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IMPACT OF SOCIAL NETWORKING USAGE ON SLEEP QUALITY AND EMOTIONAL REGULATION AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN BAHAWALPUR, PAKISTAN

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Abstract

This research explores the relationship between social networking use by Pakistani university students in Bahawalpur, sleep quality, and emotional regulation. Standardized measures, including the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire, the Sleep Quality Scale, and the Social Networking Usage Scale, were employed to assess a sample of 250 individuals. The outcomes indicated a negative correlation between emotional controls and sleep quality, as well as between social networking use and sleep quality. Conversely, a marginally significant positive correlation was observed between emotional regulation and social networking use. Although there were no identifiable gender differences in the use of social networking, independent sample t-tests indicated gender-based differences in emotional regulation, with females performing better than males. Also, while no differences were apparent in the time devoted to social networking, urban students had better-quality sleep compared to rural students. Social networking was minimally related to emotional regulation, but sleep quality was a strong predictor of social networking usage, per regression analysis. These findings reveal social networking's dual role as a risk factor for sleep disturbances and a facilitator of adaptive regulation. The research underlines how important it is to develop awareness campaigns and balanced technology-use treatments in an attempt to enhance students' well-being.

Keywords: university students; technology use; emotional control; sleep quality; social networking

Introduction

Social networking is now an essential part of students' lives during the digital era, and it has a major influence on daily routines, social interactions, and psychological well-being. University students spend considerable amounts of time on the Internet from sites such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, oftentimes at the expense of sleep and emotional well-being. Issues over the potential ill effects of too much social networking use, particularly in relation to sleep quality and mental health, have increased among researchers (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017).

Learning capacity, memory consolidation, and emotional resilience are all affected by the quality of sleep, which is an essential component in identifying physical and mental well-being (Lo et al., 2016). Decreased academic achievement, mood fluctuations, and heightened vulnerability to stress have all been associated with poor sleep, which has been traditionally attributed to social media use during night-time. Similarly, another essential psychological term that is often impacted by online behaviour patterns is emotional regulation, or the ability to manage and shape one's emotional responses (Gross, 2015).

Surprisingly few studies in South Asian contexts have explored the interplays between university students' emotional regulation, sleep quality, and social networking, although these topics have received increased scholarly attention. By investigating such interplays in a Pakistani context of higher education, this study closes such knowledge gaps and aims to provide both theoretical insights and practical suggestions for promoting healthier digital practices.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its potential to uncover valuable insights into how social networking usage impacts the well-being of university students, specifically in terms of sleep quality and emotional regulation. Social networking platforms often lead to prolonged screen time, disrupting sleep schedules and affecting sleep quality. This study can identify

patterns and quantify the extent to which excessive usage interferes with students' rest. Emotional regulation is critical for students' mental health and academic performance. Social networking may influence emotional states through exposure to online interactions, peer comparisons, and cyberbullying. The study will explore these connections and their effects. Poor sleep quality and emotional dysregulation are linked to decreased academic performance, increased stress levels, and long-term health issues. Insights from this study could inform strategies to support students in achieving better outcomes. In this research effects of unlimited social media usage and people comparing their lives with others and developing concerns regarding their physical appearance, thus affecting their emotions. Comparing oneself to ideal images in public then triggers emotions of inadequacy, which further lowers one's sense of self and of one's body, and perpetuates the overemphasis on weight and physical appearance.

Problem Statement

Social networking's rapid expansion has radically transformed the way young adults, particularly college students, interact, socialize, and convey their feelings. Excessive use of social media sites has been linked with behavioural addiction, irregular circadian rhythms, sleep difficulties, and problems in emotional regulation, even though the sites provide potential for connectivity, information exchange, and peer support. University students are especially vulnerable due to social comparison behaviours, night-time consumption, and study pressure, all of which can negatively impact their physical and mental well-being. While there have been other studies examining how social networking impacts sleep quality or emotional regulation independently, there are few combined studies that examine how these areas intersect in the cultural context of Pakistan. Since unsettled issues in these domains can have long-lasting impacts on academic achievement, psychological health, and overall well-being, this gap highlights the

importance of exploring the connection between the use of social networking, the quality of sleep, and emotional management among Pakistani university students.

Objectives

- 1 To examine the relationship between social networking usages, sleep quality and emotional regulation.
- 2 To explore the differences between social networking usages, sleep quality and emotional regulation.
- 3 To compare the sleep quality levels between urban and rural areas.
- 4 To compare social media usage between urban and rural areas.
- 5 To investigate the association between social networking usage and sleep quality of university students in Bahawalpur
- 6 To investigate the association between social networking usage and emotional regulation among university students in Bahawalpur.

Hypotheses

1. There would be a significant correlation between social networking, sleep quality and emotional regulation among university students in Bahawalpur.
2. There would be a significant difference between social networking, sleep quality and emotional regulation among university students in Bahawalpur.
3. Urban students would report a higher level of sleep quality compared to rural students.
4. Urban students would report higher levels of social media usage compared to rural students.
5. There would be a significant association between social networking usage and sleep quality among university students in Bahawalpur.
6. There would be a significant association of social networking usage on emotional regulation among university students in Bahawalpur.

Literature Review

Emotional regulation and social networking are a more complex interrelationship. Although some researchers argue that online environments

can undermine regulation through exposure to emotional overload and social comparison (Vogel et al., 2014), others argue that internet communities can produce emotional support and adaptation strategies (Seabrook et al., 2016). Past research uniformly connects social networking use with disrupted sleep patterns and decreased well-being. Cain and Gradisar (2010) described bedtime delays and nighttime awakenings as prevalent effects of excessive use of digital technology, and Levenson et al. (2017) demonstrated that individuals who have intensive usage of social networking sites have a higher chance of poor sleep quality and insomnia.

These interactions are also influenced by cultural context. Online engagement can be a source of sense of belonging and an aspirational source of stress in collectivist cultures such as Pakistan, which may have a distinctive effect on mental health outcomes (Saeed et al., 2021). By empirically examining the interaction of these variables among Pakistani university students, the present study situates itself within this framework and contributes to prior work.

Methodology

Research Design and Participants

A cross-sectional, quantitative design was employed in the study. The sample of 250 university students from Bahawalpur included 78 males and 172 females. 72% of the participants were in BS programs, with lower percentages in PhD, MS/MPhil, and diploma/MBBS programs. The majority resided in metropolitan areas (88%), belonged to middle socioeconomic backgrounds (94.8%), and were in nuclear families (85.2%).

Inclusion Criteria

To ensure the relevance and appropriateness of the sample for the study's objectives, participants were included based on the following criteria:

1. **Age range:** Only students aged 18 to 28 years were included, as this group typically represents the youth demographic most actively engaged in social networking platforms.

2. **Enrollment status:** Participants had to be **currently enrolled** in a degree program (BS, MS, MPhil, PhD, MBBS, or diploma level) at a recognized university. This ensured that the data reflected the experiences of active university students from Bahawalpur.
3. **Institution affiliation:** Only students from **The Islamia University of Bahawalpur (IUB)** and **Government Sadiq College Women University, Bahawalpur (GSCWUB)** were considered for participation, as these institutions were the target research sites.

Exclusion Criteria

To maintain the study's internal validity and avoid confounding variables, the following exclusion criteria were applied:

1. **Age limitation:** Individuals **below 18 years** or **above 28 years** were excluded to maintain a focused and developmentally consistent sample.
2. **Graduation status:** Students who had **recently graduated** and were no longer enrolled in any academic program were excluded, as their social networking patterns and daily routines might differ significantly from currently enrolled students.

Instruments

Informed Consent

Statements were inserted before the form was started to let the subjects know that they were welcome to fill it out. We merely asked for ten to fifteen minutes of their valuable time. Additionally, they were told not to write down any identifying information. It is entirely up to them to participate. They are free to stop the study process at any time. The investigators will only utilize the data they have provided for study reasons and will then discard it.

Demographic Sheet

The demographics include age, gender, qualification level, socio-economic status, Family system and residential area.

Social Networking Usage Questionnaire

The Social Networking Usage Questionnaire is a self-report instrument designed to measure how people use social networking sites. There are twelve items on the questionnaire. Respondents

rank each item on a scale of 1 to 5, indicating how much they participate in specific social networking behaviours (Gupta & Bashir, 2018).

Sleep Quality Questionnaire

The chosen population's sleep quality was evaluated using Shin and colleagues' Sleep Quality Scale. The internal consistency of its 28 elements is 0.92. It was trustworthy for research (Yi, Shin, & Shin, 2006).

Emotional Regulation Questionnaire

The Emotion Regulation Questionnaire is designed to assess individual differences in the habitual use of two emotion regulation strategies: cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression (Gross & John, 2003).

Procedure

All subjects provided informed consent, and the collection of data was done following ethical approval. Confidentiality was ensured, and questionnaires were administered in school environments. Descriptive statistics, regression analyses, independent samples t-tests, and Pearson correlations were some of the statistical studies that were conducted using SPSS 26.

Result

Table 4.1

Frequency Distribution of Sample (N=250)

Characteristics		F	%
Gender	Male	78	31.2%
	Female	172	68.8%
Education	BS	180	72.0%
	MS/MPHIL	56	22.4%
	PHD	2	0.8%
	Diploma/MBBS	12	4.8%
Socioeconomic status	Low	7	2.8%
	Middle	237	94.8%
	High	6	2.4%
	Nuclear	213	85.2%
Family system	Joint	37	14.8%
	Urban	220	88.0%
Area of residence	Rural	30	12.0%

Note. f = frequency; % = percentage.

The majority of participants were female, enrolled in BS programs, belonged to nuclear families, came from middle socioeconomic backgrounds, and resided in urban areas.

Table 4.2

Reliability Coefficients (Cronbach's Alpha) of Study Instruments (N = 250)

Instrument	No. of Items	M	SD	Range	Cronbach's α
Social Networking Usage Scale	12	51.30	3.75	37-60	.84
Sleep Quality Scale	28	89.50	6.35	70-112	.91
Emotional Regulation Questionnaire	10	39.64	6.43	25-60	.78

Note. Cronbach's alpha (α) values reflect internal consistency based on the current sample. Score range indicates the minimum and maximum possible total scores for each scale. SD = Standard Deviation.

Table 4.3

Correlation among Study Variables (N=250)

Variables	n	M	SD	1	2	3
1. Social Networking Usage	250	51.30	3.75			
2. Sleep Quality	250	89.50	6.35	--		
3. Emotional Regulation	250	39.64	6.43	.328*	--	
				.168*	.464*	--

Note. M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation. $p < .01^{**}$. Only statistically significant relationships are presented. A negative correlation was found between social networking usage and sleep quality, and between sleep quality and emotional regulation. A weak but significant positive correlation existed between social networking usage and emotional regulation.

Table 4.4

Independent Sample T-test to Check the Social Networking Usage and Emotional Regulation on Male and Female (N=250)

Variables	Male		Female		df	t(250)	p	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD				
Social Networking Usage	51.19	4.30	51.34	3.48	12.49	-.282	<.001	0.039
Emotional Regulation	37.50	4.38	41.78	5.09	248	-.6.42	.048	0.901

Results of an independent samples t-test examining gender differences in use of social networking and emotional regulation are reported in Table 4.4.

Although statistically significant ($p < .001$) the difference between men's and women's social networking use, the effect size was minimal (Cohen's $d = 0.039$), which indicates that there was actually no difference in real life. Conversely, there was a gender difference in emotion regulation, with women performing better than men. There was a significant gender difference in emotion regulation, as indicated by the large effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.901$).

Table 4.5

Independent Sample T-test to Check the Sleep Quality in Urban and Rural (N=250)

Variables	Urban		Rural		df	t(250)	p	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD				
Sleep Quality	90.30	6.31	83.66	2.36	99.98	10.94	<.001	1.39

Urban and rural respondents' sleep quality varied considerably ($t(99.98) = 10.94$, $p < .001$), with an extremely large effect size ($d = 1.39$), as presented in Table 4.5.

This means that city dwellers had much better sleep than individuals from rural areas.

This finding should be interpreted with caution, however, since only 12% of the sample were rural dwellers. To prove its stability, it must be replicated in more representative populations.

Table 4.6

Independent Sample T-test to Check the Social Networking Usage on Urban and Rural (N=250)

Variables	Urban		Rural		df	t	p	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD				
Social Networking Usage	51.35	3.81	50.86	3.26	248	.674	.501	0.13

The use of social networking between urban and rural participants did not show a significant difference ($t(248) = 0.67$, $p = .501$, with a small effect size ($d = 0.13$), as indicated by Table 4.6. This suggests that the use of social networking in this population is not significantly affected by place of residence.

Table 4.7

Regression results showing the association of Social Networking Usage and Sleep Quality (N=250)

Predictor	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient		95%CI	
	B	Std. Error β	t	p	LL	UL
Constant	117.99	5.23				
Sleep Quality	-0.56	0.10	-.328	<.001	-0.76	-0.36
R ²	.107					

Note. Total N=250, CI=Confidence Interval; LL=lower limit; U= upper limit

Table 4.7 shows that a simple linear regression was conducted to examine the association of sleep quality with social networking usage. Results showed that sleep quality and social networking usage have an association, accounting for approximately 11% of the variance ($R^2 = .107$). The association was negative and moderate in strength, indicating that lower sleep quality is associated with higher social networking usage.

Table 4.8

Regression results showing the association of Social Networking Usage and Emotional Regulation (N=250)

Predictor	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient		95%CI	
	B	Std. Error β	t	p	LL	UL
Constant	28.69	4.52				
SNU	.229	.088	.168	2.60	.010	0.056
R ²	.027					

Note. Total N=250, CI=Confidence Interval; LL=lower limit; U= upper limit; SNU=Social Networking Usage

Table 4.8 shows the association of social networking usage on emotional regulation in Bahawalpur University students. The R^2 value of (.027) revealed that 1% change in the outcome variable. The finding revealed that sleep, social networking usage and emotional regulation have a positive association among university students.

The participants indicated moderate use of social networking ($M = 51.30$, $SD = 3.75$), fairly good sleep quality ($M = 89.50$, $SD = 6.35$), and decent emotional control ($M = 39.64$, $SD = 6.43$) based on descriptive data.

Highly significant negative correlations were observed by correlation analysis between emotional regulation and sleep quality ($r = -.464$,

$p < .01$) and between social networking and sleep quality ($r = -.328$, $p < .01$). A weak positive correlation was observed between emotional regulation and social networking ($r = .168$, $p < .01$).

There were no gender distinctions in the use of social networking, based on independent samples t-tests, but women performed higher than men on emotional control ($t = -6.42$, $p < .05$, $d = .90$). Urban students reported significantly improved sleep quality compared with rural students ($t = 10.94$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.39$), while no urban-rural differences were found for the use of social networking.

By regression analysis, social networking use has a weak association with emotional regulation ($\beta = .168$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .027$), while sleep quality has a strong association with social networking use ($\beta = -.328$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .107$).

Discussion

Consistent with previous studies correlating excessive use of digital devices with disrupted circadian rhythms and poor sleep, the findings confirm that excessive social media use lowers the quality of sleep (Levenson et al., 2017). Restorative sleep is necessary in the maintenance of cognitive-emotional homeostasis, as reflected by the negative correlation between emotional regulation and sleep quality.

It is noteworthy that, though weakly, social networking was positively associated with emotional control. This suggests that moderate usage might provide avenues for emotional release, peer support, and opportunities for self-expression, while excessive usage might interfere with sleep (Seabrook et al., 2016).

In spite of a statistically significant positive relationship between social networking use and emotional control, the magnitude of the effect was not significant ($R^2 = .027$). This indicates that social networking accounts for only about 2.7% of the variance in emotional regulation. Therefore, though the connection exists, it is of little practical significance and should be interpreted cautiously.

The extremely small effect size tells us that

this correlation may not hold for all students, even though the weak positive relationship between social networking and emotional regulation was statistically significant. Rather, it's possible that certain social media usage behaviours, such as seeking social support or healthily expressing oneself, might assist a subgroup of individuals in developing emotional regulation. Conversely, overuse or maladaptive use of social networking is more likely to negatively affect sleep quality and well-being for the majority of students. This complexity highlights the importance of distinguishing between different types and levels of use of social networking in determining its psychological impact.

The emotional control gender gap, in which women outperform men, is in line with other research demonstrating that women are more likely to employ adaptive regulation strategies (Gross & John, 2003). As per previous research, there is a gender variation in emotional regulation, where women having higher levels than men. As per Gross and John (2003), suppression is used more by men, while women are more likely to employ adaptive strategies such as cognitive reappraisal. This theoretical perspective presents a plausible explanation of the current findings, as women's higher emotional regulation scores can be explained by their higher utilization of reappraisal. The current results are thus theoretically grounded by established models of gendered emotion management strategies, as well as being statistically significant.

Likewise, urban students compared to rural communities might possess better sleep quality based on differences in lifestyle, resource access, and their environment.

Conclusion

This research reveals that the well-being of Bahawalpur University students is influenced by their social networking use in a complex manner. Excessive use can have a small positive effect on emotional regulation, but also has worse sleep. The results underscore the importance of balanced digital behaviour with self-regulation

strategies as well as respect for sleep hygiene.

Limitations and Recommendations

Causal inference is constrained by the cross-sectional design, and geographic bias can be introduced through the use of self-report measures. Experimental or longitudinal designs should be employed in future studies to shed light on causal pathways. Generalizability would be enhanced by combining qualitative and quantitative methods and broadening the sample beyond a particular region.

Some limitations are overrepresentation of females, urban and middle-class bias and only two universities in one region, Bahawalpur, are included. Therefore, findings should be interpreted with caution and cannot be generalized to the entire population of Pakistani university students.

Some of the recommendations are:

1. Awareness campaigns and promoting responsible internet usage.
2. Sleep hygiene workshops tailored for college students.
3. Integrating digital literacy within student counselling services.
4. Cross-cultural studies to determine whether findings differ across settings.

This constraint may also be seen as a valuable beginning point, even if the present study was conducted on a very homogenous group of predominantly female, urban, middle-class university students from two Bahawalpur universities. The findings provide a useful foundation to begin to understand this particular group, but more heterogeneous participants, like rural students, different socioeconomic groups, and a better gender balance ought to be included deliberately in subsequent research. Through this, it will be simpler to assess the degree to which these results can be considered reliable and applicable across different Pakistani contexts.

Innovation/Cutting-edge Contribution

Through simultaneously examining social networking usage, sleep quality, and emotional regulation in a single empirical model, this research contributes to South Asian scholarship.

Through highlighting social networking's potential negative as well as positive aspects, the research provides informative data to teachers, psychologists, and lawmakers who wish to assist students' well-being in the era of digitalization.

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