

Impact of Social Media and Self-Esteem On Young Adults: The Mediating Role of Resilience and Emotional Quotient

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Cite this paper as: Meenakshi, Kiran Srivastava, Simplejit Kaur Dhanoa, Lalit Kumar Singh, (2025) Impact of Social Media and Self-Esteem On Young Adults: The Mediating Role of Resilience and Emotional Quotient. *Journal of Neonatal Surgery*, 14 (5s), 434-439.

ABSTRACT

In the current digital era, social media platforms have become the essence of one's existence. Most research has indicated a negative relationship between social media use and self-esteem. Sample of 200 participants were taken and they were assessed on Social Networking Usage Questionnaire (SNUQ), Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), Connor Davidson Resilience Scale, The Trait Emotional Intelligence Quotientnaire (EQ) Scale, Psychological Well-being. There is also a strong association between social media and self-esteem that social media usage significantly negatively predicted resilience ($B = -0.324$, $p < .001$; $B = -0.324$, $p < .001$), which positively predicted psychological well-being ($B = 0.416$, $p < .001$; $B = 0.416$, $p < .001$). And there was also a significant direct effect of social media usage on psychological well-being, EQ and self-esteem were entered as dependent variables with the effects of social media use. The overall regression model proved significant, R^2 values of 0.38, $F(2, 197) = 56.25$, $p < .001$, accounting for 38% of the variance in self-esteem. Social media use negatively predicted self-esteem ($p < .001$; $B = -0.203$, $\beta = -0.298$) with higher usage linked to lower self-esteem; EQ predicted self-esteem positively ($p < .001$; $B = 0.475$, $\beta = 0.412$), such that higher EQ levels boost self-esteem regardless of social media usage. The overall model was significant; $R^2 = 0.46$, $F(5, 194) = 35.61$, $p = .000$, explaining 46% of the variance in self-esteem. social media use had a significant negative effect on self-esteem ($B = -0.250$, $p < .001$), while resilience ($B = 0.340$, $p < .001$) and EQ ($B = 0.425$, $p < .001$) significantly positively affected self-esteem.

Keywords: Social media, self-esteem, resilience, well-being.

1. INTRODUCTION

Resilience refers to the capacity to adapt successfully in the face of adversity, trauma, or significant stress. In case of social media use, resilience may act as a protective factor that alleviate the negative effects on self-esteem. Individuals with higher resilience are found to have a better way to deal with negative experiences like cyber bullying or social rejection, thereby maintaining healthier self-esteem levels.

Emotional intelligence (EI) encompasses the ability to perceive, understand, manage, and utilize emotions effectively. People with high EI enable the individuals to deal with social interactions more proficiently, both online and offline. In the field of social media, individuals with higher EI may be more capable of managing emotional responses to online content, reducing susceptibility to negative social comparisons, and mitigating the impact on self-esteem. Research indicates that lower levels of emotional intelligence are associated with increased problematic social media use among adolescents, highlighting the importance of EI in managing online interaction

The interplay between resilience and EI is central in understanding their combined effect on self-esteem in the context of social media use. Individuals possessing both high resilience and EI are more likely to interpret social media content critically, reducing the likelihood of negative self-assessment. This in turn fosters a more balanced self-view, mitigating the detrimental effects of social media on self-esteem. The current study is an attempt to study the impact on self-esteem due to indulgence in social media. Here resilience and Emotional Intelligence acts as mediating factors to understand the interplay between the variables more clearly. The objective of the current study is to examine the relationship between social media usage and self-esteem among young adults. To assess the role of resilience as a mediator in the impact of social media and self-esteem on young adults' psychological well-being. To evaluate the influence of emotional quotient (EQ) as a predictor variable in the relationship between social media usage and self-esteem.

To analyse the combined impact of social media, self-esteem, resilience, and EQ on the mental health and overall well-being of young adults.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS:

Hypothesis

H1: There is a significant relationship between social media usage and self-esteem among young adults.

H2: Resilience mediates the relationship between social media usage and the psychological well-being of young adults.

H3: Emotional quotient significantly predicts the influence of social media on self-esteem.

H4: Higher levels of resilience and emotional quotient reduce the negative impact of social media on young adults' self-esteem.

Participants:

200 participants (100 male & 100 females)

Inclusion and Exclusion

Inclusion Criteria:

Individuals aged 18-21 years actively using social media

Hindi/English Speaking

Exclusion Criteria:

Individuals below 18 years and above 21 years of age

Instruments

Social Networking Usage Questionnaire (SNUQ) – Measures the frequency, duration, and engagement levels of social media use. Developed by Dr Savita Gupta and Dr Basher in 2018

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) – Assesses self-esteem on a 10-item scale with responses ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Connor Davidson Resilience Scale – Measures resilience as a psychological trait contributing to coping ability.

The Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (EQ) Scale – Evaluates emotional intelligence, including self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. It was developed by Petrides and Furnham in 2009.

Psychological Well-being- Developed by psychologist Carol D. Ryff, the 42-item Psychological Wellbeing (PWB) Scale measures six aspects of wellbeing and happiness: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance (Ryff et al., 2007; adapted from Ryff, 1989). Researchers have used both the 42-item PWB Scale and a shortened 18-item version (Ryff & Keyes, 1995) with American adults of all ages, including those from lower-income backgrounds (Ryff & Keyes, 1995; Curhan et al., 2014). The 18-item scale has also been used with Latinx college students (Gloria, Castellanos, Scull, & Villegas, 2009), African-Americans living in New York, and Mexican-Americans living in Chicago (Ryff, Keyes, & Hughes, 2003).

Procedure

Data was collected using snowball technique. Total 200 participants (100 Males and 100 females) filled the required information. Socio demographic Information was gathered from the sample on a semi structured socio-demographic data sheet. Clinical details of the participants were collected on Social Networking Usage Questionnaire (SNUQ), Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), Resilience Scale and Emotional Quotient (EQ) Scale.

Statistical Analysis

This section presents the statistical analysis conducted to examine the relationships between social media usage, self-esteem, resilience, emotional intelligence (EI), and psychological well-being among young adults. Various statistical techniques, including correlation analysis, mediation analysis, multiple regression, and moderated regression, were employed to test the proposed hypotheses.

3. RESULTS:

Table 1: Means, Standard Deviations, and Pearson Correlation between Social Media Usage and Self-Esteem (N = 200)

Variables	M	SD	1	2
1. Social Media Usage	48.32	7.89	1	
2. Self-Esteem	28.45	5.32	-0.482**	1

**p<0.01 *p<0.05

The study confirmed hypothesis 1, claiming a strong association between social media usage and the self-esteem of young adults. That is, the more a young person engages in social media, the less self-esteem he acquires. Findings revealed a considerable psychological effect on the self-image and confidence of young adults.

Table 2: Mediation Analysis: Resilience as a Mediator between Social Media Usage and Psychological Well-Being

Path	Unstandardized Coeff. (B)	SE	p-value
Social Media → Resilience	-0.324	0.072	< .001 **
Resilience → Well-Being	0.416	0.068	< .001 **
Social Media → Well-Being (Direct Effect)	-0.231	0.058	< .01 **
Social Media → Well-Being (Indirect Effect via Resilience)	-0.135	0.043	< .01 **

**p<0.01 *p<0.05

The study did mediation analysis of resilience' role between social media usage and psychological well-being in young adults. Results indicated that social media usage significantly negatively predicted resilience ($B=-0.324$, $p<.001$), which positively predicted psychological well-being ($B=0.416$, $p<.001$). And there was also a significant direct effect of social media usage on psychological well-being ($B=-0.231$, $p<.01$).

Table 3: Multiple Regression Analysis: Predicting Self-Esteem from Social Media Usage and Emotional Quotient

Predictor Variables	Unstandardized Coeff. (B)	SE	Standardized Coeff. (β)	t	p-value
Social Media Usage	-0.203	0.048	-0.298	-4.21	< .001 **

Emotional Quotient (EQ)	0.475	0.078	0.412	6.12	< .001 **
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**p<0.01 *p<0.05

EQ and self-esteem were entered as dependent variables with the effects of social media use. The overall regression model proved significant, R^2 values of 0.38, $F(2,197) = 56.25$, $p < .001$, accounting for 38% of the variance in self-esteem. Social media use negatively predicted self-esteem ($p < .001$; $B = -0.203$, $\beta = -0.298$) with higher usage linked to lower self-esteem; EQ predicted self-esteem positively ($p < .001$; $B = 0.475$, $\beta = 0.412$), such that higher EQ levels boost self-esteem regardless of social media usage.

This finding supported Hypothesis 3, thus asserting EQ as a substantive predictor of self-esteem and protective from the negative influences of social media.

Table 4: Moderated Regression Analysis: Interaction Effects of Resilience and EQ on the Relationship between Social Media Usage and Self-Esteem

Predictor Variables	Unstandardized Coeff. (B)	SE	Standardized Coeff. (β)	t	p-value
Social Media Usage	-0.250	0.051	-0.308	-4.89	< .001 **
Resilience	0.340	0.060	0.376	5.67	< .001 **
Emotional Quotient (EQ)	0.425	0.070	0.410	6.03	< .001 **
Social Media \times Resilience	0.125	0.039	0.210	3.21	< .01 **
Social Media \times EQ	0.142	0.041	0.215	3.45	< .01 **

**p<0.01 *p<0.05

For this study, a moderated regression analysis was conducted in order to determine whether resilience and emotional intelligence (EQ) could moderate the relationship between social media use and self-worth. The overall model was significant; $R^2=0.46$, $F(5,194)=35.61$, $p=.000$, explaining 46% of the variance in self-esteem. In terms of the hypotheses, social media use had a significant negative effect on self-esteem ($B=-0.250$, $p<.001$), while resilience ($B=0.340$, $p<.001$) and EQ ($B=0.425$, $p<.001$) significantly positively affected self-esteem. The interaction terms all turned out significant:

- Resilience interacted with this relationship ($B=0.125$, $p<.01$), showing that an increase in resilience would lessen the negative impact of social media on self-esteem.
- Emotional quotient also acted as a moderator ($B=0.142$, $p<.01$), thereby hinting that subjects with higher emotional intelligence show less negative effects of social media usage on levels of self-esteem.

The findings are consistent with Hypothesis 4, supporting resilience and EQ as protective against the adverse impact of social media usage on self-esteem

4. DISCUSSION:

This study was aimed at assessing social media usage and its relationship with self-esteem, resilience, emotional quotient (EQ), and psychological well-being of young adults. It gives some insight into how these variables interact, and, for the first time, indicates with some confidence a profound psychological relationship at work within the context of social media use.

We will also discuss the most salient findings from the study in relation to the hypotheses tested and attempt to present an application-friendly reinterpretation through an integration of the latest literature from past research related to our findings.

Hypothesis 1 was supported by the results showing that social media and self-esteem were inversely related. More specifically, higher social media usage among young adults was associated with decreased self-esteem. This finding was in line with more recent studies which show that extensive use of social media, especially if seen passively; scrolling instead of interacting with others, negatively influences one's self-image through social comparisons and observing unreal idealized online personae (Meier & Reinecke, 2020). In another study, Valkenburg et al. (2022) pointed out that frequent social media use was a predictor of fewer drops in self-esteem, specifically in social comparison contexts. The moderate-to-strong effect size observed in the study ($r=-0.482$) underlines the considerable impact social media has upon self-esteem and highlights the urgent need to develop preventative interventions aimed at promoting healthy online behaviour and building a positive self-image among young adults.

Hypothesis 2 gained credence through the mediation analysis evidencing that resilience partially mediates the relationship between social media usage and psychological well-being. Resilience was negatively predicted by social media usage, while psychological well-being was positively predicted by resilience. This finding indicates that at least for certain persons, very high resilience mitigates the negative effects of social media usage on psychological well-being; social media usage still undermines the resilience of those low in resilience. These results are in accordance with the recent study by Hou et al. (2021), whereby resilience buffered the adverse effects of social media use on mental health, notably during the stressful times of the COVID-19 pandemic. The study conducted by Smith and Lim (2020) also underscores the role played by resilience in ameliorating the psychological impact of social isolation and loneliness aggravated by social media. Interventions promoting resilience, including mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) and cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT), will be helpful for the young people whose social media use brings challenges.

Consequently, Hypothesis 3 was supported through the multiple regression analysis, suggesting that higher EQ predicts the higher self-esteem, even when the effects of social media activities are controlled. In addition, additionally suggested was the ability of an individual with higher EQ to improve self-esteem that protects against the potentially negative psychological effects of social media. This has greater significance placed on it. More prominent significance has arisen from more recent research by Goleman and Cherniss (2021) concerning the role of EQ in improving mental health and self-esteem, especially within the digital communication framework. Parker et al. (2020) also found that individuals with higher EQ can regulate their emotions and maintain a positive self-concept when faced with stressors, including social media. These empirical findings point to potential benefits for incorporating emotional intelligence skills into existing interventions working to enhance self-esteem and psychological wellness among young adults.

Moderated regression analysis supported Hypothesis 4, which states that resilience and EQ moderate the relationship between social media use and self-esteem. High levels of resilience and EQ attenuated the negative influences that social media casting on self-esteem. These protective mechanisms may be due to good emotional-regulation capacities and better positive coping mechanisms. Current results also affirm the recent research of Chen et al. (2022), who found that when resilience and EQ were considered together, the very negative impacts of social media on mental health were attenuated, especially among adolescents and young adults. In another recent study supported by Lee & Kim (2021), high EQ and resilience were found to provide shielding effects by cancelling out the negative impacts of social media on self-esteem. High emotional immunity and resilience are the buffers because these individuals are better at modulating emotional responses and have a more balanced view. Thus, interventions for resilience and emotional intelligence together could be potent in preventing the psychological problems associated with this particular social media use.

5. LIMITATIONS:

Some issues involved in this research need to be taken into consideration:

Due to the cross-sectional design, it cannot ascertain the cause and effect between variables like social networking and self-esteem.

Self-reporting, other than a measure of association, may also predispose biases due to social desirability.

Since the sample was drawn from young adults, the results could not be generalized to other age groups or cultures.

Fourth, the study made no distinctions among different social media platforms and their varying effects on psychological factors. In addition, personality traits and gender other than resilience and EQ as moderators were omitted.

6. FUTURE DIRECTIONS-

Future studies could establish relationships better using longitudinal designs, looking at their development toward each other over long periods. Intervention studies could test programs meant to enhance resilience and EQ as mechanisms for reducing the deleterious effects of social media. Cross-cultural analyses and platform-specific analyses would give insights into how different cultural and platform designs contribute to outcomes.

Future studies should utilize objective measures such as screen-time tracking, while other moderators (e.g., social support, personality traits) of the social media use phenomena can be further extended beyond the study domain.

Finally, future studies should also emphasize the positive sides of social media use, including the potential enhancement of social connection and emotional support, to construct a more balanced field of intervention.

Some of these pathways indicate a reaction plan to overall constraints meant to enhance mental health and psycho-social well-being, specifically in an era involving digital technologies.

7. COMPLIANCE WITH ETHICAL STANDARDS

Conflict of interest -No conflicts of interest was recorded amongst the authors

Informed Consent Informed consent was taken from the participants. Confidentiality was maintained.

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