



## Assessing the Role of Social Media in Shaping Quality of Interpersonal Communication among Students at Universities

<sup>a</sup> Zoha Raza Hashmi, <sup>b</sup> Samina Akhtar, <sup>c</sup> Farah Latif Naz

<sup>a</sup> M. Phil Scholar, Department of Education, The Women University, Multan, Pakistan

E-Mail: [zohahashmi82@gmail.com](mailto:zohahashmi82@gmail.com)

<sup>b</sup> Assistant Professor, Department of Education, The Women University, Multan, Pakistan

E-Mail: [samabdullah33@hotmail.com](mailto:samabdullah33@hotmail.com)

<sup>c</sup> Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan, Pakistan

E-Mail: [farahlatif@bzu.edu.pk](mailto:farahlatif@bzu.edu.pk)

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### ABSTRACT

*The current descriptive study aimed to examine the role of social media on students' interpersonal communication skills at universities. The study population covered 5,768 students who were studying regularly at three public universities: Emerson University Multan, Bahauddin Zakariya University Multan, and The Women University Multan, Punjab, Pakistan. A sample of (n=200) two hundred students, including sixty males (M=60) and one hundred forty females (F=140), were chosen through simple random sampling from various departments within the social science faculty to accomplish this study. A questionnaire was designed to obtain quantitative data for the current study. The descriptive statistics standard deviation, mean, percentages, and frequencies as well as inferential statistics Pearson coefficient correlation regression and t-test was employed to examine the data. The findings indicated a positive perspective of students towards social media in shaping their communication skills and a significant positive correlation between social media usage and interpersonal communication skills was observed in the study. The study recommended that counselling services for students should be offered to maximize the positive impression of social media's effect on communication patterns at universities.*

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Corresponding author's email address: [farahlatif@bzu.edu.pk](mailto:farahlatif@bzu.edu.pk)

### 1. Introduction

Interpersonal communication skills remain important for students in discussions with peers and lecturers in academic context (Drago, 2015). Within this context, Baruah (2012) noted that the ongoing social media revolution has significantly enhanced communication practices globally. The advancement of online communication technology has provided individuals with the opportunity for convenient

online interaction (Sponcil & Gitimu, 2013). Furthermore, Hill (2015) emphasized that reliance on social networks diminishes students' face-to-face communication, subsequently impacting the quality of their relationships. Social media's impact on interaction and communication is evident across various sectors of society (Subramanian, 2017). The integration of media technologies into society has led to significant social changes that have affected individuals and families in diverse ways (Lai & Gwung, 2013). Further, Henderson (2010) emphasizes that face-to-face communications encompass various elements, including word choice, vocal variety, body language, movements and positioning, facial expressions, and listening skills, all of which contribute to effective messaging. Young children are increasingly present online, with various social networking sites designed for this demographic (Giffords, 2009). The impact of social networking on the younger generation is a significant concern for researchers in social work, particularly in light of ongoing technological advancements. The excessive use of this technology may underhandedly inhibit proper interpersonal skill development (Wolak et al. 2003). Interpersonal communication has evolved significantly due to advancements in social media and instant messaging applications over the years. This supports the assertion by Gapsiso and Wilson (2015) that the internet has emerged as a significant medium of communication in the lives of most individuals. Moreover, Ngonidzashe (2016) examined the impact of excessive use of social media sites on emotional connections and physical presence among family members.

Additionally, Mims et al. (2013) argue that social media platforms lack the essential face-to-face interaction required for the development of interpersonal skills. Children and adolescents are increasingly experiencing individualization and social exclusion, resulting in reduced opportunities for family interaction. This significantly impacts family communication and social interaction. The utilization of social media has resulted in reduced time spent with family members (Belk, 2013). This results in insufficient opportunities to develop interpersonal skills in social media contexts. Furthermore, Hamat et al. (2012) assert that online communication facilitates the development of relationships among peers, family, and lecturers. Online communication allows individuals to circumvent the anxiety and shyness associated with in-person interactions. They are capable of resolving problems, discussing issues, and addressing individuals who may have misinterpreted them, all without prior face-to-face communication.

### **1.1 Research Objectives**

1. To examine the perspectives of students regarding social media usage at Public universities.
2. To investigate the perceived effect of social media on the development of interpersonal communication skills among students at public universities.
3. To explore the role of social media in shaping the student's interpersonal communication on the basis of their gender at public universities.

### **1.2 Research Questions**

1. What are the perspectives of students regarding social media usage among students at Public universities?
2. What is the perceived impact of social media on the development of interpersonal communication skills among students at Public universities?
3. What are the differences regarding the role of social media in interpersonal communication on the basis of the gender of students at public universities?

### **1.3 Justification of the Study**

In the current digitally interconnected society, the examination of the impact of social media on the interpersonal communication skills of university students is of considerable importance. As social

media platforms have grown more integrated into students' everyday lives, recognizing their influence on interpersonal communication skills is critical for a variety of reasons.

First and foremost, colleges play an important role in creating future leaders, and good communication is a necessary ability for both personal and professional success. Examining the function of social media in this context might help uncover possible difficulties and possibilities for improving communication skills.

Additionally, the findings of such research can inform educators and institutions about the need for targeted interventions or adjustments to curricula to better prepare students for the evolving communication landscape.

Moreover, in a time when virtual interactions frequently enhance face-to-face communication, gaining insights into the effects of social media on interpersonal skills can significantly contribute to promoting positive digital communication habits among students.

In conclusion, investigating the impact of social media on the interpersonal communication skills of university students serves both educational and societal purposes by addressing the changing dynamics of communication in today's world.

#### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

The rise of social media platforms has changed communication methods among individuals, especially students. This study aims to explore the impact of these platforms on interpersonal communication. Interpersonal communication skills are vital for academic achievement and future career success. By investigating the effects of social media, this study will contribute valuable insights into how students' ability to communicate effectively with peers, professors, and potential employers may be affected.

Educational institutions are not just about academics; it's also places where students develop important social and professional networks. Looking at how social media affects personal skills can help students and teachers see how these platforms can support or hinder the growth of meaningful relationships. As digital citizens, students need to navigate the online world responsibly and ethically. By exploring the impact of social media, this research can identify potential pitfalls and challenges related to online interactions, contributing to the development of informed and responsible digital citizens.

## **2. Literature Review**

Social media has emerged as a significant communication tool, especially within educational communities. In an investigation by Boateng and Amankwaa (2016), it was observed that social media users can communicate and engage with one another effectively through applications. Individuals utilize this virtual area to make or maintain connections with others, share information, and interact for a variety of reasons. Through social media, individuals can establish online networks and relationships with others who share similar hobbies, backgrounds, and real-world connections. Additionally, Wan Othman et al. (2016) emphasized in their study that social media significantly influences the perceptions of undergraduate students regarding their social and interpersonal skills at TATI University.

Similarly, Kross et al. (2013) illustrated that despite the many advantages of social media, questions have been raised about how it may affect interpersonal communication abilities. Elaborating on this, Valkenburg et al. (2013) noted that studies on this topic had shown both positive and negative impacts. Therefore, the empirical evidence is still conflicting. A study conducted by Lawrence Femi Ademiluyi (2020) revealed a substantial impact of social media on the acquisition of communication skills and the academic performance of business education students. Additionally, Vevere (2015) highlighted in his research at the University College of Economics and Culture that social media significantly affects every day communicative behaviors, particularly in the ways individuals express themselves in speech and writing. Furthermore, Talaue et al. (2018) asserted that social media platforms facilitate access to information and materials relevant to education. Hartmann (2016) projected that, in the forthcoming century, children are likely to spend an increasing amount of time engaging with their phones and laptops from their bedrooms. In recent years, there has been a notable rise in what is termed the "culture of the bedroom," suggesting that children and young individuals are spending more time at home visiting various websites rather than participating in communal activities or interacting with family members (Peyroux & Franck, 2014). Furthermore, Peterson and Densley (2017) pointed out that utilising the various social networking platforms available online helps strengthen current relationships. Because of this, they function as a bridge between the virtual and physical worlds.

### **3. Research Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This research utilized a descriptive research design to investigate how social media impacts the interpersonal communication abilities of students in public sector universities. A descriptive survey method was used, involving data collection from a sample through a structured questionnaire. The study incorporated quantitative techniques, utilising numerically rated items to assess students' perceptions.

#### **3.2 Population of the Study**

The study population comprised 5,768 students (both male and female) enrolled in the Faculty of Social Sciences at three public sector universities in Multan:

- The Women's University Multan
- Bahauddin Zakariya University Multan
- Emerson University Multan

The study focused on students from various departments within the Faculty of Social Sciences at these institutions.

#### **3.3 Sample and Sampling Procedure**

This study used a simple random sampling method to choose participants. The final sample included 200 students (n=200), consisting of 60 males (M=60) and 140 females (F=140) students. This approach ensured a representative sample for analysing students' perspectives on social media's impact on their interpersonal communication skills.

#### **3.4 Development of Instrument**

This research utilized a standardized questionnaire as the main method for gathering data. The questionnaire was developed after a comprehensive literature review and discussions with social science experts. It contained 24 statements assessing students' perceptions of social media's impact.

To ensure content validity, two subject experts from the social sciences discipline reviewed the questionnaire. They evaluated each item’s clarity, relevance, and structure, providing feedback on strengths and weaknesses. Based on their recommendations, the questionnaire was refined to enhance its content and format. The final version of the instrument comprised 24 validated statements designed for easy comprehension by university students.

**3.5 Data Collection and Analysis**

A pilot study was performed to evaluate the instrument's reliability. Cronbach’s alpha was used to determine the internal consistency of the questionnaire items. After collecting responses, educational experts validated the instrument to ensure its accuracy. The study utilized descriptive statistics to analyse the collected data. The responses were processed using SPSS software, and findings were reported in terms of mean scores, standard deviations, and frequency distributions. The results provide insights into students' perspectives on the role of social media in shaping interpersonal communication skills at higher education institutions.

**4. Data Analysis**

The gathered data was examined using descriptive statistics, such as means and standard deviations. Following this, descriptive statistics mean, standard deviation and frequencies were used. Moreover, inferential statistics Pearson Correlation and regression analyses were applied to explore the relationships between social media use and interpersonal communication skills, aiming to pinpoint significant predictors and assess their coefficients.

**Table 1: Gender-wise Distribution of Sample**

<b>Universities</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
The Women university	66	33.0
BZU	67	33.5
Emerson university	67	33.5
Total	200	100.0

The data displays gender distribution within a sample of 200 individuals. Females constitute 70% (140) of the sample, while males account for 30% (60). Overall, females outnumber males in this dataset.

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Social Media Usage among Students (N=200)**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Statements</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
1	I use social media for conversation all day.	2.7	1.01744
2	Communicating online is more comfortable than face-to-face.	2.83	1.03912
3	Social media has affected my verbal conversation.	2.78	.94662
4	My relationships are being changed due to the overuse of social media.	2.29	.96875
5	Social media has influenced my ability to communicate with others.	2.71	1.04568
6	I felt that excessive use of social media has affected my ability to understand nonverbal cues in communication.	3.09	1.10630
7	Social media enhances my ability to interact with others.	3.03	1.09102
8	I can carry on a conversation by way of texting rather than talking to a person.	3.04	1.11805
9	I experience being out of touch with others because of social media.	3.02	1.10493

10	Social media has made it less complicated for me to stay linked with pals and family.	2.9	1.02727
11	Social media has made it harder for me to maintain eye contact at some point in the conversation.	2.63	1.13615
12	I preserve a healthy balance between online and offline social interaction	2.88	1.04154
13	Social media is growing the quality of friendship.	2.7	1.07507
14	Social media influences my listening abilities.	2.67	1.06148
15	Social media is a waste of time.	2.27	.91173
16	Sometimes, there are frauds and fake news on social media.	2.44	1.15893

Table 2 illustrates how respondents perceive different aspects of social media usage, along with the corresponding mean and standard deviation values. Overall, opinions regarding the impact of social media on communication and relationships are varied. For instance, responses to statements like "Communicating online is more comfortable than face-to-face" (Mean: 2.8250, Std. Deviation: 1.03912) and "Social media enhances my ability to interact with others" (Mean: 3.0250, Std. Deviation: 1.09102) indicate a moderate level of agreement on the positive aspects of social media interaction, albeit with some differences in responses. On the other hand, responses to statements such as "My relationships are being changed due to overuse of social media" (Mean: 2.2850, Std. Deviation: 0.96875) show less consensus regarding negative effects, again reflecting moderate variability. Additionally, the statement "I felt that excessive use of social media has affected my ability to understand nonverbal cues in communication" (Mean: 3.0850, Std. Deviation: 1.10630) suggests a stronger agreement on the negative impacts of extensive social media use while also displaying greater variability. Overall, these results highlight the complex and varied opinions on how social media influences communication and relationships among those surveyed.

**Table 3: T-test for Gender-Wise Analysis of Social Media Usage among Students**

Factors	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	T	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Social media usage	Male	60	43.0000	9.12066	1.17747	-.843	.400	-1.33571
	Female	140	44.3357	10.71851	.90588			
Development and Maintenance of Interpersonal Communication Skills	Male	60	13.4500	3.12141	.40297	.450	.653	.24286
	Female	140	13.2071	3.64523	.30808			
Effects of social media on academic context	Male	60	10.1167	2.17140	.28033	.272	.786	.09524
	Female	140	10.0214	2.31190	.19539			

The provided data offers insights into the impact of social media usage on academic context, distinguishing between genders. The analysis suggests that there is no statistically significant difference in social media usage between males and females, as evidenced by comparable mean scores and a non-significant t-value. Regarding interpersonal communication skills, while males have a slightly higher mean score than females in the first measurement, the difference is not statistically significant, indicating no substantial variation between genders. Similarly, in the second measurement of interpersonal communication skills, there is no significant difference between males and females. Thus, the findings imply that gender does not significantly influence social media usage patterns,

interpersonal communication competencies, or the effects of social media on academic context within the scope of this study.

**Table 4: Correlation Matrix of Different Factors**

Factors		Social media usage	Development of Interpersonal communication skills	Effects of social media on academic context
Social media usage	Pearson Correlation	1	.622**	-.361**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	200	200	200
Development and Maintenance of Interpersonal Communication Skills	Pearson Correlation	.622**	1	-.422**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	200	200	200
Effects of social media on academic context	Pearson Correlation	-.361**	-.422**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	200	200	200

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation analysis across three factors social media usage, development and maintenance of interpersonal communication skills, and the effects of social media on academic context—reveals noteworthy associations. Firstly, there's a strong positive correlation between social media usage and interpersonal communication skills development ( $r = 0.622, p < 0.01$ ), suggesting that individuals who engage more with social media tend to exhibit better interpersonal communication skills. However, there's a negative correlation between social media usage and its effects on academic context ( $r = -0.361, p < 0.01$ ), indicating that increased social media engagement may be linked to detrimental effects on academic performance. Additionally, there's a negative correlation between interpersonal communication skills development and its effects on academic context ( $r = -0.422, p < 0.01$ ), implying that as interpersonal communication skills improve, the adverse effects of social media on academic context may diminish. These findings underscore the complex interplay between social media usage, interpersonal communication skills, and academic outcomes, suggesting the need for further exploration and nuanced interventions to optimize these relationships for positive outcomes in educational settings.

**Table 5: Regression Analysis, Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.361 <sup>a</sup>	.130	.126	2.11834

a. Predictors: (Constant), Social media usage

The provided regression model examines the relationship between the predictor variable and the outcome variable. The coefficient of determination (R Square) indicates that approximately 13% of the variance in the outcome variable can be explained by the predictor variable, suggesting a weak-to-moderate association between the two. The adjusted R Square, which considers the number of predictors in the model, remains consistent with the R Square value. The coefficient (R) signifies a positive correlation between the predictor and outcome variables, indicating that as Social media usage increases, the outcome variable tends to increase as well, albeit moderately. However, the Standard Error of the Estimate suggests a degree of variability in the accuracy of predictions made by the model. Overall, while the model provides some insight into the relationship between the predictor and outcome

variables, it explains only a modest portion of the variability in the outcome variable, indicating that other factors not included in the model may also influence the outcome.

**Table 6: ANOVA Results**

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	133.004	1	133.004	29.640	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	888.496	198	4.487		
Total	1021.500	199			

a. Dependent Variable: Effects of social media on academic setting

b. Predictors: (Constant), Social media usage

Based on the results of the regression analysis, there is a strong correlation between the two variables in the given model. According to the substantial F-statistic ( $F = 29.640, p < 0.001$ ), a considerable amount of the dependent variable's variability may be explained by the regression model. Additionally, the fact that the sum of squares for regression (133.004) is much higher than the sum of squares for residuals (888.496) confirms the strength of the association between the dependent and predictor variables. A R-squared value of around 13% suggests that the predictor variable explains about 13% of the variation in the dependent variable in this model. Hence, while the model shows statistical significance, it implies that the effects of social media on academic settings might be influenced by other factors outside social media use. This highlights the intricacy of the interaction between the variables.

**Table 7: Coefficients**

Model	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
1 (Constant)	13.692	.574		23.852	.000
Development and Maintenance of Interpersonal Communication Skills	-.274	.042	-.422	-6.558	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Effects of social media on academic setting

Table 7 displays the intercept as 13.692, indicating the expected value of the Effects of social media on academic context when the Development and Maintenance of Interpersonal communication skills is zero. The Effects of social media on academic context are significantly impacted by the Development and Maintenance of Interpersonal Communication Skills ( $B = -0.274, p < .0001$ ). When controlling for other variables, there is a 0.274-unit decrease in the effects of social media on academic context for every unit increase in development and maintenance of interpersonal communication skills. There is a negative correlation between the effects of social media on academic settings and the significant coefficient for the Development and Maintenance of Interpersonal communication skills ( $t = -6.558, p < .0001$ ).

**5. Discussion**

The primary objective of the research was to examine how students utilize social media for personal communication at universities. Was the main goal of this study? According to the results from the present study, social media has influenced my ability to communicate with others, and I felt that excessive use of social media has affected my ability to understand nonverbal cues in communication. Similarly, according to Al-Khaddam (2013), young people's heavy social network usage diminishes them



in-person connections with other community members. Another result from the present study revealed that social media enhances my ability to interact with others, and I am aware of the impact of social media on my interpersonal relationships and attempt to maintain wholesome stability. Comparably, Ellison et al. (2007) observed that neither parents nor strangers were kept updated on Facebook by college students. Other results from the present study revealed that social media has made it harder for me to maintain eye contact at some point of conversation, and social media has affected my verbal conversation. On the other hand, Duggan (2015) demonstrates that women use Facebook more frequently and are more involved than men.

## 6. Conclusions

According to the results, how social media impacts students' capacity for interpersonal communication shows diverse perspectives. Some students feel that using social media enhances their ability to interact with people, while others are concerned about the negative effects it could have on relationships and spoken communication. The effect of social media on listening comprehension and the quality of friendships is a topic of debate. These results demonstrate the variety of social media interactions among students, emphasizing the need for more research and approaches that encourage positive online and offline communication behaviors. Furthermore, some students struggle to move from informal online to formal offline interaction, and others strive for balance because they know the impact of social media on relationships. Each of these approaches emphasizes the numerous ways in which social media influences student communication. There are various perspectives on how social media influences college students' social and academic abilities. Though some students see social media as a possible study distraction, others recognize how it may help them network with professionals and share academic materials.

## 7. Suggestions for Further Studies

- Compare social media's impact on interpersonal skills between public and private universities.
- Explore how cultural backgrounds affect social media's influence on communication skills.
- Use interviews to delve into students' perceptions of social media's impact.
- Assess university policies on social media and their effects on communication.

## 8. Recommendations

- Offer training programs to enhance communication skills, addressing challenges like maintaining eye contact and understanding nonverbal cues.
- Integrate media literacy into education to help users identify fake news and fraudulent content.
- Offer counseling or support groups aimed at helping individuals enhance the beneficial effects of social media on communication habits.
- Implement policies for supporting responsible social media use for students' overall well-being.

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