

Social Media Addiction, Psychological Distress and Self-esteem: A Correlation Study

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ABSTRACT

Social media has become an integral part of all our lives. It helps us in seeking education, entertainment, and job opportunities. This paper aims to find the correlation between social media addiction, psychological distress, and self-esteem. The study aims to determine the levels of social media addiction, psychological distress, and self-esteem among young adults. A total of 220 data were collected, and 214 participants passed the inclusion criteria. The data was collected among young adults from the age group of 18 to 24 years. Social media addiction scale, psychological distress scale (DASS 21) and Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale were used to collect the data from the participants—convenient and snowball sampling techniques to collect the data. The data was collected and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) test was conducted to determine the differential relationship between psychological distress and self-esteem on various levels of social media addiction. The results of the study show that social media addictions significantly differ in psychological distress, and there was no significant difference between social media addiction and self-esteem.

Keywords: *Social Media Addiction, Psychological Distress, Self-Esteem*

In today's world, social media has a massive role in everyone's life and has become an integral part of our lives. It helps us seek knowledge, job opportunities, entertainment and many more with all the technological advancements available to the general population. The overuse of social media and its related technologies has several associated risks. The increasing threat of loneliness, anxiety, depression, insomnia, and suicidal thoughts would also cause poor academic performance, unhealthy relationships, and poor quality of lifestyle. While there is an increased use of social media, we see the impacts on young adults. This study is aimed to understand the prevalence of social media addiction with psychological distress and self-esteem among young adults from the Indian population.

Social media addiction has been a significant area of research for an extended period. Many studies have researched different causes of social media addiction and its related disorders. Ivan Goldberg (1995) proposed Internet addiction disorder as a psychological issue. It refers to individuals' inability to control the urge to deal with social media platforms, which would have numerous negative consequences, like increased stress levels and loss of interest in

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Social Media Addiction, Psychological Distress and Self-esteem: A Correlation Study

daily activities, interactions, education, and occupation (Aboujaoude 2010; Douglas et al. 2008).

A few social media activities, including shopping and gaming, might cause obsessive internet utilisation of addiction. Studies have shown that subjects with uncontrolled utilisation of the internet do not just offer side effects with substance addiction, like tolerance, withdrawal side effects and relapse (Beard & Wolf, 2001; Young, 1999) yet, but also show the presence of psychiatric comorbidity, including anxiety disorders, attention deficit hyperactivity, sleep disorders and obsessive compulsiveness (Bernardi & Pallanti, 2009; Ko et al., 2009; Yen et al., 2007).

Although society understands the idea of an internet addiction disorder, the scientific community has some debate concerning internet addiction disorder as an illness (Chakraborty et al., 2010; Morahan-Martin, 2005). Internet gaming disorder is one of the essential subtypes of an internet addiction disorder. It is given in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM V) edition fifth. It is one of the conditions that need further study (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). According to Young (1999), there are five kinds of internet addiction. They are computer addiction, net compulsion, information overload, cyber-sexual addiction, and cyber relationship addiction. Social networking addiction falls into the cyber relationship addiction category as the primary use and main motivation to use social networking sites to maintain offline and online relationships. While it is relatively significant that social media addiction is a cyber-relationship addiction, playing games on social networking sites would be considered a gaming disorder rather than a Facebook addiction (Andreassen et al., 2010).

Research shows that excessive utilisation of new technologies, such as online networking, would be dangerous for youngsters (Echeburua & de Corral, 2010; Kuss & Griffiths, 2011). The bio-psycho-social framework for the analysis of addiction by Griffiths (2005) and the condition model of dependence by Shaffer et al. (2004) states that individuals using social networking sites and addicted to them share identical symptoms which are found in people who suffer from substance abuse addiction (Echeburua de Corral, 2010).

Research findings show that uncontrolled or impulsive internet use adversely influences young adults' psychological well-being (Whang et al., 2003; Lou et al., 2012; Labrague, 2014; Akoijam & Kumar, 2017; Kraut et al., 1998). However, researchers have tracked down a connection between online social networking and several other psychiatric disorders, such as anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem (Jan et al., 2017; Valkenburg et al., 2006; Banyai et al., 2017; Koc & Gulyagci, 2013). Social media, another new phenomenon, has yet to track down the solutions to many inquiries, such as the impact of excessive use of social media and its effects on psychological well-being. At the same time, the easy accessibility and use of the internet and online services among the general population and the growth of any psychiatric disease would pose a severe health concern. Mass communication has faced many changes with the availability of social networks. However, it is not yet confirmed whether these changes affect human behaviour characteristics, which would lead to psychiatric disorders. Many studies have brought forward the prolonged use of social networking sites and their relations with depression and anxiety. Excessive use of certain social networking sites and activities, especially in children and adolescents, can be related to negative self-esteem. Contrary to this, the use of social media and its positive relation with self-esteem has also been researched by many. To this day, the use of social

Social Media Addiction, Psychological Distress and Self-esteem: A Correlation Study

media and its regard to psychological well-being may remain controversial, but research is still ongoing.

Addiction to social networking sites can also be explained from a behavioral perspective or based on learning theories. The behaviour is likely to repeat itself if excessive social networking behaviour has been rewarded in the past (Skinner, 1974). Positive feedback and positive outcomes such as entertainment, popularity and attention from significant others may promote the behaviour. Similarly, it is likely to reoccur if social networking behaviour has previously led to avoidance of negative consequences such as criticism, boredom, and exclusion. Other studies have shown that social media addiction is also related to the motive of entertainment, passing time, and fear of missing out (Ryan et al., 2014; Przybylski et al., 2013 & Sofiah et al., 2011).

According to various studies, psychological distress also has been connected with excessive use of social media. Social media can be considered a double-edged sword in the current world scenario. Various research findings show how social use benefits individuals by empowering them to offer their viewpoints and feelings and get social help (O'Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011; Lilley et al., 2014; Lenhart et al., 2015). According to McCrae et al. (2017), a statistically significant relationship is present between the use of social media and depressive symptoms among children and adolescents.

A meta-analysis of 23 studies conducted on adolescents and young adults showed a correlation between the problematic use of Facebook and psychological distress (Marino et al., 2018). Many researchers find a positive correlation between Facebook addiction, anxiety, depression, and insomnia (van Rooij et al., 2017; Koc & Gulyagci, 2013). Other researchers have found a significant relationship between social media use and depression (Best et al., 2014; Hoare et al., 2016).

Social learning theory suggests that individuals learn by observing the behaviours of others (models). Social learning theory says that our environment is just as influential as genetics or psychological traits in the development of an addiction. Observations of another's behaviour can also make us vulnerable to addiction. Observations influence our behaviours and thoughts in a variety of ways. Because of this, the addicted people would be under constant psychological distress and unable to focus on their daily activities effectively. Which would not fulfil their internal and external rewards; this could be related to BF Skinner's operant conditioning theory (BF Skinner - Operant Conditioning, 2018). When no rewards are obtained for the person's behaviour, their self-esteem would like to be reduced. In Rosenberg's theory of self-esteem, he says about one positive or negative attitude towards oneself and one's evaluation of one's thoughts and feelings overall about oneself (Park & Park, 2019).

Social media has been a massive part of our lives, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic. Social media has been used widely by the young generation. There are benefits to using social media. Some advantages could be knowledge seeking, finding job opportunities, developing skills, expressing one's view, developing relationships or friendships, showcasing their talents, and many more. These have become an integral part of the young generation's life.

The excessive use of social media by youths has its risks and consequences. There would be low academic performances, problems in personal relationships, lack of emotional

Social Media Addiction, Psychological Distress and Self-esteem: A Correlation Study

connection, laziness, lack of face-to-face connections with people, low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, cyberbullying, sleep deprivation, etc. While there is increasing use of social media, the youths have a more significant impact. Concern about young adults using social media and social networking sites is much needed at this hour to protect them from getting exposed to harmful information and negative experiences. With the rapid use of social media by youths worldwide, India is ranked 2nd in the number of social media users worldwide (Social Network Users in Leading Markets 2027 | Statista, 2022). There is a need for youth-centered research to understand the prevalence of social media usage and its relationship with psychological distress and self-esteem among young adults.

The introduction of social media or the internet and its excessive use has caused addiction among many people. It is also affecting the psychological well-being of individuals. Singh and Gill (2011) conducted a study among research scholars at Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar. The study aimed to investigate the usage of 26 social networking sites. The study's findings highlight that Facebook is the most used social networking site for communicating and finding helpful information among the participants. Also, it reports that time consumption is the main hurdle in assessing social networking sites.

Kalpidouet al. (2011) conducted a study among undergraduate students to see the relationship between Facebook use and their well-being. A total of 70 students participated in the study. Self-reported measures were used to assess socio demographic information. The Facebook intensity scale was used to measure usage of Facebook, Rosenberg self-esteem scale was used to measure self-esteem. Correlational analyses were used to see the relationship between the interested variables. The study results show a negative correlation between Facebook use and self-esteem. More time spent on Facebook is associated with low self-esteem.

In the Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project survey, Duggan, and Brenner (2012) assessed the demographics of social media users. They found that more than others, young adults were significant social media users. Social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, and Tumblr were chosen for the study. The findings show that 67% of the total population were Facebook users, 16% used Twitter, 15% used Pinterest, 3% used Instagram, and 6 % used Tumblr. Overall, Internet users under 50 are more likely to use social networking sites of any kind. More users were women and significantly those living in the urban zone compared to the rural.

Social media and psychological distress

Whang et al. (2003) conducted a study in Korea to assess internet over users' psychological profiles. The study included 13,588 users. Young's Internet addiction scale was used in the study. The results of the study showed that 3.5% of the samples were internet addicts, while 18.4% of them were classified as possible internet addicts. The results also put forward that internet addicts showed a high tendency to access the internet. A high degree of depression, loneliness, and compulsivity was also found to be present among the addicts as compared to the other groups.

Yen et al. (2009) also conducted a study among Taiwanese adolescents. The study was proposed to see the effect of socio-demographic factors, individual factors, peers, family, and school life factors on excessive internet use among the participants. The study included 8941 adolescents. The findings of the research study showed that depression and low family monitoring factors were contributing to the cause of internet addiction. Along with it, low

Social Media Addiction, Psychological Distress and Self-esteem: A Correlation Study

connectedness to school, family conflict, peer groups with habits of alcoholism, and residing in rural areas also were found to have discriminative effects on adolescent internet addiction. Akin and Iskender (2011) conducted a study among university students in Turkey to see the relationship between depression, anxiety and stress and internet addiction. 300 University students took part in the study. The findings of the research showed a positive correlation between the variables. There was a significant relationship between depression, anxiety, stress, and internet addiction.

Feinstein et al. (2012) conducted research among young adults. The study aimed to see how depression, global anxiety and social anxiety affect the quality of 40 social networking among the participants. The study included 301 participants and completed the initial survey and follow-up three weeks later. The study revealed that depressive symptoms were associated with increased negative interactions and adverse effects following the interactions. Thus, the study highlighted that social networking activities are another platform individuals use to show their dysfunctional interpersonal interactions.

Pantic et al. (2012) conducted a study among high school adolescents to see the association between online social networking and depression among them. The study included 160 participants. An anonymous structured questionnaire and a Beck depression inventory were used to collect the data. Other data like height and weight, gender, spending on the internet, social networking sites, average time spent watching TV, and sleep duration were collected. The study findings indicated a minimal, mild, and moderate level of depression among the participants. A positive correlation was also found among the time spent on social media use and depression among the students.

Rosen et al. (2013) conducted a research study to see the association between technology use and the presence of clinical symptoms of psychiatric disorders. The study included a total sample of 1143 teens, young adults, and adults ranging from 18 to 65 years. The participants were generally well educated, with 48% having a college education and 40% having a college degree. Online questionnaires were used to assess the set variables for the study. The results showed clinical symptoms using Facebook.

Iqbal et al. (2015) conducted a study among undergraduate medical students. The study aimed to assess the presence of depression, anxiety, and stress. It was a cross-sectional, self-administered test, so the depression, anxiety, and stress scales were used to meet the study's objective. The result showed that more than half of the respondents were affected by depression (51.3%), anxiety (66.9%), and stress (53%). The females reported a higher score as compared to the males.

Younes et al. (2016) conducted a study among Saint Joseph University students. The study aimed to assess potential internet addiction among students and the relationship between internet addictions, insomnia, depression, and anxiety. The study included 600 students from three faculties: medicine, dentistry, and pharmacy. The Young's Internet addiction scale, Depression, anxiety and stress scale, the insomnia severity index, and the Rosenberg self-esteem scale were used in the study to assess the 42 variables. The study findings showed the prevalence of internet addiction among 16.8% and a significant positive correlation between internet addiction and insomnia, depression, anxiety, and stress.

Social media and self-esteem

Tazghini and Siedlecki (2013) conducted a mixed-method approach to examine the use of Facebook and see its relationship with self-esteem. The research was conducted on college students. Samples of 201 within the age range of 17-29 took part in the study. The Rosenberg self-esteem scale was used to evaluate self-esteem, the ten-item personality inventory was used to determine personality, and the Facebook intensity scale and Facebook use scale were used to see the use of Facebook. The study results showed lower self-esteem was associated with a greater sense of belonging to the virtual community connected through Facebook, finding more accessible communication, and getting to know friends better. At the same time, individuals with high self-esteem reported that they liked sharing pictures, thoughts, and ideas on the social platform. The lower self-esteem group was not comfortable with posting pictures about themselves publicly. Thus, the study highlighted that individuals with higher self-esteem placed less importance on the interaction on Facebook and were more likely to view some aspects negatively.

Vogel et al. (2014) did research in a similar field. The study aimed to see the impact of chronic and temporary exposure to social media-based comparison information on self-esteem. They used a correlational approach to see whether frequent use of Facebook is related to lower trait self-esteem. The results concluded that the participants using excessive Facebook had poorer trait self-esteem. An experimental approach was used to examine the impact of temporary exposure to social media profiles on state self-esteem and relative self-evaluations. The findings showed that the participant's" state self-esteem and relative self-evaluations were lower than the target person's profile as it included upward comparison information.

Jan et al. (2017) conducted a study to see the impact of social media on self-esteem. 150 students using Facebook were included in the study. Questionnaires and interviews were used to collect the data from the students. The correlation and regression model were applied to see the relationship between social media and self-esteem. The study findings showed the relationship between social media and self-esteem and showed that excessive use of social media decreases self-esteem among the participants.

Andreassen et al. (2017) conducted a study on self-esteem. The study aimed to understand the relationship between the addictive use of social media, narcissism, and self-esteem. It was a cross-sectional study with a large sample. 23,532 participants participated in the study through the web-based survey, including Bergen social media addiction scale (BSMAS), Rosenberg self-esteem scale and narcissistic personality inventory-16. The result of the study highlighted the negative relationship between addictive social media use and self-esteem.

Pawar and Shah (2019) studied social media addiction, self-esteem, sensation seeking and boredom among the samples. 150 college students between 18-30 years were chosen as samples for the study. The study used the social media addiction scale and the Rosenberg self-esteem scale, and the brief sensation-seeking scale and boredom scale were used to measure the other variables. Descriptive statistics and correlation were used in the study. The study's findings revealed a significant relationship between social media addiction and self-esteem. More use of social media led to a decrease in self-esteem.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

A total of 220 participants were part of the study, from the age group of 18 to 24 years across India. The Google form was circulated through social media. At the beginning of the Google form, the participants who wished to participate in the study had to give informed consent electronically, following this section containing the social media addiction scale, Depression, Anxiety, Stress Scale and Self-esteem scales. There was a total of 143 potential participants selected as they met the inclusion criteria.

Instruments

Three measures were used in this study,

- 1. Social media addiction scale - Student form:** The SMAS - SF was developed by Cengiz Şahin (2018) to determine social media addiction levels. The scale consisted of 29 items and 4 subscales in a five-point Likert scale. The lowest score obtained from the scale is 29, and the highest score is 145. Depending on the score obtained, addiction status was grouped as no addiction (29-58), mild addiction (59-87), moderate addiction (88-116), and severe addiction (117-145).
- 2. Depression, Anxiety, Stress Scale:** DASS was developed by (Lovibond and Lovibond (1995); it's a self-report scale designed to measure the emotional states of depression, anxiety, and stress. The scale consisted of 21 items.
- 3. Self-esteem scale:** The self-esteem scale was developed by Rosenberg to measure global self-worth by measuring both positive and negative feelings about the self. The scale consisted of 10 items.

Procedure

The study was approved by CHRIST (Deemed to be University) Research Conduct and Ethics Committee. Participants were informed about their rights, and their participation was voluntary. The data collection forms comprised five sections and were administered online via Google forms. The form prevented the same users from completing the form more than once. The Google forms were sent via social media platforms like WhatsApp and Instagram. The participants electronically approved the informed consent section on the first section of the Google form and then could continue answering the questionnaires of social media addiction scale, depression, Anxiety, Stress Scale and Self-esteem scale.

RESULTS

Table No. 1 Descriptive Statistics

	SMA	Mean	Std Deviation	N
Anxiety	1.00	9.1429	7.35368	42
	2.00	11.7460	8.40946	126
	3.00	16.3182	8.82853	44
	4.00	32.0000	5.65685	2
	Total	12.3645	8.77030	214
Depression	1.00	9.9524	8.55955	42
	2.00	12.8730	10.18390	126
	3.00	18.1818	10.58141	55
	4.00	35.0000	9.89949	2
	Total	13.5981	10.46915	2
Stress	1.00	9.5238	8.26169	42
	2.00	12.9541	8.66347	126

Social Media Addiction, Psychological Distress and Self-esteem: A Correlation Study

	SMA	Mean	Std Deviation	N
Self-esteem	3.00	18.9091	9.20520	44
	4.00	34.0000	5.65685	2
	Total	13.7196	9.36259	214
	1.00	28.5238	4.94969	42
	2.00	27.6429	5.17604	126
	3.00	26.1591	4.50290	44
	4.00	24.0000	2.82843	5
	Total	27.4766	5.02734	214

Table No. 2 Multivariate test

Effect	Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	sig
Wilks' Lambda	0.843	3.024	12.000	542.671	.000

Table No. 3 Multivariate test

Source	Dependent Variables	df	F	Sig
SMA	Anxiety	3	9.419	0.000
	Depression	3	8.264	0.000
	Stress	3	12.428	0.000
	Self-esteem	3	2.008	0.114

Table No. 4 Post Hoc test – multiple comparisons

Dependent Variable		(I) SMA	(J) SMA	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
							Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Anxiety	Tukey HSD	1	2	-2.6032	1.4775	0.295	-6.4295	1.2231
			3	-7.1753*	1.78888	0	-11.808	-2.5426
			4	-22.8571*	6.00163	0.001	-38.3997	-7.3146
		2	1	2.6032	1.4775	0.295	-1.2231	6.4295
			3	-4.5722*	1.4521	0.01	-8.3327	-0.8116
			4	-20.2540*	5.90999	0.004	-35.5592	-4.9487
		3	1	7.1753*	1.78888	0	2.5426	11.808
			2	4.5722*	1.4521	0.01	0.8116	8.3327
			4	-15.6818*	5.99542	0.047	-31.2083	-0.1553
		4	1	22.8571*	6.00163	0.001	7.3146	38.3997
			2	20.2540*	5.90999	0.004	4.9487	35.5592

Social Media Addiction, Psychological Distress and Self-esteem: A Correlation Study

Dependent Variable	(I) SMA	(J) SMA	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval			
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Depression	Tukey HSD	3	15.6818*	5.99542	0.047	0.1553	31.2083		
		1	2	-2.9206	1.77666	0.356	-7.5217	1.6804	
			3	-8.2294*	2.15109	0.001	-13.8002	-2.6587	
			4	-25.0476*	7.21683	0.004	-43.7372	-6.358	
		2	1	2.9206	1.77666	0.356	-1.6804	7.5217	
			3	-5.3088*	1.74611	0.014	-9.8308	-0.7869	
			4	-22.1270*	7.10665	0.011	-40.5312	-3.7228	
		3	1	8.2294*	2.15109	0.001	2.6587	13.8002	
			2	5.3088*	1.74611	0.014	0.7869	9.8308	
			4	-16.8182	7.20937	0.094	-35.4884	1.8521	
			4	1	25.0476*	7.21683	0.004	6.358	43.7372
				2	22.1270*	7.10665	0.011	3.7228	40.5312
		3	16.8182	7.20937	0.094	-1.8521	35.4884		
Stress	Tukey HSD	1	2	-3.4603	1.54822	0.117	-7.4698	0.5491	
			3	-9.3853*	1.8745	0	-14.2397	-4.5308	
			4	-24.4762*	6.2889	0.001	-40.7627	-8.1897	
		2	1	3.4603	1.54822	0.117	-0.5491	7.4698	
			3	-5.9250*	1.5216	0.001	-9.8655	-1.9844	
			4	-21.0159*	6.19288	0.005	-37.0537	-4.978	
		3	1	9.3853*	1.8745	0	4.5308	14.2397	
			2	5.9250*	1.5216	0.001	1.9844	9.8655	
			4	-15.0909	6.2824	0.08	-31.3606	1.1788	
			4	1	24.4762*	6.2889	0.001	8.1897	40.7627
				2	21.0159*	6.19288	0.005	4.978	37.0537
				3	15.0909	6.2824	0.08	-1.1788	31.3606

Social Media Addiction, Psychological Distress and Self-esteem: A Correlation Study

Dependent Variable	(I)	(J)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval		
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
Self Esteem	Tukey HSD	1	2	0.881	0.88945	0.755	-1.4225	3.1844
			3	2.3647	1.0769	0.128	-0.4242	5.1536
			4	4.5238	3.61297	0.594	-4.8328	13.8804
		2	1	-0.881	0.88945	0.755	-3.1844	1.4225
			3	1.4838	0.87416	0.328	-0.7801	3.7476
			4	3.6429	3.55781	0.736	-5.5709	12.8566
		3	1	-2.3647	1.0769	0.128	-5.1536	0.4242
			2	-1.4838	0.87416	0.328	-3.7476	0.7801
			4	2.1591	3.60924	0.933	-7.1878	11.506
		4	1	-4.5238	3.61297	0.594	-13.8804	4.8328
			2	-3.6429	3.55781	0.736	-12.8566	5.5709
			3	-2.1591	3.60924	0.933	-11.506	7.1878

SPSS software was used to analyse the results. The Shapiro-Wilk test was conducted to check for the normality of the variables (only one variable was normally distributed self-esteem: 0.174 p-values). The data for all the three variables was found to be normally distributed. Skewness was zero, and all three curves were mesokurtic. A MANOVA was conducted to assess the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variables. The results revealed a significant multivariate effect (Wilks' Lambda = .843, $F(3, 542.671) = 3.024, p < .001$), indicating that there were significant differences in the mean scores on the dependent variables across the levels of the independent variable.

There were significant differences observed between SMA and anxiety ($F(3) = 9.419, p < .001$), Depression ($F(3) = 8.264, p < .001$), and stress ($F(3) = 12.428, p < .001$). However, no significant differences were found between SMA and self-esteem ($F(3) = 2.008, p = .114$). The post-hoc tests were conducted to further explore the significant effects.

A significant difference between the anxiety levels of participants with no social media addiction and participants with moderate social media addiction ($p < .0005$) was observed. Similarly, there was a significant difference between the anxiety levels of participants with no social media addiction and those with severe social media addiction ($p = 0.001$). A significant difference was observed in the anxiety levels between those participants who had mild social media addiction and those with moderate social media addiction ($p = 0.01$). Similarly, a significant difference was observed in the anxiety levels of those with mild social media addiction and severe social media addiction ($p = 0.004$). There was a

Social Media Addiction, Psychological Distress and Self-esteem: A Correlation Study

significant difference between anxiety levels of those with moderate and severe social media addiction ($p = 0.047$).

A significant difference was observed between the depression levels of participants with moderate SMA and no SMA ($p = 0.001$). A similar difference exists between depression levels of those with no SMA and severe SMA ($p = 0.004$).

In the context of stress levels, a significant difference was found between the stress levels of those with no SMA and moderate SMA ($p < .0005$). A similar significant difference was observed between stress levels of those with no SMA and severe SMA ($p = 0.001$). There was a significant difference in the depression levels of those with mild SMA and moderate SMA ($p = 0.001$).

There were no significant differences observed in self-esteem between groups of all categories of social media addiction.

DISCUSSION

The present study aims to find the relationship between social media addiction, psychological distress, and self-esteem among young adults. For the same purpose, data was collected online from 220 young adults through the administration of Social Media Addiction scale (Cengiz Şahin, 2018), Depression, anxiety, and stress scale (DASS 21) (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995) for the measurement of psychological distress and Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale for the measurement of self-esteem. Outliers were removed from the sample, making the number 214 eligible for statistical analysis.

By a study conducted by Akalin (2022) as a basis, the sample was categorized into four levels of social media addiction: No SMA, Mild SMA, Moderate, SMA and Severe SMA. There was a significant difference in the anxiety levels of participants across all levels of social media addiction. In addition, there was a significant difference in the depression levels of participants who had no SMA with those who had moderate and severe SMA. There was a significant difference in the stress levels across all groups of social media addiction. There were no significant differences observed in self-esteem between groups of all categories of social media addiction. These results indicate that social media addiction has a significant effect on various domains of psychological distress namely stress, anxiety, and depression levels. Therefore, the present study rejects the hypothesis (H1) that stated that there is no relationship between social media addiction and psychological distress among young adults.

Social media addiction has become a pervasive issue in today's digital age, with increasing evidence suggesting that it can significantly affect mental health, including depression, anxiety, and self-esteem. Several research papers have explored this phenomenon and established a correlation between social media addiction and negative mental health outcomes.

The findings from various research studies support the notion that social media addiction has significant effects on psychological distress, including depression, anxiety, and self-esteem. Social networking site addiction, as defined, involves excessive and compulsive use of social media, leading to disruptions in other social activities, relationships, studies, jobs, and psychological well-being. According to Kuss & Griffiths (2011), behavioural addiction, like social networking site addiction, may be seen from the biopsychosocial perspective. Just like

Social Media Addiction, Psychological Distress and Self-esteem: A Correlation Study

substance-related addiction, social networking site addiction has addiction symptoms; they are mood modifications, salience, tolerance, withdrawal symptoms, conflict, and relapse. These symptoms have also been mentioned in the internet addiction component model by Kuss et al. (2014).

Research studies have shown a high prevalence of social media addiction among college students. For instance, a study by Tang and Koh (2017) conducted among college students in Singapore found that 29.5% of the surveyed students were addicted to online social media platforms, with comorbidity observed with unhealthy food intake, shopping addiction, and affective disorders such as depression, anxiety, and mania. Additionally, studies conducted by Jafarkarimin et al. (2016), Wan (2009), Jacobsen and Forste (2001), Cheak et al. (2011), and Niranjana et al. (2017) found that students in Malaysia and Nigeria had similarly high rates of social media addiction, ranging from 27% to 73%.

The findings of the current study of social media addiction having a significant effect can be supported by the study conducted by Gelban et al. (2009), which shows the prevalence of depression, anxiety, and stress among participants using the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS-42). The study revealed high prevalence rates of depression (41.5%), anxiety (66.2%), and stress (51%). Similarly, Pantic et al. (2012) found a positive correlation between the time spent on Facebook among high school students.

One study conducted by Lin et al. (2016) found that excessive use of social media, such as Facebook and Instagram, was associated with higher levels of depression and anxiety. The study, published in *Computers in Human Behavior*, surveyed over 700 university students, and found that those who reported spending more time on social media experienced increased symptoms of depression and anxiety. The researchers concluded that excessive use of social media could exacerbate mental health issues, leading to higher levels of depression and anxiety.

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Furthermore, a study by Kircaburun and Griffiths (2018) explored the relationship between social media addiction and mental health. The study found that individuals who reported higher levels of social media addiction also experienced higher levels of depression and anxiety. The researchers concluded that social media addiction could harm mental health, leading to increased symptoms of depression and anxiety.

Lou et al. (2012) identified increased loneliness in first-year college students due to the reciprocal relationship between loneliness and Facebook use. Labragude (2014) discovered that time spent online was significantly correlated with depression and anxiety among adolescents. Akijam and Kumar (2017) found higher stress levels among participants with access to social media among higher secondary students in Imphal. Buyukyilmaz and Aydogan (2017) mentioned that frequent social media usage increases students' anxiety levels in their research. Kumar and Mondal (2018) revealed that extreme internet users had higher scores in obsession and compulsion, interpersonal sensitivity, depression, anxiety,

Social Media Addiction, Psychological Distress and Self-esteem: A Correlation Study

and stress, indicating a significant association between internet addiction and psychopathology.

The present study found no differences in self-esteem across various levels of SMA. This indicates that social media addiction does not influence or affect the levels of self-esteem. Therefore, the present study fails to reject the hypothesis (H2) that states that there is a relationship between social media addiction and Self-esteem among young adults. However, Jan et al. (2017) researched social media's impact on self-esteem; the study proves a strong relationship between social media and self-esteem. The increase in social media usage causes a decrease in the self-esteem of individuals. Further, in research by Bahrainian et al. (2014) researched the relationship between internet addiction and self-esteem and depression in university students. The results indicated that 40.7% of the students had internet addiction. And a significant correlation emerged between depression, self-esteem, and internet addiction. There were no differences found in self-esteem across various levels of SMA. This finding is unique to this study. Hence, this finding needs to be strengthened and calls for further research to focus on the same.

Research has shown that social media addiction can have detrimental effects on psychological well-being, including an increased risk of depression, anxiety, and stress. Excessive and compulsive use of social media can disrupt other areas of life and negatively impact mental health, leading to decreased self-esteem and increased psychological distress. Factors such as comparing oneself to others, fear of missing out, and addiction to social media can all contribute to negative mental health outcomes. Therefore, individuals need to be mindful of their social media use and seek support if they feel they may be struggling with social media addiction and its associated mental health effects.

The study aimed to find the correlation between social media addiction, psychological distress, and self-esteem. The data was collected from a total of 220 students through Google Forms. The SMA, DASS 21 and Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale were used. The exposure to fast-growing technology has brought new kinds of addiction called social media addiction. The fact that social media addiction leads to so many issues and is not included in the fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM V) is concerning.

The present study used a quantitative approach, and a convenient sampling method was used to collect the data. A Google form was created, which contained the informed consent section, demographic details, and the scales. The scale was the social media addiction scale, used to find out the participants' social media addiction levels. The DASS 21 scale was used to measure the psychological distress of the participant's depression, anxiety and self-esteem levels of the participants and the Rosenberg self-esteem scale to find them.

After the data was collected, it was further analysed using the SPSS software. The data was analysed through MANOVA, which showed the significant effects of social media addiction. The study's results showed that social media addiction had effects on psychological distress (Depression, anxiety, and self-esteem); this study found that social media addiction did not have any significance on self-esteem levels.

Limitations of the study

- The present study was only done among the college-going youth population. Increased sample size would pave the way for better generalisation.

Social Media Addiction, Psychological Distress and Self-esteem: A Correlation Study

- Gender difference was not found because there was no equal number of samples in each group.
- Correlations between rural and urban social media users could have been found.
- Self-report measures were used in the study to collect the data. External factors could have affected the accuracy of the results of the study.

Implications

The present study shows there is a need for clinical intervention as it highlights the prevalence of social media addiction and the comorbidity of depression, anxiety, and stress. The excessive use of social media causes mental health issues. Like other addictions, social media addiction should be given due importance through professional help. Since youth use social media to a larger extent, regular screening for addiction in universities could help ensure timely intervention. Cognitive behavioural therapy can be used to reduce comorbid conditions like depression and anxiety symptoms.

Suggestions for future research

- The present study was conducted for a specific college-going youth; it can be done on a larger scale.
- A large gender comparative study with a standardised scale should be conducted.
- The future research should look for both qualitative and quantitative analysis.

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Conflict of Interest

I, Tanuja Munegowda, the author, declared no conflict of interest.

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