

PSYCHOSOCIAL EXPERIENCES OF SNAPCHAT USE AMONG PAKISTANI YOUNG ADULTS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

Mehraab Dilshad Baig¹, Kiran Naseer², Khadija Tul Uzma³, Sana Rasheed⁴, Muhammad Zubair Saleem⁵
Institute of Applied Psychology, University of the Punjab, Lahore.

Corresponding Author

Email: mehrabbaig125@gmail.com

Abstract

In Pakistan, Snapchat has become an increasingly popular platform among young adults, shaping how they connect, communicate, and present themselves in digital spaces. While existing literature has examined global patterns of social media use, little is known about the psychosocial experiences of Pakistani youth on Snapchat, where cultural, religious, and gendered values intersect with digital practices. This study aimed to explore (1) the psychosocial experiences young adults encounter through their everyday use of Snapchat, (2) how Snapchat use influences their communication and relationships, (3) the role of cultural, religious, and gender-based factors in shaping their experiences. A qualitative exploratory design was employed. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with 20 young adults (10 males, 10 females) aged 18–26 years from Lahore, Pakistan, recruited through purposive sampling. All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed thematically using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework. Four major themes emerged from the analysis: (i) Digital Belonging (everyday social glue, playful digital expressions, and relational dynamics), (ii) Pressures and Emotional Costs (streaks and digital compulsions, emotional fluctuations), (iii) Performing the Self (curated vs. authentic selves, boundaries of expression), and (iv) Cultural and Gendered Boundaries (gendered norms of comfort, cultural expectations and family honor, religious and spiritual concerns). The findings suggest that while Snapchat fosters belonging, creativity, and relational maintenance, it also generates pressures of comparison, compulsive use, and cultural constraints. These insights highlight the importance of culturally sensitive digital literacy and mental health interventions. Future research should expand to diverse populations and explore cross-platform dynamics to provide a more comprehensive understanding of youth social media experiences.

Keywords: Snapchat, psychosocial experiences, young adults, digital self-presentation.

INTRODUCTION

Social interaction is particularly crucial for psychological and social adjustment during the developmental stage of the young adult: identity exploration, greater autonomy, shifting peer groups, and development of intimate relationships (Arnett, 2000). Given that the consequences of using social media can be better understood than just in terms of total screen time, because users, activities, relationships, and features of the platforms differ (Kross et al., 2021; Valkenburg et al., 2022), social media is now part of the context in which these developmental tasks are negotiated. The psychosocial experiences of social media are thus related to psychological processes (e.g., emotion, self-esteem, identity, self-presentation, body image, and fear of missing out) and social processes (e.g., belonging,

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friendship, intimacy, peer expectations, privacy, and interpersonal conflict) (Nesi et al., 2018; Przybylski et al., 2013).

This is especially significant for Snapchat, given that its current visual, mobile, and ephemeral nature is significant and contrasts with sites focused on permanent public profiles. Research has found that people tend to use Snapchat to send spontaneous photos, videos, and captions to only relatively small groups of close friends, partners and family (Bayer et al., 2016; Piwek & Joinson, 2016). Because it has messages that fade and the ability for audience selection, it can alleviate some of the pressures of permanent posting and highly curated communication, which can lead to informal or authentic expression (Bayer et al., 2016; Choi & Sung, 2018). Images, texts, audio, video, filters and private messaging can all contribute to the social presence that is created when using Snapchat, which is the sense of being psychologically present with another person, and which can influence perceived closeness in friendships, family and romantic relationships (Kahlow et al., 2020; Vaterlaus et al., 2016).

Snapchat can provide easy and regular communication that allows young people to share normal moments that may not be deemed significant enough to be captured through other more enduring platforms (Bayer et al., 2016). These exchanges can be involved in relationship maintenance, social capital building, companionship, humour, emotional expression, and feeling included in close peers (Piwek & Joonson, 2016; Vaterlaus et al., 2016). It could also offer users more control over who views their posts and how long, allowing them to practice their presentation and allow for some amount of experimentation without the risk of being exposed to a wide or mixed audience (Choi & Sung, 2018). The affordances, as described above, indicate that usage of Snapchat can be perceived as more than just performative and passive, but as an intimate, playful, and socially supporting experience (Bayer et al., 2016; Kahlow et al., 2020).

The same qualities that facilitate connection can also create psychosocial pressures. Visual communication can promote: attention to appearance, repetitive selfie-taking, comparison, editing, and self-evaluation (Burnell et al, 2022; Fardouly & Vartanian, 2016). In the college-age population, more frequent use of Snapchat lenses has been linked to higher body-image concerns, but no evidence exists that the use of a specific Snapchat lens leads to a decrease in appearance satisfaction (Burnell et al., 2022). Filters can therefore be perceived as creative instruments as well as criteria for evaluating how users look without any filters (Burnell et al., 2022).

Relational security may also be impacted by Snapchat. Its secret and ephemeral communication can lead to confusion when it comes to partners' relationship dynamics, and, in experimental research, scenarios involving Snapchat have caused more romantic jealousy than similar scenarios about Facebook (Utz et al., 2015). Furthermore, daily streaks make communication an overt, game-like responsibility, and there is evidence that younger users are more likely to participate in streaks, which is linked to fear of missing out and smartphone use problems (van Essen & Van Ouytsel, 2023). FOMO is correlated with lower psychological-need satisfaction, a negative mood state, and increased engagement with social media, indicating that constant connectivity might stem from a fear of being left out (Przybylski et al., 2013). Additionally, technical disappearance can actually create uncertainty of privacy, as content may be captured, re-distributed, and misinterpreted outside of its original

context, potentially impacting the experience of safety and control for users (Choi & Sung, 2018; Vaterlaus et al., 2016).

The literature about Snapchat comes from Western samples and the young adults of Pakistan are under-represented in platform-specific psychosocial research. A study conducted with young adults in Lahore found a positive association between SNAPCHAT use and self-esteem, and a positive association with problematic use and life satisfaction; their association with these variables was not consistent (Iftikhar et al., 2023). But such a narrow gaze on measurable connections is not sufficient to capture the meanings people in everyday life give to activities like keeping streaks, editing presentations, engaging in private conversations, doing social comparisons, maintaining a close relationship, experiencing jealousy, or feeling pressured. Broadly, these reviews warn that the effects of an average culture will mask significant variations between people and contexts, and that every individual's meaning and experience should be explored (Kross et al., 2021; Valkenburg et al., 2022).

The present study aims to discuss the social and psychological experiences of the young adult users of the social media platform Snapchat in Pakistan. It aims to explore the ways participants engage with Snapchat and its connection to self-expression, identity, emotional state, body image, feeling at home, relationship with others, privacy, societal norms and engagement. The study can offer a culturally informed description of the ways in which the platform of Snapchat has become embedded in the everyday psychological and social lives of Pakistani youth by analyzing both positive and negative experiences.

Main Objectives

The main objective of this qualitative study is to explore and understand the psychosocial experiences of young adults in Pakistan who use Snapchat.

Specific Objectives

- To explore how Snapchat affects the emotional well-being and self-perception of young adult users.
- To examine the role of Snapchat in influencing communication, relationship-building, and social bonding.
- To understand how cultural values and social expectations shape Snapchat use among Pakistani youth.
- To identify both the positive and negative psychosocial outcomes associated with frequent Snapchat interaction.

Research Questions

- What psychosocial experiences do young adults encounter through their everyday use of Snapchat?
- How does Snapchat use shape the social connections and communication patterns of young adults?
- What cultural, religious, and gender-based factors influence the psychosocial experiences of Snapchat users in Pakistan?

Method

Research Design

The current research design is a qualitative exploratory study in which a Thematic Analysis was used to analyze the psychosocial experiences of young adults on Snapchat. Thematic Analysis was used because of the themes, meanings and patterns that can be identified in qualitative data, particularly in the learning of the complex social and emotional reality of the study participants. The design is

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congruent to the goal of the study, to explore the fine-grained emotional and social worlds of study participants through their interactions on Snapchat.

Participants and Sampling

The study participants were 10 male and 10 female young adults (aged 20) of Lahore city, Pakistan, selected via purposive sampling. Those who actively used Snapchat for at least one year, who used the app at least 2-3 times a day, and who gave informed consent and agreed to discuss their experience were eligible to participate. Participants who used other social media platforms as their primary means of social media communication, had low use of Snapchat, refused to participate, or dropped out prior to or during the process of interviews were not included.

Table 1

Demographic profiling of the Snapchat user participants (N=20)

Participant	ge	Gender	Education	Duration of Usage	Usage Frequency/day	Snap Count/day
Participant 1	0	Female	Intermediate	4 years	5-6 times	8-9 snaps
Participant 2	6	Female	Bachelors	2-3years	5-6 times	2 snaps
Participant 3	4	Male	Bachelors	5 years	3-4 times	3-5 snaps
Participant 4	4	Female	Masters	6 years	3-4 times	2 snaps
Participant 5	6	Male	Bachelors	5 years	3-4 times	3 snaps
Participant 6	4	Male	Bachelors	5 years	5-6 times	3-5 snaps
Participant 7	5	Male	Bachelors	4 years	5-6 times	3-5 snaps
Participant 8	4	Female	Bachelors	6 years	5-6 times	3-5 snaps
Participant 9	1	Female	Intermediate	3 years	2-3 times	1 snap
Participant 10	5	Female	Bachelors	5 years	5-6 times	3-5 snaps
Participant 11	2	Female	Bachelors	4 years	3-4 times	1 snap
Participant 12	7	Female	Bachelors	3 years	1-2 times	1 snap
Participant 13	5	Female	Bachelors	5 years	3-4 times	2 snap
Participant 14	3	Male	Bachelors	5 years	3-4 times	1-2 snap
Participant 15	3	Male	Bachelors	5 years	3-4 times	4 snap
Participant 16	22	Male	Bachelors	4 years	4-5 times	2 snaps
Participant 17	3	Male	Bachelors	4-5years	4-5 times	3-4 snap
Participant 18	4	Male	Bachelors	5 years	3-4 times	2 snaps
Participant 19	0	Female	Intermediate	3-4years	4-5 times	1-2 snaps
Participant 20	3	Male	Bachelors	5 years	5-6 times	2-3 snaps

Interview Guide

The in-depth interview guide was developed using a semi-structured method to discuss the psychosocial experiences of young adults with the use of Snapchat. The guide was based on existing literature, the objectives of the study and the research questions. It was also peer-reviewed by the research supervisor and subject experts for clarity, relevance, cultural appropriateness, and ethical appropriateness.

The interview questions included general usage of Snapchat, preferred features of the application, emotional experiences with Snapchat, self-perception, social relationship, communication, pressures with Snapchat, including keeping a streak alive, social comparison, jealousy, and interpersonal conflict. Other questions explored self-presentation, authenticity, privacy and the impact of cultural, familial, religious and gender-related expectations. Probes such as “Can you give an example?” and “How did that make you feel?” were utilized to elicit detailed and meaningful responses. Semi structured interviews were used to maintain a consistency across interviews and allowed flexibility to explore participants' experience in more depth (Kallio et al., 2016; DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019).

Procedure

Following permission from the research supervisor, potential participants who met the eligibility criteria were approached through purposive recruitment. The purpose and nature of the study were explained before participation. Prior informed consent was obtained for each interview. In order to let the participants convey their experience in their own words, semi-structured and in-depth interviews were then carried out. An interview guide was used to provide a structure across the participants, and additional follow-up questions to provide clarification or detail as needed. All interviews were carried out in Urdu so as to provide ease of understanding and allow the participants to share the cultural experiences and emotions in a language they were more comfortable with. Consent was obtained from participants to have the interviews taped. The recordings were then transcribed verbatim in Urdu. Detailed notes of these transcripts were taken while listening to the audio recording to look for errors in the transcript and to ensure that the content was accurate and to the point based on what the participants had to say.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the interview data, followed by Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis. All the interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed in Urdu, in the first place. Transcripts were compared to the recordings and reread several times so as to become familiar with participants' accounts. Second, meaningful chunks of the data were found and initial codes were identified that were relevant to the research questions. Third, codes were aggregated into themes and subthemes that were related. Fourth, the proposed themes were checked with coded extracts and the entire data set to ensure internal consistency and clear-cut differences between themes. Fifth, themes were defined and named around the central meaning and salience of the incoming experiences at the psychosocial level of the participants. Finally, the themes were structured into an analytical narrative, with relevant verbatim excerpts from the interviews. As well as the meaning the participants conveyed in their statements, the analysis also included the cultural, emotional, and relational meanings within statements. Codes and themes were compared repeatedly with the original transcripts to ensure findings were rooted in participants' experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017).

Ethical Considerations

Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained before the interviews. Participants were told that they had the right to refuse to participate in the study and could stop at any time without penalty. The researchers wanted to approach participants respectfully and to try to limit any potential emotional or social damage to the participants when talking about sensitive issues like family

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reputation, gender limitations, jealousy, appearance, interpersonal conflict, or religion. The identities of participants were not used in the presentation of the findings. Rather, the participants were assigned codes to the quotations from the interviews to minimize the risk of identification.

Results

Thematic analysis was conducted to examine the psychosocial experiences of young adults on Snapchat and identified four themes, each representing unique yet related to each other aspects of the lived experiences of the participants.

Table 2

Main Theme	Subtheme	Initial Coding
Digital Belonging	Everyday Social Glue	- Maintaining friendships - Micro-updates as glue - Visibility of lives - Role of friendship (initiative use) - Quick ambient awareness - Strengthening bonds
	Playful Expressions and Relational Dynamics	- Filters & lenses - Bitmoji & stickers - Avatar identity - Memory nudges - Presence cues as intimacy - Direct talk to resolve - Stickers to patch up
Pressures and emotional costs	Streaks & Digital Compulsions	- Pressure to maintain streaks - Tactical restoration - Time drains - scroll loops
	Emotional Fluctuations	- Joy from memories & throwbacks - Felt inclusion via reciprocity - Lifestyle comparison - Jealousy/envy - Being left out - Unequal responsiveness - Night cravings - Ambivalence (bonding vs bad mood)
Performing the Self	Curated vs Authentic Selves	- Authentic private vs curated public - Performance of best self - Fabricated/aspirational selves - Image management

Cultural & Gendered Boundaries	Boundaries of Expression	• Snap score as social capital • What not to post • Audience calibration • Taking breaks • Limited use
	Gendered Norms of Comfort	• Selective adding by gender • Gendered content norms • Gendered audience calibration
	Cultural Expectations & Family Honor	• Modesty • Family honor • Family reputation • Secrecy from elders
	Religious & Spiritual Concerns	• Religious critique of misuse • Evil eye concerns (Nazr) • Moral anxieties

Interpretation

Thematic analysis identified four interconnected themes describing the psychosocial experiences of young adult Snapchat users: Digital Belonging, Pressures and Emotional Costs, Performing the Self, and Cultural and Gendered Boundaries.

The first theme, digital belonging, suggests that Snapchat was not just a communication tool, it was a way to be present in the world. The use of "streaks" and "stories" and quick visual updates helped keep participants informed about their friends' lives without the need for constant talking. The exchanges were low-effort exchanges, and they became relational in their meaning as they became regular; they were like 'signals of continued attention, availability, and inclusion'. This was especially relevant if contact was not face-to-face due to distance or change in circumstances such as graduating from university. These interactions were enhanced with filters, Bitmojis, stickers, and reminders, which gave them a playful element and allowed them to express feelings through visual and symbolic means. They were used for purposes of humor, reassurance, expression of emotions, and minor misunderstandings, indicating that platform features were used as relational resources, rather than as simple decorative elements. Males more frequently referred to these practices in terms of continuity and awareness of participants' activities in their accounts, while females more frequently referred to emotional and relationship-maintaining aspects of these practices. As a whole, the theme shows how the tool of Snapchat has been used as a way to exchange something small, but that is nevertheless significant, as a marker of care, familiarity, and relational continuity.

The second theme, pressures and emotional costs, shows that those same constructs that can facilitate connection can make it feel like social duty, and that's the case when interaction is voluntary. When participants' numbers were at risk, the discomfort was apparent; they used restoration options, and they were inclined to snap even if they were not particularly interested in the content of the message; there was, in some instances, more interest in maintaining numerical continuity than in the communicative content itself. Streaks were thus both a sign of friendship and pressure, and disruption of the streak can be seen as a loss of relationship. Other accounts of unintentional scrolling and wasting

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time also demonstrate how deeply entrenched engagement might become, potentially reducing participants' mastery of their time. In the emotional sense, Snapchat was a mixed bag. Memories and reciprocal snaps, reminders of shared experiences, created happiness and closeness, while seeing outings, achievements, lifestyles and opportunities of peers created jealousy, comparison and exclusion. Comparisons stood out particularly when participants saw friends abroad, when they missed out on events, or when they saw something they wished they had, but didn't have. Social inclusion, unequal responses and lifestyle differences were therefore constantly present and visible for Snapchat, intensifying emotions. Its psychosocial dimension was not always negative or positive, but was linked to what they saw and how they felt; it was reciprocal, and to the significance ascribed to their digital encounters.

The third theme, performing the self, indicated that authenticity on Snapchat was not permanent but was situationally dependent. Private Snapshots were seen by participants as places for more spontaneous and 'authentic' expression, whereas public Stories were more carefully curated, selected and managed. The social construction of acceptable participants involved posting only when they seemed attractive, posting multiple photos and showing only positive moments. Reports also exist of presenting aspirations, such as seemingly visiting other locations despite not using them. For some, scores on the snaps also had symbolic significance, as a form of representation for activity, popularity, or status. However, these pressures were not unchosen pressures for participants. Audience grouping, minimized stories, silenced notifications, planned use and breaks were intentional attempts to manage visibility and emotional exposure. Female participants were more likely to associate such regulation with appearance, family acceptability, and emotional protection, while males were more likely to associate such regulation with public impression, scores, or the actual control of use. The results challenge an easy dichotomy between the real and the false self, and suggest that self-presentation depends on the audience, relational closeness, the evaluation of the audience, and the individual's comfort level.

The last theme, cultural and gendered boundaries, illustrates that the use of Snapchat was set within the broader moral and relational framework of Pakistani society. In the case of female participants, the selective inclusion of male contacts, the avoidance of sharing content with the other gender, and the choice of neutral topics (food or weather) indicated a concern for modesty, safety and reputation. Male participants discussed selective interaction as well, but in their case, the choice was more likely to be based on their familiarity with a person than the level of reputational caution. Values among the family also influenced what was considered appropriate to post on the Internet, especially among females, whose online actions were known to have a potential impact on the family image. The sharing of intimate images, the use of appearance-altering filters and the creation of one's lifestyle were subject to a further moral assessment in the light of religious concerns. *Nazr*, or visibility, also suggests spiritual risk as well as social risk, particularly with regard to posts that appeared beautiful, successful, and material-enticing. As such, self-expression on Snapchat was not understood as an individual decision but an action responsible to family standards, gender norms, religious and culturally significant beliefs. Women's restraint is overemphasized, indicating that the responsibility for respectability in culture and family was not equally shared between men and women. So Snapchat did

not eliminate offline social barriers, but instead created, negotiated and adapted these offline barriers in the digital context.

Discussion

The present study explored how young adults in Lahore experienced Snapchat as a social, emotional, and culturally regulated digital environment. The themes that emerged on Snapchat were Digital Belonging, Pressures and Emotional Costs, Performing the Self, and Cultural and Gendered Boundaries, and indicated that Snapchat facilitated connection but also created obligation, comparison, and self-monitoring. The findings have enriched the previous studies as they have shown how the features of the platforms get their meanings in accordance with the Pakistani norms on relationships, modesty, family reputation, gender interaction, and religion.

The first theme, Digital Belonging, demonstrated that the use of streaks, stories, short snaps, filters, Bitmoji, and stickers served as an “everyday social glue.” Micro-updates were not lengthy conversations, but they were enough to create a sense of connection as friends were around them, as they were in the university or during a time when there was little face to face interaction. Emotions were also conveyed through playful elements, along with keeping relations warm and curbing minor conflicts. The results are aligned with the study of Bayer et al., (2016), who discovered that the ephemeral design of Snapchat allows for the sharing of mundane moments and is a lighthearted way of connecting to the social world. Piwek and Joinson (2016) also found that Snapchat use is primarily with close friends and family, and that it is related more to bonding than bridging social capital. Vaterlaus et al. (2016) also determined that young adults saw Snapchat as a more personal tool, one that serves primarily existing close relationships. Furthermore, playfulness, trust, positivity and assurances of relationships have been positively correlated with Snapchat use (Makki et al., 2018).

This may have special significance in the context of Pakistani society where participants indicated that friendships have been important resources for emotional continuity in both transitions to secondary and tertiary education and in moving from one phase of life to another. It was thanks to Snapchat that they are able to maintain these connections without too much outing or discussion. The private and temporary nature of its communication style allowed it to be a manageable means of keeping intimacy and awareness of others' daily lives. Digital Belonging thus not only captured technology's ease of use, but also the re-socialization of Snapchat for relation-centric socialities.

The second theme, Pressures and Emotional Costs, showed that ways of keeping a relationship could eventually become burdensome. Anxiety about losing streaks; sending snaps without true communicative interest; dependence on restoration options; time spent scrolling; and a need to be responsive. Streaks were then also symbolic of friendship and termed as gamified duties. The findings of van Essen and Van Ouytsel (2023) align with those of the researchers who studied younger adolescents, as they also concluded that streak engagement is related to problematic smartphone use, and that the number and duration of streaks is linked to FOMO and social media self-control. Studies have also shown that Indian adolescents experiencing social-media fatigues may also exhibit symptoms of anxiety and depression due to their compulsive use of social media and fear of missing out (Dhir et al., 2018).

In general, participants were happy when they remembered happy moments or when they got a ‘snap’ back from another participant, but also jealous of and unhappy with the outings, foreign lives

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and material good fortune of their peers. These experiences are similar to the fear of missing out (FOMO), in which the awareness of rewarding experiences outside of one's own life is linked to negative feelings and greater social media use (Przybylski et al., 2013). In Pakistan, these comparisons can be particularly salient when Snapchat brings differences in financial resources, international mobility, social opportunities, and lifestyle to the fore. The results therefore indicate that the emotional implications of use are not merely determined by how often a person uses Snapchat but rather by the significance and meaning that they give to the concepts of inclusion, responsiveness, reciprocity, and comparison.

In the third theme, *Performing the Self*, there was a recurring theme of authenticity and impression management. The participants tended to perceive private snaps as somewhat authentic, while public stories were retaken, edited, selectively posted or created to convey a desirable and aspirational identity. Some respondents also considered snap scores as measures of popularity, visibility or social status. McDaniel and Coyne (2016) also claimed that ephemerality can minimize the effort required to maintain a permanent online presence while maintaining strategic self-presentation to a minimum. This Snapchat design may then foster impromptu communication and, at the same time, pressures to project a socially desirable image.

Filters and repeated retakes were relevant to appearance management, specifically, in the way in which the participants used them. Habib et al. (2022) pointed out that Snapchat filters can influence young women's attitudes regarding appearance, as they can foster short-term confidence and appearance anxiety. In the present study, however, there was no passivity involved with these pressures. Their exposure was managed by limiting their audiences, grouping their contacts, turning off notifications, limiting their usage and taking breaks. Declining to answer questions or refusing to comment on the issue signals conscious efforts to maintain control over emotional life and over the visibility of his/her online presence.

In Pakistan, self-presentation was more than just being attractive or socially successful. The participants also expected the opinions of their social network and family members. The dichotomy between the "private" and the "public" self was thus negotiated with the audience and not deception per se. Snapchat now emerged as a place where young people could experience spontaneity, social acceptance, emotional support, and reputational protection.

The fourth theme, *Cultural and Gendered Boundaries*, revealed that use of Snapchat was still tightly intertwined with offline cultural constructs. Female participants were very aware of adding strangers, posting personal photos, and reposting content that may not be in line with family values. Modesty, family honor, content and audience selection, based on religious appropriateness. Male participants also reported selective interaction, while the burden of protecting one's reputation seemed to be stronger among the females.

These results are in line with the qualitative study conducted by Aksar et al. (2020) which showed that the factors of 'purdah', 'izzat', 'control by men in the family' and 'harassment from men online' remain a reality for Pakistani women in their digital lives. They discovered that the patriarchal expectations are not necessarily undermined when exposed to the social media, but rather they are reproduced in virtual spaces. The current findings also suggest that the visibility of women online can

be judged by the honour of the extended family, and therefore, women have to be calibrated and keep themselves in check.

Digital self-regulation was also culturally unique, as religious and spiritual concerns emerged. Filters, bodily display, showmanship and public sharing were appraised in participants' moral and spiritual contexts. The term *nazr* indicated that not only was there a reputational concern about being seen, but there was also a possible spiritual vulnerability. To validate the multidimensional measure of evil eye beliefs developed and validated by Naz and Aslam (2023), the current study was conducted with Pakistani samples, which also confirmed the continued cultural and psychological relevance of these beliefs. Thus, Pakistani young adults did not take up Snapchat uniformly, but rather negotiated and mediated its possibilities within the cultural context of gender, family, religion and spirituality.

Overall, Snapchat emerged as a psychosocially ambivalent environment. It helped cultivate intimacy, playfulness, relational continuity, and compulsive rituals, but it also fostered emotional comparison, identity management and culturally unequal restrictions. These results indicate that the impact of social media cannot be considered without taking their sociocultural background into account. In the case of Pakistani youth, the affordances of Snapchat were negotiated through expectations and accounts of the group, with digital belonging not divorced from emotional pressure and cultural boundary negotiation.

Implications

The findings highlight the need for culturally responsive digital-literacy and mental-health initiatives for Pakistani youth. They should cover issues of managing a healthy streak, audience control, privacy, compulsive checking, social comparison, and psychological implications of filtered self-presentation. Parents, teachers, counsellors and university support services need to be aware that Snapchat can also foster a sense of social connection, while simultaneously exerting emotional pressure. Interventions should therefore promote the balanced use of the platform without minimizing or taking away its value, be mindful of gender norms, reputation of families, religious values and concerns about visibility online.

Limitations

The findings are not easily generalizable to other cities, rural communities, age groups and socioeconomic status, as the study included a limited number of young adults by purposive sampling from Lahore city. The results were based on the participants' recall and might have been affected by recall bias and socially desirable responses, especially regarding culturally sensitive issues. Further, the qualitative and cross-sectional design only reflected the experiences of participants at one point in time and was not able to make causal inferences or to identify changes in Snapchat-related experiences over time.

Future Directions

Larger and more diverse samples from different regions, socioeconomic levels, educational backgrounds, and cultural settings in Pakistan should be included in future studies. Longitudinal studies and mixed-method studies may be used to explore the changes in Snapchat usage, the pressure to use streaks, social comparisons, self-presentation, and emotional well-being over time. Comparative studies between the different gender groups and social media may help to clarify further what experiences are unique to Snapchat. Future research should also examine the relationships among

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family monitoring, religious beliefs, privacy concerns, and digital literacy interventions and healthier social media engagement.



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