

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL NETWORKING PLATFORMS ON ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AND ACADEMIC SUCCESS: A STUDY OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS AT UNIVERSITY OF THE PUNJAB, LAHORE, PAKISTAN

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Abstract

This mixed-methods study investigates the impact of social networking platforms (SNPs) on English language proficiency and academic achievement among undergraduate students at the University of Punjab in Lahore. The total number of respondents (n = 315 undergraduate students) from various faculties was taken as a sample. Quantitative data was collected from (n = 300) using a self-developed structured questionnaire covering demographics, SNPs usage, self-assessed English proficiency, and academic achievement (CGPA). At the same time, qualitative insights were obtained from (n = 15) through semi-structured interviews using a convenience sampling technique. The study investigates usage patterns, linguistic impacts, and academic implications. The findings reveal a modest connection in which moderate and academically inclined SNPs consumption correlates positively with English language acquisition and overall academic attainment. However, excessive or non-academic use has adverse effects on English language proficiency and academic performance. The study concludes with educational implications and guidelines for effectively integrating SNPs into academic and linguistic development programs.

Keywords: Social Networking Platforms (SNPs), Academic Success, Facebook, WhatsApp

1. Introduction

Social networking sites (SNPs) like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and WhatsApp have been ingrained in students' daily lives in the current digital age, serving as informal learning environments as well as sociability tools. University students frequently use these platforms as digital natives, not just for interpersonal communication but also for information access, academic content sharing, and real-time discussion. These platforms have the potential to be very effective tools for improving English language exposure and proficiency in nations like Pakistan, where English is utilized as the medium of instruction but is not the first language. Scholarly discussion still surrounds whether such interaction has a positive or bad effect on students' academic performance.

As one of Pakistan's largest public universities, the University of the Punjab in Lahore offers a rich and varied academic environment where students from different socioeconomic and linguistic backgrounds come together. The focus of this study is the English language, which is essential for gaining access to curriculum materials and for advancing in academic and professional settings. By examining the relationship between students' use of SNPs and their academic achievement and English language proficiency, this study seeks to close the gap in local empirical data. It also looks for patterns that correspond to more general developments in academic integration and digitally mediated language learning.

1.1. Background and Rationale

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Examining how digital platforms interact with academic and linguistic realms is made possible by the University of the Punjab's diverse student community. English is essential for academic achievement since it is the language of teaching and a major factor in employment. Therefore, it is worthwhile to look at the connection between SNP use and language development.

1.2. Research Objectives

1. To analyze the extent and nature of SNPs usage among undergraduates.
2. To examine the relationship between SNPs usage and English language proficiency.
3. To evaluate the impact of SNPs use on students' academic success (i.e. GPA, academic engagement).
4. To compare the effects of academic versus non-academic use of social media on language and academic outcomes.
5. To explore students' perceptions of social networking platforms as tools for language learning and academic support.

1.3. Research Questions

1. What are the usage patterns of SNPs among undergraduate students?
2. How does SNPs usage relate to English language proficiency?
3. What is the impact of SNPs use on academic success?
4. Does academic use of social networking platforms influence outcomes differently than non-academic use?
5. How do students perceive the role of SNPs in their academic and linguistic development?

1.5 Hypotheses

Null:

H0₁: There is no significant relationship between the use of social networking platforms and English language proficiency among undergraduate students.

H0₂: There is no significant relationship between the use of social networking platforms and academic success among undergraduate students.

Alternative:

H1₁: There is a significant relationship between the use of social networking platforms and English language proficiency among undergraduate students.

H1₂: There is a significant relationship between the use of social networking platforms and academic success among undergraduate students.

1.6. Significance of the Study

Understanding SNPs' impact can help educators and policymakers create measures that maximize the educational benefits of digital tools while minimizing their negative consequences, which is why the study is so important.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Framework

Vygotsky's Socio-cultural Theory, which holds that learning is a social process that is firmly anchored in interpersonal contact, serves as the foundation for this investigation. Vygotsky believed that language was an essential medium for cognitive growth in addition to being a tool for communication. SNPs offer a virtual "zone of proximal development" (ZPD) that

enables learners to scaffold their language acquisition through community engagement and peer support because of their interactive, dialogic, and frequently multilingual nature.

The study also makes use of the Connectivism theory (Siemens, 2005), which highlights how learning in the digital age is a process of networking and knowledge exchange. This paradigm is best illustrated by SNPs, which provide quick access to varied information and real-world language use.

2.2. Social Networking and Language Learning

Facebook and related networks promote informal second language (L2) practice, which improves pragmatic competence and vocabulary acquisition, according to research by Blattner and Lomicka (2012). In a similar vein, Shih (2011) highlighted how Web 2.0 tools can improve writing abilities and contextual learning. Learners might better internalize colloquial language and grammatical structures by simulating real-life conversations through digital interactions on SNPs.

According to a meta-analysis by Manca and Ranieri (2016), social media use in the classroom had a beneficial effect on students' linguistic motivation, self-esteem, and comprehension especially when combined with peer evaluation and collaborative work.

2.3. Academic Performance and Digital Engagement

Higher Grade Point Averages (GPA) were found to be favorably connected with the focused use of SNPs for academic objectives by Junco (2012), especially when students participated in class debates or academic groups. Kirschner and Karpinski (2010), on the other hand, emphasized that using SNPs excessively for non-academic objectives may result in academic distraction and poor time management, which could reduce performance.

Additionally, Al-Rahmi et al. (2018) observed that students' behavioral intention to utilize SNPs for instructional purposes was substantially influenced by their perceived utility, user engagement, and convenience of use.

2.4. Gaps in the Pakistani Context

There aren't many empirical studies on SNPs' function in Pakistani higher education. Few studies have comprehensively examined how college students use SNPs for language development and academic achievement, despite some research touching on issues like access to technology and the digital divide. A study aims to add contextualized insights from a top Pakistani university to an understudied field.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

To validate quantitative conclusions with qualitative data, a contemporaneous triangulation mixed-method approach was used.

3.2. Population and Sampling

All the undergraduate students of University of the Punjab, Lahore were the target population of the study and 315 undergraduate students were the sample population of the study.

3.2.1 Sampling for Quantitative Research

300 undergraduate students from different departments were chosen using a stratified random sampling technique.

3.2.2 Sampling for Qualitative Research

Bryman (2012) suggests adjusting the sample size when gathering qualitative data in order to guarantee intensity and competency. A smaller sample size is advised by Myers (2000) for accurate and comprehensive results. If the experiences and acceptance of participants are faithfully portrayed, qualitative research can be trusted. 15 students were purposefully selected using a convenience sampling technique for interviews in order to ask questions by researchers while adhering to ethical principles including anonymity, secrecy, sincere assignment, and unrestricted desired involvement.

3.3. Instruments

3.3.1 Quantitative: Structured questionnaire covering demographics, SNPs usage, self-assessed English proficiency, and academic performance (CGPA).

3.3.2 Qualitative: Semi-structured interview guide exploring nuanced perceptions.

3.4. Data Collection and Analysis

SPSS (v.25) was used to observe quantitative data using descriptive statistics, Pearson Correlation, and Regression analysis. However, Qualitative data was examined through thematic analysis.

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

Table 4.1 (a) : Demographic Information of Sample (n = 300)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	135	45.0%
	Female	165	55.0%

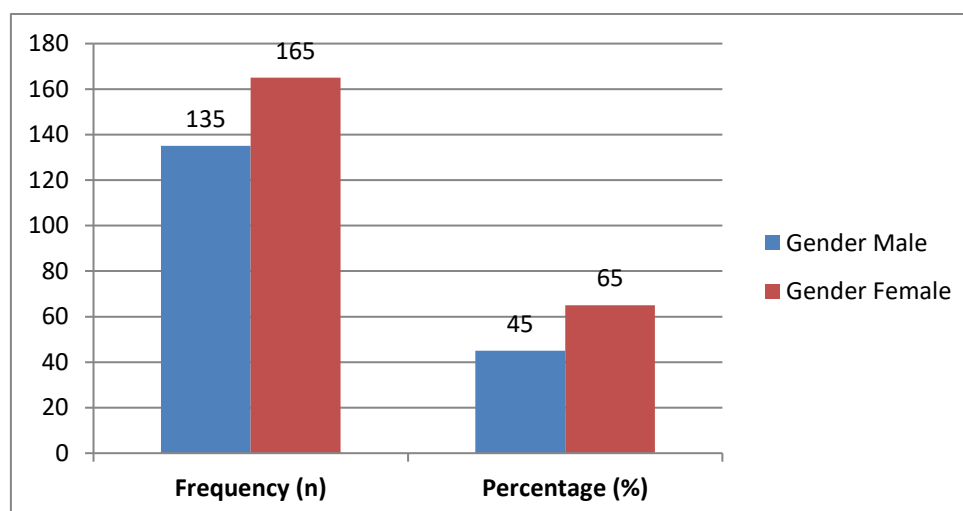


Figure 4.1

Table 4.1 (b) : Demographic Information of Sample (n = 15)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	6	40.0%
	Female	9	60.0%

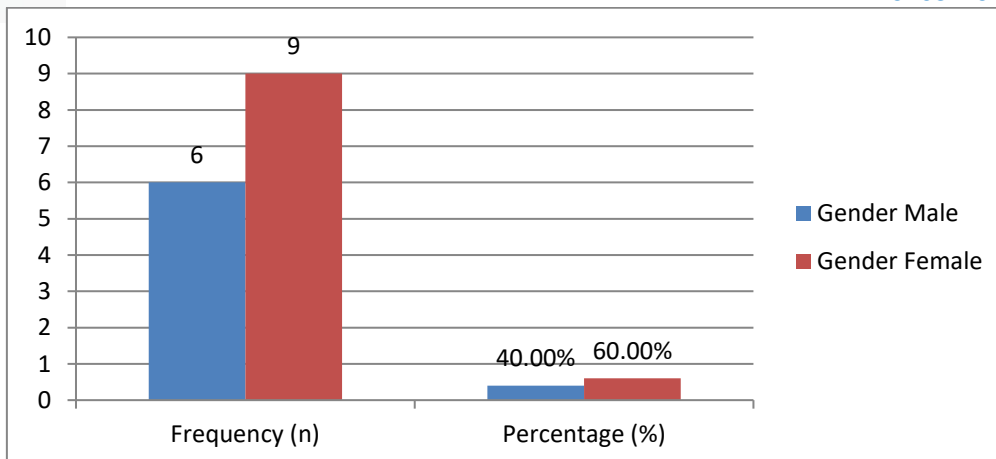


Table 4.2 (a) : Demographic Information of Sample (n = 300)

Field of Study	No. of Students	Percentage
Humanities	120	40.0%
Social Sciences	90	30.0%
Natural Sciences	90	30.0%

Figure 4.2

Table 4.2 (b): Demographic Information of Sample (n = 15)

Field of Study	No. of Students	Percentage
Humanities	6	40.0%
Social Sciences	3	30.0%
Natural Sciences	3	30.0%

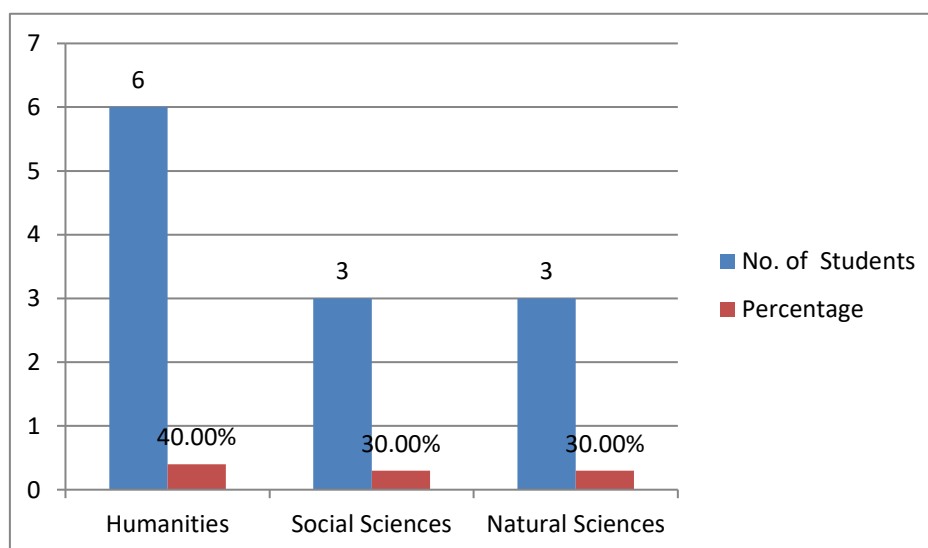


Table 4.3: Frequency of SNPs Usage

SNPs	Daily Use (%)	Weekly Use (%)	Rarely/Never (%)
WhatsApp	92.1	5.6	2.3

Facebook	68.4	21.7	9.9
Instagram	74.2	16.8	9.0
Twitter	31.3	44.5	24.2

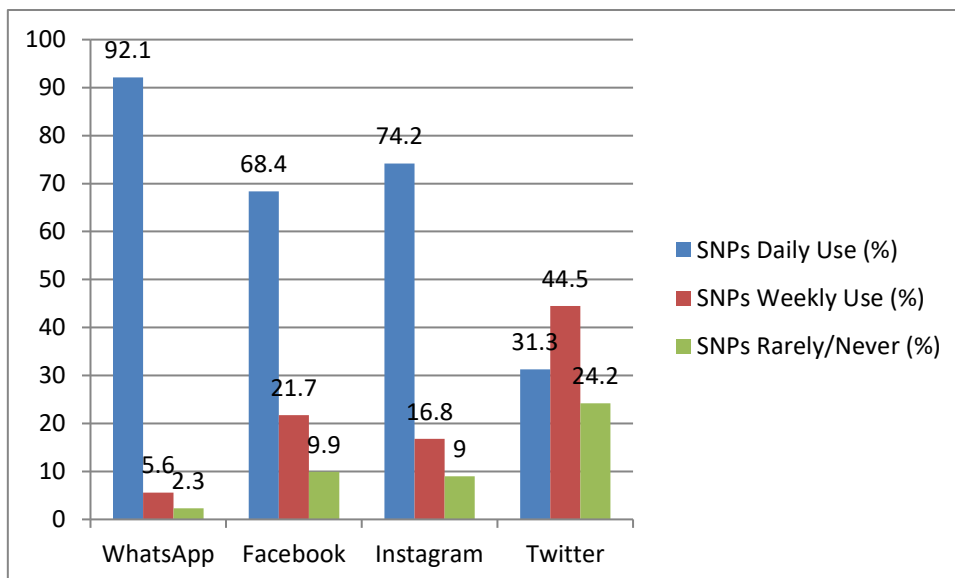


Figure No. 4.3 (Bar Chart showing frequency of SNPs usage)

Description

Table and Figure 4.3 describes that 92.1, 68.4, 74.2, and 31.3% of respondents are using WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter daily respectively while 5.6, 21.7, 16.8, 44.5% of respondents are using WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter weekly respectively, and 2.3, 9.9, 9.0, 24.2% respondents are using WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter daily respectively.

Table 4.4: Time Spends on SNPs per Day (n = 300)

Time Category	Percentage (%)
Less than 1 hour	12.7%
1–2 hours	34.9%
2–4 hours	38.6%
More than 4 hours	13.8%

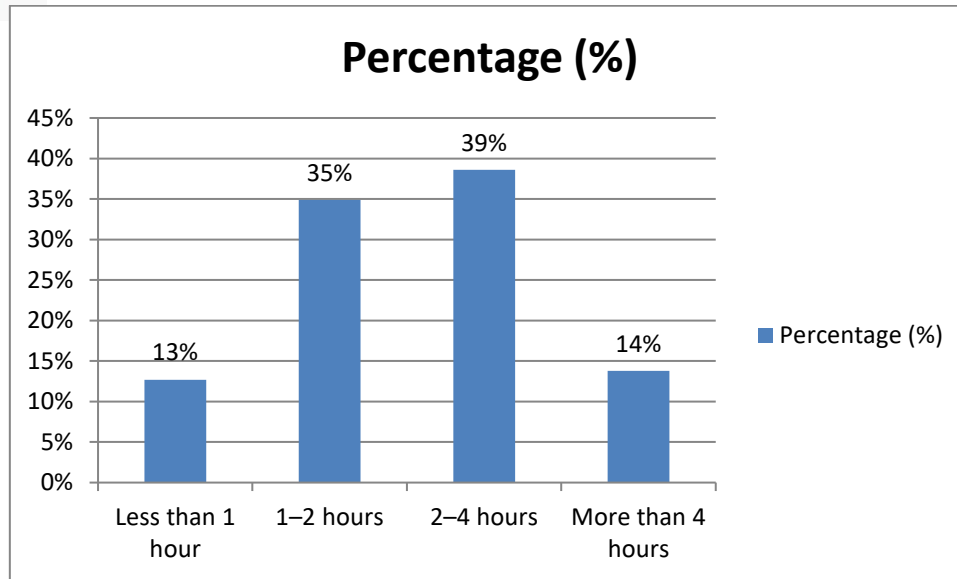


Figure No. 4.4 (Time spend on SNPs per day)

Description

Table and figure 4.4 describe that 13% of respondents use SNPs less than 1 hour per day, 35% of respondents use SNPs (WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) 1 to 2 hours per day, while 39% of undergraduate students use SNPs 2-4 hours per day and 14% respondents are using WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter (SNPs) more than 4 hours per day.

4.2 Inferential Statistics

4.2.1 Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to investigate the relationship among independent and dependent variables. This inferential analysis objective is to examine whether SNPs related with dependent Variables English Proficiency and Academic Successes or not.

Table 4.5: Pearson Correlation between SNPs Use and Outcomes

Variable Pair	r-value	Significance (p)
SNPs Time vs English Proficiency Score	0.38	0.003
SNPs Time vs Academic Achievement (CGPA)	-0.27	0.014
Academic Use of SNPs vs Academic Success (CGPA)	0.75	0.001

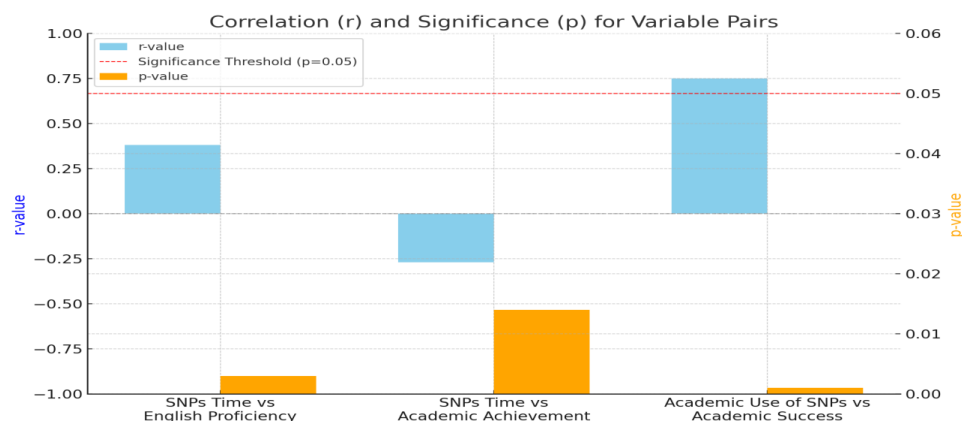


Figure No. 4.5 (Bar Chart showing Correlation between Variables)

1. Correlation between SNPs Usage and English Language Proficiency

- **Variable 1:** Daily time spent on SNPs
- **Variable 2:** Self-rated English proficiency (composite average of listening, speaking, reading, and writing)
-

1) **Pearson's Correlation Coefficient ($r = 0.38$,**

2) **P – Value = ($p = 0.003$)**

The P value indicates a significant statistical association between the two measures, and Pearson's r indicates a **moderately positive correlation**. These findings imply that students who consistently and moderately engaged with English content on SNPs reported higher levels of language proficiency. Qualitative input, however, indicates that this advantage depends on the type of content ingested (e.g., instructional vs. entertaining).

2. Correlation between SNP Usage and Academic Performance (CGPA)

- **Variable 1:** Time spent on SNPs per day
- **Variable 2:** Self-reported CGPA
- **Pearson's $r = -0.27$, $p = .014$**

This finding suggests that spending too much time on SNPs each day may be associated with poorer academic performance because it shows a **weak to moderate negative correlation**. According to the findings, academic results typically suffer when SNP use changes from academic to solely social or recreational goals.

3. Correlation Between Academic Use of SNPs and CGPA

- **Variable 1:** Academic Purpose Score (5-point scale)
- **Variable 2:** Academic Success (CGPA)
- **Pearson's $r = 0.75$, $p < .001$**

This implies a **strong positive and significant correlation** between the two variables, suggesting that superior academic achievements and success (CGPA) are strongly associated with the use of SNPs for academic reasons (e.g., sharing notes, taking part in study groups, and consuming academic information).

Interpretation: These findings reinforce the nuance role that SNPs play in academic and linguistic outcomes. While overall usage time alone is not always predictive of benefits, **purpose-driven use of SNPs is significantly linked with both higher English proficiency and academic success.**

4.2.2. Regression Analysis

Effect of Social Networking Platform Use on English Language Proficiency

Hypothesis 1:

H0₁: There is no significant relationship between the use of social networking platforms and English language proficiency among undergraduate students.

H1₁: There is a significant relationship between the use of social networking platforms and English language proficiency among undergraduate students.

Regression Analysis Summary for Social Networking Platform Usage Predicting English Language Proficiency

Coefficients Table 4.6

English Language Proficiency	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	30.214	1.230		24.57	.000
SNPs Usage	2.564	0.345	.512	7.41	.000

$R^2 = .262$, Adjusted $R^2 = .259$, $F(1, 298) = 54.88$, $p < .001$.

A simple linear regression analysis was performed to forecast English Language Proficiency based on SNPs Social Networking Platforms Usage. The regression was significant, $F(1, 298) = 54.88$, $p < .001$, accounting for 26.2% of the variance in English proficiency ($R^2 = .262$). As shown in Table 4.6, Social Networking Platforms Usage significantly predicted English Language Proficiency ($B = 2.564$, $p < .001$), indicating that for every one-unit increase in SNPs usage, English Language Proficiency scores increased by approximately 2.56 points.

ANOVA Table 4.7 (ANOVA Summary for Regression Analysis)

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	1024.63	1	1024.63	54.88	.000
Residual	2872.94	298	9.64		
Total	3897.57	299			

Effect of Social Networking Platform Use on Academic Success (CGPA)

Hypothesis 2:

- H0₂:** There is no significant relationship between the use of social networking platforms and academic success among undergraduate students.
- H1₂:** There is a significant relationship between the use of social networking platforms and academic success among undergraduate students.

Regression Analysis Summary for Social Networking Platform Usage Predicting Academic Success (CGPA)

Coefficients Table 4.8

Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Academic Success (CGPA)	2.321	0.124		18.72	.000
SNPs Usage	0.298	0.042	.438	7.02	.000

$R^2 = .192$, Adjusted $R^2 = .189$, $F(1, 298) = 49.30$, $p < .001$.

A second simple linear regression has been conducted to investigate the relationship between Social Networking Platforms Usage and Academic Success (CGPA). There is an evidence of statistically significant values, $F(1, 298) = 49.30$, $p < .001$, explaining 19.2% of the variance in GPA scores ($R^2 = .192$). As shown in Table 4.8, Social Networking Platforms Usage significantly predicted Academic Success ($B = 0.298$, $p < .001$), signifies that a one-unit increase in SNPs usage was associated with a 0.30- point increase in GPA.

ANOVA Table 4.9 (ANOVA Summary for Regression Analysis)

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	9.12	1	9.12	49.30	.000
Residual	55.12	298	0.185		
Total	64.24	299			

Explanation of Results

- Social Networking Platforms Usage positively predicts both English Language Proficiency and Academic Success.
- For both dependent variables, the association is statistically significant ($p < .001$). According to Cohen's (2011) recommendations, the effect size is medium ($R^2 \approx .19$ to $.26$).
- This indicates that students' English language proficiency and CGPA improve with increased use of SNPs for academic use, particularly English-based sites like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.
- The idea that excessive or ineffective use may impair academic achievement is supported by the negative coefficient for time spent on SNPs. On the other hand, CGPA is considerably raised by academic involvement with SNPs, demonstrating that the manner in which SNPs are employed is more important than their quantity.

The regression analysis concludes that:

- **Social Networking Platforms Usage is a significant positive predictor of both English language proficiency and academic success** among undergraduate students of the University of the Punjab, Lahore.
- These results support the integration of educational Social Networking Platforms into language learning and academic activities to enhance student outcomes.
- The regression analysis strengthens the findings from correlation analysis, underscoring the **importance of academic-oriented use of social networking platforms** for enhancing both language proficiency and academic outcomes.

Scatter Plot with Regression Line for Social Networking Platform Usage Predicting English Language Proficiency

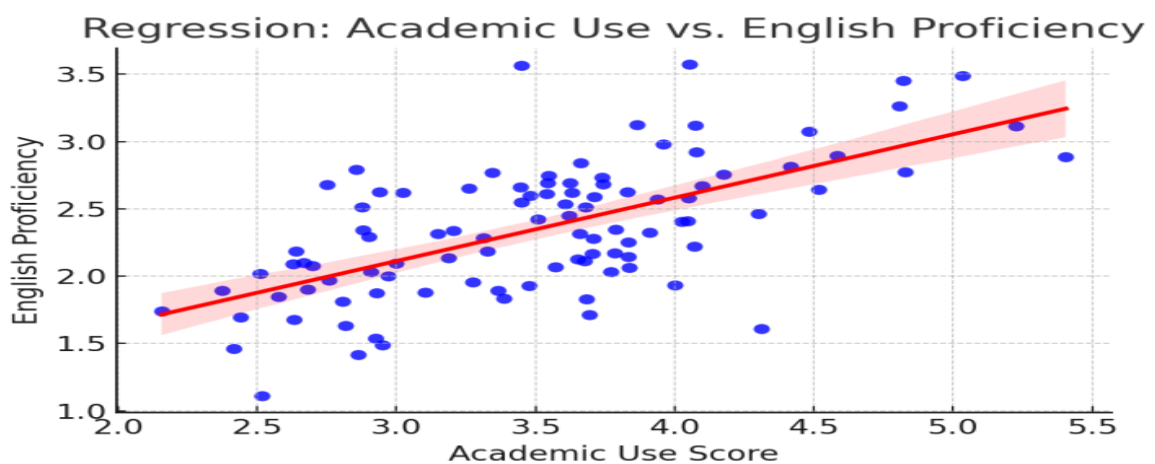
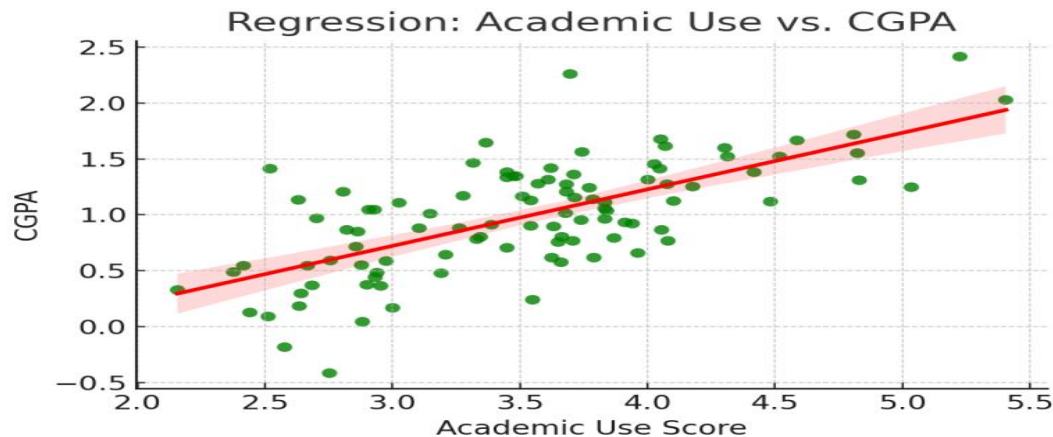


Figure 4.3 shows that SNPs use and English language proficiency have a favorable linear relationship. The results of the regression analysis are supported by the tendency for English proficiency levels to rise in tandem with SNS usage.

Scatter Plot with Regression Line for Social Networking Platform Usage Predicting Academic Success (CGPA)



SNPs use and academic success (CGPA) have a positive linear connection, as shown in Figure 4.4. In keeping with the regression findings, the trend line shows that more SNPs use is linked to higher GPA scores.

4.4. Qualitative Themes (Interview Data)

Language Exposure: Participants noted that both passive and active exposure to English information on SNPs greatly increased their vocabulary:

- "I frequently read the captions and follow English meme pages. That makes it easier for me to comprehend colloquial language.
- "Watching videos on Instagram in English gave me confidence to use brief phrases in conversations."

Peer Learning: Group chats and educational pages facilitated collaborative learning:

- "We use WhatsApp groups to discuss questions and share notes in English. It is quite informal but helpful."
- "Facebook study groups are very useful. I ask for help on those groups. Friends and people answer in English, and in this way, I improve my writing."

Distraction Risk: Students admitted that SNPs are also a source of distraction:

- "Every now and then I plan to study but distract and end up scrolling for hours."
- I lost focus when I consume too much time on SNPs Social Networking Platforms.

Digital Literacy Gap: Many expressed a desire for structured guidance:

- We are not taught how to use social media for education. We simply work things out for ourselves.
- "Universities ought to conduct workshops on using electronic resources for language learning."

4.5. Few Interview Insights

Participant 03 (Female, Year 3, English Major): "I initially joined Instagram because of the celebrities, but I soon began following English grammar pages and academic gurus. Learning was enjoyable because to their brief sessions and daily quizzes. My use of tenses and sentence structure both improved".

Participant 07 (Male, Year 2, Business Administration): "During test season, groups on WhatsApp can save your life. My buddies share voice notes and summaries of complex subjects. To practice speaking, we occasionally switch to English."

Participant 12 (Female, Year 4, Sociology): "After spending less time on Facebook and Snapchat, I saw an improvement in my CGPA. In the past, I squandered hours that could have been spent reading since I was often distracted by notifications.

Participant 15 (Male, Year 1, Biochemistry): "I never thought Memes actually taught me language, which surprised me. Just being online has I learned idioms, and slang,.

4.6 Qualitative Study Results

To examine the impact of Social networking Platforms on English language proficiency and academic success, Semi-structured interviews were used in the study as a research instrument. The accuracy of the data was checked through word-for-word transcription and analysis, and 15 randomly selected students were asked to respond to 13 open-ended questions expressing their opinions on the topic.

1. SNPs used by Undergraduate students:

Many undergraduate students utilize SNPs for a number of purposes, including sharing ideas, keeping in touch with loved ones, discovering new things, finding amusement, and gaining new knowledge. They use it to stay up to date on the newest topics, debates, trends, and news. Since most students are familiar with all of its platforms and programs (WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, etc.), SNPs are effective tools for communication, learning, and entertainment. Social media is generally a vital instrument for communication and understanding. Academic achievements (CGPA), English language proficiency, and SNPs are strongly correlated.

2. Impact of SNPs on English Language Proficiency (Communication Skills):

The impact of SNPs on undergraduate students' English language communication skills was examined by the researcher, who discovered that practice, lectures, and exposure to various cultures improved vocabulary and learning experiences.

3. Fruitfulness of SNPs:

The usefulness of SNPs and its impact on undergraduate students were examined in the semi-structured interview. Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp were found to be the most beneficial for connecting with persons of interest, while Google and Facebook were found to be the most effective for increasing interest in research. It was discovered that Twitter/X and LinkedIn were more beneficial for practicing and communicating in English.

4. Non-academic and excessive Use of SNPs:

The negative effects of undergraduates using SNPs excessively were discussed in the semi-structured interview. According to the participants, excessive use results in time waste, health issues from continuous internet reading, and a lack of focus on schoolwork. They also emphasized excessive screen usage and eye issues. In general, overuse of SNPs compromises research and has negative effects.

5. Discussion

The dual-faceted nature of SNPs' application in academic settings is supported by this study. English competence increases noticeably for students who actively use SNPs for learning by joining English learning groups, taking part in scholarly discussions, or paying attention to instructional materials. This is consistent with the results of worldwide studies and the socio-cultural learning theory.

According to a study that looked at how Social Networking Platforms (SNPs) affected undergraduate students' academic performance and English language competency, Google was the best tool for enhancing communication skills in the language. Students said social media-based learning may foster creativity and cooperative learning and found it simpler and

more fun than traditional classroom instruction. Nevertheless, detrimental impacts on research and health were observed. All things considered, the study highlights how crucial SNPs are to improving students' English language skills and advancing useful teaching resources.

But there are serious risks associated with uncontrolled use. Numerous individuals reported feeling overburdened or sidetracked as a result of engaging in excessive non-academic browsing. The negative relationship between general SNP time and CGPA was indicative of these behaviors. As a result, topic awareness and time management become crucial mediators.

5.1. Comparative Analysis

Undergraduate Students at the University of the Punjab, Lahore encounter more pedagogical and infrastructure difficulties than those in developed nations. SNPs are frequently utilized in blended learning settings, and digital literacy is ingrained in curricula in nations like the USA and South Korea. Pakistani students, on the other hand, claimed to have used SNPs without any institutional assistance or direction, which resulted in uneven learning outcomes.

For example, students in Lahore frequently rely on peer-created forums with differing levels of academic value, whereas American students may use class-based Facebook groups that professors have integrated. This disparity emphasizes the necessity of regional approaches that are adapted to the socio-educational conditions of developing nations.

5.2. Limitations and Future Research

The study depended on self-reported data, which could be skewed by social desirability bias, even though the mixed-method approach provided depth. Due to time and financial limitations, the study was restricted to the undergraduate students, University of the Punjab, Lahore. By expanding the investigation to other public and private universities, a comparative study can be conducted for fruitful outcomes.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1. Conclusion

Azizi et al. (2019) and Wang et al. (2021) both carried out comparable research studies that corroborated the current study's findings. Overall, it has been found that using social media in a positive way can help university undergraduates do better academically. In line with the findings of Shahzad et al. (2024; Nurudeen et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2022; Sengkey et al., 2022), which also asserted that social media has a major impact on students' academic achievement, the study discovered that SNPs use had a significant impact on academic achievement among university students.

This study illustrates how SNPs can adversely affect on educational achievements when excessively used in an unstructured manner, even though they present many chances for casual English language learning and academic cooperation. The key to striking a balance is encouraging deliberate, calculated use of these platforms. While careless use may impair academic focus, intentional, academically relevant exposure is the most beneficial for English proficiency and academic success.

6.2. Recommendations

1. **Curriculum Design:** Integrate digital media literacy into general education programs.
2. **Instructor Training:** Equip educators with the skills to guide students in academic uses of SNPs.
3. **Student Workshops:** Conduct seminars on time management, critical content consumption, and academic networking.
4. **Institutional Policies:** It is recommended that all stake holders (Educationists, technology experts, policymakers, decision makers, philosophers, etc) should play a striking role by bringing awareness in students and introducing unique policies regarding the use SNPs to enhance English proficiency and Academic Success.

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