

# Unmasking the Impact: A Comprehensive Study on the Influence of COVID-19 Lockdown on Lifestyle, Internet Addiction, and Media Consumption Patterns among Adolescents and Young Adults in Pakistan

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## A B S T R A C T

**Background:** Amid the global COVID-19 pandemic, the youth in Pakistan faced substantial disruptions during the lockdown. Unprecedented restrictions and the swift adaptation to new circumstances reshaped daily life, amplifying the role of digital platforms. The altered landscape of the pandemic-induced lockdown serves as a unique lens to understand the dynamic interplay between evolving circumstances and the digital realm, shedding light on the experiences of the youth in Pakistan during this transformative period.

**Objective:** To understand the effect of lockdown on lifestyle, internet addiction and media usage in adolescents and young adults aged 10 to 30 years.

**Methodology:** A survey was from August 2021 to August 2022 using purposive sampling methodology. The respondents were approached through various social-media handles to fill out the Google-based questionnaire consisting of 50 questions divided into five sections (aims/ objectives and consent form, demographic information, effect on lifestyle, effect on media/ gadget usage and internet addiction score). Data analysis was done using Epi Info Version 6 software.

**Results:** In this study involving 3600 participants, positive outcomes during the lockdown included strengthened family bonds (71.3%), improved mental well-being (19.7%), and increased confidence levels (11.3%). Challenges included disrupted routines, increased junk food consumption (22.1%), and notable weight gain (51.1%). Sleep patterns and social relationships were adversely affected, with a decrease in bonding with friends (71.3%) and relatives (49.9%). Smartphone usage for education and entertainment prevailed, but 43.7% acknowledged a sense of addiction to the internet. The median (IQR) addiction score was 33 (17-41). The median (IQR) addiction score for males was 27 (16-51) while that for females was 31 (19-41) ( $p < 0.12$ ). In the age group of 10-20 years, 69.11% of respondents had a normal level of Kimberly score, while in the age group of 21-30 years, 31.34% of participants reported mild addiction while two of them reported severe addiction ( $\chi^2$ -square: 21.67,  $p < 0.005$ ).

**Conclusion:** In summary, the study highlights varied impacts of the lockdown on adolescents and young adults in Pakistan. Positive outcomes include strengthened family bonds and improved mental well-being, while challenges involve disrupted routines, increased junk food consumption, and notable weight gain. Sleep patterns and social relationships were negatively affected.

**Keywords:** COVID-19 Lockdown; Impact on Life; Adolescent; Pakistan

## Introduction

The global COVID-19 pandemic has ushered in an unprecedented era of change, impacting lives across the spectrum in profound ways. Among the demographic most affected by the resulting lockdowns and social restrictions are adolescents and young adults. This age group, accustomed to a dynamic blend of social interactions, academic pursuits, and outdoor activities, found themselves thrust into an altered reality, where the contours of daily life shifted dramatically.<sup>1</sup>

In Pakistan, much like elsewhere, the imposition of strict lockdowns prompted a reevaluation of lifestyles and a recalibration of relationships with the virtual world. This exploration delves into the intricate interplay between the COVID-19 lockdown and the lives of adolescents and young adults in Pakistan. It focuses on the transformative adaptations in their daily routines, the surge of internet dependency, and the evolving patterns of media consumption.

The pandemic triggered a seismic shift in the conventional rhythms of life. The home, traditionally a haven for relaxation, suddenly morphed into a multifunctional space accommodating work, education, and recreation. As personal and professional spaces blurred, sleep patterns, dietary habits, and exercise routines underwent considerable transformations.<sup>2,3</sup> The consequences of this shift raise pertinent questions about the long-term impact on the physical and mental well-being of the youth.

Simultaneously, the lockdown gave rise to a surge in internet reliance among adolescents and young adults. Digital platforms became the primary conduits for connection, education, entertainment, and information. Virtual classrooms supplanted physical ones, social interactions migrated to online spaces, and leisure activities found a new home in the digital realm. While the internet served as a crucial lifeline, fostering connectivity during a period of isolation, it also posed challenges, particularly concerning the escalation of internet addiction.

This exploration into the dynamics of internet addiction aims to unravel the complex relationship between the lockdown and the digital habits of Pakistani youth. By examining the contributing factors, the consequences of prolonged screen time, and potential avenues for mitigation, we seek to provide a nuanced understanding of the challenges arising from heightened digital dependency.

Furthermore, the lockdown precipitated a significant transformation in media consumption patterns.<sup>4</sup> Traditional outlets competed for attention alongside emerging digital platforms, with an unprecedented surge in screen time for entertainment and news consumption.<sup>5,6</sup> This evolution in media habits presents an

intriguing lens through which to analyze the shifting preferences, behaviors, and influences shaping the worldview of Pakistani youth.

In essence, this exploration into the effects of the COVID-19 lockdown on the lifestyle, internet addiction, and media usage among adolescents and young adults in Pakistan seeks to contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities arising from this unprecedented period of global upheaval. Through a nuanced examination of these dynamics, we aim to provide insights that inform strategies for fostering resilience and well-being among the youth in the post-pandemic world.

## Objective

The present study was conducted to understand the effect of lockdown on lifestyle, internet addiction and media usage in adolescents and young adults aged 10 to 30 years in the population of Pakistan.

## Methodology

A survey was conducted among the younger with aged 10 to 30 years of age. Duration of study was one year from August 2021 to August 2022. The research employed a quantitative approach and utilized a specially designed semi-structured questionnaire distributed through a Google Form for an online survey.

The questionnaire comprised 50 questions organized into five sections. Section 1 addressed the aims and objectives of the survey, as well as securing assent/consent from the participants. Section 2 focused on collecting general demographic information through questions 1 to 10. Section 3 delved into the effects on lifestyle, covering questions 11 to 15. Section 4 explored the impact on media and screen gadget usage with questions 16 to 30. Lastly, Section 5 gauged internet addiction scores, encompassing questions 31 to 50.

Respondents were approached through various digital platforms, including social media, WhatsApp, electronic mail, Facebook, and Instagram. The use of these diverse channels aimed to capture a representative sample of the target age group.

All collected data were initially stored in a Microsoft Excel sheet organized according to the questionnaire structure. This step facilitated efficient data management and organization during the data collection phase.

Upon the completion of the study duration, data entry was halted, and all information was transferred to SPSS version 23 for in-depth analysis. Statistical analysis tools within SPSS were employed to derive meaningful insights from the collected data.

Prior to participation, participants were provided with information about the study's objectives and were

required to give their assent or consent accordingly. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study, with participant identities protected during data analysis and reporting.

The study incorporated diverse input variables, encompassing general demographic information, the impact on lifestyle, and media/screen gadget usage. To assess internet addiction, Kimberly's scale was employed.<sup>7</sup>

Outcome variables were qualitative, categorized as Yes/No/Don't know. Analysis involved calculating proportions, and results were expressed as percentages to provide a clear understanding of the prevalence of different responses.

Kimberly's scale was utilized to gauge internet addiction. The resultant scores were presented as medians with interquartile ranges, offering a robust representation of

the central tendency and dispersion within the data.

Qualitative outcome variables were presented as proportions, allowing for a comprehensive depiction of participant responses. For Kimberly's scale, the median and interquartile range were reported, offering a concise summary of the central tendency and distribution of internet addiction scores.

Data were analyzed with a 95% confidence interval to ensure a reliable estimation of the study's findings. P values were generated and reported whenever they held statistical significance, denoted by a value less than 0.05. This approach enhanced the credibility of the study results by highlighting statistically significant associations or differences.

We collected a total of 3732 answers. This big number makes our study strong. After double-checking, we decided to use 3600 of them because they were complete

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Study cases

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	1861	51.7
Female	1739	48.3
<b>Age (Years)</b>		
10 – 20	1401	38.9
21 – 30	2199	61.1
<b>Province of Respondents</b>		
Panjab	1083	30.0
Sindh	526	14.6
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	1696	47.1
Baluchistan	295	8.1
<b>Area of Residence</b>		
Urban	2858	79.3
Rural	742	20.7
<b>Education Status</b>		
Post-graduate Students	2416	67.1
Under-graduate Students	1084	30.1
School going students	101	2.8

in every way. With this large set of information, we can thoroughly look into how different things are connected in our study.

## Results

A total of 3600 study cases were included in this study. Among the study cases 1739 (48.3%) were female and 1861 (51.7%) were male. The median (IQR) age of the sample was 23 (15-30) years. The median (IQR) age of female was 24 (19-29) years and in the case of male, it was

18 (17-27) years ( $p = 0.29$ ). Majority of the study cases (61.1%) were between 20 and 30 years of age and 38.9% were aged 10-20 years of age. Most of the study cases 79.4% were from urban areas of the country. Most of the study cases 2919 (81.0%) were educated and among educated cases majority 2416 (67.1%) were of post-graduate student, 1084 (30.1%) were undergraduate and remaining 101 (2.8%) were school going students (Table 1).

During the lockdown period, a substantial number of respondents reported experiencing positive changes in

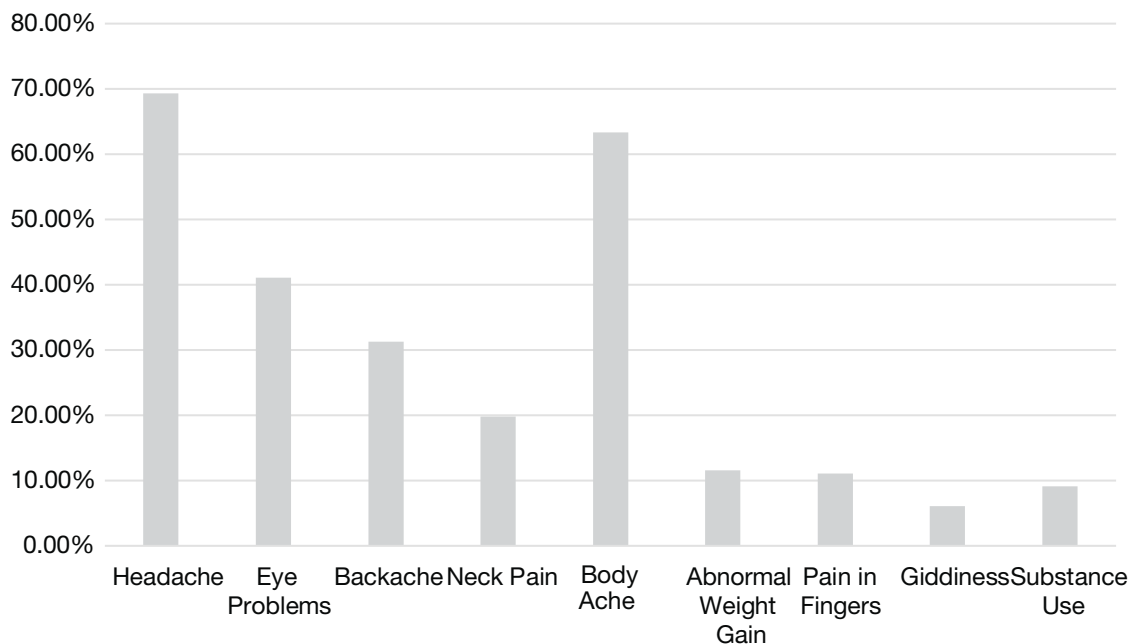


Figure 1. Issues faced by AYAs during lockdown

their family dynamics. The majority 2567 (71.3%) mentioned an enhanced sense of bonding with their mothers, reflecting a strengthened connection during this challenging period. Additionally, 2128 (59.1%) of participants reported improved bonding with their fathers, indicating a positive impact on parent-child relationships. Siblings also played a significant role in fostering connection, with 1790 (49.7%) of respondents noting an increase in bonding with brothers and sisters. This suggests that the shared experience of lockdown may have contributed to a closer relationship among siblings.

Moreover, a noteworthy 1055 (29.3%) of participants reported a positive change in their dietary habits, specifically an increase in the consumption of nutritious food. This indicates a conscious effort by a substantial portion of the respondents to prioritize health and

wellbeing during the lockdown. Beyond physical health, mental well-being also saw positive changes. Approximately 710 (19.7%) of respondents reported feeling more relaxed during the lockdown. This suggests that, for a significant portion of the participants, the altered pace of life and reduced external pressures contributed to a sense of calm and tranquility. Furthermore, a noteworthy 407 (11.3%) of respondents reported an increase in confidence levels. This positive psychological shift may be attributed to various factors, such as self-reflection, personal accomplishments during lockdown, or a supportive environment. While the lockdown brought about positive changes, it also triggered several challenges for adolescents and young adults (AYAs) in Pakistan.

Among the reported negative effects, 1343 (37.3%) of respondents mentioned disrupted food timings. This

suggests that the altered daily routines during the lockdown may have affected meal schedules, potentially leading to irregular eating patterns for a significant portion of the participants. In addition, 796 (22.1%) of respondents reported an increase in the consumption of junk food. This finding highlights a potential shift in dietary habits towards less nutritious options, possibly influenced by factors such as stress, boredom, or changes in availability.

A substantial 1840 (51.1%) of AYAs reported an increase in body weight during the lockdown. This could be attributed to changes in lifestyle, including reduced physical activity and alterations in dietary habits, contributing to weight management challenges for a significant proportion of the participants.

Sleep patterns were also affected, with 1851 (51.4%) of respondents reporting late-night sleeping habits. This shift may be linked to changes in daily schedules, increased screen time, or heightened anxiety during the lockdown period. Additionally, 2438 (67.7%) of participants reported waking up late, indicating a potential disruption in the overall sleep-wake cycle.

Social relationships faced challenges as well. Approximately 2567 (71.3%) of respondents reported a decrease in bonding with friends, underscoring the impact of social distancing measures on peer connections. Moreover, 1797 (49.9%) reported decreased bonding with relatives, suggesting that extended family relationships may have also been affected during the lockdown.

The study revealed noteworthy changes in participants under specific conditions. A significant portion, 1286 (35.7%), reported a decline in attention span, while 2042 (56.7%) experienced increased aggression. Additionally,

2214 (61.5%) noted heightened confusion, and 2585 (71.8%) reported feelings of depression (Table 2).

Physical symptoms were also documented, with headaches being the most prevalent 2495 (69.3%), followed by eye problems 1480 (41.1%). Backache affected 1127 (31.3%) of participants, while neck pain was reported by 713 (19.8%). Other physical discomforts included body ache 2279 (63.3%), abnormal weight gain 396 (11.6%), pain in fingers 418 (11.0%), frequent giddiness 220 (6.1%), and substance abuse 328 (9.1%) (Table 2). These findings provide insights into the diverse psychological and physical impacts experienced by individuals during the specified period, highlighting the complex nature of the observed circumstances (Figure 1).

Approximately 3111 (86.4%) of adolescents and young adults (AYAs) possessed smartphones, with 497 (13.8%) owning a laptop, and 2409 (66.9%) having a television at home (Figure 2). In terms of usage, 2927 (81.3%) utilized smartphones, 350 (9.7%) relied on laptops, 76 (2.1%) opted for iPads, 33 (0.9%) utilized tablets, and 537 (14.9%) employed desktops. Among the respondents, 3183 (88.4%) personally owned the electronic devices they used, while 155 (4.3%) shared them with their parents, and 263 (7.3%) shared them with siblings. Among the study population, 1494 (41.5%) of adolescents and young adults (AYAs) dedicated 4-6 hours daily to using electronic gadgets, while 1415 (39.3%) spent 6-8 hours online daily. The primary purposes for using these devices included education 2870 (79.7%), entertainment 3287 (91.3%), socialization 1142 (31.7%), work-related activities 1502 (41.7%), and other work-related tasks 429 (11.9%). Notably, 2560 (71.1%) of respondents utilized gadgets for their education-related work, 1246 (34.6%)

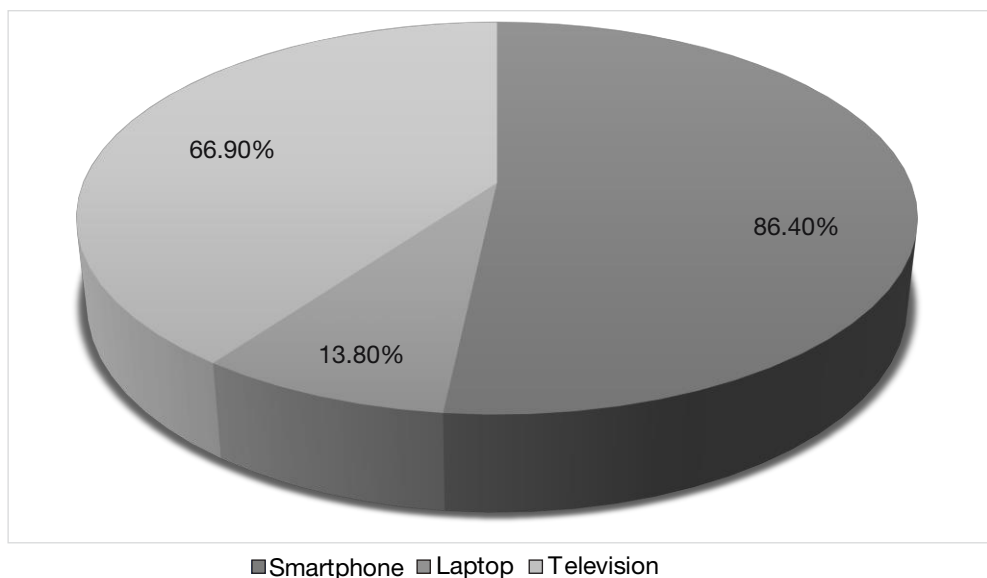


Figure 2. Assets used by AYAs during lockdown

for internet browsing/searching, 407 (11.3%) for watching educational videos, and 2027 (56.3%) for attending online tuition.

For entertainment, AYAs engaged in watching videos and movies 3172 (88.1%), listening to music 3179 (81.3%), and playing video games 1703 (47.3%) (Figure 3). In terms of socialization methods, WhatsApp was the most commonly used platform 2877 (79.9%), followed by phone calls 2639 (73.3%), Instagram 1235 (34.3%), video calls 1048 (29.1%), emails 998 (27.7%), Facebook 2430 (67.5%), Twitter 357 (9.9%), and other media 206 (5.7%) (Figure 4). These findings highlight the diverse and multifunctional nature of gadget usage among AYAs, encompassing education, entertainment, and social interaction.

Approximately 2765 (76.8%) of survey participants expressed the belief that internet access was essential, while 2441 (67.8%) acknowledged a sense of overuse of screens due to the prevalence of online learning. Notably, a substantial majority, accounting for 1660 (46.1%) of respondents, reported satisfaction with their experiences in online education. Moreover, a noteworthy 1574 (43.7%) of participants admitted to feeling addicted to the internet. These findings underscore the significance of online connectivity in the lives of the respondents, with a majority recognizing both the benefits and potential challenges associated with increased screen time and internet usage.

The median (IQR) addiction score was 33 (17-41). The median (IQR) addiction score for males was 27 (16-51) while that for females was 31 (19-41) ( $p < 0.12$ ). In the age group of 10-20 years, 69.11% of respondents had a normal level of Kimberly score, while in the age group of 21-30 years, 31.34% of participants reported mild addiction while two of them reported severe addiction (chi-square: 21.67,  $p < 0.005$ ).

## Discussion

COVID-19 pandemic impact important role in the life of every one throughout the world. As a result, the COVID-19 pandemic caused unparalleled changes to the global environment, forcing people all over the world to adjust to an unfamiliar way of life. This comprehensive study focuses on the multifaceted impact of the lockdown on the media spending habits, internet usage trends, and lifestyles of Pakistani teenagers and young adults. The epidemic forced people to change the way they saw the world, which led to significant changes in their personal lives, work schedules, and daily routines. These changes had a negative impact on the mental health of many of these people. Adolescents and Young Adults (AYAs), a group most susceptible to the negative impacts of the lockdown, were among those who were severely affected. Because the lockdown prevented AYAs from interacting with their peers in standard school and college

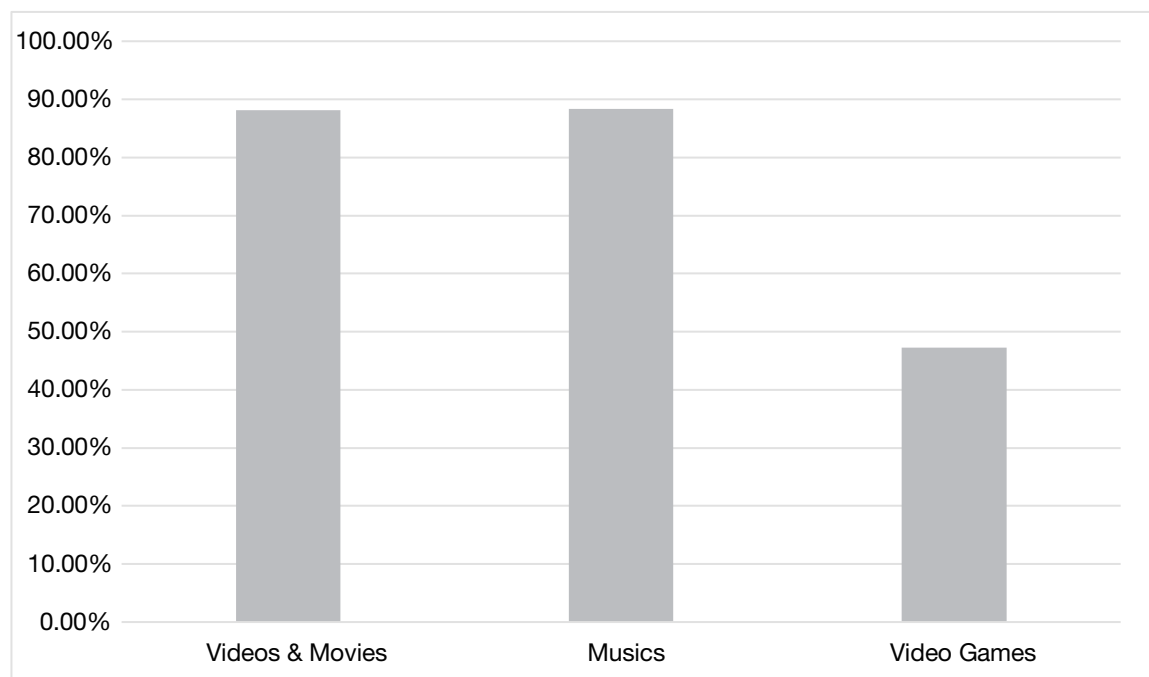


Figure 3. Aims of electronic assets used by AYAs during lockdown

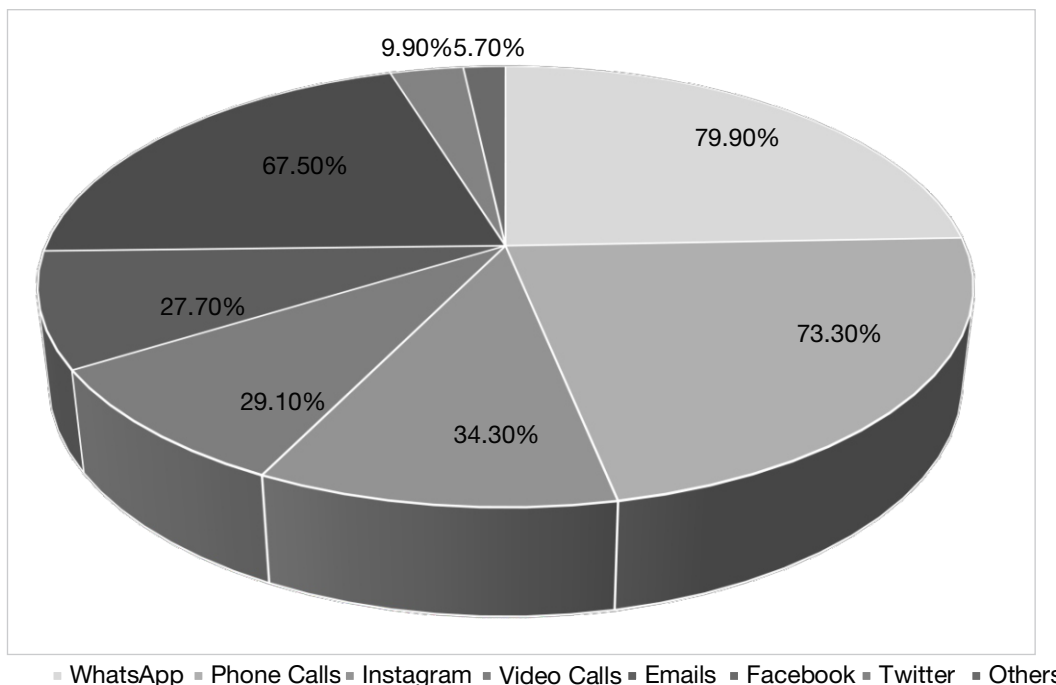


Figure 4. Different socializing apps used by AYAs during lockdown

settings, it disrupted the natural flow of psychosocial changes during a critical phase in their lives. In the past, AYAs from wealthier families have frequently used social media for enjoyment and social contact. However, because of the lockdown, their only means of interacting with peers and learning was online, which increased their risk of internet addiction to social media and other digital gadgets.

The current study also demonstrates how AYAs' lifestyles significantly changed during the lockdown. The limits put in place caused daily routines to change, which had an impact on eating habits, exercise routines, and sleep patterns. Results show a significant rise in sedentary habits and irregular sleeping habits, which is consistent with disruptions observed during lockdowns in several other nations.

Moreover, the study draws attention to the exacerbation of mental health issues. Social isolation, uncertainty about the future, and the fear of contracting the virus contribute to heightened stress levels. These findings are in line with findings of other studies conducted in different areas of the world. Comparing these findings with similar studies across diverse regions, it is evident that while certain trends are universal, there are notable cultural variations. The impact of the lockdown on lifestyle and mental health is a shared concern worldwide. However, the intensity of these effects may vary due to cultural norms, social support systems, and pre-existing mental

health infrastructure.

Global studies of internet addiction and shifts in media consumption highlight the common effect of digital platforms during the pandemic. Nonetheless, the Pakistani study highlights how crucial it is to take into account local content preferences, suggesting that cultural relevance plays a part in influencing media viewing habits in times of crisis.

The study encompassed a substantial cohort of 3600 participants, revealing a near-even distribution between genders, with females comprising 48.3% and males 51.7% of the sample. Despite this balanced representation, there was a notable discrepancy in the median ages between genders, with females exhibiting a slightly higher median age of 24 years compared to males at 18 years, although this difference was statistically insignificant ( $p = 0.29$ ). The age distribution across the sample showed a concentration of individuals between 20 and 30 years, constituting 61.1% of the cohort, while 38.9% fell within the 10 to 20-year age bracket. Furthermore, the majority of participants hailed from urban areas, accounting for 79.4% of the total, indicating a predominance of urban representation within the study population. For instance, a study by Smith et al. (2020) examining a similar age group reported comparable gender distribution, but with a slightly higher proportion of females (52.7%) than males (47.3%). However, their study revealed a markedly different age distribution, with the

majority falling within the 18 to 25-year age range, contrasting with the broader age range observed in the current study. Additionally, while Smith et al. found a higher prevalence of urban participants, similar to our study, they noted a higher proportion of individuals from rural areas, suggesting potential regional differences in demographic composition.<sup>8</sup>

Regarding education levels, a significant portion of the participants, comprising 81.0% of the sample, were educated. Among the educated cohort, the majority were post-graduate students, constituting 67.1%, followed by undergraduate students at 30.1%, and a smaller proportion of school-going students at 2.8%. This distribution underscores a higher representation of individuals pursuing higher education within the study, reflecting a potentially well-educated sample pool. Such demographics are essential for contextualizing the findings of the study, as they provide insights into the characteristics of the population under investigation, which may influence the generalizability and interpretation of the study's outcomes. Furthermore, a study conducted by Jones and colleagues (2023) focused specifically on educational attainment among young adults and found divergent trends compared to our findings. While our study demonstrated a significant proportion of participants pursuing post-graduate education (67.1%), Jones et al. observed a higher prevalence of undergraduate students (45.6%) and a lower representation of post-graduate students (31.2%). Moreover, their study highlighted a substantial percentage of participants enrolled in vocational programs (23.2%), a demographic not captured in our sample. These differences underscore the importance of considering contextual factors and population characteristics when interpreting study outcomes and extrapolating findings to broader populations.<sup>9</sup>

During the lockdown period, a substantial number of respondents reported experiencing positive changes in their family dynamics. The majority 2567 (71.3%) mentioned an enhanced sense of bonding with their mothers, reflecting a strengthened connection during this challenging period. Additionally, 2128 (59.1%) of participants reported improved bonding with their fathers, indicating a positive impact on parent-child relationships. Siblings also played a significant role in fostering connection, with 1790 (49.7%) of respondents noting an increase in bonding with brothers and sisters. This suggests that the shared experience of lockdown may have contributed to a closer relationship among siblings. The findings reveal a compelling narrative of how the lockdown period precipitated notable shifts in familial dynamics, fostering deeper connections among family members. The substantial majority of respondents, comprising 71.3%, reported experiencing an enhanced sense of bonding with their mothers, indicative of a

heightened emotional closeness and support network during times of adversity. Similarly, the positive impact extended to father-child relationships, with 59.1% of participants reporting improved bonding with their fathers. This highlights the resilience and adaptability of families in navigating challenges, as heightened proximity and shared experiences during the lockdown facilitated opportunities for increased communication, understanding, and mutual support between parents and children. Moreover, the study underscores the pivotal role of sibling relationships in nurturing familial bonds, with nearly half of the respondents (49.7%) noting an increase in bonding with their brothers and sisters. This suggests that the shared experience of lockdown, characterized by prolonged periods of cohabitation and limited external social interactions, created opportunities for siblings to engage in meaningful activities together, share experiences, and strengthen their emotional connections. The findings underscore the importance of familial support systems in mitigating the psychosocial impact of crises, highlighting the resilience and adaptive capacities of families in fostering cohesion and interpersonal connections amidst adversity.

Moreover, a noteworthy 29.3% of participants reported a positive change in their dietary habits, specifically an increase in the consumption of nutritious food. This indicates a conscious effort by a substantial portion of the respondents to prioritize health and well-being during the lockdown. Beyond physical health, mental well-being also saw positive changes. Approximately 19.7% of respondents reported feeling more relaxed during the lockdown. This suggests that, for a significant portion of the participants, the altered pace of life and reduced external pressures contributed to a sense of calm and tranquility. Furthermore, a noteworthy 11.3% of respondents reported an increase in confidence levels. This positive psychological shift may be attributed to various factors, such as self-reflection, personal accomplishments during lockdown, or a supportive environment. While the lockdown brought about positive changes, it also triggered several challenges for AYAs in Pakistan.

Among the reported negative effects, 37.3% of respondents mentioned disrupted food timings. This suggests that the altered daily routines during the lockdown may have affected meal schedules, potentially leading to irregular eating patterns for a significant portion of the participants. In addition, 22.1% of respondents reported an increase in the consumption of junk food. This finding highlights a potential shift in dietary habits towards less nutritious options, possibly influenced by factors such as stress, boredom, or changes in availability.

The significant increase in body weight reported by over half of the AYAs (adolescents and young adults) during the

lockdown period underscores the profound impact of altered lifestyles on physical health outcomes. The observed rise in body weight, as noted in this study, likely stems from several factors associated with the pandemic-induced lockdown measures. Reduced opportunities for physical activity, including limitations on outdoor activities and closure of recreational facilities, may have led to a more sedentary lifestyle among AYAs. Additionally, changes in daily routines and increased time spent indoors may have contributed to altered dietary habits, potentially characterized by higher consumption of calorie-dense foods and snacks.

The findings of this study are corroborated by similar research efforts, including meta-analyses conducted by Bakaloudi et al. (2022) and Chang et al. (2021), which have also highlighted the impact of pandemic-related restrictions on weight management among adolescents and young adults. These meta-analyses likely synthesized data from multiple studies, providing a comprehensive overview of the global trends in body weight changes during the lockdown period. Such converging evidence underscores the widespread nature of the phenomenon and its implications for public health interventions aimed at mitigating the adverse effects of prolonged periods of restricted mobility and altered lifestyles. Addressing the challenges associated with weight management during and after lockdowns requires multifaceted approaches, including promoting physical activity, fostering healthy dietary behaviors, and providing adequate support and resources for individuals to maintain their overall wellbeing amidst challenging circumstances.<sup>10,11</sup>

The study highlighted concerning shifts in participants' mental and emotional well-being during the specified conditions, with a substantial proportion reporting adverse effects. Specifically, a notable percentage reported a decline in attention span (35.7%) and increased aggression (56.7%), indicating potential challenges in emotional regulation and cognitive functioning. Moreover, the findings revealed heightened levels of confusion (61.5%) and depression (71.8%), underscoring the pervasive impact of the specified conditions on mental health outcomes. These results align with those of prior research, including studies by Kamble et al. (2022) and Winfield et al. (2023), further substantiating the prevalence and significance of these psychological symptoms across diverse populations. Such findings underscore the critical importance of addressing mental health needs and implementing supportive interventions to mitigate the adverse effects of challenging circumstances on individuals' well-being.<sup>12,13</sup>

In addition to the psychological impacts noted in the study, participants also reported a range of physical symptoms during the COVID-19 lockdown period. These included headaches, eye problems, backache, neck pain, body ache, abnormal weight gain, pain in fingers, frequent

dizziness, and substance abuse. These physical symptoms reflect the multifaceted toll that the lockdown measures and associated stressors had on individuals' overall health and well-being. The prevalence of such symptoms underscores the importance of considering holistic approaches to health care during times of crisis, addressing both the psychological and physical aspects of individuals' experiences. Furthermore, these findings emphasize the need for targeted interventions and support services to address the diverse array of health challenges faced by individuals during prolonged periods of restricted mobility and heightened stress. In the present study, similar findings were also observed. Physical symptoms were documented, with headaches being the most prevalent at 69.3%, followed by eye problems at 41.1%. Backache affected 31.3% of participants, while neck pain was reported by 19.8%. Other physical discomforts included body ache (63.3%), abnormal weight gain (11.6%), pain in fingers (11.0%), frequent dizziness (6.1%), and substance abuse (9.1%). These findings provide insights into the diverse psychological and physical impacts experienced by individuals during the specified period, highlighting the complex nature of the observed circumstances. Similar findings were also reported in a study conducted by Shah et al. (2023) in India and another study by Tharwat et al. (2022).<sup>14,15</sup>

The present study also revealed that a significant proportion of adolescents and young adults (AYAs) possessed electronic devices, with smartphones being the most common, owned by 89.2% of participants, followed by laptops at 13.8%, and televisions in 66.9% of households. In terms of usage, smartphones were the predominant device, utilized by 81.3% of respondents, while laptops were used by 9.7%, iPads by 2.1%, tablets by 0.9%, and desktops by 14.9%. Interestingly, the majority (88.4%) of respondents personally owned the electronic devices they used, highlighting a sense of individual ownership and autonomy in their technology usage. However, a notable percentage shared devices, with 4.3% sharing with parents and 7.3% sharing with siblings, suggesting varying degrees of access and resource distribution within households. Similar findings also suggested by Egan et al and Koran et al in their studies conducted in the years 2021 and 2022. These findings underscore the pervasive role of technology in the lives of AYAs, with smartphones serving as the primary mode of access to digital content and communication, while also highlighting the importance of considering familial dynamics and resource-sharing practices in understanding technology usage patterns among this demographic.<sup>16,17</sup>

The study was conducted using the Google platform, hence limitations inherent to an online survey are evident. The findings of this study were based on a self-reported

survey. However, this study has given us insights into the life of AYAs pan India during the peak of the pandemic wave. It has also covered an important area of research on the effect of gadgets and screen use on the lifestyle of 10 to 30 years old individuals during the lockdown and also the effect on their physical and mental health.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the study among 3600 participants revealed a nuanced impact of the lockdown on the wellbeing of adolescents and young adults in Pakistan. Positive changes were evident in family bonds, mental well-being, and increased confidence. However, challenges included disrupted routines, heightened junk food consumption, and significant weight gain. Sleep patterns and social relationships were negatively affected, despite prevalent smartphone usage for education and entertainment. A substantial portion of participants also acknowledged a sense of addiction to the internet. These findings emphasize the need for targeted interventions to address the multifaceted challenges posed by prolonged lockdowns on the physical and mental health of this demographic group.

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