

Interplay of Loneliness, Impulsivity and Social-media Use among Indian Youth

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study was to explore the relationship between loneliness, social media and impulsivity among Indian youth, while also examining the social media as a mediator between impulsivity and loneliness. The data was collected from a sample of 155 people aged between 18-25, currently residing in Delhi and NCR regions. The data provided significant positive correlations between all three variables. Regression analysis indicated that both impulsivity and loneliness significantly predicted social media use. Mediation analysis further accounted that social media use partially mediated the relationship between impulsivity and loneliness, accounting for 44.3% of the total effect, though the direct effect of impulsivity on loneliness was also confirmed. The findings of the study stipulate that impulsive people are more likely to engage in compulsive social media use and which in turn might exacerbate loneliness. The study highlights the psychological effects of excessive social media use and the significance of regulating impulsive behaviors in loneliness-reduction strategies.

Keywords: *Impulsivity, Loneliness, Social Media Use, Youth, Mediation, Psychological Well-Being*

The rapid increase in social media platforms has consequentially altered the social dynamics among Indian youth. This research aims to examine the intricate interplay between loneliness, social media use, and impulsivity in this demographic. Loneliness, often perceived as a subjective feeling of social isolation, has been linked to increased social media usage as individuals seek virtual connections to compensate for real-world social deficits (Sharma, 2021). Concurrently, impulsivity, characterized by a tendency to act on a whim without considering consequences, may exacerbate the relationship between social media use and loneliness (Ramchandani et al., 2023). This study will investigate how these factors interact and influence each other, providing insights into the psychological well-being of Indian youth.

An article, *Loneliness as a cause*, written by Popa (2023), used a biopsychosocial model approach to understand loneliness at social, biological and psychological levels. The negative effects of loneliness on one's physical and mental health are becoming more widely

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acknowledged as a public health concern. Popa examined loneliness as a cause using mechanisms, dispositional theories, and interventionism in a biopsychosocial model.

Loneliness

Loneliness is an unpleasant emotional state caused by a perceived gap between one's desired and real social interactions. It's a feeling of distress or discomfort, not just being alone, and it can happen even while you're with others. Heritability and comparative studies indicate that understanding the evolutionary roots of loneliness is critical (Cacioppo et al., 2013). Evolution shapes phenotypes throughout generations in response to unique surroundings. While evolutionary theories have been proposed for traits associated with loneliness, such as depression (Allen & Badcock, 2003; Andrews & Thompson, 2009; Keller & Neese, 2005), self-esteem (Leary & Downs, 1995; Kirkpatrick & Ellis, 2001), and the need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), loneliness remains functionally distinct. Unlike other characteristics, loneliness frequently causes emotions of dissatisfaction and insecurity (Cacioppo et al., 2006)

According to a study that used experience sampling, lonely people reported more unsatisfactory and unfavorable social encounters, which over time led to worsening moods and interactions (Hawley et al., 2007).

Social isolation is dangerous for human survival because of our dependence on those providing care and our limited physical skills. It's possible that loneliness developed as an adaptive signal that led people to re-establish social ties that were essential to their genetic survival. In the same way that hunger, thirst, and pain drive actions that guarantee physical survival, loneliness serves as a catalyst for mending social ties. (Cacioppo et al., 2006)

But just having other people around you doesn't mean you're safe. The quality of social relationships is a better indicator of loneliness than the quantity of connections because of human propensities for deceit and shifting allegiances.

Loneliness can also create biases that support disapproving opinions of social encounters and increases the detection of social threats. People who are lonely tend to remember social interactions adversely over time and interpret them more negatively (Duck et al., 1994).

Additionally, loneliness can also impair self-control. According to studies on both humans and non-human animals, social isolation makes people more impulsive (Cacioppo & Hawley, 2009; Cacioppo et al., 2000). This exacerbates the detrimental emotional and cognitive impacts of loneliness, resulting in a vicious cycle of discomfort and social disengagement.

Social Media

The American Psychological Association defines social media as a type of digital communication in which people form online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content. Social media cannot be intrinsically categorized as good or bad. Social media platforms provide significant potential for socialization and interaction, but they can also have negative consequences, such as misinformation, hate speech, and cyberbullying. Excessive social media use can disrupt sleep, physical exercise, and in-person social connections.

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The rapid expansion of digital technology has significantly reshaped social dynamics, particularly among the youth in India. Social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter serve as virtual arenas for communication, self-expression, and identity formation. However, their pervasive use has raised concerns regarding mental health implications, particularly in relation to loneliness, impulsive decision-making, and addictive behaviors (Mishra et al., 2024). While social media can mitigate feelings of isolation by fostering virtual connectivity, research suggests that excessive reliance on these platforms may paradoxically exacerbate loneliness and contribute to impulsivity. (Mohanani & Shekhar, 2021). Recent research indicates that 56% of individuals who engage in binge-watching prefer to do so by themselves, implying that binge-watching can be a solitary and isolating activity (Chaudhary, 2014).

Loneliness is often confused with being alone, but it is different from it as one can feel lonely while still being surrounded with a crowd of people. Social media use has emerged as a way of coping with loneliness, providing instant gratification and a perceived sense of belonging. However, empirical evidence indicates that excessive engagement with social media correlates with increased impulsive behavior, particularly in financial decisions, online shopping, and risk-taking activities (Tripathi & Farooqi, 2023). Impulsivity, in turn, can lead to negative emotional states, reinforcing the cycle of loneliness and compulsive social media use (Sandhu & Kaur, 2024).

Impulsivity

Impulsivity may be defined as immediate, unplanned behavior without regard for the consequences (Moeller et al., 2001). Impulsivity, defined by a lack of planning and consideration for all possible outcomes, is typically related to poor outcomes. Although impulsivity is not a psychiatric diagnosis in and of itself, it is included in the diagnostic criteria for several mental illnesses. Impulsivity can manifest in various forms, like motor impulsivity, cognitive impulsivity, non-planning impulsivity, attentional impulsivity and emotional impulsivity. It can look like posting sensitive personal information online without thinking twice, or having difficulty paying attention to a task because you are constantly distracted, or procrastinating important tasks, and acting on intense emotions without restraint.

Human beings are social animals and there is an innate need for belongingness. When this need is not met people look to other ways of filling the void. Impulsive behaviors like online shopping, binge eating, engaging in unprotected sex, having casual relationships, being easily distracted, experiencing sudden and intense emotions such as anger, frustration etc. can thus stem from a need to belong.

From a behavioral economics perspective, the interplay between loneliness and decision-making is complex. Wong (2021) argues that individuals experiencing loneliness are more likely to engage in impulsive choices due to cognitive distortions and emotional compensations. This aligns with studies on Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), which indicate that young individuals engage in excessive social media usage to escape social exclusion, often making hasty and irrational decisions in the process (Kumar & Kumar, 2024). Moreover, Indian youth, exposed to digital peer pressure and curated online lifestyles, may develop compulsive social comparison tendencies, further affecting self-esteem and decision-making capacities (Hassan & Mahmud, 2024).

Loneliness, Impulsivity and Social media Relationship

In the digital age, individuals experiencing loneliness increasingly turn to social media platforms as a means of coping with emotional distress and seeking social connection. Modern social media algorithms are deliberately designed to maximize user engagement by delivering continuous novelty and instant gratification, much like the reinforcement mechanisms of slot machines. This constant stimulation fuels dopamine release, reinforcing compulsive scrolling behaviors. Individuals with high impulsivity—characterized by difficulty in delaying gratification and regulating behavior—are particularly susceptible to these patterns of use.

For instance, the study conducted by Arghashi (2025) examined the relationship between academic adjustment and impulsivity and loneliness in female high school students, taking into account the mediating effect of smartphone addiction. According to data collected from 406 students in Ahvaz, Iran, impulsivity and loneliness are linked to a rise in smartphone addiction, which has a detrimental effect on academic adjustment. In particular, the association between impulsivity and academic adjustment and loneliness is mediated by smartphone addiction. These results implied that treating smartphone addiction may improve academic adjustment for impulsive and lonely students.

According to an Indian study conducted by Taddi et al. (2024), youths who use social media excessively are more likely to feel stress, anxiety, and depression. The study, which included 204 youths aged 14 to 23, demonstrated the need for additional research to curb online abuse and better understand the complex interaction between social media and mental health. According to the findings, young people have significant difficulty distinguishing between digital and in-person encounters. The inability to establish a balance between online and outside activities may have a negative impact on teenagers' overall well-being and mental health. The majority of kids who responded stated that accessing social media had caused them to feel worried or anxious.

Excessive reliance on social media sincerely affects our decision-making abilities. In their 2023 study, Reed and Haas used the theoretical framework of "escape from freedom" to investigate the connection between social media reliance and avoidance of choice. According to their findings, people who rely heavily on social media have a higher tolerance for ambiguity and a preference for externally imposed alternatives over autonomous decision-making.

Some researchers also explored other variables in context with loneliness and impulsivity. For instance, Wang et al. (2023) investigated how loneliness moderates the link between narcissism and impulsive social media behaviors. Their study found that adolescents with higher loneliness levels were more likely to engage in impulsive self-promotional behaviors online, including cyberbullying and prosocial behavior, due to an increased need for attention-seeking. This suggests that loneliness exacerbates impulsive social media engagement, particularly among narcissistic youth.

A study done by Narain and Sahi (2021) throws light on the positive relationship between binge-watching and loneliness indicating that higher levels of loneliness were associated with high levels of binge-watching. The study found no significant gender differences in binge-watching, loneliness, or psychological well-being among the participants.

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The psychological implications of social media use were examined in another study by Fumagalli et al. (2022), with a special emphasis on how it affects decision-making. According to the research, excessive social media use can promote impulsivity because it can hinder one's capacity for careful and deliberate decision-making due to the constant barrage of information and instant feedback loops. The carefully manicured depictions of other people's lives combined with this increased impulsivity can intensify feelings of inadequacy and loneliness, leading to a vicious cycle in which lonely people use social media more and lose control over their impulses.

Rajan et al. (2022) study looked into the connection between young adults' use of Instagram, loneliness, and Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) in India. The researchers discovered a correlation between higher levels of loneliness and FOMO and more time spent on Instagram. In particular, people who used the platform for three or more hours a day reported feeling far more socially isolated and missing out than those who used it less. This implies that heavy Instagram use can make the emotional distress associated with perceived exclusion and social comparison worse.

Hossain et al. (2020) conducted a systematic analysis of 1290 research conducted in India and discovered that loneliness was highly prevalent, affecting 3169 individuals at a burden of 41%. Aging, family structure, marital status, religious traditions, and concomitant health issues were all found to contribute to loneliness. To lessen the burden of loneliness, the review recommended multifaceted approaches.

Collectively, these studies underscore a complex feedback loop: loneliness drives individuals toward social media for connection, yet excessive use of these platforms can enhance impulsive decision-making, potentially leading to behaviors that may not alleviate, and might even exacerbate, feelings of loneliness. However, there is limited research examining this triadic relationship within the Indian socio-cultural context thus current research aims to explore this relationship within Indian context. Cultural factors such as collectivist family structures, intergenerational expectations, and varying levels of digital literacy may uniquely influence how Indian youth engage with social media and cope with loneliness.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the relationship between loneliness, impulsivity, and social media use among Indian youth, with a specific focus on how social media usage may mediate the association between loneliness and impulsivity. Understanding this relationship is essential for developing culturally sensitive interventions to promote healthier digital behavior and address the psychological consequences of excessive social media engagement.

METHODOLOGY

Objective

This study seeks to examine the relationship between loneliness, social media and impulsivity, analyzing how social media usage mediates the link between loneliness and impulsivity. The objective of this study is to test the structural equation model, given by Savci (2016), in their study that examines the relationship between loneliness, impulsivity and social media use.

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Figure 1.1 Structural Equation Model by Savci (2016)

Hypotheses

The hypotheses of the study are-

- **H0:** There is no significant correlation between social media use and loneliness and impulsivity and social media use
- **H1:** Social media use is positively correlated with Impulsivity among Indian youth.
- **H2:** Loneliness is positively associated with Social media use among Indian youth.
- **H3:** Social media mediates the relationship between Impulsivity and Loneliness

Participants

The data was collected from 155 participants who belonged to the Indian demographic, between the age group of 18-25 years. The sample was collected from the regions of Delhi and Delhi NCR. Most of the participants were undergraduate or postgraduate university students and very few were high school students as shown in Figure 1.1. Participants in the study had to have a minimum level of education up to high school, be active users of social networking sites and apps and have a basic understanding of English. Random sampling was done to ensure diversity in terms of gender, socioeconomic status and education qualification.

Participants with psychiatric or psychological disorders, those with chronic medical conditions, those who were inactive on social media applications, and those who could not speak English were all excluded from the study. The study included 85 females (54.8%) and 70 males (45.2%) participants as shown in Figure 2. The mean age of the participants was 22.25 years as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Statistics for Age including Mean, Mode, Median, Standard Deviation and Range

Descriptive Statistics for Age	Value (in yrs)
Age Range	18.0 - 25.0
Mean Age	22.25
Median Age	22
Standard Deviation	1.54

Tools for Assessments

The UCLA Loneliness Scale (ULS-8) is a widely used tool to assess an individual's subjective feelings of loneliness and social isolation. It consists of 8 items, each measured on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Never) to 4 (Often). The scale demonstrates good internal consistency, with a reliability coefficient of 0.74, and excellent test-retest reliability of 0.84. Additionally, it has a good content validity, making it a reliable measure for evaluating loneliness.

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The Social Media Use Scale is used to assess the frequency and extent of social media engagement. Comprising 17 items, it employs a 9-point Likert scale where responses range from 1 (Never) to 9 (Hourly or more). The scale demonstrates strong psychometric properties, with Cronbach's alpha ranging from 0.74 to 0.89, indicating high internal consistency. It also shows both convergent and factor-structure validity, making it a suitable instrument for understanding patterns of social media use and their potential psychological impacts.

The Barratt Impulsivity Scale (BIS-11) is a well-established measure for assessing impulsivity across cognitive, motor, and non-planning dimensions. It contains a total of 30 items, rated on a 4-point Likert scale from 1 (Rarely/Never) to 4 (Almost Always/Always). The BIS-11 has demonstrated high internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values typically ranging from 0.80 to 0.90. Additionally, it possesses strong test-retest reliability and good construct validity, making it a reliable and valid tool for measuring impulsive behaviors across various clinical and research settings.

Additional demographic information related to gender, age and educational qualification was also taken.

Procedure

The data was collected from 155 participants using a simple random sampling method. Informed consent was obtained from all participants in writing, ensuring they were aware of the study's purpose and confidentiality measures. Participants were asked to complete three standardized questionnaires—the UCLA Loneliness Scale (ULS-8), Social Media Use Scale by AB Tuck, and Barratt Impulsivity Scale (BIS-11)—along with additional demographic information regarding their age, gender, and educational qualification. The questionnaires were administered in person. After data collection, responses were systematically scored using Microsoft Excel, and statistical analysis was conducted via Jamovi Software to derive meaningful insights.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 Means and Standard Deviations of Study Variables (N = 155)

Variable	M	SD	Range	Variance
Loneliness	24.0	5.52	22	30.5
Social Media Use	63.0	17.2	100	294
Impulsivity	39.9	6.74	33	45.4

Key-

M= Mean

SD= Standard Deviation

Descriptive statistics were computed for the three primary variables: loneliness, social media use, and impulsivity. A sample size of 155 Indian youth participated in the study. It comprised 85 females and 70 males. The means and standard deviations for loneliness (M = 24.0, SD = 5.52), social media use (M = 63.0, SD = 17.2), and impulsivity (M = 39.9, SD = 6.74) were also calculated and are presented in Table 2.

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Correlational Analysis

Table 3 Pearson Correlations Among Variables

Variables	Loneliness	Impulsivity	Social Media Use
1. Loneliness	—	.587***	.655***
2. Impulsivity	.587***	—	.546***
3. Social Media Use	.655***	.546***	—

Note. *** $p < .001$.

The correlation analysis was used to find associations between loneliness, impulsivity and social media. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to examine the relationships between the three variables. As shown in Table 3, Social media use turned out to be significantly positively correlated with impulsivity, $r(153) = .546$, $p < .001$, and with loneliness, $r(153) = .655$, $p < .001$. Impulsivity was also found to be positively associated with loneliness, $r(153) = .587$, $p < .001$.

Regression and Mediation Analysis

To examine the predictive value of loneliness and impulsivity on social media use, a linear regression model was applied as shown in Table 4.

Table 4 Linear Regression Model Coefficients - Social Media Use

Predictor	Estimate (B)	SE	t	p
Intercept^a	1.775	6.681	0.266	0.791
Loneliness	1.585	0.227	6.970	<.001
Impulsivity	0.603	0.189	3.187	0.002
Gender:				
Female –	-1.500	2.086	-0.719	0.473
Male				

Note: ^a Represents reference level

The results were significant, $R = .686$, $R^2 = .470$, $F(3, 151) = 44.67$, $p < .001$. Loneliness ($B = 1.585$, $p < .001$) and impulsivity ($B = 0.603$, $p = .002$) both significantly anticipated social media use. Higher impulsivity was associated with increased social media use. The role of gender was also examined, but results were insignificant ($\beta = -1.500$, $p = .473$) to be given any consideration. Loneliness revealed to be the strongest predictor of social media use, followed by impulsivity.

Table 5 Mediation Model: Social Media Use as a Mediator between Impulsivity and Loneliness

Effect	Label	Estimate	SE	95% Confidence Interval		Z	p	% Mediation
				Lower	Upper			
Indirect	a × b	0.213	0.0400	0.135	0.291	5.32	<.001	44.3
Direct	C	0.268	0.0553	0.160	0.376	4.85	<.001	55.7
Total	c+a×b	0.481	0.0533	0.377	0.585	9.03	<.001	100.0

Key:

a= Impulsivity → Social Media Use

b= Social Media Use → Loneliness

c= Impulsivity → Loneliness

To examine whether social media use mediated the relationship between impulsivity and loneliness (H3) or not, mediation analysis was conducted as shown in Table 5. The results revealed a significant indirect effect of impulsivity on loneliness through social media use, $B = 0.213$, $SE = 0.0400$, 95% CI [0.135, 0.291], $z = 5.32$, $p < .001$. The results still demonstrated a significant direct effect of impulsivity on loneliness ($B = 0.268$, $SE = 0.0553$, 95% CI [0.160, 0.376], $z = 4.85$, $p < .001$), thus suggesting partial mediation. The total effect was still significant ($B = 0.481$, $SE = 0.0533$, $p < .001$), with 44.3% of the effect of impulsivity on loneliness being explained by the mediator, social media use.

DISCUSSION

The present study was designed to explore the relationship between impulsivity, loneliness and social media use, with a special emphasis on the mediating role of social media use. With the advent of technological revolution social media has become an integral part of our life. Social media is instrumental in shaping and influencing our views, behaviors and personality in the current scenario. In the post-pandemic world, there has been a growing concern regarding loneliness as an epidemic. Social media allows people to connect virtually but also sometimes fail to fulfil the greater human desire for deep meaningful relationships.

Loneliness as a research topic is often overlooked in India, owing to its status of being a collectivistic society. In collectivistic cultures families are usually larger but in India there has been a recent shift from joint family system to nuclear and extended families, especially in urban cities (Chadda & Deb, 2013). Hence, loneliness becomes an important topic for discussion as it also throws light on the changing family dynamics in India. Globalization has led to blurring of national boundaries and social media has thus become influential in shaping the lives of Indian youth. Therefore, all these variables-impulsivity, loneliness and social media need to be studied in unison.

The data from 155 participants was collected through questionnaires and was analyzed. The results of the study were consistent with hypothesis 1, i.e. social media was found to be positively associated with impulsivity and the values were significant as well ($r = .546$, $p < .001$). This aligns with previous research done by Fumagalli et al. (2022). According to the research, excessive social media use can promote impulsivity because it can reduce one's capacity for careful and deliberate decision-making due to the continuous barrage of information and instant feedback loops in social media. Individuals with high impulsivity are more susceptible to engage in behaviors that provide instant gratification and rewards.

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The current findings reinforce the view that impulsive individuals may have difficulty regulating their digital behaviors, potentially leading to problematic use.

Another study done by Jeske et al. (2016) indicated that impulsivity social media users fail to maintain healthy work life balance which cause high stress. Cognitive impulsivity can reduce the ability to think before performing an action and make them indulge in hazardous online behavior. Motor impulsivity on the other hand can look like checking social media notifications, messages again and again.

The algorithms used by social media are designed in a way to keep people glued to the screens and sustain their attention by offering quick gratification, which may further appeal to impulsive individuals who struggle with delayed rewards or self-control (Wegmann et al., 2020). Prior research has also suggested that impulsive youth may turn to online platforms as an escape from boredom or emotional discomfort, reinforcing a habit of scrolling endlessly or excessive engagement (e.g., posting without thinking twice about its consequences). Therefore, this relationship indicates that impulsivity may not only lead to frequent use but could also predict problematic or maladaptive patterns of engagement with social media.

In case of Hypothesis 2, the results generated in the current study aligned with the hypothesis. Social media use turned out to be significantly positively with loneliness, $r(153) = .655, p < .001$. This suggests that youth experiencing higher levels of loneliness may turn to digital platforms as a substitute for face-to-face social interaction or as a means to alleviate emotional distress. However, this increased use may not always fulfil the underlying social needs, potentially perpetuating feelings of disconnection.

The findings are consistent with research undertaken by Patulny and Seaman (2016). He found that lonely people tend to rely on the internet for social connections rather than in-person contacts. According to Stivers (2004), there is a tendency to overemphasize technological advances and solutions. He highlights that there can be negative consequences of over-reliance on technology. According to the author, modern civilization has led to an increase in psychiatric problems such as ADHD, neurosis, and schizophrenia due to feelings of isolation. According to the author, the "aggressively cheerful, garrulous, mildly hyperactive outer personality" of technology compensates for the loneliness and anxiety of the inner self.

The results further confirmed Hypothesis 3, demonstrating that social media use partially mediates the relationship between impulsivity and loneliness ($B = 0.213, SE = 0.0400, p < .001$). The mediation analysis result suggests that people who are more impulsive may use social media more frequently, and this heightened use, in turn, contributes to increased feelings of loneliness. The indirect effect was statistically significant and accounted for 44.3% of the total effect, highlighting a meaningful pathway through which impulsivity affects loneliness.

This mediation can be viewed via the lens of compensatory internet use theory, which holds that people frequently utilize online platforms to manage emotional distress or unfulfilled social needs. Impulsive people may be more prone to excessive social media use as a coping method, without necessarily getting the emotional connection or happiness they desire. Instead of relieving loneliness, this conduct may further isolate people by paradoxically replacing offline encounters with superficial online contacts.

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Furthermore, the partial mediation indicates that while social media use is a significant contributor linking impulsivity to loneliness, other factors may also add to this relationship. Emotional dysregulation, poor coping mechanism, or lack of real-life social support could also mediate or moderate this pathway. These findings thus suggest that simply limiting screen time may not be sufficient; rather, interventions should target impulsivity-related traits and promote healthier, more intentional social engagement both online and offline. Social media can be a boon if used wisely as it also helps in discovering new ideas, interacting with people from diverse backgrounds and promoting livelihood for so many people.

Overall, this research adds to the growing body of literature that highlights the nuanced role of social media in psychological well-being and provides a valuable framework for addressing impulsivity and loneliness in clinical and academic settings. These findings highlight the importance of understanding digital behaviours through a psychological lens. They suggest that while social media may appear to offer opportunities for connection, it may actually contribute to greater loneliness, especially among those who engage in it impulsively. Interventions aimed at improving emotional regulation and promoting balanced social media habits may be particularly beneficial for youth struggling with impulsivity and loneliness.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The study investigated the relationships among impulsivity, loneliness, and social media use among Indian youth, with a specific focus on the mediating role of social media use. The sample size of 155 participants completed standardized questionnaires assessing their levels of impulsivity, loneliness, and social media usage. Correlational analysis yielded significant positive associations between all three variables. Regression analysis showed that both impulsivity and loneliness significantly predicted social media use. Mediation analysis further indicated that social media use partially mediated the relationship between impulsivity and loneliness, accounting for 44.3% of the total effect. Thus, all the hypothesis were proven true and null hypothesis was rejected. These findings suggest that impulsive individuals are more likely to engage in social media use, which in turn is associated with heightened loneliness.

Despite its contributions, the study has several limitations. First, the correlational design limits the ability to draw causal conclusions. Future longitudinal research is needed to explore the directionality of these relationships. Second, the study relied solely on self-report measures, which may be subject to biases such as social desirability and inaccurate recall. Including objective behavioural measures or peer reports could enhance validity.

Additionally, the study sample consisted of Indian youth residing in Delhi and NCR, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other cultural or age groups. Future studies should consider cross-cultural comparisons or explore differences based on demographic factors such as socioeconomic status, educational background, or urban–rural residence.

In summary, the study provides evidence that impulsivity and loneliness are both significant predictors of social media use, and that social media use serves as a partial mediator between impulsivity and loneliness. These findings have practical implications for educators, mental health professionals, and parents aiming to understand and support the well-being of young people in a digital world.

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Conflict of Interest

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