

Materialism, Happiness and Social Media Addiction among Adolescents

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ABSTRACT

Social media use among youngsters is on the rise. More and more people are using social media to connect with each other socially, to share information and to express views. Increased use of social media exposes them to many advertisements and posts by friends and acquaintances of their various achievements and acquisitions of material goods. This kind of exposure may lead to an urge for owning and acquiring more material goods and achieving life goals. The study examined the relationship between social media addiction, happiness and materialism among high school and college students. The study also investigated if there were any gender differences in social media addiction, happiness and materialism among students. 200 high school and college students from two schools and two colleges in Chennai city completed the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire -OHQ (Argyle & Hills, 2002), the Bergen Social Media Addiction (BSMAS; Andreassen et al, 2012) and Material Values Scale Short form (Richins,2004). Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to investigate the relationships between variables. Independent samples t-test was computed to examine gender difference in the three variables. The analysis revealed that social media addiction was significantly, negatively correlated with happiness and significantly, positively correlated with materialism among students. Among female students social media addiction was significantly, negatively correlated with happiness and significantly, positively correlated with materialism. There was no significant relationship between happiness and materialism among female students. Among male students social media addiction was significantly, negatively correlated with happiness. The relationship between social media addiction and materialism was non-significant. Materialism was significantly, negatively correlated with happiness. There were no significant gender differences in social media addiction, happiness and materialism.

Keywords: *Social media Addiction, Materialism, Happiness, High school and College students.*

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When we think of the word “addiction” we usually think of alcohol, drugs and gambling. In the recent few decades a new type of addiction has emerged, an addiction to social media and other technology based addictions. There is emerging evidence that the psychobiological mechanism for internet and videogame addiction resembles those of addiction for substance abuse (Weinstein, Le joyeux, 2015). Youngsters nowadays regularly use various social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, WhatsApp, Pinterest etc for different activities like chatting, sharing of pictures, videos, information, blogging, dating and making friends. They access them on their smart phones, tablets, laptops and personal computers. Despite its many uses research has shown that individuals can become addicted to social media (Kuss & Griffiths 2011). The term social media addiction may be used to describe an individual who spends so much time using various sites like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other forms of social media, so much so that it interferes with his or her ability to function in daily life leading to problems in work, academics, interaction with friends and others. When these individuals are asked to stop or reduce their use of social media they become angry, irritable, anxious and defensive. Research shows social media addiction can have a negative impact on emotional, social and mental well being. Lee, Cheung and Thadani (2012) found that obsessive use of Facebook was associated with problems in work, academics and interpersonal relationships. Andreassen and Billieux (2016) found that social media addiction was positively correlated with depression. Malik and Khan (2015) found that there was a negative relationship between self-esteem and high levels of social media use. Wolniczak et al (2013) reported that excessive use of face book was associated with sleeping difficulties.

Gender differences in social media addiction

Thompson and Loughheed (2012) found that females spend more time on Facebook than males. Females were also more likely to report feeling addicted to Facebook than males.

Materialism

Richins and Dawson (1992) define materialism as “the importance ascribed to the ownership and acquisition of material goods in achieving major life goals or desired states”. Richins and Dawson (1992) characterize material values as including three domains, the use of possessions to judge the success of others and oneself, the credibility of possessions in a person’s life and belief that possessions and their acquisition lead to happiness and life satisfaction.

Happiness

Happiness is a state of well being characterized by positive emotions and overall satisfaction with one’s life. (Diener et al 2009). Lyubomirsky (2001) has found that people who are happy perceive and respond to the world in a positive manner, which increases their level of happiness while unhappy people focus only on the negative aspect of an event and keep having negative thoughts.

The relationship between materialistic values and happiness

Chakraborty and Chatterjee (2015) examined the relationship between materialistic values and happiness and other variables in 100 professionals from Howrah district and Calcutta using the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire-OHQ (Argyle & Hills 2002) and Material Values Scale (Richins, 2004). The results from the study revealed that materialistic value was negatively and significantly correlated with happiness, this contradicts the belief that possessions and their acquisition lead to happiness and life satisfaction.

Seungsin Lee, Jungkun Park & Lee (2016) examined the relationship between internet addiction and self esteem to compulsive shopping online and offline. Results revealed that self esteem was significantly and negatively correlated with compulsive online buying and internet addiction.

The relationship between internet addiction and happiness

Akın (2012) examined the relationship between internet addiction, subjective vitality and subjective happiness in university students and found that subjective vitality and subjective happiness were negatively predicted by internet addiction whereas subjective happiness was positively predicted by subjective vitality.

METHODOLOGY

Objectives Of The Study:

The objectives of the study were:

1. To assess the level of social media addiction, materialism and happiness among students.
2. To examine if there were gender difference in social media addiction, materialism and happiness among students.
3. To investigate the relationship between social media addiction, materialism and happiness among students.

Hypotheses:

The following hypotheses were formulated

1. There will be no significant relationship between social media addiction and happiness among students.
2. There will be no significant relationship between social media addiction and materialism among students.
3. There will be no significant relationship between materialism and happiness among students.
4. There will be no significant relationship between social media addiction and happiness among female students.
5. There will be no significant relationship between social media addiction and materialism among female students.
6. There will be no significant relationship between materialism and happiness among female students.

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7. There will be no significant relationship between social media addiction and happiness among male students.
8. There will be no significant relationship between social media addiction and materialism among male students.
9. There will be no significant relationship between materialism and happiness among male students.
10. There will be no significant difference in happiness among male and female students.
11. There will be no significant difference in materialism among male and female students.
12. There will be no significant difference in social media addiction among male and female students.

Research Design:

The research design was an ex post facto research.

Sample:

The sample consisted of 200 high school and college students selected from 2 schools and 2 colleges in Chennai city, in the age range of 16 to 22 years. Of the 200 students, 100 were males and 100 were female students.

Tools Used:

Material Values Scale Short-form (Richins, 2004) in an adaptation of the material values scale by Richins and Dawson (1992). The scale measures materialism at a general level. It consists of 6 items and possesses acceptable psychometric properties. The Cronbach's alpha for the 6 – item version = .75

The Bergen Social Media Addiction scale (BSMAS; Andreassen et al, 2012) is an adaptation of the Bergen Facebook Addiction Scale (BFAS; Andreassen, Torsheim, Brunborg & Pallesen 2012). It consists of 6 items each item is answered on a 5-point likert scale ranging from very rarely (1) to very often (5). It yields a composite score from 6 to 30. The BSMAS involves replacing the word Facebook with Social media only, and the social media being defined as “Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and the like”, in the instructions to the participants. Internal consistency of the BSMAS was Cronbach's alpha = .88

The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire-OHQ (Argyle & Hills, 2002) is an adaptation of the Oxford Happiness Inventory, (OHI; Hills & Argyle 2002). The OHI comprises 29 items, each involving the selection of one of four options that are different for each item. The OHQ includes similar items to those of the OHI, each presented as a single statement which can be endorsed on a uniform six-point likert scale. The revised instrument is compact, easy to administer and allows endorsements over an extended range. When tested against the OHI, the validity of the OHQ was satisfactory and the associations between the scales and a battery of personality variables known to be associated with well-being were stronger for the OHQ than for the OHI.

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Statistics Used:

- Pearson correlation coefficient was used to investigate the relationships between variables.
- Independent samples t-test was used to examine gender differences in the three variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 Relationship between social media addiction and happiness among students.

Variables	N	Correlation coefficient	Significance level
Social media addiction happiness	200	- 0.290**	Significant at 0.01 level

**P<0.01

Correlation coefficient between social media addiction and happiness among students is - 0.290 which is significant at the 0.01 level. This indicates that there is a significant negative correlation between social media addiction and happiness. Thus it can be inferred that students who are more addicted to social media experience less happiness, i.e. as social media addiction increases, happiness decreases. This finding is supported by the study done by Ahmet (2012) which highlights that subjective happiness was negatively predicted by internet addiction. Thus the hypothesis-1- “There will be no significant relationship between social media addiction and happiness among students” is not accepted.

Table 2 Relationship between social media addiction and materialism among students.

Variables	N	Correlation coefficient	Significance level
Social media addiction materialism	200	0.206**	0.01 level

**P<0.01

The correlation coefficient between social media addiction and materialism among students is 0.260 which is significant at the 0.01 level. This suggests that there is significant positive relationship between social media addiction and materialism among students. Thus implies that students who show greater social media addiction also show higher materialistic value. As students spend increasing amounts of time on various social media platforms they see many posts on various social networking platforms of various things their friends have bought and they develop a greater desire for a lot of luxury and for owning different things. They may begin to equate their success and the success of others on the basis of the ability to own these materialistic goods. These results may also imply that people with a tendency to have higher materialistic values may use social media to flaunt their acquisition of various

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material things. Thus the hypothesis-2- “There will be no significant relationship between social media addiction and materialism among students” is not accepted.

Table 3 Relationship between materialism and happiness among students.

Variables	N	Correlation coefficient	Significance level
Materialism Happiness	200	-0.019NS	Not Significant

NS-Not Significant

The correlation coefficient between materialism and happiness among students is -0.019. this shows that there is no significant relationship between materialism and happiness among students. However contradictory results were found by Chakraborty and Chatterjee who reported that materialistic value was significantly, negatively related with happiness. Thus the hypothesis-3- “There will be no significant relationship between materialism and happiness among students” is accepted.

Table 4 Relationship between social media addiction and happiness among female students.

Variables	N	Correlation coefficient	Significance level
Social media addiction Happiness	100	- 0.203*	0.05 level

*P<0.05

For female students the correlation coefficient between social media addiction and happiness is -0.203 which is significant at 0.05 level. This indicates that there is a significant negative correlation between social media addiction and happiness. Thus it seems that the more time female students spend on various social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, etc the lesser the overall satisfaction with life. Thus the hypothesis-4- “There will be no significant relationship between social media addiction and happiness among female students” is not accepted.

Table 5 Relationship between social media addiction and materialism among female students.

Variables	N	Correlation coefficient	Significance level
Social media addiction Materialism	100	0.383**	0.01 level

**P<0.01

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For female students the correlation coefficient between social media addiction and materialism is 0.383 which is significant at the 0.01 level. This indicates a significant positive relationship between social media addiction and materialism among females. The more time spent on social media means seeing more and more posts of friends buying things, this can lead to a tendency to developing high materialistic values, with an increased need to want to own various materialistic goods and to compete with their friends in acquiring various things. There is also a tendency to judge one's and others success and accomplishments by the acquisition of various goods and goals. Females with a tendency to be materialistic may also use social media platforms to share information about all the things they have bought. Thus the hypothesis-5- "There will be no significant relationship between social media addiction and materialism among female students" is not accepted.

Table 6 Relationship between materialism and happiness among female students.

Variables	N	Correlation coefficient	Significance level
Materialism Happiness	100	0.107	Not Significant

NS-Not Significant

For female students the correlation coefficient between materialism and happiness is 0.107 which is not significant. This seems to imply that buying and owning a lot of things is not linked to happiness and wellbeing in female students. Thus the hypothesis-6- "There will be no significant relationship between materialism and happiness among female students" is accepted.

Table 7 Relationship between social media addiction and happiness among male students.

Variables	N	Correlation coefficient	Significance level
Social media addiction Happiness	100	- 0.394**	0.01 level

**P<0.01

For male students, the correlation coefficient between social media addiction and happiness is -0.394 which is significant at the 0.01 level. This indicates that there is a significant negative correlation between social media addiction and happiness. This implies that high social media usage in male students is linked to lower subjective well being and satisfaction. Thus the hypothesis-7- "There will be no significant relationship between social media addiction and happiness among male students" is not accepted.

Table 8 Relationship between social media addiction and materialism among male students.

Variables	N	Correlation coefficient	Significance level
Social media addiction Materialism	100	0.114NS	Not Significant

NS- Not Significant

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For male students the correlation coefficient between social media addiction and materialism is 0.114, which is not significant. This suggests that social media addiction among male students is not linked to materialistic values. Thus the hypothesis-8- “There will be no significant relationship between social media addiction and materialism among male students” is accepted.

Table 9 Relationship between materialism and happiness among male students.

Variables	N	Correlation coefficient	Significance level
Materialism Happiness	100	- 0.199*	0.05 level

*P<0.05

For male students, the correlation coefficient between materialism and happiness is -0.199 which is significant at the 0.05 level. This indicates that there is a significant negative correlation between materialism and happiness. This implies that as materialistic values increases happiness decreases among male students, suggesting that the acquisition of many luxury goods does not lead to happiness and life satisfaction. This finding is corroborated by the previous finding by Chakraborty and Chatterjee (2015) whose study revealed that materialistic values were negatively and significantly correlated with happiness. Thus the hypothesis-9- “There will be no significant relationship between materialism and happiness among male students” is not accepted.

Table 10 Mean and t-value for happiness, materialism and social media addiction between male and female students.

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	t-value	Significance level
Happiness	Male students	100	119.31	0.235NS	Not Significant
	Female students		118.71		
Materialism	Male students	100	19.38	1.412NS	Not Significant
	Female students		18.37		
Social media addiction	Male students	100	15.87	0.714NS	Not Significant
	Female students		15.35		

NS- Not Significant

The study reveals that there are no significant gender differences in happiness, materialism and social media addiction among male and female students.

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This is contradictory to the study done by Thompson and Lougheed (2012) who reported that females spend more time on Facebook than males. They also found more addiction to Facebook in females. Thus the hypothesis-10- “There will be no significant difference in happiness among male and female students” is accepted. The hypothesis-11- “There will be no significant difference in materialism among male and female students” is accepted. The hypothesis-12- “There will be no significant difference in social media addiction among male and female students” is accepted.

CONCLUSIONS:

- From the results of the present study, it can be concluded that social media addiction was significantly, negatively correlated with happiness and significantly, positively correlated with materialism among students.
- There was no significant relationship between happiness and materialism among students.
- For female students social media addiction and happiness were found to be significantly, negatively correlated and social media addiction was significantly, positively correlated with materialism.
- There was no significant relationship between happiness and materialism among female students.
- For male students, there was a significant and negative correlation between social media addiction and happiness.
- The relationship between social media addiction and materialism was non-significant.
- There was a significant and negative correlation between materialism and happiness.
- The results indicated that there were no gender differences in social media addiction, happiness and materialism among students.

IMPLICATIONS:

From this research it is evident that social media addiction is associated with higher materialistic values but ironically owning more things does not lead to increased happiness on the contrary materialism is linked to lesser happiness. Hence students could be educated about that fact that increased use of social media is associated with increased need to acquire material goods and compete with friends in the acquisition of goods. Hence students can be given some kind of psycho education about effects of social media and some form of psychosocial intervention to reduce social media use.

LIMITATIONS:

The main limitation of the study was the small sample size , consisting of only 200 students. The participants in the research were only high school and college students. The study was conducted only among students in Chennai city.

Suggestions For Further Research:

Inclusion of subjects from a wider age range and a larger sample will be more reliable.

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