

The Effect of Personality Traits on Social Media Behavior among Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

Personality traits are stable characteristics that typically determine how an individual thinks, feels, and behaves. Narcissistic traits are linked with Narcissistic personality disorder more often and consist of characteristics such as need for admiration, sense of entitlement, lack of empathy, and exploiting others for personal good. Histrionic traits are also often associated with Histrionic personality disorder which consist of traits like the need for attention, dramatic expressions, and the constant need to seek reassurance. Social media behavior refers to the ways in which one carries oneself online which may include activities like liking posts, commenting, and posting own pictures. The underlying motives for these activities must be taken into account which is the matter of concern in the present study. For this research study, a total of 161 young adults from various universities and workplaces hailing from different cities in India aged between 18 and 25 were chosen as the sample from whom data was collected through Convenience Sampling method. Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI 13), Brief Histrionic Personality Scale (BHPS 11), and Social Media Usage Scale (SMUS 17) were utilized to examine the same. In the Data Analysis, descriptive statistics, Pearson's r correlation was used to understand the relationship between the independent variables (Narcissistic and Histrionic traits) and the dependent variable (Social media behavior), and Multiple regression was used to compare the impact of Narcissistic and Histrionic traits on Social media behavior. The findings deduced that there exists a significant positive correlation between the variables, Narcissistic traits and Social media behavior and no negative correlation. There exists a significant positive correlation between the variables, Histrionic traits and Social media behavior and no negative correlation. Furthermore, Narcissistic traits do not have a stronger influence on Social media behavior, rather, Histrionic traits do.

Keywords: *Personality traits, narcissistic traits, histrionic traits, social media behavior*

Personality Traits

Personality traits are habitual patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting that characterize a person's usual way of approaching the world. They contribute to relationships, occupational choices, and physical health. Traits are relatively stable over time but can shift with experience and self-transformation. As we survey our environments, we observe how

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Received: April 26, 2025; Revision Received: June 03, 2025; Accepted: June 06, 2025

different people are from one another. Personality psychologists seek to illuminate and explain these variations.

Narcissistic Traits

Narcissistic features are personality traits that include grandiosity, a need for admiration, and a lack of empathy. Such individuals often have an inflated sense of self, thinking of themselves as superior to others. Narcissistic individuals may engage in manipulative or exploitative patterns, using others to fulfill their own objectives. Excessive expressions may indicate Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD). Narcissism is marked by grandiosity, a craving for admiration, and a lack of empathy. Sigmund Freud first developed the concept of primary and secondary narcissism. This was further expanded on by Otto Kernberg and Heinz Kohut, emphasizing early relationships with caregivers.

Narcissism is a critical component of the Dark Triad. Narcissistic individuals tend to be high on extraversion and low on agreeableness according to the Five-Factor Model. Evolutionary psychologists argue that narcissism could offer adaptive benefits like dominance and risk-taking. Narcissism can be further classified into Grandiose Narcissism and Vulnerable Narcissism. Grandiose narcissists exhibit extroverted personality and a strong need for validation, whereas vulnerable narcissists have low self-esteem and emotional distress. Malignant narcissism is a more destructive form that is linked with antisocial behavior.

Histrionic traits

Histrionic traits are characterized by exaggerated demonstration of emotion, a seeking for attention, and a strong requirement for approval. Individuals with such traits often portray dramatic displays of emotion and could be easily manipulated by others. They tend to seek approval, use their appearance to attract notice, and might perceive relationships to be closer than they are. Freud theorized that histrionic traits develop from unconsummated oedipal conflicts, leading to hyperemotional expressions. Cognitive-behavioral models propose distorted thought styles, such as an inordinate craving for approval, are involved. Eysenck's Personality Theory links histrionic traits with high extraversion and neuroticism. Evolutionary approaches propose attention-seeking may have evolved for social attachment and mate attraction. Major characteristics are attention seeking, excessive emotionality, dramatic behavior, and high suggestibility, overemphasis on physical appearance, misperceiving relationship intimacy, and low tolerance for delayed gratification. Histrionic Personality Disorder (HPD) is diagnosed as a Cluster B disorder with dramatic behavior and a need for attention and approval. Their emotions are intense but superficial, and they tend to make superficial relationships. Treatment involves psychotherapy in order to help them develop better emotional control and interpersonal skills.

Narcissistic traits and Histrionic traits affecting Social media behavior

The study proposes a strong correlation between Cluster B personality disorder traits and social media problematic use. Narcissistic Personality Disorder individuals might use social media sites to find attention, approval, and admiration, which will fit their grandiosity. Narcissistic people use social media for self-promotion and self-image enhancement. They carefully create their online persona, often displaying achievements and attractiveness through highly manipulated photographs and status messages. Studies indicate that narcissists have increased rates of posting and commenting, are more reactive to likes and comments, and practice continuous social comparison. Narcissistic characteristics are connected to compulsive notification checking, increased online time, risky behaviors such

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as oversharing, and negative emotional responses to low engagement. Narcissistic features are associated with behavior like cyberbullying and trolling.

People with Histrionic features, characterized by a need for attention, might have a higher chance of becoming addicted to social media. They have space for an increased emotional expression and a need for attention, significantly influencing how people engage with social media. Since social media sites provide instant feedback and an extensive audience, they become the ideal setting for individuals with histrionic tendencies to seek approval and maintain social attention. Those with high histrionic traits post constantly to stay visible and engaged, using provocative or melodramatic content. The deep but shallow expression of emotion causes them to over reveal personal stories in order to gain sympathy or admiration, responding in a theatrical fashion to compliments or criticism. They are highly sensitive to social acceptance, frequently checking likes and comments, and may suffer from distress from disapproval, resulting in impulsive acts. Other people with extreme histrionic features may distort or fabricate events to elicit emotional responses or be involved in internet arguments to maintain attention. Therefore, social media is an ideal platform for individuals with histrionic traits to express themselves, seek approval, and maintain social status, although the same may lead to maladaptive social media behavior and dysfunctional relationships.

METHODOLOGY

Objectives:

- **O1:** To examine the relationship between Narcissistic traits and Social media behavior among young adults.
- **O2:** To examine the relationship between Histrionic traits and Social media behavior among young adults
- **O3:** To compare the effects of narcissistic and histrionic traits on Social media behavior to determine if one has a stronger influence than the other and vice versa.

Hypotheses:

- **H1:** There will be positive significant relationship between Narcissistic Traits and Social Media Behavior among young adults.
- **H2:** There will be negative significant relationship between Narcissistic Traits and Social Media Behavior among young adults
- **H3:** There will be positive significant relationship between Histrionic Traits and Social Media Behavior among young adults.
- **H4:** There will be negative significant relationship between Histrionic Traits and Social Media Behavior among young adults.
- **H5:** Narcissistic traits have a stronger influence on Social Media Behavior among young adults.

Sample: The data was collected from young adults from various universities and workplaces across India and aged between 18 and 25 years. 161 is the sample size. The sampling technique used was Convenience Sampling.

Variables:

- **Independent Variables:** Narcissistic and Histrionic traits
- **Dependent Variable:** Social Media Behavior

Tools used in data collection:

Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI-13) is a brief version of the original Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI), and it is intended to measure narcissistic tendencies among individuals. The 13 items measure the central aspects of narcissism, including leadership/authority, grandiosity, and entitlement. Raskin and Hall created the original NPI in 1979, and Gentile et al. (2013) later developed the NPI-13 as a brief version. NPI-13 has exhibited high internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha ranging between 0.70 to 0.80, suggesting measurement reliability. It has exhibited high construct validity with high correlations with longer forms of the NPI and other constructs of narcissism such as grandiosity and self-enhancement. The NPI-13 includes 13 forced-choice pairs of items, where the subjects have to select a narcissistic or a non-narcissistic statement. Each of the narcissistic options gets a point (1), while the non-narcissistic option gets 0. The total test score can range from 0 to 13. The two statements are scored such that A=0 and B=1. Reverse score items also exist. The higher the test score, the more pronounced the narcissistic features. The highest possible score is 13 while the lowest is 0. The Brief Histrionic Personality Scale (BHPS-11) is a self-report scale that is intended to evaluate histrionic personality features. It has 11 items and can be used to screen for features like extravagance, attention seeking, and theatricality. BHPS-11 was constructed by Fossati et al. (2005) as a shorter form of previously developed instruments to effectively evaluate histrionic personality features in clinical as well as non-clinical samples. The BHPS-11 has also shown good internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha values generally greater than 0.75, suggesting a reliable scale. The scale has also exhibited strong construct validity, correlating well with other measures of personality disorders. The BHPS-11 has a likert scale format (1 = Never true to 4 = Always true). There is no reverse scoring. A higher score reflects greater histrionic personality traits. The Social Media Use Scale (SMUS-17) is a 17-item self-report instrument intended to measure the frequency, involvement, and behavioral patterns of social media use. SMUS-17 has proven to be internally consistent, with Cronbach's alpha levels usually more than 0.80, demonstrating high reliability. The scale has satisfactory construct validity, being associated with measures of social media addiction, mental health indicators, and self-esteem questionnaires. SMUS-17 employs a rating scale from 1 to 9 wherein the labels include the following. Total score is derived by totaling responses to all 17 items. Higher total scores reflect greater social media usage and possible problem usage patterns.

Statistical Analysis:

Data analysis was done using Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics were portrayed, Pearson's r correlation was used to understand the relationship between the independent variables (Narcissistic and Histrionic traits) and the dependent variable (Social media behavior), and Multiple regression was used to compare the impact of Narcissistic and Histrionic traits on Social media behavior.

Procedure:

Data was collected from 161 individuals aged between 18 and 25, studying all across India in different universities and institutions through Google forms. The scales used were Narcissistic personality inventory-13, Brief histrionic personality scale-11, and Social media usage scale-17. Later, Pearson's r correlation was used to study the relationship between the independent (Narcissistic and Histrionic traits) and dependent (Social media behavior) variables. Lastly, multiple regression was used to compare the impact of Narcissistic and Histrionic traits on Social media behavior.

RESULTS

The following table depicts the trends of the study showcased through Descriptive statistics across all the three variables (Narcissistic traits, Histrionic traits, and Social media behavior).

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of all three variables

Descriptive Statistics									
	N Statistic	Minimum Statistic	Maximum Statistic	Mean Statistic	Std. Deviation Statistic	Skewness Statistic	Std. Error	Kurtosis Statistic	Std. Error
NT	161	0	13	5.87	2.613	.117	.191	-.479	.380
SMB	161	17	141	53.97	19.417	1.233	.191	3.628	.380
HT	161	15	44	27.52	6.812	.304	.191	-.478	.380
Valid N (listwise)	161								

There has been an indication of diverse distributions in the three main variables for this dataset (N=161). Narcissistic traits (NT) exhibited a quite normal distribution (skewness = .117, SE = .191; kurtosis = -.479, SE = .380) on a range from 0 to 13 (M = 5.87, SD = 2.613). By comparison, the Social media behavior (SMB) variable had high positive skew (skewness = 1.233, SE = .191) and leptokurtic distribution (kurtosis = 3.628, SE = .380), with the scores varying from 17 to 141 (M = 53.97, SD = 19.417). This suggests the values are massed towards the lower part of the scale but with some extreme values at the upper end.

Figure 1: Scatter plot showcasing the relationship between Histrionic traits and Social media behavior

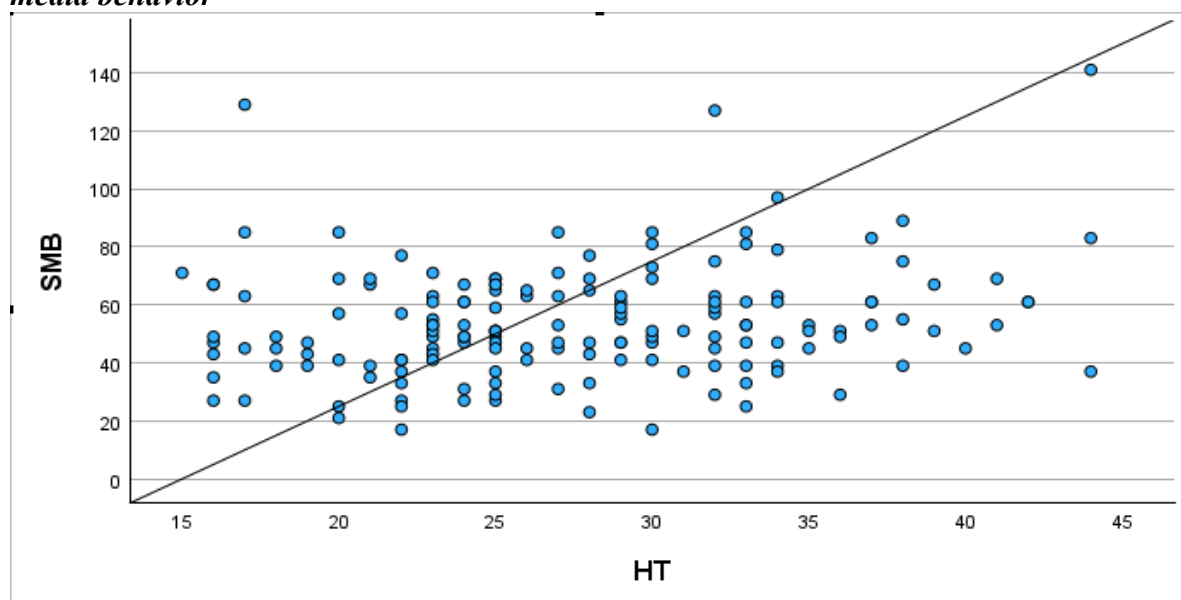


Figure 1 shows the connection between Social media behavior (SMB) and Histrionic traits (HT). The plot illustrates data points that are spread throughout the HT scale (15-45) and SMB values (0-140). Although the positive trend hinted at by the diagonal line seems to prevail, the significant spread of points surrounding the line indicates a moderate correlation. The distribution of data indicates more aggregation in the middle blocks of histrionic characteristics (20-35), with some extreme outliers in high SMB values (>120).

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Thus, there is a clear positive direction with greater histrionic features being related to more social media activity. Yet, the points indicated exhibit high variability, reflecting variation in the relationship.

Figure 2: Scatter plot showcasing the relationship between Narcissistic traits and Social media behavior

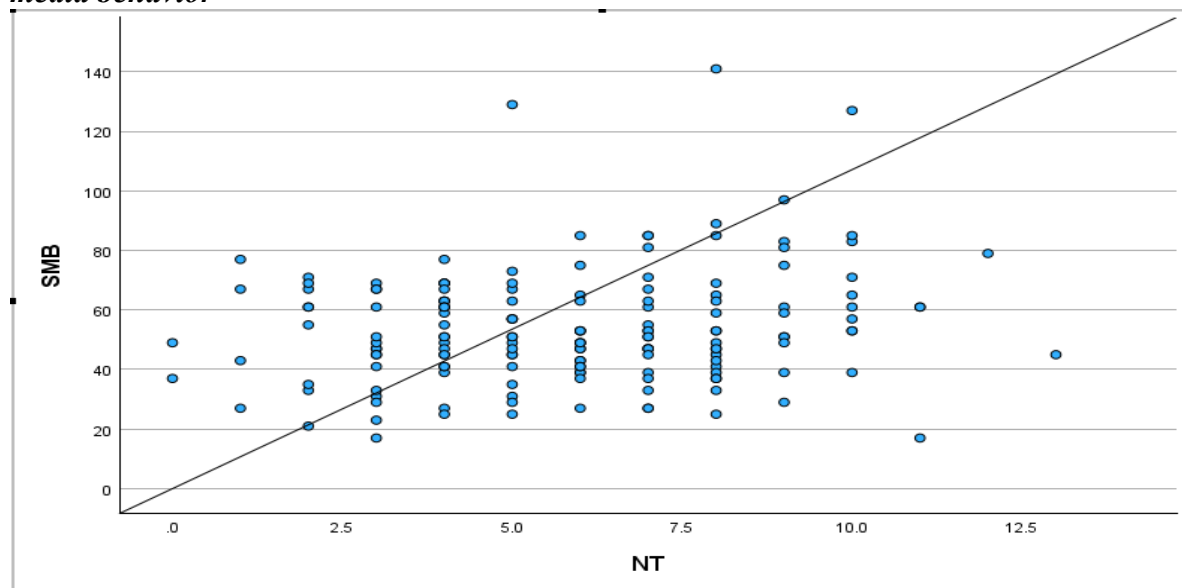


Figure 2 illustrates the association of Narcissistic traits (NT) and Social media behavior (SMB). Points are scattered over narcissistic trait scores (0-13) and corresponding SMB values (0-140). The reference line indicates a positive trend.

Thus, the same positive trend is seen, suggesting that people with more narcissistic tendencies are more likely to exhibit social media behavior. The distribution of data points indicates that although the trend is present, there are other variables that might affect social media behavior. In general, both graphs confirm the hypothesis that histrionic and narcissistic traits are positively correlated with social media behavior, albeit with variation.

Table 2: Pearson's Correlation between Histrionic traits and Social media behavior

		Correlations	
		HT	SMB
HT	Pearson Correlation	1	.202*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.010
	N	161	161
SMB	Pearson Correlation	.202*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.010	
	N	161	161

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

To analyze 'The impact of Narcissistic and Histrionic traits on Social Media Behavior among young adults', the correlation table gives an idea of the relationship between these variables. Secondly, the sample size is good (N = 161) giving moderate reliability to the results.

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Pearson Correlation (r) = 0.202

- This shows a weak positive relationship between histrionic traits and social media behavior.
- This indicates that with increasing histrionic traits, social media behavior also increases, although the correlation is not robust.

Significance Level (p-value) = 0.010

- Because the p-value is below 0.05, the correlation is significant.
- This indicates that the correlation between histrionic traits and social media behavior is unlikely due to chance.

Table 3: Pearson’s Correlation between Narcissistic traits and Social media behavior

Correlations			
		NT	SMB
NT	Pearson Correlation	1	.188*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.017
	N	161	161
SMB	Pearson Correlation	.188*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.017	
	N	161	161

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Pearson Correlation (r) = 0.188

- This shows a weak positive correlation between narcissistic traits and social media behavior.
- As narcissistic characteristics rise, social media behavior also rises but the size of this relationship is small.

Significance Level (p-value) = 0.017

- As the p-value is below 0.05, the relationship is statistically significant.
- This indicates that the observed relation is unlikely due to random chance.

Table 4: Comparison: Narcissistic vs. Histrionic Traits on Social Media Behavior

Trait	Pearson Correlation (r)	Significance (p-value)	Strength of Relationship
Narcissistic Traits (NT)	0.188	0.017 (Significant)	Weak Positive Correlation
Histrionic Traits (HT)	0.202	0.010 (Significant)	Slightly Stronger Positive Correlation

The Histrionic traits correlation (0.202) is marginally greater than that of Narcissistic traits (0.188).

- Both correlations are statistically significant, indicating both traits have an actual influence on social media use.
- Because histrionic characteristics possess a slightly higher coefficient of correlation (0.202 vs. 0.188) and a higher level of significance (p = 0.010 vs. p = 0.017), they seem to have a slightly larger effect on social media conduct.

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Table 5: Multiple Regression

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	Change Statistics			
						F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.220 ^a	.048	.036	19.060	.048	4.019	2	158	.020

a. Predictors: (Constant), Histrionic traits, Narcissistic traits

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2920.243	2	1460.122	4.019	.020 ^b
	Residual	57400.601	158	363.295		
	Total	60320.845	160			

a. Dependent Variable: Social media behavior

b. Predictors: (Constant), Histrionic traits, Narcissistic traits

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	38.284	6.272		6.104	<.001
	Narcissistic traits	.798	.703	.107	1.135	.258
	Histrionic traits	.400	.270	.140	1.483	.140

a. Dependent Variable: Social media behavior

According to the output displayed within the multiple regression analysis, the interpretations are as illustrated below:

- The multiple regression analysis analyzed the effect of histrionic and narcissistic characteristics on social media conduct. The total model was significant statistically ($F(2, 158) = 4.019, p = .020$), but explained only a small amount of variance in social media conduct ($R^2 = .048, \text{Adjusted } R^2 = .036$). This indicates that although these personality dimensions do have a substantial correlation with social media behavior, they only account for explaining 4.8% of the variance, which means many other factors most likely influence social media usage patterns.
- Examining the individual predictors, neither histrionic ($\beta = .140, t = 1.483, p = .140$) nor narcissistic ($\beta = .107, t = 1.135, p = .258$) traits were statistically significant when adjusting for one another. Although the individual contributions were not significant, the constant term was significant ($B = 38.284, p < .001$), which is the predicted social media behavior score when both personality traits are zero.

DISCUSSION

The study titled ‘*Personality traits and Social media behavior among young adults*’ was conducted in order to identify the relationship between these variables under study i.e. personality traits and social media behavior in the context of young adults from various

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universities and workplaces. The sample population consisted of young adults ($N = 161$) aged between 18 and 25 years. Three tools were used to assess Narcissistic traits (NPI 13, Gentile, et.al. 2013), Histrionic traits (BHPS 11, Fossati, et.al. 2011), and Social media behavior (SMUS 17, Hoffner & Lee, 2021). The data gathered was analyzed and interpreted using MS Excel and IBM SPSS by calculating Descriptive statistics of all the three variables, Pearson's product moment correlation, and Multiple regression. In addition, IBM SPSS tool came handy in using scatter plots to visually represent the distribution of data between the independent variables (Narcissistic traits and Histrionic traits) and dependent variable (Social media behavior).

Table 1 shows that Narcissistic and histrionic traits are fairly normally distributed. Social Media Behavior has the highest standard deviation, suggesting more variability in responses. SMB is positively skewed, meaning more participants have lower SMB scores, but some have very high scores. Table 2 portrays a statistically significant positive correlation between the variables but the strength of the relationship is weak suggesting that histrionic traits do impact the patterns of social media behavior but not substantially. Table 3 shows a statistically significant positive correlation between the variables but the strength of the relationship determinant remains to be weak implying that the role of narcissistic traits does not solely influence the patterns of social media behavior. Table 4 makes it easier to compare and contrast and understand the key findings in a more consolidated manner. Both correlations (HT and SMB; NT and SMB) are statistically significant, showing that they inevitably play a role in the social media usage patterns. However, histrionic traits have a slightly higher correlation coefficient (0.202 vs. 0.188) and a stronger level of significance ($p = 0.010$ vs. $p = 0.017$) implying a slightly stronger weightage in impacting social media behavior among young adults. Table 5 shows that the Regression model was significant ($F(2,158) = 4.019$, $p = .020$) but explained only 4.8% of the variance ($R^2 = .048$). Neither narcissistic ($\beta = .107$, $p = .258$) nor histrionic traits ($\beta = .140$, $p = .140$) were significant predictors, though the constant term was ($B = 38.284$, $p < .001$).

A research study conducted by *Acka, O.F., et.al. in 2020* on the relationship between social media addiction and personality disorders concluded that individuals who are immersed into the world of social media are likely also victims of Cluster B personality disorders. They concretely tended to align with excessive social media use for different factors. Concerned with the present study are Histrionic and Narcissistic traits both of which held a significant positive correlation in being more prone to developing social media addiction.

Another research study conducted by *Carvalho, L., et.al. in 2019* examined the relationship between narcissistic and histrionic pathological traits and passive Facebook data. They found histrionic traits to be more correlated with passive data from Facebook than narcissistic traits. In addition, they figured that 'Simpson's paradox' could have produced these results as the relationship tends to alter when variables are combined according to this statistical phenomenon. This can also explain the occurrence of a not so significant figure with multiple regression in the present study.

CONCLUSION

The study titled '*Personality traits and Social media behavior among young adults*' was conducted in order to identify the relationship between these variables under study i.e personality traits and social media behavior in the context of young adults from various universities and workplaces.

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Histrionic personality traits have a slightly more robust and statistically significant correlation with social media use than narcissistic personality traits. This is consistent with psychological theory, as people with histrionic personality traits are marked by inordinate attention-seeking, dramatics, and social validation-seeking, all of which are supported by social media.

- Although Narcissistic tendencies also motivate social media activity (ex. self-advertising and seeking admiration), the somewhat lower correlation indicates that narcissism per se is not the best predictor of social media use.
- Both of the correlations are fairly modest, indicating that although personality characteristics such as narcissism and histrionic behavior can shape social media use, they would probably account for only a small percentage of the variance. Other variables not reflected in these correlations probably play key roles as well.

Thus, Histrionic features seem to be more strongly and statistically related to social media behavior than Narcissistic features in the sample of young adults. These results are consistent with theoretical predictions that those who have histrionic features and are apt to get attention and approval from others may be more likely to take part in particular social media activities that allow them to receive attention and emotional feedback from their audience.

Furthermore, Narcissistic and Histrionic traits together statistically significantly predict Social media behavior. Because Sig. F Change = 0.020 (< 0.05), the two traits significantly predict social media behavior. The effect size, however, is very low ($R^2 = 0.048$), indicating that other factors explain a large majority of the variation in social media behavior.

- The Relationship is weak. Since with $R = 0.220$, the correlation is weak, it means that although these traits have some impact, they are not the prime movers of social media behavior.
- Neither Narcissistic nor Histrionic Traits Are Strong Predictors of Social Media Behavior. Both predictors' p-values (0.258 for NT and 0.140 for HT) are larger than 0.05, so neither trait significantly impacts social media behavior. Although there is a weak positive correlation (as indicated in the previous correlation analysis), these traits in isolation are not strong enough to predict social media behavior.
- The total model ($R^2 = 4.8\%$) was significant statistically, indicating the predictors collectively have an impact on social media behavior, but their separate effects are small.
- This could indicate that other factors like extraversion, social anxiety, self-esteem, or other personality factors also contribute to social media behavior.

Hence, to align the new findings of my study with the hypotheses, there exists a significant positive correlation between the variables, Narcissistic traits and Social media behavior. It was found that there is no negative correlation between the variables, Narcissistic traits and Social media behavior. There exists a significant positive correlation between the variables, Histrionic traits and Social media behavior. It was figured that there is no negative correlation between the variables, Histrionic traits and Social media behavior. The final key finding was that Narcissistic traits do not have a stronger influence on Social media behavior, it is rather the other way around. **H1** and **H3** have been proven.

Limitations and Implications

This study's future implications include the sample size and demographics which could be extended, including a wider variety of participants from various age ranges, cultures, and geographic areas to investigate if the findings are consistent across different populations. Contrast social media behaviors on various platforms (ex: Instagram, TikTok, X, LinkedIn) to identify if certain characteristics are more evident on specific platforms. Longitudinal study approach could be adopted going ahead by implementing a longitudinal study to evaluate how narcissistic and histrionic characteristics affect social media usage over time. This helps in monitoring shifts in personality traits and their influence on social media engagement to determine if behaviors change with age or outside influences. Intervention based study could be conducted to determine the bouncing back options alongside by creating and evaluating interventions (such as digital detox programs, self-awareness training, or therapy) to determine if they minimize problematic social media behaviors in individuals exhibiting high narcissistic or histrionic traits. Lastly, this helps in examining whether mindfulness or emotional regulation techniques can lessen the effects of these traits on online activity.

The possible limitations of this research study could be that it may generate self-report bias and social desirability as the research depends on self-report tools (ex: questionnaires or surveys), which may result in social desirability bias and flawed self-assessments. Secondly, this is a Cross sectional design and it captures only a momentary view of behaviors at a single time. This restricts the capacity to establish causality and so, it would be hard to ascertain whether narcissistic and histrionic traits bring about certain social media actions or if social media use strengthens these traits over time. Lastly, Limited generalizability exists wherein the sample primarily includes young adults from a particular region, university, or background, and so, the results might not apply to other age groups or cultural situations. Various societies may exhibit different norms regarding social media usage and personality expression.

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Acknowledgment

I would like to extend my sincere and heartfelt gratitude to everyone who helped me embark on this journey of my Dissertation. Without their constant support, guidance, and encouragement, this would not have been possible. I extend my sincere thanks to Dr. Ranjana Bhatia, Head of Institution, namely AIPS in Amity University for providing me with this incredible opportunity to undertake the major project. I would like to thank my faculty guide Dr. Shivani Bhambri for her ceaseless commitment in helping me throughout the project. She has been the biggest pillar of support in all the aspects of the dissertation. Lastly, not to forget

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the consistent encouragement I received throughout this process from my family and friends who stood behind me and acted as the major driving forces for me to be able to complete the research successfully.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Kumar, K.S. (2025). The Effect of Personality Traits on Social Media Behavior among Young Adults. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 13(2), 2964-2976. DIP:18.01.263.20251302, DOI:10.25215/1302.263