ORIGINAL ARTICLES

EXPLORING SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION AND IT'S IMPACT ON THE PSYCHOSOMATIC HEALTH OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN WESTERN ODISHA: A GENDER AND BMI PERSPECTIVE

Deepak Kumar Behera[1] & Rajendra Gartia[2]

[1]Research Scholar, School of Statistics, Gangadhar Meher University, Amruta Vihar, Sambalpur-768004, Odisha, India, [2]Assistant Professor & Head, School of Statistics, Gangadhar Meher University, Amruta Vihar, Sambalpur- 768004, Odisha, India.

Correspondence: Deepak Kumar Behera, e-mail : dkbehera4@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Background: The prevalent issue of university students excessively utilizing social networking sites (SNSs) has raised significant apprehension due to its potential for cyber addiction and detrimental impact on psychosomatic health. **Aim:** The objective of this study was to explore the potential associations between addiction to SNSs, gender, body mass index (BMI), and health problems (HPs) in university students from Western Odisha. **Methods and Materials:** A survey consisting of a questionnaire was administered to a sample of 300 individuals, comprising 149(49.6%) males and 151 (50.33%) females enrolled in GM University and Sambalpur University Institute of Information Technology respectively. The gathered data underwent analysis and interpretation utilizing Microsoft Excel and SPSS 26.00. **Results:** Significant positive correlation between SNS addiction and BMI status. Gender differences in BMI status (x^2= 24.626, $p<0.01$), number of accounts (x^2= 34.048, $p<0.01$), and HP score (x^2= 49.984, $p<0.01$). No significant difference between gender and SNS addiction (x^2= 1.031, $p>0.05$) or academic performance (x^2= 11.881, $p<0.05$). Males had higher BMI status (mean rank= 169.04) than females (mean rank= 132.21) (H= 17.593, $p<0.01$). Females had higher HP score (mean rank= 161.37) than males (mean rank= 139.49) (H= 4.813, $p<0.05$). Males had more SNS accounts (mean rank= 167.57) than females (mean rank= 133.65) (H= 11.825, $p<0.01$). No significant difference in SNS addiction between males (mean rank= 146.31) and females (mean rank= 154.64) (H= 1.031, $p>0.05$). **Conclusion:** Excessive SNS addiction correlated with higher BMI in university students. Gender influenced BMI, number of SNS accounts, and HP score. Preventive measures are essential to address the detrimental impact on students' well-being. The study highlights the adverse repercussions of SNS addiction on university students' health in Western Odisha. Insights can aid healthcare practitioners, educators, and policymakers in formulating preventive measures.

Keywords: Social Networking Sites (SNSs), Cyber Addiction (CA), Body Mass Index (BMI), Psychosomatic Health (PH).

INTRODUCTION

Social media platforms have become an integral part of modern life, with an increasing number of individuals, including university students, engaging with them extensively. This widespread use of social networking sites (SNSs) has raised concerns about the potentially addictive nature of these platforms and their impact on the psychosomatic health

of young adults. University students, in particular, are considered a vulnerable population due to their heavy reliance on SNSs for communication, information sharing, and entertainment (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017).

Research into the addictive nature of social media usage has been a focal point in recent years. Andreassen, Torsheim, Brunborg, and Pallesen (2012) developed the Facebook Addiction Scale, which revealed that individuals could develop addictive tendencies towards social networking sites, leading to adverse effects on their overall well-being. These addictive behaviours have been associated with a range of psychosomatic health problems, such as anxiety, depression, and interpersonal difficulties.

In the context of university students in Western Odisha, India, the relationship between social media addiction and psychosomatic health has garnered attention. A study by Behera, Gartia, and Pachori (2022) investigated the SNS usage patterns of 277 university students and found a significant association between social media use and psychosomatic health problems. Notably, this association was stronger for females than for males (Kumar Behera et al., 2022), highlighting the relevance of gender perspectives in understanding this phenomenon.

The negative impact of excessive social media usage on the mental health of university students has been extensively documented. Onyeizu (2022) reported that increased social media use was linked to poorer social interactions and mental health outcomes among students. Apuke (2018) identified various detrimental effects of social media addiction, including sleep deprivation, fatigue, and blurred vision in students. Furthermore, Islam (2020) revealed that students' excessive engagement with social media had a negative impact on their self-esteem and self-worth, affecting their overall well-being. Several studies have emphasized the alarming prevalence of social media addiction among university students. Hammad (2023) found that a staggering 60% of students suffered from social media addiction, and this addiction was a significant predictor of depression, anxiety, and loneliness. Akurathi (2021) concluded that social media overuse was associated with higher levels of depression and anxiety in students. Similarly, Sarwar (2022) discovered a positive correlation between social media addiction and depression, with the severity of addiction directly proportional to the level of depression experienced by students.

Exploring the factors contributing to social media addiction, Köse (2019) identified a relationship between addiction levels and the number of Instagram followers. Notably, students with fake accounts and those engaged in stalking behaviours exhibited higher addiction rates. Additionally, a moderate negative correlation between self-esteem and social media addiction was observed, suggesting that students with lower self-esteem were more prone to addictive social media behaviours. Considering the reasons behind social media usage patterns, Aslan (2020) found that students primarily used social media for communication with friends, listening to music, and sharing content. Gender differences were evident, as males preferred social media for following groups, playing games, and meeting new people. Males also exhibited higher addiction levels, often prioritizing social media over responsibilities. Younger students and those with longer and more frequent social media usage demonstrated higher addiction rates. The factors most strongly correlated with addiction were relapse and conflict, with conflict being the most influential factor.

In a study specific to university students in India, Behera and Gartia (2023) reported a significant association between SNS usage

and increased levels of anxiety, depression, and loneliness. Notably, this negative impact was more pronounced among females than males (Kumar Behera & Gartia, 2023), emphasizing the importance of considering gender perspectives in understanding social media addiction's psychosomatic health implications.

An array of research highlights the concerning prevalence of social media addiction among university students and its adverse impact on their mental health and overall well-being (Onyeizu 2022; Apuke 2018; Islam 2020; Hammad 2023; Akurathi 2021; Sarwar 2022; Köse 2019; Aslan 2020). As this phenomenon continues to grow, it becomes imperative to address social media addiction promptly and implement interventions to support the psychological health and academic success of university students in Western Odisha. This research aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge and provide insights into the complex interplay between social media addiction and psychosomatic health, considering gender and BMI perspectives, thereby fostering the development of effective intervention strategies for this vulnerable population.

OBJECTIVES

The study endeavours to achieve the following specific objectives:

1. To investigate the correlation between addiction to social networking sites and BMI status among university students in Western Odisha.
2. To explore gender differences in BMI status, the number of SNS accounts, health problems, SNS addiction, and academic performance among university students in Western Odisha.

HYPOTHESES

Based on the study's objectives and the available literature, the following unique hypotheses are formulated:

H_0: There is no statistically significant difference in the BMI, the total number of SNS accounts, the addictiveness of SNS usage, health issues, and the percentage of last test marks earned between male and female respondents.

H_1: There are considerable variations between male and female respondents in terms of BMI, the total number of SNS accounts, the addictiveness of SNS use, health issues, and the percentage of last test scores earned.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Study Design and Participants

This research employed a questionnaire survey design to gather data from university students in Western Odisha, India. A total of 300 participants, comprising 149(49.67%) males and 151(50.33%) females, were conveniently selected from GM University (GMU) and Sambalpur University Institute of Information Technology (SUIIT) respectively. Care was taken to ensure representation from both institutions. Before data collection, the institutional ethics committee (IEC) at Gangadhar Meher University, Sambalpur provided ethical approval, and the participants provided their voluntary consent.

Data Collection

A self-administered questionnaire was utilized to collect the data. The questionnaire encompassed various sections covering demographic information, social media usage patterns, the number of social media accounts, social media addiction, health problems, and academic performance. The design of the questionnaire drew upon existing scales and validated instruments from previous studies.

Data Analysis

The collected data underwent analysis using Microsoft Excel and SPSS 26.00. Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and

percentages, were employed to summarize the participants' demographic characteristics and social media usage patterns. To investigate gender differences in BMI status, the number of social media accounts, health problem scores, and academic performance, the Kruskal-Wallis Rank Test and Chi-square Test were applied. Correlation analysis was conducted to explore the relationships between social media addiction, BMI status, and health problems (Satici et al., 2021).

RESULTS

Demographic Characteristics

The research encompassed a sample of 300 university students from Western Odisha, comprising 149(49.67%) males and 151(50.33%) females. These participants were selected from GM University and Sambalpur University Institute of Information Technology respectively.

Social Media Usage Patterns

Analysis of the participants' social media usage patterns revealed a range of different numbers of social media accounts. The number of accounts varied from one to five, with an average of 2.6 (Standard Deviation = 1.17). A significant majority of participants (72.3%) reported having two or more social media accounts.

Gender

Gender were analyzed in terms of BMI status, the number of social media accounts, and health problem scores. The outcomes revealed noteworthy gender disparities in BMI status ($x^2 = 24.626$, $p < 0.01$), the number of accounts ($x^2 = 34.048$, $p < 0.01$), and health problem scores ($x^2 = 49.984$, $p < 0.01$). However, no significant gender difference was observed in social media addiction ($x^2 = 1.035$, $p > 0.05$) or academic performance ($x^2 = 11.881$, $p > 0.05$).

BMI and Gender

Analysis using the Kruskal-Wallis 'H' test indicated a significant divergence in BMI status between males and females. The mean rank for BMI status was significantly higher for males (169.04) than for females (132.21) ($H = 17.593$, $p < 0.01$). These findings suggest that males tend to have higher BMI levels compared to females within the study population.

Health Problems and Gender

Significant gender differences were observed in health problem scores, with females reporting higher scores than males. The mean rank for health problem scores was significantly higher for females (161.37) compared to males (139.49) ($H = 4.813$, $p < 0.05$). This implies that females may encounter a greater number of health problems associated with social media addiction.

Number of Social Media Accounts and Gender:

Gender disparities were also identified in the number of social media accounts. The mean rank for the number of accounts was significantly higher for males (167.57) compared to females (133.65) ($H = 11.825$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that males tend to possess a greater number of social media accounts than females.

Table 1: Summary of Findings

Variables	Gender	Statistical Test	p-value
BMI Status	Significant difference	Chi-square Test	P<0.01
Number of SNS Accounts	Significant difference	Chi-square Test	p<0.01
Health Problem Score	Significant difference	Chi-square Test	p<0.01
SNS Addiction	No significant difference	Chi-square Test	p>0.05
% of Mark	No significant difference	Chi-square Test	p>0.05

The findings showed no gender differences in the effects of social media addiction on body mass index (BMI). However, there were noticeable gender differences in BMI status, the number of social networking site (SNS) accounts, and the severity of health problems (Wang et al., 2021). The Kruskal-Wallis test showed that men's BMI status was

considerably greater than women's. Similar to how women scored much higher on health problems than men did. Additionally, compared to females, guys had a lot more SNS accounts.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study shed light on the relationship between social media addiction and psychosomatic health among university students in Western Odisha. The higher BMI status observed among male students aligns with previous research highlighting gender disparities in body composition and weight management (Flegal et al., 2012; Ng et al., 2014). This finding emphasizes the need to focus on promoting healthy lifestyle behaviours among male students, particularly those who are addicted to social media, to mitigate the potential risk of increased BMI.

Moreover, the higher number of social media accounts among male students suggests that they may be more actively engaged in using various social media platforms. This finding is consistent with prior studies that have indicated gender differences in social media usage patterns, with males showing greater involvement (Seo & Houston, 2018; Wang et al., 2019). Understanding the reasons behind these gender disparities in social media usage can provide valuable insights for future interventions and policies.

The study's results also have implications for healthcare practitioners, educators, and policymakers, providing them with valuable information to develop preventive measures against social media addiction's detrimental effects on students' health and well-being (Koessmeier et al., 2021). The higher health problem scores among female students compared to their male counterparts suggest that females may be more susceptible to experiencing psychosomatic health issues associated with social media addiction. Therefore, targeted interventions and support may be necessary to address female students' specific mental health needs in relation to their social media use.

While the study offers valuable insights, it is essential to acknowledge its limitations, such as the reliance on self-reported data and its focus on a specific region and university student population. Future research should aim to incorporate more diverse samples and employ objective measures to overcome these limitations and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of social media addiction on university students' psychosomatic health. By addressing these limitations, future studies can contribute to the development of evidence-based interventions to promote healthier social media use and improve the overall well-being of university students.

CONCLUSION

This study delved into the relationship between social media addiction and its impact on the psychosomatic health of university students in Western Odisha, with a specific focus on gender and BMI perspectives. The findings have provided valuable insights into the potential repercussions of excessive social media use on students' well-being.

The study revealed a significant positive correlation between social media addiction and BMI status among university students. This highlights the importance of recognizing the potential risk of increased BMI associated with addictive social media behaviours, particularly among male students. Promoting healthy lifestyle behaviours and encouraging balanced technology use should be a priority in addressing this concern.

Gender differences were also evident in social media usage patterns, with male students having a higher number of social media accounts compared to their female counterparts. This finding underscores the need for understanding the underlying

reasons behind these gender disparities in social media engagement to develop targeted interventions and support.

Furthermore, the study indicated that female students reported higher health problem scores compared to male students, suggesting that they may be more susceptible to experiencing psychosomatic health issues associated with social media addiction. Tailored interventions to address female students' specific mental health needs regarding their social media use are crucial. The implications of this research extend to healthcare practitioners, educators, and policymakers who can use the insights to design preventive measures and interventions against social media addiction and its detrimental consequences on university students' health and well-being.

However, it is essential to acknowledge the study's limitations, such as the reliance on self-reported data and its focus on a specific geographical region and university student population. Future research endeavours should seek to overcome these limitations by incorporating diverse samples and employing objective measures to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the intricate relationship between social media addiction and psychosomatic health.

In conclusion, the findings of this study underscore the urgency of addressing social media addiction among university students. By promoting healthier social media habits and considering the specific needs of different gender groups, educators and policymakers can contribute to improving the overall well-being and academic success of university students in Western Odisha and beyond.

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