

## Relationship Between Subjective Happiness and Social Media Usage: Self-Esteem as a Mediator

Pallavi Patwari<sup>1\*</sup>, Dr. Sakshi Seth Grover<sup>2</sup>

### ABSTRACT

Social media usage has increased over the period of time among adolescents and young adults. There have been incidents where people start subjective comparison of their reality with the reality that has been formed by social media usage. It has been observed by past research that this impacts the self esteem of the person. Keeping this in mind, the present study is trying to explore the relationship between use of social media, self esteem and subjective happiness in young adults. Indian Population was used as a sample through the method of convenience and snowball sampling. Total sample of 138 adolescents with the age range of 18 to 30 years was considered for this study. English proficiency and absence of clinically diagnosed mental illness was taken as a control variable. It has been hypothesized self esteem would work as the mediator for the relationship between social media usage and subjective happiness. In addition to this the secondary aim was to understand the relationship between subjective happiness. The data was collected through google form. Mediation analysis and correlations were used in order to analyse the result. Results showed that there is a negative relationship between social media usage and subjective happiness. Analysing the relationship further with the help of mediation analysis it was observed that there is no direct relationship between social media usage and subjective happiness but there was an indirect relationship that was found between social media usage and subjective happiness

**Keywords:** *Social Media Usage, Self Esteem, Subjective Happiness, Young Adult, Mediation*

Social media usage in layman's language is the amount of time one spends on social media. Social media is taken as any website that helps a person to connect with people. It has gone significantly high especially during the lockdown period as everything from studying to work went digital. The purpose of usage may differ ranging from work to recreational purposes.

Happiness is a state of emotion where one feels joyous, satisfied and content. It is a positive emotion. The definition and meaning of happiness may vary from person to person. For instance, having a good meal could be a source of happiness for one person while the other person might not consider it as happiness. Due to the individual differences and

<sup>1</sup>Associate Psychologist, Cognizavest, India

<sup>2</sup>Psychologist, Cognizavest, India

\*Corresponding Author

Received: December 24, 2021; Revision Received: June 13, 2022; Accepted: June 30, 2022

## **Relationship Between Subjective Happiness and Social Media Usage: Self-Esteem as a Mediator**

expectations, the level of happiness could be subjective. Happiness as a state of emotion comes under a broad umbrella of subjective well being. According to positive psychology, subjective well being is a person's evaluation of his or her own life, emotions and moods. A person's subjective happiness could or could not be dependent on external things. While taking subjective happiness in account in the present research we are trying to explore the inner happiness that comes to the individual.

Self esteem can be defined as how you see yourself. It is your opinion of yourself, your abilities, and your worth. It can be classified into healthy self esteem and unhealthy self esteem. When you have healthy self esteem, you have a good feeling about yourself and your capabilities, whereas unhealthy self esteem is when you feel bad for your own self and connote disapproval even when there aren't any. A person who has a healthy self esteem is less likely to get affected by external factors and in case of negative self esteem your sense of self is easy to shake.

Social media is expected to have a direct impact on the subjective happiness of the person. Self esteem will be acting as a mediator between the usage of social media and its effect on subjective happiness. It is expected that a person having high self esteem will have high subjective happiness irrespective of the usage of social media whereas a person low on self esteem might have high or low subjective happiness depending on low or high usage of social media respectively.

As mentioned in Hasan and Tiwari (2018), where they did an exploratory study with 80 boys and 80 girls belonging to the graduation and post-graduation department. They used open ended structured interviews to find the relationship between social media usage and self esteem among youths. The results obtained showed that self esteem was found higher in low social media users. It also showed that self esteem was found high in female users.

According to a study conducted by Guven (2019), 188 participants who were aged between 18 to 25 years were part of the study to find out the relationship between the usage of social media and self-esteem, and social media use and satisfaction with life among university students in the United States. Multiple Regression Analyses and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation were used to compute the results and it was found that social media use is a predictor of self-esteem, whereas no correlation was found between life satisfaction and social media use.

In a research, Yue, Liu, Jiang and Hiranandani (2014) tried to examine whether humor styles could have mediating effects on self-esteem and subjective happiness in a Hong Kong sample. The sample consisted of 227 people aged 18 to 28 years who were randomly selected and were undergraduate students. It was observed that higher self-esteem will be by the greater use of adaptive humor styles and subjective happiness is significantly and positively associated with affiliative humor and self-enhancing humor.

A research was conducted by Jan, Soomro and Ahmad (2017) where 150 students from the Institute of Business Management were surveyed through questionnaires and interviews to check the impact of social media on self esteem. Correlation and regression model was applied to the data with the help of SPSS statistics to test the relationship between social media and self-esteem. This research proves that there is a strong relationship between social media and self-esteem, an increase in social media usage causes the self-esteem of individuals to decrease.

## Relationship Between Subjective Happiness and Social Media Usage: Self-Esteem as a Mediator

In a research, Widjajanta, Senen, Masharyono, Lisnawati and Anggraeni (2018) conducted research to find out the relationship between social media usage, self-esteem, and conspicuous consumption. It employed descriptive and verificative study through explanatory survey involving 200 respondents from the Hijabers Community Bandung member by using quota sampling technique. The data were analyzed by using multiple linear regression techniques and the results indicated that social media usage and self-esteem had a high impact on conspicuous consumption. In Fact, the Hijabers Community Bandung members were active social media users, which resulted in a high self-esteem in them.

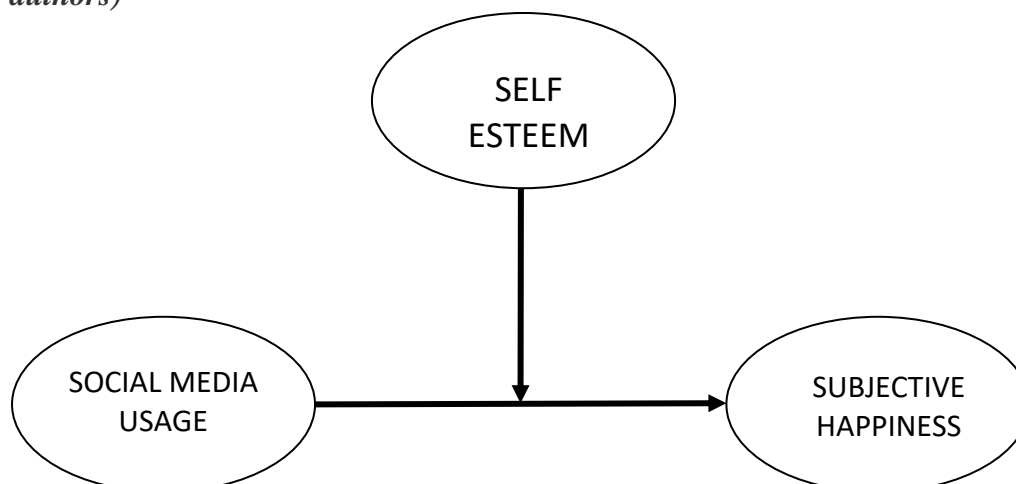
An exploratory study was conducted by Hawi and Samaha (2016) examining the relationships between the addictive use of social media, self-esteem, and satisfaction with life. The sample size of 364 was used and systematic random sampling was done. Pearson correlations between the variables, regression analysis and structural equation modeling was used to compute the results. The results showed that addictive use of social media had a negative association with self-esteem, and the latter had a positive association with satisfaction with life. However, path analysis of the data showed that self-esteem mediated the effect of social media addiction on satisfaction with life.

In a study conducted by Fazaldad, Iqbal and Hassan (2020), they tried to find the relationship between jealousy, subjective happiness and self esteem. The sample consisted of 200 university students using purposive convenience sampling technique including 100 male and 100 female students. The findings obtained indicated a significant negative relationship between perceived jealousy and subjective happiness ( $r=-.32, p <.001$ ), and a positive relationship between subjective happiness and self-esteem.

The research by Stanculescu, Elena (2020) tried to analyze to what degree and how active social media use and self-esteem would lead to subjective well-being. The survey data was collected from a sample consisting of 653 participants, based on a cross-sectional design. The research findings showed positive association between active social media use, self-esteem, affective engagement in social media use, sense of belonging to online community, number of friends/followers, and subjective well-being. Interaction between active social media use and self-esteem significantly predicts subjective well-being.

The present research is taking in account the indirect relationship between subjective happiness and social media usage and self-esteem as a mediator for the same. One of the reasons for exploring this was the lack of studies available for the same. There has been a dearth of studies that has been exploring the relationship between these two variables. Thus, increasing the scope of the present topic for the future research and space to explore. Keeping in view the present research focuses on understanding how self esteem is impacting the relationship between social media usage and subjective happiness. It has been assumed that there will be an indirect impact of social media usage on subjective happiness. Authors propose the following model:

Figure 1.1: Model depicting the relationship between three variables (as proposed by authors)



## METHODOLOGY

### *Objective*

To understand the relationship between self esteem, subjective happiness and social media usage.

### *Hypothesis*

**H<sub>1.1</sub>:** There will be a statistically significant correlation between social media usage and subjective happiness.

**H<sub>0.1</sub>:** There will be no statistically significant correlation between social media usage and subjective happiness.

**H<sub>1.2</sub>:** Self esteem will be a statistically significant mediator for the relationship between social media usage and subjective happiness.

**H<sub>0.2</sub>:** Self esteem will not be a statistically significant mediator for the relationship between social media usage and subjective happiness.

### *Design*

The study follows a simple research design. The primary aim of the research is to understand the mediation effect of self esteem on the relationship between the usage of social media on subjective happiness of adolescents living in India. The total sample of 138 adolescents were taken using the sampling technique of convenience and snowball sampling.

### *Sample*

The sample consisted of 138 adolescents, both males and females of the age range of 18 to 30 years. They all have good proficiency in the English language. This was checked by ensuring that they are studying in an English medium school. It was ensured that they are not having clinically diagnosed mental illness. The young adults should be residing in India from the past 5 years. They should be residing with families. Both married and unmarried adults were considered.

### *Tools Used*

Data was collected through three questionnaires Subjective Happiness Scale by Sonja Lyubomirsky and HEIDI S. LEPPER in 1997. The test-retest reliability ranged from 0.55 to 0.90 (M = 0.72). substantial correlations, ranging from 0.52 to 0.72 (M = 0.62), between the

## Relationship Between Subjective Happiness and Social Media Usage: Self-Esteem as a Mediator

Subjective Happiness Scale and other happiness measures. Evidence of discriminant validity was further obtained from very low correlations with theoretically unrelated constructs, such as academic success and stressful events. The test showed good to excellent internal consistency, demonstrating comparability across samples of varying ages, occupations, languages, and cultures. The alpha's ranged from 0.79 to 0.94 (M = 0.86).

Self made questionnaire to understand the time spent and nature of work on social media usage Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale by Morris Rosenberg in 1965.

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale presented high ratings in reliability areas; internal consistency was 0.77, minimum Coefficient of Reproducibility was at least 0.90. Test-retest reliability for the RSE range from 0.82 to 0.85. Criterion validity = 0.55

### Procedure

For the aim of collecting data, the adolescents were connected through face to face or through telephone. The brief instruction and introduction was given to them. The data was collected through google form in order to save the paper. The form included four sections: personal details, usage of social media, self esteem questionnaire and subjective happiness scale. The consent for the participation was taken through the form. Participants were given the right to withdraw and were debriefed after they submitted the data. In total 157 questionnaires were received but some of them were rejected if they were incomplete or were not meeting the different criteria's and 138 questionnaires were retained.

## RESULT AND INTERPRETATION

To fulfill the objectives of the present research both descriptive and inferential statistics were used. In this Statistical tools of independent t, correlation and mediation analysis were used. In addition to these descriptive statistics were also used to understand the nature of the data. The data collected for social media was coming out to be skewed. In order to reduce the skewness of the data log10 was used to make the data normally distributed.

**Table 1.1: Descriptive Analysis for Social Media Usage, Subjective Happiness and Self Esteem**

	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
SM	0.3946	0.4771	0.2926
SH	19.78	20.00	4.234
SE	19.98	20.00	4.790

SM: Social Media Usage, SH: Subjective Happiness, SE: Self Esteem

**Table 1.2: Correlation Analysis for Social Media Usage, Subjective Happiness and Self Esteem**

	SH	SM
SH	1	-0.208*
SM	-0.208*	1

SM: Social Media Usage, SH: Subjective Happiness, SE: Self Esteem

\*\* - significant at 0.01 level

\* - significant at 0.05 level

Figure 1.2: Regression Model depicting the relationship between three variables

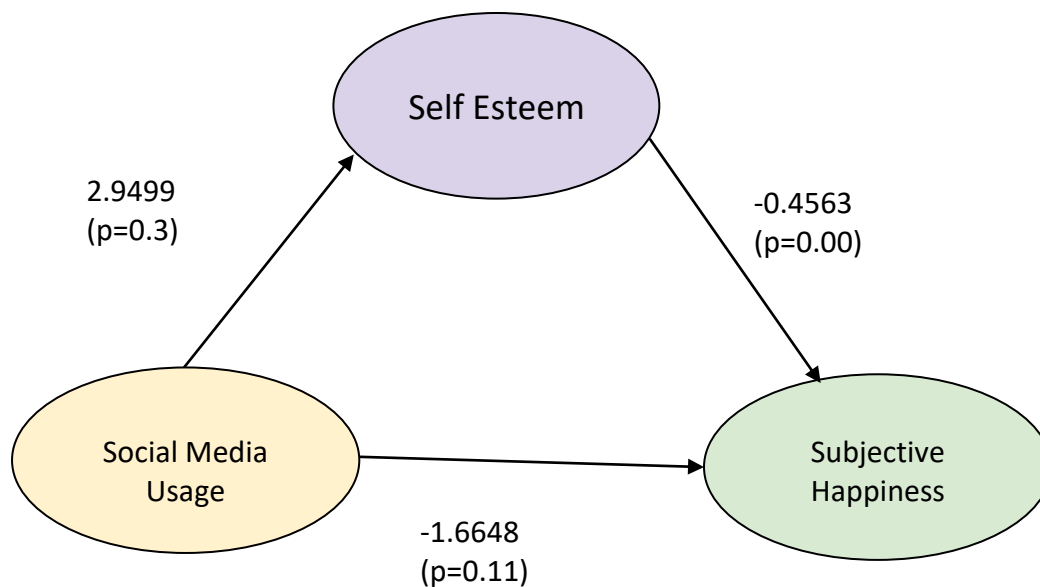


Table 1.3: Input Values for Regression Model for Sobel Test

Input	Value
a	2.9499
b	-0.4563
S <sub>a</sub>	1.3802
S <sub>b</sub>	0.0647

a = raw (unstandardized) regression coefficient for the association between IV and mediator., sa = standard error of a., b = raw coefficient for the association between the mediator and the DV (when the IV is also a predictor of the DV)., sb = standard error of b.

Table 1.4: Sobel Test for Mediation

	Test Statistics	Standard Error	Significance Value
Sobel Test	-2.04543417	0.65807025	0.0408

**H1.1: There will be a statistically significant correlation between social media usage and subjective happiness.**

The first Hypothesis of the research states that there will be a statistically significant correlation between social media usage, self esteem and subjective happiness. For this purpose, Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient was used. After analysis statistically significant correlation was found between both the variables. The result shows that there is a negative correlation between subjective happiness and social media usage.

There has been a negative relationship between subjective happiness and self esteem, the correlation coefficient came out to be -0.208 (p=0.05). This shows that as one variable increases the other variable decreases. Though there has been insignificant relationship found in mediation between independent and dependent variables. There could be multiple reasons how this can happen. As the increase in social media usage would increase our comparison level therefore decreasing the subjective happiness of the participant. Chae., 2018, re-examined the relationship between social media and happiness and found that often

## Relationship Between Subjective Happiness and Social Media Usage: Self-Esteem as a Mediator

social media pushes us to believe that other people are living a better life due to social comparison. However, that comparison influences only a part of a person's happiness and does not define an individual's overall happiness.

Though there are a lack of studies which are taking subjective happiness as one of the variables to study. In the present study subjective happiness has been taken as the happiness one has which is coming from the inner self. When people start comparing themselves to others there is a high probability that the satisfaction and happiness within would decrease, thus decreasing the subjective happiness of the person. According to Stapleton et al., 2017, the unrealistic content that comes on social media blurs our ideal self and our sense of realistic life and thus decreasing our satisfaction from life and decreasing the subjective happiness of one. Another major issue that White et al., 2006, pointed out for this relationship is that while comparing ourselves on social media we start giving importance to the socially prescribed benchmarks and less importance to the inherited characteristics, thus decreasing the satisfaction we are having from ourselves and decreasing the subjective happiness from ourselves. Wirtz et al., 2021, showed that greater use of social media regularly resulted in lower subjective well-being of the person by decreasing the positive states such as subjective happiness.

Thus, in the light of the data from the present research and available literature, it is safe to say that there is a negative relationship between the usage of social media and subjective happiness, as the comparison that comes from social media decreases the satisfaction we are having from inner self and thus decreasing the subjective happiness of the person. The same kind of findings have been described with the concept of 'hedonic adaptation' or 'Mrigtrishna' in a research paper where authors have described that subjective happiness no longer remains with the person for a long time (Vajpayee et. al.,2017;2022). Thus, accepting our first alternative hypothesis stating *there will be a statistically significant correlation between social media usage and subjective happiness.*

### ***H1.2: Self esteem will be a statistically significant mediator for the relationship between social media usage and subjective happiness.***

For this hypothesis Sobel test of mediation analysis was done. Through this test it was observed that the mediation was significant (table 1.4 and 1.4). In addition to Sobel method Andrew process method was also used, which showed that the total effect was significant but the direct effect was insignificant. Showing that the indirect effect is significant (table 1.5)

***Table 1.5: Mediation analysis between the variables.***

<b>Total Effect</b>	
Effect = -0.30108	p= 0.143
<b>Direct Effect</b>	
Effect = -0.16648	p= 0.1180

One of the assumptions that shows that social media usage and subjective happiness relation is mediated by self esteem is, because self esteem would impact the person's ability to compare with others and define their happiness. As the comparison of one self through social media increases, it is very probable that the subjective happiness. It might not be evident that subjective happiness would be directly impacted by the way a person is using social media, but in a longer continuous run, social media would impact the self esteem of

## Relationship Between Subjective Happiness and Social Media Usage: Self-Esteem as a Mediator

the person and that would impact the subjective happiness of the person (table 1.3 and figures 1.2). Moreover, in the final regression analysis it was found that the direct relationship between the variables has been insignificant and the indirect effect has been significant. One of the reasons for having the negative relationship between self esteem and social media is that as the self esteem and the value of one person for himself/ herself increases their intention to compare themselves with others decreases. Though, the questions that questionnaire had has a high value of social desirability, therefore there is a high chance of faking. There has been a dearth of studies who are studying this variable. Therefore, the literature support is weak for the relationship explored in the present research.

Therefore, in the light of the data it can be said that there is an indirect statistics significant relationship between social media usage and subjective happiness, thus proving our hypothesis *self esteem will be a statistically significant mediator for the relationship between social media usage and subjective happiness.*

### CONCLUSION

Thus, in the light of the present collected data and literature review, this can be concluded that there is an indirect relationship between social media usage and subjective happiness. Though, there is no direct effect that was found. Therefore, it is safe to say that social media usage might decrease the internal satisfaction of the person and thus decrease the subjective happiness of the person. There are several factors that might influence this relationship. This present research focused on self esteem and this indirect effect and relationship came out to be significant.

#### *Limitation*

- The sample was very limited.
- Non probability sampling techniques were taken.
- This data is not generalizable as the number of females and males are not equal, the data collected is biased towards females.

#### *Future Implication*

- The present research used non probability sampling techniques, therefore future researchers have the chance to take probability sampling techniques and make samples more representative of population.
- There is also a scope to analyse this relationship further with a larger population and analyse what could be other factors which might impact this relationship directly or indirectly
- In addition to this difference in male and females can be studied.
- The study focused only on adolescents, therefore it cannot be generalized that the adult population would also act to the situation in a similar manner. This correlation in adolescents can be true due to the maturity level. Therefore, analysing the relationship in other populations can be helpful in throwing more light on the relationship.
- The variables are being studied with the help of a self report questionnaire. Both the questionnaire has the susceptibility to social desirability. Therefore, it will be fair to have future research which studied this variable qualitative manner and gives a more concrete base to study the relationship.



## REFERENCES

- Chae, Jiyoung (2018). Reexamining the Relationship between Social Media and Happiness: The Effects of Various Social Media Platforms on Reconceptualized Happiness. *Telematics and Informatics*, (), S0736585318300066 doi: 10.1016/j. tele.2018.04.011
- Fazaldad, G., Iqbal, S., & Hassan, B. (2020). Relationship Between Jealousy and Subjective Happiness Among University Students: Moderating Role of Self-Esteem. *Pakistan Journal of Psychological Research*, 35(2). Retrieved from <http://pjprnip.edu.pk/index.php/pjpr/issue/view/71>
- Guvén, A. (2019). *Relationship between social media use, self-esteem and satisfaction with life*. Retrieved from The University of Alabama: <https://ir.ua.edu/handle/123456789/6133>
- Hasan, S., & Tiwari, P. (2018). A Study between Social Media Usage and Self-Esteem among. *Electronic Research Journal of Behavioural Sciences*, 1. Retrieved from <http://erjbehaviouralsciences.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/3.-A-Study-between-Social-Media-Usage-and-Self-Esteem.pdf>
- Hawi, N., & Rupert, M. S. (2016, August). The Relations Among Social Media Addiction, Self-Esteem, and Life Satisfaction in University Students. *Social Science Computer Review*. doi:10.1177/0894439316660340
- Jan, M., Soomro, S. A., & Ahmad, N. (2017). Impact of Social Media on Self-Esteem. *European Scientific Journal*. doi:10.19044/esj.2017.v13n23p329
- Jian, S. And Ngien, A. The Effect of Instagram Use, Social Comparison and Self Esteem on Social Anxiety: A Survey Study in Singapore. *Sage Journals*, 6(2), 10.1177/2056305120912488
- Stănculescu, Elena. (2020). Does Active Social Media Use Improve Subjective Well-Being?-A Mediation Model. *eLearning & Software for Education*,1,259-266. Retrieved from <https://web.b.ebscohost.com/abstractdirect=true&profile=ehost&scope=site&authtype=crawler&jrnl=2066026X&AN=145711109&h=MY2nqowye24VG BmMSqXnSZ6ZhmcCxppNsrw12%2feaRX0LStNOjPJ8ahc9oep19fGvhoYL0bnyGRj5U0ccu4OcjA%3d%3d&crl=c&resultNs=AdminWebAuth&resultLocal=>
- Stapelon, P., Luiz, G. And Chatiorin, H. (2017). Generation Validation: The Role of Social Comparison in Use of Instagram Among Emerging Adults. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior and Social Networking*, 20, 142-149.
- Vajpayee, A. and Chakraborty, D. K. (2017). The Societal Culture of Bhutan and its Impact on Organizational Culture Industrial Relation and Employee Satisfaction in Manufacturing Companies of Bhutan. In *IOSR Journal of Business and Management*. Vol-19, Issue9. PP-01-07.
- Vajpayee, A. (2022). Eternal happiness and endurance of life through Buddhism in Bhutan, Paper accepted in *British Journal of Administrative Management*. Vol-58, Issue151.
- White, J. B., Langer, E.J., Yurin, L And Welch, J. (2006). Frequent Social Comparison and Disruptive Emotions and Behaviors. The Darkside of Social Comparison. *Journal Of Adult Development*, 13, 36-44.
- Widjajanta, B., Senen, S. H., Masharyono, Lisnawati, & Anggraeni, C. P. (2018, July). The Impact of Social Media Usage and Self-Esteem On. *International Journal of Ebusiness and Egovernment Studies*, 10(2). Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326403418\\_The\\_impact\\_of\\_social\\_media\\_usage\\_and\\_self-esteem\\_on\\_conspicuous\\_consumption\\_Instagram\\_user\\_of\\_Hijabers\\_Community\\_Bandung\\_member](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326403418_The_impact_of_social_media_usage_and_self-esteem_on_conspicuous_consumption_Instagram_user_of_Hijabers_Community_Bandung_member)
- Wirtz, D., Tucker, A., Briggs, C. *et al*. How and Why Social Media Affect Subjective Well-Being: Multi-Site Use and Social Comparison as Predictors of Change Across Time.

## Relationship Between Subjective Happiness and Social Media Usage: Self-Esteem as a Mediator

*J Happiness Stud* 22, 1673–1691 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-020-00291-z>

### ***Acknowledgement***

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

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

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

***How to cite this article:*** Patwari P. & Seth Grover S. (2022). Relationship Between Subjective Happiness and Social Media Usage: Self-Esteem as a Mediator. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 10(2), 604-613. DIP:18.01.062.20221002, DOI:10.25215/1002.062