., comparison of their academic record before, during and after pandemic, The same needs to be investigated for their extent of usage of social media before, during and after pandemic. Therefore, this

study made a foundation for further investigations and provides an overview of how pandemic do the use of social media and academic performance of university students.

Regarding academic performance, this study is not consistent with the past investigations i.e., during pandemic overall CGPA of the university students are above average and it suggested that they didn't find any difficulty taking online classes during pandemic (Tuma et al, 2021; Giusti et al, 2021). The hidden factors in this scenario might be the fact students didn't have to face on-campus activities and more of their work was descriptive in nature and they just had to upload it on e-portals. This fact had been discussed by Giusti et al (2021) in their study that before pandemic students were studying either at home (20%) or socially with their peers or study groups (80%). The other study indicated that was examining CGPAs while 30% of students had higher grades, 40% had no change in grades and the rest 30% had lower grades during pandemic opting for e-learning (Elsalem et al, 2021).

The most used social media platform by the university students were WhatsApp, facebook, Instagram and Youtube (100% several times a day). Past studies illustrated that social media like facebook, youtube, WhatsApp etc., enable students to extensive research, give reflections and share learning material (Papademetriou et al, 2022; Moran et al, 2011; Liburd & Christensen, 2013).

Majority of the university students were concerned about their emotional wellbeing and social immobility during pandemic as per our study this was also endorsed in previous study that COVID-19 pandemic period made students quite depressed and impacted their emotional development imposing social isolation with low life quality (Giusti et al, 2021). However, this study suggested that the use of social media has no effect on the academic performance of university students rather their CGPAs seemed to be above average during pandemic. This result is consistent with the past study indicating improvements in grades of university students during COVID-19 (Sobaih, Palla & Baquee, 2022). This is due to the support of social media platforms for adopting e-learning easily (Alamri, Almaiah & Al-Rahmi, 2020). On the contrary results defy previous results (Dabbagh & Kitsantas, 2012) indicating that social networking platforms do not advocate students' cumulative achievements.

A study revealed that COVID-19 pandemic environment is associated with emotional, social, and economic threats among university students. This type of environment is related to and had a significant effect on academic performance of the university students during pandemic. These findings were also consistent with the past study conducted in Pakistan (Iqbal et al, 2021) indicating direct relation of emotional development with academic performance. Some of the past studies had also shown the same significant positive effect on academic performance (MacCann et al, 2020; Trigueros et al, 2020). Furthermore, it had also been discovered in this study that there was a relationship between COVID-19 pandemic environment with use of social media and has a positive significant effect. This result is also consistent with the results implicated in the study of Javed et al (2021) i.e., pandemic stressful environment and social media sites has positive significant effect and relationship (Mursidi et al, 2020).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study had provided a clear image of the COVID-19 environment and threats as perceived by the university students. The effect of COVID-19 environment was significant with the excess use of social media platforms between students and also with academic grades. For further investigations where social media use is not related to the academic performance of the students, reasons should be examined. There is a higher chance of the readiness of university students towards use of social media and in pandemic their learning activities had turned to online mode where they had to use a type of social media platform, software, or application for fulfilment of their academic needs. For the adverse effects of COVID-19 on the academic performances at higher education more internal variables should be investigated through mediation or moderation model or university students can be interviewed to examine their psychological and emotional conditions during pandemic. Thus, mixed method approach can lead to an effective theory that can be used and implemented in such pandemic situations if faced by the world in coming times. This would lead to a working teaching-learning model or a theory for coping up the educational emergencies in such harsh times.

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