

Attachment Style and Social Network Addiction among College Students

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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed at exploring the relationship between Social Network Addiction and Attachment style among college students. The study also analyses the gender and age difference among college students with regard to Attachment style and Social Network addiction. A sample of 150 college students were part of the study. Quantitative technique was used to procure data the questionnaires used were, Adult attachment scale (1990) and Social Network Addiction (2020). The responses were scored and analyzed using Pearson's product moment correlation and independent sample t test. The result showed there was no significant relationship between social network addiction and attachment styles among college students and there exists no gender and age difference among college students with regard to Social Network Addiction and Attachment style. The study also provides theoretical and practical implications.

Keywords: *Social Network Addiction, Attachment Style, College Students*

Social-virtual addictions have recently emerged as a major concern and a widespread problem around the world. The use of social networking sites (SNS) such as Telegram, Instagram, WhatsApp, YouTube, and other SNS has significantly altered how people socialize, share information, work, perceive others, and present themselves (1). Furthermore, with the rise of social networking sites, SNS addiction has emerged as a new behavioural addiction (2). Addiction to SNS is defined as a strong desire for social networks, a strong desire to use social networks, and a significant amount of time and effort spent on social networks to the detriment of other social, occupational, and academic activities, interpersonal relationships, or psychological well-being and health. Furthermore, SNS addiction is defined as a subjective sense of loss of control in which the person uses social networks excessively despite the negative effects of using them and attempts to change or control them.

Attachment is defined as a lasting psychological connectedness between human beings and may be considered interchangeable with concepts such as affectional bond and emotional. Attachment style is a relatively stable disposition that influences expectations, emotions, and behaviours in personal relationships. These patterns emerge from early childhood

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experiences with caregivers, which result in mental representations (internal working models) of the self in relation to others (Bowlby, 1969). Following Bowlby (1969) and Ainsworth (1964)'s theories of childhood attachment, Hazan and Shaver (1987) developed the first typology of adult attachment styles in romantic relationships. They differentiated between the secure, avoidant, and preoccupied styles. Bartholomew (1990) distinguished between dismissive and fearful tone. Secure people believe they are worthy of love and are at ease with autonomy and intimacy. Attachment style influences personal relationship needs, expectations, and behaviours (Feeney & Noller, 1992). While secure attachment is linked to more constructive conflict resolution behaviours (Sierau & Herzberg, 2012), better emotion regulation (Bippus & Rollin, 2003), and prosocial behaviour (Shaver et al., 2008), anxious people seek reassurance excessively (Shaver et al., 2005), and avoidance is linked to more relationship breakup (Feeney & Noller, 1990). Adult attachment style has also been shown to be a good predictor of relationship outcomes (Nofle & Shaver, 2006; Shaver & Brennan, 1992).

There is a growing body of research that has examined the impact of attachment styles and its influence on internet addiction. Findings has shown a significant positive association between insecure attachment and a more intensive and dysfunctional use of the internet and social media. The findings suggest that the gratification model provides a useful framework to understand the effects of parental attachment on social media addiction.

In addition to SNS, theoretical and empirical models argue that dispositional and sociocultural factors, as well as behavioural promotions, are effective (4). The attachment theory considers character differences in attachment system performance and mediates close relationships (including relationships with parents and romantic ones) as a behavioural regulator system, reflects character-based cognitions and emotions of individuals, and anticipates different ways to interact with friends and strangers. Attachment theory appears to be a good theory for explaining specific aspects of social media engagement based on previous literature examining attachment and addiction more broadly. Attachment styles, for example, appear to influence time spent online and can be used as frameworks to understand the reasons that drive social media usage.

Risky behaviours have previously been linked to attachment styles and may serve as a risk and predictive factor for addictive behaviours (Flores 2004).

In fact, numerous studies have found that attachment anxiety and emotional dysregulation are positively correlated, and that these two variables appear to contribute to maladaptive behaviour and affective problems, such as problematic internet use (Estevez et al., 2018), eating disorders (Norrish et al., 2019), anxiety (Esbjorn et al., 2012; Nielsen et al., 2017), and depression (Marques et al., 2018; Owens et al. Difficulties with emotion regulation are particularly regarded as risk factors for both substance (e.g., alcohol and drug abuse) and behavioural addiction (e.g., gambling disorder, video game addiction, and smartphone addiction). For example, the internet could be used to help people cope with stress, anxiety, and depression. The link between emotion regulation and SNS addiction has also been established; that is, greater difficulties in emotion regulation are associated with problematic SNS use, as measured by modified substance abuse measures (Hormes et al., 2015). Dysfunctional emotional regulation has also been linked to (Pontes et al., 2018) and has been shown to predict problematic Facebook use (Marino et al., 2019).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The current study adopts a quantitative research method with correlational research design. The samples were collected from young adults in the form of questionnaire. This research helps in understand the correlation between social network addiction and attachment style. The paper also focuses on whether there is any difference in attachment style and social network addiction based on gender and age.

Objectives

The objective of the study is to find out the significant relationship to find between Attachment Style and Social network addiction and if there is a difference in attachment style and social network addiction based on gender and age.

Hypothesis

H¹: There is a significant relationship between Attachment style and Social network addiction among college students.

H²: There is no significant difference in Attachment style and Social network addiction based on Gender.

H³: There is no significant difference in Attachment style and Social network addiction based on age.

Operational Definition

- **Social Network Addiction**

Social network addiction is a type of behavioral addiction that is broadly defined as compulsive engagement in social media platforms that significantly disrupts the users' functioning in important life domains, such as interpersonal relations, work or study performance, and physical health

- **Attachment Style**

The characteristic way people relate to others in the context of intimate relationships, which is heavily influenced by self-worth and interpersonal trust.

Variable

- Social network Addiction
- Attachment style

Universe of the study

The sample were collected among college students between the age of 18 to 25 in India. Data was collected from both male and females.

Sample

150 college students between the age of 18 to 25 where collected from various parts of India. Both males and females were collected.

Sample Technique

Purposive and convenient sampling was used for the study.

Inclusion criteria

- College students between the age of 18 to 25.

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Exclusion Criteria

- College students above the age of 25 were excluded.

Procedure

For this study adult attachment scale and Social networking addiction scale was used to collect the data, in the form of questionnaire and was shared with the participants in the form of google form. Participants were instructed on how to answer the questions and basic demographic details were collected. The participants will take 15 minutes to answer the questions on both the scales. After the data is collected the data will be analysed with the help of correlation and t-test and outcome will be discussed.

Research Ethics Followed

Ethical Considerations:

1. The consent of the participant and the clinical centers were taken prior to the study.
2. The participant's beliefs and sentiments were not questioned in any way.
3. The responses were kept confidential
4. Anonymity of individuals and organizations participating in the research was ensured.
5. The responses of the participant were not used for any other purpose, other than the agreed research study.

Tools for the study

- Adult Attachment Scale
- Social networking addiction scale

Description of Tools

- **Adult Attachment Scale**
Adult attachment scale was developed by Collins and Read in 1990, the adult attachment scale consists of 18 statements. It is measured in 5 point scale, which include "not at all characteristics of me to very characteristics of me".
- **Social Network Addiction Scale**
Social Network Addiction (SNA) Scale: Shahnawaz and Rehman (2020) presented the scale, which consists of 21 items on a 7-degree Likert scale, to assess the extent to which individuals suffer from social network addiction. The score can range from 21 to 147. Any score above 84 indicates addiction, with three levels of diagnosis: mild, moderate, and severe; such levels may be influenced by various cultural and contextual variables; thus, factorial analysis of the scale is required to detect and assess such variables (Griffiths, 2005; Shahnawaz, 2020; Kiouas 2021). The SNA scale can be used to detect and assess the extent to which individuals suffer from social network addiction. The dimension exploration score was calculated by adding the questions scores from each dimension.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics of correlation between the two variables, attachment style and social network addiction

Variable	N	M	SD	P	
				1	2
Attachment style (X1)	150	54.41	6.623	.124	-
Social Network Addiction (X2)	150	75.87	23.562	-	.124

$P < 0.05$

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The mean and standard deviation for attachment style is 54.41 and 6.23 and for social network addiction, 75.87 and 23.56. The significance value is which is more than 0.05 and accepts the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between spirituality and multicultural sensitivity.

T-test

Table 1 Descriptive statistics of t-test

	Male		Female		t	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
Attachment Style	54.40	6.740	54.42	6.617	.014	.928
Social Network addiction	77.23	25.652	75.45	22.992	.389	.161

P < 0.05

The table shows the means and standard deviation of Attachment style and Social Network addiction for males and females. The mean score for males in attachment style is 54.40 and the standard deviation for males is 6.740 and for Social Network Addiction the mean value is 77.23 For females, the mean score obtained in Attachment style is 54.42 and the Standard Deviation is 6.617 and for Social Network Addiction mean value is 75.45 and Standard Deviation is 22.992. Here the t value for attachment style is 0.14 and for social network addiction it is .389, which is less than 1.96. Therefore, there is no significant difference in attachment style and social network addiction based on gender and it accepts the hypothesis.

DISCUSSION

The study was conducted among college students in which 35 were males and 115 were females. The findings of the study has shown that there is no significant relationship between attachment style and social network addiction and it rejects the hypothesis.

According to studies, there is a negative relationship between Internet addiction and Secure attachment style, and a positive relationship between Internet addiction and non-secure attachment styles such as dismissive, fearful, and preoccupied. Also found a negative correlation between secure attachment style and internet addiction, and a positive correlation between anxious attachment style and internet addiction. Griffiths et al. (2017). Schroiff (2019) discovered a link between excessive smartphone usage and an insecure attachment style. An anxious attachment orientation is distinguished by a preoccupation with relationships and a sense of belonging. This can be satisfied by using SNS, which can lead to SNS addiction. An avoidant attachment dimension, on the other hand, is associated with refusal of intimacy and maintaining emotional distance in relationships; as a result, people with this attachment may use social media less than others. SNS addiction has received much scholarly attention in recent years as a new type of behavioural addiction, and there are numerous studies exploring the risk factors associated with SNS addiction. Internet addiction has been linked to insecure attachment, anxious and avoidant attachment styles (Shin et al. 2009), and dismissive and preoccupation attachment styles (Odac and krkç 2014). The relationship between attachment styles and other types of online addiction (e.g., internet gaming disorder and social networking addiction) has received little attention. Recent research has found that attachment predicts excessive use of Facebook and other online social networking sites (Rom and Alfasi 2014; Yaakobi and Goldenberg 2014). More specifically, (i) securely attached individuals have larger social networks and more social ties (Jenkins-Guarnieri et al. 2012), (ii) anxiously attached individuals use Facebook more frequently and are constantly concerned about how they are perceived on Facebook (Lin 2015, 2016), and (iii) securely attached individuals have larger social networks and more

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social ties. According to research, strong parental attachment reduces the need to use the internet. Strong parental ties protect against internet addiction (Yang et al 2016). If family ties are weak, there is a need to escape reality, and internet addiction is a maladaptive coping strategy. When their emotional needs are not met, people flee situations. According to one study, pathological internet use is caused by insecure attachment and limited interpersonal relationships. (Eichenberg and colleagues, 2017). Patients who are addicted to the Internet have more anxious attachment styles as well as significant disruptions in family functioning. (2014) (Omer Senormanci).

The results also show that there is no significant difference between males and female students with regard to gender. It also shows that there is no significant difference with regard to age of the college students.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The findings of the study shows that there is no significant relationship between attachment style and social network addiction. It shows there is no significant difference in attachment style and social network addiction based on gender. And it also shows that there is no significant difference and social network addiction based on age among college students.

Limitations of the study

- The sample was selected using convenient sampling.
- The sample size of Female and male college students were not proportionate.
- Age groups other than 18-25 were excluded.

Suggestions for future research

- The sample population can be further divided on the basis of sector or field of occupation.
- The present study may be implicated in a large sample with inclusion of more variables.
- Further research can be done by including the older adults perspective within the same variables mentioned in the study.

Implications

Although there are several existing studies exploring the association between attachment and SNS addiction. It has been documented that attachment security priming is an effective procedure to reduce attachment anxiety (Gillath and Karantzas, 2019). It entails exposing individuals to stimuli designed to activate a sense of love, comfort, and safety. Attachment security priming may have beneficial effects, especially for those whose attachment involves hypervigilance to threats. Consequently, such a technique could be a potential choice when considering an intervention of SNS addiction. The present study of attachment style and social network addiction among college students is significant in this current transitional environment we are present now. The result of the study is relevant in understanding the relationship between attachment style and social network addiction among college students. The research can be used in identifying various behavioural addiction of young adults. There should be a better parenting styles that can help the youngsters.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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