

SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION AND AGGRESSION AMONG HIGHER SECONDARY STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Background

Social media addiction and aggression among school students are widespread issues with significant health and social consequences. There is a significant increase in social media usage and aggressive behaviours among school students in India. Taking this into consideration, this study aimed to find out the extent of social media addiction and aggression and their relationship among students studying in higher secondary classes in Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

Method

The sample comprised of 220 students (106 boys and 114 girls) with a mean age of 16.10 years chosen from various higher secondary schools in Tamil Nadu and Kerala. These variables were measured using Social Networking Sites Addiction Scale (SNAS) and the Buss and Perry Aggression Questionnaire (BPAQ). The data was analyzed using Descriptive Statistics, Spearman Rank Order Correlation and Regression Analysis.

Results

Social media addiction and aggression was high among students studying in higher secondary classes. The results indicated a significant positive relationship between social media addiction and aggression. Results also showed that social media addiction significantly predicted aggression in higher secondary students.

Conclusion

Findings indicate the immediate need to regulate social media usage and, thereby, reduce aggressive behaviours in students. Educational programmes that focus on digital literacy and responsible media use, family-based awareness program for parents to monitor children's online activity, and counselling service for social media addicted students can be implemented for addressing these issues.

Keywords: Social media addiction, Aggression, Higher secondary students.

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Introduction

Along with rapid digitalization, India witnessed a rising trend in social media usage (Singh et al., 2020). According to the Digital 2021: Global Overview Report, there has been 1.5 times increase in social media usage duration over the last five years (Data Reportal, 2021). The usage of social media among youth is high (Sümen & Evgin, 2021), making platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, and Instagram

particularly popular (Data Reportal, 2021). These platforms serve as tools to establish new interpersonal relationships and connect with social groups beyond geographical boundaries (Chassiakos & Stager, 2020; Echeburúa & De Corral, 2010; Gray, 2018; Hearn & Foth, 2007; Savci & Aysan, 2017).

“Social media addiction is a behavioural addiction that is defined by being overly concerned about social media, driven by an

uncontrollable urge to log on to or use social media, and devoting so much time and effort to social media that it impairs other important life areas” (Hilliard & Parisi, 2019). Excessive social media use has detrimental impact on physical, psychological, and behavioural development of adolescents (Bhuvanewari, 2019; Chen et al., 2020). Poor sleep quality, low academic performance, lower energy levels (Akbaş Güneş & İren Akbıyık, 2018; Azizi et al., 2019; Sümen & Evgin, 2021), lower life satisfaction and happiness levels, as well as conflicts in interpersonal relationships (Tuan, 2021; Zhang et al., 2022), physical symptoms such as backache, headache, eye strain, and carpal tunnel syndrome (Rani & Buvanewari, 2017) are some among them. Moreover, concentration issues, depression, anxiety, especially social anxiety and heightened feelings of anger and hostility are also common (Annoni et al., 2021; Kreya & Wok, 2020).

Aggression is a prominent behavioural impact of social media addiction (Güler et al., 2022; Ko et al., 2009). Social media addiction can contribute to aggressive behaviours through many interconnected mechanisms. Social media addiction leads to a decline in fundamental social skills such as empathy, which may contribute to rise in aggression (Dalvi-Esfahani et al., 2020). It has been observed that social media addicts display the ‘disinhibition effect,’ where they engage in online behaviours that they would not otherwise do in real life, which may lead to the expression of aggressive behaviours (Niemz et al., 2005; Paul, 2019). Aggressive behaviour poses significant distress among school children (Choudhary et al., 2022), which prompt researchers to explore underlying causes of aggression specifically among adolescents (Sidhu et al., 2019). Aggression is a major cause of concern for parents, teachers and other stake holders due to its potential detrimental impact in their future (Jamal et al., 2018).

According to Ferguson and Beaver (2009), aggression is “behaviour which is intended to increase the social dominance of the organism

relative to the dominant position of other organisms”. There has been an increase in aggressive behaviour among secondary school students, making them susceptible to anti-social behaviours (Kumar et al., 2016). Children with elevated levels of aggression often have behavioural issues later in life, especially during adolescence (Kishore et al., 2019). Most of the time, aggression serves as a precursor to delinquent behaviour and criminal attitudes among adolescents, specifically childhood aggression (Brook et al., 1992; De Haan et al., 2010).

Need and Significance of the Study

Today, the ubiquitous use of social media is seen across all age groups, especially among adolescents. Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Twitter, and Tumblr are very popular and are embraced globally by adolescents. Social media addiction and aggressive behaviour are two significant concerns among school students. Understanding the prevalence of these behaviours among adolescents is crucial in knowing the evolving dynamics of adolescents in this digital age.

This study aims to find out the nature and extent of social media addiction and aggression and their relationship among higher secondary school students. Understanding the nature and extent of social media addiction and aggression is crucial for designing targeted interventions and strategies. The findings of the study could have significant implications for educational institutions and can contribute to broader societal implications on social media and aggression.

Objectives

1. To find out the nature and extent of social media addiction and aggression among Higher Secondary students.
2. To find out the relationship between social media addiction and aggression among Higher Secondary students.
3. To find out the influence of social media addiction on aggression among Higher Secondary students.

Hypotheses

1. There will be no significant relationship between social media addiction and aggression among higher secondary students.
2. Social media addiction will significantly predict aggression among higher secondary students.

Materials and Methods

Study design

The present study tries to explore the relationship between social media addiction and aggression among higher secondary students. Hence, a cross-sectional correlational research design was employed in the study. The participants of the study comprised 220 Higher secondary students (106 boys and 114 girls) selected through convenience sampling method from various schools in Tamil Nadu and Kerala with an average age of 16.10 years.

Inclusion Criteria

Regular students studying in higher secondary schools in Tamil Nadu and Kerala between the ages of 15 and 17.

Exclusion Criteria

Students studying via correspondence/distant mode, and students of age > 17.

Procedure

A convenience sampling method was used to select the participants for the study. The principals of the selected schools were contacted in person, and approval to collect data was obtained. Prior to the conduction of the survey, informed consent was taken from the school of social media addiction on aggression.

Results

Table 1: Nature and Extent of Social Media Addiction and Aggression

Variables	N	Mean	SD
Social Media Addiction	220	86.48	22.16
Aggression	220	89.79	14.31
Physical Aggression	220	26.68	5.38
Verbal Aggression	220	16.12	3.51
Anger	220	21.12	4.70
Hostility	220	25.87	5.42

The mean score obtained for social networking site addiction indicates social media addiction among Higher Secondary students. According to

authorities, and written assent was obtained from the participants. The collection of data was done by using a survey method from the classes allotted by the school authorities. Written informed assent was collected from the participants, and confidentiality was assured.

Study Instruments

Socio-demographic proforma

The sociodemographic details of the participants were collected using a socio-demographic proforma prepared by the researchers.

Social Networking Sites Addiction Scale (SNAS)

Social Networking Addiction Scale by Shahnawaz & Rehman (2020) was used to measure aggression. The scale consists of 21 items with total score ranging from 21 to 147, with a score of 84 and above indicating addiction.

Aggression Questionnaire (AQ)

Aggression Questionnaire by Buss & Perry (1992) was used to measure aggression. This self-report questionnaire contains 29 items, with four subscales: Physical aggression, Verbal aggression, Anger and Hostility. The total score ranges from 29 to 145, with higher scores indicating heightened levels of aggression.

Statistical analysis

Statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS software (Version 21). Spearman rank order correlation was used to determine the relationship between social media addiction and aggression, and regression analysis was done to determine the influence

SNAS, a score above 84 indicates social media addiction. 121 students (55%) scored 84 and above, which signifies an alarming rate of social

networking addiction among school students. The mean score obtained for aggression also indicates a disturbingly high rate of aggression in school

students. Also, physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger, and hostility were found to be high in students.

Table 2: Relationship between Social Media Addiction and Aggression among Higher Secondary Students

Variable	Social Media Addiction	
	Correlation	Sig. (2-Tailed)
Aggression	.40**	0.01
Physical Aggression	.36**	0.01
Verbal Aggression	.30**	0.01
Anger	.25**	0.01
Hostility	.33**	0.01

P<0.05

There is a significant positive relationship between social media addiction and aggression. Hence, the hypothesis that “there will be no significant positive relationship between social media addiction and aggression” is rejected. Also,

a significant positive relationship was obtained between social media addiction and various dimensions of aggression, including physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger, and hostility.

Table 3: Impact of Social Media Addiction on Aggression

IV – DV	ANOVA TABLE		MODEL SUMMARY	Coefficient		
	F	SIG	Adjusted R Square	Unstandardized coefficient B	sig	
				Constant	IV	
Social Media Addiction – Aggression	54.80	.000	0.20	64.76	3.49	.000

Table 4 shows that social media addiction predicts 20% of the variation in aggression. Hence, the hypothesis that social media addiction will not significantly predict aggression among higher secondary students is rejected.

Discussion

Adolescence is a crucial period in an individual's academic journey and personal development. Social media addiction and aggression are two of the most demanding issues affecting students' growth and development. Social media addiction was found to be high among higher-secondary students, which is in line with previous studies reporting addiction among students (Simsek et al., 2019; Sümen & Evgin, 2021; Veronica & Samuel, 2015).

Increased use of social media has detrimental impacts on various aspects of the well-being of an individual. Past research underscores that it

leads to negative effects on interpersonal relationships (Çalışır, 2015), mental health (Chen et al., 2020), and academics. It is also associated with increased levels of depression (Haand & Shuwang, 2020) and other detrimental psychological outcomes such as paranoid thoughts, anxiety and heightened feelings of anger and hostility (Bilgin, 2018). It also leads to a decline in sleep quality among adolescents (Pirdehghan et al., 2021; Zhu & Xiong, 2022), contributing to multifaceted repercussions that make them lethargic and demotivated (Rani & Buvaneswari, 2017), thereby impacting the overall performance of students in academics and other co-curricular activities (Azizi et al., 2019; Bhandarkar et al., 2021).

Higher secondary students had a high level of aggression. The prevalence of aggression among school-going students in India is increasing at an

alarming rate (Kumar et al., 2016; Kumari et al., 2017). Aggressive behaviour among students can arise from a combination of individual, interpersonal and environmental factors (Fauzi et al., 2023). Personality characteristics such as impulsivity (Srinivasan et al., 2022; Yu et al., 2021), low frustration tolerance (Mahon et al., 2006), and problems in emotion regulation (Cooley et al., 2019; Purwadi et al., 2020) can predispose individuals to engage in aggressive behaviours. High academic pressure and expectations from parents and teachers can make some students stressed and frustrated, contributing to aggressive behaviours (Khanehkeshi & Basavarajappa, 2011; Sokhi, 2019).

Exposure to a community with high levels of violence and aggression or exposure to a problematic family environment characterized by conflicts are some risk factors causing the development of aggressive behaviour in students (Bailey & Coore-Desai, 2012; Sehgal & Nayak, 2021; Sharma & Marimuthu, 2014). Also, be with aggressive peers is another vital risk factor. Students adopt aggressive behaviours from their peers to fit into the friends' circle or to conform to the perceived social norms of the group (Faris & Ennett, 2012; Hofmann & Müller, 2021).

Relationship between social media addiction and aggression

A significant positive relationship was found between social media addiction and aggression. This is consistent with the findings of previous studies (Ko et al., 2009; Lim et al., 2015; Sobkin & Fedotova, 2021). Also, it found that social media addiction significantly predicted aggression in students.

Adolescents who are addicted to social networking sites and who use internet problematically have impulse control difficulties, which would explain their aggressive behaviour (Martínez-Ferrer et al., 2018). Cognitive skills and functions have a significant influence in regulating the thoughts and actions of adolescents (Miyake et al., 2000). Therefore, impairments in cognitive functioning can be a major risk factor for increased aggressive thoughts and actions. Excessive use of smartphones will lead to cognitive failures and impairments in daily life

(Hadlington, 2015; Liebherr et al., 2020), which can be a potential reason for heightened aggressive behaviour in such adolescents. The nature of the media content and the characteristics of the individual exposed to the content influence the relationship between social media violence and aggressive behaviour among adolescent viewers. Despite all these moderating factors, the effect of social media is significant enough to pose threats to public health (Huesmann & Taylor, 2006).

There is an immediate need for proper measurement of social media addiction and aggression among adolescents in India and the development of prevention and intervention strategies to curtail these behaviours. Interventions targeting aggressive adolescents as early as possible will have the maximum impact on aggression. Adolescents should be taught healthy expressions of anger and promote information on positive coping to problems. Parents and Teachers should be part of all initiatives as they play an essential role in providing care and support to adolescents. Effective programmes and prevention strategies will help create healthy and responsible adults in the future.

Limitations of the study

The present study has certain limitations. Firstly, as it is a cross-sectional study, the findings were based on a single observation and do not give any causal interpretations. Second, a convenient sampling was undertaken in the study; data may not be true representative of the population and might affect the generalizability of the results.

Conclusion

The present study aimed to find out the prevalence and the relationship between social media addiction and aggression among higher secondary students. Social media addiction and aggression were found to be significantly high among higher secondary students. Also, a significant positive relationship was found between social media addiction and aggression was found. Preventive and intervention-based research efforts can be initiated to deal with the higher prevalence of these issues. Also, it is important to raise awareness among students and families about the potential effects of social

media addiction. Government can introduce necessary policies and strategies to monitor and reduce these issues among adolescents.

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