

Self-Esteem and Social Networking Addiction among College Students

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Abstract: *The present study examined the relationship between self-esteem and social networking addiction among college students and investigated differences across gender and educational level. A descriptive research design was used with 210 participants from Kerala selected through an unrestricted self-selected survey method. The sample included 69 males and 141 females; 149 were undergraduate students, 27 were postgraduate students, and 34 were professional degree students. Data were collected using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, the Social Networking Addiction Scale, and a socio-demographic data sheet. Pearson product-moment correlation, independent-samples t-test, and one-way ANOVA were used for statistical analysis. The dissertation reports a significant positive correlation between self-esteem and social networking addiction ($r = .44, p < .01$). Significant gender differences were reported for self-esteem and social networking addiction. No significant differences were reported across undergraduate, postgraduate, and professional degree groups for either variable. The findings highlight the relevance of understanding social networking behaviour and self-evaluative processes among college students. The study also identifies the need for broader samples and more controlled data-collection procedures in future research.*

Keywords: self-esteem; social networking addiction; college students; gender; educational level

1. Introduction

Self-esteem refers to an individual's overall evaluation of personal worth and value. Rosenberg described self-esteem as an individual's positive or negative attitude toward the self. Self-esteem is associated with confidence, security, identity, belonging and perceived competence, and it has implications for decision making, relationships, emotional health and well-being. The dissertation notes that early experiences and social relationships contribute to the development of self-esteem and that low self-esteem may be associated with reduced confidence, negative social comparison and interpersonal difficulties.

Social networking sites have become an important form of communication among young people. Social networking addiction is described in the dissertation as a behavioural pattern involving excessive or obsessive use that can interfere with important areas of life. Problematic use may involve preoccupation, mood modification, tolerance, withdrawal, conflict and relapse. The increasing use of social networking sites among college students makes it important to examine how such use relates to psychological variables such as self-esteem.

Previous literature reviewed in the dissertation presents mixed findings regarding the relationship between social networking use and self-esteem. Some studies have reported negative associations, whereas other work suggests that the relationship may depend on the type and intensity of use, social comparison, personality and individual differences (Andreassen et al., 2017; Hawi & Samaha, 2017; Köse & Doğan, 2019; Krause et al., 2021).

The present study therefore focused on self-esteem and social networking addiction among college students, with additional comparisons based on gender and educational level.

2. Review of Literature

Research on self-esteem indicates that it is related to psychological adjustment and social functioning. Erol and Orth (2011), using longitudinal data, reported that self-esteem generally increases through adolescence and young adulthood. Harris and Orth (2020) found a reciprocal longitudinal relationship between self-esteem and social relationships, suggesting that the two constructs may influence one another over time. Studies reviewed in the dissertation also connect lower self-esteem with psychological difficulties and highlight the role of social support and other contextual factors.

Research on problematic internet and social networking use has identified associations with psychosocial variables. Lin et al. (2011) reported internet addiction among college students in Taiwan and identified several psychosocial correlates. Masters (2015) found varying rates of social networking addiction across platforms among health-science students. Azizi et al. (2019) reported a negative relationship between social networking addiction and academic performance among Iranian medical-science students. Hou et al. (2019) found that social media addiction was associated with poorer mental health and academic performance and examined self-esteem as a mediating factor.

The literature directly examining social networking addiction and self-esteem has produced inconsistent results. Andreassen et al. (2017) reported relationships among addictive social media use, narcissism and self-esteem. Hawi and Samaha (2017) examined social media addiction, self-esteem and life satisfaction among university students. Köse and Doğan (2019) reported a moderate negative relationship between social media addiction and self-esteem among Turkish university students. The dissertation notes that such findings differ from the positive relationship obtained in the present Kerala sample, potentially reflecting differences in samples and sociocultural context.

A further review in the dissertation highlights that the relationship between social media use and self-esteem may be complex and person-specific. Cingel et al. (2020) emphasized mixed patterns across studies, while Krause et al. (2021) reviewed both detrimental and beneficial effects of social networking site use on self-esteem. These findings support the need for context-specific empirical investigations.

3. Objectives

- 1) To examine the relationship between self-esteem and social networking addiction among college students.
- 2) To examine whether self-esteem differs significantly based on gender.
- 3) To examine whether social networking addiction differs significantly based on gender.
- 4) To examine whether social networking addiction differs significantly among undergraduate, postgraduate and professional degree students.
- 5) To examine whether self-esteem differs significantly among undergraduate, postgraduate and professional degree students.

4. Hypotheses

H1: There will be a significant relationship between self-esteem and social networking addiction.

H2: There will be a significant difference in self-esteem based on gender.

H3: There will be a significant difference in social networking addiction based on gender.

H4: There will be a significant difference in social networking addiction among undergraduate, postgraduate and professional degree students.

H5: There will be a significant difference in self-esteem among undergraduate, postgraduate and professional degree students.

5. Method

A descriptive research design was used. Participants were recruited using an unrestricted self-selected survey method, described in the dissertation as a form of convenience sampling in which individuals voluntarily participate in an openly available survey.

5.1 Participants

The sample consisted of 210 college students from Kerala. There were 69 males and 141 females. Based on educational level, 149 participants were undergraduates, 27 were postgraduates and 34 were professional degree students. Willing participants from these three educational categories were included. Participants with mental health, developmental or congenital disorders and students outside the specified educational categories were excluded.

Characteristic	Category	n
Gender	Male	69
	Female	141
Educational level	Undergraduate	149
	Postgraduate	27
	Professional degree	34
Total		210

5.2 Measures

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965). The scale contains 10 items, including positively and negatively worded statements, rated on a four-point response format from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The dissertation describes the scale as a widely used measure of global self-esteem and reports test-retest correlations of .85 and .88.

Social Networking Addiction Scale. The 32-item scale by Md Ghazi Shah Nawaz, Dr. Nivedita Ganguli and Manchong Limlunthang Zou was used to assess the intensity of social networking use and its interference with daily life. The scale includes three dimensions: impulsivity, virtual freedom and negative outcomes. The dissertation reports a Cronbach's alpha reliability of .94.

Socio-demographic data sheet. A researcher-developed sheet was used to collect demographic information, including age, gender and educational status.

5.3 Procedure

The questionnaires were administered online through a Google Form circulated using social media platforms. Participants were provided with instructions and information regarding the purpose of the study, confidentiality and voluntary participation. Socio-demographic information was collected first, followed by assessment of self-esteem and social networking addiction. The responses were recorded, scored and tabulated.

5.4 Statistical Analysis

Data were analysed using SPSS. Pearson product-moment correlation was used to examine the relationship between self-esteem and social networking addiction. Independent-samples t-tests were used to compare males and females on both variables. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to compare undergraduate, postgraduate and professional degree students on self-esteem and social networking addiction.

6. Results

The results are presented below as reported in the dissertation.

6.1 Correlation Between Self-Esteem and Social Networking Addiction

Variables	r
Self-esteem × Social networking addiction	.44**

Note. ** Significant at the 0.01 level.

Pearson's product-moment correlation yielded $r = .44$, reported as significant at the 0.01 level. The direction of the association was positive, indicating that higher self-esteem scores were associated with higher social networking addiction scores in the present sample. The first hypothesis was therefore accepted in the dissertation.

6.2 Gender Differences in Self-Esteem

Variable	Male M (SD)	Female M (SD)	t
Self-esteem	23.40 (3.47)	21.23 (3.75)	3.28*

Note. * Reported as significant at the 0.05 level.

The dissertation reports a significant difference between males and females in self-esteem. Males obtained a mean score of 23.40 (SD = 3.47), whereas females obtained a mean score of 21.23 (SD = 3.75). The second hypothesis was accepted.

6.3 Gender Differences in Social Networking Addiction

Variable	Male M (SD)	Female M (SD)	t
Social networking addiction	86.29 (1.29)	85.99 (2.34)	0.48*

Note. * The dissertation reports this result as significant at the 0.05 level.

The dissertation reports a significant gender difference in social networking addiction and therefore accepts the third hypothesis.

6.4 Educational-Level Differences in Social Networking Addiction

Source	Between SS	Within SS	Between MS	Within MS	F
Social networking addiction	66.53	8210.97	22.18	23.07	0.96

The one-way ANOVA did not show a significant difference among undergraduate, postgraduate and professional degree students on social networking addiction. The fourth hypothesis was not accepted.

6.5 Educational-Level Differences in Self-Esteem

Source	Between SS	Within SS	Between MS	Within MS	F
Self-esteem	480.36	77849.01	160.12	218.68	0.73

The one-way ANOVA did not show a significant difference among undergraduate, postgraduate and professional degree students on self-esteem. The fifth hypothesis was not accepted.

7. Discussion

The primary finding of the study was a significant positive relationship between self-esteem and social networking addiction ($r = .44$). This finding differs from some earlier studies reviewed in the dissertation, particularly Köse and Doğan (2019), who reported a moderate negative association among Turkish university students. The difference may reflect variation in sample characteristics and sociocultural context. The present finding suggests that the association between self-esteem and social networking behaviour may not be uniform across populations.

The study also reported a significant gender difference in self-esteem, with higher mean self-esteem among males than females. The dissertation's literature review identifies gender as a variable that may be relevant to psychological well-being and social media behaviour, although previous findings have not been completely consistent. The present result should therefore be interpreted within the characteristics of this particular sample.

A gender difference was also reported for social networking addiction. However, the dissertation's Table 4.3 presents a t value of 0.48 while simultaneously marking the result as significant at the 0.05 level. Because this numerical result should be verified before publication, the manuscript deliberately preserves the dissertation's reported result rather than recalculating or replacing it.

No significant educational-level differences were reported for either variable. Undergraduate, postgraduate and professional degree students did not differ significantly in social networking addiction or self-esteem. This suggests that, within this sample, educational level did not distinguish the two study variables.

8. Conclusion

The present study examined self-esteem and social networking addiction among 210 college students from Kerala. A significant positive association was reported between the two variables. Significant gender differences were reported for both self-esteem and social networking addiction, whereas educational level was not associated with significant differences in either variable. The findings contribute to the understanding of psychological factors associated with social networking behaviour among college students.

9. Implications

The findings may be relevant to researchers, educators and mental health professionals working with college students. Awareness programmes may help students reflect on patterns of social networking use and their psychological correlates. The dissertation also suggests that interventions aimed at reducing problematic social networking behaviour may be useful in promoting healthier functioning and self-evaluative processes.

10. Limitations

The study was conducted within a limited geographical area and included only college students. The unrestricted self-selected sampling method limits generalizability. Data were collected online, creating the possibility of reduced participant commitment and socially desirable responses. Participants' incomplete understanding of items may also have affected the accuracy of responses. The dissertation further notes that broader geographical sampling and larger samples could improve the robustness of future findings.

11. Recommendations for Future Research

Future studies may include participants from different age groups and geographical regions, use larger and more diverse samples, and consider in-person data collection where feasible. Further research may also examine additional psychological variables and use designs capable of clarifying the direction and mechanisms underlying the relationship between self-esteem and problematic social networking use.

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Note: This manuscript is a condensed version prepared directly from the submitted dissertation. References have been retained from the dissertation and should be checked against the final journal reference requirements before submission.