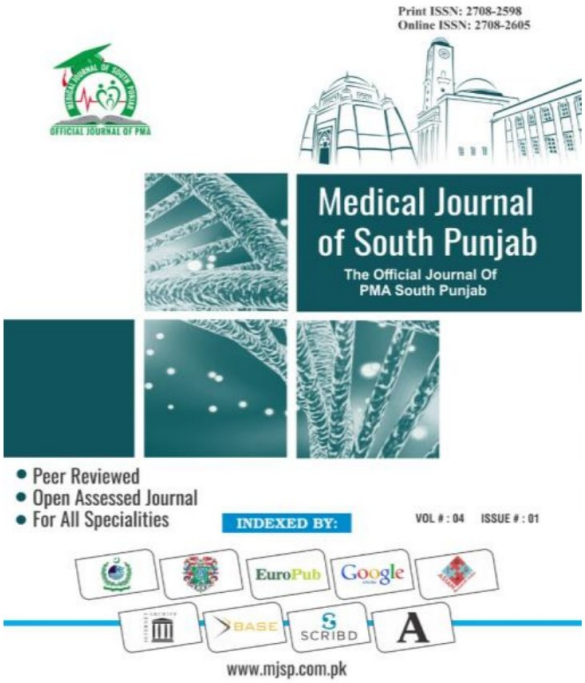
ISSN (E): 2708-2601
ISSN (P): 2708-2598

Medical Journal of South Punjab
Article DOI:10.61581/MJSP.VOL04/02/06
Volume 4, Issue 2, 2023



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Publication History

Received: Oct, 06 2023 Revised: Oct 16 2023
Accepted: Oct 17, 2023 Published: Dec 30, 2023

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Conflict of Interest:

Author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

Acknowledgment:

No Funding received.

Citation: Bibi H, Samar V, Shah SAH, Qureshi I, Sarwar S, Parveen F. Relationship Between Social Media Use and Professional Identity Development in Undergraduate Nursing Students. Medical Journal of South Punjab. 2023 Dec 30; 4(2):56-62.

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An official publication of
Medteach Private Limited, Multan, Pakistan.
Email: farman@mjsp.com.pk, Website: https://mjsp.com.pk/index.php/mjsp

Medical Journal of South Punjab
Volume 4, Issue 2, 2023; pp: 56-62
Original Article

Relationship Between Social Media Use and Professional Identity Development in Undergraduate Nursing Students

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ABSTRACT

Objective: *To examine the link between undergraduate nursing students' use of social media and the formation of their professional identities.*

Methods: *Cross-sectional study was conducted at people's Nursing School, LUMHS, Jamshoro during the period of May 15,2023 to June 10,2023. A questionnaire was adopted form Muna Alharbi et.al, study conducted at Saudi Arabia, was distributed to 162 students to collect data. Descriptive analysis, including frequencies, percentages, and medians, was performed, along with non-parametric tests to examine relationships in the questions.*

Results: *Out of 162 participants, the majority had high or very high professional identity levels (48.8% and 37.0% respectively). Those who used social media for education had higher professional identity scores (p = 0.001), and participants with more years of study also had higher scores (p = 0.028). Hours of social media use (3 to 5.5 hours) were significantly related to professional identity scores (p=0.029).*

Conclusion: *Social media has a positive impact on the formation of professional identity among nursing students of undergraduate level. However, integrating use of social media in curriculum of nursing education has been slow. Proper guidance to students on using social media for professional growth is needed.*

Keywords: *[Correlational, Nursing education, Nursing Students, Professional Identity, Social media, Undergraduate students]*

1. INTRODUCTION

Nursing professional identity is defined as how nursing students see themselves becoming nurses in the future[1,2]. social media, abbreviated as SM, is an online platform where individuals create accounts, connect with others, and share content[1,3]. Today's social media platforms are essentially social networking sites, enabling users to generate content and connect with their network[3]. Professionals and learners in healthcare education have found value in using social media (SM). These platforms offer a distinct way for both general and specialized learning, this is true for undergraduate nursing students, who are active users of SM[4]. Lots of nursing students in college have a favorable view of using social media[5]. However, we still don't know how using social media affects these students' professional identity development[6]. To explore understanding of this connection can help educators and institutions better prepare future nurses for their roles and responsibilities in the healthcare field. It can also shed light on the potential benefits and challenges of social media in nursing education and practice.

Over the last two decades, user-generated content, including social media encompasses Internet-based tools facilitating real-time connection, collaboration, and communication[7]. In the literature review, it is evident that the majority of studies have concentrated on specific social media platforms that are commonly used by healthcare providers. These platforms include WhatsApp/WeChat, Facebook , Twitter/Weibo , YouTube , Instagram , LinkedIn , Podcast , and Wikipedia [8].

Online interactive platforms reshape nursing student communication, with academic faculty increasingly using social media for student interaction[9]. SM usage has demonstrated potential in enhancing teamwork, self-improvement, and real-time information sharing[4]. One research shows 60% of reviewed doctors and 65% percent of surveyed nurses have acknowledged interest in using social networks for professional purposes[9]. Nurses around the world share commonalities but also have unique cultural traits related to care and professional practices. Professional identity development is a diverse and individual experience, shaped by personal perspectives[10]. Numerous factors shape the formation of a nursing professional identity. These encompass the work setting, education level, job prospects, cultural norms, gender-related aspects, caregiving skills, and media portrayals of nurses[10,11,12].

The influence of social media (SM) on nursing students' professional identity (PI) is an intriguing field, with potential benefits but uncertain outcomes. While SM shows promise in fostering PI, its precise impact remains unclear[12]. Encouraging students to utilize SM for PI development is an ongoing consideration[1], yet comprehensive research in this context is limited in Pakistan. This study addresses a significant research gap by examining the role of SM in shaping the professional identity of nursing students, particularly in Pakistan. Exploring how SM influences their journey towards a nursing career is crucial in the age of digital communication. This research contributes valuable insights to the existing literature and sheds light on the unique dynamics between SM and nursing students' professional development.

2. METHODOLOGY

The data were gathered at a particular moment in time using a correlational cross-sectional approach to examine the association between social media usage by undergraduate nursing

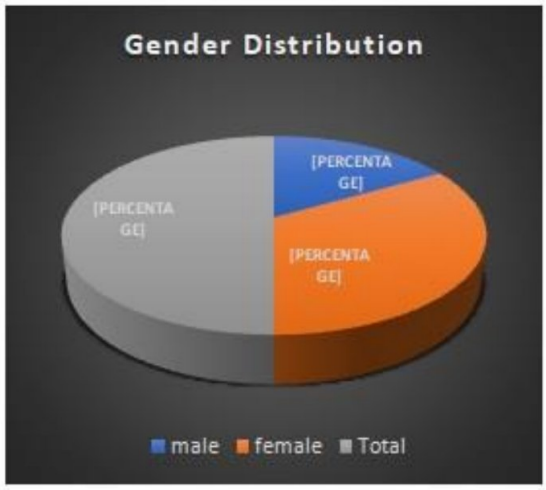
students and their PI development. This strategy acknowledges the variety of variables that may influence PI development while restricting the focus of the inquiry to SM.

Study has been conducted at People's Nursing School, LUMHS, Jamshoro. Data collected during the period of May 15,2023 to June 10,2023. PNS had a student enrollment of 277. Utilizing the RAOSOFT sample size calculator, a sample size of 162 was determined. This sample of 162 was collected with a 95% level of confidence and 5% margin of error. Convenience sampling technique was used for male and female undergraduate nursing students from PNS, LUMHS university. All undergraduate (BSN) nursing students who willingly participated in study and were present at the time of survey. Age of participants must be 17 years and above. Students who were not present at the time of data collection and also unwilling to participate in the study, age less than 17 years were excluded. The study utilized a questionnaire consisting of three parts. **Part 1:** Focused on demographic information and included items related to age, gender, and educational background. **Part 2:** Delved into social media (SM) usage, gathering data on the types of SM platforms used for personal, educational, and professional purposes, daily hours spent on SM, frequency of use, and the profiles followed for professional reasons. **Part 3:** Assessed Nursing Professional Identity (PI) using a Likert scale that featured positively and negatively framed statements about undergraduate nursing students' PI strength. Data was analyzed using SPSS 22 for Windows (IBM Corp, 2010). with descriptive statistics including frequencies, percent- ages, medians, and interquartile ranges were reported and non-parametric The Fisher Exact test for independence, chi square test and correlational test were used to see the relationship among the variables. The significance level was set at $p < 0.05$. Informed consent and confidentiality were maintained.

3. RESULTS

The age of the 162 participants ranged between 17 and 28 years, mean was 20.90 years (SD: 1.939). Gender of the participants were female (n=108,66.7%), male (n=54,33.3%) shown in (Graph 1). The majority of participants (32.1%) were in their fourth year of education and were female (66.7%). Nearly all participants (99.5%) used social media personally, favoring WhatsApp and Facebook. For education, 88.3% used social media, primarily YouTube (66.4%). Among professional users (80.9%), Facebook (26.0%) and YouTube (27.5%) were popular. Many (92.0%) used it for understanding nursing techniques, and 79.6% for learning about nursing. Table 1 summarizes participants' responses to a five-point scale on various aspects of nursing connections. The majority had high (48.8%) or very high (37.0%) professional identity levels. Age and professional identity had a slight non-significant correlation but a slightly positive correlation ($r = 0.021$). Years of study showed a significant link with higher PI scores ($p = 0.028$).

Graph 1:



Using social media for education (P=0.001) and 3 to 5.5 hours of use (P=0.029) were significantly related to professional identity. Checking frequency (P=0.125) showed no significant relationship. (See Table 2).

Table1: Respondent Professional Summary (n=162)

Statement	Strongly Agree n (%)	Agree n (%)	Neither Agree nor Disagree n (%)	Disagree n (%)	Strongly Disagree n (%)
I feel like I am a member of the nursing profession.	73 (45.1)	75 (46.3)	12 (7.4)	2 (1.2)	----
I feel I have strong ties with members of the nursing profession.	48 (29.6)	81 (50.0)	21 (13.0)	11 (6.8)	1 (0.6)
I am often ashamed to admit that I am studying for the nursing profession.	14(8.6)	37 (22.8)	27 (16.7)	48 (29.6)	36 (22.2)
I find myself making excuses for belonging to the nursing profession	18 (11.1)	44 (27.2)	27 (16.7)	53 (32.7)	20 (12.3)
I try to hide that I am studying to belonging to the nursing profession.	17 (10.5)	38 (23.5)	25 (15.4)	58 (35.8)	24 (14.8)
I can identify positively with members of the nursing profession.	53 (32.7)	69(42.6)	36 (22.2)	4 (2.5)	-----
I am pleased to belong to the nursing profession.	56 (34.6)	63 (38.9)	25 (15.4)	13 (8.0)	5 (3.1)
Being a member of the nursing profession is important to me	54 (33.3)	76(46.9)	27(16.7)	4(2.5)	1(0.6)
I feel share characteristics with other members of the nursing profession	59 (36.4)	65 (40.1)	34 (21.0)	3 (1.9)	1 (0.6)

Graph 2:

Table 2: Outcome Findings

Statement	Test applied	Value	P value
Correlation between age and professional identity	Pearson correlation	r=0.021	0.787
Relationship between Year of Study and PI Score levels	Fisher's Exact test	13.79	0.028
Relationship between Social media use for educational purposes and PI Score levels	Fisher's Exact test	13.537	0.001
Relationship between Hours of Social Media Use and PI Score levels	Fisher's Exact test	16.001	0.029
Relationship between Frequency of Checking social media and PI Score levels	Fisher's Exact test	14.004	0.125

4. RESULTS

The outcomes of this study illuminated active engagement with social media by undergraduate nurses correlated with advanced professional identity. Extended time on social media enhanced their nursing professional identity. In the current study, approximately 30.2% of

participants spent 3 to 5.5 hours daily on SM, a trend akin to outcomes from a recent Jordanian study conducted by Al-Shdayfat et all.[13]. Similarly, a study by Ayaz-Alkaya et all.[14] revealed dedication of 2 to 4 hours daily basis among 41.7% of nursing and midwifery students, while 26.4% spent 4 to 6 hours using SM. Another study conducted by Canadian researcher Duke VJA et all.[15] evidenced that engagement of nursing students with SM for 1 to 2 hours per day remained to 35.7%. Thus, while precise timeframes may differ across studies, it is apparent that nursing students dedicate a significant length of time to SM engagement.

Participants in this study, similar to Al-Shdayfat et al.[13] (Jordanian), Alharbi M et al.[1] (Saudi Arabia), and Duke VJA et al.[15] (Canadian), reported using SM for various purposes, including personal, educational, and professional. The use of SM for educational and professional purposes was shown to have a beneficial effect on PI development among undergraduate nursing students in this study, even though it was not part of participants' curricula. This finding aligns with a study by Price AM et all.[16] which reported that even though nursing students benefited from SM for educational and professional purposes, nursing education has been slow to adopt this type of technology into nursing curricula.

During the pandemic, online tools like social media (SM) provided essential educational and professional support, as highlighted by Merchant RM et all.[17] study. This aligns with our findings, emphasizing the role of SM in enhancing learning and professional identity in the nursing profession. As a result, some felt the COVID-19 pandemic actually heightened the development of a feeling of nursing PI[18].

Many participants followed nurses on social media, positively impacting their professional identity. About half followed doctors, with few following non-nurse and non-doctor healthcare professionals. This study revealed a challenge in discerning between personal and professional boundaries on social media, leading to potential confusion among nursing students[19]. Consequently, investigating how students manage their social media usage and their awareness of differentiating personal and professional limits presents an intriguing area for exploration.

After a comprehensive evaluation despite being trusted authorities, the public often misunderstands nurses' roles and contributions to patient care [20]. Consequently, there exists an opportunity for nurses to leverage social media (SM) as a platform to enhance awareness about their profession[15]. Limitations in my study include a convenient sample of 162 participants from one institution limit generalizability. Cross-sectional design hinders causal relationships and long-term effects. Self-reporting may introduce biases. Single university focus may not represent broader nursing student population.

5. CONCLUSION

This study underscores social media's significant role in shaping the professional identity of nursing students. It suggests that integrating social media into nursing education could enhance professional identity. Future research and curriculum adjustments can help nurses effectively utilize social media in their careers.

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