

Exploring the Relationship between Social Media Addiction and Loneliness among Young Adults: A Quantitative Analysis

Munisa Mushtaq^{1*}, Dr. Siddharth Soni²

ABSTRACT

The widespread incorporation of social media platforms into the daily routines of young adults calls for a thorough comprehension of its influence on psychological well-being, specifically in relation to concepts such as loneliness. The present study employs a quantitative approach to investigate the complex association between addiction to social media and feelings of loneliness among young individuals. This investigation involves a thorough analysis that incorporates correlation and t-test approaches. Through an in-depth exploration of this association, the research endeavours to clarify the psychological ramifications associated with excessive utilization of social media platforms and its prospective impact on individuals' experiences of loneliness. Participants between the ages of 18 and 25 were chosen via purposive sampling, taking into account particular criteria relating to their involvement with social media sites. The data collection devices employed in this study encompassed surveys, which provided valuable insights into the extent of participants' social media addiction and their encounters with feelings of loneliness. The research included a sample size of 172 individuals, encompassing both males and females, and using known psychometric tools to assess the variables under investigation. Loneliness experiences were assessed using the De Jong Gierveld Scale, while the level of social media addiction was evaluated using the Internet Addiction Test by Dr. Kimberly Young. Furthermore, it is worth noting that there were significant gender disparities in the levels of loneliness, underscoring the necessity for additional investigation into individual variations in comprehending the correlation between addiction to social media and feelings of loneliness. This study adds to the growing corpus of scholarly work on the utilization of social media and its psychological consequences, offering valuable perspectives that can guide specific interventions designed to encourage healthy online behaviors among young adults.

Keywords: *Internet addiction, loneliness, students, quantitative research, young adults*

The integration of social media platforms into everyday life has greatly transformed the dynamics of interpersonal communication, especially among young adults, in modern society. These digital platforms offer exceptional opportunities for communication, interpersonal relationships, and personal self-expression. However, despite the benefits linked to the use of social media, concerns have been expressed regarding its

¹Student, Amity Institute of Psychology and Applied Sciences, Amity University Noida

²Assistant Professor, Amity Institute of Psychology and Applied Sciences, Amity University Noida

*Corresponding Author

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potential impact on mental health and overall well-being, specifically in relation to the phenomenon of loneliness. This study seeks to examine the complex relation between addiction to social media and experiences of loneliness among young individuals.

To fully comprehend our investigation, it is essential to appreciate the concept of social media addiction. Addiction to social media is defined as the compulsive and excessive use of social media platforms, often resulting in negative consequences such as the neglect of interpersonal relationships, decreased productivity, and psychological distress. The appeal of novel information and continuous connectivity in social media usage might cultivate tendencies resembling dependency, whereby individuals prioritize virtual contacts above in-person relationships. This addictive behaviour can show in various ways, including the compulsive surveillance of social media feeds, excessive involvement with social platforms, and the occurrence of withdrawal symptoms while unable to access social media.

Similarly, loneliness is a prominent psychological phenomenon, particularly prevalent among young adults who are grappling with the complexities of modern reality. Loneliness refers to an individual's experience of being socially alone and feeling a lack of meaningful interpersonal connections. Young adults may experience notable degrees of loneliness, despite the extensive accessibility of social networks. This phenomenon can be ascribed to various factors such as social transitions, geographical mobility, and the aspiration for autonomy. Loneliness can emerge in different ways, including emotional loneliness, which involves the absence of close relationships, and social loneliness, which refers to the loss of a social network.

The deep and diverse nature of the interaction between addiction to social media and feelings of loneliness is evident. The overutilization of social media platforms has the potential to exacerbate feelings of loneliness by gradually eroding authentic human relationships. The deliberate production of social media content, often featuring idealized portrayals of others' lives, can foster unrealistic social comparisons and heighten feelings of inadequacy, hence worsening individual isolation. Moreover, engaging in passive consumption of social media information might lead to experiencing social isolation and alienation, particularly while observing the pleasurable social connections of others. Conversely, those experiencing loneliness may turn to social media sites as a coping mechanism, seeking solace and virtual companionship. However, relying on digital contacts can lead to feelings of isolation in a harmful cycle, ultimately exacerbating the problem of social media addiction.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Karapetsas. et al. (2015) The preliminary results of the study revealed a clear correlation between instances of social isolation and the emergence of internet addiction. Multiple research studies have provided evidence indicating that teenagers who significantly depend on the Internet have elevated levels of loneliness in comparison to their counterparts who do not display such dependency. This study makes it easier to investigate the relationship between addiction and loneliness, which is a condition that is well-established in the scientific world. The study sample comprised 100 people, aged 13–15 (M.O. 14.3 ± 0.647), of which 51 were male and 49 was female. In this study, participants were selected at random from secondary schools located throughout the Volos conurbation. Young (1996) created a Greek-adapted questionnaire that was given to the participants to gauge their degree of Internet addiction. An examination of the questionnaire responses suggests that, in

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line with Young's (1996) research, 14.6% of the sample of young participants in this study show signs of internet addiction.

Elona Hasmuaj (2016) investigated the association between Internet addiction and experiences of loneliness among students at the University of Shkodra. The research encompassed a group of 151 individuals, especially students between the ages of 18 and 23. The objective was to establish the association between internet addiction among university students and their levels of loneliness. The study employed a cross-sectional design, specifically selecting a sample of 78 males and 73 females using random sampling. The data underwent analysis utilizing the SPSS program. The data suggest that there is no statistically significant difference in the average level of loneliness among the student population. Moreover, no significant association has been found between internet addiction and loneliness.

Latief. et al. (2019) This study examined the connection between nostalgia, self-esteem, and internet addiction among adolescents. The study involved a sample of 35 adolescents, consisting of 23 females and 12 males, ranging in age from 14 to 17 years. The study sample consisted of individuals selected from Junior High School (SMP) and Senior High School (SMA) in Kota Ternate. The study utilized a fundamental random sampling methodology for the selection of participants. The data was collected using questionnaires that employed scales as the primary instrument. The research employed Cronbach's Alpha as the measure of reliability. The current investigation employed the multiple regression methodology for the purpose of data analysis. There is a strong association between loneliness, self-esteem, and Internet addiction in adolescents, as indicated by the findings.

Xuan et al. (2020) a comprehensive literature review was undertaken to investigate the phenomenon of juvenile social media addiction. The purpose of this review is to examine and integrate several aspects that contribute to the emergence of social media addiction among teenagers. The researchers utilized the PRISMA criteria to conduct a thorough examination and meta-analysis. The present study utilized a systematic approach to conduct a thorough examination of the available literature. Social media has become a crucial instrument for global youth communication. Parents, educators, and counselors play a crucial role in fostering healthy social media usage and mitigating the risk of addiction. In order to deliver improved services, counselors must possess a thorough comprehension of mental health and the complex array of difficulties that affect teenagers who heavily rely on social media. It is crucial for counselors to possess a comprehensive understanding of social media addiction and the application of evidence-based interventions for young individuals. In order to provide effective support, it is imperative for parents, teachers, and counselors to possess a thorough comprehension of the activities, needs, perceptions, social interaction patterns, and emotional responses of young individuals.

Tian. et al (2020) This study examined the interrelationships between shyness, self-esteem, loneliness, depression, and Internet addiction among a group of Chinese adolescents. The research conducted in this study involved a sample size of 1047 students from a junior middle school. To assess the factors of shyness, self-esteem, loneliness, discontents, and Internet addiction, two distinct time periods were employed. A 12-month time gap was observed between each examination. This study utilized structured equation modeling to investigate the long-term correlations between variables. The results of a retrospective study demonstrate a statistically significant correlation between early instances of shyness and

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eventual development of Internet addiction. Furthermore, prior studies have shown that the early addiction to the Internet might act as a predictor of future self-esteem. Furthermore, the study found that the initial feeling of loneliness was a clear sign of future Internet addiction. The study revealed that the initial experience of despair was a reliable predictor of the development of Internet addiction. No more significant delayed effects were detected. The study findings suggest a connection between shyness and Internet addiction, with self-esteem being noticed as a result of Internet addiction. Prior to developing Internet addiction, individuals commonly experience feelings of loneliness and despair, as indicated by the data.

Cybulska et al. (2021) the present investigation utilized a survey methodology and encompassed a cohort of 556 women, meticulously selected to ensure a representative sample of the female populace residing in Poland. The research employed a range of measures, including a researcher-developed questionnaire for collecting socio demographic data, the De Jong Gierveld Loneliness Scale, the BDI- II the IAT, and the BFAS. The current investigation utilized an analytical methodology to determine the particular characteristics that had a significant impact on the emergence of Internet and Facebook addiction among the participants. The variables being examined included age, symptoms of depression, and feelings of loneliness. The study's results revealed an increased incidence of depressive symptoms among unmarried women, who exhibited a greater reliance on the Internet and Facebook. The group of employed women had a significant incidence of increased Internet and Facebook addiction. The study found that younger ladies had a greater degree of reliance on the Internet and Facebook. The empirical evidence suggests a noteworthy association between experiences of social isolation and the propensity to develop addictive behaviours towards the Internet and Facebook. Furthermore, a significant association can be observed between the intensity of depressive symptoms and the degree of addiction to these platforms.

Kavaklı et al. (2021) conducted a study that investigated the impact of comparison on the relationships between addiction to social media, self-esteem, and overall levels of belongingness. The study comprising 311 undergraduate students from a Turkish state institution who were actively involved in their academic endeavours. The evaluation of the mediator impact of SC was conducted using structural equation modeling. The results of this study indicate that the variable SC exerts an indirect influence on the association between SM and SE. The variable SC exerts an indirect influence on the relationship between SM and GB. Self-comparisons with others are a common activity among individuals, and social media technologies can facilitate this process in a quick and efficient way.

Saadati et al. (2021) did a comprehensive meta-analysis and systematic review were undertaken to examine the global association between internet addiction and depressive symptoms. The present study involved a comprehensive analysis of qualitative and quantitative research articles available in the English language, which investigated the correlation between internet addiction and feelings of loneliness. The writers individually collected the material, and if any inconsistencies arose, they consulted a third author. The data was obtained through the utilization of a pre-established data collection form. The study employed the Newcastle-Ottawa quality assessment scale (NOS) to assess the quality of the data. Out of the initial pool of 606 papers, a total of 26 papers were assessed for their quality. A systematic review was undertaken, encompassing a comprehensive collection of 24 cross-sectional research and 2 cohort studies. Turkey conducted a total of 11 research

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studies, China conducted 4, the United States conducted 2, and Korea conducted 2. Australia, Hong Kong, Kosovo, Pakistan, Italy, Greece, and Hungary hosted the remaining performances. A thorough investigation was conducted on a total of 26 researches. The study incorporated a total of seventeen cross-sectional studies and two prospective investigations. Among the 19 cross-sectional investigations conducted, 15 studies yielded positive outcomes in terms of therapeutic interventions. Conversely, 13 of these investigations revealed a higher incidence of loneliness among individuals with internet addiction in comparison to those who engage in regular internet usage. The current investigation has effectively established a definitive correlation between internet addiction and the perception of social isolation.

Akkuş Çutuk. (2021) the objective of this research was to investigate a theoretical framework aimed at clarifying the interrelationships among social media addiction, cognitive absorption, and self-esteem. The survey sample consisted of 361 university students, which included 198 females and 163 males. The empirical data was collected by the researchers using the Social Media Addiction Scale (SMAS), the Cognitive Absorption Scale (CAS), and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES). Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was employed for the data analysis. The study's results revealed a statistically significant and observable association between cognitive absorption and vulnerability to social media addiction. Furthermore, a significant and negative association was observed between self-esteem and addiction to social media, suggesting that self-esteem had a role in reducing the likelihood of developing social media addiction.

Dembiska et al. (2022) analysed the connection between diminished self-esteem and excessive internet usage, with a particular focus on investigating the impact of interactivity and feelings of loneliness. The study's sample consisted of 506 participants, of which 60% were female and fell between the age range of 18 to 35 years. Our findings confirm that the relationship between the variables depends on the ability to initiate social connections and the occurrence of chronic loneliness, which develop in a sequential manner. The association between diminished self-esteem and exaggerated Internet usage can be ascribed to the difficulty of engaging in social contacts, potentially leading to sensations of seclusion.

METHODOLOGY

Aim

To evaluate the impact of excessive reliance on social media on feelings of isolation among young adults

Objective of the research

- To examine the relationship between loneliness and social media addiction.
- To examine and compare the level of loneliness and social media addiction among male and female young adults.

Hypothesis

- H1: There would be a significant positive association between loneliness and social media addiction.
- H2: There would be a significant difference in the perceived level of loneliness and social media addiction.

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Sample

The research employs a purposive sampling technique, wherein individuals between the ages of 18 and 25 who frequently interact with social media platforms are identified as participants. The total number of participants were 172, (82) female and (90) male.

Table 1 Frequency and percentage of students in terms of gender (n=172)

| Gender | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---------|--------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | female | 82 | 39.1 | 47.1 | 47.1 |
| | male | 90 | 43.0 | 51.7 | 98.8 |
| | Total | 172 | 83.1 | 100.0 | |
| Missing | System | 35 | 16.9 | | |
| Total | | 207 | 100.0 | | |

Research Design

This study used both t-tests and correlation analysis to investigate in detail the relationship between loneliness and social media addiction in young adults. Examining the nature and extent of the differences seen between these factors was the primary goal of this investigation. In order to assess the statistical significance, the study used t-tests. Furthermore, correlation analysis was used by the researchers to evaluate the direction and strength of the association between the previously listed variables.

Measures

- University of California Los Angeles Loneliness Scale – V 3:** One of the most widely recognized psychometric tool, which has gained some acceptance as a standard measure in scientific research, is renowned for its superior dependability in psychoanalysis when compared to alternative measures. The level of loneliness was evaluated utilizing the aforementioned scale. The scale comprised a total of 20 items, consisting of 11 items labeled as positive (e.g., "How frequently do you perceive yourself to be in harmony with the individuals in your vicinity?") and 9 things labeled as negative (e.g., "How frequently do you perceive a lack of companionship?").
- Young's Internet Addiction Scale:** The creation of IAT is attributed to Dr. Kimberly Young in 1998. The present survey comprises a total of 20 statements. Please provide your response (0, 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5) on the 5-point scale that best represents your characteristics, after carefully examining each item.

RESULTS

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics

| | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation | Skewness | |
|-----|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------------|-----------|------------|
| | Statistic | Statistic | Statistic | Statistic | Statistic | Statistic | Std. Error |
| TL | 172 | 17.00 | 45.00 | 31.5407 | 4.76507 | -.424 | .185 |
| TIA | 172 | 3.00 | 91.00 | 38.0465 | 19.03976 | .208 | .185 |

Note, TL :total loneliness , TIA: total internet addiction

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Table 3 Correlation table

| | | TL | TIA |
|-----|---------------------|--------|--------|
| TL | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .291** |
| TIA | Pearson Correlation | .291** | 1 |

Note, It was revealed that there was a significant positive correlation between loneliness and social media addiction

Table 4 T table

| Characteristics | Gender | N | Mean | SD | T-value | Sig. |
|-----------------|--------|----|-------|------|---------|------|
| TL | Female | 82 | 32.08 | 4.2 | 1.451 | .064 |
| | Male | 90 | 31.02 | 5.2 | 1.466 | |
| TIA | Female | 82 | 36.75 | 18.8 | -.735 | .786 |
| | Male | 90 | 38.9 | 19.3 | -.736 | |

Note, there was no significant difference between the level of loneliness and social media usage among male and female respondents.

DISCUSSION

Given the growing prevalence of social media platforms, it is imperative to conduct a comprehensive examination of the psychological processes that drive individuals' involvement with these platforms, specifically among young adults between the ages of 18 and 25. This specific demographic comprises a significant fraction of those who actively participate in social media platforms, underscoring the importance of understanding the broader implications of social media addiction on mental health. The primary aim of this research was to investigate the relationship between social media addiction and experiences of loneliness. The results of the study indicated a statistically significant association between experiences of loneliness and the development of internet addiction. Recent studies have demonstrated that those who are heavily reliant on the Internet encounter heightened levels of loneliness in comparison to those who do not exhibit addiction. Therefore, this research allows for an investigation of the direct association between social media addiction and experiences of loneliness. The present study's results demonstrate similarities to other research (e.g., Argyris v. Karapetsas, 2015; Primack et al., 2017) that have demonstrated a significant positive association between experiences of loneliness and addiction to social media. Furthermore the study specifically sought to investigate potential variations between genders by employing a quantitative methodology. In order to investigate potential discrepancies in degrees of social media addiction and loneliness between males and females, a t-test analysis was performed. The results of the T analysis highlight that there is no statistically significant difference between genders in terms of their use of social media and their reported degrees of loneliness. In addition, the investigation did not find any significant gender-based differences in social media attachment. Specifically, there was no noticeable difference between males and females in this aspect.

CONCLUSION

Ultimately, our study's quantitative analysis has provided significant insights into the correlation between social media addiction among young adults and feelings of loneliness. The findings suggest that there is no significant influence of gender on the usage patterns of social media or the levels of loneliness among persons within this specific demographic. Moreover, the findings also indicate a notable absence of substantial gender disparity in the extent of social media engagement, implying similar levels of involvement across males and females. Significantly, the conduct of the investigation revealed a clear correlation between the levels of loneliness and addiction to social media, underscoring the potential impact of excessive engagement with social media on mental well-being. The aforementioned findings enhance our comprehension of the intricate dynamics of social media behaviour and underscore the significance of additional study and focused interventions aimed at mitigating the potential adverse consequences linked to excessive social media usage among young adults.

Future direction

Future investigations into the association between addiction to social media and feelings of loneliness among young individuals may employ diverse research approaches in order to improve understanding and inform therapeutic therapies. The implementation of longitudinal research examining the correlation between social media usage and feelings of loneliness could yield valuable insights into the temporal dynamics and causal relationships between these variables. Perceived social support and coping abilities have the potential to exert influence and control over the relationship, thereby providing significant insights into the underlying dynamics at play. Conducting a cross-cultural study to examine the relationship between usage of media and experiences of loneliness holds the promise of enhancing our comprehension of this issue. Implementing and evaluating targeted interventions, such as digital detoxification or social skills education, can enhance the well-being of young individuals by tackling problems associated with addiction to social media and social isolation.

Examining the impact of technology design on the cultivation of meaningful social relationships and the alleviation of online loneliness will contribute to the advancement of digital environments that are conducive to support. By investigating these prospective paths, researchers might enhance evidence-based strategies to tackle the problems of juvenile social media addiction and loneliness.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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