

Impact of Excessive Use of Social Media on Psychological Wellbeing among Undergraduate University Students: Role of Academic ProcrastinationAzfar Abbas^{1*}, Rabia Batool², Dr. Shakir Iqbal³, Razia Raza⁴¹ MPhil Scholar, Department of Psychology, Muslim Youth University, Islamabad, Pakistan² Clinical Psychologist, NUST School of Health Sciences (NSHS), Islamabad, Pakistan.³ Assistant Professor, Department of Clinical Psychology, Shifa Tameer-e-Millat University (STMU), Islamabad, Pakistan.⁴ MPhil Scholar, National Institute of Psychology, Quaid-e-Azam University Islamabad, Pakistan**Abstract**

The present study aimed to investigate the impact of excessive use of social media on psychological wellbeing among undergraduate university students with focus on the mediating role of academic procrastination. Correlational research was conducted, where participants were provided informed consent and completed a demographic questionnaire along with three scales: Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale, Psychological Wellbeing Scale, and General Procrastination Scale. The research was conducted on 302 undergraduate university students (126 males and 176 females) aged 18 to 26 years ($M = 20.95$, $SD = 1.78$) recruited from Islamabad and Rawalpindi, Pakistan. Correlational analysis indicated a significant negative correlation ($r = -.62$, $p < .01$) between excessive use of social media and psychological wellbeing among undergraduate university students. Mediation analysis was conducted using the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2018). The indirect effect appeared to be highly significant ($\beta = -.13$, $p < .001$), indicating that academic procrastination total effect. The direct effect was also significant ($\beta = -.45$, $p < .001$), suggesting that academic procrastination partially explained the negative impact of excessive usage of social media on psychological wellbeing. The study findings are limited by the cross-sectional design, small sample, and self-reported data. Hence, future studies should use larger, diverse samples and longitudinal or experimental designs.

Keywords: Excessive use of social media, Psychological Wellbeing, Academic Procrastination, Undergraduate University Students

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1. Introduction

Modern society has experienced important technological advances which have developed into the information and communication technology era according to current historical descriptions of our world. The surge in knowledge during this period created various impacts which affected different parts of human existence (Hia et al., 2020). Social media stands as a contemporary communication technology creation which gained its progress through internet-based tools (Nisar et al., 2020). The modern technology has created virtual communities which exist separate from recognized spaces while establishing three new cultural social and political systems through its development (Manago et al., 2021).

Studies reveal that university students spend significant amounts of time on social platforms, with 28.9% dedicating 4-6 hours daily and 13.6% spending more than 7 hours per day (Aslan & Polat, 2024). Social media platforms provide multiple benefits which include faster communication, better social connections and instant access to information. The study found that social media platforms lead to negative outcomes which include their role in enabling procrastination, a widespread issue that affects people from all backgrounds including medical students (Vukušić et al., 2021).

Excessive use of social media (EUSM) refers to individuals who depend on social media platforms to an excessive degree which impacts their daily life activities and their ability to execute different life responsibilities (Guckian et al., 2021). The condition leads to mental health problems which include anxiety and depression and low self-esteem and decreased psychological well-being (Sujarwoto et al., 2023). Moreover, EUSM has evolved into a critical issue which negatively impacts university students because it leads to academic performance decline and psychological distress (Pekpazar et al., 2021). EUSM exists as a social media usage force which pushes users to spend time on social platforms until their personal life and work duties, and mental well-being begin to suffer from their usage (Ahmed, 2025). Multiple social media platforms create interruptions which affect both everyday life and work productivity and mental well-being (Khattak et al., 2024; Shahid & Bushra, 2024). Studies have found that excessive use of social media, which is also called compulsive social media use, is a big problem all over the world, but especially common among students (Ndubuaku et al., 2020). Studies also found that EUSM can make an individual less productive at work (Cao et al., 2020).

Psychological Wellbeing

Achieving optimal functioning in both social and personal domains of life and experiencing good emotional states, such happiness (from a hedonic standpoint), are common definitions of psychological wellbeing (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Kraiss, 2023; Winefield et al., 2012). Psychological wellbeing, which reflects a balance between individual happiness and productive functioning, is obtained when life is going well. People who are psychologically well off tend to be content, capable, cheerful and feel supported in life. Physical health which may be regulated by neurochemical processes, brain activity patterns and genetics, is positively impacted by psychological wellbeing (Huppert, 2009).

Similarly, Hunt et al. (2018), found a correlation between depression symptoms and the use of excessive multiple social media platforms, social media and excessive use for non-academic purposes have increased as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Social networking platforms have an important harmful effect on university students' psychological wellbeing. The excessive use of social media also affects psychological wellbeing (Luo et al., 2020). Several studies (Baltacı et

al., 2021; Guedes et al., 2016) have found that students' mental and emotional health is at risk because they spend more time on social media.

In addition, studies have shown that EUSM is associated with a decrease in satisfaction with life, self-reported physical health, and self-reported mental health (Caplan et al., 2010; Shakya et al., 2017). Studies show a positive correlation between mental health issues and excessive use of social media (Elmer et al., 2020). Several studies have indicated that EUSM causes people to experience greater emotional distress together with mental health problems and aggressive behavior and social withdrawal which results in multiple psychological stress factors that affect their mental state (Bai & Gao 2021; Laroche et al. 2012; Nisar et al. 2020).

Academic Procrastination

Academic procrastination is when students delay the start or finish of their tasks even when they know it could affect their grades and psychological well-being. This behavior occurs frequently among students who often delay important tasks like studying for tests, working on assignments, or getting ready for presentations (Gargari et al., 2011). Additionally, academic procrastination exists when students postpone their study work until the final hour of approaching assignments. The ability of students to reach their academic targets becomes disrupted through academic procrastination because students need to learn how to manage their time for their academic work. (Klassen & Kuzucu 2009; Gading, 2020).

However, most students seem to procrastinate and postpone attending to their academic assignments depending on their preoccupation with other activities (Etodike et al., 2018). For example, students who spend excessive time on social media platforms experience academic procrastination because social media creates multiple addictive problems that prevent them from completing their academic responsibilities (Ipem et al., 2020). The research conducted by Anierobi et al. 2021 found that students face academic challenges because they spend too much time on social media and online gaming activities which creates conditions that lead to academic procrastination through fear and laziness and loss of interest and anxiety about tasks that remain postponed. As a result, student's academic achievements are negatively affected.

Procrastination has been consistently associated with mental health issues including, stress, anxiety and depression (Smoletz, 2019). He found that procrastination not only contributes to increasing stress levels but also impacts overall psychological wellbeing. Eisenbeck et al. (2019), how procrastination is associated with psychological inflexibility, characterized by an inability to adapt to change situation and manage emotional responses effectively, contributes to procrastinate behavior's that further impair psychological wellbeing.

Recent research also highlight the crucial role of academic procrastination in mediating the adverse impact of excessive use of social media on psychological wellbeing (Hammad et al., 2023). Al-Menayes (2015), found that frequent use of platforms was strongly associated with reduced psychological wellbeing among university students, with academic procrastination acting as a key mediating factor. Likewise, He and Li (2022), reported that students exhibiting signs of excessive use of social were more likely to delay academic tasks, which, in turn, heightened stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms. Supporting this framework, Geng, and Liu, (2025) demonstrated that procrastinators often turn to social media as a form of psychological escape, further reinforcing addictive behaviors and emotional strain. Furthermore, Satici and Uysal (2015), provided empirical evidence suggesting that academic

procrastination not only prolongs engagement with social media but also contributes to reduce life satisfaction and increased emotional exhaustion, exacerbating declines in psychological wellbeing.

The study aims to investigate the relationship between excessive use of social media and psychological wellbeing among undergraduate university students, as well as to examine the mediating role of academic procrastination in the relationship between excessive use of social media and psychological wellbeing among undergraduate university students.

2. Method

2.1 Research design

Correlation research design was used to access the relationship between excessive use of social media and psychological wellbeing among undergraduate university students.

2.2 Sample

The sample was comprised 302 university students aged 18 to 26 which was collected by using purposive sampling technique. The targeted population of this study was the excessive use of social media users from different universities, located in twin cities Islamabad and Rawalpindi. A demographic questionnaire was used to gather information such as gender; time spent on social media and number of apps used.

2.3 Instruments

2.3.1 Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (Andreassen et al., 2016)

The BSMS (Andreassen et al., 2016) assesses excessive social media usage behaviors over, using six items rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (very rarely) to 5 (very often). Total possible scores range from 6 to 30, with higher scores indicating higher social media usage. The reliability of this scale, as reported in previous literature, is .88 (Gomez et al., 2024), indicating strong internal consistency among its items.

2.3.2 Psychological Well-Being Scale (Ryff, 1995): Psychological Well-being was assessed using a shorter version of the Ryff Psychological Well-being Scale (Ryff, 1995). This scale employs a 7-point Likert-type format with 18 items. It measures six aspects of well-being: self-acceptance (Item 1, 2 and 5), purpose in life (Item 3, 7 and 10), environmental mastery (Item 4, 8 and 9), positive relations with others (Item 6, 13 and 16), personal growth (Item 11, 12 and 14), and autonomy (Item 15, 17 and 18). Each subscale consists of 3 items, contributing to an overall score ranging from 18 to 126. Items are rated from 1 (Strongly Agree) to 7 (Strongly Disagree), with higher scores indicating higher levels of psychological well-being. Ten items on this scale (1, 2, 3, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 17 and 18) involve reverse scoring. The reliability of this scale, as reported in previous literature, is .84 (Clarke, 2001), indicating strong internal consistency among its items.

2.3.3 General Procrastination Scale (Lay, 1986): The General Procrastination Scale developed by Lay (1986), suggests that people use a 5-point scale to determine how much particular statements match their personality traits. On a scale that ranges from 1 (Extremely Uncharacteristic), 2 (Moderately Uncharacteristic), 3 (Neutral), 4 (Moderately Characteristic), and 5 (Extremely Characteristic). Higher scores on the scale indicate a high level of procrastination. Reversed-keyed items: 3,4,6,8,11,13,14,15,18,20. The reliability of this scale, as reported in previous literature, is .83 (Lay, 1986), indicating strong internal consistency among its items.

2.4 Ethical Considerations

Ethical rules were followed strictly in this study, and approval from the university's ethics board were sought. Participants' personal details and answers were kept safe and anonymous throughout the research. The purpose of the study and the surveys used was explained clearly to participants. Data was analyzed carefully, ensuring participants'

information remains protected and handled securely, in line with ethical standards.

2.5 Procedure

Sample was approached individually, consisting of students from different universities of twin cities (Islamabad and Rawalpindi), using a purposive sampling technique. Ethical principles were strictly adhered throughout the study. The Informed consent form was obtained from all participants, and they were also assured that their responses will be kept confidential. Clear instructions were provided on how to complete the questionnaires. Participants were encouraged to share any concerns they had, while completing the questionnaires. It took approximately 15-20 minutes to complete the questionnaires. Incomplete questionnaires were discarded as some participants also withdrawn from the study. Participation was completely voluntary, and participants were thanked and appreciated for their valuable time and involvement for this study.

3 Results

Table 1

Pearson Correlation among Study Variables (N=302)

Variables	EUSM	PWB	AP
Excessive use of social media	-	-.62 **	.52 **
Psychological Well-being		-	-.72**
Academic Procrastination			-

Note. EUSM = Excessive use of social media, AP = Academic Procrastination, PWB = Psychological Well-being, ** $p < .01$

Table 1 shows the bi-variate correlations among all study variables that are used in the study. The results depict that excessive use of social media is negatively related to psychological well-being. Additionally, excessive use of social media is significantly positively related to academic procrastination.

Table 2

Mediation by Academic Procrastination between Excessive Use of social media and Psychological Wellbeing (N=302)

Path	β	SE	95 % CI	
			LL	UL
EUSM \rightarrow AP	2.36***	.23	1.92	2.80
AP \rightarrow PWB	-.67***	.05	-.77	-.56
Direct Effect (c')	-.45***	.24	-.86	-.30
Indirect Effect	-.13***	-	-.26	-.09

Note. EUSM = Excessive use of social media, AP = Academic Procrastination, PWB = Psychological Wellbeing, CI = Confidence Interval, LL = Lower Limit, UL = Upper Limit, *** $p < .001$

As results in Table 2, show partial mediation of academic procrastination on the relationship between excessive use of social media and psychological wellbeing. Mediation analysis is conducted using the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2018) with 5000 bootstrap samples. The indirect effect appears to be highly significant ($\beta = -.13, p < .001$), indicating that academic procrastination is mediating the total effect. The direct effect is also significant ($\beta = -.45, p < .001$) suggesting that academic procrastination is partially explaining the negative impact of excessive usage of social media on psychological wellbeing.

Figure 1: Path Diagram of the Mediation Effect of Academic Procrastination between Excessive Use of Social Media Usage and Psychological Wellbeing (N = 302)

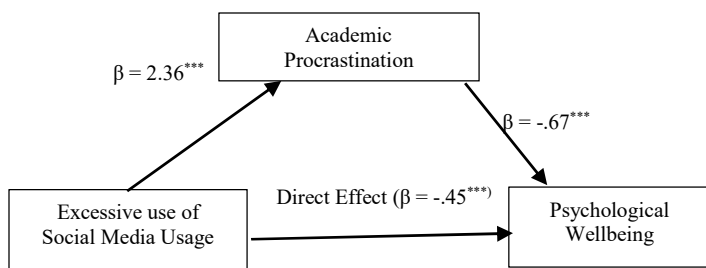


Figure 1 illustrates the mediating role of academic procrastination in the relationship between excessive use of social media and psychological wellbeing. The findings show that there is a significant mediation by academic procrastination; between excessive use of social media and psychological wellbeing.

Table 3

Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for Excessive Social Media Usage Predicting Psychological Well-Being (N=302)

Predictors	B	β	SE	T	95% CI	
					LL	UL
Constant	126.11***		5.63	22.39	115.02	137.19
ESMU	-3.45***	-.62***	.25	-13.59	-3.95	-2.95
R ²	.38					

Note. ESMU=Excessive Social Media Usage, CI=Confidence Interval, LL=Lower Limit, UL=Upper Limit, *** $p < .001$

In Table 3, multiple regression analysis is carried out for the variable (excessive social media usage) predicting psychological well-being. Before that, demographic variables are also entered into the regression process in order to control their effect. However, the results show that demographic variables have no significant effect (negligible) on the dependent variable (psychological well-being). The R² value of .38 reveals that excessive social media usage explains 38% of the variance in psychological well-being, with $F(1, 300) = 185, p < .001$. The findings reveal that excessive social media usage negatively predicts psychological well-being ($\beta = -.62, p < .001$).

Excessive use of social media (EUSM) is the misuse and obsession with social media platforms, which can have negative effects on mental health, relationships, and motivation to participate in social activities (Demirci, 2019). Excessive use of social media directly reduces psychological flexibility, which is linked to psychological health (Güldal et al., 2022). Excessive use of social media significantly impacts students' stress levels, which can affect psychological well-being (Malak et al., 2021). EUSM is frequently accompanied by excessive worry about it and an insatiable need to use social media (Hou et al., 2019).

4 Discussion

Present study shows that EUSM has negative relationship with psychological wellbeing among undergraduate university students. Study examined the significant impact that excessive social media use

has on students' psychological well-being, as discovered by Primack et al., 2017. EUSM may exacerbate depression, anxiety, and stress because excessive social media use is related to certain maladaptive social and psychological outcomes, including a decline in social interactions, loneliness, poor psychological adjustment, and low life satisfaction (Yıldırım et al., 2023). Prolonged and compulsive internet use through technology can result in social isolation and an avoidance of in-person interactions, which can exacerbate stress, anxiety, and depression. In a comprehensive assessment, Smith (2022), discovered that 65% of 1,000 college students exhibited signs of EUSM.

Present study shows that EUSM has positive relationship with academic procrastination among undergraduate university students. According to Sternberg et al. (2020), students' academic performance suffers as a result of procrastination brought on by excessive use of social media. There is a risk of excessive use of social media since students may use the internet to start or avoid difficult assignments (Daci et al., 2011).

Present study shows that academic procrastination mediates the relationship between excessive use of social media and psychological wellbeing among undergraduate university students. Mediation analysis was conducted to explore the role of academic procrastination in this relationship. Results revealed partial mediation of academic procrastination on the relationship between excessive use of social media and psychological wellbeing. The indirect effect was highly significant ($\beta = -.13, p < .001$), explaining that academic procrastination is mediating the total effect, while the direct effect is also significant ($\beta = -.45, p < .001$) suggesting that academic procrastination is partially explaining the negative impact of excessive usage of social media on psychological wellbeing.

Previous literature supported to present study excessive use of social media is frequently associated with avoidance behaviors, particularly academic procrastination, which intensifies stress, anxiety, and declines in overall psychological wellbeing (Li et al., 2021). When students usually defer academic tasks due to prolonged time spent online, they often experience increased academic pressure and dissatisfaction with their academic progress, negatively affecting psychological wellbeing (Alfasi et al., 2022).

Conclusion

Excessive social media use has become a widespread concern affecting individuals across all ages, genders, and ethnic backgrounds. The issue is particularly pronounced among undergraduate university students. This study explored the link between excessive social media use and academic procrastination, emphasizing the mediating role of procrastination in shaping academic outcomes. The findings revealed several important insights. First, heavy reliance on social media was associated with lower psychological wellbeing. Second, academic procrastination emerged as a crucial mediator in this relationship, enabling students who procrastinate to better cope with the challenges posed by excessive social media use and to mitigate its negative impact on their mental health.

Limitations and Suggestions

This study has several limitations. First, the use of a cross-sectional design restricts the ability to establish causal relationships between the variables examined. Consequently, caution is warranted when interpreting the findings, and definitive conclusions about causality cannot be drawn. Future research employing experimental methods and longitudinal designs may provide a more comprehensive understanding of how these factors develop over time and influence students' academic outcomes. Second, the relatively small sample size, constrained by

limited time and resources, poses challenges for generalizing the results to larger populations of undergraduate students. To enhance the representativeness of future studies, larger and more diverse samples particularly across the broader Pakistani population are recommended. Third, reliance on self-reported data introduces the possibility of bias. Participants may have provided socially desirable responses or inaccurate accounts of their experiences.

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