

Original article

Social media addiction and mental health of emerging adults: Associated familial factors

Abstract

Aim: This study investigates the association of familial factors with social media addiction and mental health of emerging adults. **Study design:** A survey research design and random sampling technique was used. **Sample:** Present study was conducted in the year 2020-21 in Dharwad district of Karnataka State, India Total study sample of the study comprised of 160 students. Around 80 students from two arts colleges studying I year and II year and eighty students from two science colleges studying in I year and II year were selected. Social media addiction tool by Tutgan and Deniz (2015) was used to assess social media addiction and mental health inventory by Jagadish and Srivasthava (1983) was used to assess mental health status. **Results:** Results indicated that type of family had significant association ($\chi^2=29.07^{**}$ and p value = 0.02) and difference (5.48**, p value = 0.01) with social media addiction and mental health of emerging adults. No influence of socio economic status was observed on social media addiction and mental health of emerging adults.

Introduction

Jeffrey Jensen Arnett (2020) defined emerging adulthood as a distinct developmental phase occurring roughly between the ages of 18 and 29. This period is characterized by significant exploration and self-discovery, as individual's transition from adolescence to full adulthood. Arnett's research emphasizes that emerging adulthood is marked by five key features: identity exploration, instability, self-focus, feeling in-between, and a sense of broad possibilities.

Experience of emerging adulthood varies across different cultural and socioeconomic contexts. For example, according to Rachel A. Robillard and David C. Meyer (2021) have highlighted how globalization and economic shifts influence this developmental stage, leading to diverse trajectories in education, career, and personal relationships. Additionally, new studies emphasize the impact of technological advancements and changing social norms

on the emerging adult experience, providing a more nuanced understanding of this complex life stage.

"Social media can be defined as a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010)."Majority of emerging adults were using different social media sites such as Face book (88 %) followed by Instagram (59 %), Pinterest (36 %), LinkedIn (34 %), and Twitter (30%). These all social media sites have some common features, such as active participation, information exchange, communication, entertainment and media sharing (Vannucci, 2017).

The American Psychological Association (APA, 2000) defines mental health as "a state of well-being in which an individual can effectively handle daily stressors, maintain positive relationships, and achieve personal and professional goals."

Smart phones are providing millions of emerging adults throughout the world remarkable access to communication, entertainment, education, knowledge and are helpful in many other ways. According to the report Statista (2016) there were 238.70 million users of smart phones during the year 2015 which increased to 292 million during 2016. Smart phones are playing a big role in connecting people especially teenagers and emerging adults with internet. For the majority of emerging adults in the age group of 18-25 years social media usage has become the most popular daily activity. Teenagers and young adults are almost universally online. The internet population of young adults has remained the most likely to go online during the last decade.

The negative effects of social media are also come to the surface when used it excessively. Logging into others accounts, sharing of irrelevant photos and videos, hacking one's account and lack of privacy in online transactions are some of the biggest concern of internet users. Social media sites are also trying to provide encryption method to save the privacy of the users where the information is closed between the sender and the receiver (Holland and Tiggemann, 2016).

Methodology

Study area: The study was conducted in undergraduate colleges present in Dharwad district of Karnataka State.

Sample: The sample for the present study consisted of undergraduate students both boys and girls studying in arts and science degree colleges. Eighty students from two arts colleges studying I year and II year and eighty students from two science colleges studying in I year and II year were selected thus making a final sample of 160 respondents.

Inclusion criteria: Emerging adults in age group of 18-25 years attending degree colleges, those who were using android smart phones and having accounts in social media were included in the study.

Tools used:

Social Media Addiction Scale (SMAS) developed by Tutgan and Deniz (2015) was used to assess social media addiction level among students. Scale consists of 41 items with five point likert scale graded with the frequency expressions in the range of "Always (5)", "Often (4)", "Sometimes (3)", "Rarely (2)", and "Never (1)". The highest point to be taken from the whole of the scale is 205 and the lowest point is 41. Higher the score indicates increased social media addiction. Mental health was measured using mental health inventory developed by Jagadish and Srivastava (1983). This scale consists of 54 statements with four alternative answers like Always, Most of the times, Sometimes and Never, rated on four point scale. Out of 54 statements 23 are positive and 31 are negative. For positive statements the scoring is 4,3,2,1 and for negative statements it is reverse order (1, 2, 3 and 4). The score ranges between 54-216. The high scores on mental health inventory is an indicator of better mental health and vice-versa. The scale measures five dimensions of positive self-evaluation, perception of reality, integration of personality, autonomy and group oriented attitude.

Statistical analysis: Frequency, percentages and correlation was used for statistical analysis.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Association between type of family and social media addiction among emerging adults

Type of	Social media addiction	χ^2	Mean \pm SD	t-
---------	------------------------	----------	---------------	----

family					Value		value
	Less	Medium	High	Total			
Nuclear	12 (10.20)	38 (32.40)	67 (57.40)	117 (100.00)	29.07**	139.58±28.32	5.48 *
Joint	21 (48.80)	10 (23.30)	12 (27.90)	43 (100.00)		108.18±40.76	

Figures in the parenthesis indicate percentages

*Significant at 0.05 level, ** Significant at 0.01 level

Table 1 depicts association and difference between type of family and social media addiction of emerging adults. With respect to type of the family, 57.40 percent of the respondents who belonged to nuclear family had high level of addiction and 32.40 percent had medium level of social media addiction. About 48 percent of respondents who belonged to joint family were in low level of addiction and 27.90 percent were in high level of social media addiction. Significant association ($\chi^2=29.07$) and difference ($t= 5.48$) was observed between type of the family and social media addiction of emerging adults where, respondents who belonged to nuclear family had higher social media mean scores (139.58) compared to those who belonged to joint family (108.18). Respondents who belonged to nuclear family had higher social media scores compared to joint family. The reason might be that in nuclear family there will be no one to monitor the social media usage of emerging adults as both the parents are involved in job roles and household chores whereas in joint family there will be more number of members stay together and monitor their children which might have led to lessen social media addiction among emerging adults.

Table 2: Association between SES and social media addiction among emerging adults

SES of family	Social media addiction				χ^2 Value	Mean ± SD	F- value
	Less	Medium	High	Total			
Poor	0 (0.00)	2 (50.00)	2 (50.00)	4 (100.00)	2.190 ^{NS}	131.55±32.80	0.514 ^{NS}
Low middle	5 (18.50)	9 (33.30)	13 (48.20)	27 (100.00)		128.29±36.57	

Upper middle	14 (19.70)	20 (28.10)	37 (52.20)	71 (100.00)		130.74±36.53	
High	14 (24.10)	17 (29.30)	27 (46.60)	58 (100.00)		151.5±28.10	

Figures in the parenthesis indicate percentages NS - Non Significant

Table 2 depicts association and difference between socio economic status of the family and social media addiction of emerging adults. With regard to SES of the family 50.00 percent of the respondents who belonged to poor class were in high level of addiction and 50 percent were in medium level of social media addiction. Among the respondents who belonged to lower middle(48.20%), upper middle(52.20%) and high class (46.60%) were in high level of social media addiction and lower middle (33.30%), upper middle (28.10%) and high (29.30%) were in medium level of social media addiction. No significant association and difference was observed between SES of the family and social media addiction of emerging adults where, respondents belonging to upper middle and high class had high social media scores compared to lower middle and poor. The reason might be that those who belonged to upper middle and high socio economic status they can afford smart phones and have access to internet connectivity which might led to their higher usage levels and those who belonged to poor and lower middle because of their low income may not afford android mobiles which might have resulted in their lower addiction to social media. Results found contradictory with Zhong *et al.* (2020) who revealed that in families with lower socio economic status the students found to be high social media addicts.

Table 3: Association between type of family and mental health of emerging adults

Type of family	Mental health status				χ^2 Value	Mean ± SD	t value
	Poor	Average	Good	Total			
Nuclear	65 (55.70)	36 (30.70)	16 (13.60)	117 (100.00)	0.292NS	152.41±20.12	3.26**
Joint	22 (51.10)	14 (32.50)	7 (16.40)	43 (100.00)		164.41±21.98	

Figures in the parenthesis indicate percentages

** Significant at 0.01 level NS - Non Significant

Table 3 depicts association and difference between type of family and mental health of emerging adults. With respect to type of the family in respondents belonging to nuclear family 55.5 percent were in poor level of mental health and 30.7 percent were in average level of mental health same trend was observed in respondents belonging to joint family where, 51.1 percent were in poor level and 32.5 percent were in average level of mental health. No significant association was found between type of family and mental health of emerging adults. Significant difference ($t= 3.26$) was observed between type of the family and mental health of emerging adults where, respondents who belonged to joint family had better mental health mean scores (164.41) compared to those who belonged to nuclear family (152.41)

Table 4: Association between SES and mental health of emerging adults

SES of family	Mental health status				χ^2 Value	Mean \pm SD	F value
	Poor	Average	Good	Total			
Poor	4 (100.0%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	4 (100.00)	4.951 ^{NS}	145.75 \pm 8.65	0.342 ^{NS}
Low middle	15 (55.60)	8 (29.60)	4 (14.80)	27 (100.00)		156.81 \pm 24.03	
Upper middle	36 (50.70)	26 (36.60)	9 (12.70)	71 (100.00)		156.05 \pm 21.07	
High	32 (55.10)	16 (27.50)	10 (17.40)	58 (100.00)		156.60 \pm 20.14	

Figures in the parenthesis indicate percentages NS - Non Significant

Table 4 depicts association and difference between SES of the family and mental health of emerging adults. With regard to SES of the family all the respondents (100%) who belonged to poor class were in poor level of mental health. Among the respondents belonged to lower middle, upper middle and high class majority were in poor level of mental health with (55.5%), (50.7%), (55.1%) respectively and (29.6%), (36.6%), (27.5%) were in average level of mental health. No significant association and difference was observed between SES of the family and mental health status of emerging adults. In the present study type of the family and socio economic status had no significant influence on the mental health of emerging adults. A contradictory study revealed by Bagi and Kumar (2014) also revealed that a positive relationship between type of the family and mental health. Family cohesion, expressiveness, acceptance and caring in joint families was positively correlated with mental health of emerging adults. Tobias *et al.* (2010) revealed that, lower socioeconomic status of the family had a greater impact on the mental health status of their children.

Conclusion

It is concluded from the present study that a significant influence was found between type of the family and social media addiction of emerging adults where individual belonging to nuclear family had high addiction. Significant difference was observed between type of family and mental health status of emerging adults where individual belonging to joint family had better mental health. Through open communications and promoting other productive activities, families can help emerging adults develop healthier relationships with social media and support their overall well-being. Digital literacy programmes at the college and university level and individual based counselling sessions for the emerging adults can be done by highlighting the importance positive mental health and appropriate use of social media.

Disclaimer (Artificial intelligence)

Option 1:

Author(s) hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc) and text-to-image generators have been used during writing or editing of manuscripts.

Option 2:

Author(s) hereby declare that generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models, etc have been used during writing or editing of manuscripts. This explanation will include the name, version,

model, and source of the generative AI technology and as well as all input prompts provided to the generative AI technology

Details of the AI usage are given below:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

References

American Psychological Association, 2020, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. 5th ed. Washington, DC.

Arnett, 2000, Emerging adulthood a theory of development from the late teens Through the Twenties. *Am Psychol*, 55 (5): 469-480.

Bagi S and Kumar P, 2014, Family structure and its impact on the mental health of adolescents: A study on different types of family systems. *Journal of Family Studies*, 20(2), 162-178.

Holland, G. and Tiggemann M. A., 2016, Systematic review of the impact of the use of social networking sites on body image and disordered eating outcomes. *Body Image. Learn media technol*, 17:100-110.

Jagadish, S. and Srivasthava, A.K., 1983, Manual for mental health inventory. Published by ManovaigyanikParikshanSamsthan, Varanasi., pp: 1-6.

Kaplan, A. M, and Haenlein, M., 2010, Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media. *Business Horizons*, 53(1), 59-68.

Robillard R A and Meyer D C, 2021, Globalization, economic shifts, and the emerging adulthood experience. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 50(6), 1234-1250. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-021-01453>.

Tobias M, Jackson S and Thompson D, 2010, Socioeconomic status and child mental health: Evidence from a longitudinal study. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 51(6), 673-680.

Tutgan, A., and Deniz, L., 2015, Development of social media addiction scale. *J.info Tech*, 6(21): 121-138.

Vannucci, A., Flannery, K. M and Ohannessian. M. C., 2017, Social media usage among emerging adults. *J. Affect. Disord.*, 207 (5): 163-167.

Zhong, H., Ming, Li., Xiao, Ma., and Chan, Liu., 2020, Family Socioeconomic Status and Social Media Addiction in Female College Students: The Mediating Role of Impulsiveness and Inhibitory Control. *J Genet Pssychol*, 90 (6): 60-74.

UNDER PEER REVIEW