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Social media addiction and academic performance in students at the Universidad Nacional de San Martín, Rioja, Peru

Adicción a redes sociales y rendimiento académico en estudiantes de la Universidad Nacional de San Martín, Rioja, Perú

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ABSTRACT

Objective. To determine the relationship between social media addiction and academic performance in students at the Universidad Nacional de San Martín, Rioja, Peru. **Methods.** The study used a quantitative approach, with a descriptive-correlational level and a non-experimental design. The sample was census-based and consisted of 266 students, who were administered two questionnaires; academic records were collected using a document analysis guide. Spearman's rho test was used for data analysis. **Results.** The variable "social media addiction" was classified as moderate in 87.6% of cases. As for the variable "academic performance," it was found to be at a moderate level. The correlation between these variables was -0.143. The two-tailed significance value was 0.020 and was therefore lower than 0.05. **Conclusions.** There is a significant relationship between "social media addiction" and "academic performance" in students at the Universidad Nacional de San Martín.

Keywords: *obsession; personal control; virtual communities; academic achievement; cognitive.*

RESUMEN

Objetivo. Determinar la relación entre la adicción a las redes sociales y el rendimiento académico, en estudiantes de la Universidad Nacional de San Martín, Rioja, Perú. **Métodos.** El enfoque del estudio fue cuantitativo, nivel descriptivo-relacional y diseño no experimental. La muestra fue censal y estuvo conformada por 266 estudiantes, a quienes les fueron administrados dos cuestionarios; recopiló el registro académico mediante la guía de análisis documental. Para el análisis de los datos se usó la prueba rho de Spearman. **Resultados.** La variable "adicción a las redes sociales" contempló la categoría regular en un 87,6 % de los casos. Por el lado de la variable "rendimiento académico" esta se encontró en un nivel regular. La correlación media entre estas variables fue de -0,143. La significancia bilateral fue de 0,020 y, por tanto, menor al 0,05. **Conclusiones.** Existe relación significativa entre la "adicción a las redes sociales" y el "rendimiento académico", en estudiantes de la Universidad Nacional de San Martín.

Palabras clave: *obsesión; control personal; comunidades virtuales; logro académico; cognitivo.*

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INTRODUCTION

Social media addiction refers to excessive, repetitive, and compulsive use of digital platforms, accompanied by difficulties controlling or discontinuing their use, which can cause significant problems in daily life and negatively affect individuals' emotional, social, and functional well-being (Vargas-Serrudo et al., 2021). These problems may lead to various psychological disturbances and adverse effects on students' mental health, particularly emotional regulation and inhibitory control, which are the abilities that enable individuals to regulate impulses and resist the temptation to use social media excessively. In addition, excessive social media use may serve as an escape mechanism from negative emotions (Soares et al., 2023). In this regard, impaired mental health negatively affects self-esteem and satisfaction with daily life while increasing the risk of developing depressive symptoms (Huang, 2022). Academic performance is another factor affected by social media addiction, as uncontrolled use may lead students to sacrifice sleep to remain connected to social media, neglecting social interactions and academic activities (Espinosa et al., 2018).

At the international level, Leon Melendez et al. (2024) report an increase in the habitual use of social media across Latin America in the context of an increasingly digital future. Specifically, 71% of users in Colombia frequently use social media, followed by Argentina (77%), Mexico (87%), and Brazil (89%), while Chile has the highest proportion, with 99% of active users. These figures highlight the widespread use of social media across Latin America. Facebook, in particular, is the most widely used social networking platform among internet users and continues to expand its dominance. Alonso (2017) reports that approximately 191.1 million individuals in the United States are active social media users. Of these, approximately 70.4% use Snapchat, 69% use Pinterest, and 77 million use Instagram, while Facebook accounts for the largest concentration of internet users, with 191.1 million individuals actively interacting through the platform, particularly young adults aged 18 to 34 years.

At the national level, Villanueva (2023) argues that greater use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) is associated with lower development of information literacy competencies and academic task performance, although the relationship between these variables was not statistically significant. Valladolid et al. (2023), in turn, state that social media use through electronic devices facilitates access to information. However, social media addiction may also contribute to various potential problems and significantly disrupt university students' lives.

Camahuali (2023), in a study examining social media use and academic performance among students from the Faculty of Education at a public university in Lima, Peru, found that the proportions associated with social media use were generally below 50%. Specifically, 38.3% of respondents reported a low level of social media use, 46.7% a moderate level, and 15% a high level. Regarding academic performance, 23.3% of students were classified at a low level, 43.3% at a moderate level, and 33.3% at a high level. The study reported an inverse relationship between the variables, suggesting that social media use negatively affects academic performance. Similarly, Diaz (2023), in a study involving university students in Lima, Peru, identified a significant relationship between social media addiction and aggression among students. Likewise, Diaz (2021), in research involving second-semester students enrolled in the Professional Technical Accounting Program at the San José Public Technological Higher Education Institute (IESTP) in Yurimaguas, reported a significant relationship between social media use and academic performance.

Finally, in the city of Rioja, San Martín Department, Peru, a significant increase in social media use has been observed among university students. These platforms are primarily used for social interaction and leisure, and to a much lesser extent as supplementary tools for educational development. This widespread adoption of social media is largely attributable to the ease of access to mobile devices, which affects students' ability to manage their academic activities.

Therefore, the objective of this study was to determine the relationship between social media addiction and academic performance among students at the Rioja branch of the Universidad Nacional de San Martín (UNSM). The study also sought to achieve specific objectives, including identifying students' levels of social media addiction and academic performance, as well as examining the relationship between social media addiction and the dimensions of the academic performance variable.

METHODS

Study design and area

The study employed a non-experimental design and a quantitative approach and was classified as basic research, as its purpose was to address research

questions arising in various real-life situations (Romero et al., 2021). The study had a correlational scope and a cross-sectional design. It was conducted at the Faculty of Education and Humanities of the Universidad Nacional de San Martín, Rioja, during the 2023-II academic semester. The faculty comprises the Early Childhood Education, Primary Education, and Secondary Education programs, as well as the Accounting Program.

Population and sample

The study population consisted of 266 students enrolled in the Early Childhood Education Program at the Rioja branch of the Universidad Nacional de San Martín. The sample included the entire study population and was therefore considered a census-based sample. The inclusion criteria were enrollment in the Early Childhood Education, Primary Education, or Secondary Education programs. Students enrolled in the Accounting Program were excluded.

Variables and data collection instruments

The study variables were "social media addiction" and "academic performance." Both variables were measured using two questionnaires, each consisting of 24 items rated on a Likert scale. The first instrument, designed to assess social media addiction, included the following response options: "Never" (1), "Rarely" (2), "Sometimes" (3), "Almost always" (4), and "Always" (5). The second questionnaire, designed to assess academic performance, used the same response options.

Regarding the dimensions of the first variable, "social media addiction," the instrument comprised 24 items: 10 items assessed the dimension of "obsessive dependence on social media," six items addressed "lack of self-control over social media use," and eight items measured "excessive social media use." Similarly, the questionnaire assessing "academic performance" comprised 24 items, with eight items assigned to each of its three dimensions: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. The following score classification ranges were used for both variables: "High" (89–120), "Moderate" (57–88), and "Low" (24–56).

Both instruments were validated by three experts specializing in the subject matter. In addition, a pilot study was conducted, yielding a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.922 for both variables, indicating high reliability.

Data collection techniques and procedures

The data collection technique was a survey, which allowed data to be organized through systematic procedures to provide practical answers (Baena, 2017). Data collection was conducted after obtaining authorization from the Universidad Nacional de San Martín (UNSM), Rioja. The instruments were administered online using Google Forms and distributed through social media platforms, including WhatsApp, email, and other communication channels.

Students were also consulted regarding data collection and asked to provide informed consent before completing the questionnaires. Subsequently, the data were processed using Microsoft Excel and SPSS version 25 and presented in descriptive and inferential statistical tables.

Data analysis

Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. First, the information was organized and presented in charts, tables, and figures to facilitate its interpretation. Subsequently, inferential statistical procedures were applied to test the hypotheses concerning the study variables and their dimensions. For this purpose, Spearman's rank correlation coefficient (rho) was employed, and data processing was performed using Excel or SPSS version 25.

Additionally, the internal consistency of the results was assessed to ensure the validity of the conclusions. Statistical reliability criteria were applied to strengthen the interpretation of the correlations identified. The combined use of computer software and statistical methods ensured greater precision in organizing the information. Accordingly, the analysis made it possible to identify not only general trends but also significant relationships between the variables under investigation. Finally, the integration of descriptive and inferential techniques provided a more comprehensive and rigorous understanding of the phenomenon studied.

Ethical considerations

This study adhered to essential ethical principles, including intellectual integrity, informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and risk minimization. Intellectual property rights were also respected through appropriate citation and referencing of sources, and the study received approval from the Ethics Committee. Furthermore, the required similarity threshold was observed in accordance with the parameters established by the requesting institution.

The information collected and presented was used exclusively for academic purposes. In this regard, compliance with the principles of respect, confidentiality, and transparency in information management was ensured.

RESULTS

Table 1 presents the results for the variable "social media addiction." Most participants (87.6%; 233 students) were classified at a moderate level, while a minority (12.4%; 33 students) were classified at a high level, and none were classified at a low level.

Regarding the dimensions, the results for "social media obsession" showed that the highest proportion of participants was classified at a moderate level (76.3%; 203 students), while a smaller proportion (6.8%; 18 students) was classified at a low level. However, 16.9% (45 students) were classified at a high level.

For the dimension "lack of personal control over social media use," most participants (71.4%; 190 students) were classified at a moderate level, followed by 15.4% (41 students) at a high level and 13.2% (35 students) at a low level.

Overall, more than 50% of participants were classified at a moderate level for social media addiction and the dimensions assessed. These findings suggest certain tendencies toward frequent social media use, which, in practical terms, may constitute an early warning sign.

Table 1
Social media addiction among students at the Rioja branch of the Universidad Nacional de San Martín, 2023

Variable and dimensions	n = 266	
	fi	%
Social media addiction		
Low	0	0.0
Moderate	233	87.6
High	33	12.4
Dimension: social media obsession		
Low	18	6.8
Moderate	203	76.3
High	45	16.9
Dimension: lack of personal control over social media use		
Low	35	13.2
Moderate	190	71.4
High	41	15.4
Dimension: excessive social media use		
Low	22	8.3
Moderate	196	73.7
High	48	18.0

Table 2 presents the results for the variable "academic performance." Most participants (78.2%; 208 students) were classified at a moderate level, while 13.5% (36 students) were classified at a low level, and a smaller group comprising 8.3% (22 students) was also classified at a low level.

Similarly, most participants were classified at a moderate level across the dimensions. For example, in the cognitive dimension, 78.2% (208 students) were classified at a moderate level, 18.8% (42 students) at a high level, and 14.3% (38 students) at a low level.

In the affective dimension, 63.2% (168 students) were classified at a moderate level, 19.2% (51 students) at a low level, and 17.7% (47 students) at a high level.

Finally, in the psychomotor dimension, 63.2% (168 students) were classified at a moderate level, 21.1% (56 students) at a low level, and 15.4% (41 students) at a high level.

These results suggest that most students were classified at a moderate level, indicating a predominance of intermediate academic performance. Likewise, the cognitive dimension showed a predominance of moderate performance, with students also represented at high and low levels.

Table 2
Academic performance among students at the Rioja branch of the Universidad Nacional de San Martín, 2023

Variable and dimensions	n = 266	
	fi	%
Academic performance		
Low	36	13.5
Moderate	208	78.2
High	22	8.3
Cognitive dimension		
Low	38	14.3
Moderate	186	69.9
High	42	15.8
Affective dimension		
Low	51	19.2
Moderate	168	63.2
High	47	17.7
Psychomotor dimension		
Low	56	21.1
Moderate	169	63.5
High	41	15.4

Table 3 presents the results of the relationship between "social media addiction" and "academic performance," including the dimensions of the latter variable. A weak, statistically significant negative

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Table 3

Relationship between social media addiction and academic performance and its dimensions among students in the study sample

Variable	Social media addiction	Academic performance		
		Cognitive	Affective	Psychomotor
Spearman's rho	-0.143	-0.132	-0.131	-0.141
p-value	0.020	0.032	0.032	0.021

correlation was found between the two variables (Spearman's rho = –0.143; $p = 0.020 < 0.05$). Similarly, the correlations between social media addiction and the dimensions of academic performance were also negative and statistically significant.

DISCUSSION

This study made it possible to analyze and interpret the findings in relation to the research objectives, previous studies, and theoretical frameworks. Social media addiction among university students was predominantly classified as moderate, accounting for 87.6% of participants. This finding suggests that students from the Faculty of Education and Humanities frequently turn to social media to avoid their academic responsibilities. Such dependence may lead to withdrawal symptoms characterized by distress, anger, and frustration when access to these platforms is restricted (Quispe and Luicho, 2023).

This finding is consistent with the study conducted by Yana-Salluca et al. (2022), which identified excessive social media use among students who remained connected for several hours a day, resulting in anxiety and concern. Similarly, Chávez and Coaquira (2022) found that 48% of students at the Tsáchila Higher Technical Center demonstrated a moderate level of excessive social media use, indicating difficulties in completing their academic activities. Likewise, Roque et al. (2022) reported that 49% of participants were classified at a moderate level of excessive social media use. Conversely, the present findings differ from those reported by Reynoso (2022), who found that 68.3% of students enrolled in the National Online High School Service exhibited low levels of excessive social media use.

From the perspective of the academic self-regulation theory proposed by Pintrich and Schunk (2002), academic performance largely depends on students' ability to plan, monitor, and regulate their own learning. In the present study, academic performance was predominantly moderate, with 78.2% of participants classified at this level. Only a small proportion achieved high academic performance (8.3%), while the remaining 13.5% were classified at a low level. These findings are consistent with the observations of Pérez and Gardey (2023), who suggest that this pattern reflects students' difficulties in achieving the academic averages required to complete their academic term, as leisure activities, social media use, and other factors may negatively affect academic performance.

Chávez and Coaquira (2022) reported that students at a higher education institution in Ecuador exhibited moderate levels of academic performance, which affected their academic stress and professional development. In contrast, Roque et al. (2022) reported that 49.7% of students exhibited moderate levels of aggression, suggesting that social media addiction may affect academic performance and increase the likelihood of aggressive behaviors that negatively affect mental health. In this context, the association between social media addiction and academic performance has been described as inverse (Bandura, 2006; Echeburúa and Riquenses, 2012; Forgas et al., 2009; Quispe, 2023). However, the findings of the present study only partially support this theoretical perspective. Similarly, Salari et al. (2025), in their study on social media adoption and academic performance, emphasized that social media offers various opportunities but also presents several risks. Excessive social media use may lead to addiction and negatively affect academic performance.

At the local level, Chávez and Coaquira (2022) reported that social media addiction and academic performance among students at the Rioja branch of the Universidad Nacional de San Martín in 2023 were not significantly associated ($p = 0.146 > 0.05$), although the correlation was negative (rho = –0.089). This suggests a tendency toward lower academic performance with greater social media use, although the association was not statistically significant. Similarly, Meléndez (2022), in a study examining the association between excessive social media use and behavior, identified a statistically significant relationship with students' attitudes, reporting a moderate positive correlation (rho = 0.429; $p = 0.000 < 0.05$).

Furthermore, Hamam et al. (2024) and Alhrahsheh and Al Majali (2023) reported a significant negative relationship between social media addiction and academic performance, indicating that higher levels of problematic use are associated with poorer academic performance, reduced concentration, and lower rates of assignment completion. Moreover, the consistent negative correlation reported internationally, regardless of cultural context, supports the identification of addictive social media use as a cross-cutting academic risk factor (Salari et al., 2025). Erduran Tekin (2024) also noted that social media addiction affects not only grade point averages but also intermediate variables such as self-regulation, self-discipline, and time management, which influence academic outcomes. Similarly, academic engagement tends to decrease when students exhibit high levels of social media dependence, negatively affecting motivation, active classroom participation, and overall academic performance (Landa-Blanco et al., 2024; Roque Herrera et al., 2025). Anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem may also act as mediators of the relationship between social media addiction and academic performance, suggesting that this phenomenon is multifactorial rather than exclusively behavioral (Landa-Blanco et al., 2024; Mou et al., 2024).

Other Latin American studies have shown that social media addiction significantly contributes to lower grade point averages and increased distracting behaviors during study activities (Morán Murillo et al., 2025). In addition, several studies indicate that excessive social media use negatively affects study habits and sleep quality, both of which have implications for university students' academic performance (Islamiyyah et al., 2021). Some studies have identified psychoeducational interventions that may mitigate the negative effects of problematic social media use by promoting emotional regulation and time management strategies (Dufola and Ciftci, 2025). Furthermore, social media addiction has been identified as a significant predictor of poor academic performance, supporting recommendations for institutional prevention programs, digital literacy initiatives, and interventions aimed at strengthening self-regulatory competencies (Hamam et al., 2024; Salari et al., 2025).

The reviewed studies on social media addiction and academic performance also indicate that social anxiety may increase social media dependence, indirectly affecting academic outcomes through reduced academic engagement (Mou et al., 2024).

The findings of the present study show that both social media addiction and academic performance were predominantly classified at moderate levels, suggesting a condition of vulnerable stability. The negative and statistically significant correlation between these variables indicates that intensive use of digital platforms may represent a factor that compromises students' academic performance. This finding strengthens the relevance of the study by highlighting the importance of implementing preventive measures and pedagogical strategies aimed at promoting responsible social media use and improving academic performance.

Several limitations should be acknowledged when interpreting the findings of this study on social media addiction and academic performance among students at the Universidad Nacional de San Martín, Rioja. The cross-sectional design precludes the establishment of causal relationships, as associations were assessed at a single point in time. The use of self-report questionnaires may introduce social desirability bias, since participants may provide responses that portray themselves favorably. Furthermore, the sample was restricted to a single institution, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other university settings in Peru. External factors, including study habits, family support, socioeconomic conditions, and emotional well-being, were not controlled for and may influence both academic performance and social media use. These limitations should be considered when assessing the validity of the findings.

The cultural validity of the instruments represents an additional limitation, as the measurement scales may not accurately reflect the specific characteristics of the Peruvian context. Moreover, although the correlation between the variables was statistically significant, its magnitude was weak, suggesting the involvement of other relevant factors not included in the analysis. This highlights the need to broaden the methodological approaches used in future research by incorporating longitudinal studies capable of examining how the phenomenon evolves over time. Complementary qualitative methods, such as interviews and focus groups, are also recommended to gain a deeper understanding of students' experiences. Acknowledging these limitations strengthens the study by promoting transparency and identifying new research directions that may contribute to a better understanding of the relationship between social media use and academic performance in higher education.

The findings suggest that social media addiction and academic performance are interrelated in ways that may affect students' academic progress and even their mental health (Pérez and Gómez, 2023). In some educational settings, a degree of

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social media dependence has been observed, with students spending several hours a day connected to these platforms, resulting in anxiety and concern. Educational authorities and teachers should consider these behaviors when developing strategies to improve students' academic performance and well-being.

Finally, several limitations arose during the research process, including financial constraints, difficulties in accessing relevant information, and time restrictions, all of which affected the implementation of the study. In this regard, national, regional, and local educational authorities should consider these challenges and promote more favorable conditions for conducting research, including access to competitive research funding and training in the use of international scientific databases.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study demonstrate a statistically significant relationship between social media addiction and academic performance among students at the Rioja branch of the Universidad Nacional de San Martín. Nevertheless, the magnitude of this relationship was weak ($r = -0.143$), indicating a limited association between the variables examined. Although the results suggest that greater social media use may be associated with slight variations in academic performance, these findings should be interpreted cautiously, avoiding causal interpretations or broad generalizations.

Finally, the associations between social media addiction and the dimensions of academic performance were also statistically significant and negative. In other words, greater social media use was associated with lower performance in the affective dimension, with similar associations also observed in psychomotor skills.

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HJMN: Conceptualization, investigation, project administration, software, and writing – original draft.

JHMD: Funding acquisition.

MEMS: Data curation, methodology, resources, supervision, and writing – review and editing.

OJZI: Formal analysis and visualization.

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