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Social Media Addiction and Depression Among University Students

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the effects of social media addiction on depression in adult individuals. For this purpose, the researcher analyzed whether social media dependence had differing impacts according to various variables (age, gender, the highest level of education, duration of daily use of social media, frequency of social media use, etc.). A sample population of Students of University of Poonch Rawalakot in different campuses such as supply campus , shell campus , agriculture campus between 18 to 30 years of age participated in the research .The questionnaire form was developed to obtain the Social Media Addiction Scale (SMAS), Beck Depression Inventory scores, and demographic information from the participants. . Significant differences were found between depression and social media dependency in variables such as the number of children, age, and income. As a result of the study, when social media addiction was examined in terms of gender among socio-demographic variables, no significant difference was found.

Key words: Social Media, Depression, University Students

Introduction

Depression (major depressive disorder) is a common and serious medical illness that negatively affects how you feel, the way you think and how you act. Fortunately, it is also treatable. Depression causes feelings of sadness and/or a loss of interest in activities you once enjoyed. It can lead to a variety of emotional and physical problems and can decrease your ability to function at work and at home. Depression is One of the major mental health problems worldwide, especially among young adults. Depression can cause infected individuals to suffer greatly in their everyday life and it mainly affect their daily routine activities Such as studying, working household chores where as the severe level of depression can lead to suicide.

Around 800000 people commit suicide every year and suicide is identified as the second leading cause of death among young people aged (15 to 29) years

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(Qureshi, Khattak & Alay, 2021. On the other hand evidence suggest that Social Media can adversely, affects its user mental health mainly the adolescent generation. The extreme use of social media among young adult is associated with mental health problem e.g. depression, anxiety, stress, self esteem. Social media defined as, websites which allow profile creation and visibility of relationships between users has become one of the common leisure activities among its users. Now, almost half of the world population 49%, 3.80 billion actively use social media and these numbers are rapidly swelling every day. We use social media for a variety of reasons such as maintaining relationships, access to information and entertainment that made social media as an inseparable part of many individuals, daily life. Although social media provide a range of benefits and opportunities as just mention above, concerns have been raised about its excessive usage globally.

The excessive or addictive use of social media define as a behavioral addiction that is characterized As being overly concerned about social media , driven by a uncontrollable urge to log on to or use social media and devoting so much time and effort to social media that impair other important life areas .Through over past decades studies mainly explored the opportunities provided by internet-social media but now scholars , attention have turned to explore the adverse effects of the internet and social media among its users, mental health problems e.g. loneliness, self-esteem, anxiety, stress, depression and cancer among various age group of people in developed countries (Iqbal & Khattak, 2019).

Social Media Addiction

Historical Background

The history of social Media dates back to 1997, when the first SNS Six Degrees emerged as a result of the idea that individuals are linked via six degrees of separation (Boyd & Ellison , 2008) and is conceived as "the small world problem" in which society is viewed as becoming increasingly inter-connected(Mailgram,1967) . In 2004, Facebook, was launched as an online community for students at Harvard University and has since become the world's

most popular Social media addiction (Kuss &Griffiths,2011) . In 2016, there were 2.34 billion social network users worldwide (Statist Facts on Social Networks, 2017). In the same year, 22.9% of the world population used Facebook . In 2015, the average social media user spent 1.7 h per day on social media in the USA and 1.5 h in the UK, with social media users in the Philippines having the highest daily use at 3.7 h . This suggests social media use has become an important leisure activity for many, allowing individuals to connect with one another online irrespective of time and space limitation.(Turkle,2015)

Conceptual Definition

Social Media sites are virtual Communities where user can create individual public profiles, interact with real life friends , and meet other peoples based on shared interest. (Watermeyer,2012)

Operational Definition

It is a scale that consists of 21 items and 4 factors (occupation, mood modification, relapse and conflict). It is a 4 point Likert scale with "Always," "Often," "Sometimes," "rarely," and "Never." SMAS has 4 factors which explain 59% of the total variance.

Depression

Historical Background

During the Middle Ages, the mentally ill were believed to be possessed or in need of religion. Negative attitudes towards mental illness persisted into the 18th century in the United States, leading to stigmatization of mental illness, and unhygienic (and often degrading) confinement of mentally ill individuals. (Kuznetsov et al., 2015)

Conceptual Definition

Depression (major depressive disorder) is a common and serious medical illness that negatively affects how you feel, the way you think and how you act. Fortunately, it is also treatable. Depression causes feelings of sadness and/or a loss of interest in activities you once enjoyed. It can lead to a variety of emotional and

physical problems and can decrease your ability to function at work and at home (American Psychiatric Association,2013

Operational Definition

BDI is 21-item self report rating inventory that measures characteristics attitude and symptoms of depression.(Beck,et,1961)

Relation between Social Media Addiction And Depression

Many prior studies have explored the relationship of social Networking sites usage with the users' mental health problems (e.g. depression, anxiety, stress, loneliness, and self-esteem) among the various age group of people in developed countries (Glazzard & Stones, 2016; Ho et al., 2019; Savci, 2016;Waqas et al., 2018). In the least developed countries such as Afghanistan, there is not enough relevant academic literature. Therefore, this study will contribute by examining whether the relationship between the excessive use of social media and mental health problems are the same or not in developed and in least developed countries. The main objective of this study is to investigate the correlation between social media addiction and depression .(Waqas et , 2018).

Demographic Differences In Social Media Addiction & Depression

Research suggests there are socio demographic differences among those addicted to social networking. In terms of gender, psychotherapists treating technology- use related addictions suggest Social media addiction may be more common in female rather than male patients, and describe this difference based on usage motivations. Girls don't play role-playing games primarily, but use social forums excessively, in order to experience social interaction with other girls and above all to feel understood in their very individual problem constellations, very different from boys, who want to experience narcissistic gratification via games. This means the girls want direct interaction. They want to feel understood. They want to be able to express themselves. we're getting girls with clinical pictures that are so pronounced that we have to admit them into inpatient treatment. we have to develop strategies to specifically target girls much better because there appears a

huge gap. Epidemiologically, they are a very important group, but we're not getting them into consultation and treatment.

This quote highlights two important findings. First, in the age group of 14–16 years, girls appear to show a higher prevalence of addictions to the Internet and Social media sites, as found in a representative German sample , and second, teenage girls may be underrepresented in clinical samples. Moreover, another study on a representative sample demonstrated that the distribution of addiction criteria varies between genders and that extraversion is a personality trait differentiating between intensive and addictive use .Cross-sectional research is less conclusive as regards the contribution of gender as a risk factor for SNS addiction. A higher prevalence of Facebook addiction was found in a sample of 423 females in Norway using the Facebook Addiction Scale. Among Turkish teacher candidates, the trend was reversed, suggesting males were significantly more likely to be addicted to using Facebook as accessed via an adapted version of Young's Internet Addiction Test .In other studies, no relationship between gender and addiction was found. For instance, using a version of Young's Internet Addiction Test modified for SNS addiction in 277 young Chinese Smartphone users, gender did not predict SNS addiction . Similarly, another study assessing SNS dependence in 194 SNS users did not find a relationship between gender and SNS dependence. In a study of 447 university students in Turkey, Facebook addiction was assessed using the Facebook Addiction Scale, but did not find a predictive relationship between gender and Facebook addiction .(Caplan S.E , 2003)

Furthermore, the relationships between gender and Social media addiction may be further complicated by other variables. For instance, recent research by Oberst et al. found that only for females, anxiety and depression symptoms significantly predicted negative consequences of Social media use. The researchers explained this difference by suggesting that anxiety and depression experience in girls may result in higher Social media usage, implicating cyclical relationships in that psychopathological symptom experience may exacerbate negative

consequences due to SNS use, which may then negatively impact upon perceived anxiety and depression symptoms.

In terms of age, studies indicate that younger individuals may be more likely to develop problems as a consequence of their excessive engagement with online social networking sites . Moreover, research suggests perceptions as to the extent of possible addiction appear to differ across generations. A recent study by found that parents view their adolescents' online communication as more addictive than the adolescents themselves perceive it to be. This suggests that younger generations significantly differ from older generations in how they use technology, what place it has in their lives, and how problematic they may experience their behaviors to be. It also suggests that external accounts (such as those from parents in the case of children and adolescents) may be useful for clinicians and researchers in assessing the extent of a possible problem as adolescents may not be aware of the potential negative consequences that may arise as a result of their excessive online communication use. Interestingly, research also found that mothers are more likely to view their adolescents' behavior as potentially more addictive relative to fathers, whose perception tended to be that of online communication use being less of a problem . Taken together, although there appear differences in SNS addiction with regards to socio demographic characteristics of the samples studied, such as gender, future research is required in order to clearly indicate where these differences lie specifically, given that much of current research appears somewhat inconclusive.(Cam E.,Isbulan ,2012)

Theoretical Background

There are many different theories about the Social media addiction & depression. The most important theories include Behaviorist Theory, Beck's Theory, and Media dependency theory.

Behaviorist Theory

Behaviorism emphasizes the importance of the environment in shaping behavior.

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The focus is on observable behavior and the conditions through which individuals' learn behavior, namely classical conditioning, operant conditioning and social learning theory Therefore depression is the result of a person's interaction with their environment. For example, classical conditioning proposes depression is learned through associating certain stimuli with negative emotional states. Social learning theory states behavior is learned through observation, imitation and reinforcement (Dr. Saul McLeod, 2015)

Beck's (1967) Theory

One major cognitive theorist is Aaron Beck. He studied people suffering from depression and found that they appraised events in a negative way. Beck (1967) identified three mechanisms that he thought were responsible for depression. The cognitive triad (of negative automatic thinking) Negative self schemas Errors in Logic (i.e. faulty information processing) The cognitive triad are three forms of negative (i.e. helpless and critical) thinking that are typical of individuals with depression: namely negative thoughts about the self, the world and the future. These thoughts tended to be automatic in depressed people as they occurred spontaneously. For example, depressed individuals tend to view themselves as helpless, worthless, and inadequate. They interpret events in the world in a unrealistically negative and defeatist way, and they see the world as posing obstacles that can't be handled. Finally, they see the future as totally hopeless because their worthlessness will prevent their situation improving. Beck believed that depression prone individuals develop a negative self- schema. They possess a set of beliefs and expectations about themselves that are essentially negative and pessimistic. Beck claimed that negative schemas may be acquired in childhood as a result of a traumatic event. Experiences that might contribute to negative schemas include Death of a parent or sibling. Parental rejection, criticism, overprotection, neglect or abuse. Bullying at school or exclusion from peer group.

However, a negative self-schema predisposes the individual to depression, and therefore someone who has acquired a cognitive triad will not necessarily

develop depression. Some kind of stressful life event is required to activate this negative schema later in life. Once the negative schema are activated a number of illogical thoughts or cognitive biases seem to dominate thinking. People with negative self schemas become prone to making logical errors in their thinking and they tend to focus selectively on certain aspects of a situation while ignoring equally relevant information. Beck (1967) identified a number of systematic negative bias' in information processing known as logical errors or faulty thinking. These illogical thought patterns are self-defeating, and can cause great anxiety or depression for the individual. For example:

- **Arbitrary Inference**. Drawing a negative conclusion in the absence of supporting data.

- **Selective Abstraction**. Focusing on the worst aspects of any situation.

- **Magnification and Minimization**. If they have a problem they make it appear bigger than it is. If they have a solution they make it smaller.

- **Personalization**. Negative events are interpreted as their fault.

- **Dichotomous Thinking**. Everything is seen as black and white. There is no in between.

Such thoughts exacerbate, and are exacerbated by the cognitive triad. Beck believed these thoughts or this way of thinking become automatic. When a person's stream of automatic thoughts is very negative you would expect a person to become depressed. Quite often these negative thoughts will persist even in the face of contrary evidence.

Media dependency theory

Media dependency theory was created by Sandra Ball Rotech and Melvin Defer. The theory was originally conceptualized around ideas about sociology and large social systems (Ball-Rotech & Delfleur, 1976). Now, the theory can be expanded to encompass social media. Media dependency theory requires both a social system and a media system, and the essential idea behind its application to social media is that the social and media systems are combined. This creates a unique take on the

theory, as neither the media system or the social system can live alone within social media. Media dependency theory outlines three relationships that lay the framework for media dependency; these include society vs. media, media vs. audience and society vs. audience. Users must engage in each of these model relationships to meet their needs.

Similarly, the theory also lays out three different media needs. First is surveillance, or needing to understand one's social environment. Second, social utility describes the need to act in a way that is both efficient and significant within that social world. Lastly, the need for an escape, or to get away from the social environment when one feels overwhelmed. Social media allows users to fulfill all of these needs in some way. Social media allows people to observe the behaviors and published personalities of others without them even knowing, thus gauging the social environment. It also gives users a sense of importance when their interactions are highly "liked" or "shared" on platforms, which could make users feel that they are posting meaningful things. Social media also offers users an escape from face-to-face interactions and gives them a place where they can simply observe without contributing to any conversation, thus allowing them to fulfill the component of escape. The authors of this theory also mention the effects that media can have on consumers, noting the strength of the cognitive impacts of media. Within cognitive effects, they acknowledge the impact of media in agenda-setting, attitude formation and uncertainty avoidance and resolution (Ball-Rokeach, 1985).

Social media displays these effects most definitely, demonstrating the power of agenda-setting through trending stories and tweets, etc. An increasing amount of people seem to be relying on social media as a news source, giving social media platforms and the people they follow the power to set the agenda. Attitude formation is a large part of celebrity interaction on social media; people form opinions on products and services, etc. when they are more widely displayed on social media or posted about by a celebrity figure. Applying media dependency

theory suggests that the more dependent a person is on social media, the greater number of opinions they will form about products and services that appear on their feed more often. Uncertainty avoidance is often a byproduct of social media. When large institutional, political or social changes, people often turn to social media to voice their support, frustration or confusion. The ability to be able to ask questions and have them answered by people within the user's social support system is what makes this relevant to social media specifically. Due to the nature of media dependency theory, several researchers have looked at combining media dependency theory and uses and gratifications theory.

The perspective on this is that the media dependency theory offers another perspective to uses and gratifications, allowing a three-fold relationship between media, users, and the social environment; in turn, all three of these factors play in to motivations for media usage (So, 2012). Following this model, when a user's needs for social and environmental interactions are met, the usage is perpetuated, allowing addiction behaviors to grow.

Conceptual Framework

This study in terms of a theoretical framework tries to understand the Internet addiction among teenagers by studying the student's personal characteristics and their cyber behavior. The key dimension used to conceptualize the concerns include losing control of time in online activity, escaping from social activities, and compulsive response to environment. As for students personal characteristics the key dimensions used are gender, self-esteem, adjusting to family, adapting to learning, and interpersonal relationship. For Cyber behaviors, the key dimensions are entertainment, social communication online, virtual emotions and browsing for information search. The research conceptual framework for this study is developed based on the modification . This conceptual framework to study the factors that influence Internet addiction tendency is shown in Fig

SOCIAL   MEDIA ⟶ ADDICTION

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DEPRESSI

ON

(IV)   (DV)

Objective

- To find out the relationship between Social media addiction and depression among University students.

Hypothesis

- There is a positive relationship between Social media addiction and depression among university students.

Rationale

Studies show that negative social media behaviors can cause isolation, depression, and mood changes based on negative content users see while scrolling (Bethmini, 2015). With an increase in the use of social media over the last decade, it is important to assess any impact social media might have on mental health. (Bellomini, 2015). Meanwhile, evidence from previous studies also shows that there is a link between social media usage and depression. In some recent studies, teenage and young adult users who spend the most time online on social media were shown to have a substantially higher rate of reported depression than those who spent less time online (Lin et al., 2016; Twinge et al., 2018). So, does that mean that social media are actually causing depression? These studies, including the present one, mainly demonstrate a correlation between social media usage and depression, not correlation does not necessarily mean causation. In other words, the addictive use of social media can be defined as one of the symptoms of depression, and vice versa, not an actual cause of depression. Depression might be caused by various factors, an earlier study of Rich & Scovel (1987) indicated that

loneliness, interpersonal distrust, and neuroticism are strongly and consistently associated with depression.

Other scholars argue that the growing popularity of social media might be another possible reason for the suspected increase in mental health problems (e.g. depression) (Twenge et al. 2018), and social media, may even increase feelings of loneliness (Song et al., 2014 cited in Twinge et al., 2018), whereas loneliness is known as one of the main symptoms of depression. For that reason, it is worth a serious look at how social media could be affecting teenagers and young adults' mental health, and our findings show that the addictive use of social media is significantly associated with depression and vice versa, Furthermore, many prior studies mainly explored the relationship between internet addiction and depression, anxiety, stress, loneliness, self-encem. social connectedness, insomnia, and other variables related to mental health ins (Akin & Iskender, 2011: Cheung & Wong, 2011; Demir, 2016; Ha et al. 2007; Kim et al., 2006: Kimberly, 1998; Saver & Aysan 2017; Selfhout et al., 2009).

Neurly all there studies found a positive relationship between internet addiction and depression and other variables relevant to mental health; however, an earlier study of (Shaw & Gant, 2002) found a negative relation between internet addiction and depression. Only a few other scholars investigated social media addiction/social media use and its relationships with depression or other mental health problems; almost all these studies found that social media addiction associated with depression other mental health problems (Hanprathet et al., 2015; Hou et al., 2019: Kelly et al., 2018; Karaburun. 2016; Savci, 2016; Seabrook et al., 2016: Shensa et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2018 Waqas et al., 2018), The young generation (high school students) was the target population in many of these studies; they mostly utilized Goldberg. DASS (Depression Anxiety Stress Scale), CES-D and the 6-item Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS) for measuring depression and social media addiction. while we used IATs and CES-Ds in this study.

Nearly all these studies confirmed that social media use social media addiction/technological addiction have a positive relationship with mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and stress, especially among adolescents. So, our finding ties with these studies and confirms consistency in the result regardless of changing the instruments. The relationship between technological addictions (social media addiction & smart phone addiction) and mental issues (depression, anxiety, stress, loneliness, self-esteem, insomnia) have been explored in various developed or developing countries, however, highly likely these relationships are not examined in the least developed countries The literacy level is quite low, in 2019 it was estimated approximately 32% of the total population (Kemp, 2019): GDP per capita was estimated $20.95 in 2018 and Human Capital Index (HCI), Afghanistan was ranked 0.39 from the scale 0-1 (World Bank & OECD, 2018).

In terms of insecurity and political stability, the country witnessed a high number of causalities in conflict among government, the Taliban, ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria), and foreign troops (see UNAMA, 2019) Afghanistan has experienced a civil war from the last quarter of the twentieth century to the beginning of twenty-first century, however, the country has relatively stable political system since the collapse of the Taliban regime in late 2001. Taking it into account, our research findings confirm that technological addictions explain mental health issues regardless of geographical location, low literacy level, a weak economy, political stability, and conflicts. In other words, social media addiction associates with depression similarly in developed and least developed countries.

Methodology

The present study aimed to examine the effect of Social media addiction and depression in university of Poonch Rawalakot AJK.

Research Design

The present Study was based on " Cross-sectional design" of survey research. Data were collected from two sections of students including boys and girls . Questionnaire booklets were distributed in students by researcher as the

underlying survey method.

Participants

In the present study, a non-probability convenience sampling technique was applied for data collection. One hundred university students 100 males and 100 females were recruited from different campuses university of Poonch Rawalakot (U.P.R) ,Such as Supply Campus , Agriculture Campus and Shell campus because we attempted to have comparable groups in terms of a number of males and females students to investigate gender differences in Depression . Inclusion criteria included informed consent; age ranged between 18 to 30 years and had no previous psychiatric history. Due to limited resources, we could not improve the sample size. Participants were selected irrespective of their semester, discipline etc.

Participants Table

U.P.R	Male	Female	Total
Total	100	100	200
Supply Campus Shell Campus	30	30	60
Agriculture Cam	40	40	80
	30	30	60

Note. U.P.R = University of Poonch Rawalakot

Demographic Sheet

Demographic data was collected in terms of gender, age, and education etc.

Instruments

Both scales applied in the current study have validated English versions.

English is an official language in Pakistan as well as medium of instruction is also English in Pakistani Universities; therefore, language was not assumed to be a problem. In the current study, the following scales were used to collect data.

Measures

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Beck Depression Inventory Scale (BDI)

The Beck depression inventory (BDI) is widely Used to screen for depression and to measure behavioral manifestation and severity of depression. The BDI can be used for ages 18 to 30. The inventory contains 21 self-report items which individuals complete using multiple choice response formats. The BDI takes approximately 10 minutes to complete. Validity and reliability of the BDI has been tested across population , worldwide Depression Inventory. The Self-report study based on the symptoms described by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV) which makes measuring depressive severity possible. This version of the inventory consists of 21 items, in which four response options are presented on a scale of 0 to 3. For example, to measure pessimism (item 2) the response options used range from "I am not particularly discouraged about the future" (score of 0) to "the future is hopeless and things cannot improve" (score of 3). In this study we are using the English version of Beck Depression Inventory . which has an excellent reliability coefficient of 0. 92 . Its content validity is ensured because most of its items are equivalent to the DSM-IV criteria for depression. Its construct validity has also been tested successfully by comparing scores with other measures for depression. (Beck, Ward, Mendel son, Mock & Erbaugh, 1961)

Social Media Addiction Scale (SMAS)

In order to establish a trial form for determining the social media addiction of students, it was necessary firstly to create a conceptual framework by examining the social media use and addiction research. In this framework, a frame for the scope of the "Social Media Addiction Scale (SMAS)" was determined in line with the information obtained from the related literature and opinions of field experts, an item pool consisting of 19 items was formed and a draft form was prepared. A 5-point grading is used in the scale: (1) Always , (2)Often, (3)Sometimes,(4)Rarely and(5) Never.. The collected data were uploaded to SPSS-16.0 in order to conduct statistically reliability and validity tests of the scale. Values for negative

expressions are inversely encoded when loading to the programs.

The Scoring of the Scale

This is a 5-point Likert type scale which consists of 21 items.. All of the items in the scale are Negative . The highest point that can be scored from the scale is 145, and the least one is 29. The higher scores indicate that agent perceives himself as a "social media addict".

Procedure

The ethical approval was sorted from the Ethical Committee of Poonch University. Permission was granted from higher authorities of universities to allow their students to participate in the study. Hundred males and hundred female students were selected for the study. Students were approached in their free time. Participants were told about informed consent, volunteerism, and anonymity of data. Nature of the study was explained to them. After taking permission, they were presented with questionnaires and encouraged to ask questions in case of any ambiguity.

Results

The present study aimed to examine the effect of Social media addiction on mental health such as depression among university students in Rawalakot Azad Jammu Kashmir. Data analysis was carried out using SPSS-16.0. Reliability of both variables are examine. Descriptive statistics and alpha reliability coefficients were computed.

Correlation was computed to examine the relationship between variables.

Table 1

Psychometric properties for variables

Variables	*M*	*S.D*	Range	Skewness	Kurtosis	Cronbach's a
S.M.A	55.4450	6.97785	38-104	1.571	10.675	.434
Depression	43.8200	4.52215	28-55	-.244	1.205	.217

Note. Table 1 shows psychometric properties for the scales used in present study. Here (S.M.A) shows social media addiction. The cronbach's α Value for Social media addiction trust scale was .434(<.70) which indicated low internal consistency. The cronbach's α for turning to Depression scale was .217 that also indicates low consistency. Internal consistency of our survey is just in acceptable range.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics and Correlation for study variables

Variables	*n*	*M*	*SD*	1	2
Social media addiction	200	55.4450	6.97785	-	
Depression	200	43.8200	4.52215	.143*	-

P<.05

Note. Table 2 indicate Descriptive results and correlation for the variables..143 is a weak correlation.

Discussion

The main objective of this study was to examine the relationship between social

media addiction and depression. As was expected, the findings revealed a positive correlation between social media addiction and depression. The correlation analysis showed that depression significantly predicted social media addiction; however, there was not a strong correlation between social media addiction and depression. Meanwhile, evidence from previous studies also shows that there is a link between social media usage and depression. In some recent studies, teenage and young adult users who spend the most time online on social media were shown to have a substantially higher rate of reported depression than those who spent less time online (Lin et al., 2016; Twenge et al., 2018). So, does that mean that social media are actually causing depression? These studies, including the present one, mainly demonstrate a correlation between social media usage and depression, not correlation does not necessarily mean causation.

In other words, the addictive use of social media can be defined as one of the symptoms of depression, and vice versa, not an actual cause of depression. Depression might be caused by various factors; an earlier study of Rich & Scovel (1987) indicated that loneliness, interpersonal distrust, and neuroticism are strongly and consistently associated with depression. Other scholars argue that the growing popularity of social media might be another possible reason for the suspected increase in mental health problems (e.g. depression) (Twenge et al., 2018), and social media, may even increase feelings of loneliness (Song et al., 2014 cited in Twenge et al., 2018), whereas loneliness is known as one of the main symptoms of depression. For that reason, it is worth a serious look at how social media could be affecting teenagers and young adults` mental health, and our findings show that the addictive use of social media is significantly associated with depression and vice versa. The relationship between technological addictions (social media addiction & smart phone addiction) and mental health issues (depression, anxiety, stress, loneliness, self-esteem, insomnia) have been explored in various developed or developing countries; however, highly likely these relationships are not examined in the least developed countries like Afghanistan.

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Afghanistan is one of the least developed countries in south Asia. The literacy level is quite low, in 2019 it was estimated approximately 32% of the total population (Kemp, 2019); GDP per capita was estimated 520.9$ in 2018 and Human Capital Index (HCI), Afghanistan was ranked 0.39 from the scale 0–1 (World Bank & OECD, 2018). In terms of insecurity and political stability, the country witnessed a high number of causalities in conflict among government, the Taliban, ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria), and foreign troops (see UNAMA, 2019). Afghanistan has experienced a civil war from the last quarter of the twentieth century to the beginning of twenty-first century; however, the country has relatively stable political system since the collapse of the Taliban regime in late 2001. Taking it into account, our research findings confirm that technological addictions explain mental health issues regardless of geographical location, low literacy level, a weak economy, political stability, and conflicts. In other words, social media addiction associates with depression similarly in developed and least developed countries.

Limitations

The present study was based on survey method in which cross sectional design was used to collect the information from university. Survey design has usually low internal validity although it has high internal validity. in the future research it would be more appropriate to make use of method triangulation which will be beneficial in overcoming the inbuilt limitations of the survey method. The present study is limited to the faculty of the university.

Strengths

As was expected, the findings revealed a positive correlation between social media addiction and depression. The simple correlation showed that depression significantly predicted social media addiction; however, there was not a strong correlation between social media addiction and depression.

Implication

Excessive social media use can not only cause unhappiness and a general

dissatisfaction with life in users but also increase the risk of developing mental health issues such as depression. However the replication of the finding with the administration of university will enhance the external validity of the findings in the universities. Because academies and administration work in collaboration to ensure high quality education in the universities In the present study some self-awareness measures were used to collect information. The immediate area of the research is validation of these instruments in the indigenous context. All the scales used in the present study were developed in individualistic cultures and there is need to validate them in the collectivistic context of Pakistan. Similarly, all the scales were in English language. Although all participants belong to academies but still it would be more appropriate in the future research to carry out Urdu translation, adaption and cross language validation of these scales.

Conclusion

In summary, this study reveals that social media addiction has a positive correlation with depression among university students in University Of Poonch Rawalakot AJK In other words, the higher the student addiction level, the greater his/her depression level is. Meanwhile, a simple linear regression analysis also shows that depression significantly predicts social media addiction. This study also confirmed that the internet-based technological addiction positively associates with mental health problems without considering developed and least developed countries. In other words, the addictive use of social media positively associates with depression equally in developed and in least developed societies. Future study: Further studies have to be conducted to investigate other aspects of problematic use of social media context such as the relationship between social media addiction and students' academic performance, anxiety, stress, disturbed sleep, self-esteem, and socialism.

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