

## A Study of Social Media Engagement on Social Connectedness and Self-Esteem in Young Adults

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### ABSTRACT

With the advancement in technology, social media has become one of the most significant platforms for interaction in today's world. It offers a variety of rewards such as likes, comments, shares, DMs, etc. Yet this can harm one's mental health. Over-engagement in social media can affect one's relationship with the self and that with others. The present research aims to study the impact of social media engagement on social connectedness and self-esteem. The research was conducted on 60 young adults including 30 males and 30 females (aged 20-30 years). Standardized measures of social media engagement, social connectedness, and self-esteem were administered on participants. The findings of the study revealed a negative correlation between social media engagement and social connectedness as well as social media engagement and self-esteem. It was also found that there is a positive correlation between social connectedness and self-esteem. The study has important implications such as the need to maintain enriching relationships in real life by reducing time spent on social media and also redirecting energy on building positive self-esteem.

**Keywords:** *Social Media Engagement, Social Connectedness, Self-Esteem, Young Adult*

The early 21<sup>st</sup> century has marked the emergence of social networking sites all around the world. It has become a major part of people's lives, especially the youth. Many teenagers and young adults are prone to spending hours on social networking sites such as Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, etc. They use social media to gather information, stay connected with their friends and family, communicate and build and maintain relations. However, there have been certain changes observed in the behavior of the users. The upward and downward comparisons that people get trapped in, make them envy others and also form a negative self-image. The standards set by others on social media are what determines their self-concept.

With the popularization of social media, people find comfortable spaces online to interact with others, especially introverts. Social connection is what each human strives for. Social media claims to offer the rewards such as likes, comments, and shares and hence, validation and social approval. One tends to form a false perception of being well connected socially based on the number of their Instagram followers. When in reality, they may not be

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equipped to have meaningful face-to-face conversations. Thus, social media has potentially been harming people's abilities to interact in an offline environment.

A study conducted by Gao et al., (2020) showed that there is a high prevalence of mental health problems, especially anxiety and depression with frequent social media engagement among the general population during the Covid-19 outbreak.

In another study by Hunt et al., (2018) it was found that limited usage of social media showed significantly lower levels of loneliness, depression, and fear of missing out.

### ***Social Media Engagement***

Engagement has been defined by Hollebeek (2011) as, "the level of a customer's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral investment in specific brand interactions." Social media engagement is a relative psychological perception experienced by individual interaction with social media (Khan, 2007).

Berryman, Ferguson & Negy (2017) discovered that young adults who engaged in vague posting (posting unclear but alarming sounding posts to get attention) were high on suicidal ideation which poses even more serious implications.

Lin et al., (2016) conducted a study on young adults and found out that increased social media engagement was significantly associated with higher rates of depression.

### ***Social Connectedness***

Social Connectedness has been an important determinant for youth adjustment (Guerra & Bradshaw, 2008). Thus, it refers to the experiences of belonging to a social relationship or network (Lee and Robbins, 1995).

Positive social environments facilitate more adaptive behavioral patterns in young adults and a lesser probability of anxiety, depression, isolation, and fewer academic problems. It has more positive implications concerning social competence and self-esteem (Youngblade et al., 2007)

Saeri et al., (2018) conducted a study in New Zealand that revealed that social connectedness was found to be a strong and consistent predictor of mental health.

Armstrong and Oomen (2010) conducted a study among collegiate athletes versus nonathletes and found that athletes had higher levels of self-esteem and social connectedness and significantly lower levels of depression than nonathletes.

### ***Self-Esteem***

Self-Esteem refers to an individual's sense of his or her value or worth, or the extent to which a person values, approves of, appreciates, prizes, or likes him or herself (Blascovich & Tomaka, 1991).

Sedikides and Gress (2003) stated that self-esteem refers to individual's perception or subjective appraisal of one's own self-worth, one's feelings of self-respect and self-confidence and the extent to which the individual holds positive or negative views about self.

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Muqaddas et al., (2017) performed a study on 150 students and found out that an increase in social media usage causes a decrease in the self-esteem of individuals. An hour spent on Facebook daily resulted in an approximately 5% decrease in the self-esteem of the person.

Vogel et al., (2014) studied the relationship between social comparison, social media, and self-esteem and found out that participants' state self-esteem and relative self-evaluations were lower when the perceived person's profile had upward comparison information such as a high activity social network, healthy habits than when the perceived person's profile had downward comparison information such as a low activity social network and unhealthy habits.

### *Purpose*

The purpose of the study is to study the effect of social media engagement on social connectedness and self-esteem of young adults.

### *Hypothesis*

- There will be a negative correlation between social media engagement and the social connectedness of young adults.
- There will be a negative correlation between social media engagement and the self-esteem of young adults.
- There will be a positive correlation between social connectedness and self-esteem among young adults.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### *Sample*

The study was conducted on a total of 60 young adults (30 men and 30 women) from Punjab, Chandigarh, and Himachal Pradesh. The sample lied in the age group of 20 to 30 years.

### *Measures*

The following standardized tests were used:

- **Social Media Engagement Scale (SMES):** SMES is an 11 item scale self-report measure of social media engagement of adolescents and young adults. It was developed by Ni, Shao, Geng, Qu, Niu, and Wang, in 2020. The scale was composed of three factors named affective engagement, behavioural engagement, and cognitive engagement, each item is scored on a five-point Likert scale i.e. 1=strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree. Items are added to obtain a total score ranging from 0 to 55.
- **Social Connectedness Scale-Revised (SCS-R)** – SCS-R is a 20 item scale that assesses the degree to which the youth feels connected to others in their social environment. It was developed by Lee & Robbins (1995). Responses range from 1=strongly disagree to 6=strongly agree. Negatively worded items are reverse coded. Items are summed to obtain a total score. A higher score indicates more connectedness to others
- **Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale-** A 10-item scale developed by Rosenberg (1968) measures global self-worth by measuring both positive and negative feelings about the self. Items are answered on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

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### Procedure

The participants were informed about the purpose of the research and the questionnaires were filled using Google forms. The participants were requested to respond honestly and were assured of the confidentiality of their responses. They were thanked for their time and cooperation. Standardized psychological tests were administered to the participants.

## RESULTS

Mean, Standard Deviation, and Correlations were worked out to find out the relation.

*Table 1- showing the mean and standard deviation of all variables*

	Social Media Engagement	Social Connectedness	Self Esteem
N	60	60	60
Mean	30.0	36.6	29.6
Standard deviation	7.91	8.69	4.65

## DISCUSSION

*Table 2- showing correlations of all variables*

	Social Media Engagement	Social Connectedness	Self Esteem
Social Media Engagement	—		
Social Connectedness	-0.331 **	—	
Self Esteem	-0.276 *	0.378 **	—

Where, \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

The results found out that there is a negative correlation between Social Media Engagement and Social Connectedness ( $r = -0.331$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Hence, the hypothesis that there will be an effect of social media engagement on the social connectedness of young adults is accepted. The results also found out that there is a negative correlation between Social Media Engagement and Self-Esteem ( $r = -0.276$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Thus, the hypothesis that there will be a negative correlation between social media engagement and the self-esteem of young adults is accepted. Further, we found out that there is a positive correlation between Social Connectedness and Self-Esteem ( $r = 0.378$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Therefore, the hypothesis that there will be a positive correlation between social connectedness and self-esteem among young adults is accepted.

In a study conducted by Steinsbekk et al., (2021) it was found that increased use of social media predicted a decrease in appearance self-esteem in adolescents. In another study by Savci et al., (2017) showed that Internet Addiction, social media addiction, digital game addiction, and smartphone addiction significantly predicted only 25% of social connectedness. In another study by Lee et al., (1998) social connectedness was negatively correlated to trait anxiety and positively correlated to self-esteem in women.

## CONCLUSION

Social media engagement has a significant impact on the self-esteem and social connectedness of young adults. Individuals use social media to interact with their peers and build relationships. However, excessive use of social media can result in social comparisons, decreased gratitude for one's own life, and a distorted perception of the lives of others. Since social media is becoming increasingly popular among young adults and is used by them daily, it is not possible to keep people away from using it for a very long time. However, parents and teachers can play an active role in guiding the youth towards building positive self-esteem and self-confidence. It is also recommended to consciously limit the time spent online on social networking sites. The study also implies spending lesser time engaging in social media and more engagement in real-life interactions can lead to a higher sense of social connectedness which in turn has a positive effect on the self-esteem of the individuals.

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### ***Conflict of Interest***

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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