ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER
Volume - 15 | Issue - 11 | November - 2026 | PRINT ISSN No. 2277 - 8179 | DOI : 10.36106/ijsr
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION AND SELF-ESTEEM AMONG YOUNG ADULTS

Psychology

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ABSTRACT

Vthe pervasive expansion of digital networking platforms has fundamentally transformed patterns of social interaction, identity formation, and psychological well-being among young adults. This quantitative empirical study investigated the relationship between social media addiction and self-esteem among young adults aged 18 to 25 years. Employing a cross-sectional correlational research design, data were collected from a sample of N = 100 participants (48 males, 52 females) residing in urban settings. Social media addiction was assessed using the Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS), while global self-esteem was evaluated using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES). Statistical analyses, including descriptive metrics, Pearson product-moment correlation, and independent samples t-tests, were conducted. The findings revealed a statistically significant, moderate-to-strong negative correlation between social media addiction and self-esteem ($r = -0.482$, $p < .001$), indicating that higher levels of problematic social media engagement are associated with reduced self-reported global self-worth. Gender-based comparative analysis indicated slightly higher social media addiction scores among females, though the difference in overall self-esteem scores was not statistically significant. The study underscores the critical necessity for digital literacy interventions, mental health awareness programs, and cognitive-behavioral strategies aimed at fostering healthy online habits among young adults.

KEYWORDS

Statement of the Research Problem

In the modern digital age, excessive use of social media platforms has become a major concern among young adults aged 18 to 25. High usage often leads to compulsive behaviors, social comparison, and altered self-evaluations, which may negatively impact an individual's overall self-worth and psychological well-being.

Research Questions

- Is there a significant relationship between social media addiction and self-esteem among young adults?
- Are there significant gender differences in the levels of social media addiction and self-esteem?

Objectives of the Study

- To evaluate the level of social media addiction among young adults.
- To assess the global self-esteem levels among young adults
- To examine the relationship between social media addiction and self-esteem.

Hypotheses

- **H_01:** There is no statistically significant relationship between social media addiction and self-esteem among young adults.
- **H_a1:** There is a statistically significant negative relationship between social media addiction and self-esteem among young adults.
- **H_02:** There is no statistically significant difference in social media addiction between male and female young adults.

Sample Size & Sampling Strategy

- **Sample Size:** N = 100 young adults.
- **Age Group:** 18 to 25 years.
- **Sampling Method:** Convenience / Non-probability sampling technique.

Statistical Tools & Tools Description

- **Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS):** A 6-item scale measuring core components of addiction (salience, mood modification, tolerance, withdrawal, conflict, relapse).
- **Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES):** A 10-item scale evaluating global self-worth on a 4-point Likert scale.
- **Statistical Analysis:** Descriptive Statistics (Mean, Standard Deviation) and Inferential Statistics (Pearson Correlation Coefficient and t-tests).

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

- **Inclusion Criteria:** Young adults aged 18–25 years; active users of social media; basic understanding of English.
- **Exclusion Criteria:** Individuals below 18 or above 25 years; individuals with diagnosed psychological/clinical disorders.

Procedure

Participants were informed about the nature of the study, and informed consent was obtained digitally. The socio-demographic details, BSMAS, and RSES questionnaires were administered. Data collected were coded and analyzed using appropriate statistical methods.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Background and Context of the Study

Over the past two decades, the exponential proliferation of mobile computing technologies and ubiquitous high-speed internet access has reshaped human communication. Social media platforms—such as Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, Snapchat, and LinkedIn—have evolved from simple media-sharing utilities into central infrastructure for social interaction, self-expression, and information consumption. Among young adults aged 18 to 25, digital engagement is virtually universal.

While these platforms offer opportunities for global connectivity, peer engagement, and information dissemination, their algorithmic structures are engineered to maximize user retention and engagement. Features such as variable reward schedules, infinite scrolling, push notifications, and visual metric indicators (likes, shares, comments) exploit human neural reward pathways. Consequently, a significant proportion of young adult users exhibit compulsive consumption patterns, giving rise to what psychological literature conceptualizes as

Social Media Addiction or **Problematic Social Media Use (PSMU)**. Simultaneously, young adulthood represents a critical developmental period characterized by identity consolidation, academic transition, career establishment, and socio-emotional autonomy.

A core psychological pillar during this stage is **Self-Esteem**, defined as an individual's global subjective evaluation of their own worth and value. Because social platforms present idealized, highly curated portrayals of peers' lives, constant exposure to these environments exposes young adults to chronic upward social comparison, potentially eroding self-appraisal and emotional stability.

The Types of Social Media Platforms

Discussion Forums and Communities: An online Discussion Forum is a place where individuals may participate in continuous dialogues and exchange knowledge regarding specific objects or themes. Frequently, Community Engagement Tools intended for corporate usage are used to construct these forums. Sites such as Quora and Reddit facilitate topical discussions. Users have the ability to converse, exchange knowledge, and pose enquiries.

Microblogging Sites: Microblogging is a combination of instant messaging and content production. Sharing brief messages with an online audience through a microblog can increase engagement. Microblogs are crucial because they give us a way to communicate with the people in our surroundings. These websites can also be used to

quickly learn about the current affairs or information that is time-sensitive.

- **Photo and Video Sharing Sites:** Photo sharing websites allow users to post their images to share with their friends online or even the entire web, in place of printing pictures in hard copy.

- **Professional Networks:** Developing contacts with professionals in your field of work and other similar fields is known as professional networking. The main professional networking site is LinkedIn, where many users may network with peers, display their talents, and look for job openings.

- **Social Networking Sites:** Social network sites are online spaces and mobile applications that let people and groups interact, exchange information, connect and build relationships. Individuals can establish connections with neighbours, family and friends who share their interests.

THE CONCEPT OF ADDICTION

The complicated disorder known as Addiction is typified by obsessive use of rewarding stimuli in spite of negative outcomes. It can take on diverse forms that impact people's mental, emotional, and physical health. One can think of a thorough examination of addiction, including its many forms, causes, impacts, and a variable therapies.

Types of Addiction

- **Behavioral Addiction:** Process addictions is another name for Behavioral Addictions, are disorders characterized by obsessive and troublesome behaviors. These effects may have an impact on one's job, relationships, or mental and physical well-being.

- **Gambling Addiction:** Gambling disorder is a chronic mental health condition that can affect many aspects of one's life. The overwhelming drive to gamble that results in financial, personal, and emotional pain is known as Compulsive gambling, also known as Gambling disorder.

- **Internet and Gaming Addiction:** Video game addiction is also known as internet gaming disorder, is a disorder marked by a marked loss of control over gaming behaviors.

- **Shopping Addiction:** Shopping addiction is also known as Oniomania, is a behavioral addiction characterized by obsessive purchase as a copying mechanism for unpleasant emotions including sadness and anxiety.

The Symptoms of Addiction

The signs and symptoms of addiction differ depending on the substance or activity and the individual. Generally speaking, indicators consist of:

Inability to stop: One of the main characteristics of social media addiction is the inability to quit using the platform, which is indicative of a compulsive activity that many people find difficult to manage. The neuronal, psychological, and social aspects of the incapacity to cease social media use combine to produce an enticing urge to use them constantly. Even if a person wants to stop using drugs or engaging in dangerous addictive behaviours, they might not. They might have made several unsuccessful attempts to cut back on their substance usage or behaviour. They might also attempt to conceal it or lie about it to their loved ones.

Increased tolerance: A person's decreased pharmacological response is brought on by prolonged use. Tolerance to both legal and illegal substances can develop in people. One physical result of taking a medication repeatedly is tolerance. Addiction is not always synonymous with tolerance.

Intense focus on the substance or activity: An addiction causes a person to become pathologically fixated on the drug or activity. When individuals find themselves needing, acquiring, and thinking about the issue of the addiction more and more, they could feel as though the addiction has taken over their lives.

Lack of control: Addicts frequently feel helpless and may believe they have no control over their substance use or activities. Their addiction and how much it has affected their lives may cause them to feel guilty, despondent or overwhelmed on a regular basis.

Personal problems and health issuse: Every element of people's lives is impacted by addiction, including their relationships, careers, physical and mental health. They could struggle to complete tasks at home, at school or at work because of their substance abuse or the activity. Again, they are aware of the negative consequences their addictions are causing them, but they are unable to give them up.

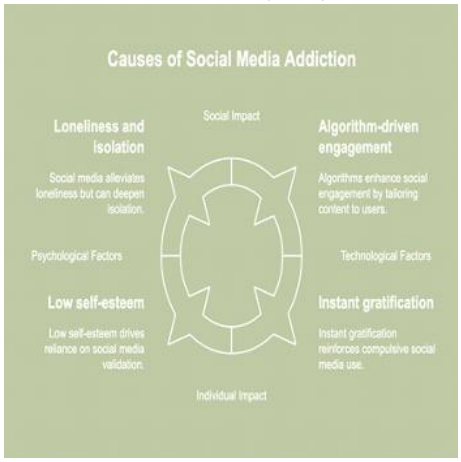
- **Withdrawal:** When addicts stop using, addicts may experience both physical and emotional withdrawal symptoms. Throwing up, trembling, or sweating are examples of physical symptoms. They might also start to feel agitated or nervous.

The Factors causing Addiction

Environmental factors:

Social influence: Addiction is a problem with society and culture. In essence, understanding how society impacts those with addiction as well as how those with addictions effect society is crucial for treating addiction. The social cost of addiction is so great that it affects every member of society. Addiction can lead to a variety of negative outcomes, including losses from productivity decline, property destruction, excessive healthcare expenditures, and crimes. Addiction risk can be greatly impacted by cultural attitudes towards substances, familial practices, and peer pressure.

Stress and Trauma: When someone has had trauma or ongoing stress, they may turn to substances like alcohol and narcotics as a kind of self-medication. Substance abuse is a common way that people temporarily manage their misery or the symptoms of mental diseases such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder(PTSD).



Psycological factors:

Mental health disorders: Serious mental illnesses like schizophrenia, bipolar disorders, manic depression, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder(ADHD), obsessive-compulsive disorder, panic disorder, post-traumatic stress disoder, and antisocial personality disorder are frequently linked to long-term issues.

Understanding Social media addiction

Definition and Characteristics: An excessive and obsessive use of social media that results in an ablility to control or minimise consumption, despite detrimental effects on everyday functioning and well-being, is known as social media addiction. It frequently results in the disregard of their obligations, such job, education, or interpersonal connections. An incessant impulse to check for updates, a continuous concentration on online activity, and a sense of losing control over usage are all sogns of social media addiction.

Different From Healthy Use: Social media by itself is not bad, but when it is used excessively, it can cause problems. In order to utilise social media resposibly, one must interact with the sites in a way that does not conflict with one's daily obligations,

interpersonal relationships, or self-care. On the other hand, constant checking , uneasiness when offline, and negative impacts on mental and emotional well-being are characteristics of social media addiction.

Prevalence of social media addiction: Research indicates that addiction to social media is more common among younger people, with a notable proportion of adolescents and young adults displaying addictive behaviours. Concerns are raised concerning possible negative impacts on their growing minds as a result.

Factors contributing to social media addiction

- **Algorithms:** Algorithms are the data, signals, and rules that control how social media platforms work. These algorithms decide which content is ranked, filtered, chosen and suggested to users. Algorithms have an impact on our decisions and the content we view on social media.

- **Notifications and instant feedback:** Instant gratification is provided by features like likes,comments, and notifications, which makes users want to engage with ither people more. Anxiety about getting likes or good feedback might cause obsessive conduct.

- **Illusion of Connectivity:** Social media gives users the impression that they are always connected and a part of a bigger community. To satisfy their social demands, people are frequently led by this illusion to seek out more virtual engagement.

The Pyschological Mechanisms Behind Social Media Addiction

- **Instant Gratification:** Social media is made to make you feel good right away. Dopamine, the feel-good hormone, is released in response to likes, shares and comments on a platform, which increases the user's desire to use it more. People who are in this cycle may become quite addicted to it since they are always looking for additional rewards.

- **Social comparision:** People's lives are shown via a filtered lens on social media, which highlights their accomplishments, connections and successes. Constant comparisions ca result from this, which can exacerbate low self-esteem, jealously, and feelings of inadequacy. Fear of Missing Out(FOMO): Anxiety brought on by the perception of being excluded from activities or experiences.

- **Neurobiological Perspective:** The biological and neurological viewpoint is concerned with an individual's nature. This approach holds that an individual's internal characteristics are significantly more significant to their behaviours than the external influences that help mould them.

Mental Health Implications of Social Media Addiction

- **Anxiety:** Many people share highlight reels of their lives on social media. Stress and anxiety might result from the pressure to craft the ideal post in order to receive likes and comments.

- **Depression:** People's time spent on enjoyable things like hobbies and exercise might also be reduced by social media. It can also divert attention from more crucial duties, including homework. Trying to balance those obligations can lead to depression.

- **Sleep disruption:** The influence of midnight browsing and interrupting circadian rhythms through the strong light provided by the gadgets used to access social media accounts leads to sleep disruption.

- **Impaired concentration:** Social media addiction impacts productivity, attention span, and moment awareness.

- **Emotional exhaustion:** Emotional exhaustion and decision fatigue can result from consuming information continuously.

Emotional Health Impact of Social Media Addiction

Low self-esteem: Social media addiction frequently results in exposure to cyberbullying, social comparision, and the need for validation via likes and comments. Their general well-being is impacted by the intricate interaction that affects their sense of self-worth and confidence, which in turn contributes to feelings of inadequacy, despair, anxiety, and loneliness.

Increased feeling of loneliness: People who use social media extensively and for extended periods of time may unknowingly substitute virtual relationships for in-person encounters, which heightens their sense of social isolation.

Emotional Dysregulation: Overuse of social media can cause irritability, mood changes, and trouble controlling emotions.

The Impact of Social Media Addiction on Relationships

Family dynamics: Overuse of social media can result in a decline in in-person family contact because users may become more preoccupied with their conncetions than with their real- life relationships. Family dynamics may be strained as a result.

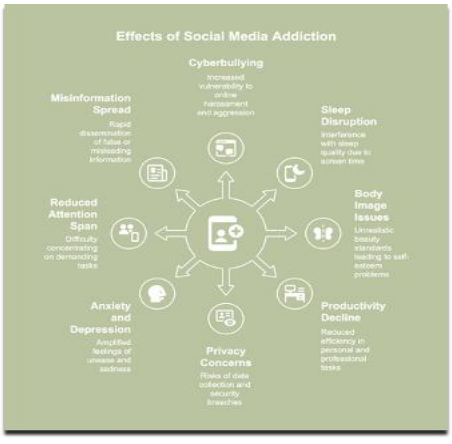
Friendships: People who spend a lot of time on social media may become disengaged from their friendships in real life and experience higher levels of stress, despair, and loneliness. As a result, the quality of people's friendships in real life is diminished.

Romantic Relationships: Social media influences how people perceive romantic love in both postive and bad ways, including how they perceive rewards, threats, and self-disclosure. Relationship discontent has been linked to social media , which also affects how people see independence, commitment, love lasting and gender dyads.

Positive Aspects and Responsible Usage of Social Media

Positive effects of social media: Social media platforms give users the chance to interact with others, have fun, and learn. They can also benefit young people's mental health. They can support the upkeep of social tries and global communication with loved ones. They offer oppurtunities to make pals. You can utilise them to get ongoing assistance. The social media platforms can help with communication skill development. Furthermore, utilising social media wisely might aid in improving one's personality.

- **Promoting Responsible Usage:** Addiction can be prevented by adhering to healthy consumption who to follow and creating a happy online environment.



Statement of the Research Problem

Despite the growing recognition of digital dependence as a public health issue, the psychological mechanisms connecting compulsive social media use to personal self-evaluations among young adults require rigorous empirical investigation. While social networking platforms aim to foster social capital, excessive reliance on digital feedback often manifests in heightened anxiety, loneliness, body dissatisfaction, and diminished self-worth.

Many young adults find themselves trapped in cycles of compulsive checking driven by the "Fear of Missing Out" (FoMO). Understanding the magnitude and nature of the relationship between social media addiction and global self-esteem is essential for clinical psychologists, educators, and policy makers seeking to mitigate digital mental health risk

Research Questions

1. Is there a statistically significant relationship between social media addiction and self-esteem among young adults?
2. Are there significant gender differences in the levels of social media addiction and self-esteem within this population?
3. To what extent does daily screen time correlate with levels of social media addiction.

Objectives of the Study

1. To measure the prevalence and severity of social media addiction among young adults aged 18–25 years using the Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS).
2. To assess global self-esteem levels among young adults using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES).
3. To evaluate the direction and strength of the correlation between social media addiction and self-esteem.

4. To examine gender-based differences across social media addiction and self-esteem scores.

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Theoretical Frameworks

- Social Comparison Theory (Festinger, 1954): Postulates that individuals possess an innate drive to evaluate their own opinions, abilities, and worth by comparing themselves to others. In social media environments, users are overwhelmingly exposed to "upward social comparisons"—curated, highlighted representations of others' achievements, appearances, and lifestyles—which frequently leads to negative self-appraisals and lower self-esteem.

- Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz et al., 1973): Suggests that individuals actively seek out specific media platforms to fulfill specific cognitive, emotional, and social needs. When individuals rely heavily on social media to satisfy psychological needs for validation and belonging, excessive, habit-forming consumption patterns can develop.

- Biopsychosocial Model of Addictive Behaviors (Griffiths, 2005): Conceptualizes behavioral addictions through six core components: salience, mood modification, tolerance, withdrawal symptoms, conflict (interpersonal and intrapsychic), and relapse.

Empirical Review: Social Media Addiction and Psychological Well-Being

- Andreassen et al. (2017): Investigated the relationship between addictive use of social media, narcissism, and self-esteem across a large sample (N = 23,532). The researchers found that social media addiction was negatively correlated with self-esteem and positively correlated with narcissism, suggesting that low self-esteem may drive compulsive social media use as a compensation mechanism.
- Vogel et al. (2014): Examined the impact of chronic social media exposure on self-evaluations. Their experimental and correlational findings confirmed that participants who frequently browsed social media experienced poorer self-perceptions, mediated primarily by upward social comparisons.

- Woods and Scott (2016): Evaluated night-time social media use, sleep quality, self-esteem, anxiety, and depression among young adults. Their analysis demonstrated that higher social media engagement was directly linked to lower self-esteem and increased psychological distress.

- Appel et al. (2016): Analyzed passive consumption (scrolling without interacting) versus active consumption on social platforms. Passive usage was found to be strongly associated with envy and lowered self-esteem, whereas active social interaction produced milder psychological effects.

The Triggers and Signs of Social Media Addiction

Behavioral signs: Excessive online time, obsession with social media, anxiety, or irritability when unable to access online content, using digital platforms as a copying mechanism, losing control over internet usage, a constant need for validation, forgoing time with others in favor of online time, and allowing social media to interfere with obligations are all signs and symptoms of social media addiction.

Triggers: Peer pressure, loneliness, boredom, low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, social comparison, decreased physical activity, and FOMO are some of the emotional triggers of social media addiction.

Psychological Dependence: Excessive social media use has been linked to a higher risk of melancholy, anxiety, loneliness, self-harm and even suicide ideation, according to numerous research. Negative experiences like feeling inadequate about one's life or appearance may be encouraged by social media.

Research Gap and Rationale

While international research extensively documents digital media usage, there remains a need for empirical studies examining urban young adult populations in developing technological markets. With rapid smartphone adoption and changing social dynamics, evaluating how digital addiction impacts core self-esteem provides necessary localized empirical data to inform counseling practices and campus wellness guidelines.

CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study utilized a quantitative, cross-sectional, descriptive, and correlational research design. This approach allows for the statistical evaluation of relationships between variables at a single point in time without manipulating participant environments.

Operational Definitions

Social Media Addiction: Defined operationally as a compulsive preoccupation with social networking applications, measured quantitatively via total scores on the Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS).

Self-Esteem: Defined operationally as an individual's global subjective feeling of overall self-worth and self-acceptance, measured quantitatively via total scores on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES).

Young Adults: Defined operationally as individuals aged between 18 and 25 years (inclusive).

Hypotheses

- **\mathbf{H_01}:** There is no statistically significant relationship between social media addiction and self-esteem among young adults.
- **\mathbf{H_a1}:** There is a statistically significant negative relationship between social media addiction and self-esteem among young adults.
- **\mathbf{H_02}:** There is no statistically significant difference in social media addiction scores between male and female young adults.
- **\mathbf{H_a2}:** There is a statistically significant difference in social media addiction scores between male and female young adults.

Variables

- Independent Variable: Social Media Addiction
- Dependent Variable: Self-Esteem
- Demographic Variables: Gender, Age, Daily Screen Time

Sample and Sampling Technique

- **Target Population:** Young adults aged 18 to 25
- **Sample Size:** N = 100 participants (48 males, 52 females)
- **Sampling Strategy:** Non-probability convenience sampling and snowball sampling.

Inclusion Criteria:

1. Individuals aged 18 to 25 years.
2. Active users of at least one social media platform (e.g., Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp, Snapchat).
3. Able to read and comprehend basic English.

Exclusion Criteria:

1. Individuals under 18 or over 25 years.
2. Individuals with a self-reported history of clinical psychiatric disorders currently undergoing medical treatment.

Psychometric Assessment Tools

1. Socio-Demographic Sheet: Captured age, gender, educational status, primary social media platform, and self-reported daily usage hours.

2. Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS; Andreassen et al., 2015):

- *Structure:* 6 items based on core addiction components (salience, mood modification, tolerance, withdrawal, conflict, relapse).
- *Scoring:* 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("Very rarely") to 5 ("Very often"). Total scores range from 6 to 30. Higher scores indicate greater severity of addiction
- *Reliability:* High internal consistency (\alpha = 0.88).

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1965):

- *Structure:* 10 items assessing global self-worth (5 positively phrased, 5 negatively phrased/reverse-scored).

- *Scoring:* 4-point Likert scale ranging from 0 ("Strongly Disagree") to 3 ("Strongly Agree"). Total scores range from 0 to 30. Scores below 15 indicate low self-esteem.
- *Reliability:* High test-retest and internal reliability (\alpha = 0.85).

Ethical Considerations

Data collection followed American Psychological Association (APA) ethical standards. Informed consent was obtained digitally from all participants prior to scale administration. Participation was voluntary, responses were kept completely anonymous, and participants retained the right to withdraw at any stage without consequence.

CHAPTER 4
ANALYSIS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Sample Demographic Distribution

Table 4.1: Demographic Breakdown of the Sample (N = 100)

Demographic Category	Sub-Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	48	48.0%
	Female	52	52.0%
Age Group	18 – 21 Years	54	54.0%
	22 – 25 Years	46	46.0%
Daily Screen Time	< 2 hours	12	12.0%
	2 - 4 hours	41	41.0%
	> 4 hours	47	47.0%

Descriptive Analysis of Main Variables

Table 4.2: Descriptive Metrics for BSMAS and RSES Scores

Measure	Items	Score Range	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)	Skewness
Social Media Addiction (BSMAS)	6	6 – 30	18.42	4.65	0.12
Global Self-Esteem (RSES)	10	0 – 30	16.10	3.88	-0.24

Hypothesis Testing & Inferential Analysis

Hypothesis 1 Testing (Correlation Analysis)

To test **\mathbf{H_01}** (relationship between social media addiction and self-esteem), a Pearson product-moment correlation was calculated.

Table 4.3: Pearson Correlation Matrix between BSMAS and RSES Scores

Variable	Metric	BSMAS Score	RSES Score
BSMAS Score	Pearson r	1	$-0.482^{}$
	Sig. (2-tailed)	—	< .001
	N	100	100
RSES Score	Pearson r	$-0.482^{}$	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	< .001	—
	N	100	100

Note: Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

Decision: Since p < .001, the null hypothesis \mathbf{H_01} is **rejected**. There is a statistically significant, negative correlation between social media addiction and self-esteem (r = -0.482). Higher addictive usage is associated with lower self-esteem.

Hypothesis 2 Testing (Gender Differences)

To test **\mathbf{H_02}** (gender differences in BSMAS scores), an independent samples t-test was conducted.

Table 4.4: Independent Samples t-Test for BSMAS Scores by Gender

Gender	N	Mean (M)	Std. Dev (SD)	t-value	df	p-value (2-tailed)
Male	48	17.54	4.32	-1.92	98	.058
Female	52	19.23	4.81			

Decision: The difference in social media addiction scores between males (M = 17.54) and females (M = 19.23) did not reach full statistical significance at the \alpha = .05 level (t = -1.92, p = .058). Therefore, the null hypothesis \mathbf{H_02} is **retained**

Discussion of Findings

The primary objective of this investigation was to determine whether a significant relationship exists between social media addiction and self-esteem in young adults. The empirical results demonstrate a clear negative correlation (r = -0.482, p < .001).

These findings align with Social Comparison Theory (Festinger, 1954). Young adults spending excessive time on digital platforms encounter constant visual representations of physical beauty, material success, and curated lifestyle achievements. Chronic exposure to these idealized standards fosters upward social comparison, leading individuals to evaluate their own lives as inadequate. This continuous gap between the actual self and perceived ideal online profiles contributes directly to eroded global self-worth. Furthermore, compulsive checking behaviors (driven by dopamine-driven notification schedules) impair real-world social performance, academic functioning, and sleep hygiene. As offline functioning suffers, individuals may experience diminished feelings of competence, further reducing self-esteem scores on standardized measures like the RSES.

CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Major Findings

1. A statistically significant, moderate-to-strong negative correlation (r = -0.482, p < .001) exists between social media addiction and global self-esteem among young adults aged 18–25.

2. Approximately 47% of participants reported spending more than 4 hours per day on social media platforms.

3. Gender differences in social media addiction scores were observed (females showing slightly higher mean scores), but the difference was not statistically significant at the 5% alpha level (p = .058).

CONCLUSIONS

Compulsive social media usage is inversely tied to psychological self-worth in young adults. Excessive engagement with algorithm-driven platforms creates environments prone to social comparison, which can undermine self-esteem. Managing digital consumption is therefore a critical component of socio-emotional health during young adulthood. Social media addiction has a serious and alarming effect on mental and emotional health. Excessive use of these platforms has been linked to increased anxiety, depression, and feelings of loneliness, according to research. People are frequently inundated with carefully chosen photos and lifestyles, which leads to harmful comparison's that damage their self-worth and general well-being. It is essential to promote proactive social media usage management strategies in order to successfully navigate this environment. People can take back control of their health by prioritizing offline activities, setting time limits, and doing digital detoxes. Furthermore, encouraging awareness of one's social media usage patterns and the emotional consequences they might result in more purposeful and satisfying online connections. By adopting these actions, we may minimize the possible negative effects of social media while maximizing its benefits, thereby fostering improved mental and emotional well-being for both our communities and ourselves.

Implications

Clinical & Counseling Psychology: Therapists working with young adults experiencing low self-esteem, social anxiety, or identity distress should incorporate digital media assessments and digital detox strategies into intervention plans.

Higher Education Institutions: Universities should establish psychoeducational workshops addressing healthy screen time, algorithmic awareness, and digital resilience.

Limitations

1. Cross-Sectional Design: Prevents establishing direct causal directions between digital addiction and self-esteem.
2. Sampling Limitations: Convenience sampling of N = 100 participants limits generalizability across diverse socioeconomic backgrounds.
3. Self-Report Bias: Reliance on self-reported questionnaire responses may introduce social desirability bias.

Suggestions for Future Research

1. Longitudinal studies tracking social media consumption patterns over several years to determine direct causal mechanisms.

2. Qualitative research exploring individual experiences of social comparison on specific platforms (e.g., short-form video content platforms vs. traditional image boards).
3. Evaluation of specific intervention frameworks, such as mindfulness-based digital detox programs.

ANNEXURE: INFORMED CONSENT & QUESTIONNAIRE FORM

Informed Consent Form

Research Title: Social Media Addiction and Self-Esteem Among Young Adults **Investigator:** [Your Name], M.Sc. Psychology Candidate, JAIN (Deemed-to-be University)

Purpose: You are invited to participate in an academic research study evaluating online habits and psychological well-being. Participation involves completing a brief questionnaire taking approximately 10 minutes.

Confidentiality: All responses are completely anonymous. No personal identifying information (e.g., name, address) will be published. Data will be analyzed in aggregate form for academic purposes only. Participation is entirely voluntary.

Section A: Demographic Information
1. Age: ____ years (Must be 18–25)
2. Gender: [ ] Male [ ] Female [ ] Other
3. Estimated Daily Social Media Usage:
[ ] Less than 2 hours
[ ] 2 to 4 hours
[ ] More than 4 hours

Section B: Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS)
Instructions: Please rate how often you have experienced each of the following over the past year (1 = Very rarely, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Very often).

1. You spend a lot of time thinking about social media or planning to use it.

2. You feel an urge to use social media more and more.

3. You use social media in order to forget about personal problems.

4. You have tried to cut down on the use of social media without success.

5. You become restless or troubled if you are prohibited from using social media.

6. You use social media so much that it has had a negative impact on your job/studies.

Section C: Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES)
Instructions: Rate your agreement with each statement (0 = Strongly Disagree, 1 = Disagree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Strongly Agree).
1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
2. At times I think I am no good at all. *(Reverse scored)*
3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of. *(Reverse scored)*
6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.
7. Overall, I am satisfied with myself.
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself. *(Reverse scored)*
9. I certainly feel useless at times. *(Reverse scored)*
10. At times I think I am no good at all. *(Reverse scored)*

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