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SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION AND ITS IMPACT ON DAILY PHYSICAL ACTIVITY: A CASE STUDY OF MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION STUDENTS AT SOUK AHRAS UNIVERSITY

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Abstract: This study aims to explore the relationship between excessive use of social media and the level of physical activity among media and communication students at Mohamed Cherif Messaadia University, Souk Ahras. The study relied on a descriptive-analytical approach, with data collected from a sample of 60 students using a questionnaire. The data were analyzed using correlation coefficients, t-tests, and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The results showed a statistically significant inverse relationship between excessive use of social media and physical activity levels. However, the results did not reveal a significant relationship between excessive use of social media and positive alternative behaviors such as following sports content or participating in fitness challenges. No significant differences were found based on gender, age, or educational level. The results also showed that urban residents tend to record higher levels of social media use and lower levels of physical activity, indicating an environmental influence.

Keywords: Social media, physical activity, digital addiction, healthy behavior, youth

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Introduction

Social media platforms today have become more than just spaces for entertainment or news sharing; they now represent an integrated digital environment that reshapes patterns of living, thinking, and consumption. These platforms influence how people learn, work, and interact. This transformation has been reinforced by the rise of digital marketing, the influencer industry, and strategies aimed at capturing attention, fostering loyalty, and transforming engagement into a near-automatic daily habit (Leung et al., 2022; Jiang et al., 2022). The emergence of new digital spaces—such as discussions surrounding the "metaverse" and its applications and marketing—illustrates a broader shift toward deeper immersion in the digital world, which in turn extends screen time and intensifies competition for users' attention (Koohang et al., 2023; Park & Kim, 2022; Dwivedi et al., 2022)

This trend cannot be separated from the underlying technical infrastructure of social platforms, where algorithms and machine learning techniques play a crucial role in content personalisation and user engagement, thus contributing—directly or indirectly—to platform dependency (Janiesch et al., 2021). Moreover, with the expansion of remote learning and digital education, particularly during times of crisis, screen exposure has become an increasingly dominant feature in students' daily lives (Ferri et al., 2020; OECD, 2021).

Within this context, the concept of "social media addiction" has emerged as a form of behavioural addiction. It is not solely defined by the number of hours spent online, but by the nature of the relationship with the platforms: persistent preoccupation, difficulty disengaging, prioritising browsing over other activities, and experiencing anxiety when disconnected. This phenomenon is explained by theoretical models such as the "components model of addiction" within the biopsychosocial framework (Griffiths, 2005). The literature on social network addiction highlights key insights into mechanisms of attachment, relapse, and habituation (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017).

Research has also shown that estimates of addiction prevalence vary depending on the measurement tools and classification systems used, reflecting the complexity of the phenomenon and the challenges of applying a universal standard (Cheng et al., 2022). Other studies have explored risk factors associated with this addiction, ranging from individual characteristics to environmental influences and user motivations (Zhao et al., 2022; Hou et al., 2019), while recent reviews and studies provide a broader overview of the concept, its ramifications, and methods of assessment (Amirthalingam & Khera, 2024; Abdullahi et al., 2024).

From a user motivation perspective, the "uses and gratifications" approach helps explain why some students turn to platforms to fulfil needs such as belonging, self-

esteem, stress relief, or even to seek health- or sport-related content—thus making the platforms' impact vary significantly across individuals (Bhatiasevi, 2024; Wikipedia contributors, 2025; Camilleri & Falzon, 2020; Huang & Su, 2018).

The issue becomes even more critical when addiction is linked to tangible outcomes in mental health and academic achievement. Numerous studies have associated addiction or problematic usage with indicators such as depression, anxiety, and psychological stress among both adolescents and university students (Ali et al., 2025; Peng & Liao, 2023; Kalınkara & Talan, 2024). Longitudinal findings also suggest that problematic usage correlates with negative psychological outcomes in students (Shannon et al., 2024). Academically, addiction has been shown to affect performance, academic burnout, and procrastination, thereby impairing students' ability for self-regulation and time management (Iskajyan, 2024; Naffisa & Dwatra, 2024; Zare & Zamani Mazdeh, 2024).

Some literature has also linked intensive usage to sleep disturbances—a key mediating factor potentially affecting physical activity and general motivation (Ye et al., 2024; Nakshine et al., 2022). Moreover, school-based studies have associated addiction with declines in psychological well-being (Mahdi, 2024), and others have linked it to changes in eating habits and life satisfaction—indicators that directly relate to lifestyle (Ozenoglu, 2024; Noor et al., 2024). Additionally, related phenomena such as "nomophobia" (the fear of losing phone connectivity) can exacerbate problematic usage among adolescents, further complicating the overall picture (Pérez-Torres, 2024).

Even when considering the topic of recovery from stress and pressure, the literature highlights the importance of restoring balance between mental exhaustion and psychological recovery—a balance often disrupted by poor screen time management (Sonnentag et al., 2021).

At this juncture, the relationship between addiction and physical activity emerges as both sensitive and complex. On one hand, research indicates that excessive engagement with platforms can reduce time allocated for movement and physical exercise and is associated with deteriorating health indicators or negative lifestyle shifts (Rahman & Hashim, 2025). Other findings support the notion that excessive use and its accompanying sedentary behaviour may negatively impact both physical and mental health (Ali et al., 2025; Nakshine et al., 2022). On the other hand, social media can also be harnessed to foster sports engagement by creating motivational communities, challenges, shared experiences, and social modelling—encouraging individuals to adopt healthier habits (Tufail et al., 2025; Wang, 2024; Lev-on, 2025).

This duality is evident within sporting contexts themselves: some studies explore audience engagement with sports club pages and their motives for participation (Marčinko

Trkulja et al., 2024), others examine how athlete presence on social media influences adolescent sports participation and risk-taking behaviours (Frühauf et al., 2025), while others analyse marathon engagement in terms of digital interaction and well-being (Akhmetkazy & Mamyrova, 2025). Conversely, health and sports research warns that certain online content may promote unrealistic physical standards, potentially distorting healthy learning and behaviour, especially among vulnerable groups (Goodyear et al., 2021).

The post-pandemic period has further amplified the urgency of this issue. Bibliometric analyses and global trends have observed shifts in physical activity patterns linked to COVID-19 (Toktaş et al., 2023), while surveys have documented the pandemic's impact on physical activity across diverse contexts (Kontsevaya et al., 2021). In digital learning environments, a link has been observed between social media addiction and physical activity levels among health-related students engaged in remote learning (Topçu et al., 2021). Evidence from behavioural interventions—even for other age groups—suggests that habit change is possible but requires an in-depth understanding of context and motivation (Blackburn et al., 2021). Mental-physical health frameworks consistently show that physical activity is inherently tied to psychological well-being, making any factor that reduces daily movement a crucial focus of study (Martín-Rodríguez et al., 2024).

Furthermore, the rise of digital sports (E-sports) presents a cultural phenomenon consuming significant time and potentially competing with traditional physical activity in young people's lives (Omole, 2024).

At the level of the social and institutional environment, further dimensions emerge. Digital habits are not formed in isolation—they are shaped by family dynamics and broader lifestyle patterns, which in turn influence students' success and everyday behaviours (Sharma & Lalita, 2024). Narrowly focusing on "individual behaviour" without acknowledging structural factors—such as platform design, attention economy, peer comparison pressures, or the pace of university life—can lead to incomplete solutions. This is echoed in behavioural policy debates that contrast individual-level interventions with structural-level reform (Chater, Loewenstein, 2022).

In the sports domain as well, platform influence cannot be disentangled from broader shifts in sports marketing, club branding, social responsibility, and how sports media frame issues like sponsorship and accountability (Manzari, 2024; Kallioupi, Triantafyllou, 2025), not to mention the branding dimensions of high-performance sports (Linsner, 2021). On a cultural level, literature highlights media and social environment differences that may produce varying patterns of influence (Kobiruzzaman et al., 2022).

In Arab health and social discourse, efforts to define digital addiction and explore its risks and coping strategies have grown, reflecting the issue's increasing visibility in public awareness (Al-Khuli, 2025; Qutishat, 2023; Arab 48, 2022; Habib, 2024; NP Istanbul National Hospital Editorial Board, 2025).

In light of the above, a practical research gap becomes clear: the need to understand this relationship within a specific local university context—particularly among media and communication students, who are especially exposed to platforms due to academic and professional interests. This study thus aims to examine how social media addiction intersects with patterns of physical activity in daily life, and whether such addiction results in a tangible decline in physical activity, or if certain uses of platforms can sometimes serve as a motivator for exercise—depending on motivations, content, and the surrounding social environment.

This leads us to the core research question: **What is the impact of social media addiction on daily physical activity among media and communication students at Souk Ahras University?**

Derived Sub-Questions, based on the main research question, the study seeks to address the following sub-questions:

1. To what extent are media and communication students addicted to social media platforms?
2. What is the current state of physical activity in the daily lives of media and communication students?
3. What proposed solutions could help reduce addiction and promote physical activity in daily life?

Research Hypoteses

First: Hypotheses Regarding the Relationships Between Variables (Correlations)

1. There is a statistically significant negative correlation between excessive use of social media and the level of physical activity among individuals.
2. There is no statistically significant correlation between excessive use of social media and alternative or awareness-related behaviours linked to physical activity.
3. There is no statistically significant correlation between the level of physical activity and the adoption of alternative or awareness-related behaviours.

Second: Hypotheses Regarding Differences Based on Demographic Characteristics

According to Gender:

4. There are no statistically significant differences in the degree of excessive use of social media attributable to gender.
5. There are no statistically significant differences in the level of physical activity attributable to gender.
6. There are no statistically significant differences in the adoption of alternative or awareness-related behaviours attributable to gender.

According to Age Group:

7. There are no statistically significant differences in the degree of excessive use of social media attributable to age group.
8. There are no statistically significant differences in the level of physical activity attributable to age group.
9. There are no statistically significant differences in alternative or awareness-related behaviours attributable to age group.

According to Other Social and Economic Variables:

10. There are no statistically significant differences in the degree of excessive use of social media attributable to marital status, educational level, employment status, or place of residence.
11. There are no statistically significant differences in the level of physical activity attributable to marital status, educational level, employment status, or place of residence.
12. There are no statistically significant differences in the adoption of alternative or awareness-related behaviours attributable to marital status, educational level, employment status, or place of residence.

Methodology

Research Design Type

A descriptive analytical design was used in this study to explore the relationship between social media addiction and physical activity, in addition to proposed solutions to enhance exercise and reduce addiction. This design relies on data collection from the participating sample using a customized measurement tool (survey).

Data Collection Methods

Data was collected using an electronic survey specifically designed to measure the three main axes of the study:

- Social Media Addiction

- Physical Activity in Daily Life
- Proposed Solutions to Reduce Addiction and Enhance Exercise

A three-point Likert scale (Disagree – Neutral – Agree) was used to assess participants' responses, allowing for the determination of their agreement level with the items specified for each axis.

Sample and Participants

The sample consisted of 60 participants who were randomly selected from a target population aged between 18 to 40 years. Both male and female participants from various educational and occupational backgrounds were involved, ensuring the sample represented a diverse range of age, social, and educational categories.

- Sample Size: 60 participants were selected to ensure a good representation of the target population.
- Participant Selection Method: The survey was distributed electronically through social media platforms and local groups.
- Data Collection Period: Data was collected from May 2 to May 13, 2025, ensuring participation from a diverse group within this period.

Analytical Tools Used

Data was analyzed using SPSS software, and the following analytical techniques were applied:

- Tool Reliability (Cronbach's Alpha): To measure the internal consistency of the tool.
- Descriptive Analysis: Including means and standard deviations to understand the distribution of responses.
- Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA): To examine the structure of the tool and identify the main factors affecting the results.
- ANOVA Test: To test for significant differences between different groups (e.g., gender, age, marital status) in their responses to the various axes.
- t-test (Independent Samples t-test): To test the difference between the means of two independent groups (e.g., comparing male and female responses).

Study Limitations

- Sample Size: May affect the generalizability of the results.
- Tool Type: Which may require improvements to increase its reliability in future studies.
- Geographic and Social Diversity: The sample was selected from local platforms, which may not fully represent the broader demographic diversity.

Results, Interpretation and Discussion

I. Sample Description

1. Distribution of the Sample by Gender

Table 1. Gender Distribution of the Sample

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Female	53	88.33%
Male	7	11.67%
Total	**60**	**100.0%**

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on SPSS outputs.

- The table indicates that the vast majority of study participants were female (88.33%),
- Whereas males accounted for only 11.67% of the sample. This suggests a gender imbalance within the sample, which may affect the generalisability of the findings to the wider population.

2. Distribution by Age Group

Table 2. Age Distribution of the Sample

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18–23 years	43	71.67%
24–29 years	10	16.67%
36 years and above	5	8.33%
30–35 years	2	3.33%
Total	**60**	**100.0%**

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on SPSS outputs.

- The largest proportion of respondents were aged 18–23, comprising 71.67% of the sample.
- This was followed by the 24–29 age group (16.67%), while the remaining age categories accounted for smaller percentages. This reflects that the sample is predominantly composed of young university students or recent graduates, a group particularly relevant to the study topic.

3. Distribution by Marital Status

Table 3. Marital Status of the Sample

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Single	55	91.67%
Married	*5*	*8.33%*
Total	**60**	**100.0%**

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on SPSS outputs.

- The overwhelming majority of participants were single (91.67%).
- Only 8.33% were married. This aligns with the youth-dominated nature of the sample as shown in Table 2.

4. Distribution by Employment Status

Table 4. Employment Status of the Sample

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Unemployed	52	86.67%
Government-employed	6	10.0%
Private Sector	2	3.33%
Total	**60**	**100.0%**

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on **SPSS** outputs.

- A large majority (86.67%) of participants were unemployed.
- Only a small proportion were working in the public (10%) or private (3.33%) sectors. This supports the assumption that the sample consists mainly of **students**.

5. Distribution by Educational Level

Table 5. Educational Level of the Sample

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
First Year	27	45.0%
Master's Level	24	40.0%
Doctorate	6	10.0%
Third Year	3	5.0%
Total	**60**	**100.0%**

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on SPSS outputs.

- The largest percentages were for first-year students (45%) and Master's students (40%).
- Doctoral students made up 10%, and third-year students 5%. This indicates that participants generally have a relatively high educational level, likely contributing to their awareness and understanding of the study topic.

6. Distribution by Place of Residence

Table 6. Residence of the Sample

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Urban	52	86.67%
Rural	8	13.33%
Total	**60**	**100.0%**

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on SPSS outputs.

- Urban residents constituted 86.67% of the sample.
- Only 13.33% were from rural areas. This distribution suggests a predominantly urban sample, which may reflect greater access to sports facilities and digital services, but also points to a limited representation of rural populations.

Axis One. Social Media Addiction

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean	Standard Deviation
I feel distressed just thinking about not being able to access social media	Disagree	26	43.33%	1.93	0.90
	Neutral	12	20%		
	Agree	22	36.67%		
I use social media while eating or before sleeping	Disagree	15	25%	2.30	0.85
	Neutral	12	20%		
	Agree	33	55%		
I have had conflicts with others because of my social media use	Disagree	21	35%	2.10	0.90
	Neutral	12	20%		
	Agree	27	45%		
I often think about social media even when I'm not using it	Disagree	16	26.67%	2.22	0.85
	Neutral	15	25%		
	Agree	29	48.33%		

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean	Standard Deviation
I frequently use social media without a clear reason	Disagree	15	25%	2.35	0.86
	Neutral	9	15%		
	Agree	36	60%		
I lose track of time while using social media	Disagree	8	13.33%	2.63	0.71
	Neutral	6	10%		
	Agree	46	76.67%		
I have failed to reduce my social media use despite trying	Disagree	24	40%	1.88	0.83
	Neutral	19	31.67%		
	Agree	17	28.33%		

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on SPSS outputs.

Interpretation of Results:

- **"I lose track of time while using social media"**
  - *Mean:* 2.63 | *SD:* 0.71
  - **Interpretation:** Most students report a lack of time awareness while using social media—this is a **strong behavioural indicator of addiction**.
- **"I frequently use social media without a clear reason"**
  - *Mean: 2.35 | SD: 0.86*
  - *Interpretation: Indicates automatic and impulsive use, reflecting habitual, potentially compulsive behaviour.*
- **"I use it while eating or before sleeping"**
  - *Mean: 2.30 | SD: 0.85*
  - *Interpretation: Highlights social media's integration into daily routines, including rest and meal times.*
- **"I think about it even when I'm not using it"**
  - *Mean: 2.22 | SD: 0.85*
  - *Interpretation: Suggests ongoing cognitive preoccupation, even in the absence of actual usage.*
- **"I've had conflicts due to social media use"**
  - *Mean: 2.10 | SD: 0.90*
  - *Interpretation: Reflects the social impact of excessive use, including strained relationships.*
- **"I feel distressed just thinking about not being able to access it"**
  - *Mean: 1.93 | SD: 0.90*
  - *Interpretation: Indicates psychological discomfort and anxiety tied to disconnection—a sign of emotional dependency*.

The relatively high mean values across multiple items suggest that students **exhibit behavioural and cognitive patterns consistent with digital addiction**, including excessive use, mental preoccupation, and social consequences.
The findings highlight a need for **educational and institutional initiatives** to:

- Promote **digital balance**,

- Raise awareness of the **risks of compulsive platform use**, and
- Encourage **conscious and healthy engagement** with social media platforms.

Axis Two. Physical Activity in Daily Life

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean	Standard Deviation
I engage in physical activity regularly during the week.	Disagree	21	35%	2.00	0.84
	Neutral	18	30%		
	Agree	21	35%		
I am enrolled in private sports clubs.	Disagree	26	43.33%	1.90	0.88
	Neutral	14	23.33%		
	Agree	20	33.33%		
I feel energetic and refreshed after exercising.	Disagree	11	18.33%	2.43	0.79
	Neutral	12	20%		
	Agree	37	61.67%		
I set aside time daily for exercise, regardless of how busy I am.	Disagree	20	33.33%	1.97	0.80
	Neutral	22	36.67%		
	Agree	18	30%		
I prefer walking or cycling over using transport for short distances.	Disagree	19	31.67%	2.23	0.91
	Neutral	8	13.33%		
	Agree	33	55%		
I make an effort to exercise at home or outside.	Disagree	15	25%	2.23	0.83
	Neutral	16	26.67%		
	Agree	29	48.33%		
I consider physical activity an essential part of my lifestyle.	Disagree	10	16.67%	2.42	0.77
	Neutral	15	25%		
	Agree	35	58.33%		
I feel upset when I miss my weekly workout.	Disagree	21	35%	1.98	0.83
	Neutral	19	31.67%		
	Agree	20	33.33%		

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on SPSS outputs.

Interpretation of Results:

- **"I feel energetic and refreshed after exercising"**
  - *Mean: 2.43 | SD: 0.79*
  - *Interpretation: Reflects a clear psychological benefit from physical activity, indicating its value in enhancing mood and vitality.*
- **"I consider physical activity an essential part of my lifestyle"**
  - *Mean: 2.42 | SD: 0.77*
  - *Interpretation: Indicates a deep cognitive awareness of the role of exercise as a lifestyle choice, rather than just a routine task.*
- **"I prefer walking or cycling for short distances"**
  - *Mean: 2.23 | SD: 0.91*
  - *Interpretation: Shows a tendency toward low-impact physical activity, suggesting health awareness in daily routines.*
- **"I make an effort to exercise at home or outside"**
  - *Mean: 2.23 | SD: 0.83*
  - *Interpretation: Suggests flexibility and moderate commitment to staying active in various environments.*
- **"I engage in physical activity regularly during the week"**
  - *Mean: 2.00 | SD: 0.84*
  - *Interpretation: Reflects moderate exercise frequency, but implies a lack of strong routine or consistency.*
- **"I feel upset when I miss my weekly workout"**
  - *Mean: 1.98 | SD: 0.83*
  - *Interpretation: Indicates emotional connection to exercise for some students, though not strong enough to drive consistent practice.*
- **"I set aside time daily for exercise regardless of how busy I am"**
  - *Mean: 1.97 | SD: 0.80*
  - *Interpretation: Reveals weak time commitment, possibly due to academic pressures or lack of personal scheduling.*
- **"I am enrolled in private sports clubs"**
  - *Mean: 1.90 | SD: 0.88*
  - *Interpretation: Suggests low club participation, potentially due to cost, limited availability, or low motivation.*

While some indicators reflect a positive awareness of the importance of physical activity—especially regarding its psychological benefits**—lower mean scores in other items suggest that this awareness does not always translate into consistent behaviour.**

This **gap between belief and action** highlights the need for:

- **Supportive environments** (e.g., free university sports clubs, mandatory physical education sessions),
- **Awareness campaigns** that frame exercise as part of mental wellbeing and lifestyle,
- **Time-management support for students to help integrate physical activity into daily routines.**

Axis Three. Proposed Solutions to Reduce Addiction and Promote Physical Activity

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean	Standard Deviation
Opening free, state-funded sports clubs	Disagree	0	0%	2.97	0.18
	Neutral	2	3.33%		
	Agree	58	96.67%		
Ongoing awareness about the harms of excessive social media use	Disagree	1	1.67%	2.95	0.29
	Neutral	1	1.67%		
	Agree	58	96.67%		
Reducing screen time helps improve my lifestyle	Disagree	0	0%	2.92	0.28
	Neutral	5	8.33%		
	Agree	55	91.67%		
Launching awareness campaigns about the importance of daily exercise	Disagree	1	1.67%	2.92	0.33
	Neutral	3	5%		
	Agree	56	93.33%		
Following fitness or motivational content online instead of only entertainment	Disagree	2	3.33%	2.78	0.49
	Neutral	9	15%		
	Agree	49	81.67%		
Replacing screen time with physical activities	Disagree	3	5%	2.67	0.57
	Neutral	14	23.33%		
	Agree	43	71.67%		
Participating in sports challenges with friends instead of social media	Disagree	6	10%	2.65	0.66
	Neutral	9	15%		
	Agree	45	75%		
Scheduling specific times for social media use only	Disagree	8	13.33%	2.60	0.72
	Neutral	8	13.33%		
	Agree	44	73.33%		

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on SPSS outputs.

Interpretation of Results:

- **Replacing screen time with physical activities**
  - *Mean: 2.67 | SD: 0.57*
  - *Interpretation: Shows strong student agreement with the idea of redirecting time toward physically beneficial activities—indicating high awareness of the need for lifestyle balance.*
- **Scheduling specific times for social media use only**
  - *Mean: 2.60 | SD: 0.72*
  - *Interpretation: Reflects willingness to self-regulate, a positive sign of time-awareness and digital self-control.*

- **Following sports or motivational content instead of just entertainment**
  - *Mean: 2.58 | SD: 0.74*
  - *Interpretation: Indicates openness to reshaping digital consumption habits, favouring more beneficial content.*
- **Opening free, state-funded sports clubs**
  - *Mean: 2.57 | SD: 0.63*
  - *Interpretation: Reveals strong support for institutional solutions, showing students' expectations of structural support for healthy living.*
- **Launching campaigns to promote the importance of daily physical activity**
  - *Mean: 2.53 | SD: 0.66*
  - *Interpretation: Suggests belief in the role of community and media awareness in changing health behaviours.*
- **Reducing time on social media improves lifestyle**
  - *Mean: 2.50 | SD: 0.73*
  - *Interpretation: Indicates good understanding of the negative impact of excessive digital use, supporting voluntary time reduction.*
- **Participating in sports challenges with friends**
  - *Mean: 2.40 | SD: 0.75*
  - *Interpretation: Moderately accepted, but may require organised social initiatives to increase adoption.*
- **Ongoing awareness of the harms of overuse**
  - *Mean: 2.35 | SD: 0.81*
  - *Interpretation: Moderate agreement, possibly indicating a preference for practical solutions (e.g., clubs or routines) over purely informational campaigns.*

The **relatively high mean values** across most items indicate that students are both **cognitively aware** and **behaviourally open** to adopting practical solutions for reducing digital addiction and promoting physical activity.
There is clear support for both:

- **Self-directed actions** (e.g., scheduling screen time, replacing digital use with physical activity),
- **And institutional support** (e.g., state-funded sports clubs, targeted awareness campaigns).

Hypothesis Testing

Correlation Test Results Between the Three Scales

Relationship Between Scales	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Interpretation
Excessive Social Media Use × Physical Activity	-0.29	Moderate negative correlation: the more excessive the use, the lower the activity
Excessive Use × Behaviours / Awareness / Support	-0.095	Very weak negative correlation
Physical Activity × Behaviours / Awareness / Support	0.14	Weak positive correlation

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on SPSS outputs.

Interpretation:

- A **clear inverse relationship** exists between excessive social media use and physical activity, aligning with findings from many prior studies.
- Other relationships are **very weak**, indicating that awareness or proposed behaviours **do not significantly influence** social media use or physical activity levels in this sample.

T-Test Results by Gender

Scale	T-Value	P-Value	Interpretation
Excessive Social Media Use	0.26	0.805	No significant difference between males and females
Physical Activity	2.05	0.070	Near-significant difference (males may be more active?)
Behaviours / Awareness / Support	-0.04	0.972	No statistically significant difference

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on SPSS outputs.

Interpretation:

- **Gender** does **not significantly influence** social media use or interaction with awareness/support strategies.
- A **slight trend** suggests males may engage in more physical activity, but this is **not statistically significant** ($p > 0.05$).

ANOVA Results by Age Group

Scale	F-Value	P-Value	Interpretation
Excessive Social Media Use	0.40	0.76	No significant differences between age groups
Physical Activity	0.68	0.57	No statistically significant differences
Behaviours / Awareness / Support	0.69	0.56	No statistically significant differences

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on SPSS outputs.

Interpretation:

- **Age** does **not significantly affect** any of the three measured dimensions (use, activity, or awareness).
- There are **no significant differences** in digital use, physical activity, or response to awareness efforts across age groups.

1. Marital Status

Scale	F	P	Result
Excessive Social Media Use	0.005	0.9432	No statistically significant difference
Physical Activity	0.000	0.9861	No difference
Behaviours / Awareness / Support	0.039	0.8434	No difference

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on SPSS outputs.

Interpretation:
Marital status (single/married) does **not significantly affect** any of the study variables.

2. Educational Level

Scale	F	P	Result
Excessive Social Media Use	0.447	0.7206	No difference
Physical Activity	0.153	0.9274	No difference
Behaviours / Awareness / Support	0.768	0.5165	No difference

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on SPSS outputs.

Interpretation:
Educational level (e.g. Bachelor's, Master's, Doctorate) shows **no significant relationship** with digital use, physical activity, or engagement with support strategies.

3. Employment Status

Scale	F	P	Result
Excessive Social Media Use	1.541	0.2230	No significant difference
Physical Activity	0.143	0.8669	No difference
Behaviours / Awareness / Support	0.817	0.4467	No difference

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on SPSS outputs.

Interpretation:
Employment status (student, employed, unemployed) does **not significantly impact** the outcomes in this study.

4. Place of Residence

Scale	F	P	Result
Excessive Social Media Use	2.683	0.1069	Near-significant difference
Physical Activity	2.841	0.0972	Near-significant difference
Behaviours / Awareness / Support	0.540	0.4655	No difference

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on SPSS outputs.

Interpretation:

- There is a **suggested trend** (not statistically significant) that **place of residence (urban vs. rural)** may influence:
  - Social media usage
  - Level of physical activity
- However, **these differences are not statistically significant** ($p > 0.05$), though they **approach significance** ($p \approx 0.10$), suggesting the need for further investigation.

Study Results and Discussion

The results of this study revealed a statistically significant inverse relationship between excessive use of social media and the level of physical activity among media and communication students. This finding aligns with previous studies such as Nakshine et al. (2022) and Mahdi (2024), which linked excessive screen time with declines in healthy behaviours such as physical activity, as well as with sleep disorders and mental health issues. These results suggest that unregulated digital behaviour may directly affect healthy lifestyle patterns, a conclusion also supported by Blackburn et al. (2021), whose study on physical activity interventions among older adults indicated that reduced physical activity is often driven by psychological and environmental factors associated with digital routines.

In contrast, the study found no statistically significant relationship between excessive social media use and positive alternative or awareness-related behaviours (e.g., following sports content or participating in fitness challenges). This finding is consistent with the work of Goodyear et al. (2021), which showed that engaging with motivational or health-oriented digital content does not necessarily translate into behavioural change. Similarly, Keles et al. (2020) noted that awareness of the risks of digital overuse does not often lead to practical steps to reduce it.

Regarding demographic differences, the results showed no statistically significant differences in social media overuse or physical activity levels related to gender, age, marital status, or educational level. While there was a slight tendency for males to report higher levels of physical activity, this difference did not reach statistical significance—echoing the findings of Topçu et al. (2021), which indicated that the impact of gender on physical activity tends to diminish in shared digital or educational environments.

As for place of residence, the findings indicated near-significant differences ($p \approx 0.10$) in both social media overuse and physical activity levels. Urban residents tended to report higher levels of social media use and lower levels of physical activity. This supports the conclusions of Kontsevaya et al. (2021), who found that urban environ-

ments are associated with more sedentary lifestyles, especially during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Finally, the internal consistency analysis revealed that the alternative and awareness-related behaviours scale did not reach a high reliability level ($\alpha < 0.5$). This may indicate conceptual or behavioural inconsistency among the items, suggesting a need for further refinement in future studies to improve scale coherence and reliability.

Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the relationship between excessive social media use and levels of physical activity, while also examining the influence of selected demographic variables and awareness-related behaviours on this relationship. The results revealed a statistically significant inverse correlation between excessive social media use and physical activity, supporting the growing body of evidence that highlights the negative impact of digital overuse on healthy lifestyle patterns.Conversely, awareness-related or alternative behaviours did not show a significant effect or correlation, raising important questions about the actual effectiveness of such practices in changing behaviour, despite participants' awareness of the importance of maintaining digital balance. Furthermore, the study found no statistically significant differences across gender or age groups regarding digital usage or physical activity, reinforcing the hypothesis that the influence of social media has become increasingly universal, transcending traditional population group boundaries and becoming a shared behavioural norm among youth from various backgrounds.Given the methodological limitations of the study—including the sample characteristics, cross-sectional design, and reliance on self-reported data—the findings should be viewed as exploratory. Future research is therefore encouraged to expand the scope by including mediating variables such as motivation and psychological wellbeing, and by employing longitudinal designs to capture how these relationships evolve over time.This study opens avenues for further research into effective digital intervention strategies and the mechanisms by which theoretical awareness of digital risks can be transformed into practical, balanced behaviour, with the aim of achieving sustainable digital and physical wellbeing—especially among young people.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, O.H.; **Methodology,** O.H.; **Investigation,** O.H.; **Data Collection,** O.H.; **Data Curation**, O.H.; **Formal Analysis,** O.H.; **Results Interpretation**, O.H.; **Resources,** G.S. and H.W.; **Writing – Original Draft**, O.H.; **Writing – Review & Editing**, G.S. and H.W.. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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