

The paradox of switching social medias: A mixed-method study of students' academic performance and social fatigue

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><i>Keywords:</i> academic achievement digital literacy education quality social fatigue social media</p>	<p>This study investigates the relationships among social media switching behavior, social fatigue, and academic performance among Generation Z university students. Despite the pervasive use of social media among this demographic, there is a lack of understanding of how social media switching affects academic outcomes and well-being. To address this research gap, a mixed-methods approach with a cross-sectional design was employed, analyzing data from a survey of 200 first-year Communication Science students in the State University of Surabaya (Unesa), Indonesia. The results reveal a statistically significant positive correlation between frequent social media account switching and higher academic performance, but no significant relationships between social media switching and social fatigue, or between social fatigue and academic performance. By understanding these collectivist dynamics between social media usage, academic performance, and social fatigue, this will provide valuable insights for educators and policymakers to develop strategies that promote a healthier balance between digital engagement and academic responsibilities.</p>

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Introduction

Generation Z (Gen Z), the generation of digital natives born from the late 1990s to the early 2010s, is known for their extensive use of social media. Their communication patterns, social interactions, and worldview are greatly influenced by their significant presence on social media platforms (Becker, 2022). Social media has become a crucial part of their everyday lives, serving as their primary means of connection, self-expression through emoji, sharing news, and staying informed about job opportunities (Kümpel, Karnowski, & Keyling, 2015; Stark & Crawford, 2015; Trang et al., 2023). As they transition from high school and enter university, Generation Z faces the challenges of adapting to new academic environments, campus cultures, social dynamics, and increased independence. Consequently, their use of social media continues throughout their university years.

Platforms such as Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok cater to a global audience by providing visually engaging and easily consumable content (Duffett, 2017; Alhabash & Ma, 2017). These platforms offer various features such as photo and video sharing, live streaming, short-form content, and instant messaging, aligning with Generation Z's preference for visually captivating and easily consumable media. According to Gillespie (2015), these platforms use algorithms to curate images and posts, enhancing user engagement. Generation Z's active presence on social media has led to the beginning of new digital trends and phenomena that organizations, including universities, must take into account (Benthaus, Risius, & Beck, 2016). They actively participate in creating and consuming user-generated content, engaging in challenges, memes, and viral trends. Influencers and social media content creators play a significant role in shaping Generation Z's interests and preferences as

they expand their social and cultural capital as students today (Zepke & Leach, 2010).

Furthermore, social media acts as a platform for Generation Z to express their opinions, advocate for social causes, and pursue social change. Bali et al. (2022) noted that this dynamic is supported by the relative freedom social media offers. They are vocal about important issues, for instance climate change, racial equality, human rights, and mental health, using social media as a tool for activism and raising awareness. However, while social media offers chances for connection and self-expression, it also presents challenges such as online harassment, privacy concerns, and the pressure to maintain a carefully curated online persona (Nguyen et al., 2021). Understanding Generation Z's connection with social media is crucial for businesses, marketers, and researchers as it provides insights into their preferences, consumption habits, and communication patterns, facilitating the development of effective engagement and communication strategies.

Research conducted by Yin et al. (2021) has brought attention to how social media platforms are significantly distracting Generation Z university students. The continuous flow of notifications, updates, and entertainment options interrupts their focus and makes it difficult for them to study effectively. The addictive nature of social media complicates their ability to control their usage during study sessions. In addition to being distracting, social media also has an influence on students' emotional well-being and mental health, which can influence their academic performance. Pradhan (2022) has identified negative experiences such as cyberbullying, social comparison, and the fear of missing out (FOMO) as contributing to information overload, increased stress, anxiety, and reduced self-esteem. These adverse effects can impair concentration, motivation, and

overall academic achievement (Malik et al., 2021). Furthermore, Kalogeropoulos et al. (2017) have observed that these impacts are worsened by active engagement across multiple social media platforms.

One significant outcome of these dynamics is social fatigue, which arises from the overwhelming amount of information generated by constantly switching between different social media platforms (Xiao et al., 2022). Although social media use can sometimes serve as a coping mechanism for boredom, it unexpectedly leads to communication overload and emotional exhaustion (Whelan, Islam, & Brooks, 2020; Sheng et al., 2023). Each platform delivers a distinct stream of content, updates, and news, leading to an excessive influx of information. Gen Z's interaction with multiple platforms amplifies this volume, making it challenging to process and keep up with the vast amount of content encountered. This phenomenon is driven by a desire to be seen and see others on social media (Marwick & Boyd, 2011). Consequently, this overload can cause cognitive exhaustion, reduced attention span, and overall diminished well-being (Baj-Rogowska, 2023). The pressure to maintain a polished online presence further exacerbates social fatigue. Constant exposure to carefully curated content fosters social comparison and the fear of missing out, leading to unrealistic expectations and feelings of inadequacy as individuals strive to meet perceived standards.

This study aims to explore the connection between Gen Z university students' behavior of switching between social media platforms, their academic performance, and the potential impact of social fatigue. By examining these factors, the research seeks to comprehend in what way social media use affects academic success and well-being in this digitally connected generation. Given the complexities of social media's impact on concentration, emotional well-being, and

information processing, this study will offer insights into how Gen Z students can manage their social media use to reduce its undesirable effects on academic performance and mental health. Understanding these relationships will aid in developing strategies to improve students' self-regulation, decrease social fatigue, and encourage a healthier balance between digital engagement and academic responsibilities.

Method

The research utilized a mixed-methods approach combined with a cross-sectional design to explore the interplay between social media switching behavior, social fatigue, and academic achievement among first-year university students. This methodology, as highlighted by Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, and Turner (2007), is beneficial for integrating both quantitative and qualitative research paradigms. This approach leverages the strengths of each methodology, providing a richer and more comprehensive understanding of the studied phenomena. By utilizing mixed methods, the research aimed to offer a nuanced perspective on the complex relationships between digital behavior and academic outcomes.

For sampling, the study employed the mixed-methods sampling strategies outlined by Teddlie and Yu (2007). A total of 200 students of the Department of Communication Science, State University of Surabaya (Unesa), Indonesia from the cohort of 2022 were selected for the study. These students were divided into five classes to ensure a diverse and representative sample. To address sample homogeneity and ensure a varied representation of social media usage, the study focused on observing approximately ten students from each class who were known to use multiple social media accounts. This selection was based on the criterion of having different account

names for each social media platform, which provided insight into diverse switching behaviors across various platforms.

In addition to the class-based observation, a convenience sample of 23 students of the Department of Communication Science, State University of Surabaya (Unesa), Indonesia was recruited to complete self-administered surveys. These surveys were designed to measure three primary areas: social media switching behavior, social fatigue, and academic achievement. Social media switching behavior was assessed by examining the frequency and patterns of platform usage. This measurement captured how often and in what ways participants switched between different social media platforms. Social fatigue was evaluated through indicators of cognitive exhaustion, attention span, and overall well-being, providing a holistic view of the participants' mental and emotional states related to their social media use. Academic achievement was gauged through self-reported grades and overall academic performance, offering an understanding of how social media and fatigue might influence students' educational outcomes.

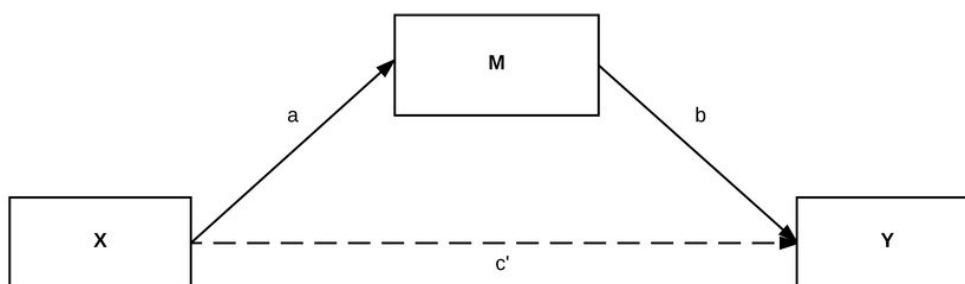
Descriptive statistics were utilized to analyze the data collected from the surveys. This statistical approach allowed the researchers to explore the distribution of variables and identify potential correlations

among social media switching behavior, social fatigue, and academic achievement. By summarizing the data effectively, descriptive statistics provided a clear picture of key patterns and associations, enabling the researchers to draw preliminary conclusions about the relationships between the variables.

Code. Script for analysis using Rstudio.

```
#1 set working directory
setwd("D:/Folder Document_2023")
#2 reading the data
library("readr")
library("psych")
library("semPlot")
library("SEMgraph")
library("lavaan")
#3 processing
df <- read_csv2 ("data.csv")
str(df)
specmod <- "
#path c' (direct effect)
academic ~ c*switching
#path a
fatigue ~ a*switching
#path b
academic ~ b*fatigue
#indirect effect (a*b)
ab := a*b"
fitmod <- sem(specmod, data=df)
fitMeasures(fitmod)
fitMeasures(fitmod, "cfi")
```

Figure 1. Conceptual diagram in which Social Fatigue (mediator) mediates the effect of Switching Social Media (predictor variable) on Academic Achievement (outcome variable)




```
fitMeasures(fitmod, c("chisq", "df",
"pvalue", "cfi", "rmsea"))
fitMeasures(fitmod, c("chisq", "df",
"pvalue", "cfi", "rmsea"), output =
"matrix")
print(fitMeasures(fitmod, c("chisq",
"df", "pvalue", "cfi", "rmsea"), output
= "text"), add.h0 = TRUE)
parameterEstimates(fitmod2,
ci=TRUE, level=0.95, boot.
ci.type="perc")
semPaths(fitmod2, "std", rotation=1,
layout = "tree", curvature = 2,
nCharNodes = 0, nDigits = 3, sizeMan
= 10, sizeInt = 5, sizeLat = 5, edge.
label.cex=1.2, exoVar = FALSE,
fade=FALSE)
summary(fitmod, rsquare=TRUE)
```

The primary analysis of this study involved utilizing regression analysis in the R software to conduct a mediated path analysis. The aim was to examine the significance and strength of the direct and indirect effects of switching account behavior on academic achievement, with social fatigue acting as the mediator. The interpretation of the findings was conducted in relation to the research question, and the discussion centered on the implications of switching account behavior and social fatigue for understanding their impact on academic achievement. Ethical considerations were given due importance throughout the study, ensuring participant confidentiality and adherence to informed consent procedures. The study was concluded with a comprehensive research report that detailed the methodology,

results, and conclusions, providing valuable insights into the intricate interplay between switching account behavior, social fatigue, and academic achievement.

Results and Discussion

Between social media switching, academic achievement, and social fatigue

According to MacKinnon et al. (2002), path analysis results typically begin with a description of the data statistics. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the variables. The mean score for switching social media is 4.04, with a standard deviation of 0.98. The median score is 4, and the trimmed mean (at 10% trimming level) is 4.11. The distribution of the switching social media variable is slightly left-skewed, with a skewness value of -0.36. The range of switching scores is 3, ranging from a minimum of 2 to a maximum of 5. The mean academic achievement score is 3.61, with a standard deviation of 0.89. The median score is 4, and the trimmed mean is 3.63. The distribution of the academic achievement variable is nearly symmetrical, with a skewness value of 0.06. The range of academic achievement scores is 3, ranging from a minimum of 2 to a maximum of 5. The mean social fatigue score is 3.65, with a standard deviation of 0.78. The median score is 3, and the trimmed mean is 3.58. The distribution of the social fatigue variable is slightly right-skewed, with a skewness value of 0.63. The range of fatigue scores is 2,

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the data

Variable	Mean	SD	Median	Trimmed	MAD	Min	Max	Range	Skew
Switching Social Media	4.04	0.98	4	4.11	1.48	2	5	3	-0.36
Academic Achievement	3.61	0.89	4	3.63	1.48	2	5	3	0.06
Social Fatigue	3.65	0.78	3	3.58	0.00	3	5	2	0.63

Source: Authors' Data (2024)

ranging from a minimum of 3 to a maximum of 5.

In the regression analysis, as shown in Table 2, the following results were obtained. Firstly, the relationship between switching social media and academic achievement was examined. The estimate for the path coefficient (c) is 0.433, with a standard error of 0.158. The z-value for testing the significance of the coefficient is 2.743, and the p-value indicates statistical significance ($p = 0.006$). The standardized path coefficient (Std.lv) is 0.433, and the standardized coefficient (Std.all), representing the strength of the relationship, is 0.474. Secondly, the relationship between switching social media and social fatigue was explored. The estimate for the path coefficient (a) is 0.207, with a standard error of 0.160. The z-value for testing the significance of the coefficient is 1.298, and the p-value suggests that the relationship is not statistically significant ($p = 0.194$). The standardized path coefficient (Std.lv) is 0.207, and the standardized coefficient (Std.all), indicating the strength

of the relationship, is 0.261. Lastly, the relationship between social fatigue and academic achievement was investigated. The estimate for the path coefficient (b) is 0.302, with a standard error of 0.199. The z-value for testing the significance of the coefficient is 1.516, and the p-value suggests that the relationship is not statistically significant ($p = 0.129$). The standardized path coefficient (Std.lv) is 0.302, and the standardized coefficient (Std.all), representing the strength of the relationship, is 0.262.

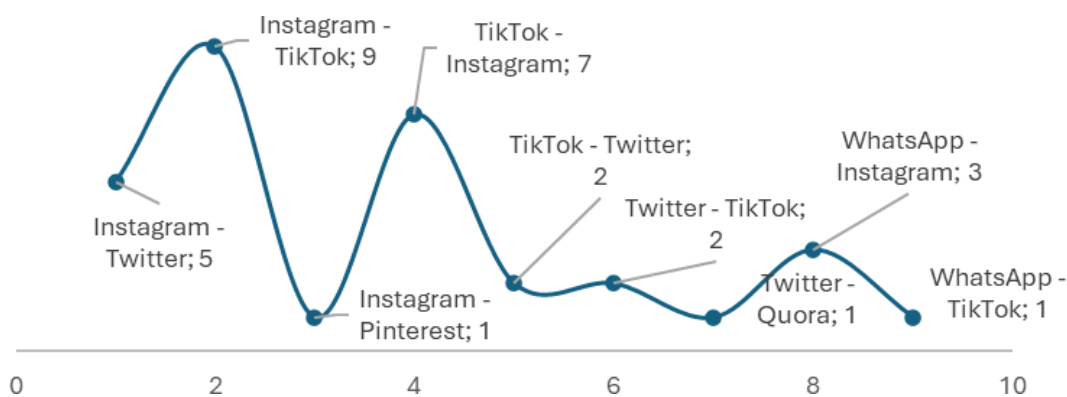
These regression results offer insights into the relationships among the variables in the path analysis model. The significant relationship between switching social media and academic achievement suggests a positive association between these two variables. However, the relationships between switching social media and social fatigue, as well as between social fatigue and academic achievement, are not statistically significant, indicating that these variables may not have a substantial impact on each other.

Table 2. Regression analysis of the data

Variables	Estimate	Std.Err	z-value	($> z $)	Std.lv	Std.all
academic achievement ~ switching social media (c)	0.433	0.158	2.743	0.006	0.433	0.474
social fatigue ~ switching social media (a)	0.207	0.160	1.298	0.194	0.207	0.261
academic achievement ~ social fatigue (b)	0.302	0.199	1.516	0.129	0.302	0.262

Source: Authors' Data (2024)

Figure 1. Social media switching frequency



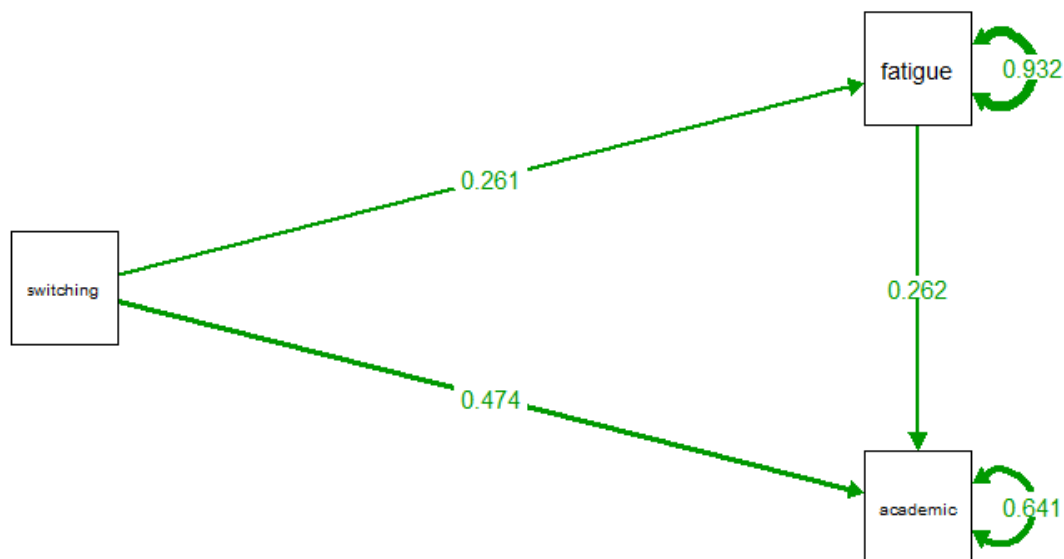
The data presented in Figure 1 provides a detailed breakdown of the social media switching frequency among the participants. The table reveals that there are a total of 30 switches between various social media platforms. The most frequent switch is from Instagram to TikTok, which occurs 9 times, accounting for 25.7% of the total switches. This is followed by switches from TikTok to Instagram, which occur 7 times, representing 20.0% of the total switches. The least frequent switches are from Instagram to Pinterest, Twitter to Quora, and WhatsApp to TikTok, each occurring only once and accounting for 2.9% of the total switches.

The switching pattern reveals that Instagram is the most common starting point for switching, with 15 switches (50% of the total switches), while TikTok is the most common destination for switching, with 13 switches (43.3% of the total switches). The data also highlights the reciprocal switching between platforms, such as TikTok to Twitter and Twitter to TikTok, each occurring 2 times and accounting for 5.7% of the total switches. Additionally, there are 3 switches

from WhatsApp to Instagram, representing 8.6% of the total switches. Overall, the data provides a comprehensive understanding of the social media switching frequency and patterns among the participants.

The first significant finding of the study is the observed positive relationship between academic achievement and the frequency with which students switch social media accounts. This association, which was statistically significant, suggests that students who frequently switch between social media platforms tend to perform better academically. This counterintuitive result aligns with Qiao’s (2019) perspective, which posits that the interactive nature of social media fosters emotional and social engagement. This engagement can enhance cognitive functions that are beneficial for academic performance. By engaging in dynamic, conversation-based interactions, students may stimulate cognitive processes that translate into better academic outcomes. The lines between self-directed learning and spontaneous, incidental learning are unclear in participatory digital cultures, as

Figure 2. Path diagram of the mediation analysis model in which Social Fatigue (mediator) mediates the effect of Switching Social Media (predictor variable) on Academic Achievement (outcome variable).



Source: Authors’ Data (2024)

Greenhow and Lewin (2016) have argued. In the collectivist culture of Indonesia, students might find satisfaction in their switching behavior on social media (Sulastri, 2010). This satisfaction is especially relevant in informal settings where digital interactions contribute to learning experiences. Social media platforms are designed to foster a culture of participation, allowing users to engage in continuous exchanges of ideas and information, potentially enhancing the learning environment and complementing formal academic activities. Consequently, frequent switching of social media accounts may expose students to a wider range of educational and informational resources, positively impacting their academic performance.

The second discovery of the study examines the connection between social fatigue and the frequent switching of social media accounts. Although a slight positive correlation was found, it did not reach statistical significance. This discovery is in line with Miller's (2017) suggestion that the weak correlation may result from increased communication that lacks substantive dialogue. Essentially, while there is some evidence that frequent switching could lead to social fatigue, the relationship is not strong enough to make definite conclusions.

This discovery suggests that social fatigue, while potentially affected by social media switching, is not primarily caused by this behavior. Instead, other factors are likely to have a greater impact on social fatigue. For example, Sobaih et al. (2016) found that the type of content encountered on different platforms plays a significant role in social fatigue. Content quality, relevance, and fear of missing out (FOMO) can influence how overwhelmed users feel from the information they come across (Dhir et al., 2018). Furthermore, Zheng and Ling (2021) and Sunil et al. (2021) further clarify that

social fatigue can be influenced at various levels such as individual, relational, and environmental. These studies emphasize that the nature of social media interactions and content plays a crucial role in shaping an individual's overall sense of fatigue and well-being.

The third main discovery investigates the possible link between academic success and social exhaustion. Although a slight positive correlation between these two factors was discovered, it did not achieve statistical significance. This result indicates that social exhaustion alone may not significantly impact academic performance, indicating that other factors may have a more crucial role in determining academic results. Solidjonov's research (2021) suggests that engaging in multiple activities, such as using social media while studying, can greatly hinder academic performance. Distractions from social media can disrupt focus, thus diminishing the effectiveness of studying. This conclusion highlights the importance of examining how different distractions, particularly those from social media, affect students' capacity to concentrate and succeed academically. Solidjonov's study emphasizes the adverse effects of multitasking on concentration and academic efficiency.

Boateng and Amankwaa (2016) argue that relying solely on social media for academic advancement is inadequate. They stress that while social media can offer valuable resources and information, it cannot replace the need for effective study habits, time management skills, and other crucial academic practices. Their study's findings, which indicate no significant correlation between social exhaustion and academic success, support this perspective. This implies that academic achievement is influenced by a wide array of factors beyond just social exhaustion, underscoring the multifaceted nature of academic success.

Factors influencing social media switching and social fatigue

Social media switching, a phenomenon increasingly prevalent among digital natives, is influenced by several factors beyond mere social fatigue. One key factor is the desire to maintain multiple online identities or personas. According to Kang (2022), Generation Z, who are adept at navigating various social media platforms, often juggle different online personas for distinct purposes. They might use one platform to connect with friends and another to explore creative interests or professional opportunities. This complex management of multiple digital identities requires careful balancing to safeguard privacy and maintain consistency. The need to curate different aspects of one's online presence across various platforms contributes to the burden of social media switching, which can lead to social fatigue as individuals strive to manage and protect their diverse roles and personal information.

Information relevance and overload also play significant roles in social media switching. Zhang, Ding, and Ma (2022) emphasize that users engage with both leisure and work-related content, which can lead to an overwhelming influx of information. Social media platforms constantly deliver streams of updates, news, and content tailored to individual interests. For Generation Z, who frequently traverse multiple platforms, this relentless flow of information can become particularly daunting. Li et al. (2024) find that information overload from continuous exposure to diverse content can result in cognitive exhaustion, diminished attention spans, and adverse effects on overall well-being. The constant bombardment of updates and notifications can lead to heightened anxiety and a sense of being overwhelmed, further exacerbating social fatigue.

The pressure to maintain an idealized online image also contributes significantly to social media-related stress. Generation Z is frequently exposed to highly curated and polished content, which fosters social comparison and a fear of missing out (FOMO). The idealized portrayals of others' lives create unrealistic expectations and can induce feelings of inadequacy. Research indicates that this pressure is particularly intense among individuals who lack self-control over their social media usage (Dhir et al., 2024; Gutierrez-Aguilar et al., 2024; Singh et al., 2023; Świątek, 2023). The effects of social fatigue are more pronounced in students and individuals who struggle with regulating their online behavior. This underscores the importance of developing healthy social media habits and self-discipline to mitigate the negative impacts of constant online engagement and maintain a balanced perspective.

Moreover, social media switching has implications for social connections and interactions. The frequent transition between different platforms or accounts can disrupt the continuity of relationships and communication, leading to a sense of disconnection and isolation. For instance, moving from Instagram to Twitter in search of more engaging content can fragment interactions and make it challenging to build deep, meaningful connections. This fragmentation can intensify feelings of social fatigue as individuals struggle to keep track of various conversations and relationships across multiple platforms.

Individual resilience, self-regulation, and coping strategies also influence how social media switching affects social fatigue. While some individuals may develop effective methods to manage the demands and negative effects of frequent platform transitions, others may find it more challenging to cope. Those who succeed in

navigating these challenges often employ strategies that help them balance their online and offline lives, maintain their mental well-being, and foster genuine connections despite the complexities of modern digital interactions.

Conclusion

The results of the study indicated a strong positive connection between frequent switching of social media accounts and academic success, indicating that students who frequently change their social media accounts tend to perform better academically. This trend can be attributed to the collectivist culture in Indonesia, which prioritizes social harmony and cooperation, resulting in a feeling of satisfaction and fulfillment among students when they switch between social media accounts. This positive sentiment can lead to improved academic performance as students become more comfortable managing their online identities and responsibilities.

However, the observed link between social fatigue and switching social media accounts was only marginally positive and did not reach statistical significance, suggesting that the association between social fatigue and switching social media may not be substantial and could be due to chance. Similarly, while there was a small positive connection between social fatigue and academic achievement, it did not reach statistical significance. These findings imply that social fatigue may not have a significant impact on academic performance, highlighting the potential influence of other factors on students' academic outcomes. The study also highlighted the significant influence of social media on Generation Z, who are enthusiastic users of platforms like Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, and WhatsApp. These platforms offer visually appealing and easily consumable content, which aligns with the preferences of Generation Z.

Additionally, social media allows Generation Z to express their opinions, advocate for social causes, and seek information. Therefore, the engagement of Generation Z with social media platforms and their switching behavior has implications for academic achievement.

While a positive connection was identified between switching social media accounts and academic achievement, the connections between social fatigue and both switching social media and academic achievement were not statistically significant. Understanding the intricate relationship between social media use, switching behavior, social fatigue, and academic achievement is crucial for developing effective engagement and communication strategies tailored to Generation Z. Further research and exploration of these dynamics are necessary to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the topic. Thus, the findings suggest that frequent switching of social media accounts may have a positive impact on academic achievement, but social fatigue may not be a significant factor in this relationship. The results also emphasize the importance of considering the unique characteristics of Generation Z and their social media use when developing strategies to improve academic outcomes.

Declaration of Ownership

This article is our original work.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest to declare in this article.

Ethical Clearance

This study was approved by the institution.

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