Examining The Effects of Social Media On Academic Performance in Terms of Communication Skills, Time Management and Mental Health

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Abstract. The increasing use of social media among students has raised concerns regarding its impact on academic performance, particularly in relation to communication, time management, and mental health. This study aims to examine the effects of social media usage on students' academic achievement by focusing on three key factors: communication skills, time management, and mental health. The research employed a quantitative approach, using structured questionnaires to collect data from a sample of Commerce Department students. The collected data were analysed using descriptive statistics, specifically score means, and inferential statistics through correlation analysis with SPSS version 29. The findings revealed that all three factors, communication, time management, and mental health, have significant correlations with students' academic performance. Poor time management and increased levels of mental health were found to negatively impact academic outcomes, while effective communication through social media showed a moderate positive influence. Based on the results, the study recommends that educational institutions develop awareness programs on healthy social media use, promote digital time management tools, and provide mental health support services to help students balance their academic and social media activities effectively.

Keywords: academic performance, communication, time management, mental health

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the rise of social media usage among Malaysian university students has become a growing concern, especially in relation to its effects on academic performance. With platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, and WhatsApp becoming integral to daily communication, students are increasingly reliant on social media not only for social interaction but also for academic collaboration. While social media can enhance communication and access to learning resources, its overuse has been associated with poor time management, distractions, and mental health issues such as anxiety and other mental health issues (Ramli et al., 2021; Che Harun et al., 2023). In the Malaysian context, the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) has emphasized the importance of digital literacy and mental well-being as part of holistic student development. However, the potential academic risks posed by excessive and non-productive use of social media remain under-addressed in both policy and practice.

Moreover, local studies indicate that Malaysian students who spend more time on social networking sites tend to experience difficulty in maintaining study discipline, completing assignments on time, and coping with emotional distress (Zainudin et al., 2022). The Malaysian Mental Health Association has also reported increasing cases of mental health issues among youth, with social media addiction identified as one contributing factor. Given that university students are at a critical stage of personal and academic development, it is imperative to examine how social media affects their academic outcomes through the lenses of communication, time management, and mental health.

Although the integration of social media in higher education has offered numerous benefits, its misuse presents serious challenges to student success, especially in Malaysia. Previous studies conducted in the Malaysian

education context have largely focused on either the positive or negative impacts of social media in isolation, often neglecting the combined influence of communication behaviour, time management, and mental health. Despite awareness of these issues, there is limited empirical research that quantitatively investigates the relationship between social media use and academic performance while simultaneously considering these three variables.

Furthermore, many university students in Malaysia report difficulties in managing their study schedules due to constant social media engagement, which can lead to procrastination and reduced academic efficiency (Latiff & Safie, 2021). At the same time, communication on social media, especially for academic purposes, may contribute positively to learning if used constructively. However, when coupled with poor time management and emotional challenges such as mental health, the overall impact on academic performance may be negative. Therefore, this study aims to achieve two research objectives: first, to examine how social media use, through its influence on communication, time management, and mental health, affects academic performance among Malaysian students. Second, to investigate the relationship between those factors and academic performance by using a quantitative approach that can provide clear, data-driven insights for educators and policymakers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social media has become a powerful force in students' lives, offering both positive and negative influences. On the positive side, it enables rapid communication, collaborative learning, and access to educational resources, which can enhance academic engagement and support networks. However, excessive or unregulated use can lead to distractions, technostress, and mental health challenges, ultimately undermining academic performance and well-being (Zhang et al., 2024).

Communication

According to Priyanka Gupta (2015), teachers and students are connected and can make good use of communication for the working of their education. Teachers or students can create a Facebook page or group and invite students to participate by exchanging information and sharing relevant Internet links relevant to the subject (Nawal Hamad Mohamad Aljaad, 2016). Research shows that social media use can positively correlate with academic performance when it strengthens family bonding and collaborative learning (Zhang et al., 2024). However, communication overload such as constant notifications and pressure to respond can create exhaustion, which negatively impact academic outcomes (Shietal.,2020).

Time Management

Time management is another critical area affected by social media. It is the structured process of organizing and allocating your time across specific tasks and activities. By planning and exercising deliberate control over how time is spent, good time management helps you work smarter, not harder, allowing you to accomplish more in less time, even under tight deadlines and high pressure. Many students spend several hours daily on social media, often for non-academic purposes, leading to procrastination, poor concentration, and reduced study time (Lalmalsawma et al., 2024; Yusuf et al., 2024). These habits are linked to lower academic achievement. While some students attempt to use time management strategies to mitigate these effects, the challenge remains significant, highlighting the need for interventions to promote balanced usage (Lalmalsawma et al., 2024).

Mental Health

Mental health is closely tied to social media use. While social media can provide social support and reduce feelings of loneliness through active engagement, high usage is associated with increased anxiety, depression, and stress, especially when it leads to social comparison, cyberbullying, or information overload (Anjum et al., 2024; Iskajyan, 2024; Malak et al., 2021). These mental health challenges can further impair students' ability to concentrate and perform academically. In addition, according to Megan Stonecipher (2017) depressed or anxious after being on social media, looking at communication can sometimes cause feelings of mental health and/or anxiety. If students spend too much time communicating on social media, this negatively affects their productivity, but it also leads to procrastination which can cause stress.

Academic Performance

Excessive use of communication is consistently associated with lower academic outcomes, including GPA and assignment completion (Kuss & Lopez-Fernandez, 2016). It is pointed out that communication serves multiple functions in education that is it offers a platform for exchanging ideas, enables students to form collaborative communities, supports the learning process, and provides educators with avenues to both engage with and teach students simultaneously.

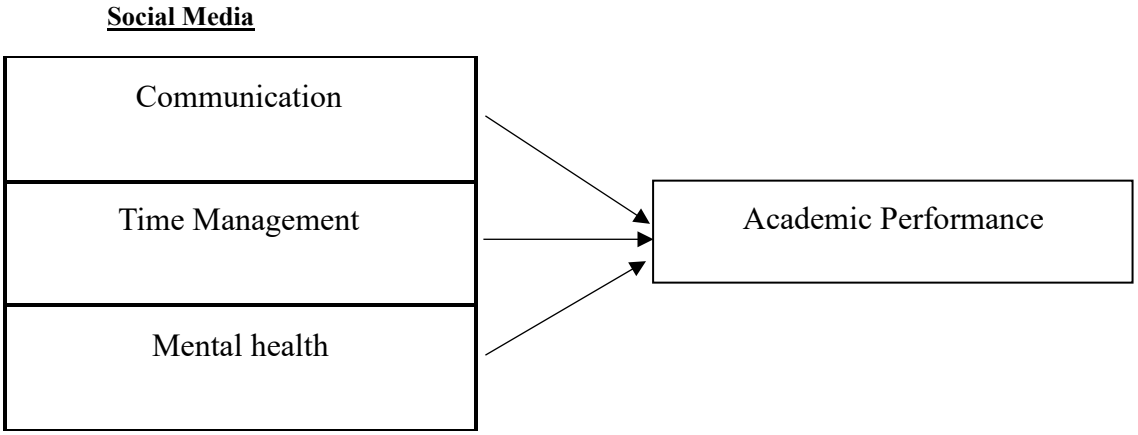


FIGURE 1-The Influence of Social Media on Academic Performance

METHODOLOGY

In this research a quantitative methodology is utilized, focusing on the collection and analysis of numerical data to enable objective evaluation and statistical interpretation. Data collection was conducted through a structured questionnaire involving students from the Commerce Department, including those enrolled in the DAT, DIB, DKB, DRM, and DPM programs, spanning semesters 1 through 5. The total population during the June 2024 semester was 1,237 students. The sample size for this study was 310 students, determined by using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table. The research instrument used in this study was a questionnaire with a 7-point Likert scale. Data analysis was carried out using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 29. As a quantitative study, the findings are reported using basic statistical indicators such as frequencies, percentages, score means, and standard deviations and Pearson correlation. A pilot test was conducted involving 30 students to ensure the reliability and clarity of the questionnaire before the full-scale data collection.

RESULTS

Demographic Analysis

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the respondents. The result showed that out of 310 sample, 118 (38.1%) were male students and followed by 192 (61.9%) were female students. The age was divided into 3 categories, it showed that 297 (70.6%) were 18-20, followed by 11 (3.5%) were 21-23 and 2 (0.6%) were others. The categories of the course showed that 103 (33.2%) DAT, 50 (16.1%) were DIB, 31 (10.0%) were DPM, 62 (20.0%) were DKB, followed by 64 (20.6%) were DRM. The results clearly showed that the majority of the students in Polytechnic Ungku Omar in Commerce Department were female.

TABLE 1- Respondents' Demographic

Item	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	118	38.1%
	Female	192	61.9%
Age	18-20	297	95.8%
	21-23	11	3.5%
	Others	2	0.6%
Course	DAT	103	33.2%
	DIB	50	16.1%
	DPM	31	10.0%
	DKB	62	20.0%
	DRM	64	20.6%

Reliability and Inferential Analysis

Reliability relates to the consistency of a measure. Cronbach's alpha is the most used test to determine the internal consistency of an instrument. According to Hair et al. (2007), Cronbach`s Alpha coefficient that exceeds .8 is excellent (refer to Table 2). Therefore, this study has a high consistency of items. Table 2 also explains the mean score and standard deviation for each variable. The table demonstrates that all variables have a high mean score because the mean score is between 5.0323 – 5.7355. According to Pimentel (2019), scores between 5.30 – 6.15 are very satisfied. From the study, it is shown that communication has the highest overall score mean (M=5.7355, SD = 0.88918), followed by academic performance (M=5.6290, SD = 0.92841), time management (M=5.4903, SD = 0.99752) and lastly mental health (M=5.0323, SD = 1.18195).

TABLE 2-Alpha Cronbach, Mean Score, and Standard Deviation

No. Items	Variables	Alpha Cronbach	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
5	Academic Performance	0.822	5.6290	0.92841
5	Communication	0.820	5.7355	0.88918
5	Time Management	0.792	5.4903	0.99752
5	Mental health	0.817	5.0323	1.18195

Correlation Analysis

The result of the Pearson correlation analysis between the dependent variable and independent variables were shown in table 3. From the table, it shows that the strongest value correlation is communication ($\beta = .684^{**}$), followed by time management ($\beta = .439^{**}$), and lastly mental health ($\beta = .437^{**}$). According to Hair et al. (2007), the correlation coefficient r has a moderate positive relationship of variables when the r is from 0.41 until 0.70.

TABLE 3-Pearson Correlation Table

	Variables	1	2	3	4
1	Academic Performance	1			
2	Communication	$.684^{**}$	1		
3	Time Management	$.439^{**}$	$.542^{**}$	1	
4	Mental health	$.437^{**}$	$.360^{**}$	$.564^{**}$	1

DISCUSSION

The study aimed to examine how communication skills, time management, and mental health relate to academic performance, particularly in the context of social media usage. The results suggest that communication skills are the most influential factor, as evidenced by the highest mean score and the strongest positive correlation with academic performance. This supports the notion that students who possess strong communication skills are more likely to perform well academically, possibly because they can express ideas clearly, participate actively in class discussions, and engage with peers and instructors effectively. According to Zhou and Wang (2021), communication skills not only enhance social interaction but also contribute significantly to a student's confidence and academic competence. The widespread use of social media platforms, when used positively, may further support this by providing students with informal channels to enhance these skills.

In contrast, time management and mental health, though still positively associated with academic performance, showed weaker correlations. The lower mean score for mental health in particular raises concern, indicating that students may experience psychological stress or emotional exhaustion, which could undermine academic outcomes. This is consistent with prior research highlighting that excessive or unregulated social media use can lead to anxiety, sleep disturbances, and decreased focus (Pimentel, 2019). Meanwhile, effective time management is moderately related to academic success, suggesting that students who are able to balance social media use with study schedules tend to perform better. Thus, while communication appears to benefit from social media in certain contexts, the negative implications for mental health and time management must also be addressed. Educational institutions should consider integrating awareness programs and digital literacy training to help students use social media constructively while minimizing its potential harms.

Based on research that has been conducted, it is recommended that students use communication in a good way. Although communication and mental health have shown positive results, it is not a big concern. However, students are advised to manage their time. Students must ensure they do not spend excessive amounts of time on social media, which can reduce their study time. This study provides important insights but is not without its limitations. Firstly, the study utilized a self-reported questionnaire to collect data, which may introduce social desirability bias or inaccuracies in participants' responses. Students might have overestimated their communication skills or underreported mental health concerns due to perceived stigma or the desire to present themselves in a favourable light. This limits the objectivity of the results and may affect the validity of the associations identified between variables. Secondly, the study was cross-sectional, capturing data at a single point in time. As a result, causal relationships between social media use, communication skills, time management, mental health, and academic performance cannot be definitively established.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the influence of social media on academic performance by focusing on three key factors: communication, time management, and mental health. The findings from the quantitative analysis revealed that all three variables significantly affect students' academic outcomes. While social media can enhance communication, especially for educational collaboration, excessive or non-purposeful use can disrupt time management and contribute to depressive symptoms, both of which negatively impact academic performance.

The results highlight the importance of promoting balanced and responsible social media usage among university students in Malaysia. Higher education institutions should implement digital well-being programs, offer mental health support, and promote the use of effective time management strategies. By addressing these factors holistically, educators and policymakers can support students in achieving better academic outcomes while minimizing the negative effects of social media.

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