



A CORRELATIONAL STUDY ON THE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION ON LONELINESS AMONG YOUNG ADULTS

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Abstract: To look at the relationship between young individuals emotions of loneliness and social media addiction. The study comprised individuals from all around India who were between the ages of 19 to 26. The majority of participants are from north-eastern India, specifically Nagaland. The remaining were dispersed using an online technique among the states of India, encompassing the north, south, and north-east areas. There were 159 young people in the sample, ranging in age from 19 to 26. A target population consisting of 60 men and 80 women. Young individuals were given questionnaires via Google form as part of the data collection procedure.

The study provides evidence supporting the hypothesis that higher levels of social media addiction are associated with increased feelings of loneliness among young adults. The findings underscores the need for further research into the mechanisms underlying this relationship and suggests implications for interventions aimed at promoting healthier social media habits to mitigate potential negative impacts on mental well-being, particularly in terms of loneliness.

Keywords: Social Media addiction, Loneliness, young adults, online, well being, India.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the digital era, social media has become an essential aspect of the daily lives of young adults, influencing their interactions, perceptions and behaviours. Some platforms like Instagram, snapchat, twitter have become a big issue in transforming communication, sharing information and self expression. This delves into the extensive impact of social media on young adults, analysing its effects on communication, identity development, mental health, privacy, and addiction. Social media platforms enable young adults to maintain instant connectivity with friends, family, and acquaintances, regardless of their geographical locations. The convenience of direct messaging, group chats, and video calls fosters constant interaction and strengthens social bonds. However, this ease of communication also blurs the lines between personal and professional spheres, resulting in difficulties in maintaining privacy and achieving work-life balance. One of the most significant roles of social media is that it influence on identity formation. Young adults craft their online image by selecting and sharing carefully curated photos, posts, and updates, presenting an idealized version of themselves to their followers. The pressure to maintain a polished image can lead to feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt, as individuals compare themselves to the curated lives of others. Moreover, the pursuit of validation through likes and comments can contribute to a cycle of seeking external approval to determine self-worth.

Loneliness

Despite its potential for connecting people, social media can also contribute to feelings of loneliness and social isolation. This paradox occurs because excessive reliance on digital communication may lead to a decrease in meaningful face-to-face interactions and genuine social connections. Furthermore, the superficiality of online interactions may fail to meet the deeper human need for emotional intimacy and empathy, which can exacerbate feelings of loneliness in some individuals. To better understand the relationship between social media usage and loneliness, research should explore both the quantity and quality of online social interactions. Surveys and qualitative interviews can be used to examine the subjective experiences of users, identifying patterns of loneliness and social support within online networks. Additionally, experimental studies could assess the effects of interventions aimed at enhancing online social connections and reducing loneliness among vulnerable populations.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

The widespread adoption of social media has become a major platform among young adults raising concerns about their potential impact on psychological well-being, particularly in feelings of loneliness. The study aims to explore the correlations between social media on experiences of loneliness among young adults, contributing to a deeper understanding and complex interplay between social media and psychological well-being.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Excessive and compulsive social media use, commonly known as addiction has been associated with several adverse psychological consequences (Chou et al., 2015). Research indicates that addictive use patterns involve seeking social validation through online interactions, which result in disconnecting between online and offline relationships (Przybylski et al., 2013).

Loneliness is characterized by perception of social isolation and scarce meaningful connections as a widespread problem for young adults, Cacioppo et al. (2009). Studies have shown that loneliness can exert negative consequences on both mental and physical well-being Holt-Lunstad et al. (2015).

The correlation between social media addiction and loneliness is depicted in a complex manner in current research findings. The increased social media use and addiction lead to increased feelings of loneliness (Charles & Steers, 2007; Russell et al., 2018). This might be because of factors like comparing oneself to seemingly flawless online representations, which results in feelings of inadequacy and social isolation (Vogel et al., 2014).

Young adults who already feel lonely may use social media as a way to cope, which could result in a pattern of increased use and intensified loneliness (Huang et al., 2014). Furthermore, the nature and caliber of social media interactions can impact feelings of loneliness. Participating actively and being part of supportive online communities could alleviate feelings of isolation (Wang et al., 2019).

The excessive and compulsive use of social media has been associated with negative psychological effects, (Chou et al., 2015). Research indicates that addictive usage behaviors may revolve around seeking approval and validation through online interactions, possibly resulting in a discrepancy between virtual and real-life relationships (Przybylski et al., 2013).

Young adults often experience loneliness, which is a feeling of being socially isolated and not having meaningful connections (Cacioppo et al. (2009). Studies indicate that loneliness can negatively impact both mental and physical health (Holt-Lunstad et al. (2015).

The present research regarding the connection between social media addiction and loneliness offers a complex view. Some studies have indicated a direct relationship, suggesting that excessive use of social media and addiction can contribute to intensified feelings of loneliness (Charles & Steers, 2007; Russell et al., 2018).

Using too much of social media can take away time and effort that could be used for building genuine and meaningful face-to-face relationships (Przybylski et al., 2013).

Social media can become a coping mechanism for young adults with pre-existing feelings of loneliness, which could result in a cycle of heightened use and perpetuated loneliness (Huang et al. (2014).

III. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

Aim

To investigate the correlation between social media on feelings of loneliness among young adults.

Research Objective

- To find out the correlation between social media on loneliness among young adults.

Hypothesis

H₁ There is a significant relationship of social media on loneliness and emotional loneliness dimension.

Demographic Variables

The socio-demographic details in this research were used to describe the target population thorough their age and gender of each of the participants. The age ranges from 19- 26 years of age.

Geographical Area

The study included participants between the ages of 19-26 years of age from all over India. Majority of the participants come from Nagaland, north east of India. The rest were scattered among different states of India through online method which includes states from north, south and north-east regions of India.

Sample Size

The sample consisted of 159 young adults between the ages of 19-26 years. A target population of female (n=80) and male (n=60). The participants were young adults residing in different states of India.

Data Collection Procedure

The data collection process involved administering questionnaires via Google forms to young adults. Prior to participations, all individuals were presented with an informed consent form and a demographic survey.

TOOLS USED FOR THE STUDY

The questionnaires was used to administered through online mode. They are Social Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale by Andreassen and his colleagues (2016) and De Jong Gierveld Loneliness Scale (1985)

DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis involved correlation and regression techniques to assess social media addiction on loneliness. Scores from both the tools were calculated according to the norms of the tools and were analyzed using IBM SPSS Version 21 and XLSTAT.

Table 1

		Social Media	Loneliness
N	Valid	160	160
	Missing	0	0
Mean		16.94	8.73
Median		17.00	8.00
Mode		16	8
Std. Deviation		4.397	2.503
Skewness		-.293	-.346
Std. Error of Skewness		.192	.192
Kurtosis		-.283	-.508
Std. Error of Kurtosis		.381	.381

The social media score averaged at 16.94, and the loneliness score averaged at 8.73, although the specific measurement scales are unknown. Notably, the median scores of 17.00 for social media and 8.00 for loneliness suggest a slight bias towards lower values when compared to the mean. This is further evident in the slightly negative skewness values of -0.293 for social media and -0.346 for loneliness. Lastly, the standard deviations of 4.397 for social media and 2.503 for loneliness indicate a moderate dispersion of data points around the respective averages.

Table 2. Showing the Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Social Media	.082	160	.010	.985	160	.074
Loneliness	.164	160	<.001	.906	160	<.001

Lilliefors Significance Correction

Social Media Addiction

The p-value (0.074) is marginally significant. While some researchers might consider this a weak rejection, others might use a stricter threshold (e.g., 0.01) for this test.

Loneliness

Shapiro-Wilk statistic (0.906) is considerably lower than 1, and the p-value (<0.001) is highly significant, again indicating a rejection of normality.

TABLE 3. SPEARMAN'S RHO CORRELATION COEFFICIENT FOR THE RESEARCH VARIABLES

Spearman's rho				
Social Media	Correlation	1.000		.196
	Coefficient			
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.013
	N	160		160
Loneliness	Correlation	.196		1.000
	Coefficient			
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.013		
	N	160		160
Emotional loneliness	Correlation	.253		
	Coefficient			
	Sig.(2-tailed)			
	N	160		160

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

The correlation coefficient of 0.196 indicates a weak positive correlation between social media use and loneliness in Spearman's rank correlation, where values range from -1 for perfect negative correlation to +1 for perfect positive correlation. A value of 0 signifies no correlation. The Spearman's rho correlation coefficient between social media use and loneliness is 0.196, with a two-tailed significance of 0.013, indicating the presence of a weak positive correlation between the two variables.

The p-value is 0.013, which is less than the commonly used significance level of 0.05. This suggests a statistically significant correlation between social media addiction and loneliness.

Correlation Interpretation

The Spearman's rank correlation coefficient of 0.196 indicates a weak positive correlation between social media addiction and loneliness scores. This means that as social media addiction scores increase slightly, loneliness scores also tend to increase slightly. The p-value of 0.013 suggests that this correlation is statistically significant, meaning it's unlikely to be due to chance.

Table 4. Linear regression analysis showing the effect of social media addiction on loneliness

Model	variables	Standardized Coefficient β	t	p	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F	P
1	(constant)		8521	<.001				
	Social Media	.222	2882	.005	.049	.043	8.193	.005 ^b

Dependent Variable Loneliness

The findings in the table illustrate a relationship between social media usage and feelings of loneliness. In this study, social media use serves as the independent variable, while loneliness serves as the dependent variable. The data reveals a positive correlation between these two variables, with a beta coefficient of .222 and a p-value of .005. This suggests that, after taking into account other influencing factors, individuals who use social media more frequently are at a higher risk of experiencing loneliness.

DISCUSSION

In this study, which aimed to investigate the effects of social media on loneliness among young adults shows the average scores for social media addiction (16.94) and loneliness (8.73) showing a tendency towards lower values, which was supported by their respective median scores and slightly negative skewness, indicating a prevalence of lower values in their distributions. Statistical analysis uncovered a p-value of 0.074, marginally significant, for social media addiction, and a highly significant p-value (<0.001) for loneliness, emphasizing non-normal distributions for both variables.

The weak positive correlation between social media addiction and loneliness is evidenced by Spearman's rank correlation coefficient of 0.196, which yielded a significant p-value of 0.013. This discovery backs the theory that heightened social media addiction is linked to increased feelings of loneliness in young adults, particularly in the realm of emotional loneliness. The research emphasizes the necessity for further investigation into the underlying mechanisms of this relationship and proposes potential interventions to encourage healthier social media behaviours in order to alleviate potential negative effects on mental well-being, especially with regard to loneliness.

The intricate nature of loneliness experiences in young adults is emphasized by prior research, encompassing both voluntary and involuntary aspects. Voluntary loneliness, often linked to self-reflection and personal growth, is in contrast to involuntary loneliness, which can result in feelings of detachment and existential anguish (Houghton et al., 2022; Rich Madsen et al., 2021). Furthermore, the research underscores the impact of social media usage on perceptions of loneliness: while it can provide a temporary distraction, excessive use or dependency may worsen feelings of isolation over time (Ang et al., 2018; Bekar et al., 2022).

Furthermore, it is important to emphasize that the effects of social media on feelings of loneliness depends on how individuals use it and their perceptions of social connection. The study participants mentioned actively regulating their social media usage to maintain their well-being, while others acknowledged the potential negative effects on mental health and opted for other ways to engage (Fardghassemi et al., 2022). This detailed understanding highlights the need for specific interventions that encourage mindful use of digital platforms

and provide support to improve social connectedness without increasing vulnerability to loneliness among young adults.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research provides valuable insights into the intricate relationship between social media and loneliness, suggesting potential areas for further investigation and practical implications for promoting mental well-being in the digital sphere.

The results imply that people who use social media more frequently may also have a tendency to feel a little more alone. However, the correlation is not very high, suggesting that social media use accounts for a relatively modest fraction of the variation in loneliness. There's a good chance that other important elements will matter more.

The important thing to remember is that correlation does not imply causation. The mere fact that social media use and loneliness are correlated does not prove that social media use causes loneliness. It is also conceivable that people who feel lonely for other reasons would be more likely to utilise social media as a means of making connections with other people.

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