

Gender Differences in Interpersonal Needs and its Influence on Use of Social Media in Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

The objective of the study was to assess the gender differences in the need of interpersonal relationships and its influence on the use of social media in young adults. Interpersonal Needs differ in every single individual. The study aims to determine whether there is a significant difference in the interpersonal needs of men and women, and if these needs are manifested on Social Media Platforms. A total of 70 participants (35 males and 35 females; with a mean age of 20.7). The present study is constructed under the correlational research design, and a non-probability, simple random sampling technique was used. For data collection, Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation- Behaviour (FIRO-B, 1996) Scale developed by Judith A. Waterman and Jenny Rogers; as well as the Internet Addiction Test (IAT, 1998) developed by Kimberly Young was administered to the participants. Descriptive Statistics were used to analyse the socio-demographic details of the sample, and Inferential Statistics like Pearson's correlation coefficient and Independent Sample t-test were used.

Keywords: *Interpersonal Needs, Social Media Use.*

According to the United States Department of Health and Human Services, young adult period is the time between the ages of 18 and 24. This period is characterized by many important social, cognitive, physical as well as psychological changes. There is a transition from childhood to adulthood, and various sexual and physical characteristics become fully formed. By this age, individuals have built a strong sense of self, and have enough distinguishing and unique characteristics from others around them. One of such unique characteristics, is the individual's need for interpersonal relationships and interactions with people around them. An individual begins to take charge of their life, takes on new responsibilities, and in the process, builds a social circle.

Interpersonal Needs refers to the desire of an individual to interact with other individuals, their social, emotional and psychological expectations from others, as well as their social, emotional and psychological contribution to others around them. Studies in the past have shown that the culture and background, the childhood and upbringing, and other environmental factors can play a vital role in the interpersonal needs of individuals. A child

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whose emotional needs were suppressed is likely to grow into an adult who is used to not expressing their emotions.

Social media has provided the world an excellent platform to connect. Individuals can connect with their families and friends from almost any part of the world. The advent of social media has changed the old ways of communication and the overall framework of social relationships. Individuals, especially young adults, rely on Social Media and Messaging as a way to reach out and stay connected to their family and friends. The features of Social Media like the emojis and stickers have also redefined the ways of expression of emotions.

Individuals seek honesty, comfort, loyalty, proximity etc. from others around them. Interpersonal Needs can also be expressed differently in a lot of individuals. With recent times, a lot of expression happens on Social Media. It acts as a medium of maintaining relationships and communication with others. There are many individuals who create friendships online and even get married to individuals they met online. This pattern of relationships formed with the use of social media is a new and interesting development.

It is human to need people and relationships in life, as humans are appropriately called 'social animals.' However, besides the commonality of social needs, humans tend to seek these needs differently. Both Interpersonal Needs and the use of Social Media are subjective to every individual. This subjectivity comes from various factors such as childhood and upbringing, early relationships, past experiences, current environment and culture, etc. The way the interpersonal needs of an individual are expressed is an essential conveyer in their relationships and social circle.

METHODOLOGY

Problem Statement:

The redefined way of expressing emotions through Social Media comes with an undiscovered ground of whether individuals who have high interpersonal needs also have a tendency to manifest their needs on social media, resulting in a comparatively higher social media time. This study aims to understand the gender differences in interpersonal needs and its influence on the use of social media.

Research Design:

In the following study, a correlational research design has been used. A correlational research design, according to Fraenkel and Wallen (2009), "Correlational Research is in which the purpose is to find out the relationship between two or more variables and their cause and effect."

Objective of the Study:

- To study the gender differences in interpersonal needs among young adults.
- To study the relationship between Interpersonal Needs and the Use of Social Media among young adults.
- To study the impact between Interpersonal Needs and the Use of Social Media.

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Hypotheses:

- H0₁: There is no significant relationship between Interpersonal Needs and the Use of Social Media.
- H1: There is a significant relationship between Interpersonal Needs and the Use of Social Media.
- H0₂: There is no significant gender difference between the Interpersonal Needs of Males and Females.
- H2: There is a significant gender difference between the Interpersonal Needs of Males and Females.

Sample:

The sample comprised of 70 young adults. Among 70 young adults, 35 were males and 35 were females. The age range of the sample was 17-24 years. Non-Probability, Simple Random Sampling was used in the study.

Variables:

- Gender- Demographic Variable
- Interpersonal Needs- independent Variable (FIRO-B by Judith A Waterman and Jenny Rogers, 1996)
- Use of Social Media- dependent Variable (Internet Addiction Test by Kimberly Young, 1998)

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria:

The sample consisted of young adults in the age range of 17-24. The sample was obtained from college students mostly, as well as some employees working in offices. The sample consists of all literate individuals coming from different parts of India. The sample is restricted to India and no foreign individuals were a part of the study, neither were any individuals below or beyond the age ranges of 17-24.

Statistical Analysis:

The experimenter used Descriptive Statistics, Inferential Statistics, Pearson's correlation coefficient and Independent Sample t-test with the help of Jamovi software Version 2.3.21.0 in the process of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Showing the descriptive data including samples size, mean and standard deviation.

Descriptives

	N	Mean	SD
Interpersonal Needs	70	16.8	8.95
Males	35		
Females	35		
Social Media Use	70	35.2	14.92
Males	35		
Females	35		

According to Table 1, the mean value for Interpersonal Needs is 16.8 and the mean value for Social Media Use is 35.2. Standard Deviation (SD) value for Interpersonal Needs and Social Media Use is 8.95 and 14.92 indicating the spread of the data.

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The Social Media Use data is well deviated from the mean while the resilience data is not much deviated indicating that data is not clustered around the mean.

Table 2. Showing the difference between Interpersonal Needs of Males and Females

		Statistic	Df	p
<i>Interpersonal Needs</i>	Student's t	0.465	68.0	0.644

According to Table 2., the statistic score is 0.465, the degree of freedom (df) is 68.0, and the p-value is 0.644. Since the p-value is greater than the significance value, the null hypothesis (H02) that there is no significant gender difference in the Interpersonal Needs of Males and Females is accepted.

Table 3. Showing the correlation between Interpersonal Needs and Social Media Use Correlation Matrix

	N		Interpersonal Needs	Social Media Use
<i>Interpersonal Needs</i>	70	Pearson's r	1	-
<i>Social Media Use</i>	70	Pearson's r	-0.134	1
		p-value	0.270	-

Note. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

Table 3. denotes whether there is a correlation between Interpersonal Needs and Social Media Use among young adults.

After the analysis it is found that there is no significant relationship between Interpersonal Needs and Social Media Use. Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected which states that there is significant relationship between Interpersonal Needs and Social Media Use.

Hence, the results denote that there is no significant relationship between Interpersonal Needs and Social Media Use.

The Pearson r value suggests negative correlation amongst the variables which means higher level of interpersonal needs is not related to higher level of social media use.

An article by Norman, N.H (2001), about reconciling conflicting findings on Sociability, Interpersonal Relations and the Internet, suggested that Internet users do not become more sociable, instead that they already show a rather higher degree of social interaction and participation, because they are relatively better educated, in better conditions financially. Also, that Internet use may actually reduce interpersonal interaction and communication.

A first of a kind meta-analysis study on Social Media Use and Interpersonal Relationships in Adolescents, keeping heterogeneity in consideration, was conducted by Hao QH., et al. (2022). The results suggested that increased Social Media Use or Internet Addiction and Interpersonal Relationship Troubles have a positive correlation. This means that increased social media use could in fact minimise the offline socialness of adolescents and cause trouble in interpersonal relationships.

On the other hand, a research conducted by Kelly Allen., et al. (2014) conducted a study on the social media use and the social connectedness in adolescents that revealed that there

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could be a significant and positive relationship between Interpersonal Needs and Social Media use among adolescents. The study concluded that a paradox that Social Media can enhance the psychosocial wellbeing and belonging in the society, while at the same time can also expose young adults to possible negative outcomes.

Delimitation of the Study

The study was limited to only young adults in the ages of 17-24 years. The study was delimited to literate individuals and did not include others beyond the definite age group or literacy.

Suggestions for Future Research

- This research can be implemented on a larger population in the future.
- The relationship between Interpersonal Needs and Social Media Use can be understood among different populations.
- The other influencing factors of Interpersonal Needs could be studied.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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