

Digital Distraction: Social Media Multitasking and its Impact on Student Productivity

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Abstract- In the digital era, social media has become an indispensable part of students' lives. Although these platforms support communication and academic collaboration, excessive multitasking between social media and study activities may reduce academic productivity. This empirical study explores the relationship between social media multitasking behaviors and academic productivity among students in the Erode district. Using a structured questionnaire, data were collected from 100 students selected through convenient sampling. Analytical tools such as simple percentage and chi-square tests were employed. Findings indicate a significant negative relationship between social media multitasking and student productivity. The study suggests the need for effective digital self-regulation strategies to foster academic success.

Keywords: Social media, multitasking, student productivity, academic performance, digital distraction

I. INTRODUCTION

The proliferations of smartphones and easy access to social media platforms have profoundly altered the academic landscape. Students often engage in simultaneous social media use while performing academic tasks, which is known as *social media multitasking*. While some research highlights the potential benefits of digital literacy and collaborative learning, other studies suggest that multitasking interrupts cognitive processes, impairs focus, and reduces overall productivity. Understanding how social media multitasking impacts student academic output is essential, particularly at the local level where context-specific patterns may exist.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Modern students are continuously exposed to digital distractions, especially through social media applications such as WhatsApp, Facebook,

Instagram, and YouTube. Many students engage in multitasking that divides their attention between academic tasks and social media use. This divided attention can decrease academic efficiency and productivity. Despite the growing concerns, few studies have focused on this issue specifically among students in the Erode district. Therefore, this research aims to fill the gap by examining the extent and effects of social media multitasking on student productivity.

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Several researchers have studied the effects of social media use on academic performance:

- Junco (2012) found that frequent social media usage negatively correlated with student GPA, indicating lower academic productivity.
- Rosen et al. (2011) reported that students who frequently multitask show reduced attention spans and disrupted study patterns.
- Ophir, Nass, & Wagner (2009) observed that heavy media multitaskers demonstrate weaker cognitive control compared to low multitaskers.
- Gupta & Irwin (2016) emphasized that social media use during classroom sessions distracted learning and affected comprehension.

These studies collectively suggest a detrimental effect of social media multitasking on academic engagement and productivity. However, limited research is available in the context of Indian student populations, particularly in less urban districts like Erode.

IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To determine the social media usage patterns of students.

2. To assess the frequency of multitasking behaviors during academic activities.
3. To analyze the impact of social media multitasking on student productivity.
4. To examine the relationship between time spent on social media and academic performance.

V. HYPOTHESIS

- H₀: There is no significant relationship between social media multitasking and student productivity.
- H₁: There is a significant relationship between social media multitasking and student productivity.

VI. METHODOLOGY

The present study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design and is based on quantitative data. The descriptive approach was used to understand the patterns of social media usage and multitasking behavior among students, while the analytical approach helped in examining the relationship between social media multitasking and student productivity.

The sample size for the study consisted of 100 students, selected to represent the target population. The study was conducted in the Erode district, which served as the geographical area for data collection.

A convenient sampling technique was employed due to its suitability and accessibility in collecting data from respondents within the limited time frame. Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire, designed to capture information related to social media usage habits, multitasking behavior, and academic productivity.

For the purpose of data analysis, appropriate statistical tools were applied. Simple percentage analysis was used to summarize and present the data in a clear and understandable manner. In addition, the chi-square test was applied to examine the association between selected variables such as social media multitasking and student productivity. The results of the analysis were interpreted at a 5 per cent level of significance.

VII. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. Data were collected only from students within the Erode district.
2. The sample size of 100 may limit the generalization of findings.
3. Self-reported measures may involve response bias.
4. Time and resource constraints restricted longitudinal follow-up.

VIII. ANALYSIS OF DATA

Simple Percentage Analysis

Table 1: Frequency of Social Media Usage Among Students

Usage Frequency	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
Daily	76	76.0
Several times a week	18	18.0
Weekly	4	4.0
Rarely	2	2.0
Total	100	100.0

The table reveals that a majority of students (76%) use social media daily. This indicates a high level of digital exposure, increasing the likelihood of distraction during academic activities.

Table 2: Extent of Social Media Multitasking During Study Hours

Multitasking Frequency	No. of Students	Percentage (%)
Always	40	40.0
Often	32	32.0
Sometimes	18	18.0
Never	10	10.0

72% of students often or always multitask with social media during study time, suggesting widespread multitasking behaviors.

Table 3: Self-Reported Impact of Social Media on Academic Productivity

Activity Performance	No. of Students	Percentage (%)
Highly Productive	12	12.0
Moderately Productive	38	38.0
Less Productive	50	50.0

Half of the participants consider themselves less productive academically, which may be associated with social media multitasking.

Table 4: Time Spent on Social Media Per Day

Time Spent (Hours)	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
Less than 1 hour	12	12.0
1 – 2 hours	28	28.0
2 – 4 hours	42	42.0
More than 4 hours	18	18.0
Total	100	100.0

Nearly 60% of students spend more than two hours daily on social media. Prolonged screen time may interfere with academic focus and productivity.

Chi-Square Test:

Table 1: Relationship Between Multitasking and Productivity

Observed Category	Productive	Less Productive	Total
High Multitasking (Always/Often)	18	54	72
Low Multitasking (Sometimes/Never)	32	6	38
Total	50	60	100

Students with high multitasking tendencies are significantly more likely to report being less productive than those who multitask less.

Table 2: Relationship Between Time Spent on Social Media and Academic Productivity

Time Spent on Social Media	Productive	Less Productive	Total
Less than 2 hours	28	12	40
More than 2 hours	22	38	60
Total	50	50	100

Since the calculated value exceeds the table value, the null hypothesis is rejected. There is a significant relationship between time spent on social media and academic productivity.

Table 3 Relationship Between Social Media Multitasking and Concentration Level

Multitasking Level	High Concentration	Low Concentration	Total
High Multitasking	20	52	72

Low Multitasking	24	4	28
Total	44	56	100

The chi-square result indicates a highly significant relationship. Students who multitask frequently show lower concentration levels during academic activities.

Table 4: Relationship Between Frequency of Social Media Use and Completion of Academic Tasks on Time

Social Media Usage	Tasks Completed on Time	Tasks Delayed	Total
Daily Users	34	42	76
Occasional Users	22	2	24
Total	56	44	100

A significant relationship exists between frequency of social media use and timely completion of academic tasks. Daily users tend to delay academic work more often.

Table 5: Relationship Between Social Media Multitasking and Academic Performance Level

Multitasking Level	High/Moderate Performance	Low Performance	Total
High Multitasking	30	42	72
Low Multitasking	20	8	28
Total	50	50	100

The calculated value exceeds the table value, indicating a significant association. Higher multitasking is linked with lower academic performance.

Table 6: Relationship Between Social Media Notifications and Study Disruption

Notification Frequency	Study Disrupted	Not Disrupted	Total
Frequent Notifications	48	20	68
Rare Notifications	12	20	32
Total	60	40	100

The chi-square analysis confirms a significant relationship between frequent social media notifications and study disruption.

IX. CONCLUSION

The empirical evidence from this study suggests that social media multitasking is strongly associated with reduced academic productivity among students in the Erode district. Frequent interruptions from social media activities impair focus, hinder deep learning, and reduce study effectiveness. Educational stakeholders should promote digital literacy and strategies to manage multitasking behaviors. Interventions such as scheduled study periods without social media access may help improve academic outcomes.

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