

The Impact of Social Networking Site on Social Well-Being During the Pandemic

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This research examines the impact of social distancing on social well-being and academic performance during the COVID-19 pandemic and how social networking sites (SNS) may moderate this relationship. Social distancing has been implemented globally to prevent the spread of the Coronavirus, leading to temporary closures of educational institutions and social networks, causing negative psychological effects such as distress, tediousness, and loneliness. This study hypothesizes that social distancing negatively affects social well-being, and social well-being positively affects academic performance. Furthermore, we suggest that SNS use may moderate the relationship between social distancing and social well-being, weakening the negative effect; to do so, the current study develops a research model with three hypotheses, emphasizing the impact of social distancing and SNS use on social well-being and academic performance during the pandemic. To test our research model, 103 college students were surveyed. Partial least squares (PLS) structural equation modeling was employed to analyze our data, and these analyses provided empirical support for the proposed hypotheses. We believe our model extends our knowledge of (1) the traditional theories related to SNS use and social well-being, (2) the impact of SNS use on academic performance, and (3) moderator and mediator in the relationships between SNS use, social well-being, and academic performance.

Keywords: social networking sites, social well-being, academic performance

INTRODUCTION

COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the way humans use technology. Social distancing measures have led to an increased need for technology. Students have had to adapt to full-time online classes (Gewalt et al., 2020), as traditional in-person meetings became impossible during the pandemic. Similarly, meetings in the workplace have transitioned to Zoom calls (Gewalt et al., 2020) for discussing important matters. The pandemic has forced people to become less social and rely more on technology. For instance, paying bills online via Wi-Fi has become the encouraged method. The pandemic has affected almost every aspect of life, requiring people to be more isolated and rely on technology for everyday needs.

The COVID-19 pandemic has negatively affected students' academic performance, with many struggling to adapt to online course materials while social distancing. Additionally, the pandemic has significantly impacted individuals' social well-being. This research aims to examine three hypotheses: (1) social distancing is negatively associated with social well-being; (2) social well-being is positively associated with academic performance; and (3) social networking sites (SNS) moderate the relationship between social distancing and social well-being, such that a high level of SNS use weakens this relationship. This study suggests that social networking sites may have a protective effect on mental health and positive impact on academic performance during periods of social isolation. In addition, social networking site use can help students maintain academic performance despite social distancing, educators and policymakers may want to explore ways to encourage responsible use of these platforms.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Well-Being During Pandemic

Social Well-Being

Social well-being can be identified as an individual's internal satisfaction with the quality of relationships and how they evaluate their ability to function within their social environments (Li et al., 2022). A well-structured support system of family, friends, and other professional associates positively improves an individual's emotional state (Li et al., 2022).

According to Silva et al., mental well-being can be defined by two fundamental concepts: 1) human function and 2) optimal development (Silva et al., 2021). Traditionally, academia has associated well-being as an emotional state of internal satisfaction with the "quality of one's life" (Lee et al., 2022). It is important to note that Silva et al (2022), highlight the importance of positive psychological features because they can reduce the severity of mental disorders (Silva et al., 2021). A strengthened sense of coherence, self-efficacy, self-esteem, positive affection, resilience, vigor, and extroversion combined can positively impact the emotional health of an individual (Silva et al., 2021).

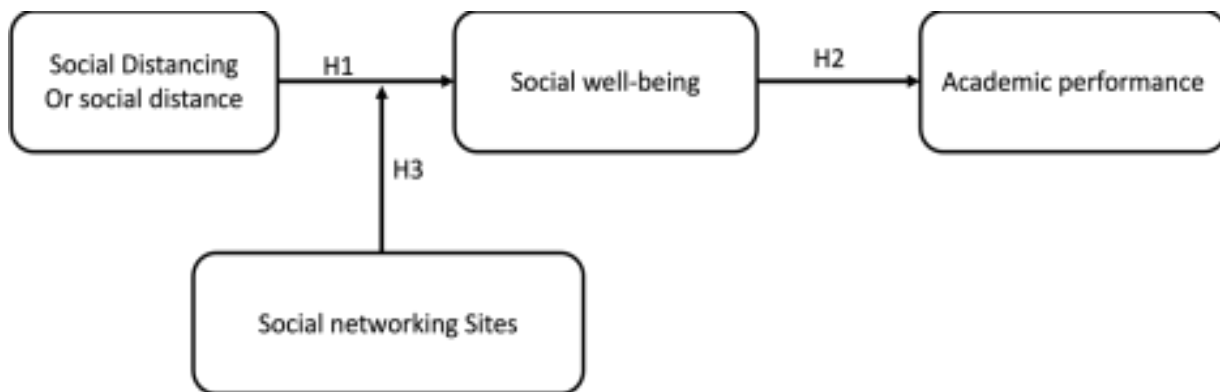
Pandemic and Social Distance

On March 11th, 2020, the World Health Organization declared Covid-19 a pandemic. The adverse effects of the virus were felt worldwide, and countries declared states of emergency (WHO, 2020). As reported by WHO, countries should seek to control the virus by implementing proactive emergency response programs focused on preventing the spread of the virus and saving the lives of local citizens (WHO, 2020). Covid-19 was highly transmissible, and carriers of the virus were classified as symptomatic or asymptomatic (WHO, 2020). Asymptomatic carriers of the virus became a major concern to health officials as the virus continued to spread rapidly, and this problem needed to be addressed efficiently and effectively (WHO, 2020).

Social distancing was implemented in countries around the world to prevent the dispersion of infection. The direct connection between the spreading of the virus and social activity led governments to enforce strict laws that prevented social interaction (Karasmanaki & Tsantopoulos, 2021). Lockdowns, curfews, and quarantines were imposed, and consequently, many companies closed indefinitely (Karasmanaki & Tsantopoulos, 2021).

As the adverse effects of Covid-19 increased globally, governments responded by restricting social activities. As a result, educational institutions such as universities and high schools closed temporarily (Loades et al., 2020). Due to this, students at the primary, secondary, and tertiary educational levels all experienced separation from professional and social network groups (Loades et al., 2020). Extended quarantines in isolation during the pandemic could be linked to negative psychological factors such as fear of infection from COVID-19, boredom, anger, and confusion (Loades et al., 2020). Loneliness is defined, drawing from Loades et al. (2020), as emotional distress experienced when there is a lack of consistency between actual and desired social attention. Currently, there is no clear association that links loneliness and quarantines. However, there is a plethora of information available on the connection between loneliness and mental health (Loades et al., 2020).

RESEARCH MODEL AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT



Social Well-Being and Social Distance

Traumatic life events can directly impact the mental state of people around the world. Trauma can lead individuals to experience common mental disorders like anxiety, depression, and stress, and these negative psychological effects are experienced by people worldwide (Silva et al., 2021). The Covid-19 pandemic has placed the world in a state of shock, especially negatively impacting professionals and students involved at the tertiary education level (Clabaugh et al., 2021). Social distancing, mask mandates, and transition to full online course curriculums were a few of the measures implemented to combat the spread of COVID-19 (Clabaugh et al., 2021). COVID-19 had temporarily ceased social interactions on a global level, causing students to feel fear and frustration (Karasmanaki & Tsantopoulos, 2021).

In the academic sectors of public health and epidemiology, researchers have no official agreed-upon definition for a term to define social connectedness (Wickramaratne et al., 2022). According to Wickramaratne et al., social connectedness is a blend of three main elements: social networks, social support, and the absence of social isolation (Wickramaratne et al., 2022). The self-psychology theory highlights the importance of social characteristics such as companionship, affiliation, and togetherness that develop as people age (Rivera et al., 2022). Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory states that social connectedness consists of multiple interactions in a person's lifetime across diverse social environments such as neighborhood communities and family groups (Rivera et al., 2022). It is important to note that social networks and social environments have the power to shape and model the behavior of individuals (Rivera et al., 2022). Babies and toddlers have social interactions that consist more of family and authority figures than adolescents, who normally experience social interactions consisting of individuals around the same age group (Rivera et al., 2022).

Social connectedness can positively impact an individual's well-being (Rivera et al., 2022). High amounts of social support for an individual generally lead to reduced stress levels, high self-esteem, and the overall improved health of society (Humphrey et al., 2022). After the pandemic had taken place, many students reported experiencing negative psychological conditions such as fear about the uncertainty of the future and lack of human social interaction (Karasmanaki & Tsantopoulos, 2021). Undergraduate students would have been susceptible to high anger and confusion as educational institutions closed and traditional face-to-face courses transitioned to fully online classes (Karasmanaki & Tsantopoulos, 2021). Regardless of a student's socio-economic background, students tend to suffer from mental disorders such as insomnia, irritability, and fatigue in their daily lives (Silva et al., 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated negative psychological conditions such as insomnia and irritability and negatively impacted the mental health of students, which led to poor academic performance (Silva et al., 2021) (Karasmanaki & Tsantopoulos, 2021).

Hypothesis 1: Social distance is negatively associated with social well-being.

Social Well-Being and Academic Performance

Academic performance is an important factor in measuring a student's success. According to Ito (2022), academic performance can be defined as the amount of success a student has in understanding and processing information provided and their ability to think creatively. Academic performance relies heavily on three main factors: cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement (Ito, 2022). Cognitive engagement refers to how well a person can think critically and creatively during a learning process. Emotional engagement refers to how a student feels toward the learning process. Behavioral engagement is a combination of cognitive and emotional engagement that defines students' academic behaviors. Of those three factors, behavioral engagement has the most direct impact on a student's academic performance in a collaborative setting (Ito, 2022).

The importance of social communities contributing to academic performance's positive success has piqued researchers' interest in recent years (Wagner et al., 2022). Student engagement, retention, and integration contribute to improving academic performance (Lenning & Ebbers, 1999, as cited in Ma-Kellams & Kwon, 2021). Social networks establish healthy group activity and engagement through classrooms, course curriculums, and sometimes in student housing areas. Additionally, social networks influence students' academic performance positively (Perdomo et al., 2022). Family bonds and social communities have the potential to act as buffers against mental disorders such as stress and anxiety (Masten & Monn, 2015, as cited in Ma-Kellams & Kwon, 2021). Social networks add value to a student's well-being by helping to improve their communal strength and resilience in the face of adversity.

***Hypothesis 2:** Social well-being is positively associated with academic performance.*

Social Network Sites

As technology evolves, it continues to improve in efficiency, and so do various forms of online communication. Social network sites are gaining popularity as they allow members to create unique profiles and express personal opinions on their public platforms (Kuss and Griffiths 2011, p. 3529, as cited in Nie et al., 2020). The increased usage of SNSs has drawn concern from researchers who describe the behavioral overuse of SNSs as an addiction or problematic (Hussain and Griffiths 2018; Andreassen 2015; Griffiths 2013, as cited in Nie et al., 2020). Problematic SNS usage can be described as developing an unhealthy dependency on SNS that negatively affects a person's social well-being (Andreassen and Pallesen 2014, p. 4054, as cited in Nie et al., 2020). It is important to note that the amount of time spent browsing social network sites is directly related to a person's well-being (Bhaskara et al., 2020). As the desire to be part of an online community increases, social media users tend to rely on social network sites to enhance their happiness or mental well-being (Bhaskara et al., 2020). In addition, users of SNSs fall into a common dilemma of social comparison and this is becoming more of a frequent theme amongst social users (Wirtz et al., 2020). The main idea behind this dilemma is that social media users portray embellished positive features of their lives, leading to others negatively judging their lifestyles (Wirtz et al., 2020).

While there have been concerns about the potential negative effects of excessive SNS usage, research suggests that SNSs can positively impact the relationships between social distancing and social well-being. SNS use can enhance social connectedness and provide emotional support, particularly during social distancing. SNS use is associated with higher levels of social support, which can help reduce stress and improve overall well-being (Lee et al., 2020; Yan et al., 2021). Furthermore, SNS use provide opportunities for individuals to engage in virtual social interactions, which can help maintain social connections and reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness (Ellison et al., 2014).

Moreover, SNS use provides opportunities for entertainment and distraction, which can help alleviate negative emotions associated with social distancing. SNS use is associated with increased positive affect and decreased negative affect, particularly when individuals engage in passive forms of SNS use, such as browsing and consuming content (Hsu et al., 2019; Lin and Utz, 2015). Thus, this research suggests that SNS use positively moderates the relationships between social distancing and social well-being.

***Hypothesis 3:** Social network sites will moderate the relationship between social distance and social well-*

being such that high levels of social network sites will weaken this relationship.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This section describes the participants, their selection, the instrument and validation, and the data collection process. To conduct our research, we used a structured survey method. We created a questionnaire administered to university students with social network profiles. A series of surveys was used to collect data from university students and 108 users in filling out the survey and a total of 103 completed surveys were collected. Table 1 shows demographic information about the respondents.

**TABLE 1
RESPONDENTS DEMOGRAPHICS**

Demographics	Frequency (percentage)
AGE	
Under 20	2 (1.9%)
20-29	89 (86.1%)
30-39	7 (6.9%)
40-49	3 (2.9%)
50-59	2 (1.9%)
Gender	
Male	41 (40%)
Female	62 (60%)

SCD: Social distancing; SWB: Social well-being; USNS: Usage of social networking sites; PER: Academic performance;

Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the reliability of the measures (as shown in Table 2). For most variables, Cronbach's alpha values were .70 or greater, indicating that the measures were reliable. Table 3 presents descriptive statistics, internal consistency reliabilities (ICR), the average variance extracted (AVE), and a correlation matrix for all constructs in the study. These findings supported the reliability of the constructs. The factor loadings for all constructs were greater than .65, further indicating the reliability of the measures. The square root of AVEs for each construct in Table 2 was greater than the inter-construct correlations, supporting both convergent and discriminant validity (Komiak & Benbasat, 2006).

TABLE 2
COMPOSITE RELIABILITY AND CRONBACH'S ALPHA

	Number of items	Composite reliability	Cronbach's alpha
SCD	4	0.78	0.82
SWB	6	0.67	0.64
USNS	4	0.86	0.83
PER	4	0.92	0.89

SCD: Social distancing; SWB: Social well-being; USNS: Usage of social networking sites; PER: Academic performance;

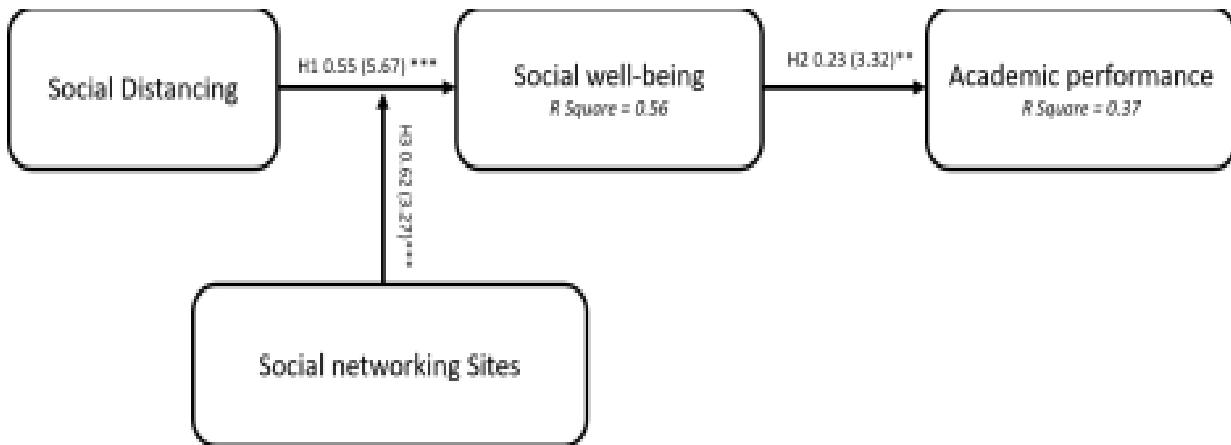
TABLE 3
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS, CORRELATIONS, AND RELIABILITIES

	SCD	SWB	USNS	PER
SCD	0.7701			
SWB	0.3394***	0.7825		
USNS	0.5782***	0.5628***	0.8699	
PER	0.7538***	0.6272***	0.7519***	0.6883

1. *SCD: Social distancing; SWB: Social well-being; USNS: Usage of social networking sites; PER: Academic performance;*
2. ****p < 0.001*
3. *Diagonal elements are the square root of the shared average variance extracted (AVE) between the construct measures and their measures; off-diagonal elements are correlations between constructs.*

The data analysis for this study utilized PLS (partial least squares) through SmartPLS V3. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was selected over regression analysis because it allowed for the analysis of all paths in one model. PLS was chosen over LISREL because the aim of the study was theory development rather than theory testing, and PLS is suitable for exploratory research. To test the PLS model, we employed a bootstrapping method with 200 randomly selected subsamples. The results of the PLS analysis are presented in Figure 1. As hypothesized, social distancing was significantly and negatively related to social well-being ($\beta = 0.55$, $p < 0.001$). Additionally, social well-being were positively and significantly related to academic performance ($\beta = 0.23$, $p < 0.005$). Lastly, using social networking sites as a moderator weakens the relationship between social distancing and social well-being ($\beta = 0.62$, $p < 0.001$).

FIGURE 1
RESULTS OF PLS-SEM ANALYSIS



1. Path coefficient (t-statistics)
2. *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.005$
3. sample size: $n=103$

IMPLICATIONS

This research has three implications that can be drawn from the results of this study. First, the Covid-19 pandemic has hurt social well-being globally due to social isolation resulting from social distancing mandates. This result suggests that long periods of social isolation are detrimental to most humans' mental and physical well-being. High academic performance and success levels are directly linked to a balanced state of emotional and physical well-being. Furthermore, this implication highlights the importance of obtaining a well-balanced well-being to achieve high levels of academic success.

In addition, one theoretical implication is that the results of this study suggest that positive academic performance can be achieved by better understanding the concept of social well-being. This study suggests that academic performance depends upon an individual's healthy social well-being.

Last, another theoretical implication is that this study builds upon the UTAUT theoretical model by identifying how high levels of social media use can negatively impact social well-being. It is important to note that there is more research that needs to be done, however, this study suggests that high usage of social media has adverse effects on human social well-being.

CONCLUSION

This research examined three main concepts. Firstly, it analyses the impact of social distancing and how it is negatively associated with social well-being. Secondly, we study how social well-being is positively associated with academic performance. Lastly, this study identifies how a high level of social network site use weakens the relationship between social well-being and social distancing. The current research has identified the importance of healthy well-being and how it can impact an individual's social life. The Covid-19 pandemic had negative effects on the well-being of most people. Social distancing was the main culprit driving the lack of social interactions as governments limited the movement of most people. Social Network Sites helped to negate the impact of social distancing; however, high usage of social media tends to have a detrimental effect on social well-being.

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