

Assessing the Impacts of Social Media on Youth: A Case Study of University Students of Quetta

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ABSTRACT

Background: Social media is a remarkable innovation in this modern era, and majority of the young generations are highly engaged with social media. The excessive use of social media among university students impacts their academic performance, health, and social behavior.

Objective: This study aims to find out what are the impacts of social media on university students in Quetta city, Pakistan.

Methods: Data were collected from 400 respondents, including both male and female students aged 18-25 from four universities in Quetta city using a semi-structured questionnaire. Stratified sampling was employed to ensure representation across different subgroups. Descriptive statistics were utilized to analyze the data.

Results: The findings of the current study indicate that university students in Quetta City engage with various social media platforms, which exert both positive and negative influences on their academic performance and overall well-being. Specifically, 36% of respondents reported positive impacts, while 49% indicated that social media has a detrimental effect on their academic performance. Additionally, 15% of respondents acknowledged both positive and negative impacts of social media. 71% of respondents reported that excessive social media use negatively impacts their physical and mental well-being. 29% of respondents indicated that social media contributed to psychological issues, including stress, anxiety, sadness, and insomnia.

Conclusions: Given these findings, the government needs to implement educational programs in universities to raise awareness about the responsible use of social media, online safety, and the risks of excessive usage. Such initiatives will help students navigate the challenges posed by social media more effectively, promoting a healthier balance between online and offline activities.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Social media has become an essential part of modern life, profoundly how people interact, share knowledge, and form connections worldwide. It encompasses a wide range of applications, including Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, and X (formally Twitter). Social media platforms

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maintain massive user bases and engagement in 2024: Facebook leads with 2.96 billion monthly active users, followed by WhatsApp with 2.78 billion, facilitating over 100 billion daily messages. YouTube has 2.5 billion logged-in monthly users, while Instagram attracts 2.35 billion, especially the 18–24 age group. Snapchat engages 750 million daily users, and X has 550 million monthly users, focusing on real-time updates and averaging 30.9 minutes daily use.

These applications allow users to exchange thoughts, share multimedia content, and stay updated with events happening globally. As an integral part of contemporary society, social media is used by individuals across all age groups, significantly influencing lifestyles, particularly among the younger generation (Ali et al., 2016). The utility and impact of social media depend largely on how individuals choose to use it, serving purposes that range from education to relaxation and recreation (Waqas et al., 2016).

In Pakistan, the youth represent a substantial portion of the population, with individuals aged between 15 to 29 comprising about 60% of the country's 180 million population. As of 2024, approximately 92 million Pakistanis are connected to the internet with over 76 million actively using social media platforms (Mohiuddin et al., 2018). Mobile connections have reached 194 million, indicating widespread digital accessibility. University students, in particular, are fervent users of social media, frequently logging into platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, and X to stay connected with peers, access educational resources, and engage in social activities. Such activities have led to significant improvements in students' literacy, social confidence, and networking abilities. Moreover, the role of social media in promoting remote learning has been particularly significant in recent years, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Platforms like Zoom, Google Meet, and WhatsApp bridge the gap between educators and students when physical classrooms were inaccessible. These tools allowed universities to continue delivering lectures, facilitating exams, and managing administrative tasks (Hussain, 2020).

Beyond academics, social media serves as a tool for personal and professional development. Students can access webinars, online courses, and skill-building resources, broadening their horizons and preparing for future careers. Additionally, platforms like LinkedIn have emerged as vital for professional networking, enabling students to connect with potential employers and mentors (Lad, 2017). Despite its benefits, social media has notable drawbacks, particularly when overused or misused. Excessive social media usage often leads to procrastination, with students spending more time on private chats or browsing unrelated content rather than focusing on their studies. Such distractions can adversely affect academic performance, causing students to miss deadlines or produce low-quality work (Chukwuere & Chukwuere, 2017).

Health-related concerns are another significant downside. Prolonged use of social media can lead to mental health issues such as anxiety and depression, as well as physical ailments like high blood pressure and disturbed sleep patterns. These disruptions not only affect academic performance but also put at risk overall well-being (Tariq et al., 2012). Furthermore, the content students encounter on social media is unethical or not fruitful. Exposure to harmful or inappropriate content can influence behavior negatively, leading to issues like cyberbullying, addiction, and decreased self-esteem. The risk of misinformation is always prevalent, as students may unknowingly rely on unverified sources for academic or personal information (Mohammad & Al-Qudah, 2020). However, the post-2020 era has also seen an increase in concern regarding the negative effects of social media. Excessive screen time during the pandemic led to heightened levels of anxiety and sleep disturbances among university students in Pakistan (Nisar, 2022).

While global studies highlight the impact of social media on students, there is limited research on its impacts in Quetta. Quetta, the capital of Balochistan, has seen a surge in mobile and internet usage in recent years. As a city, with a rapidly growing number of internet users and university students, Quetta presents a unique case for analysing social media's influence. University students in Quetta frequently use platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and X for both academic and recreational purposes. The affordability of mobile internet packages and the increasing penetration of smartphones have further facilitated this trend. Many students report spending hours on these platforms daily, often at

the expense of their academic responsibilities and personal health.

The present study aims to explore how social media influences the daily lives of university students in Quetta. Preliminary observations suggest that students in Quetta use social media extensively for academic, social, and recreational purposes. However, challenges such as time management, exposure to inappropriate content, and health concerns also prevail. By focusing on this demographic, the current study seeks to contribute valuable insights into the unique dynamics of social media usage in Quetta City. Lastly, social media is a double-edged sword, offering immense opportunities and also posing significant risks. For university students in Quetta, its impacts are profound, shaping their academic, social, and personal lives. By fostering awareness and adopting responsible usage practices, students can harness the potential of social media to enhance their lives while minimizing its drawbacks. The significance of this study lies in guiding students towards the responsible and educational use of social media, fostering personal growth and mindset development. It also raises awareness of its societal impacts, promoting ethical values and balanced online behavior.

1.1 Theoretical Framework

This study is examined through an established theory that helps explain how and why social media influences academic performance, health, and social behavior. The following theory provides the foundation for understanding the relationships between social media use and its effects on students. The Uses and Gratifications Theory is most suited to this study as it focuses on the active role of individuals in choosing and utilizing media to satisfy their needs. For this study, UGT identifies why university students use social media, be it to gain knowledge, stay informed about trends, collaborate with peers, or simply for recreation. These gratifications align with cognitive needs such as gaining information and knowledge, social integrative needs such as connecting with friends and peers, and tension release needs such as relaxation and stress relief. However, while fulfilling these needs, excessive or unregulated usage can result in negative impacts, including academic distractions, decreased productivity, and adverse health effects. This theory helps frame the findings by explaining how and why social media simultaneously benefits and challenges students, emphasizing the importance of mindful and balanced use.

2. METHODS

2.1 Research Design

The descriptive study design was employed in this research to provide a detailed account of social media usage and its effects on university students in Quetta City. By using this design, the study aims to identify key trends and relationships related to social media's influence on students' academic performance, health, and well-being, offering valuable insights into the impacts of social media on students' lives.

2.2 Setting of the study

Pakistan Quetta, the capital city of Balochistan province in Pakistan, is a significant cultural, economic, and political hub in the southwestern region. Among all cities in Balochistan, it is the most urbanized (Bazai & Panezai, 2020), (Khan et al., 2020). Strategically located, Quetta serves as a vital gateway to the country's western borders. It is situated at 30.21°N latitude and 67.01°E longitude (Neelum et al., 2023), bordering Pashin district (North), Killa Abdullah district (Northwest), Chaman district (West), Mastung district (South) and Kalat district (Southwest). Quetta lies within the Quetta division, comprising Quetta, Pashin, Killa Abdullah, and Chaman districts. As of 2023, Quetta's population is approximately 2.3 million, comprising diverse ethnic groups: Pashtuns (Majority), Baloch, Brahui, Hazaras, Punjabis, Sindhis, Urdu-speaking Muhajirs, and Tajik. The main languages spoken in Quetta include Pashto, Balochi, Brahui, Urdu, and Persian. Quetta boasts prestigious educational institutions, including the University of Balochistan, Balochistan University of Information Technology Engineering and Management Sciences, (BUITEMS), Sardar Bahadur Khan Women's University (SBK), Alhamd Islamic University, and National University of Modern Languages

(NUML) Quetta Campus and private universities like city University and institute of Management Sciences also operate in Quetta.

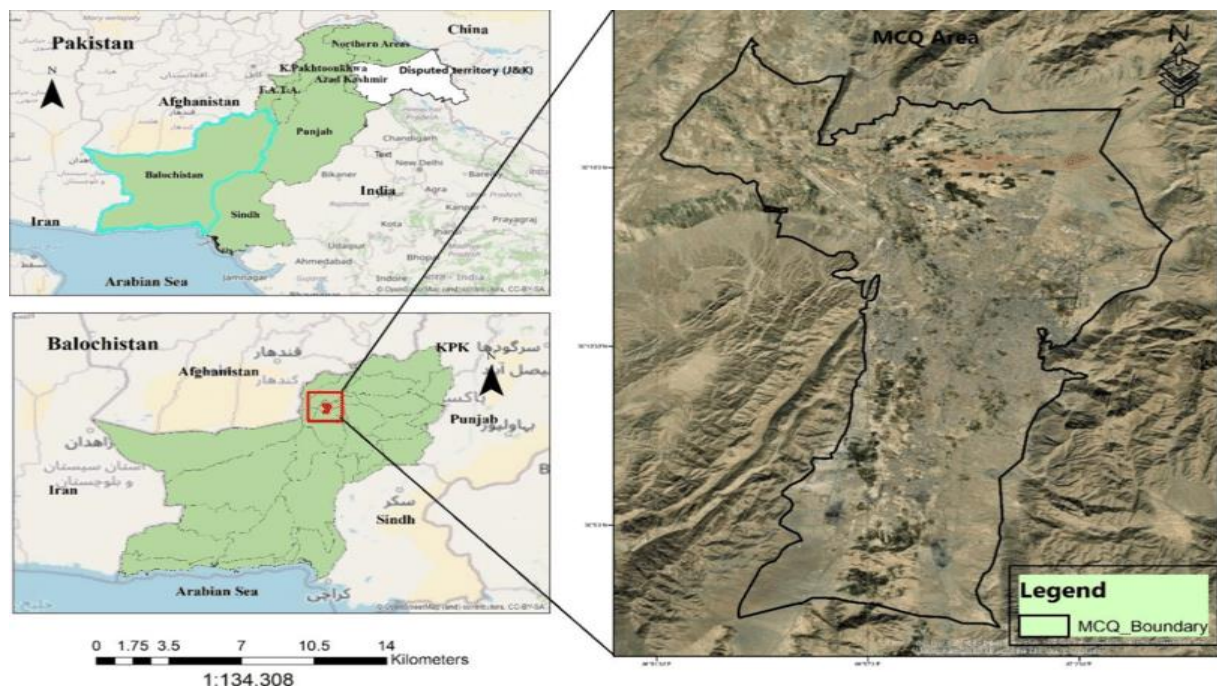


Figure 1 Locational Map of Metropolitan Corporation Quetta (MCQ)

Four main universities of Quetta City were selected for the collection of information. These universities include University of Balochistan, Sardar Bahadur Khan Women's University, Balochistan University of Information Technology Engineering and Management Sciences, and Alhamd Islamic University.

STUDY AREA MAPS

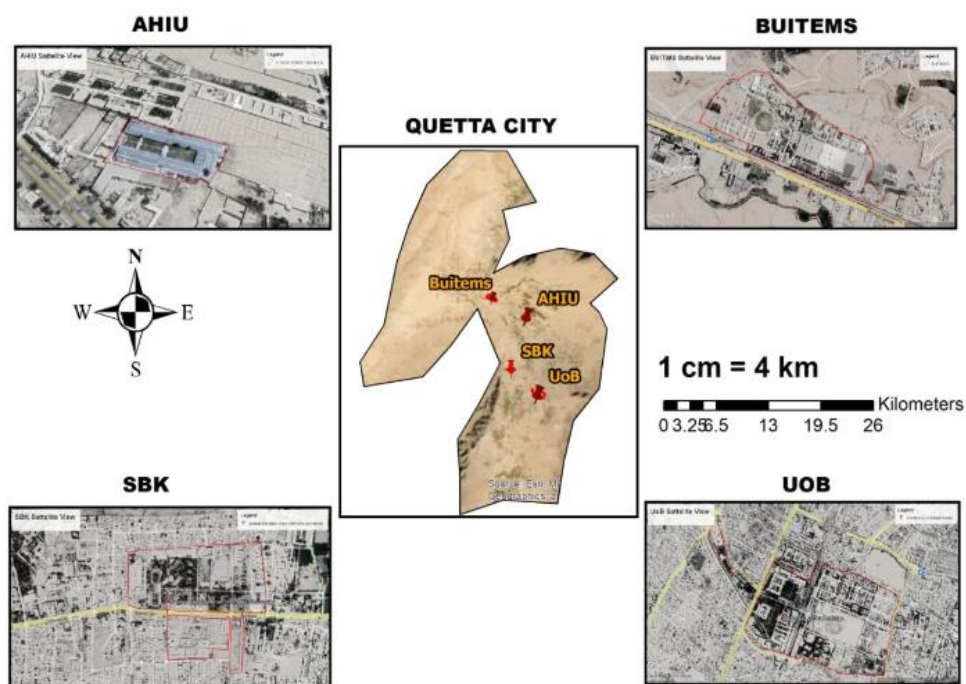


Figure 2 Map showing universities in Quetta city

2.3 Sampling Design

A stratified sampling technique was used for the collection of data. The sample size of 400 students was selected by using the Yamane formula [$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$].

Where,

n = the sample size

N = the population size

e = level of precision or sampling error

$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$

$n = \frac{31200}{1 + 31200(0.05)^2}$

$n = \frac{31200}{1 + (0.0025)}$

$n = 394$ = Rounded it to 400

The study's target participants consisted of male and female students, both graduates and postgraduates, from Quetta City's four universities. Participants were selected based on their enrolment in a university program and their regular use of social media, without additional inclusion and exclusion criteria.

2.4 Data sources and management

In this study, primary data was collected through a semi-structured questionnaire administered to 400 university students in Quetta City. The purpose of collecting primary data was to obtain firsthand insights into the specific effects of social media on students' academic performance, health, and overall well-being. Secondary data was gathered from existing literature, including research articles, reports, and academic papers, to provide background and context on social media's impact on students. This helped in identifying trends, understanding theoretical frameworks, and filling gaps in the existing research. A semi-structured questionnaire was created in order to get primary data from the students.

2.5 Data analysis methods

All the data collected from four universities of Quetta city was entered in IBM-SPSS statistic version 22, in the form of codes and then descriptive statistics was used for analysis. After analysis, the data was depicted in the form of tables by showing percentages and frequencies.

2.6 Ethical consideration

This study was conducted following ethical research practices. Before data collection, approval was obtained from the relevant authorities of the four universities. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the research and assured that their responses would remain confidential and be used solely for academic purposes. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were assured that their identities and responses would be handled with strict confidentiality. These measures were taken to ensure secure storage of the data to prevent unauthorized access, thereby maintaining the privacy of all respondents.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Socio-demographic Profile of the Respondents

The results in Table 1 showed the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. The findings highlighted that little more than half (51.0%) of the respondents were females. The data also revealed that little more than one-third (35.3%) students were from the University of Balochistan Quetta, little less than one-third (32.0%) students were from SBK University, little less than one-third (29.5%) were from BUITEMS and very few (3.3%) students were from Alhamd University. Furthermore, the analysis also indicated that almost three-fourths (74.3%) of the students were 20-24 years old. In addition, the finding further elaborated that the educational level of little less than two-thirds (62.5%) of the students was Bachelors.

Table 1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondent

Descriptive characteristics	Frequency	Percent
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	196	49.0
Female	204	51.0
Total	400	100.0
<i>Age</i>		
< 20	55	13.8
20 – 24	297	74.3
25 – 29	45	11.3
30+	3	.8
Total	400	100.0
<i>Educational Level</i>		
Intermediate	40	10.0
Bachelor	250	62.5
Masters	95	23.8
Post Graduate	15	3.8
Total	400	100.0
<i>University's Name</i>		
UoB, Quetta	141	35.3
SBK, Quetta	128	32.0
BUIITEMS, Quetta	118	29.5
Alhamd Islamic University, Quetta	13	3.3
Total	400	100.0

Source: Primary data, 2022

3.2 Routine of Students Using Social Media in Daily Life

Table 2 displays the data of students using social media and the details about using the sites. The analysis revealed that all students were using social media and little less than one-fourth (24.8%) of the students use more than five sites in their daily lives. However, little more than half of the students have preferred WhatsApp to use in their daily routine. The analysis further revealed that little more than two-thirds (68%) of students were using social media for more than eleven years. Furthermore, the table also highlights that little less than three-fourths (73%) of the students thought that social media is good for today's world.

<i>Students use Social Media</i>	Frequency	Percent
Yes	400	100
No	0	0
<i>Number of Websites They Use</i>		
One	28	7.0
Two	79	19.8
Three	87	21.8
Four	68	17.0
Five	39	9.8
More than Five	99	24.8
<i>Years of Using Social Media</i>		

1-5	272	68
6-10	124	31
11+	4	1
<i>Perception about Goodness of Social Media</i>		
Yes	292	73
No	108	27
Total	400	100

Source: Primary data, 2022

3.3 Reasons of Using Social Media

The results presented in Figure 3 indicate that (21.8%) of the participants used social media to study and collaborate with other students, and (16.8%) of the participants used social media to stay informed about current events, and very few of the participants used social media for leisure and relaxation, to connect with others and make new friends, and for financial gain. Additionally, slightly less than half (43.3%) of the field survey participants stated that they had used social media for all of the aforementioned purposes.

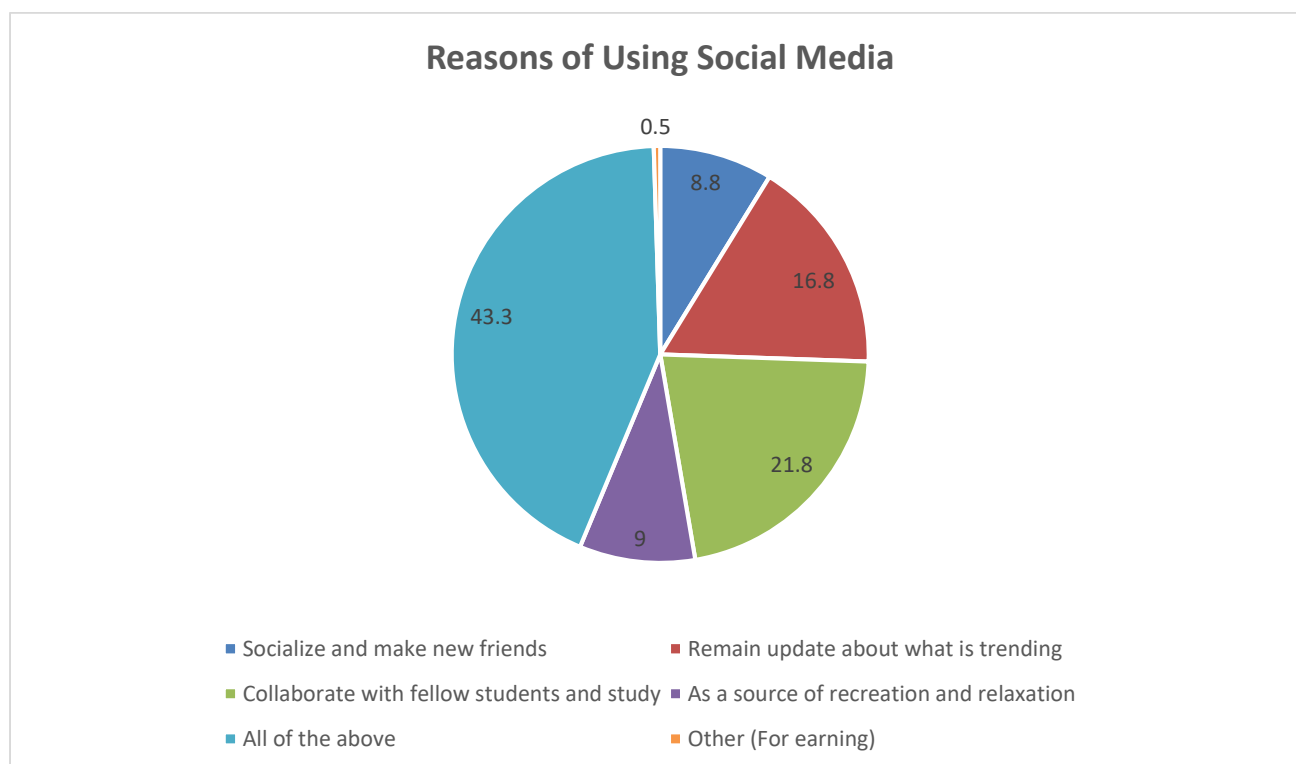


Figure 3 Reasons of Using Social Media

3.4 Impacts of Social Media

Figure 4 shows that slightly less than half (49%) of respondents said social media had a negative influence on their lives. However, (36%) of respondents said social media had positive effects, while only 15% thought it had both positive and negative impacts.

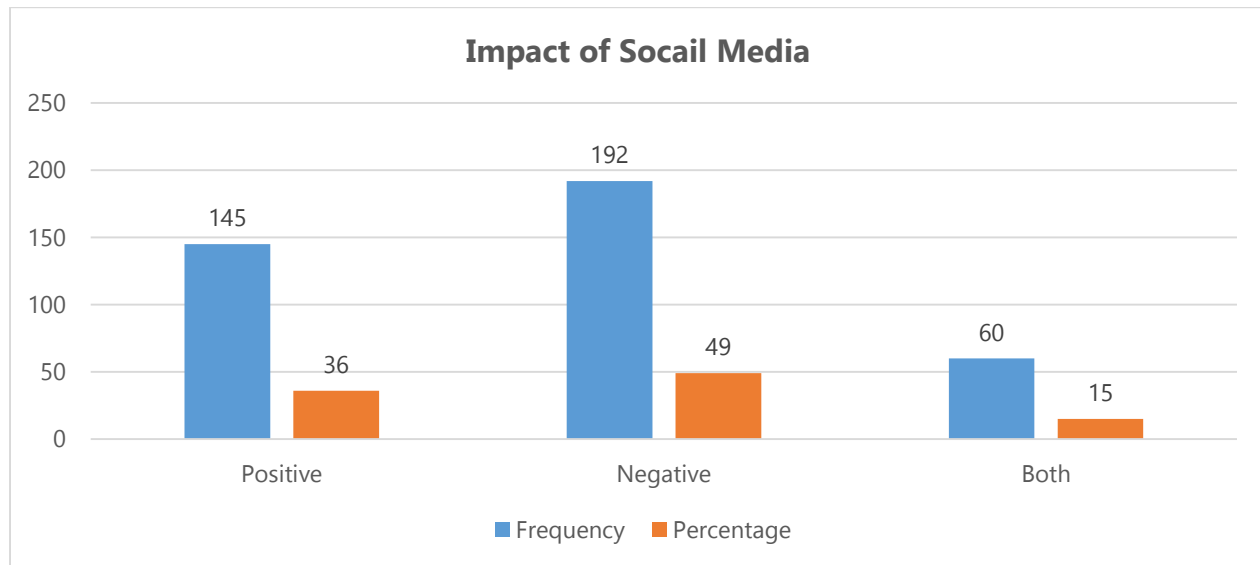


Figure 4 Impacts of Social Media

3.5 Negative Effects of Social Media

Table 5 presents the specifics of additional problems related to social media use. Around (71.0%) of the respondents said that using social media excessively negatively impacts their physical and mental well-being. A little over one-third of the respondents believed that social media caused headaches, neck and back pain, and vision deterioration. Nearly, (29.0%) of the respondents said that social media contributes to a variety of psychological issues, including stress, anxiety, sadness, insomnia, and more.

Table 5 Effects of Social Media

Effects of Social Media	Frequency	Percent
<i>Effect on Physical and Psychological Health</i>		
Yes	284	71.0
No	116	29.0
Total	400	100.0
<i>Physical Issues</i>		
Neck pain	36	9.0
Back pain	29.2	7.3
Headache	60	15.0
Eyesight weakening	119.2	29.8
All of the above	140	35
Other (No Physical Effects)	16	4.0
<i>Psychological Issues</i>		
Stress	84	21.0
Depression	84	21.0
Anxiety	56	14
Insomnia	42	10.5
All of the above	105	26.3
Other (Nothing)	29	7.3
Total	400	100

Source: Primary data, 2022

3.6 Advantages and Disadvantages of Social Media

Table 6 explains the advantages and disadvantages of social media. The results showed that slightly more than half (56.5%) of the participants thought social media's primary benefit was supporting their academic endeavors. Also, (19.3%) of the respondents stated, social media makes it simple for them to exchange and receive information with their peers and complete their tasks fast. The table, however, also outlines social media's drawbacks. According to the analysis, (32.8%) of the respondents thought that social media's main drawback was that it made it harder for them to concentrate on their studies and negatively impacted their academic performance. Meanwhile, (24.0%) of the respondents thought that social media caused problems for their privacy and destroyed their social skills in addition to negatively affecting their academic performance.

Table 6 Advantages and Disadvantages of Social Media

Advantages and Disadvantages of Social Media	Frequency	Percent
<i>Advantages</i>		
Sharing information/work quickly	77	19.3
Meeting new people	15	3.8
Learning new technologies	45	11.3
Keeping in touch with friends	36	9.0
Help in studies	226	56.5
All of the above	1	.3
<i>Disadvantages</i>		
Affects academic performance	131	32.8
Destroy social skills	77	19.3
Privacy issues	79	19.8
All of the above	96	24.0
Other (Showing Irrelevant Content)	17	4.3
Total	400	100

Source: Primary data, 2022

4. DISCUSSION

The current study presents new empirical findings regarding the impact of social media and aims to find out how the university students of Quetta City use social media in their daily lives.

The findings of this study reveal that participants primarily utilized social media for socializing and making new friends, for collaborating with peers, and to stay informed about current events. Fewer participants indicated using social media for leisure and relaxation, building connections, and for financial gains. These findings align with earlier study, which examined similar factors of social media usage (Younis et al., 2024). The study conducted in Beijing explored same results that how university students in China utilize social media for collaborative learning. The study found that social media platforms significantly facilitated collaboration among students, enhancing their learning performance. The research also highlighted that students' academic self-efficiency moderated the relationship between social media collaboration and learning outcomes (Liu et al., 2022).

Along with this, the findings of the present study indicate that nearly half of the respondents perceived social media as having a negative influence on their lives. In contrast, other participants viewed social media as having positive effects, while a smaller group acknowledged both positive and negative impacts. These results align with the previous study, which similarly explored the varying perceptions of social media's influence (Noori et al., 2023). Additionally, the study surveyed 440 Iraqi university students and found

similar results. While social media improved connections and information sharing for many, a significant portion said it limited time with friends and family and negatively affected academic performance (Taher & Ali, 2024).

Furthermore, the analysis of the current study indicates that students actively engage with one another on social media, exchanging ideas, opinions, and insights. Also, social media serves as a platform for students to communicate and collaborate in order to address various challenges. These findings are consistent with the earlier study conducted by Destiana and Salman (2015), which highlighted the role of social media in fostering academic interactions. Furthermore, the majority of students in this study reported using more than five social media platforms, underscoring the widespread adoption of various social media channels among university students. In addition, the majority of students indicated spending more than three hours per day on social media, a trend that aligns with the findings of Waqas et al. (2016), further emphasizing the substantial amount of time students dedicate to these platforms.

Another study conducted by Mahevish et al. (2023) mentioned in their study that social media leads to social isolation, and this can cause several effects, such as physical, emotional, mental, and psychological issues in youths. Likewise, in this study, many participants also identified specific health concerns, including headaches, neck and back pain, and vision deterioration, as consequences of prolonged social media engagement. Additionally, the majority of respondents linked social media use to various psychological issues such as stress, anxiety, depression, and insomnia. Likewise, a study investigated the relationship between screen exposure and various physical and mental effects in university students. The study reported similar results to those observed in the current research, that increased smartphone use was associated with higher levels of stress, anxiety, depression, and physical issues such as headaches and neck disability (Yilmaz & Goz, 2023).

Also, the current study findings highlight both the advantages and disadvantages of social media as perceived by the participants. The results indicate that just over half of the respondents viewed social media primarily as a tool that supports their academic pursuits. Additionally, a significant portion of participants noted that social media simplifies the process of sharing and receiving information with peers, allowing them to complete tasks more efficiently. However, the results also identify several disadvantages of social media, as it hampers their ability to concentrate on their studies, negatively impacting their academic performance. Furthermore, a portion of participants expressed concerns about privacy issues and the deterioration of their social skills as a result of social media use, in addition to its adverse effects on academic performance. These findings align with a previous study that similarly examined the dual nature of social media, emphasizing both its potential benefits for academic engagement and its downsides related to academic focus and social interaction (Shojib, 2024). Notably, a study conducted in Bangladesh also examined the similar impact of social media usage on the academic performance of university students in Dhaka. The study indicated that while social media facilitates communication and information sharing among students, excessive use can lead to decreased academic engagement and increased distractions, ultimately hindering academic performance (Chowdhury, 2024).

Limitations of the study

The current study is limited by time and financial resources, which restricted the scope and depth of data collection. Although some studies have been conducted in higher education institutions, there is a lack of sufficient literature specifically addressing the impact of social media on university students in the context of Quetta City. Additionally, there is a possibility of respondents providing inaccurate information due to privacy concerns, which could affect the reliability of the data.

5. CONCLUSION

The current study explores the impacts of social media on university students, providing insights into its multifaceted role in their lives. Findings reveal that social media serve as a fundamental tool in students'

lives, facilitating education, communication, and awareness of global events. Notably, social media enhances students' educational experience by offering academic resources and enabling easier connections with family and friends. However, the study also highlights that excessive use averaging 1-3 hours daily on social platforms can significantly undermine academic performance, social skills, and daily routines. Prolonged exposure to social media distracts students from studies, impairs social interactions, and negatively impacts physical and mental health, potentially even eroding cultural values. Despite its positive attributes, the unchecked use of social media poses substantial risks, which if left unaddressed, could severely hinder students' academic and personal growth. Thus, there is a critical need for targeted intervention: universities and policymakers should implement educational programs that emphasize responsible social media use, online safety, and awareness of its potential downsides. These initiatives would equip students with strategies to harness social media constructively, ensuring it supports rather than hinders their academic and personal development.

DECLARATIONS

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