

Assessing Social Media Addiction and Its Correlation with Social Comparison and Coping Strategies

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the relationships between social media addiction, coping self-efficacy, and social comparison among Indian young adults aged 18-35. The method involved administering questionnaires, including The Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale, The Social Media Disorder Scale, The Iowa-Netherlands Comparison Orientation Measure, and The Coping Self-Efficacy Scale. Results from correlation and regression analyses revealed significant negative associations between social media addiction and coping self-efficacy, as well as positive correlations with social comparison dimensions. The discussion highlights cultural implications, emphasizing the need for culturally sensitive interventions promoting digital literacy and healthy coping mechanisms. This study contributes valuable insights into the complex interplay between digital behavior, mental health, and cultural factors among young adults in India.

Keywords: *Social Media Addiction, Social Comparison, Coping Strategies, Correlation, Regression Analysis*

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media encompasses a range of technological platforms designed to enable users to exchange ideas and information. With popular platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, X platform (previously known as Twitter), and YouTube, the collective user base surpasses 4.7 billion individuals, representing approximately 60% of the global population (Dollarhide, 2024). Social media has ingrained itself into contemporary culture, radically changing how individuals engage, exchange information, and communicate.

The significance of viewing social media as more than merely a channel for broadcasting or a tool for marketing is emphasized by the Office of Communications and Marketing. Rather, it highlights the need for honesty, open communication, and authenticity as fundamental components of good social media management (Tufts, 2024). Social media managers may create meaningful interactions and a feeling of community by encouraging real relationships and paying attention to audience input.

Social media's impact on society is a dichotomy, offering both significant benefits and notable drawbacks. On one hand, social media platforms facilitate real-time access to

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information, foster connections among individuals, and enable the formation of niche communities, thereby enhancing global interconnectedness (Dollarhide, 2024). However, the proliferation of disinformation, polarization, and adverse psychological effects underscores the darker side of social media's influence. Despite concerns, studies reveal that many individuals, particularly teenagers and young adults, perceive social media positively, citing increased connectivity and expanded social networks. Nevertheless, overuse of social media among young adults has raised valid concerns about its impact on physical and mental health, including distractions, disrupted sleep patterns, comparison amongst one another, and exposure to cyberbullying.

SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION

Social media addiction is a growing phenomenon characterized by excessive and compulsive use of social networking sites, which significantly impairs various aspects of an individual's life.

Psychologists estimate that a small percentage of users, ranging from 5 to 10% of Americans, meet the criteria for social media addiction, indicating its prevalence and impact (Hilliard, 2024). Similar to substance use disorders, addictive social media use exhibits distinct behavioral patterns, including mood modification, salience, tolerance, withdrawal symptoms, conflict, and relapse. This addiction stems from the dopamine-inducing environments created by social media platforms like Facebook, Snapchat, and Instagram. These platforms stimulate the brain's reward system, triggering chemical reactions comparable to those induced by recreational drugs.

Neuroscientists have likened the effects of social media interaction to a surge of dopamine akin to that of intravenous drug use, highlighting the potent addictive potential of social networking sites.

Social media addiction is a multifaceted issue with profound effects on mental health and brain function. The addictive nature of social networking platforms stems from their ability to activate the brain's reward system, specifically the release of dopamine, a neurotransmitter associated with pleasure and reinforcement (Hilliard, 2024). Harvard University's recent study underscores this, revealing that engaging in self-disclosure on social media triggers neural pathways akin to those stimulated by addictive substances, leading to increased dopamine levels and reinforcing the behavior. Consequently, when individuals receive notifications such as likes or mentions, their brains experience a surge of dopamine, resulting in feelings of pleasure and satisfaction.

This immediate gratification, coupled with the minimal effort required to obtain it, fosters a cycle of continuous engagement with social media platforms.

Moreover, social media platforms excel in providing a platform for self-expression and validation, with individuals predominantly sharing aspects of their lives and achievements. This self-centered nature of social media communication further fuels addiction, as individuals receive positive social feedback, which further stimulates dopamine release, reinforcing the behavior. Notably, research suggests that individuals are more inclined to talk about themselves on social media platforms, with estimates indicating that self-disclosure accounts for approximately 80% of online interactions, compared to 30-40% in face-to-face interactions (Hilliard, 2024).

In essence, social media addiction represents a complex interplay between brain chemistry, behavior, and psychological well-being. Understanding the mechanisms underlying this addiction is essential for developing effective interventions and strategies to mitigate its adverse effects and promote healthier relationships with digital platforms.

SOCIAL COMPARISON

Social comparison is a type of sociological self-esteem in which we get our sense of identity by contrasting ourselves with other people (Festinger, 1954). Social comparison is a psychological phenomenon that plays a significant role in shaping individuals' self-perceptions and behaviors. Rooted in social psychology, this theory suggests that people naturally compare themselves to others as a way to evaluate their own social and personal worth. These comparisons often occur against a "comparison standard," which can be a peer, societal norm, or personal goal (Main, 2023). The outcomes of these comparisons can impact various aspects of an individual's life, including self-esteem, motivation, and mental health. Educators and researchers recognize the relevance of social comparison theory in educational settings, as it can influence students' learning experiences and self-evaluation. Understanding the nuances of social comparison processes is crucial for fostering healthy social dynamics and promoting positive self-perception and development (Main, 2023).

Relationship between social media and Social Comparisons

Social media's evolution, with its addictive nature and enhanced interactivity, has fueled a surge in social comparison. This trend has negative repercussions on mental health, including depression, anxiety, and poor self-esteem (JED, 2023). While direct causation is hard to prove, the correlation between increased social media use and worsening mental health indicators is evident, especially among youth. The prevalence of idealized self-presentation on social media contributes significantly to these adverse outcomes, triggering lower self-evaluations and perpetuating a cycle of validation-seeking behavior. Additionally, social media's addictive features, like the 'like' button designed to induce dopamine surges, further exacerbate problematic smartphone use, posing challenges to public health (Velthoven, 2018). Despite the availability of programs to limit usage, their effectiveness remains uncertain (JED, 2023).

However, data suggests that taking breaks from social media, particularly platforms like Facebook, can boost life satisfaction and emotional well-being, underscoring the complex dynamics between social media, addiction, and social comparison (Tromholt, 2016).

COPING STRATEGIES

Coping strategies encompass a diverse range of approaches aimed at managing stressors and promoting psychological resilience. These strategies can be categorized into various types, such as problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, and proactive coping (Blum, 2012).

Problem-focused coping involves taking direct action to address the stressor or change the situation, such as planning steps to solve a problem or seeking social support. Emotion-focused coping, on the other hand, focuses on regulating emotional responses and managing distress, such as accepting the situation or venting emotions (Silver, 20012). Proactive coping involves future-oriented behaviors that prepare individuals for potential stressors, enhancing their ability to assess and adapt to changing environments effectively. While research categorizes coping strategies based on their primary focus, it's important to note that individuals often employ a combination of strategies, as the effectiveness of coping

strategies can vary depending on the specific context and individual goals (Blum, 2012). Additionally, the timing and duration of coping strategies play a crucial role in their efficacy, as adaptive coping responses may evolve to address changing needs and circumstances.

Relationship between Social media addiction and coping strategies

Individuals with social media addiction often resort to coping strategies to manage their excessive internet use. These coping mechanisms may include seeking escapism through adopting different virtual identities or lifestyles on social media platforms (Kuss, 2016). For some individuals, social media serves as a means of escaping from real-life challenges and emotional distress, providing a temporary relief from stressors. However, this reliance on social media as an escape route can undermine their coping skills, as it prevents them from addressing real-life issues effectively. Instead of confronting and resolving problems, individuals may turn to social media for solace, perpetuating a cycle of problematic internet use (Lopez-Fernandez, 2016). Understanding this complex interplay between social media addiction, escapism, and coping strategies is crucial for developing targeted intervention approaches to address problematic internet use effectively.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Kocabiyik (2021) conducted a study aimed at examining the social media addiction levels among university students and exploring whether their social comparison orientations and ruminative responses could predict social media addiction. The study included a sample of 261 university students, who completed the "Social Media Addiction Scale," "Iowa-Netherlands Social Comparison Orientation Measure," and "Ruminative Response Scale, Short Form." The data obtained from the participants were analyzed using frequency, percentage, and multiple regression analysis techniques. The results of the study indicated that university students exhibited lower levels of social media addiction. Through regression analysis, it was found that obsessive thinking, deep thinking, and social comparison significantly predicted social media addiction. Specifically, obsessive thinking and social comparison were positively associated with social media addiction, while deep thinking alone did not emerge as a significant predictor.

Lim and Yang (2015) explored the mediating role of discrete emotions, specifically envy and shame, in the relationship between social comparison and behavioral intentions, as well as psychological responses, within social network services. Their study, involving 446 university students, revealed significant correlations between social comparison to media figures and various emotional and psychological outcomes. Envy was found to be significantly associated with switch intention, while shame correlated significantly with burnout. Mediation analyses supported the idea that envy and shame mediate the link between social comparison and outcome variables. This research provides insights into the emotional mechanisms triggered by social comparison on social network services, predicting behavioral and psychological outcomes. These findings contribute to understanding the unique communication environment of social network services and its impact on user experiences and well-being.

Han et al. (2020) investigated the interplay between social media use, social comparison, and job burnout among 530 working adults through an online survey. They aimed to understand how social comparison moderates and mediates the relationship between social media use and job burnout. Results showed a positive correlation between social media use and job burnout, with social comparison playing a moderating role. In high social

comparison groups, this moderation shifted to mediation, indicating that job burnout is significant when both social media addiction and a propensity for social comparison are strong. Downward social media comparisons, coupled with positive emotions, heightened job burnout risk. The study underscores the adverse effects of excessive social media use on job burnout and advocates for managing social comparisons and limiting social media use to promote employee well-being and productivity.

Chou et al. (2015) examined stress coping strategies' relationship with Internet addiction among Taiwanese college students, focusing on depression's moderating effect. Their study, involving 500 participants (238 men, 262 women), utilized the Chen Internet Addiction Scale, Coping Orientation to Problems Experienced, and Beck Depression Inventory-II. Statistical analyses including t-tests, chi-square tests, and logistic regression were conducted. Results indicated that restraint coping negatively correlated with Internet addiction, while denial and mental disengagement showed positive correlations. Additionally, depression moderated the association between denial coping and Internet addiction. The study emphasizes the need to consider stress coping strategies and depression in interventions targeting college students with Internet addiction.

Rationale of the Study

This study delves into the pressing issues surrounding social media addiction, social comparison processes, and coping strategies prevalent in contemporary society. The rise of social media addiction, characterized by compulsive usage, has sparked concerns about its adverse effects on mental health. Additionally, social comparison dynamics within these platforms often lead to feelings of inadequacy and envy, impacting individuals' emotional well-being. Effective coping strategies such as problem-solving and seeking social support play a vital role in managing the negative repercussions of excessive social media use. This research aims to unravel the complex interplay between social media addiction, social comparison processes, and coping mechanisms. By understanding these interactions, the study seeks to contribute valuable insights into developing targeted interventions and support strategies for individuals struggling with social media-related challenges and psychological distress. Ultimately, the goal is to promote positive mental health outcomes and well-being in the digital age.

METHODOLOGY

Aim

This study aims to comprehensively investigate the multifaceted relationship between social media addiction, social comparison processes, and coping strategies within the context of modern digital communication platforms. The primary goal is to understand how excessive social media use may contribute to addiction tendencies and impact individuals' perceptions of themselves and others through social comparison. Additionally, the study seeks to explore the various coping strategies individuals employ when faced with stressors related to social media and social comparison experiences. By examining these interrelated factors, the research aims to shed light on the complex dynamics of digital interactions and their implications for mental well-being.

Objective

The main objective of this study is to investigate the prevalence and severity of social media addiction among participants, examine the types and impact of social comparison processes on digital platforms, analyze the coping strategies employed by individuals in response to

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social media-related stressors, and determine correlations between social media addiction, social comparison tendencies, and coping mechanisms. The study aims to provide insights into the psychological dynamics of digital communication and offer evidence-based recommendations for interventions and support strategies to promote positive mental health outcomes in the digital age.

Hypothesis

- **H1:** Higher levels of social media addiction will correlate positively with increased engagement in social comparison.
- **H2:** Higher levels of social media addiction will correlate positively with greater use of maladaptive coping strategies, leading to lower levels of psychological well-being.

Variables

The present study focuses on examining the relationship between three key variables: Social Media Addiction, Social Comparison, and Coping Strategies, within the context of digital technology use and psychological well-being. These variables are defined and operationalized as follows:

1. **Social Media Addiction (SMA):** This independent variable refers to the extent to which individuals exhibit addictive behaviors related to their use of social media platforms. It encompasses aspects such as excessive time spent on social media, preoccupation with social media activities, unsuccessful attempts to cut back or control usage, withdrawal symptoms when not using social media, and negative impacts on various life domains due to social media use.
2. **Social Comparison (SC):** Social comparison, which is a dependent variable, involves the process of evaluating oneself in relation to others, particularly in terms of social status, appearance, achievements, and abilities. In the context of social media, individuals often engage in upward social comparison (comparing themselves to those perceived as better off) and downward social comparison (comparing themselves to those perceived as worse off). This variable encompasses both types of social comparison and their impact on individuals' self-perception and well-being.
3. **Coping Strategies (CS):** Coping strategies, also a dependent variable, refer to the methods and techniques individuals employ to manage stress, challenges, and emotional distress. This variable includes various coping mechanisms such as problem-focused coping (actively addressing stressors), emotion-focused coping (regulating emotional responses), avoidance coping (escaping or avoiding stressors), and social support seeking (seeking assistance and comfort from others).

Coping strategies play a crucial role in how individuals navigate and adapt to the demands of social media use and its potential consequences.

These variables will be measured using validated scales and instruments, allowing for a comprehensive assessment of their interrelationships and their impact on individuals' psychological well-being in the digital age.

Sampling Design

The sampling design for this research on assessing social media addiction and its correlation with social comparison and coping strategies follows a systematic approach to ensure the representation and generalizability of the findings. The study employs a cross-sectional survey design targeting a diverse population of social media users. The sampling process includes the following key components:

- 1. Population:** The target population comprises individuals who actively use social media platforms across various demographics, including age, gender, socioeconomic status, and cultural backgrounds. This broad population allows for a comprehensive understanding of social media addiction and its correlates across diverse groups.
- 2. Sampling Techniques:** The study utilizes a non-probability sampling technique, specifically convenience sampling, to recruit participants. Convenience sampling facilitates ease of access to potential participants who are readily available and accessible for data collection. However, efforts will be made to ensure diversity within the sample to enhance the study's external validity.
- 3. Sample Size:** The sample size is 200 adults aged between 18-35 who use social media regularly. A larger sample size enhances the study's ability to detect significant correlations and associations between social media addiction, social comparison, coping strategies, and psychological outcomes.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria

The inclusion criteria target individuals aged 18 to 35 years who are regular users of social media platforms and Indian citizens. This age group represents active social media users susceptible to addiction. The Indian citizenship criterion adds cultural context, enhancing the study's relevance. No gender-specific criteria promote sample diversity. Overall, these criteria aim to gather a representative sample of young Indian adults engaged in social media, ensuring meaningful insights into addiction, social comparison, and coping strategies within this demographic.

Exclusion Criteria

The exclusion criteria target individuals aged below 18 or above 35, non-users of social media, and those who are not Indian citizens. These criteria maintain focus on the young Indian adult population actively engaged in social media, aligning with the study's objectives. Excluding non-users of social media ensures relevance to the research topic, while cultural specificity is maintained by focusing on Indian citizens. These criteria enhance the study's internal validity by minimizing confounding factors and ensuring findings are applicable to the intended population.

Research Design

The research design for this study adopts a quantitative correlational approach, which is ideal for examining relationships between variables without manipulating them. Through structured self-administered questionnaires, quantitative data is collected on social media addiction, social comparison tendencies, and coping strategies among participants. To assess these constructs accurately, validated scales such as the Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS) and The Social Media Disorder Scale (SMDS) are utilized to measure social media addiction. Likewise, the Iowa-Netherlands Comparison Orientation Measure (INCOM) is employed to gauge social comparison tendencies, while The Coping Self-Efficacy Scale (CSE) is utilized to evaluate coping strategies.

This research design emphasizes the importance of using established instruments to ensure the reliability and validity of the collected data. By employing a quantitative correlational design, the study aims to explore the strength and direction of associations between social media addiction, social comparison tendencies, and coping strategies. Statistical analyses, particularly correlation analysis, are pivotal in identifying patterns and potential predictors

within the data, thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of how these variables interrelate among the study participants.

Tools

The Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale

The Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS) is a well-established instrument designed to assess social media addiction (SMA) among individuals. Developed by Andreassen and colleagues (2016), the BSMAS comprises six items that reflect core characteristics of addiction, including salience, mood modification, tolerance, withdrawal, conflict, and relapse, as outlined by Griffiths (2005). Each item is rated on a five-point Likert scale, allowing participants to indicate the frequency of their experiences related to social media use, ranging from "very rarely" to "very often." The scale's validity is supported by empirical research, with Bányai et al. (2017) proposing a cut-off score of 19 as an empirical threshold for distinguishing between non-disordered and disordered social media users. However, Luo et al. (2021) suggested a higher clinical cut-off score of 24 based on diagnostic accuracy, emphasizing the importance of accurate classification to avoid overestimating SMA prevalence. The BSMAS demonstrates good internal consistency, as indicated by a Cronbach's alpha of 0.88 in the original validation study.

The Social Media Disorder Scale

The Social Media Disorder Scale-9 (SMD-9) is a validated psychometric tool developed by van den Eijnden, Lemmens, and Valkenburg (2016) to assess social media addiction prevalence.

Initially comprising 27 items based on DSM-5 criteria for Internet Gaming Disorder, it was refined into a concise 9-item version (SMD-9) with strong internal consistency and structural validity. The SMD-9 correlates significantly with compulsive Internet use and self-reported social media addiction, demonstrating its reliability and convergent validity. It offers a sensitive and specific measure for identifying social media addiction symptoms effectively.

The Iowa-Netherlands Comparison Orientation Measure

The Iowa-Netherlands Comparison Orientation Measure (INCOM) by Gibbons and Buunk (1999) assesses social comparison orientation, rooted in Festinger's theory. It underwent meticulous development, including translation and refinement, resulting in an 11-item scale demonstrating good internal consistency and construct validity across US and Dutch samples. The scale's discriminant validity was evident as comparison orientation (CO) didn't correlate significantly with life satisfaction. The INCOM serves as a reliable and valid tool for cross-cultural research on social comparison tendencies.

Coping Self-Efficacy Scale

The Coping Self-Efficacy Scale (CSES) is a 26-item tool assessing individuals' perceived ability to cope with challenges. Developed by Margaret Chesney, Susan Folkman, Jonelle Taylor, and Dr. Albert Bandura, it incorporates stress and coping theory. Items underwent refinement through pilot testing for face validity. Respondents rate their confidence in coping behaviors on an 11-point scale. The scale has high internal consistency ($\alpha = .95$) and calculates overall scores by summing item ratings. Respondents must answer at least 80% of items, with a method to estimate missing scores. This ensures a reliable assessment of coping self-efficacy.

Procedure and Statistical Analysis

The research utilized four questionnaires: The Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS), The Social Media Disorder Scale (SMDS), The Iowa-Netherlands Comparison Orientation Measure (INCOM), and The Coping Self-Efficacy Scale (CSES). These tools assessed social media addiction levels, social comparison orientation, and coping self-efficacy. Participants rated their responses using Likert-type scales.

After data collection, statistical analyses were conducted. Descriptive statistics summarized demographic characteristics and questionnaire scores. Correlation analysis, like Pearson's coefficient, assessed relationships between variables. Regression analysis explored the predictive power of social comparison orientation and coping self-efficacy on social media addiction, controlling for social media usage patterns.

The analyses aimed to reveal significant correlations and predictive relationships, offering insights into how social media addiction, social comparison orientation, and coping self-efficacy interact among participants. This process provided a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics between these variables, contributing valuable insights into the study's objectives.

RESULT

In this section, the results of the statistical analysis will be given. Firstly, descriptive statistics are given in Table 1 which represents the descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) of all the study variables – Social media addiction, Social media disorder, Coping self-efficacy, and Social comparison (Ability, Opinion).

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Social Media Addiction	16.69	4.71
Social Media Disorder	14.76	2.56
Coping Self-Efficacy	156.74	39.23
SC_Ability	18.36	4.55
SC_Opinion	17.68	2.83
Social Comparison	36.05	6.30

Table 2 presents the coefficient of correlation between three pivotal variables: social media addiction, coping self-efficacy, and social comparison (specifically, the ability and opinion dimensions). The correlation coefficients offer valuable insights into the relationships among these variables and their potential implications for individuals' psychological well-being.

Firstly, the correlation analysis revealed a significant and negative correlation between social media addiction and coping self-efficacy. This indicates that as individuals experience higher levels of addiction to social media, their belief in their ability to effectively cope with challenges and adversities diminishes. Such a negative correlation underscores the potential detrimental impact of excessive social media use on individuals' confidence in their coping skills, potentially leaving them vulnerable to stress and psychological distress.

Secondly, the correlation between social media addiction and social comparison was found to be significant and positive. This suggests that individuals with higher levels of social media addiction are more inclined to engage in social comparison behaviors. They may

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frequently compare themselves with others on social media platforms in various aspects such as appearance, achievements, or lifestyles. This heightened comparison tendency could contribute to feelings of inadequacy, jealousy, or low self-esteem, as individuals may perceive themselves unfavorably compared to their peers online.

Moreover, the correlation analysis extended to the dimensions of social comparison – ability and opinion. The correlation between social media addiction and the opinion dimension of social comparison was found to be significant and positive. This implies that individuals' addiction to social media is associated with a greater tendency to compare their opinions, beliefs, or values with those of others. This comparison may lead to conformity pressures, polarization of opinions, or a sense of validation based on others' opinions expressed on social media platforms.

Similarly, the correlation between social media addiction and the ability dimension of social comparison was also significant and positive. This suggests that individuals with higher social media addiction levels are more likely to compare their abilities, skills, or accomplishments with others. Such comparisons may lead to feelings of competition, inferiority, or self-doubt, especially in environments where individuals showcase their talents or achievements on social media.

In essence, the correlations highlighted in Table 2 underscore the complex interplay between social media addiction, coping self-efficacy, and social comparison dimensions. These findings provide valuable insights into the potential psychological consequences of excessive social media use, emphasizing the importance of promoting healthy coping strategies and fostering a positive self-concept in the digital age.

Table 2 Pearson's Correlation between Social Media Addiction, Social Comparison, and Coping Self-Efficacy

	1	2	3	4	5
Social Media Addiction	-				
Social Media Disorder	-.68**	-			
Coping Self-Efficacy	-.25**	.27**	-		
SC_Ability	.46**	.37**	-.07**	-	
SC_Opinion	.30**	-.13	.90	.42**	-
Social Comparison	.47**	-.33**	-.01	.91**	.75**

Table 3 displays the results of a linear regression analysis investigating the relationship between social media addiction and two key variables: coping self-efficacy and social comparison. The regression model demonstrated a significant fit, suggesting that social media addiction significantly predicts variations in both coping self-efficacy and social comparison among the study participants.

The findings reveal that social media addiction accounts for approximately 22% of the positive variance observed in social comparison scores. This indicates that individuals with higher levels of social media addiction are more likely to engage in social comparison behaviors. They may compare themselves to others more frequently in terms of various aspects such as appearance, achievements, or lifestyles, potentially influencing their perceptions and behaviors.

Moreover, the regression analysis showed that social media addiction contributes to approximately 6% of the negative variance in coping self-efficacy scores. This implies that individuals with higher levels of social media addiction tend to have lower levels of confidence in their ability to effectively cope with challenges and threats. They may rely more on social media platforms as a coping mechanism, potentially detracting from their belief in their own coping skills and strategies.

Overall, these findings suggest a complex relationship between social media addiction, coping self-efficacy, and social comparison. While social media addiction may lead to increased social comparison tendencies, it may also negatively impact individuals' confidence in their ability to cope with stressors independently. These insights are crucial for understanding the psychological effects of excessive social media use and highlighting the importance of promoting healthy coping strategies and self-efficacy beliefs among individuals in the digital age.

Table 3 Linear Regression table with Social Media Addiction as a predictor of Social Comparison and Coping Self-Efficacy

Criterion	Predictor: Social Media Addiction								
	B	S.E.	β	t	R	R ²	Adj, R ²	α	F
Social Comparison	.63	.08	.47	7.55**	.47	.22	.22	25.46	57.09**
Coping Self-Efficacy	-2.11	.57	-.25	3.68**	.25	.06	.06	192.01	13.56**

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was multifaceted. Firstly, it aimed to explore the intricate relationships between social media addiction, coping self-efficacy, and social comparison within the unique cultural context of India. Secondly, it sought to contribute to the existing literature by focusing on a demographic often overlooked in research on digital behavior and mental health—young adults in India. By narrowing the focus to this specific age group and cultural background, the study aimed to uncover nuanced insights that could inform targeted interventions and support systems tailored to the needs of Indian youth navigating the digital landscape.

The correlation analysis uncovered intriguing patterns in the data. The negative correlation between social media addiction and coping self-efficacy highlights a concerning trend where excessive social media use may be linked to decreased confidence in one's ability to effectively manage stressors and challenges. This finding echoes broader concerns about the potential impact of digital technologies on individuals' resilience and coping mechanisms. It underscores the importance of fostering digital literacy and promoting healthy coping strategies among young adults to mitigate the negative effects of social media addiction.

On the social comparison front, the positive correlation between social media addiction and engagement in comparison behaviors aligns with existing research indicating that social media platforms often serve as arenas for comparison and self-evaluation. However, the specific positive correlations with both the Opinion and Ability dimensions of social comparison offer deeper insights. They suggest that individuals with higher social media addiction may not only compare themselves based on appearance or material possessions but also in terms of beliefs, opinions, skills, and achievements. This multifaceted comparison can contribute to complex dynamics in self-perception and interpersonal relationships.

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The regression analysis further elucidated the predictive power of social media addiction in influencing social comparison tendencies. By demonstrating that social media addiction significantly predicts variance in social comparison, the study underscores the pivotal role of digital behaviors in shaping individuals' perceptions of themselves and others. This finding has implications for interventions and educational programs aimed at promoting digital well-being and healthy online habits among young adults.

One of the notable strengths of this study is its focus on Indian culture and the digital landscape specific to India. Cultural factors such as collectivism, societal expectations, and the influence of family and community dynamics may significantly shape how young adults interact with social media and navigate comparison processes. Therefore, the findings of this study offer valuable insights into the intersection of culture, technology, and mental health, highlighting the need for culturally sensitive interventions and support structures.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the growing body of research on digital well-being by uncovering the complex relationships between social media addiction, coping strategies, and social comparison among Indian young adults. The findings emphasize the importance of holistic approaches that address digital literacy, promote resilience-building strategies, and foster positive

self-perceptions in the digital age. Further research and collaborative efforts across disciplines can leverage these insights to develop evidence-based interventions that empower young adults to navigate the digital world responsibly and thrive in both online and offline environments.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The current research highlights several significant findings regarding social media addiction, coping strategies, and social comparison among Indian young adults. Firstly, the study revealed a negative correlation between social media addiction and coping self-efficacy, indicating that individuals who are more addicted to social media tend to have lower confidence in their coping abilities. Additionally, positive correlations were observed between social media addiction and various dimensions of social comparison, underlining the influence of excessive social media use on comparison behaviors.

These findings have crucial implications across different domains. For practitioners, understanding these correlations can inform the development of targeted interventions aimed at enhancing coping skills and reducing social media addiction among young adults. Psychologists and counselors can incorporate these insights into their therapeutic approaches, focusing on building resilience and healthy coping mechanisms in the digital age.

From a research perspective, this study contributes valuable insights into the complex interplay between digital behaviors and psychological well-being, highlighting the need for further investigation into cultural nuances and societal influences on social media use.

Policy makers can also benefit from these findings by considering strategies to promote digital literacy, responsible social media use, and mental health awareness among youth. Educational institutions may integrate programs that emphasize healthy online behaviors and coping strategies into their curricula.

Overall, this research underscores the importance of addressing social media addiction and promoting positive coping strategies among young adults, ultimately fostering a healthier digital environment and supporting psychological well-being in today's digital age.

Limitations and Suggestion for Future Research

While the study provides valuable insights into the relationship between social media addiction, social comparison, and coping strategies among Indian young adults aged 18-35, several limitations should be acknowledged. Firstly, the sample size and demographics were limited, potentially limiting the generalizability of the findings to other age groups or cultural backgrounds. Moreover, relying solely on self-report measures may have introduced response bias and social desirability effects, impacting the accuracy of the reported data. The cross-sectional design used in the study also hinders the establishment of causal relationships between the variables studied.

Moving forward, future research should consider longitudinal designs to track changes over time and include a more diverse sample to enhance generalizability. Additionally, integrating objective measures alongside self-report measures and exploring additional psychological variables could provide a more comprehensive understanding of digital behaviors and mental health outcomes. In terms of future scope, longitudinal studies, diverse demographics, objective measures, and exploring additional psychological variables are recommended.

Furthermore, implementing educational programs, advocating for policy changes, developing intervention strategies, and fostering collaborative research efforts can contribute significantly to addressing the challenges posed by social media addiction and promoting healthy digital habits among individuals

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Conflict of Interest

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