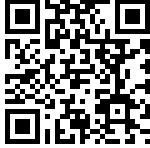


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Role of Social Media in Creating Social Pressure among Pakistani Youth: An Analytical Study

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Abstract

This research examines the role of social media exposure upon psychological stress and investigates the moderating role of social pressure between them. An online and self-administered survey was conducted to collect the data from 427 respondents living in e different areas of Wah Cantt, Rawalpindi, and Islamabad. The data was analyzed through SPSS and Smart PLS. The study demonstrated a positive correlation between social pressure, psychological stress, and social media usage. The findings based on theoretical implications, research gap in literature and the culturally inclusive framework suggested that parents and kids should be provided with guidance on how to use social media effectively. The current study shed light on social media platforms and showed their adverse effects in instilling psychological stress among youngsters. Every time a child uses social media, parents should monitor the activity. If parents observe signs of psychological stress in the behavior of their child as a result of accessing social media, they should provide proper counseling.

Keywords: psychological stress, social media exposure, social pressure, youth

Introduction

Youth in particular use social media for a multitude of objectives, including gathering data, entertainment purpose, and socializing. According to Twenge and Campbell (2019), youngsters mainly are wasting more hours on Facebook, video games, blogs, and on various other forms of social media handles. In a similar vein, social media offers a number of options for communication with both beneficial and harmful linkages, including colleagues, peers, and outsiders (Chen & Li, 2017). According to Kokkranikal et al. (2002), the increasing use of social media by 97% of the

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younger generation has a significant impact on how consumers behave and view their daily lives (Setyoko & Kurniasih, [2022](#)).

Since the early 1990s, when the internet became available, like the rest of the world, Pakistan has seen a rise in the use of social networking. Only 1.3 percent of people used the internet in 2001; by 2006, this number had increased to 6.5 percent; by 2012, this number had increased to 10%; and at this moment, 18.8% of people are using broadband internet, which means that every day, more than 32 million individuals are online (Zhan et al., [2016](#)). Youth in Pakistan is suffering from poor mental health and is facing difficult life circumstances. Due to developmental challenges such as poor economic growth, increasing inflation and unemployment on the rise, Facebook may appear to offer a number of advantages, but social networking sites (SNS) also have a dark side and youth may suffer negative consequences (Smith & Anderson, [2018](#)).

Despite the fact that social media widely uses exploration sites, relatively little research has been published on identifying the psychological causes of social networking sites particularly in relation to business students and in Asian nations like Pakistan.

Problem Statement

People are exposed to a wider range of social media platforms both offline and online. Stress levels related to psychology may rise as a result of the increased social interaction. The nature and scope of this relationship are still unknown, though. Depending on a person's personality, and the type of social engagement they have along with their capacity for stress management, the effects of social exposure on psychological stress may differ. Therefore, in order to better understand the potential consequences for mental health and well-being, in-depth research is required to study the relationship between social exposure and psychological stress.

Digital networking is used by teenagers for a range of things, including socializing, having fun and learning new things. Notable in particular is the increase in time spent by teens and young adults on social networking sites, online games, texting, and other online activities. People who excitedly write about their happy life on social media may not mean to damage anyone's sentiments, but their good content can trigger negative emotional consequences in others thus reducing their emotional happiness. The

excessive use of smartphones and cameras has led the users to develop the habit of sharing and posting their personal life events on social media.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between social media usage psychological stress by highlight the potential mitigating techniques to lower stress levels in those who interact online with people frequently.

Literature Review

Social Media Exposure and Psychological Stress

Youngsters utilize digital networking for a variety of purposes, such as socialization, enjoyment, and information seeking. The utilization of various digital media platform, for example, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and TikTok has expanded decisively in the course of the last ten years. Subsequently, they have made an immense effect on young adults explicitly, the youthful grown-ups between 20-29 years old. Social media however, also have few advantageous effects, such as positive relationships of a high caliber, social support and a sense of belonging (Smith et al., [2017](#)). According to the research by Marino et al. ([2018](#)), there is a strong link between students' problematic social media use and psychological stress (Nazari et al., [2023](#)).

Psychological stress or pressure is characterized as the mental impression of tension and body's reaction to it.. Such excessive utilization of social media among youngsters has raised worries among specialists, who have as of late started investigating the interconnections between users of social media platforms and mental prosperity (Seabrook et al., [2016](#)).

Moreover, 350 million people worldwide are affected by psychological stress, a serious and pervasive mental health problem and it is becoming more prevalent and severe among adults with each passing year. Frequent use of social networking sites (SNS) has ingrained in lives to an extent that in recent years, people have shown depressive symptoms as an outcome of SM (Peres et al., [2017](#)). Social media, in contrast has boosted people's capability to communicate and engage, making it easier to form and sustain relationships. However, as someone's social networks grow, the likelihood of the social media user receiving more social requests grows, potentially leading to social pressure (Maier et al., [2015](#)).

Currently, youngsters are both emotionally and socially engaged and sometimes social overload can lead to life happiness. As a result, social overload has a huge influence on contentment.

Similarly, psychological stress is the most adaptive (or worthwhile) type of stress that presents a fundamental lifesaving strategy that strengthens mental and physical readiness, concentrates attention and mobilizes reserves within us to undertake an appropriate and exceptional action. Social media however, also have plenty of advantageous effects, such as positive relationships of a high caliber, social support, and a sense of belonging (Seabrook et al., [2016](#)).

H₁: There exists a positive relationship between social media exposure and psychological stress

Moderating Effect of Social Pressure on the Relationship between Social Media Exposure and Psychological Stress

Individuals carefully display their idealized features on SNSs and are frequently exposed to the joyful occurrences in other people's lives. This entails a cognitive assessment of tense events and occurrences that results in a person feeling intimidated by their limited ability to react (Prizant-Passal et al., [2016](#)). According to a study, people who experience upward social comparison tend to exaggerate their weaknesses and have more unfavorable opinions of themselves, which makes them more susceptible to psychological stress (Oishi et al., [2007](#)). Evolutionary psychology holds that people acquire abilities for functioning in evolutionary adaptive ways from those they believe are advantageous to themselves, and belong to nations with higher world happiness indices. People perceive societal pressure in a contented way and not vice versa strongly indicates their low well-being. People, all around the world have the same ambition to live a happy and fulfilling life (Zhan et al., [2016](#)).

Besides, there are individualistic societies in the West where a person's needs and wants are defined by their own choices. However, community in our social context determines behavior in collectivist cultures like Pakistan. People in Pakistan are known to be very sensitive over their reputation because of the severe pressure from social inequity, poor family values, and intense worries about other people's social standing. Several empirical researches have shown that psychological stress is among the most

significant causes of excessive smartphone usage, which is consistent with the statements made above (Roberts & David, [2020](#)).

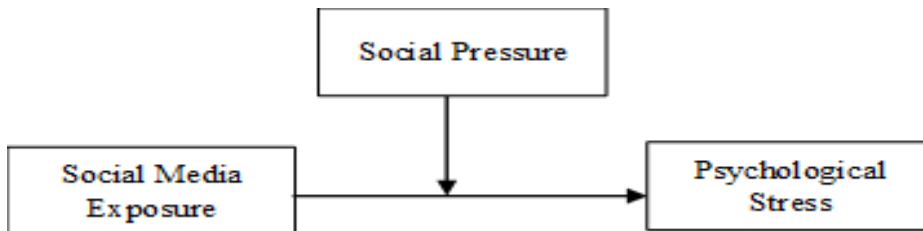
Particularly, people can use smartphones to ease a variety of pressures, such as the tension caused by upward social comparison, and to help them feel happier, but they are more likely to misuse them. People might subsequently engage in exorbitant smartphone utilization to get rid of these bad feelings (Blease, [2015](#)).

Youth are inclined to have noticeable possessions which confirms their status in the society. Consequently, youth prefer for luxurious things for example expensive clothes, trending fashions, lavish lifestyle to enhance and sketch their image in the society. Psychological stress is thought to be most commonly caused by stressful life events. Nonetheless, it has been discovered that self-disclosure can reduce the negative effects of stress on mental health.

H₂: Moderating effect of social pressure on the relationship of social media exposure and psychological stress

Figure 1

Theoretical Framework



The theoretical framework explains the research study in detail. The planned research model and the important relationships are illustrated in Fig 1. The model shows the probable relationships between the study variables signified in the scope of psychological stress. Social media exposure acts as an independent variable, psychological stress acts as a dependent variable and social pressure as a moderator.

Research Methodology

Population and Sampling

We gathered information for this study from young people at several Pakistani universities. Students in Wah Cantt, Rawalpindi, Islamabad, and

the surrounding regions are our proposed audiences. The information was acquired using a self-administered questionnaire. Purposive sampling strategy was used to determine the sample quantity for the research. The data was collected from 427 participants using a closed ended self-constructed questionnaire.

Research Instrument

The survey is conducted by using a self-administrated survey to get data from the participants. Since the impartial participants are competent, in the following section, the variables of social media exposure, psychological stress, and social pressure are explored. Every new question introduced to the instrument asks for feedback from all the respondents. A Likert scale of five points with the values 1 for *strongly disagreeing* and 5 for *strongly agreeing* is used to collect the designated respondent opinions information for all the variables.

Table 1

Variables and Authors

Sr. No	Variable	Items	Source
01	Social Media Exposure	10	(Voramontri & Klieb, 2019)
02	Psychological Stress	4	(Guntuku et al., 2019)
03	Social Pressure	9	(Gibbons & Buunk, 1999)

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

Partial least square structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) is the method most frequently employed for assessing complex interactions between variables that are both hidden and visible. The advantages include estimation of a particular or adaptable measurable model. Competency to use a challenging model with sparse data to produce a conclusive hidden variable score, which facilitates the analysis and prediction process and allows for the testing of theorized relationships. Disputes over which research study should be highlighted and what sorts of management effects should be made have been overcome by PLS-SEM.

The SEM approach, which will examine and assess the research hypothesis, is the data analyzer used in this research. According to Shmueli ([2016](#)), the statistical technique known as structure equation modelling is used for estimate and driving models.

Respondent Profile

The responses of a total of 427 respondents were examined; the results indicate that 2.2% of them had bachelor's degrees, 28.1% had graduate degrees, 56.5% had master's degrees, and 13.2% had doctorates. The data for the research has been gathered through three major cities of Pakistan. About 40.0% of responses came s from Rawalpindi, 33.3% from Islamabad, and 26.8% from Wah Cantt. In total, there were 448 responders, and 210 of them, or 46.9%, were between the ages of 18 and 28. 19 participants (4.2% of all respondents) were above the age of 49, compared to 109 responses among the ages of 29 and 38 (24.3%), 110 participants lie within the ages of 39 and 48 (24.6%), and 110 responded those aged over 49. All these percentages represent the proportions of male and female participants.

Descriptive Analysis

A descriptive analysis provides an overview of the features of the data, which are an illustration of a population or samples. According to descriptive analysis, data may be divided into two key categories: determining variability and determining central tendency. These categories are crucial for determining typical or center response. A data set's dispersion in relation to a variable's mean is referred to as having a dominant trend.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Minimum	Mean	Std. Deviation
SME	426	1.75	3.7462	.54794
PS	426	1.00	3.3537	.65926
SP	426	1.00	3.4637	.55707

Indicator Reliability

Indicator reliability is assessed using the domain's outer loading or factor loading. When an item value varies by 0.70 or more, there are adequate or suitable signs. Whenever an indicator's value is less than 0.40, it is deemed to be at its end. However, presuming the score for this indicator falls between 0.40 and 0.70, it should be considered successful provided that it increases average variance extracted (AVE) to '0.50' or higher according to Hair (2014). Given the prior limitations, no conclusion of things was necessary because the factor loading values for each indication

are inside a suitable range of limits (0.40 or more), and the AVE values for each variable satisfy a baseline limit of 0.50 or above.

Convergent Validity

The degree to which a test correlates with a substituted fraction of a related dimension is known as convergent validity (Hair et al., [2014](#)). The average values utilized in recent research are displayed in Table 3. Every value therefore agreed with the 0.50 AVE, proving that the estimating model used for the present study is accurate. While each quality met the AVE's relying a boost value of 0.50, it nevertheless demonstrated adequate simultaneously convergence validity for the measurement designs used in the present study.

Table 3

Convergent Validity

Variable	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's alpha	AVE
PS	0.832	0.728	0.555
SME	0.774	0.609	0.465
SP	0.828	0.723	0.547

Path Coefficient

The momentum research's structural model is also evaluated or gauged using its measurement coefficients. When examining the significance and effectiveness of an interaction between two new attributes, way values for coefficients are used. The Smart PLS method known as "bootstrapping" produces values for assessing linkages (paths) among variables that are dependent and independent.

According to Hair et al. ([2014](#)), the current study has a 0.95 t-esteem at a significant level of 0.05. "PLS-SEM" Hair et al. ([2014](#)) performs a test known as nonparametric measurable, often known as bootstrapping, to estimate the significance of the determined path coefficient.

Additionally, it makes sense that the ranges of coefficients have values among "-1" and "+1". Therefore, correlation coefficient values close to "+1" indicate a more solid relationship, whereas correlation coefficient values close to "-1" indicate an insufficient or inadequate intimacy. The precise p-esteem, t-worth, and path coefficients amongst components from the

present study are displayed in Table 4. It is dependent on path valuations whether the hypothesis is rejected or accepted.

As a result, and as shown by the results of the current review, all hypotheses are upheld at a significance level of 0.05.

Table 4
Path coefficients (Direct path with moderation)

Relationship	Path coefficients	<i>t</i> statistics (O/STDEV)	<i>p</i> values	Decision
SME->PS	0.157	3.732	0.000*	Accepted
SP->PS	0.558	12.493	0.000*	Accepted
SP x SME -> PS	0.021	0.552	0.581*	Accepted

Discussion

The present research focuses on determining the influence of social media exposure on psychological stress, along with the occurring factor of social pressure. A social gathering is seen as the most visible display of the wealth. Exploiting traditional Pakistani events has long become a practice in the country where lavish weddings are an exhibit of abundant luxury in order to retain their place in a culture that draws own-worth from a thrift less and bourgeois display of money.

However, with the growing usage of social networking platforms, exposure to different cultures is now changing the contemporary weddings, particularly in nations like Pakistan where strict rules make it impossible to enjoy oneself. Thus, it's feasible that young people may begin to hold two different kinds of social gatherings. Even so, spending the money on the marriage rather than the opulent parties could result in a much higher standard of living. A significant public health concern nowadays is the mental health of youths. It is believed that stressful life events are the primary cause of psychological discomfort. Nevertheless, it has been demonstrated that revealing oneself can lessen the negative impacts of stress on psychological wellness.

Furthermore, there is now more of a chance to be exposed to various cultures because of the excessive usage of social media. Enabling creative concepts to be introduced to the events that could be held throughout such multi-day occasion, alongside to the countless marriages. In contemporary day, social events in Pakistan are an inevitable consequence of an era that

is regulated by social media sites; hence my research paper will be focused on these events. Youngsters have the option to create extensive digital portrayals of what they are on social media platforms that describe their specific ideas.

Practical Implications and Limitations

The current research shed light on social media sites and demonstrate how social media causes psychological stress in youngsters. Whenever a youngster uses social media sites, guardians could monitor their everyday actions. Parents may offer appropriate counselling if they see that a youngster is experiencing psychological stress as a result of using social media. The survey data of the current study includes 426 Pakistani respondents from certain locations. Secondly, the present research has been evaluated and is confined to a certain location.

The study was verified by empirical evidence and evaluated, with validity and reliability examined. Consequently, the research's empirical findings were based on self-reported responses from the study's targeted respondents. As a result, every reply from the designated respondents is determined by how accurately and properly they expressed to the inquiries.

Stress and anxiety have become more of a risk for Pakistani youth. The stigma associated with common mental diseases persists in Pakistan despite the grave condition. It's totally common to have temporary periods of stress throughout life. When one's health and productivity are negatively impacted by the excessive stress or worry, issues develop. The ways of thinking and acting start to change significantly. A great deal of stress can, in rare instances, cause health issues including stress disorder, panic disorder, depression, or mania. Unfortunately, the rate at which these occurrences are occurring in Pakistani society is alarmingly rising, especially among young people. Sadly, our young are the largest victims of this deadliest addiction, known as social media. Many of us watch television in the morning and at night, fully oblivious to the negative consequences it's having on our health.

Future Directions

Future study on social media exposure, social pressure, and psychological stress will take a multidisciplinary approach taking into account many factors. To comprehend the long-term implications, investigate cultural and cross-cultural disparities, and create interventions that support digital well-being, researchers should carry out longitudinal

studies. Investigating technological influence, social comparison, and online communities are important topics yet, for thorough understanding, interdisciplinary collaboration and ethical considerations are essential. A more comprehensive understanding will result from incorporating variables like physiological markers, life events, computer literacy, coping techniques, offline social support, personality traits, cultural values, and educational and career aspects. In an ever-changing technology context, this all-encompassing approach seeks to inform the creation of efficient interventions and policies to promote digital well-being.

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