

Relationship between Social Media Addiction and Social Anxiety in Females

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Abstract

Females are more likely to have social anxiety disorder. A lot of environmental factors contribute to this. This study focuses on the social media addiction factor. Social media addiction is a behavioural addiction in which individuals use social media excessively and give in so much time and effort that it eventually impairs other important life areas. Social anxiety disorder is a type of anxiety disorder that causes extreme fear in social environment. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between social media addiction and social anxiety in females. Correlational survey model was used to collect data from 61 female students. A Google form survey was sent to the participants with the help of various social media platforms. The data was collected using a Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale and Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale. Pearson's Correlation Coefficient was calculated for the statistical analysis. The findings showed that there was a positive correlation ($r=0.25$, $p=0.518$) between the two variables, which was significant, confirmed through the current findings. Further, the correlation between the subscales of Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale and Bergen Social Media Addiction was computed. The correlations were uniformly high ranging from 0.80 to 0.99, with the most significant positive correlation between Avoidance in Performance and Social Media Addiction.

Key Words: Social Media Addiction, Social Anxiety, Depression.

Introduction

Mental health is defined as a condition of well-being in which people are aware of their potential, are able to solve everyday issues, work effectively, and contribute meaningfully to their communities. There is now a debate over the benefits and drawbacks of social media in terms of mental health. Social networking is an important part in maintaining our mental wellness. Mental health, health behaviour, physical health, and mortality risk are all influenced by the quantity and quality of social contacts. The Displaced Behaviour Theory may explain why there is a link between social media and mental health. People who engage in sedentary habits such as social media use, according to the idea, have less time for face-to-face social connection, both of which have been demonstrated.

We already know that social media has its benefits and drawbacks. Social media can be used to exchange information, ideas, and interests. It allows you to interact with friends and family and the outside world. It has been seen that routine use of social media can benefit adolescents by enhancing their communication skills, social connection and even technical skills (O'Keeffe, 2011). Social media has become a part of our daily lives and it has a very huge impact on our lives too. Greater usage of social media has led to social media addiction in many individuals. Social media has become a crucial medium for communication. Social anxiety is a chronic mental health condition in which social interaction cause excessive and irrational anxiety. Socially anxious people tend to use internet for social interaction (Valkenburg et al., 2005). Individuals who have a problem socializing in social environments are more comfortable socializing on the internet. It has also been proved that social anxiety is related to internet addiction and social media addiction (Yen et al., 2012). Social anxiety is also lower during online interaction than during in person face to face interaction (Yen et al., 2012). Therefore social anxiety can be an important predictor for social media addiction.

Literature Review

In a study conducted to find the association between internet addiction and social anxiety in young adults it was found that there was a positive association between internet addiction and social anxiety. It was also seen that the ones suffering from social anxiety didn't mainly use internet for social purposes.

According to several studies, people with anxiety are more prone to social media addiction due to their strong desire to avoid face-to-face social contacts. Individuals with social media addiction spend more time on web-based social connections than in-person social interactions, which may erode social skills and increase dread of meeting people in person. As these individuals continue to regard in-person interactions as a source of harm, their fear may exacerbate their symptoms of social media addiction.

People who are afraid of face-to-face connection have a lack of desire for relatedness, which may stem from emotions of insecurity in everyday life situations, and social media can be utilised as a compensatory technique to meet such requirements. Individuals with heightened anxiety may develop a social media addiction as a result of their excessive use of social media.

In another study it was found that social media made a positive impact on students (Larnyo et al., 2021). The results contradicted other studies which said that social media had a negative impact on behaviour. Social media helped the students deal with adverse emotions experienced in everyday life. The limitations of this study were that it was conducted only on international students. The study didn't confirm if the relationship between social media use and everyday life of the international students and the non-international students was similar. Moreover there was a high risk of social media addiction among students who were already using social media excessively which would've made it easy for them to cope with social media related anxiety and depression.

Mental disorders like melancholy and anxiety have long been known to raise the risk of, and intensify the effects of, behavioural and chemical addictions. Addictive use of social media has been linked to depression, anxiety, and mental suffering in numerous researches, including thorough reviews.

There is also general association between social media use and mental health issues. This study found that social media can affect the level of anxiety and depression in individuals. It was not determined as to how social media has a negative impact on some peoples' mental health where on some it might have a positive or no impact. In a group of undergraduate students Shaw et al. found discovered an association between time spent on Facebook and social anxiety. The relationship between passive Facebook use (e.g. passively viewing one's Facebook profile) and social anxiety was significant even after checking for depressive and anxiety symptoms. Weidman and Levinson considered both offline (self-reported indicators) and online indicators (using the profiles of coders for Facebook) of social anxiety. Results on self-reported social anxiety and objective Facebook use indicated significant negative relationships between the two variables, with number of friends, number of photographs and quotes length being negatively related to social anxiety. There was a notable negative relationship between social anxiety composite like number of friends, photographs, videos, photo albums, the number of people in profile pictures and social anxiety as measured by the perceived social anxiety symptoms and objective Facebook indications.

In a study that aimed to explore the association between problematic use of social media and mental distress. A complex interrelationship was found between problematic use of social media and mental distress. Seabrook, Kern, and Rickard (2016) conducted a systematic review of the relationships between anxiety, depression, and SMU and found that more positive interactions, social support, and feelings of social connectedness on social media were linked to lower levels of anxiety and depression, while more negative interactions and social comparisons were linked to higher levels of anxiety and depression. SMU was also linked to less loneliness, higher self-esteem, and higher life satisfaction, according to Seabrook et al. (2016), but they speculated that this pattern of results could be related to how people interact with social media, which was not explored in depth in the original studies in their review.

There exists a positive relationship between social anxiety and social media addiction and a negative relationship between happiness and social media addiction. In the research conducted by ÖnderBaltacı social anxiety and happiness give an explanation to university students' social media addiction. Students who were happy with their daily and content with their daily lives were less likely to be addicted to social media.

Social Media use has become extremely common particularly among young adults. Social media use affects the well-being of individuals. Researches have shown that social media use is linked to social anxiety and loneliness. Individuals that are socially anxious and lonely tend to prefer social interactions on social media. In an exploratory study conducted by Nereim et al. it was found that Passive social media use (reading posts) is more strongly associated with depression than active use (making posts).

Study found that time spent, activity and social media addiction were all significant risk factors for anxiety and depression. Anxiety is the most common mental health problems. Teenagers experience anxiety due to social media related to fear of loss which leads to them checking social media more often. One of the unintended consequences of excessive usage of social media is depression.

According to the finding from another study it was seen that women are more likely to suffer from SAD and report greater clinical severity. Females specifically are more anxious due to differences in brain chemistry and hormone fluctuations. Reproductive events in a woman's life lead to hormonal extreme changes which have been linked to anxiety. Overall social media has positive as well as negative impacts on mental

health. Excessive use of social media can lead to social media addiction. Social media addiction and social anxiety have an association between them.

Hypothesis

There is a positive correlation between social media addiction and social anxiety.

Method

A correlational survey method was used to study the relationship between social media addiction and social anxiety in students. The students were sent a Google form survey and were asked to answer a few questions. The survey was distributed on various social media platforms.

Participants

A total of 61 (N=61) students participated in the research. The eligibility criteria was that the participants should be at least 13 years old and not more than 25 years old, the participant should also be a student in either a school or a college.

Data collection tools

Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale: The Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale is developed from the Bergen Facebook Addiction Scale. It is a 6 item scale that can be used to assess social media addiction. The 6 items are written as a five point Likert scale.

Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale: The LSAS was developed by Dr. Michael R. Liebowitz in 1987. It is a 24 item scale which consists of 6 subscales which are Fear, Fear in social interaction, Fear in performance, Avoidance, Avoidance in social interaction and Avoidance in performance. 13 items are related to performance anxiety and 11 items related to social situations.

Data Analysis

The data of this study was collected from students who had participated voluntarily. The data collected from the Google form survey filled by the students was then transferred to a Microsoft excel sheet. An online statistics calculator was used to find the mean of the two tests and the standard deviation. Pearson’s correlation coefficient was used to determine the relationship between social media addiction and social anxiety.

Results

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation for social anxiety and social media addiction.

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Social Anxiety	66.14	30.13
Social Media Addiction	18.52	3.86

61 students participated in this study (N=61). Pearson’s correlation coefficient was computed using the mean given in the above table. Results indicated that there was a positive relationship between social media addiction and social anxiety ($r=0.2502, p=0.518$). The result is significant at $p < 0.05$.

Table 2: Summary table showing Pearson’s Product moment correlation coefficient relationship between Social media addiction and Social anxiety and its aspects.

	Social Media Addiction	Social anxiety	Fear	Fear of social interaction	Fear of performance	Avoidance	Avoidance of social interaction	Avoidance of performance
Social Media Addiction	1	0.25*	0.207	0.260*	0.145	0.282*	0.345**	0.204
Social Anxiety	0.25*	1	0.971**	0.964**	0.931**	0.961**	0.941**	0.935**
Fear	0.20	0.97	1	0.97	0.97	0.86	0.85	0.84
Fear of social interaction	0.260*	0.964**	0.976**	1	0.906**	0.880**	0.886**	0.832**
Fear of performance	0.145	0.931**	0.976**	0.906**	1	0.811**	0.775**	0.809**

Avoidance	0.282*	0.961**	0.866**	0.880**	0.811**	1	0.976**	0.975**
Avoidance of social interaction	0.345**	0.941**	0.850**	0.886**	0.775**	0.976**	1	0.904**
Avoidance of performance	0.204	0.93**	0.840**	0.832**	0.809**	0.975**	0.904**	1

** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$

Table 3: Summary of simple regression analysis with social media addiction as the dependent variable.

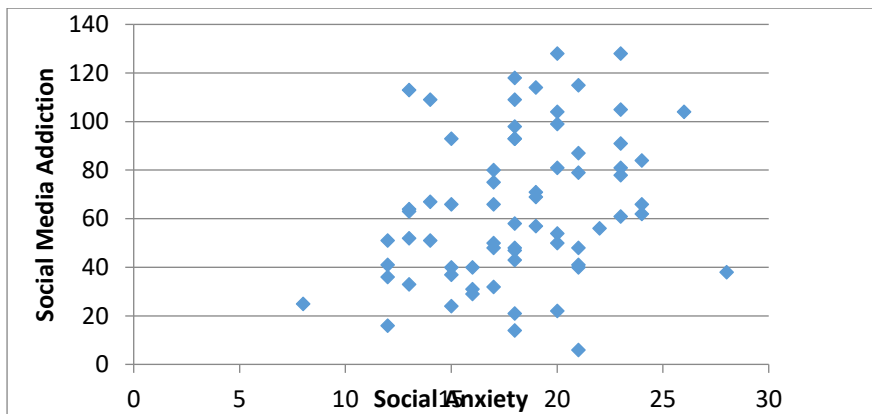
	Sum of square	df	Mean square	F	R	R ²	β	t
Regression	56.16	1	56.165	3.940*	0.25	0.063	0.25	1.985*
Residual	841.04	59	14.25					
Total	897.21	60						

* $p < 0.05$

Simple regression was carried out to find out if social anxiety could be significant predictor of social media addiction social anxiety contributes 6% variance to social media addiction $df(1,59)=3.94, p < 0.05$). Beta weight of social anxiety in explaining social media addiction was statistically significant ($\beta=0.25, t=1.985, p < 0.05$).

Research by ÖnderBaltaci (2019) found that the most important contribution to the prediction of social media addiction came from social anxiety variable ($\beta = 0.401$) with the help of hierarchical regression analysis.

Figure1: Correlation between Social Media Addiction and Social Anxiety



Discussion

Social media addiction is a behavioural addiction that is defined by being overly concerned about social media, driven by an uncontrollable urge 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. Social anxiety disorder is a type of anxiety disorder that causes extreme fear in social environment. A chronic mental health condition in which social interactions cause irrational anxiety. The objective of this study was to understand the relationship between social media addiction and social anxiety. The hypothesis stated was that there is a positive correlation between social media addiction and social anxiety. The scales used were Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale and Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale. The Pearson correlation coefficient was 0.25 which was significant at $p < 0.05$. Further, the correlation between the 6 subscales of LSAS namely, fear, fear in social interaction, fear in performance, avoidance, avoidance in social interaction and avoidance in performance was computed. The LSAS avoidance in performance correlated most significantly with the BSMAS ($r=0.992, p < 0.01$); followed by avoidance of social interaction ($r=0.9148, p < 0.01$) total avoidance being ($r=0.9766, p < 0.01$). A very similar pattern of correlations was noted for the fear of social interaction ($r=0.8422, p < 0.01$) and fear of performance ($r=0.8094, p < 0.01$) subscales. The correlation value for total fear was ($r=0.8457, p < 0.01$). The results showed that there is a positive correlation between social media addiction and social anxiety. When examined both the avoidance subscales were more highly correlated with the BSMAS than the corresponding fear subscale. This states that social media addiction results in social anxiety leading individuals to avoidance in performance in social settings. Fear is also a contributing factor but according to the results avoidance is a

slightly more influential factor. Similar results were obtained in other researches. Individuals who are not comfortable socializing are most likely to rely on various social media platforms to have some social interaction. People who have been addicted to social media might not want to socialize which could also lead to social anxiety.

Examining the results from another perspective, people, in order to cope with negative life events use dysfunctional coping strategies which are escapism and avoidance which might lead to behavioural addiction. Therefore it appears valid to claim that there is a link between avoidance in social situations and excessive social media usage.

Lately, studies have found that using social media platforms can have a negative effect on the psychological health of its users. However, the extent to which the use of social media impacts the general population is yet to be determined. Studies have found that social media addiction can affect the level of anxiety and depression in individuals. In addition, other potential causes of anxiety and depression have been identified, which require further research. The risks related to social media addiction need to be studied further.

Conclusions

This study found that there exists a positive relationship with a correlation of $r= 0.25$ between social media addiction and social anxiety. Social anxiety levels positively predicted the social media addiction levels. Thus the hypothesis “There is a positive correlation between social media addiction and social anxiety” has been proved.

Limitations

There could have been several confounding variables affecting the participant’s social anxiety that were not investigated. Personality for example, varies from individual to individual. There are studies supporting the idea that people with different personality traits differ in their usage of social media. Other confounding variables such as recent incident and other previously present mental health disorders such as selective mutism, normative shyness, and agoraphobia may have been overlooked.

Furthermore, this research has not addressed the presence of specific addiction symptoms. These might be adapted from the ICD-10 criteria for dependence syndrome including tolerance, withdrawal, and increased use, loss of control, extended recovery periods, sacrificing social occupational and recreational activities and continued use despite of negative consequences. These are the adequate criteria for diagnosing behavioural addiction. And thus appears sufficient to be applied to social media addiction.

Another limitation of this study is that this study only focuses on females. Findings would have differed if this study would’ve been gender inclusive. The sample size (N=61) of this study was small which reduced the power of this study. Hence the findings would be less conclusive.

Despite the number of potential limitations noted, the paper succeeds in its purpose to investigate the relationship between social media addiction and social anxiety in females.

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