

The Correlation Between Social Media Addiction and Psychological Security Among University Students

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Abstract:

This study aimed to investigate the relationship between social media addiction and psychological security in university students. Using the Social Media Addiction Scale developed by "Basma Houssein Younes" (2016) and the Psychological Security Scale adapted for the Algerian context by "Halima Akssa" (2015), researchers surveyed 153 university students (male and female) from various levels and programs. They found a significant correlation between these two factors. However, there were no differences in social media addiction based on gender, and socioeconomic status did not affect psychological security. Interestingly, gender did influence psychological security levels among students.

Keywords: social media addiction, psychological security, university student.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Humans need psychological stability and harmony with their surroundings, so they must invest in various factors that contribute to social adjustment and psychological adaptation. However, counteracting these positive forces are destructive elements that hinder the attainment of psychological equilibrium. One of the most prominent of these contemporary challenges is the addiction to social media, a pervasive issue characterized by excessive and irrational use of various social media platforms. The American Psychiatric Association (APA) defines this as a disorder manifesting in a compulsive need arising from the inability to achieve satisfaction from internet use. Individuals suffering from this disorder experience a range of psychological ailments (**Ali & Amal, 2021, p. 141**). The rapid evolution of social dynamics has required individuals to engage with these platforms, making participation almost mandatory, especially in the case of Facebook. This has led to the formation of chronic social media use, eventually culminating in addiction. This finding is supported by a study conducted by Rabiha Kiouss (2022) which aimed to explore the relationship between social media addiction and feelings of alienation among the University of Ghardaia students. The study's key findings revealed a high level of addiction to social media platforms, particularly Facebook (**Rabiha, 2022**). Social media is a system of interconnected electronic networks that allow users to create personal profiles and connect with others based on shared interests, friendships, or acquaintances (**Mouhammad, 2014, p. 19**). This social system comprises individuals who form a parallel community similar to the real world, regardless of whether they have real-world connections. However, these platforms offer the unique ability to connect with individuals who share similar interests, regardless of their nationality or location. The continuous growth in social media usage, with nearly 5 billion people, or over 60% of the world's population, using these platforms (**Aljazeera, 2023**), underscores the urgency of this issue, The imperative for university students to engage

with these platforms is obvious, as they facilitate access to the latest research and streamline communication with faculty. Consequently, social media addiction has proliferated without limitations related to gender or socioeconomic status. This is supported by a study conducted by Halima Mazghrani and Sarra Hamri (2020), which examined the relationship between social media addiction and family cohesion among university students. Utilizing a descriptive research design, the study, which involved a sample of 174 students of both genders, concluded that there was a negative correlation between social media addiction and family cohesion. Furthermore, no statistically significant differences were found in social media addiction or family cohesion based on gender (**Mezghrani & Hamri, 2020, p. 605**) However, excessive use of these platforms can lead to maladaptive and unhealthy integration, potentially exacerbating or mitigating perceptions of threat.

The absence of perceived psychological threats, the ability to adhere to social norms, and the need for belonging are fundamental human needs that require fulfillment. These needs contribute to the development of self-esteem and acceptance and influence personality development. Thus, healthy social integration fosters psychological security, defined by Maslow as a feeling of love and acceptance from others, as well as a perception of one's environment as friendly and supportive. In such an environment, individuals experience a reduced sense of danger, threat, and anxiety (**Wafaa, 2010, p. 14**) . Individuals living in an environment that provides emotional and psychological stability are more likely to possess mental health, given the presence of conditions conducive to psychological security. Initially, the concept of security was understood as a subjective experience, relying on an individual's ability to protect themselves from environmental and interpersonal threats, which led them to seek companionship and communal living. This is rooted in human nature and the innate desire to belong to a social group from which individuals acquire knowledge and develop skills (**Iyad, 2005, p. 02**). Psychological security is linked to various personality traits and serves as a foundational element

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shaping personality. This finding is supported by a study conducted by Ali Kouidri and Amal Ayesh (2021), which examined the relationship between psychological security and personality traits among a sample of 150 university students in the Wilaya of Laghouat. Their results indicated a significant correlation between psychological security and personality traits (**Ali & Amal, 2021, p. 94**) Personality traits reflect an individual's fulfillment of various belonging needs. Moreover, psychological security is not exclusive to a particular social group, as demonstrated by a study conducted by Naïma Dine (2016) on private sector employees in the Wilaya of El Menia. This study found no significant differences in psychological security based on socioeconomic status, and no significant differences between males and females, except for psychological comfort, which was higher among females (**Naïma & Saïd, 2016, p. 197**) . Similarly, a study by Ahlam Houari (2020) examining psychological security among students at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Tlemcen found no significant differences employing a descriptive method, and Shaqir's (2005) psychological security scale, revealed no significant differences in psychological security based on gender or socioeconomic status (**Ahlam & Yahya, 2020, p. 239**). However, in the contemporary era, social media has created parallel affiliations that compete with traditional, real-world connections.

Social media platforms have created virtual environments that mirror real-life experiences to such an extent that users exhibit a wide range of emotions, including anxiety, depression, sadness, and joy. This suggests that immersion in the virtual world has a similar impact to the real world and that users engage in interactive social activities. Consequently, users seek gratification through these platforms. University students, with their academic backgrounds, are no exception. As members of society, they possess similar psychological and emotional characteristics and are among the most frequent users of these platforms. They are also susceptible to excessive use, leading to addiction. The user's desire to satisfy personal needs is essentially a

pursuit of fulfillment. This context justifies the students' desire to seek the components of psychological security, such as feelings of acceptance, appreciation, and love, which are fundamental to mental health. Despite numerous studies on social media addiction, there has been a dearth of research investigating the relationship between social media addiction and psychological security among Algerian university students. A study by Abeer Mohammed Saban and Samah Abeer (2019) examined the relationship between social media addiction, psychological security, and cybercrime involvement in a sample of 252 students at Taiba University in Medina. The study found a significant negative correlation between social media addiction and psychological security (**Saban & Eid, 2019, p. 267**). Similarly, a study by Mansour Masfer Al-Qarni and Youssef Jalal Youssef Abu al-Maaty (2023) explored the relationship between social media addiction and psychological security among high school students (204). The results indicated a negative correlation, suggesting that social media addiction undermines psychological well-being (**Mansour & Yousuf, 2023, p. 311**).

Given the significance of this issue in the academic, social, and psychological spheres, this study aims to fill this knowledge gap by investigating the nature of the relationship between social media addiction and psychological security among university students. Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following research question:

What is the nature of the correlation between social media addiction and psychological security among university students?

Research Questions:

- Are there statistically significant differences in the level of psychological security among university students based on socioeconomic status?
- Are there statistically significant differences in the level of social media addiction among university students based on gender?

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- Are there statistically significant differences in the level of psychological security among university students based on gender ?

Hypotheses:

Given the under-researched nature of the relationship between social media addiction and psychological security in university students, we propose the following hypotheses:

General Hypothesis:

- ✓ There is a statistically significant relationship between psychological security and social media addiction.

Sub-Hypotheses:

- ✓ There are statistically significant differences in the level of psychological security among university students based on socioeconomic status.
- ✓ There are statistically significant differences in the level of social media addiction among university students based on gender.
- ✓ There are statistically significant differences in the level of psychological security among university students based on gender.

2. METHODOLOGY AND INSTRUMENTS

2.1 Research Methodology

The researchers adopted a descriptive research design, which is suitable for this type of field research in the social and human sciences. This approach involves describing a phenomenon without manipulating variables or altering its conditions. It aims to uncover the distribution of psychological characteristics and provide information about the phenomenon to identify causes and draw generalizations.

There are various definitions of descriptive research. It is a method that involves collecting and analyzing social data through

interviews or questionnaires to obtain information from as large a sample as possible of individuals related to the phenomenon under study (**Khalil, 2009, p. 152**). The primary purpose is to create a comprehensive picture of the characteristics of the study population by accessing a sample that shares the same social, psychological, and contextual characteristics. This is evident in our study sample of university students, who share similar academic experiences and are thus exposed to the same social, psychological, and emotional factors. Descriptive research is also defined as collecting data from a large number of cases to diagnose their conditions or specific aspects of those conditions, without limiting the study to a single case. This type of research helps solve many problems by providing diagnostic information about topics related to those problems (**Rahim, 2008, p. 99**).

Since the goal of scientific research is to provide a clear picture of the phenomenon under study and to infer the factors that contribute directly or indirectly, the purpose of the descriptive research conducted by the researchers is to clarify the relationship and patterns between the variables of social media addiction and psychological security. This is particularly relevant when exploring the phenomenon in a specific study sample, such as undergraduate students. Correlational research often helps researchers identify the pattern of the relationship between two variables, allowing for the construction of a complex conceptual framework or the development of a theory about a particular phenomenon (**Donald, Lucy, & Asghar, 2013, p. 427**).

Therefore, our sample consisted of 153 male and female university students who were selected through purposive sampling. An electronic questionnaire was distributed, ensuring that the sample members possessed the desired characteristics for the study. Demographic characteristics such as gender and socioeconomic status were considered, and the sample distribution is presented in the next table.

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Table 1: Characteristics of the Study Sample

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	68	44,4
	Female	85	55,6
	Total	153	100,0
Age	20-25	69	45,1
	26-31	63	41,2
	32-37	21	13,7
	Total	153	100,0
Marital Status	Single	110	71,9
	Married	43	28,1
	Total	153	100,0
Educational Level	Bachelor's	48	31,4
	Master's	56	36,6
	Doctoral	49	32,0
	Total	153	100,0

Source: Developed by the researchers using SPSS software

Table 1 presents a notable distribution of demographic characteristics among the 153 participants in our sample. In terms of gender, the sample was predominantly female (55.6 %) compared to males (44.4 %). While this indicates a relatively balanced distribution, there is a slight skew towards females. Regarding age, the vast majority of participants fell within the age groups of 20-25 years (45.1 %) and 26-31 years (41.2 %). This suggests that the sample primarily consists of young individuals, which may influence their attitudes and priorities based on their life stage. Conversely, the age group of 32-37 years represents a much smaller proportion (13.7 %). In terms of marital status, the overwhelming majority of participants were single (71.9 %), while married individuals constituted a significantly smaller proportion (28.1 %). These percentages may reflect the influence of marital status on other aspects of the study, including the psychological and social stability of individuals. Academically, the sample was distributed almost evenly among those holding bachelor's degrees (31.4 %), master's degrees (36.6 %), and doctoral degrees (32.0 %). This distribution indicates a diversity in academic level

among the sample members, which could influence results related to academic achievement and professional experience.

2.2 Research Instruments

After selecting the appropriate sample, we administered the following instruments to achieve the study's objectives:

2.2.1 Social Media Addiction Scale:

Developed by Basma Houssein Younes (2016), this scale originally consisted of 28 items. Responses to each item were rated on a three-point Likert scale (Yes, Somewhat, No). The scale was scored by assigning the highest score (3) to the most positive response and the lowest score (1) to the most negative response. The difference between the highest and lowest scores was divided by the number of categories, resulting in a score interval of 0.66.

2.2.2 Psychological Security Scale:

Developed by Zineb Shaqir (2005) and adapted for the Algerian context by Halima Akssa (2015), this scale aims to assess psychological security in various age groups, from late childhood to old age. It is also used in psychological, social, and educational research. The scale consists of 54 items, including 19 positive and 35 negative items. Participants select their responses from the options "Always, " "Sometimes, " and "Never. " Table 2 presents the distribution of positive and negative items.

2.2.3 Psychometric Properties of the Research Instruments:

The questionnaire was administered to a pilot study sample to assess the internal consistency reliability. All items in the psychological security scale were statistically significant, with correlation coefficients ranging from 0.591 to 0.931. Similarly, for the social media addiction scale, the correlation coefficients ranged from 0.691 to 0.995. Subsequently, the reliability of the scales was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, and the results are presented in the next table.

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Table 2: Reliability of the Research Instruments Using Cronbach's Alpha.

Variables	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Psychological Security	54	0.982
Internet Addiction	28	0.994

Source: Developed by the researchers using SPSS software
It can be observed from Table 2 that the questionnaire exhibits a high degree of reliability, making it suitable for use in the main study.

3. DISCUSSION AND PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

Having presented the research instruments and methodology, we will now discuss the results of the study hypotheses in light of previous research

3.1 Results of the General Hypothesis:

The general hypothesis stated: "There is a statistically significant relationship between psychological security and social media addiction. "

Table 3: Results of the General Hypothesis

Correlation coefficient	Significance level	Decision
-0.167	0.037	accepting the hypothesis

Source: Developed by the researchers using SPSS software.

Table 3 presents the statistical analysis to test the general hypothesis stating that there is a significant correlation between psychological security and social media addiction. According to the table, the correlation coefficient between the two variables is -0. 167,

indicating a weak negative relationship between psychological security and social media addiction. This result implies that as the level of psychological security increases, there is a slight decrease in levels of social media addiction among individuals. Furthermore, the significance level was determined to be 0.037, which is less than 0.05, meaning that the relationship between the variables is statistically significant. Based on this level of significance, the general hypothesis is accepted, indicating that there is a meaningful correlation between psychological security and social media addiction. We attribute this correlation to the tendency of individuals in the sample to turn to social media as a means of fulfilling various psychological needs, often seeking relational compensation or escaping from social environments that do not provide conducive conditions for adaptation and integration. Individuals in this category seek reassurance, comfort, and satisfaction, which are the fundamental components of feeling psychologically secure. According to Zahran (2003), psychological and emotional reassurance is personal security. A psychologically secure individual feels that their needs are met, and their basic life components are not at risk. A psychologically secure individual is in a state of psychological balance and harmony (Zahran, 2003, p. 445) . The nature of the relationship between social media addiction is one of compensation and unconscious coping strategies resulting from excessive and unlimited use. Through this, individuals feel a sense of fulfillment, even if it is illusory. The goal is to seek an environment with which they can adapt and escape. Our results contradict the studies of Mansour Masfer Al-Qarni (2023) and Abeer Mouhammed Sabban (2019), which were conducted in Saudi Arabia. We attribute this difference to the variation in the human and social geography of the sample. Social culture plays a role in individual orientation and personality development, and the sample in our study, which was conducted in an Algerian context, may have differed.

3.2 Results of the First Sub-hypothesis:

The first sub-hypothesis stated: "There are statistically significant differences in the level of psychological security among university

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students attributed to socioeconomic status. "

Table 4: Results of the First Sub-hypothesis

Marital status	Frequency	Mean	t-value	Significance level	Decision
Single	110	109,35	1.170	0.244	Reject the null hypothesis
Married	43	105,95			

Source: Developed by the researchers using SPSS software.

Table 4 presents the test results for the first sub-hypothesis, which posits that there are statistically significant differences in the level of psychological security among university students based on their marital status. The sample was divided into two groups: single and married.

The results showed that single individuals' mean level of psychological security was 109.35. However, the t-test value was 1.170, indicating no statistically significant differences between the two groups at a significance level of 0.244. Since the significance level of 0.244 is greater than 0.05, the first sub-hypothesis is rejected. Based on this result, it can be concluded that there are no statistically significant differences in the level of psychological security among university students attributed to their marital status. This suggests that marital status (single or married) does not significantly affect the levels of psychological security among students in this sample. This can be attributed to the nature of psychological characteristics and human responses, which tend to be similar regardless of social factors. The need for fulfillment is a universal human characteristic and is not limited to a specific social group or status. Psychological security is simply an individual's feeling of reassurance and psychological comfort that ensures psychological stability. This can be achieved by everyone through feelings of satisfaction resulting from fulfilling

specific needs. While the needs of individuals may vary based on their orientations, gender, and social status, the ultimate goal is to achieve psychological security. Therefore, by fulfilling most material and psychological needs, it can be concluded that the pursuit of fulfillment is an instinctive goal. This explains the lack of differences in the level of psychological security based on marital status. Our study aligns with the findings of Naima Dine (2016), although we used a different scale developed by Al-Tal and Abu Bakra (1997).

3.3 Results of the Second Sub-hypothesis:

The second sub-hypothesis states: “There are statistically significant differences in the level of social media addiction among university students attributed to gender. ”

Table 5: Results of the Second Sub-hypothesis

Gender	Frequency	Mean	t-value	Significance level	Decision
Male	68	80,50	-0.616	0.539	Reject the null hypothesis
female	85	80,95			

Source: Developed by the researchers using SPSS software

Table 5 presents the statistical analysis to test the second sub-hypothesis, which posits that there are statistically significant differences in the level of social media addiction among university students based on gender. The sample was divided into two groups: males and females.

The results showed that the mean level of social media addiction was 80.50 for males and 80.95 for females. However, the t-test value was - 0. 616, indicating that there were no statistically significant differences between the two groups at a significance level of 0. 539.

Since the significance level of 0.539 is greater than 0.05, the second

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sub-hypothesis is rejected. Based on this result, it can be concluded that there are no statistically significant differences in the level of social media addiction among university students attributed to gender. This means that gender (male or female) does not significantly affect the levels of social media addiction among students in this sample. We attribute this to the similar reasons for using social media among both males and females. The general content of these platforms is attractive to both genders, as it is designed for everyone regardless of their geographic, physical, or psychological characteristics. This can also be attributed to similar social and academic circumstances. Our study aligns with the study of Halima and Sara (2020), which aimed to examine the relationship between social media addiction and personal and family adjustment among university students. Their most important findings were that there were no significant differences in social media addiction attributed to gender. This is because social media platforms are easily accessible and allow users to create personal accounts or pages for various purposes, such as socializing, chatting, commenting, expressing opinions, and sharing ideas, regardless of gender. The primary goal remains social interaction and helping individuals express their ability to be open to diverse cultures. Additionally, the content of social media both platforms addresses social issues that affect genders. Moreover, these platforms cater to individual preferences through algorithms, providing each user with content they prefer, regardless of gender. This is done through short videos or "Reels, " which are engaging due to their brevity and visually appealing nature. It is difficult for users to avoid such content. The widespread phenomenon of influencers who share their personal lives through live or recorded content is another factor that affects both males and females.

3.3 Results of the Third Sub-hypothesis:

The third sub-hypothesis states: "There are statistically significant differences in the level of psychological security among

university students attributed to gender. ”

Table 6: Results of the Third Sub-hypothesis

Gender	Frequency	Mean	t-value	Significance level	Decision
Male	68	103,04	-3.829	0.000	accepting the hypothesis
Female	85	112,67			

Source: Developed by the researchers using SPSS software.

Table 6 presents the results of the statistical analysis testing the third sub-hypothesis, which posits that there are statistically significant differences in the level of psychological security among university students based on gender. The sample was divided into two groups: males and females.

The results showed that the mean level of psychological security for males was 103. 04. The t-test value was -3. 829, indicating a significant difference between males and females in terms of psychological security. The calculated significance level was 0.000, which is much less than 0.05, confirming that the observed differences are statistically significant.

Based on these results, the third sub-hypothesis is accepted. It can be concluded that there are significant differences in the level of psychological security among university students attributed to gender, with males exhibiting lower levels of psychological security compared to females in this sample. This result contradicts the findings of both “Ahlam Houari” (2020) and “Naima Dine” (2016). We attribute this result to the fact that, despite similar circumstances faced by students of both genders, each individual, based on their gender, seeks to fulfill their social and psychological desires and achieve complete satisfaction according to their perspective and aspirations. Although the Algerian social environment is relatively homogeneous, even though the students in the sample share the same social characteristics,

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they differ in their abilities and ways of coping with difficulties. It is worth noting that they belong to the same generation, and the same age group, but their desires and needs differ, and their sense of responsibility varies. This may be reflected in differences in their planning, future vision, and overall outlook on life. For example, males have different future aspirations compared to females, as they carry the burden of responsibility and leadership. In the current circumstances, characterized by limited job opportunities and increasing unemployment rates or concerns about starting a family, this increases feelings of frustration and, consequently, decreases satisfaction. Additionally, the social changes experienced by females, who have begun to pursue the same aspirations as males by seeking additional income and independence, have put more pressure on male university students due to competition in the future job market. This explains the lower level of psychological security among males compared to females.

CONCLUSION

conclusion, the findings of our research contribute significantly to understanding the relationship between the study variables. We have determined that there is a positive relationship between social media addiction and psychological security among university students. We attribute this to the fact that social media serves as an outlet for students to fulfill their desires and enhance their sense of psychological security. Despite this, we did not find any significant differences in the level of social media addiction between genders. Similarly, we did not find any significant differences in the level of psychological security among individuals based on their marital status. However, although the overall level of psychological security is relatively similar between males and females, on average, females tend to have slightly higher levels due to differences in aspirations and ways of coping with social pressures.

In line with our findings, we conclude that social media addiction is a social and psychological phenomenon that is not limited to a specific gender or social status. This is due to the rapid social development that necessitates the use of these platforms. Notably, the level of

psychological security suggests that all individuals in the sample resort to these platforms as a means of venting. Therefore, this study helps us understand the dynamics of virtual interaction and predict the potential consequences of excessive use of these platforms, especially on psychological well-being.

Based on these findings, we propose the following:

- ✓ **Organizing national or international conferences** to raise awareness about the importance of responsible social media use.
- ✓ **Working to develop a sense of the need to separate real life from virtual life** as this is essential for maintaining psychological well-being.
- ✓ **Building on the results of our study to conduct further research** on related topics.

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