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What's Feeding Your Monster? A Look at Narcissistic Tendency and Low Self-Esteem as Driving Forces behind the Growth of Social Media Dependency

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ABSTRACT

In current times social media is considered a necessity and it is often normal for people to be dependent on them. With the arrival of these platforms, it has created an opportunity for people to express themselves in a way that they could not otherwise. However this has also led to an addiction in some people and has proved to be disruptive of daily life activities. But the expression of this addiction to social media is not similar in all cases. The differences in behavioral and personality patterns manifest themselves as social media addiction. This may be rooted in narcissistic tendency as a way of portraying themselves as superior to their peers and a need to feed their ego; or low self esteem as a way of seeking approval and a need to boost their self-image. To test this hypothesis and to estimate the correlation between the three factors of social media addiction, narcissistic tendency and low self esteem we used the following questionnaires – Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale, Narcissistic Personality Inventory-16 and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale. The questionnaires were administered to 290 persons (104 males and 186 females) in the age group of 15 – 50 years. It was found that both males and females exhibited social media addiction with females having a higher tendency to be narcissistic and lower self esteem.

Keywords: *Social media addiction, Narcissistic tendency, Low self esteem*

With the rise in use of social media and with the coming of new applications such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, etc. there is a significant rise in addiction. Though there are many

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reasons for social media addiction such as loneliness, leisure activity, boredom, for social interaction; in our study we set out to find the contribution of self esteem and narcissistic tendency to social media addiction.

Social media addiction has been described as "being overly concerned about social media, driven by an uncontrollable motivation to log on to or use social media, and devoting so much time and effort to social media that it impairs other important life areas".

Narcissistic tendency has been described as extreme selfishness, with a grandiose view of one's own talents and a craving for admiration, as characterizing a personality type.

Self Esteem – psychology defines that self-esteem reflects a person's overall subjective emotional evaluation of his or her own worth. It is a judgment of oneself as well as an attitude toward the self,

1. ***Narcissistic tendency and social media addiction:*** People with a tendency to be narcissistic project themselves as superior and expect respect and adoration. Social media addiction is a tool which they can use to further propagate their superior image of themselves. The study attempts to show the positive correlation between narcissistic tendency and social media addiction i.e. high tendency to be narcissistic may lead to addictive use of social media.

2. ***Self – esteem and social media addiction:*** People with average or high levels of self esteem have a secure self image so their reasons for social media addiction may not stem from self esteem issues. Whereas people with low self esteem may use social media as a way of seeking approval or to boost their self image. The study attempts to show the inverse correlation between self esteem and social media addiction i.e. low self esteem may lead to addictive use of social media.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. Andreassen CS, Pallesen S, Griffiths MD. A cross-sectional convenient sample of 23,532 Norwegians completed an open web-based survey including the Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS), the Narcissistic Personality Inventory-16, and the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale. Overall, the study suggests that basic demographics, narcissism, and self-esteem are all associated with addictive use of social media. Addictive social media use was related to being female, being single, lower age groups, lower education, lower socioeconomic status, narcissistic traits, and a negative self-concept.

2. Alexandra Ehrenberg, Suzanna Juckes, Katherine M. White, and Shari P. Walsh. Cyber Psychology & Behavior. December 2008. The role of personality and self-esteem were examined in university students' ($N = 200$) use of communication technologies. More disagreeable individuals spent increased time on calls, whereas extraverted and neurotic individuals reported increased time spent text messaging. More disagreeable individuals

and those with lower self-esteem spent increased time using instant messaging (IM). For addictive tendencies related to communication technologies, more neurotic individuals reported stronger mobile phone addictive tendencies, while more disagreeable individuals and those with lower self-esteem reported stronger IM addictive tendencies.

3. Impact of facebook addiction on narcissistic behavior and self-esteem among students. Malik Khan, Department of Psychology, University of Sargodha

   A correlational study was conducted from February to March 2013 at the Department of Psychology, University of Sargodha, Punjab, Pakistan. Using convenient sampling, two equal groups of male and female students were enrolled from different departments of the university. Bergen Facebook Addiction Scale, Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale and Rosenberg's Self-esteem Scale were used for evaluation. SPSS 17 was used for statistical analysis.

   Of the 200 subjects in the study, 100 each were males and females. Facebook addiction was positively correlated with narcissism($r=0.20$; $p<0.05$) and negatively with self-esteem($r=-0.18$; $p<0.05$). Relationship between narcissism and self-esteem was non-significant($r=0.05$; $p>0.05$). Facebook addiction was a significant predictor of narcissistic behavior ($b=0.202$; $p<0.001$) and low self-esteem ($b=-0.18$; $p<0.001$). There were no significant gender differences in the three variables.

METHODOLOGY

Aim: To study the relationship between the three variables of social media addiction, narcissistic tendency and self esteem.

Hypothesis

1. There will be no significant relationship between social media addiction and narcissistic tendency.
2. There will be no significant relationship between social media addiction and self esteem.
3. There will be no significant relationship between narcissistic tendency and self esteem.
4. There will be no significant difference in the relationship between social media addiction and narcissistic tendency among males and females.
5. There will be no significant difference in the relationship between social media addiction and self esteem among males and females.
6. There will be no significant difference in the relationship between narcissistic tendency and self esteem among males and females.
7. There will be no significant difference in social media addiction among males and females.
8. There will be no significant difference in narcissistic tendency among males and females.
9. There will be no significant difference in self esteem among males and females.

Procedure

Individuals were invited to participate in a web – survey that was distributed via social media websites. By clicking on the link that was given, the participants were provided with basic information on the topic of the study which was – "This is a study on the link between social media use and different personality patterns". The received responses were then scored as per the scoring key of the respective questionnaires. Then the correlation between social media addiction and narcissistic tendency, and social media addiction and self esteem was statistically analyzed.

Participants

The sample had 290 participants to whom the questionnaire was distributed based upon 'snowball sampling' method. The range of age that was taken for the study was 15 – 50 years with a mean age of 23.5 years. The sample represented a broad range of occupations, economic background, educational background and various careers.

Questionnaires

The *Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS)* is a modified version of the previously validated Bergen Facebook Addiction Scale (BFAS; Andreassen et al., 2012). The modification involves using the words 'social media' instead of the word 'Facebook', with social media being defined as "Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and the like" in the instructions. The scale is anchored in general addiction theory, and operationalises social media addiction according to six basic addiction symptoms noted earlier (i.e., salience, conflict, mood modification, withdrawal, tolerance, and relapse). All questions concern experiences occurring over the past year, and are rated on a 5-point likert scale spanning from very rarely (1) to very often (5) (e.g., "How often during the last year have you become restless or troubled if you have been prohibited from using social media?"). The items correspond with diagnostic addiction criteria.

The *Narcissistic Personality Inventory-16 (NPI-16)* is a shortened version of the original 40-item NPI (Raskin & Terry, 1988). The NPI-16 comprises 16 items assessing subclinical narcissism (Ames, Rose, & Anderson, 2006). Scores comprise ratings on a 5-point likert scale using anchors of strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) (e.g., "I am apt to show off if I get the chance"). This scale is a uni-dimensional measure, thus the higher the total score, the more narcissistic the individual is.

The *Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale* is a 10-item scale for assessing levels of self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965). All statements are rated on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree (0) to strongly disagree (3). The scale measures both positive and negative feelings about the self (e.g., "All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure" or "I am able to do things as well as most other people"). The higher the overall score, the higher the self-esteem.

RESULTS

Table – I shows the mean and standard deviation of the sample for the variables – social media addiction, narcissistic tendency and self-esteem.

GENDER	Social media addiction Mean	Social media addiction SD	Self esteem Mean	Self esteem SD	Narcissistic tendency Mean	Narcissistic tendency SD
Females	3.42	1.75	28.10	4.98	5.70	2.32
Males	3.41	1.66	29.38	4.21	4.81	2.69
TOTAL MEAN	3.415	-	28.74	-	5.255	-

Table – I shows the mean scores and the standard deviation scores of 290 participants on the questionnaires BSMAS, RSES and NPI-16.

The total mean score obtained on the BSMAS questionnaire for the sample was 3.415. The mean score obtained on the BSMAS questionnaire for females was of 3.42 and 3.41 for males. The standard deviation score was 1.75 for females and 1.66 for males.

The total mean score obtained on the questionnaire RSES was 28.74. The mean score obtained on the questionnaire RSES was 28.10 for females and 29.38 for males. The standard deviation scores were of 4.92 for females and 4.21 for males.

The total mean score obtained for the questionnaire NPI-16 was 5.255. The mean scores obtained on the NPI-16 questionnaire was of 5.70 for females and 4.81 for males. The standard deviation scores were of 2.32 for females and 2.69 for males.

Table II shows the Spearman's correlation coefficient between the variables - Social Media Addiction and Narcissistic Tendency, Social Media Addiction and Self-Esteem, and narcissistic tendency and self esteem.

Rho value for social media addiction and narcissistic tendency	Rho value for social media addiction and self esteem	Rho value for narcissistic tendency and self esteem
0.097	-0.423	0.136

Table – II shows the Spearman's correlation scores between Social media addiction and narcissism, and social media addiction and self esteem.

The Rho value for social media addiction and narcissism was 0.097 for the sample. This indicates a negligible positive correlation between social media addiction and narcissism. This

implies that people with a tendency to be narcissistic may use social media as a way of self promotion. This is evident in the sample only up to an extent, as a correlation does exist between the two variables of social media addiction and narcissistic tendency but it is negligible.

Thus, the hypothesis-1 – "There will be no significant relationship between social media addiction and narcissistic tendency" is accepted.

The Rho value for social media addiction and self esteem was -0.423 for the sample. This indicates a negative correlation between social media addiction and self esteem. This implies that people with low self esteem may use social media as a way of seeking approval from others. This is evident in the sample.

Thus, the hypothesis-2 – "There will be no significant relationship between social media addiction and self esteem" is not accepted.

The Rho value for Narcissistic tendency and self esteem was 0.136 for the sample. This indicates a negligible positive correlation between narcissistic tendency and self esteem. This implies that people with a tendency to be narcissistic do have a relatively high self esteem. This is evident in the sample only up to an extent, as a correlation does exist between the two variables of narcissistic tendency and self esteem but it is negligible.

Thus, the hypothesis-3 – "There will be no significant relationship between narcissistic tendency and self esteem" is not accepted

Table – III shows the Spearman's correlation coefficient between the variables – Social Media Addiction and Narcissistic Tendency, Social Media Addiction and Self-Esteem, and narcissistic tendency and self esteem for the two groups of Females and Males

GENDER	Rho value for Social media addiction and Narcissistic tendency	Rho value for Social media addiction and Self – esteem	Rho value for narcissistic tendency and Self – esteem
Females	0.137	-0.50	0.13
Males	0.034	- 0.30	0.101

Table – III shows the Spearman's correlation scores between Social media addiction and narcissism, social media addiction and self esteem, and narcissistic tendency and self esteem.
The Rho value for social media addiction and narcissism was 0.137 for females and 0.034 for males. This indicates a negligible positive correlation between social media addiction and narcissism for both groups but the female group has a considerably greater Rho value than the male group. This may imply that females have a greater tendency to be narcissistic which may be a major contributor to their social media addiction. This also gives rise to the possibility that males may have other reasons such as – loneliness, boredom, to pass time, etc. along with narcissistic tendency that contribute to their social media addiction.

Thus, the hypothesis-4 – "There will be no significant difference in the relation between social media addiction and narcissistic tendency among males and females" is not accepted.
The Rho value for social media addiction and self esteem was – 0.50 for females and – 0.30 for males. This indicates a moderate negative correlation between social media addiction and self esteem. This implies that low self esteem is a major contributor to social media addiction in both groups but in the female group the variables of low self esteem and social media addiction were found to have a stronger correlation. This may imply that males have reasons other than low self esteem that contribute to their social media addiction.

Thus, the hypothesis-5 – "There will be no significant difference in the relation between social media addiction and self esteem among males and females" is not accepted.
The Rho value for narcissistic tendency and self esteem was 0.13 for females and 0.101 for males. This indicates a negligible positive correlation between narcissistic tendency and self esteem. This implies that people in both the groups with a high tendency to be narcissistic also have a high self esteem but this is only evident in the sample up to an extent as there is a negligible positive correlation.

Thus, the hypothesis-6 – "There will be no significant difference in the relation between narcissistic tendency and self esteem among males and females" is not accepted.

Table IV shows the U and P values for Mann Whitney U test which tests the significant difference between males and females for the variables Social media addiction, narcissistic tendency and self esteem.

VARIABLES	U value	P value	At 0.05	At 0.01
Social Media Addiction	9653	0.48803	Not significant	Not significant
Narcissistic tendency	7612	.00262	Significant	Significant
Self Esteem	8489.5	0.04182	Significant	Not Significant

Table IV shows the U values and P values for Mann Whitney U test. The U and P value for the variable social media addiction was found to be not significant at both the levels. This implies that both the groups – male and female, do not exhibit any differences in their levels of social media addiction.

Thus, the hypothesis-7 – "There will be no significant difference in social media addiction among males and females" is accepted.
The U and P value for the variable narcissistic tendency was found to be significant at both the levels. This implies that there is a significant difference in the levels of narcissistic tendency

between the two groups of male and female, with females having a higher tendency to be narcissistic as seen in the difference in the mean value in table – I .

Thus, the hypothesis-8 – "There will be no significant difference in narcissistic tendency among males and females" is not accepted.

The U and P value for the variable self esteem was found to be significant at the 0.05 level. This implies that there is a significant difference in the levels of self esteem between the two groups of male and females, with females having a lower self esteem as seen in the difference in the mean value in table-I

Thus, the hypothesis-9 – "There will be no significant difference in self esteem among males and females" is not accepted.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

From the study, it is evident that regardless of gender, the sample exhibits social media addiction. It is also observed that there exists a relation between the variables – Social media addiction, Narcissistic tendency and Self esteem. In females there exists a positive correlation between social media addiction and narcissistic tendency and a negative correlation between social media addiction and self esteem. This implies that females use social media platforms mostly to feed their ego or to seek approval from others. In males there exists a negligible positive correlation between social media addiction and narcissistic tendency and a negative correlation between social media addiction and self esteem. However the relationships discussed above are weak in males when compared to females. This indicates that though males are addicted to social media their reasons may include factors other than narcissistic tendency and low self esteem, such as boredom, loneliness, to pass time, etc. From the study, it was also found that there exists a negligible positive correlation between narcissistic tendency and self esteem in both groups of males and females.

Conflict of Interests: The author declared no conflict of interests.

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