Research Paper

Social Media Self-Presentation and Identity Development with Mindfulness as A Moderator: A Study Among Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

Social Media is harboring the attention of young adults these days as a way of presenting themselves and creating an identity. Social media Self-presentation talks about how people portray themselves on social networking sites in accordance to the current trends, which impacts their view about themselves, as researched by many. Hence, this study aims to assess the relationship between social media self-presentation and identity development with a moderating role of mindfulness. **Method Sample:** 110 young adults aged between 18-23years were selected randomly from nursing colleges, residing in north India. **Tools:** Socio-demographic datasheet, Cognitive, and Affective Mindfulness Scale – revised (CAMS-R), Erikson Psychosocial stage inventory (EPSI), and Social media self-presentation Scale. **Procedure:** The tools were converted into Google Forms and sent through WhatsApp, email, etc. **Result:** The result was analysed using descriptive statistics and regression. All the variables (Social media self-presentation, identity clarity, self-esteem, and mindfulness) had a significant positive correlation with each other. The results of the moderation analysis indicate that mindfulness plays a significant role in moderating the relationship between social media self-presentation and both self-esteem and identity clarity. This study has the potential to make a valuable contribution to future research on social media self-presentation.

Social media has become one of the most prevalent ways to develop socialization between individuals around the world and to present themselves to society in the most desirable manner according to their personalities. Self-presentation is the art of crafting a persona that we want others to perceive us as. It involves a conscious effort to create, alter, or uphold an image of ourselves in the minds of those around us. As Eliot (1915) once wrote, "We prepare our masks to meet the faces that we meet" (The Love song of J. Alfred Prufrock). In essence, every time we strive to shape the way others view us, we are engaging in the delicate dance of self-presentation. It involves expressing oneself and behaving in ways that create the desired impression. Self-presentation refers specifically to information about the self (Baumeister & Vohs, Gear).

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Self-enhancement and self-verification are two major motives that influence our self-presentation. Former motivates one to present self in a positive light, which creates a desirable impression. Latter, on the other hand, drives people to verify or to maintain the stability of their pre-existing self-views (Schlenker & Leary 1982). As we all live in a world where we meet people more often through online media but, have trouble crossing a street meeting someone. Especially young adults these days spend most of the time using social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc. this gives them a virtual basis to portray themselves in the manner they want. Many studies have also revealed that social media addiction leads to problems in psychological well-being. As, self-presentation to our best and this race of being a more likable person than the other leads them to sometimes do a false presentation, making them enter a world full of pseudo realities.

The advent of social media has brought about a paradigm shift in the way individuals communicate, consume and collaborate. It has opened up a whole new world of possibilities, providing a dynamic platform for people to connect and express their thoughts and ideas with anyone who has access to social media (Wu, Sun & Tan, 2013). Social media self-presentation has become an integral part of the usage of social media, as it's the only way one creates an impression on others; it helps in facilitating social interaction, enables one to attain rewards like material and even social thus also helps people in constructing identities according to their will. While presenting ourselves in the online world, we form our identity, which is exactly the way we are or gradually from the virtual world house in our mind and thus takes place of our conscious identity. The journey of discovering one's true identity is a complex and intricate process, where the development of one's identity and the clarity of it are intertwined. The latter refers to the extent to which an individual is able to harmoniously integrate their values, aspirations, and convictions, creating a cohesive and authentic sense of self. This concept has been explored by various scholars, including Campbell et al. (1996), Erikson (1968), and Harter (2012). Young adulthood is a critical time of identity development may also sometimes lead to an "identity crisis". People's ideas about themselves are dynamic at this point in life and are vulnerable to experiences.

Self-esteem plays an important role in forming one's identity, as it gives the basis for one's personality to be confident or timid, to be assertive or unenterprising. If one has high self-esteem, it positively contributes to identity development with an internal locus of control. Social media being a major predictor may lead to identity development but it's not the only variable, there are many contributing factors such as rumination, intrusive thinking, mindfulness, etc.

Mindfulness is one of the important factors which in turn also helps in our identity development. Any work done with a mindful perspective will lead to positive results. In the same manner, social media usage and social media self-presentation have become an integral part of today's world, we cannot imagine a life without it, but the only way we can use it effectively is by being mindful about our acts. Presenting ourselves on social media in a more aware and conscious way. As per the findings of various studies, individuals who practice mindfulness while using social media tend to experience better psychological outcomes as compared to those who don't. Moreover, similar trends can be observed in the way people present themselves on social media and form their identities (Charoensukmongkol, 2016). Self-esteem, on the other hand, is a crucial indicator of one's overall self-perception and self-value (Rosenberg, Schooler, & Schoenbach, 1989; Campbell et al., 1996). It reflects how

much an individual values themselves and their abilities, and plays a significant role in shaping their behavior and decision-making.

Rationale

Social media nowadays have become an indispensable part of our lives especially young adults who spend most of their time using social media applications and it has also become one of the major sources of communication among them. Their daily life activities and thought processes are too much influenced by social media they put in a lot of effort. To present themselves on such platforms for creating impressions or forming any point of view which in turn leads to affect their identity and personality. Mindfulness plays a very important role in such situations where young adults are at a vulnerable stage of life. The aim of the research was to evaluate the impact of social media platform self-presentation on the self-esteem of young adults. Especially, when mindfulness acts as a path on one's self-presentation, things take a better turn and are inclines more towards the positive side.

METHODOLOGY

Aim of the study:

The aim of the study was to evaluate how young adults' self-esteem was affected by the way they present themselves on social media platforms. Specifically, when mindfulness acts as a path on one's self-presentation, things take a better turn and are inclined more towards the positive side.

Objectives:

- The aim of the study is to evaluate the impact of mindfulness as a moderator between social media self-presentation and self-esteem.
- The aim of the study is to evaluate the impact of mindfulness as a moderator between social media self-presentation and identity clarity.

Sample:

The study description was cross-sectional. The sample for the study included 100 nursing students of north India, aged between 18 – 23 years were selected using the purposive sampling method. Data was collected using Google form, and analysis was done using SPSS.

Instruments

1. **The social media self-presentation scale,** (Yang & Brown, 2016) was used, to measure how one presents oneself on social media platforms. This scale is comprised of four distinct components, including Positivity (3 items, $\alpha = 0.72$), Breadth (4 items, $\alpha = 0.80$), Authenticity (5 items, $\alpha = 0.74$), and Depth (5 items, $\alpha = 0.78$). Each component is measured by a series of items, with higher mean scores indicating a more expansive, emotionally revealing, positive, and authentic self-presentation on social media.

2. We employed the concise six-item rendition of the esteemed **Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale**, developed by Rosenberg and colleagues in 1989. This scale is a self-report measure that assesses one's global self-esteem, encompassing an individual's overall sense of self-worth and self-acceptance. The scale comprises 10 statements that delve into these feelings, with responses rated on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. A higher mean score on this scale

indicates a greater degree of self-acceptance, positive self-evaluation, and self-respect, with a reliability coefficient of α = 0.86.

3. **The Erikson Psychosocial Stage Inventory** (EPSI; Rosenthal, Gurney, & Moore, 1981) was utilized to select six items from the Identity subscale. The 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree) was employed, and it exhibited excellent reliability (α = 0.82). A higher mean score indicated a more distinct and well-defined sense of identity.

4. The study utilized the **Cognitive and Affective Mindfulness Scale-Revised** (CAMS-R; Feldman et al., 2007) to gauge the participants' mindfulness. The scale consisted of ten items and employed a 4-point Likert scale (1 = Rarely/Not at All, 4 = Almost Always) to assess the level of mindfulness. The reliability of the scale was commendable, with a coefficient alpha of 0.82.

Procedure

The tools (Socio-demographic datasheet, Cognitive and Affective Mindfulness Scale-Revised (CAMS-R), Erikson Psychosocial stage inventory (EPSI), and Social media self-presentation Scale) were converted into google form and sent through WhatsApp, email, etc. along with consent form. 100 young adults aged between 18-23years were selected randomly from nursing colleges in north India for the study. Data collected were analyzed using SPSS (Correlation and moderation).

RESULTS

Table 1.1- Descriptive Statistics

Variables	M	SD
Social media self-presentation	68.5818	4.22179
Mindfulness	30.9818	1.51435
Self-esteem	32.4909	2.90443
Identity Clarity	27.2818	2.09031

Table 1.1 shows descriptive statistics for all the variables included in the study which are Social media self-presentation, Mindfulness, Self-esteem, and Identity Clarity

Table 1.2 – Bivariate Correlation Analysis

Variables	Social media self-presentation	Mindfulness	Self-esteem	Identity Clarity
Social media self-presentation	1	.298*	.291*	.212*
Mindfulness		1	.364**	.499*
Self-esteem			1	.372*
Identity Clarity				1

*Note: ** Significant at 0.01 level, * Significant at 0.05 level*

Table 1.2 shows the correlation between the variables of the study. From the table, it can be interpreted that Social media self-presentation, Mindfulness, Self-esteem, and Identity Clarity all are positively correlated.

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Table 1.3 (a) – Simple Liners regression

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standard Coefficient	T	Significance
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	10.781	1.583		6.811	.000
Social Media Self-Presentation	0.099	.027	.291	3.660	.000

Note: Dependent variable – Self-esteem, Experiential avoidance – R² = .0492, adjusted R² =.4910, F= 6.6718, P<0.01

Table1.3(a) shows the regression analysis which is predicting Self-esteem from social media self-presentation. It indicates that 4.9% of the variance in Self-esteem is accounted for by social media self-presentation.

Table 1.3 (b) - Regression Analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standard Coefficient	t	Significance
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	13.818	1.052		13.133	.000
Social Media Self-Presentation	.149	0.56	.212	2.637	.009

Note: Dependent variable – Identity Clarity, Emotion suppression- R² = .045, adjusted R² =.038, F= 6.952, P<0.01

Table 1.3(b) shows the regression analysis which is predicting Identity Clarity from social media self-presentation. It indicates that 4.5% of the variance in Identity Clarity is accounted for by social media self-presentation.

Table 1.3 (c) - Regression Analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standard Coefficient	T	Significance
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	7.314	1.523		6.221	.000
Mindfulness	0.019	1.278	.364	2.335	.000

Note: Dependent variable – Self-esteem, Experiential avoidance – R² = .083, adjusted R² =.077, F= 13.394, P<0.01

Table 1.3(c) shows the regression analysis which predicts Self-esteem from Mindfulness. It indicates that 8.3% of the variance in Self-esteem is accounted for by Mindfulness.

Table 1.3 (d) - Regression Analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standard Coefficient	T	Significance
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	11.231	1.669		12.326	.000
Mindfulness	.122	0.46	.499	3.564	.009

Note: Dependent variable – Identity Clarity, Emotion suppression- R² = .051, adjusted R² =.048, F= 5.288, P<0.01

Table 1.3(d) shows the regression analysis that predicts Identity Clarity from Mindfulness It indicates that 8.3% of the variance in Identity Clarity is accounted for by Mindfulness.

Table 1.4 (a)- Moderation Analysis

Mindfulness	Effect	Se	T	P	LLCI	ULCI
23.880	-.0077	.2147	-.0361	.9713	-.4367	.4212
29.000	.2558	.1375	1.8594	.0676	-.0191	.5306
35.120	.5707	.1763	3.2373	.0019	.2184	.9230

Note: X- Social Media Self-Presentation, Y-Self -esteem

Table 1.4 (a) illustrates the moderating impact of mindfulness on the correlation between Social Media Self-Presentation (SMSP) and Self-esteem. It shows that when the value of mindfulness is minimum (23.880) there will be no effect on the relationship between Social Media Self-Presentation and Self-esteem. At the average value of 29, this relationship will be affected to some extent, while at the highest value of 35.120, it will significantly moderate the association between Self-esteem and Social Media Self-Presentation.

Table 1.4 (b)- Moderation Analysis

Mindfulness	Effect	Se	T	P	LLCI	ULCI
12.000	0.0332	.0405	.8202	.4134	-.0469	.1134
17.000	.0709	.0315	2.2539	.0257	.0087	.1331
25.000	.1312	.0400	3.2833	.0013	.0522	.2101

Note: X- Social Media Self-Presentation, Y- Identity Clarity

Table 1.4 (b) demonstrates the moderating impact of mindfulness on the correlation between Identity Clarity and Social Media Self-Presentation. It shows that when the value of mindfulness is minimum (12) there will be no effect on the relationship of Social Media Self-Presentation and Identity Clarity. At the mean value (17) it will impact this relationship at some level and at the highest value (25) it will significantly moderate the correlation between Identity Clarity and Social Media Self-Presentation.

DISCUSSION

The current study investigated the impact of Social Media self-presentation on an individual's self-esteem and Identity clarity. Additionally, it examined the potential moderating role of mindfulness in the relationship between Social Media self-presentation and self-esteem and Identity clarity.

H1. Mindfulness would moderate the relationships between social media self-presentation and self-esteem

The hypothesis explored the correlation between social media self-presentation and Identity development (Identity clarity and Self-esteem). After analyzing the data, it was found that variables were positively and significantly correlated with each other, with self-esteem (r= 0.291*, p<0.05) and with Identity Clarity (r= 0.212*, p<0.05). The results are consistent with the study done by (Metzler A and Scheithauer H, 2017)where they explored the hypothesis that positive feedback from one's Facebook friends will increase adolescents' self-esteem. One more study done by (Gonzales & Hancock, 2011; Gentile et al., 2012), suggested that spending time on social networking sites profiles leads young adults in having positive views about themselves, this might also vary from different social networking sites.

H2. Mindfulness would moderate the relationships between social media self-presentation and identity clarity

Hypotheses also explored the relationship of Mindfulness with social media self-presentation, self-esteem, and Identity Clarity. All the variables, social media self-presentation (r=.298*, p<0.05), self-esteem (r=.364**, p<0.01) and Identity Clarity (r=.499*, p<0.05) were positively and significantly correlated. Which stated that if one acts consciously and mindfully, one can enhance their Self-esteem and be more sure about their Identity. A study by (Peerayuth Charoensukmongkly, 2016) states a contributing role of mindfulness with the validity of the content on social media before anyone believes it and shares it with others. Further studies done by (Saraff S, Tiwari A, and Rishipal, 2020) suggest that when mindfulness was taken as an intervention it led to a significant increase in college students' growth mindset, self-concept, and self-esteem.

Moderation Analysis

The results of the moderation analysis indicate that mindfulness plays a significant role in moderating the relationship between social media self-presentation and both self-esteem and identity clarity. More people will act mindfully more their self-esteem will boost up and even their ideas about their own identity will be clear, which in turn will affect how they present themselves on social media. Positive self-presentation is an important aspect of identity formation for young adults, as it allows them to focus on minimal data and develop a clear sense of self. However, less mindful individuals may experience negative consequences when engaging in this practice (Valkenburg & Peter, 2011). For instance, those who exhibit lower levels of awareness tend to be more self-conscious and ruminate more frequently (Brown & Ryan, 2003), which can lead to a lower level of self-concept clarity (Hanley & Garland, 2016). As a result, they may rely more heavily on social comparison to evaluate and define themselves (Buunk & Gibbons, 2006). Moreover, delving into the depths of online self-presentation has been correlated with a decrease in one's self-esteem, especially among those who are not as cognizant (Pullmann & Allik, 2000; Silvia & Phillips, 2011). Unveiling one's innermost emotions, beliefs, and flaws, along with the possibility of disclosing negative information about oneself, is a daring form of self-presentation. However, this approach can trigger a heightened sense of self-awareness and apprehension about how others perceive us. The upshot of this study is that individuals who lack mindfulness may be more susceptible to unfavorable consequences when attempting to present themselves to others.

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