



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Impact of social networking sites on adolescent alienation and depression with special reference to Facebook usage

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Abstract

Social networking sites, especially Facebook, have become common among adolescents and young adults. The use of Facebook enable enables users to make new friends, to establish and/or maintain relationships and to respond, comment and share information. Despite its social and innovative features, there has been increasing concern regarding its negative consequences on psychological and social well-being among adolescents and young adults. In light of this, the current study focuses on Facebook usage and its relationship with depression and alienation among adolescents. The study's findings indicate that Facebook usage has a positive and significant relationship with alienation but is negatively correlated with depression. Further, it was also found that alienation and depression would contribute to the prediction of Facebook usage of adolescents both independently as well as conjointly.

Keywords: Social networking sites, Facebook, Alienation, Depression, Adolescents.

Introduction

Social media has become worldwide, revolutionizing how people communicate, connect and socialize. It has also become a crucial part of their social and cultural fabric. Facebook was the leader in the social media revolution and is a well-known website on a global basis. India leads the pack of Facebook users with 329.65 million monthly users (Statista, 2022). Even though a far wider range of people now use Facebook, teenagers still remain the social network's "largest followers" (Vlachopoulou & Boutsouki, 2014). Facebook provides a platform to its users where they can make new relations, being a medium of social interaction; its use has been rising steadily over time. Adolescents' social lives are improved by using Facebook in ways including sustaining friendship networks, exchanging ideas, offering social support, establishing new connections,

and promoting learning (Chakraborty, 2016) but overusing of Facebook can lead to depression (Ryan, Chester & Reece, 2014; Marino, Gini & Vieno, 2018).

Researchers have proposed a new phenomenon called "Facebook depression," defined as depression that develops when preteens and teens spend a lot of time on social networking sites like Facebook and later display the typical symptoms of depression. (Davila, Stroud & Starr, 2009). As a response to such conjecture, IOVU and RUNCAN (2020) investigated the relationship between Facebook use and depression among adolescents. Their study found that Facebook engagement is positively related to depressive symptoms among adolescents. The same findings were evoked in research done by Labrague (2014) who examined the effects of Facebook usage on adolescents' emotional states of depression, anxiety, and stress. The study population included 76 students enrolled in the Bachelor of Science in Nursing program from a government university in Samar, Philippines. Facebook intensity scale (FIS) and the depression anxiety and stress scale (DASS) were the primary instruments used in this study. The results showed that the time spent on Facebook increases depression and anxiety among adolescents. Zafar, Mahmood, Saleem & Zakaira (2015) found that there is a positive correlation between Facebook addiction and depression. Study was conducted on 150 higher secondary school & college students, including 75 male and 75 female students of Bahawalpur zone, Pakistan. Another research also suggests a significant positive relationship of Facebook addiction with depression

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(Farahani, Kazemi, Aghamohamadi, Bakhtiarvand & Ansari, 2011). Researchers have found that the feeling of alienation are an important indicator of mental health and have been associated with depressed mood (Nair & Vohra, 2012; Chen, Chen & Zhong, 2022). A study being conducted by Austrian psychologists, Sagioglou & Greitmeyers (2014) also found that Facebook addicts are likely to develop depressive symptoms and end up with feelings of loneliness.

Alienation is often seen during the adolescent stage of teenagers because it is a stage of great change and challenge. The inability to deal with these changes may lead to maladjustment and psychological issues like alienation. Adolescence is a sensitive period during which youths could feel alienated (Sandhu & Tung, 2004) and is a serious psychological strain for a young person (Bronfenbrenner, U, 1984). According to modern sociologists, Hajda (1961) defined alienation as "an individual feeling of uneasiness or discomfort which reflects a self-exclusion from social and cultural participation. Mustafa (2005) defines alienation among young people as the breakdown of social relationships among young people brought on by discontent and rejection of family values or the values of society as a whole. On a psychological level, the young man loses his sense of belonging to society, whether it be in its broad or limited meaning, and has a propensity for detachment and isolation because he believes that what he is doing is worthless and won't have any impact on the outside world. Using social media websites is the most common activity of today's children and adolescents. The main motives for Facebook use are maintaining relationships, occupying time, and entertainment (Guedes, Nardi, Guimaraes, Machado, & King, 2016; Kuss & Griffiths, 2011; Moreau, Laconi, Delfour, & Chabrol, 2015). A social media site such as Facebook is associated with alienation. Assuncao, Costa, Tagliabue and Matos (2017) investigated whether peer alienation mediates the link between parental attachment and problematic Facebook use. Total of 761 adolescents from the north region of Portugal were selected as a sample. This study's results show that peer alienation plays a mediating role in the relationship between parental attachment and problematic Facebook use.

Kiouas and Koddoui (2020) conducted a study on Facebook addiction and its relationship with social alienation among university students. The study's findings revealed a positive correlation between Facebook use addiction and social alienation, a high level of Facebook use addiction and an average level of social alienation. Yan, Nickerson and McMorris (2012) showed the association between loneliness and Facebook intensity and explored that those who spent more time on Facebook, tend to feel less lonely. Researchers concluded that rumination and upward social comparison are high among Facebook users and is closely associated with alienation (Dibb and Foster, 2021).

Reviewing related literature shows that Facebook usage has been studied with different variables like sadness, isolation, loneliness, self-esteem, shyness, and fear of missing out (FOMO). Studies on Facebook usage indicated that Facebook usage has a relationship with fear of missing out (Reer *et al.*, 2019; Roberts and David, 2020), loneliness (Dibb and Foster, 2021), envy (Tandoc, Ferrucci & Duffy, 2015) but there remains a lack of consensus on the definition of alienation. Although the relationship between public Facebook activities and loneliness recently attracted research attention, little is known about the relationship between Facebook usage and alienation, especially during adolescence stage of teenagers in India. Taking this into consideration, the present study is an attempt to quantify the same, especially in the Indian set up. Hence, this gap of knowledge inspired the investigator to study Facebook usage in relation to alienation and depression among adolescents in Jammu region.

Objectives of the Study

- The objective is to find out the relationship between Facebook usage, alienation and depression among adolescents.
- To find out the conjoint effect of alienation and depression on Facebook usage among adolescents
- The conjoint effect of alienation and depression on Facebook usage among adolescents is higher than their individual effects.

Methods

Participants and Data Collection Procedure

Data of this study was from the adolescents (n=200) enrolled in government and private schools of Jammu Province. Letters defining the research project were sent home to parents with the agreement form inviting participation. Students whose parents provided written permission and who themselves gave consent completed the questionnaire in classroom settings.

Measures

Facebook usage scale

The Facebook Usage Scale (FUS) developed by Hooda and Tyagi (2017) was used. The scale consists of 25 questions, 4 dimensions: self-presentation, maintaining social network, information gathering and entertainment. Each item was scored on a 5-point Likert scale.

Alienation scale

The alienation scale (AS) developed by Kaur and Singh (2016) was used to assess subjective feelings of alienation. It includes 40 items, and 4 dimensions: powerlessness, normlessness, meaninglessness and social isolation. Each item was rated on a Likert-type scale from 1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree, which the total scores ranging from 40 to 200.

Mental Depression Scale

The mental depression scale (MDS) developed by Dubey (2006) was used to assess depression symptoms. The scale contains 50 items. Each item of the test is scored as either 1 or 0. The higher the score, the more severe subjects have depression.

Results and Discussion

Hypothesis 1, states that there is a significant relationship between Facebook usage and alienation among adolescents. Hypothesis 2, there is a significant relationship between Facebook usage and depression among adolescents.

Pearson's product moment correlation was employed on the Facebook usage and alienation scores to achieve the above-mentioned objectives. The value of the coefficient of correlation between Facebook usage and alienation of total sample of adolescents was found to be 0.54. The findings of Skues and Wise (2012); Assuncao, Costa and Matos (2017); Dibb and Foster (2021) and Kiouas and Kaddouri (2022) are in line with the present findings as they researched Facebook usage and alienation is positively related. The value of the correlation between Facebook usage and depression among adolescents is -0.07. The findings of Simoncic, Kuhlman, Vargas, Houchins and Duran (2014) and Park, Lee, Kwak, Cha and Jeong (2013) are in line with the present findings as they have found that Facebook friends can play a role and give social support which is a key protective factor for depression. This shows that there is positive and significant relationship between exists between Facebook usage and alienation among adolescents. It was further found that Facebook usage and depression is negatively correlated.

Regression for Predictive Efficiency

Hypothesis 3, the conjoint effect of alienation and depression on Facebook usage among adolescents is higher than their individual effects.

Y - Facebook usage X_1 - alienation X_2 - depression

The effect of alienation on Facebook usage among adolescents was found significant at .01 level ($F(1, 198) = 81.12$). The computed value of R^2 of alienation and Facebook usage among adolescents (YX_1) is 0.291, indicating that alienation's contribution on Facebook usage among adolescents is 29.1%. The Facebook usage among adolescents can be predicted with the equation,

$$\text{Facebook usage} = 46.88 + 0.3346.88 + 0.33 \times \text{alienation},$$

That is for every unit of increase in alienation, Facebook usage among adolescents increase .12. The effect of depression on Facebook usage among adolescents was found not significant ($F(1, 198) = 1.06$). The computed value of R^2 of depression and Facebook usage among adolescents (YX_2) is .005 which indicates that the contribution of depression

on Facebook usage among adolescents is 0.5% which is not significant. The Facebook usage among adolescents can be predicted with the equation,

$$\text{Facebook usage} = 91.31 - 0.12 \times \text{depression}$$

That is for every unit of increase in depression, Facebook usage among adolescents decrease. 12. The conjoint effect of both alienation and depression on Facebook usage among adolescents was found significant at 0.01 level of significance ($F(2, 197) = 43.96$). The computed value of R^2 of Facebook usage with alienation and depression ($Y_1X_1X_2$) is 0.309, indicating the contribution of alienation and depression on Facebook usage among adolescents is 30.9%. As %age variance (=30.9) of variables of alienation and depression conjointly on Facebook usage among adolescents shows an increase in its value from alienation (%age variance =29.1) and depression (%age variance =0.5), it indicates that the conjoint effect of alienation and depression on Facebook usage among adolescents is higher than that of alienation and depression separately. However, depression is not a significant predictor of Facebook usage among adolescents. The Facebook usage among adolescents can be predicted with the equation, Facebook usage = 50.14 + 0.34 x alienation -0.21 x depression.

Hence, Hypothesis 3, Alienation and depression would contribute towards the prediction of Facebook usage of adolescents both independently as well as conjointly, stands partially accepted. This result is consistent with the study of Park *et al.*, (2015) in their study about depression and loneliness on Facebook. They found that depression was associated with the perceived degree of loneliness among young adults who are avid users of social networking sites. This was also supported by evidence showing a positive correlation between Facebook addiction, sleep quality, depression and loneliness (Ho, 2021).

Conclusion

The study findings indicate that Facebook usage has a positive and significant relationship with alienation but it is negatively correlated with depression. Further, it was also found that alienation and depression would contribute to the prediction of Facebook usage of adolescents both independently as well as conjointly.

Implications of the Study

The present study is an attempt to identify an association between Facebook usage, alienation and depressive symptoms. By analyzing Facebook-related depressive symptoms, we tried to understand alienation that could predict depressive symptoms among adolescents. The results of this study serve as a reminder to pay attention to the frequency of social networking sites use, especially Facebook, among adolescents. Further research can be done using a larger sample size and on different age group of people.

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