

Social Media Integration and Mental Well-Being in Emerging Adulthood

Prince Thomas^{1*}, Shony Mathew²

ABSTRACT

Background: The growing use of social media has raised interest in its influence on psychological and social factors, though evidence regarding links with self-esteem, loneliness, gender, and relationship status is mixed. **Objective:** This study explored these associations in the Indian context among emerging adults. **Methods:** A convenient sample of 405 working professionals aged 21–25 years ($M = 25.3 \pm 2.6$) completed standardized measures of social media use, loneliness, and self-esteem. **Results:** Daily time on social media ($M = 158 \pm 136$ minutes) showed a weak but significant positive correlation with usage patterns, integration into daily habits, and preference for online communication. Less lonely individuals spent more time on social media ($Mdn = 120$, $IQR = 120$) than lonelier individuals ($Mdn = 100$, $IQR = 75$). **Conclusion:** Findings highlight evolving social media use among working professionals, underscoring the need for further research beyond student populations.

Keywords: Media, Self-esteem, Loneliness, Mental Health, Positive youth development

Social media is one of the most used communication techniques spread worldwide in the present age, making the world a global village (Kaya & Bicen, 2016). People from all age groups in all parts of the world use social media for various purposes like communication, education, entertainment, developing and expressing interests, marketing and so on (Madhushree, 2022). In 2020, the total number of active social media users worldwide was about 3.81 billion, followed by a drastic increase of 9.2% from 3.48 billion in 2019 (Dean, 2020). Being online more than ever since the COVID-19 lockdown, the average social media use increased in time and traffic across its platforms worldwide (Haynes, 2021), and in developing countries like India, the time spent on social media increased from 150 minutes to 240 minutes a day (Keelery, 2021). These factors indicate rapid growth in the use of social media, allowing people for better connectivity that help them cope with loneliness and maintain self-esteem, suggesting the significance of studying the patterns of social media use and its associated factors.

Several studies have reported the positive, as well as negative influences of social media on mental health (Abi-Jaoude et al., 2020), social behaviour (Ruths & Pfeffer, 2014), loneliness

¹Research Scholar, MLCU, Shillong

²Research Guide, MLCU, Shillong

*Corresponding Author

Received: September 15, 2025; Revision Received: May 07, 2026; Accepted: May 11, 2026

Social Media Integration and Mental Well-Being in Emerging Adulthood

(Johnson, 2020), family relations (Ulusoy & Atar, 2020), self-esteem (Vogel et al., 2014), cognitive abilities (Quinn, 2018) and the individual differences on the effect of social media (Kim et al., 2014). The studies observed that spending more time on social media platforms is associated with poor self-esteem (Ingolfssdottir, 2017), increased loneliness (Youssef et al., 2020), and mental health problems (Riehm et al., 2019). Considering that 90% of emerging adults (Arnett, 2006) use social media platforms (Perrin, 2015), this research investigated the relationship of social media use to the self-esteem and loneliness of the emerging adults engaged in professional jobs in India.

Self-esteem and Social Media Use

Research disclosed a positive relationship between self-esteem and social media use by making social enhancement (Kim & Kim, 2019), choice for the pace, breadth, and depth self-disclosure (Apaolaza et al., 2013), and self-motivation by the positive feedback received from others on social media (Scissors et al., 2016) and a negative relationship by compensating real-life relationships (Bergagna & Tartaglia 2018) and addictive use (Andreassen et al., 2017).

Loneliness and Social Media Use

A positive relationship between loneliness and social media use was associated with lower social support (Lisitsa et al., 2020), more persistent usage (Phu & Gow, 2019), and absorbing time from face-to-face interaction (Kim et al., 2009) and a negative relationship was reported by making social compensation on social media through satisfying the need for socialization (Cauberghe et al., 2020) and mitigating the lack of face-to-face contact (Thomas et al., 2020).

Gender differences, Relationship Status and Social Media Use

Difference in social media use have been explored among people in different genders and different relationship statuses. Compared to men, women are more frequent users of text message and video calls (Kimbrough et al., 2013). While women use social media for maintaining social relations and gaining social information, men use it for gaining general information (Krasnova et al., 2017). Married people use social media to facilitate communication and support (Lenhart & Duggan, 2020) and maintain healthy relationships among couples (Gull et al., 2019) whereas unmarried people use social media for seeking family support (Stokes & Moorman, 2017), dating, and to find new relationships (Duggan, 2020).

This study investigated the significant factors associated with the social media use of emerging adults engaged in professional works and analysed the relationship of the social media use to the time spent on social media platforms, self-esteem and loneliness resulting in their personality and social interactions, and the association of social media use to the gender and relationship status.

Though several research on the relationship of self-esteem and loneliness to the social media use of emerging adults were conducted, most of the studies in this field was based on the European or American population. The research in the Asian context becomes vital as the number of social media users and the time spent on social media platforms in Asia-Pacific region is increasing rapidly (Ganbold, 2022). Nearly all the previous studies that explored the social media use of emerging adults were done primarily on the Facebook use of college students. Working professionals in India have a high preference for communicating via social media (Gaurav & Dheer, 2018). However, few studies are performed on the

Social Media Integration and Mental Well-Being in Emerging Adulthood

relationship of social media use to their self-esteem, loneliness, gender differences, and relationship status that necessitates the study on Indian population.

This study was founded on the uses and gratifications (U&G) theory, a psychological communication perspective proposed by Katz et al. (1973) that examines why and how people seek specific media to satisfy specific needs (Eginli & Tas, 2018). Based on this theory, two competing hypotheses have been proposed, namely, the social enhancement hypothesis (Kraut et al. 2002), which argues that those less lonely and with more offline friends use social media to enhance their already strong friendship circle and the social compensation hypothesis (Valkenburg et al., 2005), which argues that people with poor self-esteem and high loneliness use social media to compensate for the lack of real-life friendships.

The current study introspected whether the social media use characterized by the nature of social interactions in social media usage, integration of social media into the social habits by regular use, and preferences to communicate via the social media platforms was positively or negatively associated to the time spent on social media platforms, self-esteem and loneliness in the population across different genders and different relationship statuses and the factors contributing to the nature of the relationship.

- **Ho1:** The social media use of emerging adults is not significantly related to their self-esteem or loneliness.
- **Ho2:** There is no significant difference social media use of the emerging adults in different genders or different relationship statuses.
- **Ho3:** There is no significant difference in the time spent on the social media platforms and the pattern of social media usage of the emerging adults in different levels of self-esteem or different levels of loneliness.

METHODS

Participants, Procedure, and Ethical Considerations

Considering the minimum age required for a person to be graduated and find a professional job in Indian educational context, the research population was 405 emerging adults who are Indian citizens between 21 to 29 years of age working in professional firms and using at least one social media platform. An adequate sample size was decided through jpower analysis of sample size calculation for independent sample *t* test on The Jamovi Project (2021).

After obtaining institutional review board approval, the data collection was done following all the ethical considerations through convenience sampling method using QuestionPro, an encrypted online platform. After screening, the number of participants in the study was $N = 405$. Mean, median, standard deviation, interquartile range, qq plot, box plot, and histogram of the variables were assessed. Spearman's rho correlation coefficient analysis, Mann–Whitney *U* test, and Kruskal–Wallis *H* test were done to analyse the relationship between the variables. Data were analysed using The Jamovi Project (2021) and IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 28 Trial) predictive analytics software. There were no covariates in this study and no data transformation was done.

Measures

- **Participant Information:** Participant information included the demographic information like identifying information, occupation, highest level of education, nationality, city of employment, gender, relationship status, and the information on the number and names of the social media platforms currently using, and the average number of minutes spent on social media in a day.
- **Social Media Use Integration Scale:** The Social Media use Integration Scale was developed to measure the nature of social media usage of emerging adults. This is a 10-item scale rated on a 5-point Likert scale. Among the two subscales, the Social Integration and Emotional Connection (SIEC) subscale with six items analyses the degree to which social media use is a habit of a person. Integration into Social Routines (ISR) subscale with four items assesses one's preference for communicating via social media. With $\alpha = .914$ for the main scale, $\alpha = .893$ for the Social integration and emotional connection subscale and $\alpha = .828$ for the Integration into social routines subscale, all the scales showed high reliability. The social media use integration scale also showed a high correlation with previously published scales on social media use that provided evidence for convergent validity (Jenkins-Guarnieri et al., 2013).
- **UCLA Loneliness Scale:** The University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) Loneliness Scale 3rd version consists of 20 items rated on a 4-point Likert scale following the frequency of feeling lonely. Significant correlations indicated convergent validity for the scale with other scales of loneliness. Test-retest reliability over one year was $r = .73$. The minimum score one gets on this scale is 20, and the maximum is 80 (Russell, 1996). Based on the scores obtained, participants can be divided into people with low (20 - 34), moderate (35 - 49), moderately high (50 - 64), and high (65 - 80) levels of loneliness (Deckx et al., 2014).
- **Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale:** Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale consists of 10-items rated on a 4-point Likert scale, according to how people feel about themselves. Different studies on various age groups showed alpha coefficients ranging from 0.72 to 0.87. Test-retest reliability for the 2-week interval was calculated at 0.85, and the 7-month interval was calculated at 0.63 (Silber & Tippett, 1965). Criterion validity = 0.55. Construct validity = correlated with anxiety (0.64), depression (0.54), and anomie (0.43). The minimum score one gets on this scale is ten, and the maximum is 40 (Rosenberg, 1965). Based on the scores obtained, participants can be divided into people with low (10 - 25), medium (26 - 29), and high (30 - 40) levels of self-esteem (Garcia et al., 2019).

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

The Cronbach's α value of Social media use integration scale ($\alpha = 0.819$), Rosenberg self-esteem scale ($\alpha = 0.801$), and UCLA loneliness scale ($\alpha = 0.865$) indicated high covariances and the Social integration and emotional connection subscale ($\alpha = 0.783$) and Integration into social routines subscales ($\alpha = 0.632$) indicated moderate covariances. Normality testing of data using the Shapiro-Wilk W test indicated that p values obtained for all variables were $< .05$, which indicated that the data is not normally distributed. Hence non-parametric tests were done to test the hypotheses.

Correlation Analysis of the Study Variables

The Spearman's rho correlation coefficient analysis tested the relationship of the nature of social media use, degree of social media integrated into the habits, and preference to communicate via the social media platforms to the time spent on the social media platforms, self-esteem, and the loneliness of the emerging adults. The results of the Spearman's rho correlation coefficient presented in Table 1 indicated that there is a statistically significant weak positive correlation between the nature of social media usage and the time spent on the social media platforms ($r_s = 0.182, p = <.001$), a statistically significant weak positive correlation between the integration of social media into the habits and the time spent on the social media platforms ($r_s = 0.19, p = <.001$), and a statistically significant weak positive correlation between the preference for communicating via social media platforms and the time spent on the social media platforms ($r_s = 0.102, p = <.041$). Spearman correlation analysis also showed a statistically significant weak negative correlation between the integration of social media into the habits and self-esteem ($r_s = -0.142, p = <.01$).

Relationship of Social Media Use with Gender and Relationship Status

Mann-Whitney U test presented in table 2 result revealed that there is no statistically significant difference between the male and female participants in the time spent on social media platforms ($U = 17440, p = 0.097$), the nature of the social media use ($U = 19269, p = 0.096$), the integration of social media into the habits ($U = 19028, p = 0.793$), and the preference for communicating via social media platforms ($U = 18325, p = 0.376$) and there is no statistically significant difference between the unmarried and married emerging adults in the time spent on the social media platforms ($U = 17440, p = 0.067$), nature of the social media usage ($U = 17021, p = 0.23$), the integration of social media into the habits ($U = 17673, p = 0.538$) and the preference for communicating via social media platforms ($U = 16699, p = 0.132$).

Social Media Use and Self-esteem

The Kruskal–Wallis H test result presented in Table 3 revealed that there is no statistically significant difference between the participants in low, medium, and high levels of self-esteem in the time spent on social media platforms $H(2) = 3.88, p = 0.144$ and the nature of social media use $H(2) = 3.95, p = 0.139$. The analysis also revealed that there is a statically significant difference in the integration of social media into the habits $H(2) = 7.72, p = 0.021$, and the preference for communicating via social media platforms, $H(2) = 5.99, p = 0.05$ of the emerging adults in the low, medium, and high levels of self-esteem.

Mann-Whitney U test post hoc analysis revealed a statistically significant difference in the integration of social media into the habits of the participants between the medium and high levels of self-esteem $U = 12662.5, p = 0.007$. In addition, there was no statistically significant difference in the integration of social media into the habits of emerging adults between low and medium levels of self-esteem, $U = 4992, p = 0.914$, and the participants between low and high levels of self-esteem, $U = 4070, p = 0.116$. A statistically significant difference in the preference for communicating via social media platforms between the participants in low and medium levels of self-esteem $U = 6588, p = 0.023$, and communicating via social media platforms between the participants in low and high levels of self-esteem $U = 3764, p = 0.02$ was observed in the study. Furthermore, there was no statistically significant difference in the preference for communicating via social media platforms by the emerging adults in medium and high levels of self-esteem, $U = 15190, p = 0.983$.

Social Media Use and Loneliness

The Kruskal–Wallis H test result presented in Table 3 revealed that there is a statically significant difference in the time spent on the social media platforms between the emerging adults in low, moderate, moderately high, and high levels of loneliness $H(3) = 15.2, p = 0.006$. In addition the test also revealed no statistically significant difference in the nature of social media use $H(3) = 0.57, p = 0.9$, no statistically significant difference in the degree of social media integrated into the habits $H(3) = 1, p = 0.79$, and no statistically significant difference in the preference for communication via the social media platforms $H(3) = 4, p = 0.24$ between the participants in low, moderate, moderately high, and high levels of loneliness.

Mann-Whitney U test post hoc analysis revealed a statistically significant difference in time spent on social media platforms between the participants with moderately high and high levels of loneliness $U = 9194, p = 0.001$. The post hoc test also revealed that there is no statistically significant difference in the time spent on the social media platforms between the participants with low and moderate levels of loneliness $U = 6692.5, p = 0.195$, between the participants with low and moderately high levels of loneliness $U = 2933, p = 0.173$, between the participants with low and high levels of loneliness $U = 157, p = 0.176$, and between the participants with moderately high and high levels of loneliness $U = 222.5, p = 0.088$.

DISCUSSION

The current study aimed to analyse the relationship of social media use with self-esteem and loneliness of emerging adults. Amongst the respondents $N = 456$, 5 people left the questionnaire incomplete and 46 people were excluded due to their ineligibility to fit into inclusion criteria. 405 emerging adults participated the study comprising 154 male and 251 female participants, who were in the relationship status of 268 single, 35 committed, and 102 married people. The committed and the married people were clubbed together in the analyses as they showed common patterns in their social media use (Lenhart & Duggan, 2014).

This study found a weak positive relationship between the time spent on the social media platforms to the nature of social interactions in social media usage, integration of social media into the social habits by regular use, and the preference for communicating via social media platforms of the emerging adults. Butt (2020) found that though no difference exists in time spent on social media in face-to-face friendship patterns and online friendship patterns, social media use strengthens the social relations and weakens the real-life relationship which suggests that as the present study reveals, the time spent on social media is associated with the nature of social media interactions and the communication preferences.

This study revealed no significant relationship between the time spent on social media platforms and self-esteem. This finding is in line with the study conducted on college students by Armstrong (2020) who argued that self-esteem was probably dependent on the approval of others. However, this finding contrasts with Jan et al. (2017), who found that spending one hour daily on social media results in a decrease of 5.574 score on the Rosenberg Self-esteem scale of an individual. However, it was found that there was a difference in social media use between the participants in low, medium, and high levels of self-esteem, which goes against the findings of a study by Subrahmanyam et al. (2020)

Social Media Integration and Mental Well-Being in Emerging Adulthood

which showed that the quality of interactions via social media was positively associated with self-esteem.

This study revealed no significant relationship between the nature of the social media use, integration of social media integrated into the habits, the preference to communicate via the social media platforms and loneliness. Though, the studies done at a similar time to the present study do not support this finding, the results indicate that the purpose of the social media use of people with different levels of loneliness can determine the effect of social media on its users. Smith et al. (2021) found that depending on the nature and the purpose of its use, social media use can lead to well-being and mitigate loneliness of its users. Magis-Weinberg et al. (2021) suggested that positive online experiences may mitigate loneliness during physical isolation. The study results of Sappington (2020) indicated that the individuals who are high on loneliness, use social media as a proxy for in-person communication and prefer to communicate via social media than communicating personally.

This study revealed that there is a difference in the time spent on the social media platforms between the participants with low and high levels of loneliness and between the other groups a significant difference does not exist. Bonsaksen et al. (2021) observed that the relationship between the time spent on social media platforms and loneliness is differed by the age of the social media users. They found a higher level of loneliness among the participants of younger age who spent more time on social media and a lower level of loneliness among older people who spend more time on social media. Since age-based comparisons are not done in the present study, this study does not reveal the role of the age of the users in the association between the time spend on social media platforms and loneliness.

The present study also revealed that there is no significant difference in the time spent on social media platforms, nature of social media use, degree of social media integrated into their habits, and their preference to communicate via the social media platforms between male and female participants and the married and unmarried participants. Karatsoli and Nathanail (2020) observed no gender differences in the social media engagements on activity planning by young adults. Alzahrani (2016) observes that men spend less time on social networks than women but use the social media more rationally. Sun et al. (2020) observed differences between men and women on the content searched on social media, expression of feelings on social media, and the effect of social media use on their social life. Silver et al. (2020) stated that smartphone use has become common. The availability of high-speed internet at cheap rates has made social media use part of the everyday life of younger and educated adults worldwide, especially in the developing countries, irrespective of gender differences. Himwan et al. (2021) observed that while the unmarried people used internet platforms for recreational purposes, married people used social media for increasing social support which indicate that though there is no difference in the time spend of social media platforms and the patterns of social media use between the people in different relationship status, their purpose of social media use may differ.

The study conducted by Cauberghe et al. (2021) showed that the participants who were feeling lonely were more persuaded to use social media to cope with lacking social contact which supports the social compensation hypothesis. Zhou et al. (2020) observed that the emerging adults with high self-esteem used social media to enhance their already existing friends' circle, which supported the social enhancement hypothesis. As the use and gratification theory suggests, why and how people seek specific media (Eginli & Tas, 2018)

Social Media Integration and Mental Well-Being in Emerging Adulthood

is an important factor determining the influence of social media on the mental health of the users. This study also revealed that the time spent on social media platforms is significantly related to the nature of social media usage, social media integration into the habits, and the preference for communicating via social media platforms of emerging adults. Thus, the outcome of this study supports the theoretical framework of this study.

This study was done in a post COVID – 19 pandemic scenario. During the pandemic, people were in lockdown and shared similar feelings and followed similar behavioural patterns which led to similar forms in social media use (Kaya, 2020) that results in having no difference in the social media use of the emerging adults of different genders and different relationship statuses reflected in the present study. A review of 81 studies during the COVID – 19 pandemic by Tsao et al. (2021) revealed a significant shift in the content searched by the people irrespective of gender and the relationship status on the social media platforms during since the pandemic. Recent studies indicate that individuals increasingly engage with social media to survey public attitudes, detect misinformation, evaluate mental health concerns, forecast emerging social trends, analyze governmental responses to societal challenges, and assess the educational value of health and well-being content. This suggests a notable shift in the functional orientation of social media from primarily entertainment-driven use to a more purposeful and knowledge-oriented engagement. The findings of this study suggest that the change in the content searched and the broadening of the purpose of the social media use is associated to the no statistically significant difference in the time spent on social media platforms, nature of social media use, integration of social media into the habits, and the preference to communicate via the social media platforms by the people with different levels of self-esteem, people with different levels of loneliness, and the people in different genders and the people in different relationship status.

Strengths, Limitations, and Implications

The findings of the present study reveal scope for further research that helps to identify the factors that underlie providing no significant relationship of social media with self-esteem and loneliness in emerging adults. Further studies that focus on the influence of the broadening of the scope of social media platforms on the mental health of the users and advocating the social media use policy based on a healthy social media use behaviour for emerging adults are a need of the time. Age-based comparisons within the group and comparison with other age groups can provide new insights into the association of social media use to the self-esteem and loneliness. The observation that the findings of the present study were done on the working professionals which do not conform with many of the studies conducted at different parts of the world mostly on the college students with similar variables at the similar time of the study and there are few studies conducted on the working professionals, necessitates more studies on the working professionals for the generalizability of the results of the present study.

The present results should be interpreted within their potential limitations. Most effect sizes found in this study were small. So, attention should be paid when concluding practical significance. The data collection was done only through online forms resulting in dropouts and participation by people who do not fit the inclusion criteria. A convenient sampling method was used for data collection, which may affect the external validity of the results. Since the data was collected as a self-report, the risks of social desirability, lack of honesty, and the limitation of the participants for self-assessment are assumed. Because of the constraint of time and resources, the study was conducted in a correlational research

Social Media Integration and Mental Well-Being in Emerging Adulthood

strategy. A quasi-experimental strategy would have helped better to identify the cause-effect relationship between the variables.

The present study suggests that further than communication purposes, the emerging adults use social media for various objectives, and the purpose of the social media use is associated to the influence of the social media use on the mental health of the users. It is an essential piece of information for those who use social media for providing mental health support and using social media for marketing their products to identify the needs of the people and make them in the best accessible way possible so that people will find their service and products when they need it. The findings of the present study would help the practitioner and therapists to work with the clients with misuse or overuse of social media to begin by changing the content that the clients seek on social media platforms than all of a sudden cutting down the time spend on social media so that the clients may not feel frustrated at the beginning of the therapy itself. Though studies indicated a rapid increase in the time spent on social media platforms since the COVID 19 lockdown in the young people in India, the present study revealed that the increased social media use was not significantly related to the self-esteem and loneliness of the emerging adults, which implies that social media serves as emotional support that helps people not to fall into the feeling of loneliness or poor self-esteem even if they have fewer opportunities for face to face interactions. Based on this finding, research can further explore how social media can be used to mitigate loneliness, poor self-esteem, and other emotional disturbances faced by emerging adults in their life transitions.

CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to explore the relationship of social media use to the self-esteem and loneliness of emerging adults. The outcome of this research challenges the conventional impression of the negative influence of social media on the self-esteem and loneliness of emerging adults with the results that social media use does not have a statistically significant relationship to the self-esteem and loneliness of the emerging adults either male or female, married or unmarried. Though the time spent on social media platforms does not affect the self-esteem and loneliness of the emerging adults, the time spent on social media is significantly related to the nature of social media usage, integration of social media into the habits, and the preference for communicating via social media platforms which suggests that the purpose of the social media use is associated to the influence of social media to the mental health of the users. The change in the purpose of the use of social media suggests changing trends in the use of social media and how it is related to the self-esteem and loneliness of emerging adults.

REFERENCES

- Abi-Jaoude, E., Naylor, K. T., & Pignatiello, A. (2020). Smartphones, social media use and Youth Mental Health. *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, 192(6). <https://doi.org/10.1503/cmaj.190434>
- Alzahrani, F. (2016). Communication difference between men and women in social media. *International Journal of Scientific & Engineering Research*, 7(4), 981–982.
- Andreassen, C. S., Pallesen, S., & Griffiths, M. D. (2017). The relationship between addictive use of social media, narcissism, and self-esteem: Findings from a large national survey. *Addictive Behaviors*, 64, 287–293. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.addbeh.2016.03.006>
- Apaolaza, V., Hartmann, P., Medina, E., Barrutia, J. M., & Echebarria, C. (2013). The relationship between socializing on the Spanish online networking site Tuenti and

- teenagers' subjective wellbeing: The roles of self-esteem and loneliness. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 29(4), 1282–1289. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2013.01.002>
- Armstrong, M. (2020). *Investigating the relationship between time spent on social media, self-esteem and loneliness in its users* (thesis). National College of Ireland, Ireland.
- Arnett, J. J. (2006). Emerging adulthood: Understanding the new way of coming of age. *Emerging Adults in America: Coming of Age in the 21st Century.*, 3–19. <https://doi.org/10.1037/11381-001>
- Bergagna, E., & Tartaglia, S. (2018). Self-esteem, social comparison, and Facebook use. *Europe's Journal of Psychology*, 14(4), 831–845. <https://doi.org/10.5964/ejop.v14i4.1592>
- Bonsaksen, T., Ruffolo, M., Leung, J., Price, D., Thygesen, H., Schoultz, M., & Geirdal, A. O. (2021). Loneliness and its association with social media use during the COVID-19 Outbreak. *Social Media + Society*, 7(3), 205630512110338. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051211033821>
- Butt, A. (2020). University students' preference regarding social media content, internet usage and online friendship patterns. *Asian Association of Open Universities Journal*, 15(2), 239–249. <https://doi.org/10.1108/aaouj-01-2020-0002>
- Cauberghe, V., Van Wesenbeeck, I., De Jans, S., Hudders, L., & Ponnet, K. (2021). How adolescents use social media to cope with feelings of loneliness and anxiety during COVID-19 lockdown. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 24(4), 250–257. <https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2020.0478>
- Dean, B. (2020, August 12). *How many people use social media in 2020? (65+ Statistics)*. Backlinko. <https://backlinko.com/social-media-users>.
- Deckx, L., van den Akker, M., & Buntinx, F. (2014). Risk factors for loneliness in patients with cancer: A systematic literature review and meta-analysis. *European Journal of Oncology Nursing*, 18(5), 466–477. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ejon.2014.05.002>
- Duggan, M. (2020, July 31). *Is social media the new wingman for singles?* Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/11/12/is-social-media-the-new-wingman-for-singles/>.
- Eginli, A., & Tas, N. (2018). Interpersonal communication in social networking sites: An investigation in the framework of uses and gratification theory. *Online Journal of Communication and Media Technologies*, 8(2). <https://doi.org/10.12973/ojcm/2355>
- Ganbold, S. (2022). *Topic: Social media in the Asia-Pacific region*. Statista. Retrieved May 1, 2022, from <https://www.statista.com/topics/6606/social-media-in-asia-pacific/#dosierKeyfigures>
- Garcia, J. A., y Olmos, F. C., Matheu, M. L., & Carreño, T. P. (2019). Self-esteem levels vs global scores on the Rosenberg self-esteem scale. *Heliyon*, 5(3). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2019.e01378>
- Gaurav, K., & Dheer, S. (2018). Social media usage at workplace - An empirical investigation. *Sumedha Journal of Management*, 7(1), 144–156.
- Gull, H., Iqbal, S. Z., Al Qahtani, S. H., Alassaf, R. A., & Kamaleldin, M. H. (2019). Impact of social media usage on married couple behavior a pilot study in Middle East. *International Journal of Applied Engineering Research*, 14(6), 1368–1378.
- Haynes, I. (2021, December 14). *Significant increase in social media usage under covid-19: Here's what that means for businesses*. Insil Homepage. Retrieved May 1, 2022, from <https://www.insil.com.au/post/significant-increase-in-social-media-usage-under-covid-19-heres-what-that-means-for-businesses/>
- Himawan, K. K., Underwood, M., Bambling, M., & Edirippulige, S. (2021). Being single when marriage is the norm: Internet use and the well-being of never-married adults in Indonesia. *Current Psychology*, 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-021-01367-6>

- IBM Corp. Released 2021. IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, Version 28.0 (Trial). Armonk, NY: IBM Corp.
- Ingolfssdottir, H. (2017). *The relationship between social media use and self-esteem: gender difference and the effects of parental support*. Retrieved January 1, 2021, from <https://skemman.is/bitstream/1946/28394/1/>
- Jan, M., Soomro, S. A., & Ahmad, N. (2017). Impact of social media on self-esteem. *European Scientific Journal, ESJ, 13*(23), 329–341. <https://doi.org/10.19044/esj.2017.v13n23p329>
- Jenkins-Guarnieri, M. A., Wright, S. L., & Johnson, B. (2013). Development and validation of a social media use integration scale. *Psychology of Popular Media Culture, 2*(1), 38–50. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0030277>
- Johnson, J. E. (2020). *Social media use, social comparison, and loneliness* (dissertation). ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Karatsoli, M., & Nathanail, E. (2020). Examining gender differences of social media use for activity planning and travel choices. *European Transport Research Review, 12*(1), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12544-020-00436-4>
- Katz, E., Blumler, J. G., & Gurevitch, M. (1973). Uses and gratifications research. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 37*(4), 509. <https://doi.org/10.1086/268109>
- Kaya, T. (2020). The changes in the effects of social media use of Cypriots due to COVID-19 pandemic. *Technology in Society, 63*, 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techsoc.2020.101380>
- Kaya, T., & Bicen, H. (2016). The effects of social media on students' behaviors; Facebook as a case study. *Computers in Human Behavior, 59*, 374–379. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.02.036>
- Keelery, S. (2021, June 2). *India: Covid-19 impact on social media app usage 2020*. statista. Retrieved July 8, 2021, from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1114459/india-coronavirus-impact-on-weekly-usage-time-of-social-networking-apps/>.
- Kim, J., LaRose, R., & Peng, W. (2009). Loneliness as the cause and the effect of problematic internet use: The relationship between internet use and psychological well-being. *CyberPsychology & Behavior, 12*(4), 451–455. <https://doi.org/10.1089/cpb.2008.0327>
- Kim, K.-S., Sin, S.-C. J., & Tsai, T.-I. (2014). Individual differences in social media use for information seeking. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship, 40*(2), 171–178. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2014.03.001>
- Kimbrough, A. M., Guadagno, R. E., Muscanell, N. L., & Dill, J. (2013). Gender differences in mediated communication: Women connect more than do men. *Computers in Human Behavior, 29*(3), 896–900. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2012.12.005>
- Krasnova, H., Veltri, N. F., Eling, N., & Buxmann, P. (2017). Why men and women continue to use social networking sites: The role of gender differences. *The Journal of Strategic Information Systems, 26*(4), 261–284. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsis.2017.01.004>
- Lenhart, A., & Duggan, M. (2014, February 11). *Main Report*. Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech. <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2014/02/11/main-report-30/>.
- Lenhart, A., & Duggan, M. (2020, May 30). *Couples, the Internet, and Social Media*. Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech. <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2014/02/11>
- Lisitsa, E., Benjamin, K. S., Chun, S. K., Skalisky, J., Hammond, L. E., & Mezulis, A. H. (2020). Loneliness among young adults during covid-19 pandemic: The mediational

- roles of social media use and social support seeking. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 39(8), 708–726. <https://doi.org/10.1521/jscp.2020.39.8.708>
- Madhushree. (2022, February 26). *Objectives of social media: Its importance and purpose (2022)*. IIM SKILLS. Retrieved May 1, 2022, from <https://iimskills.com/objectives-of-social-media-its-importance-and-purposes/>
- Magis-Weinberg, L., Gys, C. L., Berger, E. L., Domoff, S. E., & Dahl, R. E. (2021). Positive and negative online experiences and loneliness in Peruvian adolescents during the COVID-19 lockdown. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 31(3), 717–733. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jora.12666>
- Munsey, C. (2006). *Emerging adults: The in-between age*. Monitor on Psychology. Retrieved September 12, 2021, from <https://www.apa.org/monitor/jun06/emerging>.
- Phu, B., & Gow, A. J. (2019). Facebook use and its association with subjective happiness and loneliness. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 92, 151–159. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2018.11.020>
- Quinn, K. (2018). Cognitive effects of social media use: A case of older adults. *Social Media + Society*, 4(3), 205630511878720. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305118787203>
- R Core Team (2020). *R: A Language and environment for statistical computing*. (Version 4.0) [Computer software]. Retrieved from <https://cran.r-project.org>. (R packages retrieved from MRAN snapshot 2020-08-24).
- Riehm, K. E., Feder, K. A., Tormohlen, K. N., Crum, R. M., Young, A. S., Green, K. M., Pacek, L. R., La Flair, L. N., & Mojtabai, R. (2019). Associations between time spent using social media and internalizing and externalizing problems among US youth. *JAMA Psychiatry*, 76(12), 1266. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2019.2325>
- Rosenberg, M. (1965). *Society and the adolescent self-image*. Princeton University Press.
- Russell, D. W. (1996). UCLA loneliness scale (Version 3): Reliability, validity, and factor structure. *Journal of personality assessment*, 66(1), 20-40.
- Ruths, D., & Pfeffer, J. (2014). Social Media for large studies of behavior. *Science*, 346(6213), 1063–1064. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.346.6213.1063>
- Sappington, L. (2020). *Through the screen: Examining peer relationships, social anxiety, loneliness, and social media in undergraduates*. eGrove. Retrieved October 24, 2021, from https://egrove.olemiss.edu/hon_thesis/1522/.
- Scissors, L., Burke, M., & Wengrovitz, S. (2016). What's in a Like? *Proceedings of the 19th ACM Conference on Computer-Supported Cooperative Work & Social Computing*. <https://doi.org/10.1145/2818048.2820066>
- Silver, L., Smith, A., Johnson, C., Jiang, J., Anderson, M., & Rainie, L. (2020, August 25). *Use of smartphones and social media is common across most emerging economies*. Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech. Retrieved October 24, 2021, from <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2019/03/07/use-of-smartphones-and-social-media-is-common-across-most-emerging-economies/>.
- Smith, D., Leonis, T., & Anandavalli, S. (2021). Belonging and loneliness in cyberspace: Impacts of social media on adolescents' well-being. *Australian Journal of Psychology*, 73(1), 12–23. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00049530.2021.1898914>
- Stokes, J. E., & Moorman, S. M. (2017). Influence of the social network on married and unmarried older adults' mental health. *The Gerontologist*, 58(6), 1109–1113. <https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gnx151>
- Subrahmanyam, K., Frison, E., & Michikyan, M. (2020). The relation between face-to-face and digital interactions and self-esteem: A daily diary study. *Human Behavior and Emerging Technologies*, 2(2), 116–127. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hbe2.187>

Social Media Integration and Mental Well-Being in Emerging Adulthood

- Sun, B., Mao, H., & Yin, C. (2020). Male and female users' differences in online technology community based on text mining. *Frontiers in Psychology, 11*, 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.00806>
- The jamovi project (2021). *jamovi*. (Version 1.6) [Computer Software]. Retrieved from <https://www.jamovi.org>.
- Thomas, V., Carr, B. B., Azmitia, M., & Whittaker, S. (2020). Alone and online: Understanding the relationships between social media, solitude, and psychological adjustment. *Psychology of Popular Media, 9*(1). <https://doi.org/10.1037/ppm0000287>
- Tsao, S.-F., Chen, H., Tisseverasinghe, T., Yang, Y., Li, L., & Butt, Z. A. (2021). What social media told us in the time of covid-19: A scoping review. *The Lancet Digital Health, 3*(3). [https://doi.org/10.1016/s2589-7500\(20\)30315-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/s2589-7500(20)30315-0)
- Ulusoy, S. G., & Atar, O. G. (2020). Reflection of social media addiction on family communication processes. *Adam Akademi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi, 10*(2), 425-445.
- Valkenburg, P. M., Schouten, A. P., & Peter, J. (2005). Adolescents' identity experiments on the internet. *New Media & Society, 7*(3), 383–402. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444805052282>
- Youssef, L., Hallit, R., Kheir, N., Obeid, S., & Hallit, S. (2020). Social Media Use Disorder and loneliness: Any association between the two? results of a cross-sectional study among Lebanese adults. *BMC Psychology, 8*(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-020-00421-5>
- Zhou, Y., Zhang, Z., Wang, K., Chen, S., Zhou, M., & Zhang, J. (2020). Personality and emerging adults' friend selection on social networking sites: A Social Network Analysis Perspective. *PsyCh Journal, 10*(1), 62–75. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pchj.404>

Acknowledgment

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Thomas, P. & Mathew, S. (2026). Social Media Integration and Mental Well-Being in Emerging Adulthood. *International Journal of Indian Psychology, 14*(2), 1018-1032. DIP:18.01.098.20261402, DOI:10.25215/1402.098

TABLES

Table 1 Spearman Correlation Analysis Showing the Relationship of Social Media Use to the Time Spent on Social Media Platforms, Self-Esteem, and Loneliness of the Emerging Adults

| | | Time | SM- Integrati on | Emotion al Connecti on | Social Routin es | Self- estee m | Loneline ss |
|---------------------------------|----------------|--------|------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| Time | Spearman's rho | — | | | | | |
| | p-value | — | | | | | |
| SM- Integrati on | Spearman's rho | 0.182* | — | | | | |
| | p-value | <.001 | — | | | | |
| Emotion | Spearman's rho | 0.19** | 0.929*** | — | | | |

Social Media Integration and Mental Well-Being in Emerging Adulthood

| al | n's rho | * | | | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------|--------|----------|----------|--------|-----------|
| Connecti on | p-value | < .001 | < .001 | — | | |
| Social Routines | Spearma n's rho | 0.102* | 0.759*** | 0.496*** | — | |
| | p-value | 0.041 | < .001 | < .001 | — | |
| Self- esteem | Spearma n's rho | -0.065 | -0.072 | -0.142** | 0.07 | — |
| | p-value | 0.192 | 0.147 | 0.004 | 0.157 | — |
| Loneline ss | Spearma n's rho | 0.091 | 0.019 | 0.063 | -0.083 | -0.511*** |
| | p-value | 0.068 | 0.705 | 0.202 | 0.096 | < .001 |

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$; SM-Integration = Social Media Use Integration Scale; Emotional Connection = Social Integration and Emotional Connection subscale; Social Routines = Integration into Social Routines subscale; Self-esteem = Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale; Loneliness = UCLA Loneliness Scale; Time = Time spent on social media platforms in minute.

Table 2 Mann-Whitney U Test Analysis Showing the Difference in the Time Spent on Social Media Platforms and the Nature of Social Media Usage of the Emerging Adults in Different Genders and in Different Relationship Status

| Variables | Group | <i>M(SD)</i> | <i>Mdn</i> | <i>IQR</i> | <i>Q3-Q1</i> | <i>U</i> | <i>p</i> |
|---------------------------------|-----------|-------------------|------------|------------|--------------|----------|----------|
| Time | Male | 139 (104) | 120 | 120 | 148 | 17440 | 0.097 |
| | Female | 169 (151) | 120 | 180 | 140 | | |
| | Unmarried | 155.9 (141.76) | 120 | 180 | 120 | 17440 | 0.067 |
| | Married | 124.7 (95.44) | 120 | 120 | 180 | | |
| SM-Integration | Male | 31.5 (6.07) | 32 | 7 | 7 | 19269 | 0.96 |
| | Female | 31.7 (5.96) | 32 | 7 | 7 | | |
| | Unmarried | 31.4 (5.52) | 32 | 6 | 6 | 17021 | 0.23 |
| | Married | 32 (6.84) | 33 | 9 | 9 | | |
| Emotional Connection | Male | 17.3 (4.36) | 18 | 5 | 5 | 19028 | 0.793 |
| | Female | 17.6 (4.2) | 18 | 5 | 5 | | |
| | Unmarried | 17.5 (3.97) | 18 | 5 | 5 | 17673 | 0.538 |
| | Married | 17.6 (4.79) | 18 | 7 | 7 | | |
| Social Routines | Male | 14.2 (2.54) | 14.5 | 3 | 3 | 18325 | 0.376 |
| | Female | 14 (2.4) | 14 | 3 | 3 | | |
| | Unmarried | 14 (2.32) | 14 | 2 | 2 | 16699 | 0.132 |
| | Married | 14.3 (2.68) | 14 | 3 | 3 | | |
| Self-esteem | Male | 29.3 (4.1) | 29 | 4 | 4 | 19092 | 0.836 |
| | Female | 29.3 (4.16) | 29 | 5 | 5 | | |
| | Unmarried | 28.9 (3.97) | 29 | 5 | 5 | 15871 | 0.025 |
| | Married | 30 (4.33) | 29 | 5 | 5 | | |
| Loneliness | Male | 43.4 (8.55) | 44 | 13 | 13 | 18515 | 0.478 |
| | Female | 44.2 (9.38) | 45 | 12 | 12 | | |
| | Unmarried | 44.8 (8.8) | 45 | 11 | 11 | 15481 | 0.01 |
| | Married | 42.2 (9.36) | 43 | 13 | 13.2 | | |

Note. *M* = Mean; *SD* = Standard deviation; *IQR* = Interquartile Range; *Q3 - Q1* = Interquartile Range; *U* = Difference between the two rank totals.

Social Media Integration and Mental Well-Being in Emerging Adulthood

Table 3 *Kruskal-Wallis H Test Showing the Differences in the Time Spent on Social Media Platforms and the Nature of Social Media Usage of the Emerging Adults in Low, Medium and High Levels of Self-esteem and Low, Moderate, Moderately High, High levels of Loneliness*

| Variables | Groups | <i>n</i> | <i>Mdn</i> | <i>IQR</i> | <i>Q3-Q1</i> | <i>H</i> | <i>df</i> | <i>p</i> | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|------------|------------|--------------|----------|-----------|----------|-------|
| Time | Low Self-esteem | 56 | 120 | 143 | 60 | 3.88 | 2 | 0.144 | |
| | Medium Self-esteem | 180 | 120 | 180 | 80 | | | | |
| | High Self-esteem | 169 | 120 | 120 | 180 | | | | |
| | Low Loneliness | Low Loneliness | 65 | 120 | 100 | 120 | 15.2 | 3 | 0.002 |
| | | Moderate Loneliness | 230 | 120 | 120 | 120 | | | |
| | | Moderately High Loneliness | 103 | 120 | 180 | 160 | | | |
| | | High Loneliness | 7 | 100 | 75 | 30 | | | |
| SM- Integration | Low Self-esteem | 56 | 32 | 6.75 | 6.7 | 3.95 | 2 | 0.139 | |
| | Medium Self-esteem | 180 | 32 | 6 | 6 | | | | |
| | High Self-esteem | 169 | 32 | 8 | 8 | | | | |
| | Low Loneliness | Low Loneliness | 65 | 32 | 9 | 9 | 0.57 | 3 | 0.9 |
| | | Moderate Loneliness | 230 | 32 | 6 | 6 | | | |
| | | Moderately High Loneliness | 103 | 32 | 7 | 7 | | | |
| | | High Loneliness | 7 | 28 | 6 | 6 | | | |
| Emotional Connection | Low Self-esteem | 56 | 18 | 6 | 6 | 7.72 | 2 | 0.021 | |
| | Medium Self-esteem | 180 | 18 | 4 | 4 | | | | |
| | High Self-esteem | 169 | 17 | 7 | 7 | | | | |
| | Low Loneliness | Low Loneliness | 65 | 17 | 7 | 7 | 1 | 3 | 0.79 |
| | | Moderate Loneliness | 230 | 18 | 5 | 5 | | | |
| | | Moderately High Loneliness | 103 | 18 | 5.5 | 5 | | | |
| | | High Loneliness | 7 | 15 | 6 | 6 | | | |
| Social Routines | Low Self-esteem | 56 | 14 | 3 | 3 | 5.99 | 2 | 0.05 | |
| | Medium Self-esteem | 180 | 14 | 3 | 3 | | | | |
| | High Self-esteem | 169 | 15 | 2 | 2 | | | | |
| | Low Loneliness | Low Loneliness | 65 | 15 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 0.24 |
| | | Moderate Loneliness | 230 | 14.5 | 3 | 3 | | | |
| | | Moderately High Loneliness | 103 | 14 | 3 | 3 | | | |
| | | High Loneliness | 7 | 14 | 3 | 3 | | | |

Note. *H* = Kruskal Wallis *H*; *df* = degrees of freedom