The Influence of Digital Communication on Academic Success Among Sri Lankan Senior Secondary School Students

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Abstract

Digital communication has become an important part of students' everyday lives, shaping how they exchange information, interact with others, access educational resources, and spend their leisure time. Although digital platforms can support learning, their use for non-academic purposes may compete with students' study time and be associated with academic performance. This study examined the use of social media as a form of digital communication among Sri Lankan senior secondary school students, with particular attention to the platforms they used, their purposes for using them, and the relationship between social media use and academic performance. A quantitative research approach was adopted, and data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to 307 Advanced-Level students from the Colombo, Gampaha, and Kalutara districts. Participants were selected using non-probability purposive sampling. The data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The findings showed that 99.7% of respondents used social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and YouTube. Instant messaging, content sharing, and entertainment were among the main purposes of use. Although 12.1% of respondents reported using social media for academic purposes, 80.2% reported using it for non-academic purposes. These categories were not mutually exclusive because respondents could select multiple purposes. A statistically significant but weak negative correlation was found between the duration of social media use and academic performance ($r = -0.117$, $p = 0.030$, two-tailed). Reported adverse effects associated with social media use, including fatigue, headaches, and visual discomfort, also showed a negative correlation with academic performance ($r = -0.253$, $p < 0.01$). These findings indicate that longer periods of social media use and reported adverse effects were associated with lower academic performance among the students surveyed. The study highlights the need to strengthen students' digital literacy, encourage responsible engagement with digital communication platforms, and promote effective time management. Collaboration among schools, parents, and students may help establish a healthier balance between digital engagement and academic responsibilities.

Keywords: *Academic Performance, Digital Communication, Sri Lanka*