Investigating Effects of Social Media on School Environment. A Case of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

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Abstract

Social media is used for variety of purposes. For instance it is used for recording protest, voicing social, religious, political concerns, keep their daily activities trail, share friends and family photos and videos and get in touch with old and new friends around the globe (Siddiqui & Singh, 2016). Though its used has been globally adopted, however, it is very important for the users and other stack holders to understand its different dimensions which could either be beneficial or harmful in the context of school environment and school going children in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. In the continuation a qualitative case study research approach based on phenomenology was used to perform the current research. Five schools were selected through convenience sampling technique for data collection. The data collection was meant to be carried out till data saturation, however, 5 schools were also conveniently selected keeping in view the relatively small scale of the study. The data saturation started within 5 selected schools. 78 heads of all the middle school for boys, 558 teachers while 10193 students comprised population of the study. Data collection from students and head teachers was conducted through semi-structured interviews. Ten interviews were conducted with students and five with head-teachers respectively. While total of five group discussions in five selected schools were conducted for data collection. Thematic analysis of the data was carried out. Negative and positive effect of the social media surfaced after data analysis. Positive effects included "real world skills, Accessibility and availability' Peer learning, motivation and engagement, discussion and collaboration" while negative effects included negative traits like "cyber bullying and misuse, inequity, academic dishonesty, lack of social interaction and negative social comparison etc.

Introduction

People can debate and voice their thoughts on social media. People need to first grasp what social media is in order to fully appreciate its capabilities. Through a particular network, social media technologies enable users to exchange and share ideas, information, photos, videos, and much more. (Siddiqui & Singh, 2016). These days, social media dominates the lives of students, and educational institutions stand to gain a great deal from it. In the twenty-first century, social media is a very valuable tool that helps us improve our quality of life. As a result, it has a big impact on human existence

and has gotten easier to use. If students use social media responsibly, it can help them achieve their academic and career goals. On the other hand, if a student develops a social media addiction, it may potentially harm their career. The current paper tends to investigate the various effects of social media usage on students in academic institutions.

In essence, social media platforms are online communities where members can interact in many ways across various media. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and Instagram are a few of these websites. However, new websites continue to appear. Users can engage in a variety of activities designed to satisfy basic social requirements, like conversing with friends, social media is the activity that teenagers love to use the most, and there is growing concern about the link between good behavior and bad social media use. (Buda et al., 2021). Despite concerns raised, there is a dearth of reliable research on the impact of social media on academic achievement, and social media usage is commonplace (Barton et al., 2021).

The majority of secondary school students utilize social media, according to the findings of the Gedik and Cosar (2020) survey. Facebook and YouTube are the two social media sites that students use the most. People commonly utilize social media for studying, passing the time, conversation, entertainment, and information gathering. Over the past ten years or more, there has been a significant increase in the use of Online Social Networks (OSNs). Users of Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and other OSNs can connect with friends, relatives, and people who share their interests. Facebook is the most popular social media platform, with about three billion users worldwide.

Literature Review

Social media is well-liked since social connection, is greatly facilitated and it is simple to use (Cabral, 2011). Studies reveal that many undergraduate students utilize social media to help them adjust to the university setting, improve their academic skills, find enjoyment, connect with others, and overcome feelings of loneliness (Balakrishnan & Shamim, 2013). Studies reveal that social media platforms enhance learning by promoting critical thinking, teamwork, communication, interaction, and sharing of information and resources (Selwyn, 2012).

According to Hu et al. (2017), a social aggregation known as a social networking site is generated on the internet or linkages between individuals online when enough people participate in a public conversation for long enough and with enough human emotion to form a web. Students' social presence has improved dramatically as a result of using social networking sites (Hu et al., 2017). They are thought of as instructional tools for instructors and students. Several studies have been conducted about the use of social networks in educational settings. (Wheeler & Kamelos, 2007).

Distractions and mental obstacles are largely caused by social media platforms. Sometimes it is difficult for today's pupils to focus on their academics; instead, they would rather browse social media. All of this is a time waster and doesn't help with training. Our goal in doing this research is to determine the factors that encourage students to utilize social media. To what extent do they suffer from addiction? Still unknown, though. Many people are surprised by social media's explosive development and popularity, and concerns are raised about its excessive use and addictive qualities, which have been observed in other nations. The primary driving questions that serve as the foundation for this research are the reasons underlying social media addiction and consumption, as well as the detrimental effects of social media.

Various studies conducted on this phenomenon reveals that there are two types of effects of social media in general and specifically in educational institutions.

The Positive Effects of Social Media

Due to social media's growing impact on our culture, morals, and social conventions, it is becoming a more essential part of human society (Al-Sharqi et al., 2015; Chukwuere & Chukwuere, 2017). Information sharing and content distribution have become essential societal demands in the modern era (Wolf et al., 2015). Social media has altered how individuals engage, communicate, and socialize while pursuing their education, particularly for female university students (Terzi et al., 2019).

These days, social media has a significant influence on the everyday lives of young people, particularly university students (Stathopoulou et al., 2019). The emergence of social media and digital media is altering the ways in which people collaborate, exchange information, and use it on a daily basis (Suseno et al., 2018; Tulin et al., 20180). Users of digital media may communicate and interact socially, thanks to a collection of websites and online tools referred to as social media. Businesses engaging with their clients serve as examples of how it facilitates the exchange of knowledge and information, transforming one-way communication into a dialogue (Bredl et al., 2014; Waghid, 2017).

A number of websites were created in response to the growing information sharing among social media users, which was observed by several experts, including Tim O'Reilly (Ahmad et al., 2016; Bredl et al., 2014; Castellacci & Tveito, 2018). As a result, Web 2.0 has refocused on encouraging meaningful information exchange among its users. Because of this, the major new social media platforms of the period, such as Facebook (2004), Twitter (2006), and WhatsApp, provide the most accurate depiction of the present social milieu (Rus & Tiemensma, 2018). Although many academics have tried to describe social media, the definition provided by Andreas Kaplan and Michael Heinlein is the most accurate. They also carried out a thorough evaluation of the literature on social media.

The Negative Effects of Social Media

Recently, there has been a greater focus on the potential negative effects of social media use on individuals, particularly for kids and teens globally. There is debate on the effects of social media use, especially among students in Pakistan, as well as criticism of social media and digital media in general. Over the past ten years, there has been a noticeable increase in the use of social networking platforms and applications (Malita, 2011).

Social media and the internet are being used by teenagers, college students, and university students more and more often, mostly due to their widespread accessibility. Social media apps, such as Facebook and Twitter, are used by people of all ages and have become increasingly popular in modern society (Stathopoulou et al., 2019).

In recent years, students have become more adept at using easily accessible information and data from social networking sites and the Internet (Balakrishnan & Gan, 2016). Students' ability to study and do research may decrease in some situations due to their usage of social media, which can lead to a loss of attention and time spent on academic pursuits. This will eventually influence their overall academic performance (Hoffmann & Bublitz, 2017). According to le Roux and Parry (2017), students who spend more time on social media tend to allocate less time for face-to-face interactions and in-person socializing, which can eventually lead to a decline in their communication skills. There are times when students lose time by missing deadlines because they spend too much time on social media (Woods & Scott, 2016). Because successful communication skills are

essential for success, it can be troublesome for students to find it difficult to engage and connect with individuals in person (le Roux & Parry, 2017).

Objectives
  i.   To investigate how social media is used in schools.
  ii. To explore that how social media affects the learning environment at school.

Research Methodology
A qualitative case study research approach based on phenomenology was used to perform the current study. The study of people's conscious perceptions of their daily lives and social interactions is known as phenomenology. (Schram, 2003, page 71). The choice of a qualitative research design was made because the current issue is significant and calls for a thorough investigation of the phenomenon, which can only be accomplished through qualitative research in which a thorough discussion of the phenomenon is held with participants.

Research Procedure
For the purpose to collect data from the respondents and to conduct interviews, the method of linking section heads and Sub Divisional Officers in gathering data was trailed to upsurge the reply rate and brand the data collection procedure more effective. Additionally, the connection of department heads and ASDOs in the data collection procedure also enhances credibility of the study as they are reliable members of the school's community.

Population of the Study
The population of the study included 78 heads of all the middle schools for boys of District Swat. Besides, all the teachers of the middle schools of district Swat will also be the participants of the study. The population of boys in all the boys' middle schools was 10193 while population of the teachers was 558. Similarly, the total number of heads of schools is 78 who will also form the population of the current research study (Govt of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 2021).

Sample and Sampling Procedure
The researcher purposively selected five middle schools, teachers, and students from the targeted middle schools of District Swat for the study. Five structured interviews each were conducted with school headmasters and ten semi-structured interviews were conducted with students. Similarly, a total of five Focus Group Discussions were conducted in five schools with all the teachers within the selected five schools.
The following are the schools visited by the researcher for data collection

S.No	Name of School Visited
1	GMS Takhta Band, Muhammad Tariq
2	GMS Parn, Ayub Khan
3	GMS Sirajabad Nawakalay,
4	GMS Faizabad, Saidu Sharif,
5	GMS Haji Abad, Saidu Sharif, Jalal Uddin

Development of the Instrument and Interview Protocol
The researcher studied previous literature on variables related to the effects of social media on a school's academic environment. After carefully reviewing previous relevant interview protocols, the researcher was able to create a interview schedule with assistance from the supervisor for interviews with school headmasters and students. Three constructs, access to social media, use of social media, and current online use each had four, four, and six items in the student interview schedule. The interview schedule for

school headmasters consisted of twelve questions concerning the impact of social media on academic performance. The tool for focus group discussions (FGD) consisted of questions regarding the positive and negative effects of social media.

Validity/ Credibility of the Instrument

The degree to which an assessment measures what it is intended to measure is called validity. A questionnaire must go through a validation process to make sure that it accurately measures what it is supposed to measure, irrespective of the respondent. A valid interview schedule collects better-quality data and increases the credibility of data. Every item on the interview schedule was examined to make sure it made sense and that there were no double-barreled questions or statements that left respondents wondering or raising concerns.

Data Collection

The data was gathered by the researcher by personally going into each school and meeting with the school headmasters, students, and teachers. Participants were made aware of the reason behind the data gathering. Pupils received assurances on the privacy of the data they submitted.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher adhered to ethical rules when conducting the study. Participants gave their agreement after being reassured of their secrecy and anonymity. This study aims to investigate how social media affects the academic environment in middle schools. The perspectives of headmasters, educators, and students on this matter are further investigated in this study. Using the purposive sampling approach, teachers were selected for the initial round of data collecting. Focus groups were used to record their opinions. In this particular setting, the interviewer prompted the participants to freely initiate debate and share their opinions on the occurrence by asking leading questions.
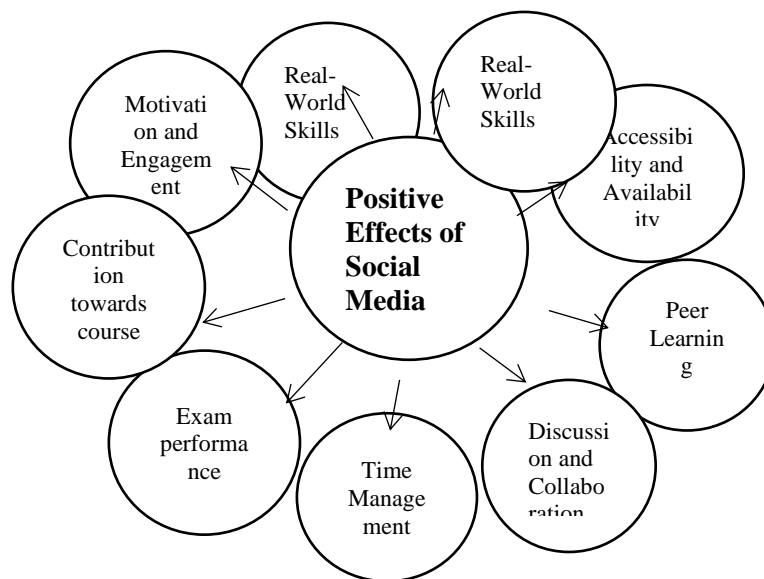
Likewise, during the second round of data collection, students from class 8 who were between the ages of 13 and 14 were also found using the purposive sample technique. These pupils were interviewed using semi-structured interviews, just like the headmasters. The interviewer's main goal has been to elicit as much specific information as possible from the pupils. The interviews with the youngsters took place on school property in a calm, undisturbed setting. They were urged to openly respond to the questions posed. In order to elicit comprehensive information from the pupils, the interviewer also employed leading questions.

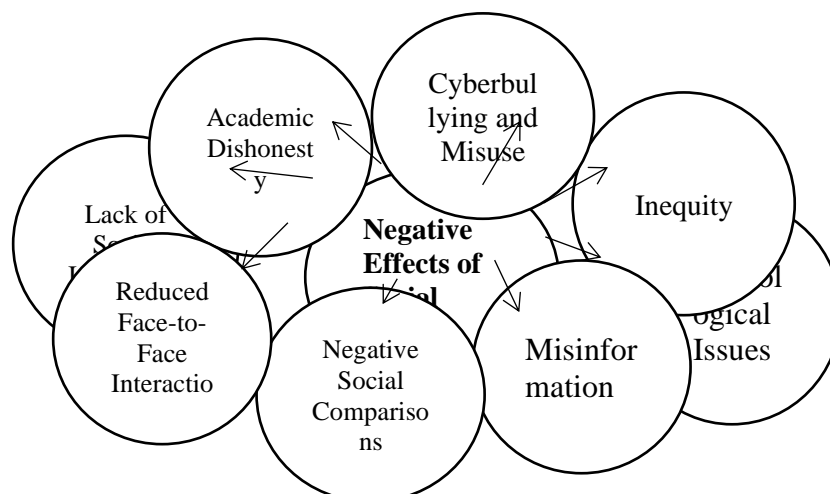## Data Analysis and Presentation of Results

This study offers an analysis and interpretation of the qualitative information that was obtained through targeted group discussions and semi-structured interviews with students, headmasters, and selected school instructors. This study looks more closely at headmasters', teachers', and students' viewpoints on this issue. For the first round of data collection, instructors were chosen using the purposive sample technique. Their comments were recorded through focus groups. In this instance, the interviewer used leading questions to encourage the participants to openly start a discussion and express their perspectives on what happened.

The qualitative information obtained from student semi-structured interviews, headmaster interviews, and teacher focus groups was examined using theme analysis. Coding the interviews was the initial stage in the data analysis process. Subsequently, the data was scrutinized to detect recurrent and relevant themes, and each theme was subsequently elaborated upon. The code names that were assigned to teachers were "T," headmasters were "H," and students were "S." In addition, the schools were given codes F, H, P, S, and T, in that order.

Themes Extracted from The Interviews and Fgds

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        Motivati      Real-           Real-
        on and        World           World       Accessibi
        Engagem       Skills          Skills      lity and
        ent                                       Availabil
                          Positive                ity
        Contribut         Effects of
        ion               Social                  Peer
        towards           Media                   Learnin
        course                                    g

              Exam                    Discussi
              performa     Time       on and
              nce          Manage     Collabo
                           ment       ration
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Negative Effects of social media

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                        Cyberbul
            Academic    lying and
            Dishonest   Misuse          Inequity
    Lack of y
    S                   Negative
    t                   Effects of
        Reduced         ial                     ogical
        Face-to-        Negative    Misinfor    Issues
        Face            Social      mation
        Interactio      Compariso
                        ns
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The gathered information has been grouped under two main themes and several sub-themes. The main themes were positive and negative effects of social media on students' academics.

Positive Effects of Social Media
Motivation
Social media has a highly favorable impact on the middle school academic environment, according to the data study. It is widely acknowledged by the study's participants that social media plays a multifaceted role in motivating and engaging students by enabling information sharing through document exchange, virtual discourse, and knowledge development.

A headmaster (H5) said "*Numerous academic institutions that see the advantages of social media and the importance of individual motivation have made efforts to encourage the use of social media to improve student performance.*" (29-10-2023).
Similarly, a respondent (T2) from the teachers said;
"Students have unique access to social networking tools such as likes, comments, polls, and the sharing of helpful material. Social media may improve students' learning

performance, and by including personal motivators, these insights can be strengthened even more. Students are more interested in sharing their information to further their reputations than in really learning it." (29-10-2023).

Contribution Towards Course concepts
Most of the teachers who took part in the discussion felt that there are many benefits to utilizing social media for homework and creative projects, and that using the knowledge available on these platforms may improve students' performance in study programs.
In this connection a respondent (T2) from the teachers said; *"Because social media sites make it easier for students to find relevant information for their tasks, some students use them for homework and assignments. Examples of these platforms include Facebook, YouTube, and TikTok."* (19-06-2023).
The study's participants concurred that social media had improved pupils' performance. They believed that social media had enhanced the potential for online learning, which made anything possible. The information also showed a favorable correlation between social media use and time management skills. It has been demonstrated that moderate social media use encourages learning, the development of skills, and a desire to make in-person connections.

Cooperation
The participants also mentioned the usefulness of social media as a platform for student cooperation and discussion. Participants in the study reported that adopting social media for online collaborative learning had a major impact on how they shared knowledge online and interacted with peers and professors.
In this connection a Student (S5) of Government Middle School (F) said
"Students do communicate and study using mobile devices and social media. Using technology and social media platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp, students participate in collaborative learning. They can also share materials with their classmates." (28-08-2023).

Communication Skills
The results showed that social media is utilized by students and learners in one way or another for communication with other students and educational reasons. The participants gave examples of how students' learning and chit-chat, online conversations, file sharing, information sharing, and enjoyment are positively correlated.
An FGD participants' teacher respondent (T3) noted
"The time and effort students put into enhancing their education, as well as their physical and mental engagement and time spent engaging with professors and peer groups for collaborative learning, are reflected in how they utilize social media and its variants." (08-08-2023).
The participants agreed that social media has made it easier for students to participate in online communities and clubs and has increased inclusion for students in developing countries. They said that it has opened up a range of avenues for interaction and communication.
A headmaster (H2) participant of the FGD stated
"Through social media, the kids are able to connect and communicate through a range of online platforms, thus enhancing their accessibility and inclusion." (08-08-2023).

Negative Effects of Social Media
The examination of the data revealed that social media significantly harmed students' ability to study. Specifically, spending too much time on social media might result in the exposure to improper information, cyberbullying, depression, and social anxiety.

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A teacher of FGD participant (T6) of Government Middle School (S) said that *"Social media use has a detrimental effect on young people's self-esteem and degree of body satisfaction. Personal comparisons on social media are associated with body dissatisfaction since they are made against models and actresses who are portrayed as the ideal of physical beauty in today's media".* (21-08-2023).

Distraction

The results showed that social media may greatly distract young students. The participants believed that social media can deter users from effectively completing specific jobs by enticing them to utilize it instead because of its high degree of distraction. They also mentioned how social media's accessibility, especially on mobile devices, may frequently serve as a source of distraction.

A headmaster participant (H1) o said

"Social media has the drawback of being highly distracting, especially for teens who are still working on their self-control and time management abilities. Social media may be a major distraction for teenagers, but it also provides advice on how to lessen its negative impacts." (19-06-2023).

Academic Dishonesty

Majority of the contributors of this study were of the understanding that academic deceit disturbs everyone involved in the academics not just pupils. They said that academic dishonesty can take many forms, which can be like cheating and copying other individual work.

A headmaster participant (H5) was of the view that

"One of the most significant obstacles facing education today, in the age of unrestricted access to digital material and social media, is the emergence of academic dishonesty among academic members. This presents a barrier to realizing moral education and fostering an environment of academic integrity and culture." (29-10-2023).

Lack of Social Interaction

The interviewees said that one major issue with social media is that it might provide a misleading image of social engagement. They also believed that, despite having a big number of friends and followers on social media, users may not be aware of how many of those connections are actually valuable. Data study revealed that social media use has lowered face-to-face interaction among students and young learners. The results show that people's preference for digital communication over in-person interactions is significantly influenced by social media.

Deficient Social Interaction

Social media platforms allow students to interact with people both locally and worldwide, which might lead to a deficiency in face-to-face communication abilities. Additionally, they said that social media sites are updated to encourage social comparison, increase user interaction, and make users more "addictive."

The interviewees also concurred that people's access to news has altered dramatically as a result of social media and the Internet. People used to rely on conventional media in the near past, such as television and radio, which had fewer but more reliable news sources. An increasing number of online information sources, including social networking sites, are available to the public, where anybody may post anything without the requirement for "editorial judgement or fact-checking". Most participants voiced worry about websites disseminating fake content under the guise of authenticity.

A headmaster participant (H4) said

"Dopamine, also known as the "feel-good chemical" linked to enjoyable activities like socializing, eating, and having sex, is released when social media is used, which is how it works as a reinforcement mechanism. The reward center of the brain is stimulated by this activity, which adds to its addictive qualities."

Cyberbullying
Cyberbullying is a significant issue with social media. The rise in children's use of cell phones and social media has led to an increase in cyberbullying. The majority of middle school students who use social media, according to research participants, have experienced cyberbullying. Schools and bullying victims have unique challenges as a result of cyberbullying, which takes place online. Students can be made fun of at any time or location.

Discussion
Social networking through social media is becoming increasingly integrated into online learning platforms utilized by numerous educational institutions. According to the Global Web Index, 46% of internet users worldwide obtain their news from social media, surpassing the 40% who visit news websites for the same purpose. Notably, Generation Z and Millennials exhibit the highest inclination towards consuming news via social media compared to previous generations.

Social media offers students many benefits, including the ability to stay informed about news and current events, talk to a big audience about their thoughts and experiences, engage in online groups and communities speak with possible employers, or take advantage of networking possibilities. The benefits also include the encouragement to complete research initiatives and remember significant dates and occasions. It also enables the students to utilize calendars and scheduling tools to stay organized and to talk to their professors and fellow students.

Social media not only has benefits but also has numerous drawbacks such as psychological problems in students and time management issues. Frequent users of social media develop psychological problems. The majority of the content on online communities is untrue. People don't disclose their darkest moments, and the photos are either staged or altered. Rather, they exchange high points. It thus provides a plethora of options for comparison. You become jealous and feel one will never be enough when you scroll through the lives of those in your group. It also causes you to unconsciously dislike the way you look and supports the notion that perfection is achievable. These all have a role in mental health problems.

The participants in this study expressed concerns about the potential drawbacks of excessive social media usage creates mental health problems. More time spent on social media by students and young learners has been linked by the participants to mental health issues like aggression, anxiety, depression, and insomnia. Increased emotional involvement in social media by young people and increased use of social media, especially at night, have been linked to depression, anxiety, and poorer sleep quality.

Another major finding of the study was that young learners find media, especially social media, to be very popular, which makes it a potentially powerful force. Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and Facebook were discovered to be the most widely used social media sites by young students.

Conclusion
All parties participating in the study including parents, teachers, government agencies, and students will benefit from having a better understanding of the present state of affairs regarding kids' excessive use of social media. Since outright banning the use of social

media is difficult, it is necessary to investigate ways to lessen these effects. Additionally, it is important to determine the positive and negative effects that excessive social media use is having on middle school students' lives as well as the school environment.

The current study made a contribution as well by examining middle school kids' social media usage habits, reasons for using social media, and signs of addiction. To find common themes on the effects of social media motives and behavioral symptoms for the quantitative study, headmasters and students participated in semi-structured interviews and focus groups with staff members from chosen schools. semi-structured interviews with 12 and 16-year-old adolescents. Students utilize social media for entertainment, self-presentation, political awareness, social networking, psychological benefits, education, and skill development. The kids showed signs of addiction, including conflict, salience, loss of control, etc., according to our study.

The addictive symptoms of social media use among students were observed in the current study; as a result, these may be used as a starting point for more research to examine the causes of these addictive behaviors. Further research can build on our findings. In order to compare the different age groups, future research might expand the sample to include older users. This might lead to some fascinating discoveries, especially on whether ageing affects users' addictive behaviors in any way.

Recommendations and Future Prospects

The present study examined the impact of social media on middle school academic environments through focus group discussions (FGDs) with teachers in middle schools and interviews with headmasters and students to gather comprehensive data. The study's findings suggest the following recommendations:

1. Nowadays, social media cannot be avoided. The usage of social media by the pupils needs to be appropriately taught to them. In their lectures and classes, educators must stress the value of social media usage in a responsible manner.
2. Based on the results, it is suggested that instructors shouldn't be permitted to use their phones or social media while on school premises because they are role models for their students.
3. Future studies can also extend our findings as our study was based on the population of a specific area; therefore, generalization of the findings requires caution.
4. It is advised that schools provide training sessions and awareness campaigns to inform students about the usage of social media.

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