SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION AND ONLINE IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT IN YOUNG ADULTS

Shivangi Sareen[1], Prashasti Jain[2]

Affiliation 1: Department of Psychology, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Manipal University Jaipur-Ajmer Expressway, Pin code- 303007

Affiliation 2: Department of Psychology, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Manipal University Jaipur-Ajmer Expressway, Pin code- 303007

E-mail: sareenshivangi18@gmail.com ; prashasti.jain@jaipur.manipal.edu

ABSTRACT

In the last decade social media has become immensely popular worldwide. It is a way of connecting with family and friends through sharing messages, photos and videos. As time moved forward, social media become a big part of our lives. The addiction of social media is a form of internet addiction which consists of all the features of other addiction disorders. This study aims to understand the relationship between social media addiction and impression management online among young adults. People in the online world present themselves in a manner which seems very desirable to other users which is known as online impression management. In order to maintain this impression online, a user constantly engages in being active on social media which results in high usage of social media. Data was collected using online survey method. A total of 220 people participated in the study out of which 131 participants were female and 89 participants were male. The age range of the participants was between 18 to 35 years. A regression analysis was conducted and a significant positive relationship was found between the variables. Online impression management was found to be a good predictor of social media addiction.

Keywords: Social media addiction, impression management online, young adult

Introduction

In the fast growing age of internet today, social media plays a big role in the lives of people. It is a form of technology which is computers based. It allows the users to actively share information, content, images and videos. Everyone has experienced the online world of social media for personal or professional reasons especially in the last two years due to the pandemic where the mode of communication was switched from "offline" to "online". In 2021, it was found that more than half the population in the entire world had an account on social media on which they spend around two to three hours every day (Kemp, 2021). Social media transformed the way people connected with each other and spent their time without geographical or time barriers. However, problematic use of social media contributed in negatively affecting the mental health of people. A study found that people became distressed when they were not able to use Instagram while working (Hussain & Starcevic,

2020). This kind of problematic use of social media is now commonly known as social media addiction.

People when communicating with one another try to form an image of themselves which they believe the other person will like and accept. This happens in both face to face and online interaction. Social media allows its users to present themselves in the way they want. The users taking advantage of this opportunity try to portray an ideal self-image online to be liked by others and control the negative image. This is known as impression management online. It also helps the people who are shy and often unable to express themselves around others. People engage in impression management to increase their social interaction, make their relationships function smoothly, meet societal expectations and benefit from social rewards. In order to maintain a desired impression online, people increase their social media usage by continuously posting content on their accounts to support the image they are creating which leads to the addiction of social media.

Review of Literature

When taking the world of social media into consideration, one of the most popular website since more than a decade is Facebook. Plenty of researchers have selected Facebook for the purpose of research as it is a website solely dedicated to establishing and managing impressions along with forming and maintaining relationships. A study was conducted to find out if there was a relationship between persons appealing Facebook profile and the ratings of their own attractiveness as well as their credibility. A total of 389 students from a public university participated in the study. It was found that positive comments by friends increased the overall social attractiveness as well as credibility of the person's profile (Walther et al., 2008). Another study was administered by Tong where 153 students from a university participated voluntarily. The results indicated that profiles of people with too many or too few friends were perceived negatively by the participants. Whereas, the profiles of people with moderate amount of friends were perceived as more appealing by the participants (Tong et al., 2008).

To understand impression management tactics among Facebook users, traits of the personality consisting of "self-monitoring", "machiavellian" and "affinity-seeking" were tested as predictors. Participants in the study were obtained through snowball sampling technique on Facebook. The researcher created a Facebook group and invited his Facebook friends to join and then requested them to further invite their own Facebook friends to join the group and participate in the study. By the end, a total of 477 participants were obtained for the study with the average age of 33 years. It was found that the users who had obtained a high score on self-monitoring and affinity-seeking and obtained a low score on Machiavellianism were using the tactics of role-modelling on Facebook.

The users of social media platforms can be divided into two types, the first will be active users and the second will be passive users. People who are active users share and post more content with the other users. Passive users share little or no content or information about themselves. They generally are interested in observing the things that are going on in other user's lives. A study was conducted to investigate the relationship between impression management online and passive use of social media. 301 people participated in an online survey where they filled a questionnaire. A significant

positive relationship was discovered between impression management online and passive use of social media platforms.

Instagram is one of the most famous social media platforms with over 1 billion active users (Backlinko, 2022). The application is most popular among adolescents and young adult population. It offers a variety of features like posting photos, videos, stories and reels. It is also very user friendly when it comes to editing videos or reels which is why users prefer it more to share content and information which is leading to the addiction of Instagram. A comparison study between students in Malaysia and Turkey was conducted to investigate the addiction of Instagram. Questionnaires were used for data collection of 403 participants. It was found that participants from Malaysia had higher level of addiction compared to participants of Turkey. Self-presentation and the usage time of social media positively predicted the addiction of Instagram (Balcı & Karaman, 2020).

Methodology

Objective

- To understand the relationship between online impression management and social media addiction
- To assess online impression management as a predictor of social media addiction

Hypotheses

- There will be a significant positive relationship between online impression management and Social Media Addiction
- online impression management significantly predicts social media addiction

Procedure

Participants were requested to complete an online questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 50 items. The estimated time to complete the questionnaire was 10 min. The participants were briefed about the test through a message before the conduction and there was a short description of the test in the start of Google Forms to give the participants all the required information. There was a brief set of instructions before each questionnaire so it was easy for the participants to respond.

Tools used

To measure the addiction of social media "Social Media Addiction Scale by Sahin.C (2018)" was used. The scale consists of "29 items" and four sub-scales which are, "virtual tolerance", "virtual communication", "virtual problem" and "virtual information". The response is recorded on a likert scale of five points which range from "Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree". It has good test-retest reliability and internal consistency reliability. It has good content and constructs validity.

To measure how an individual presents themselves online on social media networks "Presentation of Online Self Scale (POSS) by Fullwood.C (2016)" was used. The scale consists of "21 items" and four sub-scales which are "Ideal self", "Multiple self", "Consistent self" and "Online presentation

preference". The response is recorded on a likert scale of five points which range from "Strongly agree" to "Strongly disagree". Sub-scales have good internal consistency reliability.

Sample

A total of 220 people participated in the study out of which 131 participants were female and 89 participants were male. The age group was young adult and the participants were from 18 to 35 years of age. Convenience sampling technique was used for the purpose of collecting data.

Results

The aim of this study was to measure the relationship between Online Impression Management and Social Media Addiction among the young adult population. A total of 220 people participated in the study. The results and their description are given below.

The table below represents descriptive statistics for the study that was conducted. The mean and standard deviation for Social Media Addiction is 73.35 and 16.21. The mean and standard deviation for Presentation of Online Self Scale is 53.19 and 10.81. The mean and standard deviation of Presentation of Online Self Scale subscales are as follows; Ideal self is 22.64 and 6.38, Multiple selves is 10.30 and 4.06, Consistent self is 13.66 and 2.97 and Online presentation preference is 6.58 and 2.12.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for social media addiction and online impression management

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
SMA	220	34.00	145.00	73.3545	16.21662
POSS1	220	31.00	97.00	53.1909	10.81137
I_Self	220	9.00	45.00	22.6409	6.38585
M_Self	220	5.00	25.00	10.3000	4.06691
Cons_Self	220	4.00	20.00	13.6682	2.97538
Online_Presen_Preference	220	3.00	14.00	6.5818	2.12780
Valid N (listwise)	220				

Table 2: Correlation between social media addiction and online impression management

		SMA	POSS1
SMA	Pearson Correlation	1	.742[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	220	220
POSS1	Pearson Correlation	.742[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	220	220

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

A test of Pearson correlation was administered for addressing the relationship between Social media addiction and Presentation of online self (online impression management). Correlation is a form of statistical measure that is used to describe the relationship between variables. It was found that there was a positive correlation between the variables at .742 which was significant at 0.01 level. A positive correlation means that when one variable moves in a direction the other one also moves in the same direction. This means the participants who scored high in online impression management also scored high in the addiction to social media.

Table 3: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics		
					R Square Change	F Change	df1
1	.745[a]	.555	.547	10.91406	.555	67.124	4

Table 3.1 Model Summary

Model	Change Statistics	
	df2	Sig. F Change
1	215	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Online_Presen_Preference, Cons_Self, M_Self, I_Self

Table 4: ANOVA[a]

	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	31982.275	4	7995.569	67.124	.000[b]
	Residual	25610.070	215	119.117		
	Total	57592.345	219			

a. Dependent Variable: SMA

b. Predictors: (Constant), Online_Presen_Preference, Cons_Self, M_Self, I_Self

Table 5: Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	13.154	4.949		2.658	.008
	I_Self	1.316	.182	.518	7.227	.000
	M_Self	.969	.275	.243	3.519	.001
	Cons_Self	1.222	.263	.224	4.645	.000
	Online_Presen_Preference	.564	.420	.074	1.344	.180

a. Dependent Variable: SMA

Multiple Linear Regression was used to see if the subscales of online impression management will predict the addiction of social media. This analysis is used to understand which variables are good predictors of the dependent variable. As per the model table above, R^2 which is the coefficient of determination is .555 which means the subscales were able to predict 55% variance in causing social media addiction. The model is significant at .000 which means it is able to predict the dependent variable. The four subscales of online impression management are "Ideal self", "Multiple self", "Consistent self" and "Online presentation preference". Out of these, the first three have significant

effects on the dependent variable and hence were able to predict the dependent variable as there values are lesser than .005. However, the value for online presentation preference is .180 which is higher than .005 and so it was not able to significantly predict the dependent variable.

Discussion

The study aimed to determine the relationship among online impression management and the addiction to social media. Impression management is a conscious or subconscious effort made by people to influence the perception of their image in the minds of other people. When this is done online it is called impression management online. Here, people try to influence their image by managing and controlling the information that they share on social media. Social media sites have become widely popular in the last few years. These sites are used as a medium of communication as well as sharing images, videos and other types of information. Sites like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Youtube are among the most popular platforms to create and share content. As per data reports by Statista in January 2022, there were over 3.5 billion users of social media worldwide and this number was said to increase by a billion in the year 2025. Social media is taking over fast and is used by all age groups. However, the age group that uses it most is the young adult population (Auxier & Anderson, 2021). The over usage of these platforms causes addiction which is now famously known as social media addiction.

To study the relationship between the two variables, a sample of 220 young adults was taken using online survey method. Participants were explained briefly regarding the study in the beginning of the form. They were asked to fill two questionnaires and the instructions were given in the form as well. The first questionnaire that the participants filled was "Social Media Addiction Scale by Sahin.C (2018)". The scale consisted of 29 items and four sub-scale; "virtual tolerance", "virtual communication", "virtual problem" and "virtual information". The second questionnaire was "Presentation of Online Self Scale (POSS) by Fullwood.C (2016)". The scale consisted of 21 items and four sub-scales; "Ideal self", "Multiple self", "Consistent self" and "Online presentation preference". The responses were recorded on a five point likert scale ranging from "Strongly agree" to "Strongly disagree". After the data was collected it was analysed by using SPSS software.

The first hypothesis was that "There will be a significant positive relationship between Online Impression Management and Social Media Addiction". To administer the relationship between the two variables, a test of Pearson correlation was used. Correlation determines whether there is a significant connection among the variables. A positive relationship denotes that if one variable goes in a particular direction the other one goes in the same direction too. A negative relationship means that both the variables go in different directions. After the analysis was conducted, it was found that there was a significant positive relationship among the variables. The people who scored high in the POSS scale also scored high in the scale of social media addiction. This means the participants who were high in the trait of impression management online were also addicted to their social media accounts and engaged more on them in order to form a good impression of themselves online online.

The second hypothesis was that "Online Impression Management significantly predicts Social Media Addiction". The POSS scale consisted of four subscales which were "Ideal self", "Multiple self",

"Consistent self" and "Online presentation preference". The first subscale consisted of nine questions that were related to how a person personally feels and likes to present themselves on social media. The second subscale consisted of five questions that asked if participants used different personas and identities online on various social media and were they more comfortable in doing so. The third subscale consisted of four questions that were related to the participant being their true authentic self in the online world. Lastly, the fourth subscale consisted of three questions related to the participant's preference of being in the real world or the online world. These four subscales were the predictors and social media addiction was the dependent variable. Multiple linear regression was administered to find whether the subscales predicted the dependent variable. As per the analysis, the R^2 was .555 which means the subscale predicted the dependent variable by 55%. The significance was .00 which means the model is significant in explaining the effects of the predictors on the dependent variable. Out of the four subscales, three subscales "Ideal self", "Multiple self", "Consistent self" were successful in predicting while "Online presentation preference" wasn't. The values of the first three subscales were .000, .001 and .000 respectively. All these values were less than .05 which explained that they had significant effects on the dependent variable. The value of the last subscale was .180 which is more than .05 which means it did not have any significant effect in predicting the dependent variable. Since three subscales out of four successfully predicted the dependent variable, it was found that online impression management was a good predictor of social media addiction. Therefore, both the hypotheses were proven successfully.

Conclusion and Implications

As per the result analysis, it was found that the correlation between online impression management and social media addiction was significantly positive and three subscales of online impression management successfully predicted social media addiction. The study provided with insight regarding online impression management and addiction to social media. The addiction to social media has negative effects on physical and mental health of the users (Sun & Zhang, 2021). Previous studies have focused on the negative consequences of the addiction whereas this study has focused on a predictor. It shows the variables in a different light of perspective and can be helpful to aware the users regarding the addiction.

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