

Relation of social media addiction on adjustment among undergraduate college students

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ABSTRACT

Social media addiction is a major problem for the current generation of students. Easy availability of internet, and the ability to access social media websites through mobile phones has increased the penetration of social media. Students often leave their homes as they begin the phase of higher education. Social media is often the first choice for students away from their homes to find new company and spend time. However, the lack of personal support from parents and the influence of social media often cause adjustment problems in college students. Adjustment problems could lead to reduced academic performance and severe mental health issues. The present study analysed the effect of social media addiction on adjustment to college work, and concluded that social media addiction can cause adjustment problems in college students.

Keywords: *Social Media Addiction, Adjustment*

Andrew Weinrich started the first ever social media website, Six Degrees, in 1997. Although the concept of 'social media' existed prior to the launch of this website, Six Degrees was the first to offer the option of social networking – by allowing members to create profiles and link to profiles of their 'friends' (Ahmed, 2018) The earlier instance of social media was primarily the use of bulletin boards, which appeared in 1978, and Usenet in 1980 (Edosomwan, Prakasan, Kouame, Watson, & Seymour, 2011). Social media websites are immensely powerful tools that can be effectively used to the advantage of the user. Research works have found a positive correlation between frequency of social media use and relation with peers and friends, which could be used effectively to improve teaching-learning process (Rutherford, 2010).

Social media is used extensively by the 'millennials' for communication with their peers and consider them an important technology to remain connected to family and friends to obtain social support. The excessive use of social media among students have led to the emergency of a new phenomenon termed 'Fear of Missing Out' (FoMO), which is characterised by the

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desire to stay continually connected with what others are doing. Studies have explored the impact of FoMO in amotivation for learning and social media engagement (Alt, 2015).

Adjustment is a persistent feature of human behaviour. Development of personality is dependent on a person's ability to adjust himself to the environment. Adjustment is a process by which an individual learns certain ways of behaviour to cope with the situation which he/she attains through harmony with his/her environment (Sharma & Saini, 2013). Adjustment is often seen from two viewpoints – as an achievement or as a process. Adjustment to social networks in which people inhabit is an important element in ensuring that they are comfortable and able to meet their psychological needs. This often compels individuals to direct their actions towards achieving these needs by familiarizing and comforting themselves to the new environment (Sharma S. , 2016). The transition from school to college can be stressful for students, especially when the students must stay away from their parents. The new-found autonomy, pressure from peer groups present as unique risk factors that cause risky behaviour and addiction among college students (Jeffries, et al., 2016).

The present study analyses the impact that social media could have on adjustment to higher education. Students staying away from their parents could, theoretically, be more inclined to use social media, and may often be addicted to it. This could have an impact on their adjustment to college work.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The sample consisted of 122 students attending various undergraduate programs in a multi-disciplinary composite educational campus in Bengaluru, India. Purposive stratified sampling method was used to obtain the sample.

Instruments

Two measures were used in this study,

- 1. Social Media Addiction Scale (SMAS):** The SMAS is a 41-item measurement tool developed to measure the social media addictions of university students. The scale uses a five-point likert scale graded from “Always” to “Never”. The maximum score is 205, while the lowest is 41. Higher scores refer to higher addiction. According to the interpretation of the scale, as provided by the researchers, any respondent scoring between 41 to 73 has “No Addiction”, 74 to 106 - “Less Addicted”, 107 to 139 - “Moderate Addicted”, 140 to 172 - “High Addicted” and 173 to 205 meaning “Very High Addicted”. (Ünal & Deniz, 2015)
- 2. Adjustment Inventory for College Students (AICS):** This inventory is designed specifically for use among Indian college students. It measures adjustment in five areas namely – (i) Home, (ii) Health, (iii) Social, (iv) Emotional and (v) Educational. It contains 102 items out of which, area of Home contains 16 items; area of Health contains 15 items, Social 19 items, Emotional 31 and Educational 21 items. The criterion for adjustment of students is based on scores gained by students in inventory. It is a self-administered inventory and generally takes about 18 minutes to complete. (Sinha & Singh, 1968)

Procedure

The students were approached using emails sent through internal email network. All the students were appraised of the purpose of the study and consent was obtained prior to

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collection of data. The students were given an opportunity to interact with the researcher over email if they had any concerns. The form was anonymized and identifying information about the participant was not collected. The study was cleared by the research advisory board and was exempted from obtaining an ethical clearance since identifying information about the participants were not obtained.

RESULTS

Table No. 1 Sociodemographic details of participants

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age (in years)		
18	8	6.56
19	14	11.48
20	26	21.31
21	22	18.03
22	20	16.39
23	17	13.93
24	10	8.20
25	5	4.10
Mean & SD	21.29±2.04	
Gender		
Male	68	44.26
Female	54	55.74

As seen in Table 1, the average age of the participants was 21.29±2.04 years. Majority of the participants were 20 years, or older. There were slightly more males than females (68 versus 54) in the study. The total number of participants was 122.

Table No. 2 Social Media addiction among participants

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Males		
No Addiction	20	29.41
Less Addicted	20	29.41
Moderately Addicted	17	25.00
Highly Addicted	9	13.24
Very High Addicted	2	2.94
Females		
No Addiction	19	35.19
Less Addicted	23	42.59
Moderately Addicted	7	12.96
Highly Addicted	2	3.70
Very High Addicted	3	5.56
Overall		
No Addiction	39	31.97
Less Addicted	43	35.25
Moderately Addicted	24	19.67
Highly Addicted	11	9.02
Very High Addicted	5	4.10

Table 2 shows that majority of the participants had lower levels of addiction to social media. However, there existed a difference in addiction to social media between males and females, as expressed in Table 3.

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Table No. 3 Social Media addiction between genders

Gender	Average SMAS Score	Minimum	Maximum	t-value	p-value
Males	99.75 ± 37.01	41	201		
Females	87.74 ± 36.23	41	186	1.80	0.03743

As seen in Table 3, Males were found to have significantly higher addiction to social media, as compared to females.

Table No. 4 Distribution of Adjustment Levels based on AICS scores

Adjustment Level	Female		Male		Overall	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Excellent	0	0	5	7.35	5	4.10
Good	9	16.67	9	13.24	18	14.75
Average	10	18.52	23	33.82	33	27.05
Unsatisfactory	20	37.04	19	27.94	39	31.97
Very Unsatisfactory	15	27.78	12	17.65	27	22.13

Table 4 shows that majority of the participants had Average to Very Unsatisfactory level of adjustment. AICS was used to measure adjustment of college students to college work. Higher scores obtained in AICS meant poorer adjustment to college work.

Table No. 5 Distribution of AICS scores by gender and domains

Domain	Overall	Females	Males	t-value	p-value	Significance
Overall	45.14	47.13	43.56	-1.09898	0.137	NS
Home	5.73	5.61	5.82	0.31769	0.376	NS
Health	5.43	6.24	4.78	-2.45324	0.008	Significant
Social	9.75	10.22	9.38	-1.24967	0.107	NS
Emotional	14.95	15.94	14.16	-1.44831	0.075	NS
Educational	9.28	9.11	9.41	0.36915	0.356	NS

Table 5 shows the average AICS scores obtained by the participants in different domains. As seen in the table, there was no effect of gender on the adjustment scores in most of the domains. There was significant effect of gender on health domain – females had more problems in adjustment to health problems as compared to males.

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Image No. 1 Correlation between AICS Scores and SMAS Scores

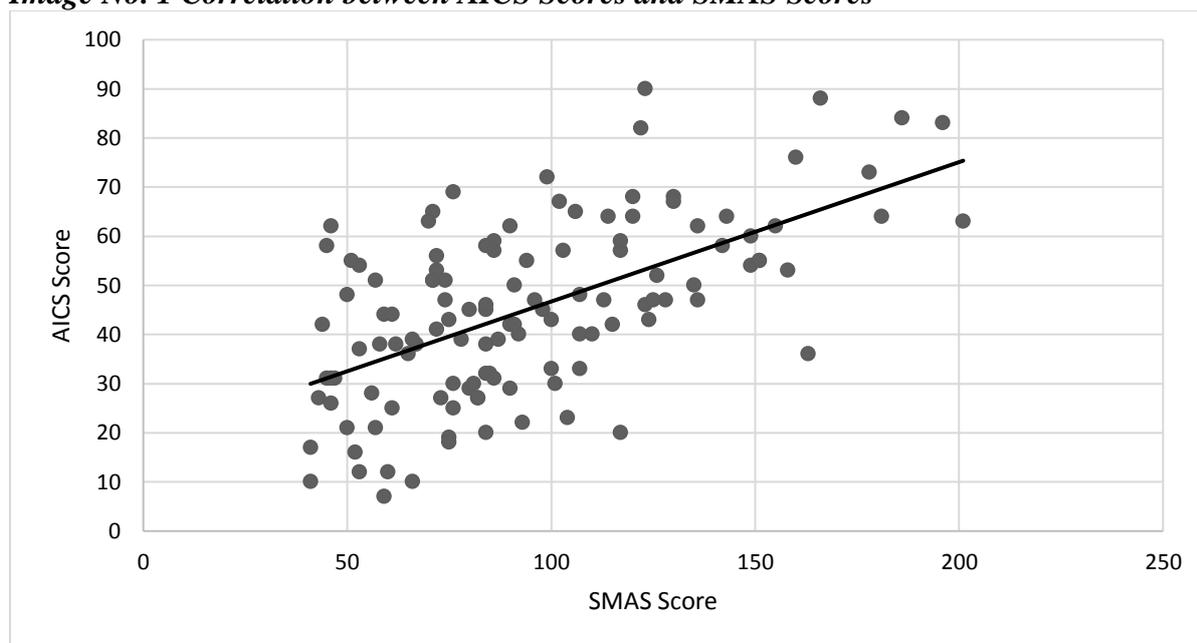


Image 1 above shows that there is a significant relationship between social media addiction and adjustment to college work, $r = 0.5886$ ($p < 0.00001$). As explained further in Table 6 below, there was statistically significant relationship between addiction to social media and different domains of AICS scores.

Table No. 6 Correlation between SMAS scores and scores obtained to various domains of AICS

Domain	r-value	p-value	Sig
Home	0.5174	<0.00001	Significant
Health	0.3988	<0.00001	Significant
Social	0.4204	<0.00001	Significant
Emotional	0.5390	<0.00001	Significant
Educational	0.4649	<0.00001	Significant

DISCUSSION

The present study was conducted in a composite academic campus in Bengaluru. The study was performed during the lockdown period by sending the questionnaires as Google Forms through an internal email group. The respondents were from Pharmacy, Engineering, and Undergraduate degree program backgrounds. A total of 122 respondents participated in the study. The number of respondents was less in the study due to lockdown restrictions. The addiction to social media was negatively correlated to the age of the respondents ($r = -0.0809$, $p = 0.381$) – the finding was statistically insignificant, though. Similarly, there was a very weak negative correlation between age and adjustment ($r = -0.0176$, $p = 0.852$).

The study found that there was an effect of gender on addiction to social media. Males were found to be more addicted to social media as compared to females. Previous studies have also found that males were more addicted to social media as compared to females. (M & Selvaraj, 2013). The present study found that there was no effect of gender on adjustment. However, looking specifically on various domains of adjustment problems, females were found to have higher adjustment problems in the health domain. This finding was remarkably similar to published literature. (Sharma & Saini, 2013).

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There are no published studies on the relation between Social media addiction and adjustment problems. This study found that there was a significant effect of social media addiction on adjustment to college work. This should be an important area to be addressed during induction programs.

LIMITATIONS

An important limitation of the study was that data collection was performed during the lockdown period. This could have impacted the responses to the questionnaire since most of the respondents were staying with their parents, as compared to other times when most of the students stay in or around the campus. This change in staying location could have had an impact on their addiction to social media.

CONCLUSION

Findings of this study highlights the importance of assessing addiction to social media among college students. Important measures to minimize social media addiction should be incorporated into induction programs and students must be made aware of the harmful effects of addiction to social media. While social media platforms could be used to the advantage of the student to improve the learning process, it is important to identify and set limits on usage. Most importantly, a control on use of social networking sites could help students come up with adjustment problems in college.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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