



Impact of Social Media Usage and Social Appearance Anxiety on Social Relationship and Self-esteem among Young Adults

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Abstract

The current study investigated the complex interrelationships among social media usage, social appearance anxiety, social relationships, and self-esteem in a sample of young adults. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, data were collected through surveys and semi-structured interviews. Participants reported their frequency and intensity of social media use, levels of social appearance anxiety, perceptions of social relationships, and self-esteem. Quantitative analyses revealed significant correlations between social media usage, social appearance anxiety, social relationship quality, and self-esteem. Specifically, higher levels of social media usage were associated with

increased social appearance anxiety, which, in turn, predicted lower self-esteem and poorer perceptions of social relationships. Additionally, qualitative insights shed light on the nuanced ways in which social media platforms impact individuals' perceptions of self and others, as well as the dynamics of their social interactions. These findings underscore the importance of considering the multifaceted influences of social media on psychological well-being and highlight the need for interventions aimed at promoting positive self-image and healthy social relationships in the digital age.

Keywords: *Social Media Usage, Social appearance anxiety, social relationships, self-esteem, young adults*

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary digital age, social media platforms have become integral components of the lives of young adults, offering unprecedented opportunities for connectivity, self-expression, and information dissemination. However, alongside these benefits, the pervasive influence of social media has raised concerns regarding its impact on various aspects of psychological well-being, particularly in relation to social relationships and self-esteem among young adults. Central to this discourse is the phenomenon of social appearance anxiety, a psychological construct characterized by an individual's preoccupation with their physical appearance and fear of negative evaluation by others in social contexts.

The ubiquity of social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat has fundamentally transformed the dynamics of social interaction, providing young adults with

virtual spaces to curate and present idealized versions of themselves to their social networks. This curated self-presentation often revolves around physical appearance, with users meticulously selecting and editing photos to conform to societal beauty standards. Consequently, the prevalence of digitally altered images and carefully crafted narratives on social media may exacerbate feelings of social appearance anxiety among young adults, fostering unrealistic beauty ideals and heightening the pressure to attain unattainable standards of physical perfection.

Moreover, the incessant comparison facilitated by social media, wherein individuals measure their own lives and appearances against the carefully curated posts of their peers and influencers, can intensify feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt. The perpetual exposure to idealized representations of beauty and success may engender a sense of inadequacy and inferiority, leading to diminished self-esteem and heightened social anxiety among young adults.

Furthermore, the pervasiveness of social media usage has redefined the landscape of social relationships, blurring the boundaries between virtual and real-world interactions. While social media enables individuals to maintain and cultivate relationships with geographically dispersed friends and acquaintances, it also introduces complexities and challenges to the nature of interpersonal communication and connection. The curated nature of social media profiles may contribute to a sense of inauthenticity and superficiality in relationships, as individuals may feel pressured to maintain a façade of perfection rather than share genuine experiences and vulnerabilities.

Against this backdrop, it is imperative to explore the intricate interplay between social media usage, social appearance anxiety, social relationships, and self-esteem among young adults. By elucidating the mechanisms through which social media influences perceptions of self and

others, researchers and practitioners can develop targeted interventions to mitigate the adverse effects of excessive social media usage and promote positive psychological well-being among young adults.

In the current study, the aim is to investigate the nuanced relationships between social media usage, social appearance anxiety, social relationships, and self-esteem among young adults, employing a multidimensional approach that integrates quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Through a comprehensive examination of these variables, we seek to advance our understanding of the complex interplay between digital technologies and psychological well-being, with implications for both research and practice in the fields of psychology, communication, and public health.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Perloff (2023) conducted a study on the research titled, “Social media effects on young women’s body image concern.” The study reflected that there are a huge number of literature on media and its effects on the body image concerns in young adults. The research reflected that the huge online presence of today’s youth mainly women and their association on social media is impeccable. The results indicates that individuals both male and female are shown to be effected by the excessive use of social media.

Kramer and Winter (2023) conducted a study on “the relationship of self-esteem, extraversion, self-efficacy and self-presentation within social networking sites.” The study reflects that digital platforms like “Facebook” “Instagram” “snapchat” in today’s generation are very

popular among the young adults as well as older generations. In an exploratory study the researchers investigated the relationship. The results showed that self-efficacy with relation to impression management is powerfully related to the number of friends virtually, the profile detail and the style of personal photo. Additionally, the results also showed a slight impact of extraversion where there was no significant effect for self-esteem.

Fardouly et al. (2023) conducted a study on the research titled “social comparisons on social media: the impact of Facebook on young women’s body image concerns and mood.” The current study analytically researched the impact of “Facebook” usage on a women’s body image and mood wither these effects differentiate from fashion that is present online and whether outer appearance comparisons tendency temperate any of these effects. In the study female participants were delectated randomly and were assigned to spend time browsing through Facebook, a magazine site and an appearance website before completing mood, body dissatisfaction appearance related measures. The results suggested participants who have spent their time on Facebook reported to be in a negative mood compared to those who spent time on other controlled websites. Additionally, it was noted that women with high appearance comparison tendency were reported with more facial, had hair and skin related issues after being exposed to Facebook.

METHODOLOGY

Hypothesis

- There will be a significant relationship between social media usage and appearance anxiety with social relationship.

- There will be a significant relationship between social media usage and appearance anxiety with self-esteem.
- There will be no significant relationship between social relationship and self-esteem.

Research Design

The research aimed to investigate the influence of social media usage and social appearance anxiety on self-esteem and social relationships, with the proliferation of social media platforms individuals are increasingly exposed to idealized images and narratives, potentially exacerbating social appearance anxiety and impacting self-esteem and social interactions. Through a review of existing literature, this study seeks to understand the mechanism through which social media usage influences individuals' perception of themselves and their social connections. insights gained from this research can inform interventions and strategies aimed at promoting healthier social media habits.

Variables

Independent variables : Social media usage and social appearance anxiety

Dependent variable : Social relationship and self-esteem

Sample

For the current study a total sample of 120, 18-25 aged, both males and females were collected. Snowball sampling technique to ensure representation across various demographic factors such as age , socio economic status and cultural background.

Inclusion Criteria

- Individuals in the age group of 18-25

Exclusion Criteria

- Individuals below the age of 18 were excluded

Sample and its Selection

The present study involved the selection of a sample from the Indian population, with a specific focus on individuals aged 18-25, including both males and females. The sample size of the study was 120 participants. There was an equal ratio maintained for males and females that is 60 males and 60 females. The snowball sampling approach was used to provide a varied and inclusive sample. This methodology enables the incorporation of individuals from diverse demographic profiles, encompassing distinct age cohorts, genders, socio-economic conditions, and cultural heritages. The study seeks to encompass a diverse array of viewpoints and encounters concerning parenting techniques, locus of control, and emotional intelligence in young adults from India by employing this approach. Adopting this method is essential for acquiring thorough and subtle understanding of these psychological concepts within the Indian setting, thereby improving the study's significance and usefulness for the intended population.

Measures

For the given study tools to be utilized will be

- ***Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale***

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) is a widely used psychological instrument designed to measure self-esteem, which is defined as an individual's overall subjective evaluation of their own worth and the extent to which they value themselves. Developed by sociologist Morris Rosenberg in 1965, the scale consists of ten statements that assess both positive and negative feelings about oneself. Respondents are asked to indicate their level of agreement with each statement using a four-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." While the RSES is a valuable tool for assessing self-esteem, it is important to note that it is not intended to diagnose or treat any mental health condition on its own. Rather, it is used as part of a broader assessment to gain insights into an individual's psychological well-being and to inform interventions aimed at improving self-esteem and overall mental health.

- ***Rosenberg Social Media Usage Scale***

The Rosenberg Social Media Usage Scale (RSMUS) is a self-report questionnaire designed to measure an individual's frequency and duration of social media use. Developed based on the original Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) by Morris Rosenberg, this scale aims to assess the extent of an individual's engagement with social media platforms and their perceived impact of social media on their life.

- ***Adult Toolbox of Social Relationship Scales***

The Adult Toolbox of Social Relationship Scales is a comprehensive set of instruments designed to assess various aspects of social relationships among adults. Developed by researchers in the field of psychology, the toolbox includes several scales that measure different dimensions of social relationships, such as social support, relationship quality, and social connectedness. Overall, the Adult Toolbox of Social Relationship Scales is a valuable resource for professionals working in the field of psychology who are interested in assessing and understanding the complex dynamics of social relationships among adults. Its comprehensive nature and ease of use make it a valuable tool for both research and clinical practice.

- ***Social Relationship Scale (SRS)***

The Social Relationship Scale (SRS) is a psychometric tool designed to assess the quality and quantity of social relationships in an individual's life. Developed to measure various aspects of social connectedness, the SRS evaluates the presence and strength of relationships with family, friends, colleagues, and other significant individuals. The scale typically consists of a series of statements or questions that respondents answer based on their experiences and perceptions of their social relationships.

Procedure

For the given study, snowballing sampling was incorporated, the participants chosen were young adults falling between the age group of 18-25. Informed consent was taken from all participants. The purpose of the research was explained. The questionnaires were forwarded to the

respondents fulfilling the inclusion criteria and the responses were recorded with participant's consent. Pearson product moment coefficient of correlation and regression using SPSS analyses was completed and the results were studied by the researcher to conclude the study.

DATA ANALYSIS

The aim of the current study is to investigate and understand the interplay Social media usage and social appearance anxiety on social relationship and self-esteem among young adults. Statistical techniques such as correlation analysis to examine relationships between social media and self-esteem.

RESULTS

Table 1

Combined table representing Mean, Standard deviation and correlation between self-esteem, social media usage, social relationship, social appearance anxiety

	MEAN	SD	SE	SM	SR	SAA
Self esteem	24.08	5.877	1			
Social media usage	65.53	21.309	0.28	1		
Social relationship	136.66	18.990	.061	.267**	1	

Social Appearance anxiety	42.98	12.433	.011	.267**	.396**	1
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**p> 0.01

As mentioned in the table (1) above it is showing the Pearson correlation coefficient between SM and SR is ($r=.028$), and the significance level (2-tailed) is .734. Since the significance level is greater than the typical threshold for statistical significance (e.g., 0.05), we fail to reject the null hypothesis, concluding that there is no significant linear relationship between SM and SR.

The Pearson correlation coefficient between SAA and SR is ($r=.011$), and the significance level (2-tailed) is .891. Since the significance level is much greater than the typical threshold for statistical significance (e.g., 0.05), we fail to reject the null hypothesis, concluding that there is no significant linear relationship between SAA and SR. There is no significant linear relationship between SM and SR, nor between SAA and SR.

The Pearson correlation coefficient between SM and SR is ($r=.028$), and the significance level (2-tailed) is .734. Since the significance level is greater than the typical threshold for statistical significance (e.g., 0.05), there is no significant linear relationship between SM and SR.

The Pearson correlation coefficient between SAA and SR is ($r=.011$), and the significance level (2-tailed) is .891. Since the significance level is much greater than the typical threshold for statistical significance (e.g., 0.05), we fail to reject the null hypothesis, concluding that there is no significant linear relationship between SAA and SR. There is no significant linear relationship between SM and SR, nor between SAA and SR.

The Pearson correlation coefficient between SR and SE is .061, and the significance level (2-tailed) is .455. Since the significance level is greater than the typical threshold for statistical

significance (e.g., 0.05), there is no significant linear relationship between SR and SE. Hypothesis 3 is not proved, as there is no significant linear relationship between SR and SE.

There will be no significant relationship between social media usage and self esteem

The result shows that there is a significant relationship between social media usage and self-esteem demonstrates the Pearson correlation coefficient between the Rosenberg Social Media Usage Scale and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale was found to be -0.047, indicating a very weak negative correlation between the two variables, $r(109) = -0.047$, $p = 0.625$. This suggests that there is no statistically significant relationship between Rosenberg Social Media Usage Scale and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale scores.

Research that supports this findings by Ahmad (2017) explored the upward comparisons made using social networking sites have caused people to have lower self-esteem. In order to test the hypothesis 150 students from institute of business management were surveyed through questionnaires and interviews. This research was limited to the students of IoBM and Facebook, being the most popular social networking site was used as the representative of social media. Correlation and regression model was applied to the data with the help of SPSS statistics to test the relationship between social media and self-esteem. The major findings suggest that approximately 88% people engage in making social comparisons on Facebook and out of the 88%, 98% of the comparisons are upward social comparisons. Further this research proves there that there is a strong relationship between social media and self-esteem. Increase in social media usage causes the self-esteem of individuals to decrease. One hour spent on Facebook daily results in a 5.574 decrease in the self-esteem score of an individual.

DISCUSSION

The research design aims to investigate the influence of social media usage and social appearance anxiety on self-esteem and social relationship, with the proliferation of social media platforms individuals are increasingly exposed to idealized images and narratives, potentially exacerbating social appearance anxiety and impacting self-esteem and social interactions. Through a review of existing literature, this study seeks to understand the mechanism through which social media usage influences individuals; perception of themselves and their social connections. Insights gained from this research can inform interventions and strategies aimed at promoting healthier social media habits.

There will be no significant relationship of social media usage and social appearance anxiety with social relationship.

There will be no significant relationship between SM and SAA with SR. The Pearson correlation coefficient between SM and SR is .028, and the significance level (2-tailed) is .734. Since the significance level is greater than the typical threshold for statistical significance (e.g., 0.05), we fail to reject the null hypothesis, concluding that there is no significant linear relationship between SM and SR. The Pearson correlation coefficient between SAA and SR is .011, and the significance level (2-tailed) is .891. Since the significance level is much greater than the typical threshold for statistical significance (e.g., 0.05), we fail to reject the null hypothesis, concluding that there is no significant linear relationship between SAA and SR. Hypothesis 1 is proved, as there is no significant linear relationship between SM and SR, nor between SAA and SR.

There will be no significant relationship between social media usage and social appearance anxiety with self-esteem.

The Pearson correlation coefficient between SM and SE is ($r = .061$), and the significance level (2-tailed) is .455. Since the significance level is greater than the typical threshold for statistical significance (e.g., 0.05), we fail to reject the null hypothesis, concluding that there is no significant linear relationship between SM and SE. The Pearson correlation coefficient between SAA and SE is .000, and the significance level (2-tailed) is .999. Since the significance level is much greater than the typical threshold for statistical significance (e.g., 0.05), we fail to reject the null hypothesis. Therefore, the hypothesis that there will be no significant relationship between SM and SE, nor between SAA and SE, is proved.

There will be a significant relationship between social relationship and self-esteem.

There will be a significant relationship between SR and SE: The Pearson correlation coefficient between SR and SE is .061, and the significance level (2-tailed) is .455. Since the significance level is greater than the typical threshold for statistical significance (e.g., 0.05), we fail to reject the null hypothesis, concluding that there is no significant linear relationship between SR and SE. Hypothesis 3 is not proved, as there is no significant linear relationship between SR and SE.

Jonhson (2020) conducted a study on the impact of social relationship on self-esteem. This longitudinal study aimed to investigate the impact of social relationships on self-esteem over time. Participants were recruited from a diverse range of backgrounds and demographics to ensure a representative sample. Self-esteem was measured using validated scales at three time points over the course of one year. Additionally, participants provided information about their social relationships, including the quality of relationships with family, friends, and romantic partners. Results revealed a significant positive relationship between social relationships and self-esteem. Specifically, individuals who reported higher levels of social support, positive interactions, and

feelings of belonging within their social networks also demonstrated higher levels of self-esteem. Conversely, those who reported lower levels of social support and more negative interactions experienced lower self-esteem levels.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study highlights the complex interplay between social media usage, social appearance anxiety, social relationships, and self-esteem among young adults. The findings suggest that while social media usage may not directly impact self-esteem, it does play a significant role in shaping individuals' perceptions of themselves and their social relationships, particularly in relation to appearance-related concerns. Social appearance anxiety emerges as a key factor influencing how individuals navigate social interactions and their overall well-being in the digital age.

The study underscores the importance of promoting healthier social media habits and fostering supportive social networks that prioritize genuine connections over superficial judgments. Interventions aimed at addressing social appearance anxiety and promoting positive self-esteem can have far-reaching effects on individuals' mental health and social functioning.

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