

## Exploring the Link between Addiction to Social Media, Self-Esteem and Well-Being among Youth

Pritisha Phukan, Kakali Goswami\*, Jomyir Bagra, Tuyir Riba

Department of Psychology, Rajiv Gandhi University, Rono Hills, Doimukh, Arunachal Pradesh, India. \*Corresponding Author's Email: kakali.goswami@rgu.ac.in

### Abstract

Every technological change comes with positive and negative outcomes. Digital social media is very powerful and effective among all generations of the present. Specifically for youth, social media brings many challenges along with its benefits. It helps to connect virtually with other people but comes with negative impacts. The excessive use of any virtual communication system can have a long term impact on the physical and mental health of a person. The present study attempts to address this issue and explores the gap in understanding social media usage and its effects on self-esteem and psychological well-being. This study involved a correlation design. The sample of the study was collected by the random sampling method, and a sample of 200 college students was selected from different colleges and universities in Assam (M = 71, F = 129). The self-report questionnaires, like the Social Media Addiction Scale Student Form, the Self-Esteem Scale by Rosenberg, and the Psychological Well-being Scale developed by Ryff, were administered to measure the study variables. The findings reported that social media helped them fight loneliness and depression, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown period. The study results also reported that addiction to social media and self-esteem were negatively and significantly correlated. However, social media addiction did not correlate significantly with psychological well-being.

**Keywords:** Addiction of Media, College Students, Psychological well-Being, Self –Esteem, Social Media.

### Introduction

Social media is an online platform for social interaction. The term 'social' refers to pertaining to or linked with others or a community, and the term 'media' means a way of communicating. Social media was explained as "those that facilitate online communication, networking, and collaboration" (1). Many students spend countless hours on social media. The survey revealed that 90% of college students utilize social media, with 25% of their internet usage dedicated to social networking sites. One important factor found to influence academic performance is digital media and technology, which affects both positively and negatively (2, 3). Research conducted at Ohio State University examining deliberately the association between digital social media usage and academic performance found students at the college level who use Face book allocate less time to studying and achieve lower grades compared to those who do not engage with popular social networking platforms (4). Students spend most of their time playing online games, connecting with peers, and

sharing posts, and they have lost interest in their real-life activities. Recent research has also explored that certain categories of social media use are associated with reduced academic performance (5-7).

Social media platforms often prompt teenagers to engage in detrimental behaviors such as procrastination (e.g., meeting up with friends) and increase the likelihood of alcohol consumption (8). Social media has a negative effect on students' mental health. Students experience various kinds of mental health issues, such as sleeping-related problems, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, loneliness, and suicidal thoughts. Due to the consistent use of social networking sites, students engage in unfavorable social comparison. Excessive use of social media can be viewed as a type of addiction, characterized by individuals feeling compelled to excessively use social media platforms (9, 10). Andreessen and Pallen explained social media time on social media activities due to uncontrollable and compulsive urges that lead to

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution CC BY license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted reuse, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

(Received 06<sup>th</sup> April 2024; Accepted 09<sup>th</sup> July 2024; Published 30<sup>th</sup> July 2024)

terrible consequences in an individual's everyday life' (11). Ivan Goldberg, in 1995, for the first time, defined internet addiction as a psychological illness (12). Extended periods of social media usage are positively associated with mental health issues like anxiety, stress, and depression, while showing a negative correlation with long-term well-being (13-15).

Through social media, students can connect with their peers, teachers, or experts from different places virtually instantly. The youth can engage in building social networks and meaningful interaction through the digital social media platform as well (16-18). This enhances the importance of understanding and exploring the excessive use of digital social platforms among youth and its consequences due to the sudden spike in use during the COVID-19 lockdown, and immediately after, the consequences can be more severe as compared to earlier times. Excessive use of social media has resulted in students experiencing numerous problems. Social media use is also linked to different types of mental health problems. Hence, there is a gap in valid empirical research to correlate these variables. The current research aims to generate a valid empirical dataset to understand the correlation between social media usage, self-esteem, and psychological well-being among young individuals. The present study articulated three objectives based on the theoretical framework and literature review. The first objective is to explore the link between addiction to social media, self-esteem, and the psychological well-being of youths in terms of gender, educational qualification, and place of residence. The second objective is to find the association between addiction to social media and the self-esteem of youth. The third objective is to find the association between addiction to social media and the psychological well-being of youths.

Based on extensive review and theoretical concepts, researchers formulated the following hypotheses to test for reaching the objectives of the study: i) there is no significant difference in addiction to social media in terms of gender, educational level, and place of residence. ii) There is no significant difference in self-esteem in terms of gender, educational level, or place of residence. iii) There is no significant difference in psychological well-being in terms of gender,

educational level, or place of residence. iv) There is a negative relationship between addiction to social media and self-esteem among youth. v) There is a negative relationship between addiction to social media and psychological well-being among youth.

## Methodology

### Sample

The present study considered youth age between 15 and 24 as per WHO General Assembly resolution 50/81 in 1995, which adopted the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and beyond. It reiterated that the United Nations defined youth as the age cohort of 15–24. Hence, the researcher selected randomly undergraduate and postgraduate students from different colleges and universities in Assam and Arunachal to participate in this study. Two hundred students (N = 200, M = 71, F = 129) made up the study's sample. Among the 200 participants, 161 are graduates, and 39 are postgraduate students. Inclusion criteria for samples: i) He/she should be a regular student; ii) His/her age should be between 18 and 33 years; iii) He/she should be a student of graduation or post-graduation; iv) He/she should be pursuing education from any central, state, or private university or college in Assam or Arunachal Pradesh. Exclusion criteria for samples: i) Any students below the age 18 and above the age 30 are not allowed to participate; ii) Any school-age students are not allowed to participate in the study; iii) Any students from outside of Assam and Arunachal are not allowed to take part in the study.

### Tools Used in the Study

**Interview schedule:** Researcher prepared an interview schedule in order to collect demographic information from the participants. The following information was included in the interview schedule: Name, age, gender, educational qualification and educational institutions and place of residence.

**Social Media Addiction:** Addiction to social media was assessed using Social Media Addiction Scale- Student Form developed by Cengiz Sahin. This scale consists of 29 items. Items are grouped under four dimensions. The test's overall internal consistency coefficient was determined to be .93, with subscale scores ranges from .81 to .86.

**Self-Esteem Scale:** Rosenberg's standardized self-esteem scale was employed to measure self-esteem of the youths. The scale is one-dimensional. It consists of 10 items. This is scale with 4-point Likert scale. The responses ranges from strongly agree to strongly disagree for each item. The psychometric properties reported that the test-retest reliability coefficient is .75 and the Cronbach's alpha is .71.

**Psychological Well-being Scale:** To measure psychological well-being a standardized scale by Carol Ryff developed in 1989 was administered. The scale has eighteen items. A nationwide representative sample of 61 English-speaking people aged 25 and above was used to test and validate as evaluated by the Ryff scale. The abbreviated well-being scale demonstrated correlation coefficients ranging from .70 to .89 in contrast to the complete version. Furthermore, its

internal consistency coefficient exhibited higher values (19).

### Data Collection Procedure

Prior consent from the University and the College has been given to the researchers to gather student data. Once the participants gave their informed consent, the questionnaires were distributed to the whole class.

### Results

The researchers scored the raw data after collection of each participant responses. The raw data was entered in statistical software. The researcher applied descriptive statistics including percentages, mean and standard deviation to check the characteristics of the sample. Further parametric statistics including t test and Pearson correlation coefficient techniques were applied to test the five hypotheses of the study. The obtained results are presented below:

**Table 1:** Descriptive of Demographics

| Demographic variables | Categories    | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------------|---------------|-----------|------------|
| Gender                | Male          | 71        | 35.5%      |
|                       | Female        | 129       | 64.5%      |
| Educational Level     | Undergraduate | 161       | 80.5%      |
|                       | Postgraduate  | 39        | 19.5%      |
| Locality              | Urban         | 57        | 28.5%      |
|                       | Rural         | 143       | 71.5%      |

The results in Table 1 showed that percentage of female is more as 64.5% as compared to 35.5% male in the sample. In terms of educational level, sample has more percentage of youth pursuing under-graduation as compared to post graduation. In terms of place of residence, there is 71.5% of youth residing in rural area s compared to only 28.5 % in the urban area. The findings from Table 2 indicated a significant t-value for psychological well-being, suggesting a notable significant

difference between male and female students in their psychological well-being levels. There was no noteworthy distinction observed between male and female students concerning social media addiction and self-esteem. There was no significant difference in the four dimensions of social media addiction among male and female as well as level of self-esteem was not significantly differed for male and female students. This result indicates third hypothesis is rejected.

**Table 2:** T-test for Difference in Mean by Gender

| Variable               | Gender | Mean  | SD    | t     |
|------------------------|--------|-------|-------|-------|
| Social media addiction | Male   | 80.58 | 17.68 | 1.012 |
|                        | Female | 78.12 | 15.74 |       |
| Virtual communication  | Male   | 25.46 | 6.274 | 1.860 |
|                        | Female | 23.84 | 5.675 |       |
| Virtual problem        | Male   | 22.34 | 6.416 | .013  |
|                        | Female | 22.35 | 5.232 |       |
| Virtual information    | Male   | 18.14 | 4.752 | .514  |
|                        | Female | 17.80 | 4.365 |       |
| Self-esteem            | Male   | 17.00 | 3.906 | 1.004 |

|                          |        |       |        |        |
|--------------------------|--------|-------|--------|--------|
| Psychological well-being | Female | 17.48 | 2.809  | 2.79** |
|                          | Male   | 75.92 | 22.750 |        |
|                          | Female | 82.88 | 12.576 |        |

\*\* p<.01, \* p<.05

**Table 3:** T-test for Difference in Mean by Educational Level

| Variable                 | Educational qualification | Mean  | SD     | t       |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|-------|--------|---------|
| social media addiction   | Graduation                | 77.05 | 16.086 | 3.479** |
|                          | Post-graduation           | 87    | 15.766 |         |
| -Virtual tolerance       | Graduation                | 13.80 | 3.647  | 3.954   |
|                          | Post-graduation           | 16.41 | 3.945  |         |
| -Virtual communication   | Graduation                | 23.76 | 5.890  | 3.287   |
|                          | Post graduation           | 27.15 | 5.344  |         |
| -Virtual problem         | Graduation                | 21.86 | 5.541  | 2.474   |
|                          | Post graduation           | 24.33 | 5.805  |         |
| -Virtual information     | Graduation                | 17.63 | 4.530  | 1.841   |
|                          | Post graduation           | 19.10 | 4.210  |         |
| Self-esteem              | Graduation                | 17.29 | 3.318  | .160    |
|                          | Post graduation           | 17.38 | 2.935  |         |
| Psychological well-being | Graduation                | 79.16 | 18.243 | 2.118   |
|                          | Post graduation           | 85.59 | 10.447 |         |

\*\* p<.01, \* p<.05

The findings presented in Table 3 revealed a significant t-value for addiction to social media concerning educational level, indicating a notable difference in social addiction between undergraduate and postgraduate students. However, there was no significant difference found in the dimensions of social media addiction, self-esteem and psychological well-being in terms of levels of education. The students pursuing post graduation and under graduation showed similarities in the levels of different dimensions of addiction to social media, self-esteem and

psychological well-being. This indicates the first hypothesis is rejected. The results from table 4 showed that there was no significant t-value in terms of place of residence of students. It indicated that there was no difference in the level of social media addiction, self-esteem and psychological well-being among the students of urban and rural area. It can be said that the place of residence did not significantly differ their levels of social media addiction, self-esteem and psychological well-being of student. The second hypothesis was accepted.

**Table 4:** T-test for Difference in Mean by Locality of Residence

| Variable                 | Place of residence | Mean  | SD     | t     |
|--------------------------|--------------------|-------|--------|-------|
| social media addiction   | Rural              | 78.70 | 16.279 | .395  |
|                          | Urban              | 79.72 | 17.051 |       |
| -Virtual tolerance       | Rural              | 14.05 | 3.901  | 1.498 |
|                          | Urban              | 14.95 | 3.637  |       |
| -Virtual communication   | Rural              | 24.22 | 6.155  | .740  |
|                          | Urban              | 24.91 | 5.346  |       |
| -Virtual problem         | Rural              | 22.64 | 5.471  | 1.153 |
|                          | Urban              | 21.61 | 6.111  |       |
| -Virtual information     | Rural              | 17.79 | 4.320  | .646  |
|                          | Urban              | 18.25 | 4.940  |       |
| Self-esteem              | Rural              | 17.62 | 3.282  | 2.180 |
|                          | Urban              | 16.53 | 3.018  |       |
| Psychological well being | Rural              | 80.24 | 14.789 | .215  |

|       |       |        |
|-------|-------|--------|
| Urban | 80.82 | 22.211 |
|-------|-------|--------|

\*\* p<.01, \* p<.05

**Table 5:** Correlation Matrix

|                          | Virtual tolerance | Virtual Com | Virtual problem | Virtual information | Total SMA |
|--------------------------|-------------------|-------------|-----------------|---------------------|-----------|
| Self-esteem              | -.105             | -.047       | -.043           | -.004               | -.061     |
| Psychological Well-being | .037              | .060        | .093            | .135                | .009      |

\*\* p<.01, \* p<.05 (2-tailed)

The findings presented in Table 5 depict the correlation coefficients between social media addiction, self-esteem, and psychological well-being. The results indicate a negative correlation between self-esteem and the overall score of social media addiction as well as all dimensions of social media addiction. This indicates acceptance of the fourth hypothesis. It implies that a person who is very addicted to social media might have low self-esteem. The findings also revealed a positive correlation between overall social media addiction, its dimensions, and psychological well-being. This indicates the fifth hypothesis is rejected. This suggests that increased social media usage may correspond to higher levels of psychological well-being among students.

## Discussion

The present research investigated the association between addiction to social media, self-esteem, and psychological well-being among youths. The findings of the study showed that male and female college students differ significantly in psychological well-being but not in social media addiction or self-esteem. This finding is corroborated by a study that asserted that there was no gender difference in the usage of social media (20). The study results revealed that the overall addiction of social media among undergraduate and postgraduate students differs significantly. The students pursuing post-graduation and undergrad showed no significant difference in self-esteem or psychological well-being. The findings also reported that students don't differ in their levels of addiction to social media, self-esteem, or psychological well-being in terms of their place of residence. The findings of the current research indicated that students from rural and urban areas didn't differ significantly in their addiction to social media, self-esteem, or well-being. These current findings are consistent with previous studies, which have shown no

significant disparity between urban and rural youth in their utilization of social media (21), self-esteem (22), and psychological well-being (23). The results of the present study indicated a negative correlation between the level of self-esteem and addiction to social media. Further dimension-wise analysis reported a negative relationship between self-esteem and the dimensions of social media addiction. The current result aligns with existing research that investigated the correlation among social media usage, self-esteem, and life satisfaction (24). The findings indicated a negative correlation between self-esteem and social media usage. Another investigation explored how the addiction to social media relates to self-esteem among Turkish university students. The results revealed a moderately negative association between self-esteem levels and social media addiction (25). Another study conducted in China also observed a comparable negative correlation between self-esteem and the extent of social media addiction among young individuals (26). The study's additional findings revealed a positive correlation between overall social media addiction, its various dimensions, and psychological well-being. This suggests that social media usage did not diminish the psychological well-being of students. These results align with previous research conducted by experts in the field (27, 28). During the pandemic, many students were extensively engaged with social media. They spent most of their time on social media by attending different types of webinars, online educational meetings, and career talks, and they got the opportunity to be in touch with friends, teachers, and other people through a virtual platform. They shared their talents on social media platforms, and when they got likes and positive comments on their posts, they were more motivated to perform well. Hence, although students showed a higher score on social media addiction, their psychological wellbeing was not

hampered. Social media assisted them in alleviating feelings of loneliness and depression, as well as the desire to be included.

## Conclusion

The findings have valid and urgent utility in the education system and society, where youth are the nation-builders and their mental health is essential to consider. The level of self-esteem is closely related to the success of a persona, and wellbeing is directly related to life satisfaction. The digital social media network can be added to a youth's life for better networking, but it can't replace a living human interaction that can ignite a human mind and help co-create knowledge and true bonding for human society.

The present study findings can provide guidance for further research to understand the positive role of media in how and why through more in-depth qualitative work among youth for the identification of indicators or themes. During lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, youth realized the positive aspects of social mediation to maintain a less hassle-free daily life and maintain normality to some extent in the total absence of physical social contact.

In summary, the findings of the study contribute to filling the current gap in the literature on social media addiction and its association with self-esteem and psychological well-being. The study explored addiction to social media in various dimensions, such as the nature of the habitant, level of education, and gender.

## Abbreviations

Nil.

## Acknowledgement

We would like to acknowledge all the participants of the study for their valuable input. All the authors equally contributed for the conception and execution of the research.

## Author Contributions

Conceptualization: Pritisha Phukan and Kakali Goswami; Data collection: Pritisha Phukan; Methodology: Kakali Goswami; Data analysis: Tuyir Riba; writing original draft: Pritisha Phukan; Editing: Jomyir Bagra; Review & Supervision: Kakali Goswami.

## Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## Ethics Approval

Ethical approval is not applicable. The researchers have followed all the ethical guidelines of Institutional Ethical Committee of Rajiv Gandhi University, Arunachal Pradesh, India. The researchers obtained informed consent from each participant prior to data collection.

## Funding

This work is based on independent research work of the authors. This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

## References

1. Russo A, Watkins J, Kelly L, Chan S. Participatory communication with social media. *Curator: The Museum Journal*. 2008 Jan;51(1):21-31. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2151-6952.2008.tb00292.x>.
2. Jacobsen WC, Forste R. The wired generation: Academic and social outcomes of electronic media use among university students. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*. 2011 May 1;14(5):275-80. <https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2010.0135>.
3. Kirschner PA, Karpinski AC. Facebook® and academic performance. *Computers in human behavior*. 2010 Nov 1;26(6):1237-45.
4. Kalpidou M, Costin D, Morris J. The relationship between Facebook and the well-being of undergraduate college students. *CyberPsychology, behavior, and social networking*. 2011 Apr 1;14(4):183-9. <https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2010.0061>.
5. Al-Menayes J. The relationship between mobile social media use and academic performance in university students. *New Media and Mass Communication*. 2014;25(2):23-9.
6. Karpinski AC, Kirschner PA, Ozer I, Mellott JA, Ochwo P. An exploration of social networking site use, multitasking, and academic performance among United States and European university students. *Computers in Human behavior*. 2013 May 1;29(3):1182-92. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2012.10.011>.
7. Kirschner PA, Karpinski AC. Facebook® and academic performance. *Computers in human behavior*. 2010 Nov 1;26(6):1237-45. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2010.03.024>.
8. Schils N, Verhage A. Understanding how and why young people enter radical or violent extremist groups. *International Journal of Conflict and Violence (IJCV)*. 2017 Jun 21;11:a473-. <https://doi.org/10.4119/ijcv-3084>.
9. Griffiths M. Internet addiction-time to be taken seriously?. *Addiction research*. 2000 Jan 1;8(5):413-8. <https://doi.org/10.3109/16066350009005587>.
10. Starcevic V. Is Internet addiction a useful concept?. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*. 2013 Jan;47(1):16-9. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0004867412461693>.

11. Schou Andreassen C, Pallesen S. Social network site addiction-an overview. *Current pharmaceutical design*. 2014 Aug 1;20(25):4053-61.
12. Goldberg I. Internet addiction disorder. *CyberPsychol. Behavior*. 1996 Aug;3(4):403-12. <http://web.urz.uniheidelberg.de/Netzdienste/anleitung/wwwtips/8/addict.html>.
13. Patton DU, Hong JS, Ranney M, Patel S, Kelley C, Eschmann R, Washington T. Social media as a vector for youth violence: A review of the literature. *Computers in Human Behavior*. 2014 Jun 1;35:548-53. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2014.02.043>.
14. Malik S, Khan M. Impact of facebook addiction on narcissistic behavior and self-esteem among students. *J Pak Med Assoc*. 2015 Mar 1;65(3):260-3.
15. Marino C, Gini G, Angelini F, Vieno A, Spada MM. Social norms and e-motions in problematic social media use among adolescents. *Addictive Behaviors Reports*. 2020 Jun 1;11:100250. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.abrep.2020.100250>.
16. Appel M, Schreiner C, Weber S, Mara M, Gnambs T. Intensity of Facebook use is associated with lower self-concept clarity. *Journal of Media Psychology*. 2016 Dec;30(3):160-172. <https://doi.org/10.1027/1864-1105/a000192>
17. Kim JY. A study of social media users' perceptual typologies and relationships to self-identity and personality. *Internet Research*. 2018 Jun 4;28(3):767-84.
18. Yang X. Social influence or personal attitudes? Understanding users' social network sites continuance intention. *Kybernetes*. 2019 Feb 20;48(3):424-37.
19. Lindfors P, Berntsson L, Lundberg U. Factor structure of Ryff's psychological well-being scales in Swedish female and male white-collar workers. *Personality and individual differences*. 2006 Apr 1;40(6):1213-22. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2005.10.016>.
20. Raacke J, Bonds-Raacke J. MySpace and Facebook: Applying the uses and gratifications theory to exploring friend-networking sites. *Cyberpsychology & behavior*. 2008 Apr 1;11(2):169-74. <https://doi.org/10.1089/cpb.2007.0056>.
21. Rambabu K. Effect of social media on youth - a comparative study of urban and rural areas. 2021 Oct 30;10(2):9-22. <http://ijmer.in.doi./2021/10.10.23>.
22. Chittapur C, Hiremath D, Natekar DS. A Comparative Study to Assess the Social Anxiety and Self-Esteem Between Urban and Rural Adolescents Studying at Selected High Schools of Bagalkot District," Karnataka, India. *Journal of Chemical Health Risks*. 2024 March 6;14(2):113-120.
23. Bharatbhai JM. Psychological Well-being among Youth. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*. 2023 Aug 6;11(3):1610-1616. DOI: 10.25215/1103.155.
24. Guven A. Relationship between social media use, self-esteem and satisfaction with life (Doctoral dissertation, University of Alabama Libraries), 2019.
25. Köse ÖB, Doğan A. The Relationship between Social Media Addiction and Self-Esteem among Turkish University Students. *Addicta: The Turkish journal on addictions*. 2019 Jan 1;6(1):175-190. <https://doi.org/10.15805/addicta.2019.6.1.0036>.
26. Hou Y, Xiong D, Jiang T, Song L, Wang Q. Social media addiction: Its impact, mediation, and intervention. *Cyberpsychology: Journal of psychosocial research on cyberspace*. 2019 Feb 21;13(1). <http://dx.doi.org/10.5817/CP2019-1-4>.
27. Ostic D, Qalati SA, Barbosa B, Shah SM, Galvan Vela E, Herzallah AM, Liu F. Effects of social media use on psychological well-being: a mediated model. *Frontiers in Psychology*. 2021 Jun 21;12:678766. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.678766>.
28. Mitropoulou EM, Karagianni M, Thomadakis C. Social Media Addiction, Self-Compassion, and Psychological Well-Being: A Structural Equation Model. *Alpha Psychiatry*. 2022 Nov;23(6):298. 10.5152/alphapsychiatry.2022.22957.