

A Comparative Study on Delaying Gratification, Body Image and Emotional Regulation among Male Social Media Users and Female Social Media Users

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ABSTRACT

Social media has become an inseparable part of our lives and it has a great impact on the physical, mental, emotional and overall well-being of an individual. Delaying gratification refers to the ability of an individual to delay temptation, body image is the perception of an individual of one's own body whereas emotional regulation is divided into cognitive appraisal and emotional suppression. The following study aims to compare the level of delaying gratification, body image and emotional regulation (cognitive appraisal and emotional suppression) among male and female social media users. The sample includes 100 unmarried and unemployed social media users of age 18 to 25 using minimum 3 social media applications and for minimum 3 hours. The data is equally distributed comprising of 50 males and 50 females. The data was collected using Delaying Gratification Inventory (DGI), Body Image Self Questionnaire (BISQ) and Emotional Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) along with PDS and further statistical analysis was done. The results show that there is higher delaying gratification, cognitive appraisal and emotional suppression in females social media users than male social media users at a significant level. There is no significant difference of body image among male and female social media users. A number of factors might be responsible for the same like the type of content viewed, the personality of the individual, external factors, etc.

Keywords: *Delaying gratification, body image, cognitive appraisal, emotional suppression, social media*

Social media has become an integral part of our lives as well as an inseparable aspect in today's world. However, along with it being constructive aspect of our lives there are many bad effects of it on our physical, mental, social, emotional, overall well-being of individuals especially the young adults. Research have found out that it effects the self-esteem and also the body image of individuals. Due to Instagram and Facebook people look at individuals, compare themselves and are influenced greatly. (Fardouly et al.,2015)

Delaying gratification is the ability on any individual to delay the temptation of trying to get an immediate award. It can be consciously or unconsciously but trying to delay the urge to get immediate satisfaction. The classic "Marshmallow Experiment" showed how delaying

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gratification among children helped them in the long run. They had better outcomes in life, emotion-based coping and even academics. (Mischel, Ebbsen & Zeiss,1972). A number of factors affect the delaying gratification like cognitive development, the individual, personality, environmental factors, emotion, support system, habits, conditioning, etc. Some findings show that the ability of delaying gratification is comparatively high in males than females as they have better self-regulation. (Silverman, 2003)

Body image can be defined as the perception of an individual, thoughts and also feelings about their physical appearance. (Cash & Pruzinsky,2002). It has various dimensions to it like how does one look at themselves or how do they think they look, what do they feel about their own looks and body, what is the impact of all these on their behavior. This image of body can be positive or negative; varies from individual to individual. Many researchers talk about how social media influences the body image of individuals. Beauty standards, the perfect body shape, appearance. Body positivity, comparisons, etc. happen due to social media. Individuals use various filters, edit pictures, present their self, etc. all these result in perfectionism of appearance further leading to body image issues and negative body image. Women and girls have shown higher levels of dissatisfaction of body especially due to media as it portrays ideal and slim bodies which further creates a societal pressure to look attractive. Leon Festinger in 1954 developed the social comparison theory where according to him, individuals determine the personal and societal worth based on comparison with others.

Emotional regulation can be explained as the process in which individuals influence the emotions have an influence on the emotions at the time they have them and how do they further experience and express the emotions.(Gross,1998b,p.275). It has an effect on the mental and psychological well-being of individuals as well as higher cognitive processes like thinking, decision making, problem solving, etc. further there are two strategies of emotional regulation.

- Antecedent focused: in this comes cognitive reappraisal.
- Response focused: under this is the emotional suppression.

Social media plays a significant role today on the emotions of young adults. The content on media is diverse and has a wide range of emotions which keep changing on the tip of the fingers of the individuals with one press or swap. It has been found that females have shown higher cognitive reappraisal.

Need and importance

Social media is an inseparable part of lives of individuals, especially the young adults. The number of social media users has also been rising rapidly. Various studies have shown that now social media and it's content has a lot of impact on the behaviour, cognition and emotional aspects of an individual. There are various evidences that show the biochemical, hormonal and neural effects of the same in the brain and body. The amount of hormones released by exercise of one hour is equivalent to the 10 to 15 minutes of content watching on media. It also affects the attention, multitasking, satisfaction, gratification, thinking, body image, emotions etc. The duration of movies in the earlier times was around 3 hours which sparingly decreased to 2 to 3, then came in series which had episodes ranging from 20 to 60 minutes, then with time came short videos and now reels which last less than 30 seconds have become the new normal. The level of gratification is affected by the same. The change in content is happening within a span of 30 seconds or even less. The wide range of platforms

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available for the varied level of content also affects the gratification. Individuals easily get bored watching content. Body image is influenced by media widely. Fame figures like politicians, actors, actresses, models, influencers are looked upon as role models by young adults. Body image is now a concern in this era. The perfect body is the wish and want and standard of the society. Watching influencers on media with the ideal body creates a lot of changes in the body image of young adults. Various filters are being used in media by influencers, editing of images, fitness influencers, etc. affect the minds of young adults. Psychological problems like anxiety, depression, self concept issues and even eating disorders are a major concern due to body image influence due to social media. However there are some positive effects too like body positivity where many individuals are also confident about their colour, hair, body, shape, etc. The content of media showcase wide range of emotions from happiness, sadness, aggression, guilt, surprise, etc. Often individual being in a normal mood have sudden shift of emotions based on the type of content they witnessed. Influence of media has also encouraged young adults into addiction as a source of emotional regulation. It also leads of poor psychological and overall well being of individuals. The young adults are the future generations of the nation and it important to consider their psychological and overall well being. By doing this research we can get information with relation to the level of delaying gratification, kind of body image and the emotional regulation of individuals which are a part of individuals we'll being. By this study an idea related to it will be generated which can further help to create interventions for the same. This research will also help in creating awareness and helping individuals know the intervention strategies which are target specific to the population and problem. Psychology based intervention strategies and therapies can help fill the barriers. The gender differences can be studied and it can further be helped for future studies and researches. Media literacy and digital well being strategies can be developed and implemented. The young adults being a role model for the younger generations as well as being the future of the nation. The symptoms for various Psychological disorders can be detected and prevented for which this research will become a great source.

Objectives

1. To study the level of delaying gratification among male and female social media users.
2. To study the body image of male and female social media users
3. To study the emotional regulation among male and female social media users.
4. To compare the level of delaying gratification among male and female social media users.
5. To compare the body image of male and female social media users.
6. To compare the emotional regulation (cognitive appraisal) among male and female social media users.
7. To compare the emotional regulation (emotional suppression) among male and female social media users.

Hypothesis

1. The level of delaying gratification will be greater in female social media users than male social media users.
2. The body image issues will be higher in female social media users than male social media users.
3. The emotional regulation (cognitive appraisal) will be higher in female social media users than male social media users.
4. The emotional regulation (emotional suppression) will be higher in male social media users than female social media users.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The researcher of the study selected a sample of 100 using the purposive sampling method. The sample was chosen from the various young adults in the city of Pune. It was collected from individuals of age 18 to 25 who have minimum three social media applications and with minimum three hours of usage. Further the sample was chosen such that it was unmarried and unemployed. The researcher selected sample including 50 male social media users and 50 female social media users.

Material

The researcher in the study used the Delaying Gratification Inventory (DGI). The DGI was designed by Hoerger, Quirk, and Weed (2011) and includes 35 self-report items that assess delay behaviour across five key domains: food, physical pleasures, social interactions, money, and achievement. Respondents indicate how much they agree with statements related to delaying gratification on a 5-point Likert scale. (Hoerger, Quirk & Weed, 2011). The Body Image Self-Rating Questionnaire (BISQ) developed by David A. Rowe. (2005) is a multidimensional psychometric scale designed to assess individual satisfaction with various aspects of body image, including the face, upper torso, lower torso, lower body, and overall appearance. Initially developed for Portuguese adults, the BISQ consists of 23 self-report items rated on a Likert scale, with higher scores indicating greater body satisfaction. (Rowe, 2005). The Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) is a widely used self-report instrument developed by James J. Gross and Oliver P. John (2003) to assess individuals' typical use of two key emotion regulation strategies: cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression. (Gross & John, 2003). Cognitive reappraisal involves changing the way one thinks about a potentially emotion-eliciting situation in order to alter its emotional impact, while expressive suppression refers to inhibiting the outward signs of internal emotions. (Gross & John, 2003). The ERQ consists of 10 items—six items assess cognitive reappraisal and four items assess expressive suppression. Respondents rate each statement on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). (Gross & John, 2003)

The researchers used these three tests in the study.

Statistical technique

In the following study the researchers used statistical analysis using SPSS. The study includes descriptive statistics mean, median, mode, standard deviation, skewness, kurtosis, standard error of skewness, standard error of kurtosis. Further the researcher did the test of normality where the data was not normal so non parametric test of Shapiro Wilk was done on the sample to test the gender differences.

Procedure

The researcher took permission from the Principal of the colleges to collect data collection through a letter as well as consent forms were given to the individuals before giving the questionnaire. It also included demographic details and some subjective questions for qualitative analysis. Purposive sampling was used to collect the data from 100 young adult social media users, 50 males and 50 females.

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RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 Shows descriptive statistics of delaying gratification, body image and emotional regulation

	Delaying Gratification	Body Image	Cognitive Appraisal	Emotional Suppression
N	100	100	100	100
Mean	125.92	75.96	28.74	19.00
Median	125.00	76.00	30.00	19.00
Std. Deviation	14.300	10.465	6.189	5.354
Skewness	.049	.018	-.319	-.035
Std. Error of Skewness	.241	.241	.241	.241
Kurtosis	-.113	-1.064	-.770	-.009
Std. Error of Kurtosis	.478	.478	.478	.478

The mean scores for the delaying gratification is 125.92 which indicates the higher ability to delay gratification. It further can be interpreted that the average level of delaying gratification ability is high among the sample. The mean for body image is 75.96 which indicates that there is dissatisfaction among the sample. The cognitive appraisal and emotional suppression means are 28.74 and 19.00 respectively which can be interpreted as high use of cognitive appraisal and moderated level of emotional suppression respectively. Delaying gratification and body image are positively skewed whereas emotional regulation is negatively skewed.

The researcher used Shapiro Wilk test used to check the test of normality and it was found out that the data is not normal. Therefore the study used non parametric test was to study the comparison among male and female social media users on delaying gratification, body image and emotional regulation.

Table 2 showing comparison between male social media users and female social media users on Delaying Gratification, Body image and emotion regulation (cognitive appraisal and emotional suppression)

Variable	Gender	N	Mean rank	Mann-Whitney U	Significance
Delaying Gratification	1	50	33.11	2119.500	<.001
	2	50	67.89		
Body Image	1	50	49.26	1312.000	.669
	2	50	51.74		
Cognitive Appraisal	1	50	37.71	1889.500	<.001
	2	50	63.29		
Emotional Suppression	1	50	58.20	865.000	.008
	2	50	42.60		

The researcher hypothesized that the ability to delay gratification will be higher among female users than male users. The Mann Whitney scores for the comparative studies of delaying gratification are 2081.000 which means there is difference among male and female social users. The scores are significant. On further analysis it was found that females are higher than males as the mean rank for males is 33.11 and females is 67.89. This can further be supported using the literature review that social media affects the ability to delay gratification in the research done by Kheya Sriram in December on effect of social media on the delaying gratification ability done in Mumbai on teenagers of age 16-18 years. It can further be

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supported by the Marshmallow experiment. Similarly, in the longitudinal study it was found that females have higher discipline than males in a study conducted by Duckworth and Seligman. (Duckworth&Seligman,2006). Hence the hypothesis that female social media users have higher delaying gratification than male social media is accepted.

The researcher hypothesised the body image dissatisfaction will be higher in females than males. However, the Mann Whitney score is 1283.000 at .817 level of significance. As a result of which the hypothesis was rejected. This could be supported by the personal data sheets where many individuals didn't mention the type of content they watch whether they prefer reels, videos, shorts, etc. It can be further supported by the research conducted by Mendelson et.al. where he found no gender differences among male and female adolescents. As a result the hypothesis that female social media users have more body image issues than male social media is rejected.

The researcher hypothesised that cognitive appraisal will be higher in female social media user than male social media users. The Mann Whitney score is 1889.500 at <0.001 level which implies that that there is significant difference among male and female social media user on cognitive appraisal. On further analysis it was found that females are higher than males as the mean rank for males is 37.71 and females is 63.29. This can be supported on the basis of literature review. The research conducted by Tamres, Janicki and Helgeson in the year 2002 show that women are liked to be more emotion focused and high on cognitive appraisal than males. (Tamres, Janicki & Helgeson,2002). In the research conducted by Gross and John during the development of emotional regulation questionnaire in 2003 that women report greater use of both emotional reappraisal and suppression than me. (Gross & John,2003). It can also be supported by the personal data sheets where males expressed lack of ability to handle stressful situations and there was lack of self-care activities too. Hence, the hypothesis that female social media users have higher emotional regulation (cognitive appraisal) is accepted.

The researcher hypothesised that emotional suppression will be higher in male social media user than female social media users. The Mann Whitney score is 865.00 at .008 level which implies that that there is significant difference among male and female social media user on emotional suppression. On further analysis it was found that males are higher than females as the mean rank for males is 58.20 and females is 42.60. This can be supported on the basis of literature review. It can be further supported by the personal data sheet in which many males mentioned having way to suppress emotion. Thus, the hypothesis that male social media users have high emotional regulation (emotional suppression) than female social media users is accepted.

Findings

- The level of delaying gratification is higher in females than males.
- The cognitive appraisal is higher in females than males.
- The emotional suppression is higher in males than females.

Implications

- This research can be helpful for the social media users in the world to gain insight.
- The research will help understand pattern of delaying gratification, body image issues and emotional regulation among males and females and also understand differences

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- The research helps us plan educational and therapeutic interventions to promote mental health according to the need.
- The research can help conduct further studies.
- The adolescents being the future of the country it can help focus on them.
- Programmes creating awareness on optimal usage of social media can be conducted.

Limitations

- The research is done on the age group of 18 to 25 only.
- The research only conducted on unmarried people.
- The research has only focused on unemployed individuals.
- The sample size is small.
- The type of content watched by people is not considered.
- The external factors are not considered.

Suggestions for further studies

- Further studies can be done on using different samples of various age groups.
- This study can be done on a larger sample.
- The research can be done on married individuals.
- The research can be done on the employed individuals.
- The further studies can be conducted considering other external factors.

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Conflict of Interest

The researcher has no conflict of interest.

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