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Social Media Addiction Among Early Adults: A Mini Empirical Study

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ABSTRACT

The rapid expansion of digital technology has significantly increased the use of social media platforms among young adults. While social media offers opportunities for communication, networking, and information sharing, excessive usage can lead to addictive patterns of behaviour. This study aims to assess the level of social media addiction among early adults. A quantitative cross-sectional research design was adopted for the study. Data were collected from 30 respondents using the Social Media Addiction Scale developed by Sahin (2018). Descriptive statistical techniques such as mean and percentage were used to analyse the level of addiction. The findings revealed that a considerable proportion of early adults exhibit moderate to high levels of social media addiction. The results highlight the need for awareness programs and digital literacy interventions to encourage responsible use of social media among young adults.

Keywords— Social Media Addiction, Digital Behaviour, Early Adults, Problematic Internet Use, Digital Wellbeing

I.INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary digital era, social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), and TikTok have become an integral part of everyday life. These platforms allow individuals to communicate, share ideas, and build social networks beyond geographical boundaries. Social media has transformed the way people interact, obtain information, and express their identities in modern society. With the rapid advancement of smartphones and internet accessibility, social media usage has increased significantly across different age groups (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Among various demographic groups, early adults are one of the most active users of social media platforms. Young adults frequently use social media for communication, entertainment, academic collaboration, and self-expression. While these platforms provide several benefits such as enhanced connectivity, social support, and access to information, excessive engagement may lead to problematic patterns of use. Continuous exposure to online environments may influence individuals' behavioural patterns, lifestyle habits, and mental wellbeing (Keles, McCrae, & Grealish, 2020).

Social media addiction refers to the excessive and compulsive use of social networking platforms that interferes with daily functioning and psychological wellbeing. Individuals experiencing social media addiction often demonstrate symptoms such as preoccupation with online activities, inability to control usage, neglect of academic or occupational responsibilities, and emotional distress when they are unable to access social media platforms. This behavioural pattern shares similarities with other forms of behavioural addiction such as internet addiction and online gaming addiction (Andreassen et al., 2017). The behavioural addiction framework suggests that repeated engagement with rewarding online activities can activate psychological reinforcement mechanisms similar to those observed in substance-related addictions. Features such as notifications, likes, comments, and shares provide instant gratification and social validation, which may encourage individuals to spend prolonged periods on social networking platforms (Griffiths, 2013). Over time, this repeated reinforcement may contribute to habitual usage patterns and difficulty in regulating screen time. Previous studies have highlighted that problematic social media usage can negatively affect emotional regulation, sleep patterns, productivity, and interpersonal relationships. Excessive use of social media has been associated with increased levels of anxiety, depression, loneliness, and reduced psychological wellbeing among young individuals (Keles et al., 2020; Marino et al., 2018). Furthermore, constant exposure to curated online content may lead to social comparison, reduced self-esteem, and dissatisfaction with one's personal life (Vogel et al., 2014). Another important factor contributing to social media addiction is the increasing screen time associated with digital device usage. The widespread use of smartphones has enabled individuals to remain connected to social media platforms throughout the day. Prolonged screen time may increase the risk of addictive behaviours as individuals continuously engage with digital content and online social interactions (Panova & Carbonell, 2018). Studies have also suggested that higher screen time is associated with reduced academic productivity, sleep disturbances, and increased psychological stress among young adults. Despite the advantages of digital communication technologies, the growing dependence on social networking platforms raises important concerns regarding behavioural health and digital wellbeing. Understanding the extent of social media addiction among early adults is therefore essential. Examining patterns of social media use and their associated behavioural outcomes can help researchers and mental health professionals design effective strategies to promote responsible digital habits. Therefore, the present study aims to assess the level of social media addiction among early adults and examine its association with selected variables such as age and screen time. The findings of the study may contribute to the growing body of literature on digital behaviour and provide insights for developing awareness programs, counselling interventions, and digital wellbeing initiatives

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Andreassen et al. (2017) developed the Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale and demonstrated that excessive social media use is associated with lower self-esteem and higher psychological distress. Their findings indicated that addictive social media behaviour is linked to compulsive online engagement and difficulties in controlling usage.

Keles, McCrae, and Grealish (2020) conducted a systematic review on the impact of social media on mental health and reported that excessive use of social networking platforms is associated with increased levels of anxiety, depression, and psychological distress among young people.

Sharma, John, and Sahu (2022) examined the influence of social media on mental health and found that prolonged social media exposure can negatively affect emotional stability, academic performance, and overall wellbeing.

These studies indicate that while social media serves important communication functions, excessive engagement may lead to behavioral addiction patterns among young users.

III. METHODOLOGY
OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To assess the level of social media addiction among early adults.
- To study the socio demographics of the respondents
- To examine the relationship between social media addiction and age among respondents

- To analyse the relationship between social media addiction and screen time among respondents.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between social media addiction and age among respondents.

H_{02}: There is no significant relationship between social media addiction and screen time among respondents.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The present study adopted a quantitative cross-sectional research design to examine the level of social media addiction among early adults.

SAMPLE AND SAMPLING

The study included 50 early adults aged between 18 and 30 years. Participants were selected using convenience sampling from both urban and semi-urban areas.

TOOL

Social Media Addiction was measured using the Social Media Addiction Scale developed by Sahin (2018). The scale consists of 29 items measured on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Higher scores indicate a greater level of social media addiction.

PROCEDURE

Participants were asked to complete a structured questionnaire containing demographic information and the Social Media Addiction Scale. Ethical considerations were followed, and informed consent was obtained from all participants. The collected data were analysed using descriptive statistical methods such as frequency, percentage, and mean scores.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of the data collected from the respondents. The study was conducted among 50 respondents to assess the level of social media addiction and its association with selected demographic and behavioural variables such as age and screen time. The collected data were analysed using descriptive statistics and correlation analysis

Table 4.1 Distribution of Respondents Based on Age

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
16 – 20 years	14	28%
21 – 24 years	29	58%
25 – 27 years	7	14%
Total	**50**	**100%**

Table 4.1 shows the distribution of respondents based on age. Out of the total 50 respondents, 14 respondents belong to the age group of 16–20 years, 29 respondents belong to the age group of 21– 24 years, and the remaining 7 respondents belong to the age group of 25–27 years. The findings indicate that the majority of respondents (58%) belong to the age group of 21–24 years, followed by 28% in the age group of 16–20 years, while 14% belong to the age group of 25–27 years. This suggests that the study largely represents young adults who are more actively engaged with digital platforms and social media usage. Table 4.2 Distribution of Respondents Based on Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	30	60%
Female	20	40%
Total	**50**	**100%**

Table 4.2 presents the distribution of respondents based on gender. Out of 50 respondents, 30 respondents are male (60%), while 20 respondents are female (40%). The data indicate that male respondents constitute the majority of the sample in the present study. This distribution reflects a slightly higher participation of males compared to females in the study. Table 4.3 Distribution of Respondents Based on Screen Time

Screen Time	Frequency	Percentage
1 – 3 hours	15	30%
3 – 5 hours	20	40%
5+ hours	15	30%
Total	**50**	**100%**

Table 4.3 shows the distribution of respondents based on screen time. Out of 50 respondents, 15 respondents (30%) fall under the 1–3 hours category, 20 respondents (40%) fall under the 3–5 hours category,

and the remaining 15 respondents (30%) fall under the 5+ hours category. Thus, it is evident that most of the respondents in the present study spend 3–5 hours on screen time. This suggests that a significant proportion of the respondents spend a considerable amount of time using digital devices, which may contribute to increased social media engagement.

Table 4.4 Relationship between Social Media Addiction and Age

Variables	Correlation (r)	p-value	Level of Significance
Social Media Addiction & Age	0.446**	0.001	p < 0.01

Table 4.4 shows the correlation between social media addiction and age. The results indicate a moderate positive correlation (r = 0.446) between the variables. The p-value (0.001) is less than 0.01, indicating that the relationship is statistically significant at the 1% level of significance. This suggests that variations in age are associated with differences in the level of social media addiction among respondents. The findings indicate that social media engagement patterns may change across different age groups of early adults.

Table 4.5 Relationship between Social Media Addiction and Screen Time

Variables	Correlation (r)	p-value	Level of Significance
Social Media Addiction & Screen Time	0.410**	0.003	p < 0.01

Table 4.5 presents the correlation between social media addiction and screen time among the respondents. The results reveal a moderate positive correlation (r = 0.410) between the two variables. The p-value (0.003) is less than 0.01, indicating that the relationship is statistically significant. This finding suggests that higher screen time is associated with higher levels of social media addiction. Individuals who spend longer durations on digital devices are more likely to develop addictive patterns of social media usage.

V.FINDINGS

5.1 MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- The majority of the respondents (58%) belong to the age group of 21–24 years, followed by 28% in the age group of 16–20 years, and 14% in the age group of 25–27 years.

- In terms of gender distribution, 60% of the respondents are male, while 40% are female. This indicates that male respondents constitute the majority of the sample in the present study.

- With regard to screen time, 40% of respondents spend 3–5 hours per day on digital devices, which is the highest proportion in the sample.

- About 30% of respondents spend 1–3 hours per day, while 30% spend more than 5 hours per day on screen-based activities.

- The correlation analysis revealed a moderate positive relationship between social media addiction and age (r = 0.446, p < 0.01). This indicates that age has a significant association with social media addiction among respondents.

- The study also found a moderate positive relationship between social media addiction and screen time (r = 0.410, p < 0.01). This suggests that individuals who spend more time on screens are more likely to exhibit higher levels of social media addiction.

VII. DISCUSSION

The findings of the present study reveal that social media addiction is prevalent among early adults. A large proportion of participants reported moderate to high levels of social media engagement that may potentially lead to addictive patterns. These findings are consistent with previous research indicating that frequent use of digital platforms increases the likelihood of behavioural dependency. The accessibility of smartphones, constant internet connectivity, and the social reinforcement obtained through likes, comments, and shares may contribute to prolonged online engagement. Over time, this behaviour may develop into habitual and compulsive usage patterns.

While social media can provide social support and entertainment, excessive engagement may reduce productivity, interfere with real-life interactions, and affect psychological wellbeing. Therefore, promoting healthy digital habits is essential to maintain a balance between online and offline life.

V. CONCLUSION

The present study aimed to examine social media addiction among respondents and its association with age and screen time. The findings indicate that a significant proportion of respondents spend several hours on digital devices each day, highlighting the increasing dependence on online platforms. The study also revealed that age and screen time have a significant relationship with social media addiction. Individuals who spend longer hours on screens are more likely to develop addictive patterns of social media usage. In today's digital era, social media has become an important part of everyday life. However, excessive use may lead to behavioral and psychological concerns. Therefore, promoting balanced and responsible use of digital technology is essential to ensure healthy lifestyle patterns among young adults.

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