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The Relationship Between Social Media Addiction and Its Effects on Generalized Anxiety and Sleep Patterns Among Youth(18-25years)

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Abstract

The present study investigated the relationship between social media addiction, generalized anxiety, and sleep patterns among youth aged 18–25 years.

A quantitative Pearson correlational research design was used for the study. The sample consisted of 150 participants selected through convenience sampling. Standardized psychological instruments were used to measure the variables: the Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS) for social media addiction, the Generalized Anxiety Disorder Scale (GAD-7) for anxiety, and the Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (PSQI) for sleep disturbances.

Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analysis were conducted to examine the relationships among the variables. The results indicated that social media addiction showed a positive relationship with generalized anxiety and sleep disturbances. Additionally, anxiety demonstrated a moderate association with poor sleep quality.

The findings suggest that excessive use of social networking platforms may be associated with increased anxiety levels and disruptions in sleep patterns among young adults. These results highlight the importance of promoting balanced social media usage and healthy sleep habits among youth.

Keywords: *Social media addiction, generalized anxiety, sleep patterns, youth, Social Networking,*

Introduction

The rapid expansion of digital technology has significantly changed the way individuals communicate and interact with one another. Social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter have become an important part of everyday life. Young adults, particularly those between the ages of 18 and 25, represent one of the most active groups of social media users.

These platforms allow individuals to share information, maintain relationships, and express personal opinions. However, excessive engagement with social networking platforms may result in problematic usage patterns. Researchers have increasingly recognized that excessive social media use may develop into a behavioral addiction that interferes with daily activities and psychological functioning.

Another concern related to excessive social media use is its potential effect on anxiety levels. Young individuals who spend long periods interacting with social networking platforms may experience stress related to online communication, social comparison, and the pressure to remain constantly connected.

Sleep patterns may also be affected by excessive use of digital devices. Many young adults use smartphones and social media applications late at night, which may delay sleep onset and reduce sleep quality. Therefore, it is important to examine the relationship between social media addiction, anxiety, and sleep patterns among youth.

Introduction of Variables

Social Media Addiction

Social media addiction refers to excessive and compulsive use of social networking platforms that interferes with an individual's daily life. Individuals experiencing social media addiction often feel a strong urge to check social networking sites frequently and may find it difficult to control their usage.

Characteristics of social media addiction include preoccupation with social media, mood modification through online interaction, withdrawal symptoms when access is limited, and neglect of other responsibilities. Excessive social media engagement may affect productivity, academic performance, and interpersonal relationships.

Generalized Anxiety

Generalized anxiety refers to persistent and excessive worry about everyday situations. Individuals experiencing generalized anxiety may feel constant tension, restlessness, and difficulty concentrating. Physical symptoms such as fatigue, irritability, and sleep problems may also occur.

Anxiety may be influenced by various factors including environmental stressors and lifestyle habits. Excessive engagement with social media may increase anxiety due to exposure to online comparisons, cyber interactions, and continuous information flow.

Sleep Patterns

Sleep patterns refer to the quality and duration of sleep experienced by individuals. Healthy sleep is essential for maintaining physical health, emotional regulation, and cognitive functioning. Poor sleep quality may lead to fatigue, reduced concentration, and increased emotional distress.

Frequent use of smartphones and social networking platforms during nighttime may interfere with normal sleep patterns. Exposure to screen light and continuous online engagement may delay sleep onset and reduce overall sleep quality.

Review of Literature

1. Cecilie Schou Andreassen (2015), social media addiction can be described as a behavioral addiction characterized by excessive concern about social networking sites, a strong urge to use them continuously, and difficulty in controlling usage. Individuals experiencing this form of addiction may spend a substantial amount of time online, which can interfere with daily responsibilities and mental well-being.

2. Mark D. Griffiths and colleagues has also suggested that problematic social media use shares several characteristics with other behavioral addictions, including salience, mood modification, tolerance, withdrawal symptoms, conflict, and relapse. These characteristics indicate that excessive social media engagement may develop into an addictive pattern of behavior.

3. Yvonne Keles, Niamh McCrae, and Andrea Grealish (2020) reviewed several studies and found that extensive social media use among adolescents and young adults was associated with increased levels of anxiety and psychological distress. The authors suggested that factors such as social comparison, cyberbullying, and fear of missing out may contribute to heightened anxiety among frequent social media users.

4. Brian A. Primack and colleagues (2017) indicated that individuals who spend more time on social networking platforms tend to report higher levels of anxiety and emotional difficulties. The study suggested that constant exposure to online social environments may increase feelings of pressure and worry among young users.

5. Jessica C. Levenson and colleagues (2016) examined the association between nighttime social media use and sleep quality among young adults. The findings revealed that individuals who frequently used social media late at night were more likely to experience sleep disturbances and reduced sleep duration.

6. Heather C. Woods and Holly Scott (2016) reported that adolescents who engaged heavily in social media use during nighttime were more likely to experience poor sleep quality, increased anxiety, and difficulties in emotional regulation.

7. Lauren Hale and Shan Guan (2015) emphasized that excessive screen exposure, particularly before bedtime, may disrupt circadian rhythms and delay sleep onset. The authors suggested that the light emitted from electronic devices may suppress melatonin production, which plays an important role in regulating sleep patterns.

8. Daniel J. Buysse (1989), who developed the Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index, highlighted that poor sleep quality is frequently associated with emotional difficulties, including anxiety symptoms. Sleep disturbances may further intensify psychological stress and negatively affect daily functioning.

9. Lin-Yu Lin and colleagues (2016) found that higher levels of social media engagement were associated with increased symptoms of anxiety among young adults. The authors suggested that constant connectivity and online social comparison may contribute to emotional stress.

In addition, studies have indicated that individuals who experience higher levels of social media addiction often report disruptions in their daily routines, including irregular sleep schedules. Excessive time spent on social networking platforms may delay bedtime and reduce total sleep duration.

Overall, previous literature indicates that social media addiction, anxiety, and sleep disturbances are interconnected factors among youth populations. While social media platforms provide opportunities for communication and social interaction, excessive use may contribute to increased anxiety levels and disturbances in sleep patterns. These findings highlight the importance of examining the relationship between social media addiction, generalized anxiety, and sleep patterns among youth.

Objectives of the Study

To assess the level of social media addiction among youth aged 18–25 years.

To examine the level of generalized anxiety among youth.

To evaluate sleep patterns among youth.

To determine the relationship between social media addiction and generalized anxiety.

To determine the relationship between social media addiction and sleep patterns.

Hypotheses

Null Hypothesis : There is no statistically significant relationship between social media addiction, generalized anxiety, and sleep patterns among youth.

Alternative Hypotheses

H1: Higher levels of social media addiction are associated with increased generalized anxiety and poorer sleep patterns among youth.

H2: There is a significant positive correlation between social media addiction and generalized anxiety among youth.

H3: There is a significant positive correlation between social media addiction and sleep disturbances among youth.

Methodology:

Research Design

The present study adopted a quantitative correlational research design to examine the relationship between social media addiction, generalized anxiety, and sleep patterns among youth aged 18–25 years. This design was considered appropriate because it allows the researcher to analyze the association between variables without manipulating them.

Variables of the Study

The study consisted of one independent variable and two dependent variables.

Independent Variable

Social Media Addiction: Social media addiction refers to excessive and compulsive use of social networking platforms that interferes with daily activities and responsibilities. In this study, social media addiction was measured using the Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS).

Dependent Variables

Generalized Anxiety: Generalized anxiety refers to persistent and excessive worry about everyday situations accompanied by symptoms such as restlessness, irritability, and difficulty concentrating. In this study, generalized anxiety was assessed using the Generalized Anxiety Disorder Scale (GAD-7).

Sleep Patterns / Sleep Quality: Sleep patterns refer to the quality, duration, and disturbances associated with an individual's sleep. Poor sleep patterns may include difficulty falling asleep, frequent awakenings, or reduced sleep quality. In this study, sleep patterns were measured using the Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (PSQI).

Sample

The sample consisted of 150 participants aged between 18 and 25 years. Participants were selected using convenience sampling. The sample included youth who actively used social media platforms.

Inclusion Criteria

Participants aged between 18–25 years

Individuals who use social media platforms regularly

Participants who were willing to participate voluntarily

Exclusion Criteria

Individuals outside the specified age range

Participants who did not complete the questionnaire

Tools / Instruments

Three standardized instruments were used to collect data:

1. *Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS)*

The Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale was developed to measure addictive use of social networking platforms. The scale consists of items assessing behaviors such as salience, tolerance, mood modification, withdrawal, conflict, and relapse related to social media use.

2. *Generalized Anxiety Disorder Scale (GAD-7)*

The Generalized Anxiety Disorder Scale is a widely used self-report instrument designed to measure the severity of generalized anxiety symptoms. The scale consists of seven items assessing symptoms experienced during the previous two weeks.

3. *Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (PSQI)*

The Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index is a standardized instrument used to assess sleep quality and sleep disturbances. The scale evaluates various components of sleep, including sleep duration, sleep latency, and daytime dysfunction.

Procedure of Data Collection

Participants were informed about the purpose and objectives of the study before data collection. Consent was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality of their responses was assured. The questionnaires were distributed through online forms and participants were requested to respond honestly. Completed responses were collected and prepared for statistical analysis.

Statistical Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analysis. Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were used to describe the levels of social media addiction, generalized anxiety, and sleep patterns. Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between the variables.

Result and Discussion

Table 1: descriptive statistics of the three major variables included in the study: social media addiction, generalized anxiety, and sleep patterns

variables	M	SD
BSMAS score	16.59	4.01
GAD score	7.07	5.06
PHQI score	6.53	3.56

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the three major variables included in the study: social media addiction, generalized anxiety, and sleep patterns.

The mean score for social media addiction (BSMAS) was 16.59 with a standard deviation of 4.01, indicating a moderate level of social media engagement among the

participants. The variation in scores suggests that some participants demonstrated higher tendencies toward addictive social media use.

The mean score for generalized anxiety (GAD-7) was 7.07, with a standard deviation of 5.06, indicating that participants reported varying levels of anxiety symptoms. This suggests that some individuals in the sample experienced noticeable anxiety symptoms. For sleep patterns (PSQI), the mean score was 6.53 with a standard deviation of 3.56. According to the PSQI scoring system, higher scores indicate poorer sleep quality. The mean score suggests that a portion of the participants experienced sleep disturbances or reduced sleep quality.

Overall, the descriptive statistics indicate the presence of moderate levels of social media use, noticeable anxiety symptoms, and some degree of sleep disturbances among the youth participants.

Table 2: the relationships between social media addiction, generalized anxiety, and sleep patterns among youth

VARIABLE	1	2	3
1.BMAS SCORE	—	.34	.19
2.GAD SCORE	.34	—	.48
3.PHQI SCORE	.19	.48	—

Table 2 presents the Pearson correlation analysis examining the relationships between social media addiction, generalized anxiety, and sleep patterns among youth.

The results indicate a positive correlation between social media addiction and generalized anxiety ($r = .34$). This suggests that individuals who reported higher levels of social media addiction also tended to experience higher levels of anxiety.

A positive relationship was also found between social media addiction and sleep disturbances ($r = .19$). Although this relationship is relatively weak, it indicates that increased social media use may be associated with poorer sleep patterns among young adults.

Furthermore, the analysis revealed a moderate positive correlation between generalized anxiety and sleep disturbances ($r = .48$). This suggests that individuals who reported higher levels of anxiety also tended to experience greater difficulties in sleep quality.

Overall, the correlation results indicate that higher levels of social media addiction are associated with increased anxiety symptoms and poorer sleep patterns among youth aged 18–25 years.

Hypotheses Testing

Null Hypothesis (H_0)

There is no statistically significant relationship between social media addiction, generalized anxiety, and sleep patterns among youth.

Based on the correlation results, positive relationships were observed between the variables. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Alternative Hypothesis Testing

H_1 : Higher levels of social media addiction will be significantly associated with increased generalized anxiety and poorer sleep quality among youth.

The correlation results showed that social media addiction was positively related to both generalized anxiety ($r = .34$) and sleep disturbances ($r = .19$). Therefore, H_1 is supported.

H_2 : There is a significant positive correlation between social media addiction and generalized anxiety among youth.

The findings showed a positive correlation between social media addiction and generalized anxiety ($r = .34$), indicating that individuals with higher social media addiction tend to experience higher anxiety levels. Therefore, H_2 is accepted.

H_3 : There is a significant positive correlation between social media addiction and sleep disturbances among youth.

The results indicated a positive relationship between social media addiction and sleep disturbances ($r = .19$), suggesting that increased social media usage may contribute to poorer sleep quality. Thus, H_3 is supported.

Discussion

The present study aimed to examine the relationship between social media addiction, generalized anxiety, and sleep patterns among youth aged 18–25 years. The findings revealed meaningful associations between these variables.

The results indicated that social media addiction was positively related to generalized anxiety. This suggests that individuals who spend excessive time on social networking platforms may experience higher levels of worry, stress, and emotional tension. Frequent exposure to online comparisons, social pressures, and the fear of missing out may contribute to these anxiety symptoms.

In addition, the study found a positive relationship between social media addiction and sleep disturbances. Excessive engagement with social media, particularly during nighttime, may delay sleep onset and reduce overall sleep quality. Continuous interaction with digital content may also stimulate cognitive activity, making it difficult for individuals to relax before sleep.

Another important finding of the study was the moderate relationship between generalized anxiety and sleep patterns. Participants who reported higher levels of anxiety also experienced poorer sleep quality. Anxiety often increases physiological arousal and racing thoughts, which may interfere with the ability to fall asleep or maintain restful sleep.

These findings are consistent with previous research suggesting that excessive social media use is associated with increased anxiety and disrupted sleep patterns among young adults. The results highlight the importance of promoting healthy digital habits and balanced technology use among youth.

Overall, the study emphasizes the need for greater awareness regarding the psychological and behavioural effects of excessive social media engagement. Encouraging responsible social media use may help reduce anxiety symptoms and improve sleep quality among young individuals.

Conclusion

The increasing use of social networking platforms has significantly influenced the daily lives of young individuals. Social media applications have become an important medium for communication, entertainment, and information sharing. Young adults,

particularly those between the ages of 18 and 25 years, are among the most active users of social media platforms. While these platforms provide several advantages such as maintaining social connections and accessing information, excessive usage may lead to problematic patterns of behaviour commonly referred to as social media addiction. Social media addiction is characterized by excessive preoccupation with social networking platforms, difficulty controlling usage, and continued engagement despite negative consequences. Prolonged engagement with social media may influence psychological functioning and daily routines among users. One of the major concerns related to excessive social media use is its potential impact on anxiety levels. Individuals who frequently engage with online platforms may experience increased stress, social comparison, and fear of missing out, which may contribute to higher levels of generalized anxiety.

Another important aspect associated with excessive digital engagement is sleep patterns. Sleep is essential for maintaining physical health, emotional stability, and cognitive functioning. However, frequent use of smartphones and social media platforms during nighttime may interfere with normal sleep cycles and reduce sleep quality. Exposure to screen light and continuous online interaction may delay sleep onset and contribute to sleep disturbances.

Considering these concerns, the present study aims to examine the relationship between social media addiction, generalized anxiety, and sleep patterns among youth aged 18–25 years. The study adopts a quantitative correlational research design and includes a sample of 150 participants selected through convenience sampling. Standardized instruments such as the Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS), the Generalized Anxiety Disorder Scale (GAD-7), and the Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (PSQI) were used to measure the variables.

By analysing the relationship among these variables, the study seeks to provide insights into how excessive social media use may influence anxiety levels and sleep patterns among young adults. The findings of the study may contribute to increasing awareness regarding responsible social media use and its potential effects on the psychological well-being and daily routines of youth.

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