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### MEDIA CONSUMPTION AND ITS IMPACT ON PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL HEALTH: A STUDY OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AND TEACHERS IN KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA

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#### ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of mass media consumption on the physical and social health of university students and teachers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. To determine how media use affects health outcomes, data were collected from 331 participants using a cross sectional survey design through students and faculty members. According to the findings, mass media has a definitive impact on both the physical and social health and that social media is becoming the dominant media with 65 percent of the total media consumption. The correlation between social media use and shape of allied health related attitude was found to be moderately positive ( $r = 0.42$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). Adverse effects on physical health, such as disrupted sleep patterns and increased sedentary behavior and the contribution of media to promoting physical activity through informational content are identified as the study. Mass media socialises us and decreases our face to face interactions as well as causing problems with mental health like cyberbullying and low self-esteem. Nevertheless, it encourages communication and collaboration in the academic world. The research highlights media as both a disruptor, as well as an enabler, of health behavior. The assessments of media impact on the health outcomes compare in their strength at different age, gender, and academic abilities. In short, the study encourages media literacy programs and policy interventions to protect against media's negative effects and take advantage of the media's potential. These insights add to the greater literature addressing media in educational structural, presenting practical recommendations for concerned Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and similar parts of the country.

**Keywords:** Media consumption, physical health, social health, university students, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, digital media.

**Introduction**

Mass media has become an important part of life, and that it influences greatly health, behavior and societal values. Rapid expansion of digital media in Pakistan, especially social media platforms, has given way to how people consume information and interact with their surroundings (Parker et al., 2019). University students and teachers, as key stakeholders in the education sector, are particularly vulnerable to the dual edged effects of media, both contributing to enhancement of learning and at the same time subjects to health related challenges of sleep disturbances and sedentary lifestyles (Smith & Lee, 2020). The widespread usage of media in Pakistan, in particular, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, necessitates a study on its effect on the health condition, educational performance and moral values. As most existing work emanates from the Western contexts, this study addresses a critical gap by focusing on localized data and is thereby likely to depict the socio-cultural dynamics of Pakistan to a lesser extent, such as Thompson & Green (2022).

Mass media consumption has implications to health. However, media is a valuable source of health information, but also propagates misinformation and unrealistic body standards that further worsen anxiety and poor self-esteem in students and educators (Johnson, 2021). Dr Williams and her colleagues follow that in Pakistan where media literacy is developing, the lack of regulation of digital content consumption can result in undesirable physical activity and reduced sleep (Williams et al, 2018). This study aims to quantify these effects by providing empirical evidence for interventions which would foster healthier media habits. The research then focuses on university populations, highlighting the specific challenges that the academic community has to balance well-being with media use.

The problem statement pertains to the absence of localized research involving the study of how mass media impacts health, performances and values in Pakistan's educational settings. Many of these existing studies fail to account for that media consumption has regional specificities, like cultural norms as well as media access that can affect how media consumption impacts (Smith & Lee, 2020). This paper attempts to fill this gap by empirically examining the impact of media on university teachers and students in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and coming up with actionable insights for policymakers and educators. This research has the potential to inform media literacy program and institutional policy recommendations toward media use that enhances rather than undermines health and academic success (Thompson & Green, 2022).

**Literature Review**

The global study of mass media consumption has been extremely studied as it has meant of impact on behavior and health. Studies in Western contexts have found a correlation between excessive media use (typically, social media), sedentary behavior

and disturbances of sleep, particularly of the latter, and mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression (Kelly et al., 2018). In Pakistan too, the rise of digital media has also brought about similar challenges as university students and teachers are reporting being disturbed with their sleep cycles and losing their physical activities because of long hours of screen time (Khan & Sattar, 2024). Local studies point out how the cultural specificity of media effects is taken into consideration, as the collectivist values in Pakistani society may potentiate the social pressures brought about by the idealized media portrayals (Shuja et al., 2022). Although such trends have been observed, there are considerable knowledge gaps regarding how they play out in academic settings, for example in areas such as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where media literacy programs are few.

It is well documented that effects of mass media on physical and social health are well documented. Prolonged exposure to screens has a physical impact on eye strain, obesity and poor posture while socially, it also reduces the face to face interaction thus decreasing interpersonal skills and increasing sense of isolation (Bian & Leung, 2015). It is because in Pakistan the ties of family and community are strong and the transition to the virtual is bringing up the issue of decline in social cohesion (Hudson, 2013). Stress and self-esteem problems for university students increase as they are pressured to conform to media standards of success and physical appearance (Marciano et al., 2022). On the other hand, media can be used for the promotion of health as well, communicating on the importance of physical activity and mental wellbeing, however the effectiveness of these activities relies on the source credibility and receptivity of the audience (Marcus & Pekmezi, 2024)..

The study integrates the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) and the Health Belief Model (HBM) in the theoretical framework of this study. According to UGT, people actively seek out media to meet certain needs including information, entertainment and social connection (Katz et al., 2017). Thus these findings are in line with ones, indicating that students and teachers are using media for both educational as well as leisure purposes, but rarely at the cost of health (Dunas & Vartanov, 2020). On the other hand, the HBM attempts to explain health related behaviors based on perception of benefits, barriers, threats (Benowitz-Fredericks et al., 2012). This model is applied and shows that unrealistic health media representations influence self perception and behaviour, if they are internalized as standards. These theories cohesively bring media consumption, health outcome and societal values into a lens for analyzing how the intricate interaction of these dimensions occurs in Pakistani academia.

### **Methodology**

The quantitative, cross sectional survey was adopted by this study to find out the impact of mass media on the health, performance and values of university teachers

and students in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. In order to ensure the representativeness of the target population, a structured questionnaire was administered to 331 participants made of 304 students and 27 teachers from four universities (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The survey design was the chosen one for its efficiency in collecting large-scale data within limited time duration that facilitates statistical generalization of findings (Salkind, 2017). Stratified random sampling was used by the study to ensure the proportional representation of the gender, age groups and academic departments to minimize the selection bias (Trochim, 2021).

The study was designed carefully to make it valid through sampling techniques. This sample was stratified for demographic variations (Behram, 2001) by grouping it into subgroups of male and female students and male and female teachers. Based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sampling table, the sample size was determined so as to meet statistical adequacy. Departments of Education, Psychology and Communication Sciences were selected to present a diverse academic background on the participants. To examine whether career stage was a factor, teachers with different amount of years of experience (3–5 years, 6–10 years, and 11–15 years) were included. The implementation of a stratified approach to the sampling process had the effect of balancing representation and resulted in more reliable comparative analyses (Pallant, 2020).

The data collection instruments were 46 item questionnaire using a 5 point Likert scale (1 strongly Disagree to 5 Strongly Agree), which was validated. Three major variables were assessed: health (as physical and social), performance (as academic and teamwork), and values (as social and organizational). Reliability of the questionnaire was pilot tested with 30 participants (15 students and 15 teachers) and Cronbach's alpha scores of Cronbach's alpha scores ranged from 0.715 to 0.946 were obtained, indicating high internal consistency (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Expert review (8 education and social sciences scholars) was used to establish content validity with a content validity index (CVI) of 0.953–0.989 indicating measurement accuracy (Polit & Beck, 2010).

Descriptive and inferential techniques were conducted for statistical analysis using SPSS. Demographic and response trends were summarized by descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, frequency distributions). Normality tests (Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk) were significant and non-normality was confirmed, therefore, non-parametric tests were used (Pallant, 2020). Media use was explored with Pearson's correlation to analyze relationships with health/performance/values and multiple regression to analyze predictive effects. Group differences (e.g., age, gender, academic role) were compared with Kruskal-Wallis and Mann-Whitney U tests.

These methods were suitable to robust analysis of media's multiple impacts, which fit to the study's aim (Field, 2018).

### Results and Analysis

With this the study covers a detailed analysis of how mass media consumption influences the health, performance and values of university teachers and students of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. It is structured around four main areas: Media usage pattern, physical health outcomes, social health affect, and comparative difference between student, teacher. Empirical data for each area are summarized in tables to aid clarity, before interpretations are given that place the results in context with the rest of the literature.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Media Consumption Patterns**

Media Type	Frequency (n=331)	Percentage (%)	Mean Daily Usage (Hours)	Std. Deviation
Social Media	214	64.7%	4.2	1.8
Television	109	32.9%	2.5	1.3
Print Media	4	1.2%	0.7	0.4
Other Digital Media	4	1.2%	1.1	0.6

The study revealed that social media was the predominant form of media consumption among participants, with 64.7% of respondents identifying it as their primary medium and spending an average of 4.2 hours daily on these platforms. Television emerged as the secondary medium, utilized by 32.9% of participants for approximately 2.5 hours each day, indicating its continued relevance despite the digital shift. Print media demonstrated minimal engagement at just 1.2%, underscoring a clear transition toward digital platforms in contemporary media consumption habits. These findings highlight the overwhelming dominance of digital media, particularly social networks, in the daily lives of university students and teachers in the region.

**Table 2: Physical Health Outcomes Linked to Media Usage**

Health Indicator	Mean Score (1-5)	Std. Deviation	Correlation with Media Use (r)	p-value
Sleep disturbances	3.43	1.21	0.38	0.001*
Sedentary behavior (screen time)	3.65	1.32	0.42	0.000*
Eye strain/fatigue	3.28	1.15	0.31	0.012*
Physical inactivity	3.52	1.24	0.45	0.000*

Results revealed important positive correlations between physical health outcomes and media consumption with all measured variables having moderate to strong positive correlations ( $r = 0.31-0.45$ ) statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). These findings indicate a strong consistent relationship between greater media use and different negative health symptoms, with sedentary behavior as the most pronounced as it had the highest mean score of 3.65 on the assessment scale. The findings of this particular result show that screen time related inactivity is pervasive among the study population and, specifically, that media engagement is directly linked with reduced physical activity levels. These correlations are as strong and consistent as possible, and their relevance as a locus of public health concern is underscored by the prominence and affiliations of media consumption in such educational settings as they potentially have the greatest potential to influence student and faculty wellbeing. It is consistent with existing literature on digital media effects but provides more specific, quantifiable evidence of these relationships in the case of Pakistani academia.

**Table 3: Social Health Effects of Media Consumption**

Social Health Aspect	Mean Score (1-5)	Std. Deviation	Key Findings
Reduced face-to-face interaction	3.20	1.14	68% reported decline in in-person socialization.
Cyberbullying exposure	3.64	1.29	42% experienced online harassment.
Self-esteem issues	3.47	1.18	55% compared themselves to idealized media portrayals.
Social anxiety	3.12	1.07	37% felt anxious in offline social settings.

In particular, the study shows that the media use has particularly disturbing trends in terms of the psychosocial impact on a human being, the manifestations of which are cyberbullying and self-esteem issues (both more than 3.5 on the measurement scale). It seems that entering into the digital platforms in repetitive way often leads to experiencing negative interpersonal experiences and damaging social comparisons that have a big impact on the psychological wellbeing of the users. A huge difference was found between student and teacher populations, 2.5 times more vulnerable to these negative social effects (72% versus 28% among teachers), which was statistically significant using Mann-Whitney U analysis ( $U = 4,566, p = 0.003$ ). This very pronounced difference is likely due to both how the two groups are differentially engaged with the media and developmental factors, since younger students may be more prone to peer influence and social pressures. These findings have high and robust statistical significance ( $p < 0.01$ ), indicating urgent need for targeted

interventions at the academic setting, in terms of programs directed to students concerning online safety, the digital citizenship and the media literacy to overcome these harmful psychosocial consequences.

**Table 4: Comparative Analysis of Students vs. Teachers**

Variable	Students (n=304)	Teachers (n=27)	Mann-Whitney U	p-value
Media Use (hrs/day)	5.1	3.4	3,890	0.022*
Sleep Disturbances	3.58	2.91	4,078	0.045*
Academic Distraction	3.72	2.35	3,312	0.001*
Social Isolation	3.41	2.67	4,455	0.011*

It compared the students' and faculty member's media consumption patterns and the resulting impacts and found significant differences between both groups. Statistically significant, students showed 5.1 vs. teachers 3.4 daily media usage hours ( $p = 0.022$ ), which matched with their more pronounced negative health and academic outcomes. Directly related to students' increased reporting of sleep disturbances, academic distraction and social isolation is the fact that this disparity in screen time exposure suggests that too much media engagement is hurting their overall wellbeing and education. However, teachers showed marked improvement in both sleep quality and academic focus and it is likely that this is because the teachers' professional routines are more structured and as a result have more media literacy skills as a result of experience. The structured schedules seem to offer a protective effect against the adverse effects of overuse of media observed in the student population. These findings point to an essential difference in development and lifestyle for younger students who may rely more on digital platforms (for academic and/or social uses) for engaging in this behavior than older students and who are therefore well positioned to suffer media-related health and performance deficits. These results emphasize the need for such targeted interventions to address these population vulnerabilities whilst encouraging healthier media habits in academic communities more generally.

### Discussion

The findings from the current study strongly suggest the significant effect of media consumption on Pakistan's academic populations in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region. We present results of high correlations between various health and performance indicators and media use, and this is especially strong for student populations. For example, these findings are consistent with, but extend, existing international research in a variety of important ways. Corroborating global trends found in recent literature (Smith & Anderson, 2018), the dominance of social media in participants' media diets

(64.7% primary usage and health impacts) between users is consistent with the media history of these social media networks. Despite the fact that our study finds cultural specificities in these patterns (the 4.2 hour daily average is also higher than in Western studies; Twenge et al., 2018) it reveals particularly intense engagement in this population. Likewise, correlations between media use and the physical health outcome ( $r = 0.31\%-0.45\%$ ) mirror cross cultural research (Cain & Gradisar, 2010) while the pronounced psychosocial effects reflect the region's vulnerabilities to socially driven social comparison.

An important contribution of our work is to extend previous work on developmental differences in media impact (Uhls et al., 2017) by showing that students faced more severe consequences (72% vs 28% negative effects) than did teachers. The cause of this disparity may be due to both age related factors as well as Pakistan's unique educational culture which stresses students heavily in their academic life, which may have an effect of combining this media stresses. The better outcomes of the teachers are consistent with Riehm et al.'s (2019) protection role of professional structure, but also point to how institutional roles moderate media effects. Their findings have important sociocultural implications for Pakistan's rapidly digitizing society. Cyberbullying prevalence (mean > 3.5) and self-esteem problems demonstrate how media in the world is globalized to local culture spaces, where collectivist values may boost social comparison pressures. The 1.2% minimal print media engagement is a signal of a massive generational shift in information consumption which educators should tackle. Most crucially, the student-teacher disparity calls for tailored interventions that account for developmental and role-based differences in media vulnerability within academic communities.

### **Conclusion**

The findings of this study prove to be very compelling in relation to the massive influence of mass media consumption on the health, academic performance and social wellbeing of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa University students and teachers. The study finds that excessive media use in particular social media has a very strong correlation with negative physical health outcomes like sleep disturbances and sedentary behavior and negative psychosocial issues, such as cyberbullying and lowered self-esteem. Particularly troubling is the great gap between students and faculty, in which students are consuming substantially more media (5.1 vs 3.4 hours daily) and experiencing much greater negative effects on all the variables measured. The fact that these results indicate developmental factors, lifestyle differences and possibly differing levels of media literacy, are contributing factors to differential susceptibility to media's harmful effects within academic communities is notable. The study emphasizes the urgency for



institutional interventions aimed at mitigating these media related challenges while acknowledging the difference between students' and educators' needs.

However, the research is significant for Pakistan's rapidly evolving digital space and its education sector. With digital technologies becoming part of the country's daily life, educational institutions are required to adopt comprehensive strategies to encourage the cultivation of healthy media habits. They should include media literacy programs, which aim to develop awareness and critical thinking toward media, digital wellbeing initiatives, and policies promoting limited screen time, especially for the most vulnerable student population. The findings further bring up the importance of building media awareness into teacher training programs to educate educators on how to coach students as they travel around the internet safely. Further research is needed on its longitudinal effects and efficacy of any potential interventions. Pakistani universities can address these challenges proactively so that the advantages of digital media can be reaped while risk mitigated for the benefit of healthier, more productive, and more supportive academic environments in the digital age that serve to enable the success of students and wellbeing of faculty.

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