

Correlation between Social Media Usage and Anxiety among Young Adults in Urban Bengaluru: An Empirical Study

Fr. Dr. M.J. Thomas,

Principal & HOD – Psychology

PG Department of Psychology

ST PAULS COLLEGE, Bengaluru

Abstract

The rapid expansion of social media platforms has profoundly reshaped communication practices, social interactions, and lifestyle behaviours, particularly among young adults in urban environments. While social media serves as an important medium for connection, self-expression, and access to information, growing psychological research suggests that excessive usage may contribute to mental health concerns, especially anxiety. This empirical study examines the relationship between social media usage and anxiety among young adults residing in urban Bengaluru. The study employs a quantitative research design using both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data were collected from 230 young adults aged between 18 and 30 years through standardized self-report questionnaires assessing patterns of social media usage and levels of anxiety. Secondary data were gathered from existing psychological literature, academic journals, and mental health reports to provide theoretical grounding. Descriptive statistical techniques were used to identify prevailing usage patterns and anxiety levels, while Pearson correlation analysis was applied to examine the nature and strength of the relationship between the two variables. The findings reveal a moderate to strong positive correlation between social media usage and anxiety, indicating that increased time spent on social networking platforms is associated with elevated anxiety symptoms among young adults. The results suggest that factors such as constant online engagement, social comparison, and fear of missing out may contribute to heightened psychological distress. The study highlights the need for increased awareness regarding healthy social media practices and emphasizes the importance of digital well-being education and mental health interventions aimed at young adults. The

findings offer valuable insights for psychologists, educators, and policymakers concerned with promoting mental health in digitally connected urban populations.

Keywords: Social media usage, Anxiety, Young adults, Mental health, Urban Bengaluru

I. INTRODUCTION

Social media has become an integral part of daily life, especially among young adults in urban centres. Platforms such as Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook, and YouTube provide opportunities for social interaction, self-expression, and information sharing. However, from a psychological perspective, growing concern has emerged regarding the impact of excessive social media use on mental health, particularly anxiety.

Anxiety is a common psychological condition characterized by persistent worry, tension, restlessness, and fear. Urban young adults often face academic pressure, career uncertainty, social expectations, and constant digital exposure, which can heighten anxiety symptoms. Social media intensifies these pressures through social comparison, fear of missing out (FoMO), online validation seeking, and constant connectivity.

Urban Bengaluru, being a major educational, technological, and cultural hub, presents a relevant context for examining these psychological dynamics. Understanding how social media usage relates to anxiety among young adults can help psychologists, educators, and policymakers design effective mental health strategies. This study empirically investigates the correlation between social media usage and anxiety among young adults in urban Bengaluru.

Review of Literature

Psychological research in recent years has increasingly focused on the mental health consequences of digital media exposure.

Social Media Usage among Young Adults

Studies indicate that young adults are the most active users of social media, often spending several hours daily across multiple platforms (Kross et al., 2013). Indian studies suggest that smartphones and social networking sites play a central role in shaping identity, peer interaction, and lifestyle among urban youth.

Anxiety and Mental Health

Anxiety disorders are among the most prevalent mental health concerns globally. In India, rising anxiety levels among young adults have been linked to academic competition, employment uncertainty, and changing social norms (Patel et al., 2018).

Social Media and Anxiety

Previous research has identified a significant association between excessive social media use and anxiety symptoms. Factors such as social comparison, cyberbullying, fear of negative evaluation, and FoMO contribute to heightened anxiety (Sharma & Gupta, 2021).

Research Gap

While international studies have explored the link between social media and anxiety, limited empirical research focuses on **urban Indian young adults**, particularly in metropolitan cities like Bengaluru. This study aims to bridge this gap.

Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the level of social media usage among young adults in urban Bengaluru.
2. To measure anxiety levels among young adults.
3. To examine the relationship between social media usage and anxiety.
4. To analyse the psychological implications of excessive social media engagement.

Research Hypotheses

- **H₁:** There is a significant relationship between social media usage and anxiety among young adults.
- **H₀:** There is no significant relationship between social media usage and anxiety among young adults.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The present study adopted a descriptive and correlational empirical research design. This design was considered appropriate as the primary objective of the study was to describe the prevailing pattern of social media usage and anxiety levels among young adults and to examine the nature of the relationship between these two psychological variables. A descriptive design enables the systematic collection and presentation of data related to existing conditions, while a correlational approach facilitates the assessment of statistical associations between variables without manipulating them. Since the study does not attempt to establish causality but focuses on identifying the degree and direction of association between social media usage and anxiety, the correlational design provides both methodological relevance and ethical suitability.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample for the study consisted of 230 young adults aged between 18 and 30 years residing in urban areas of Bengaluru. This age group was purposively chosen as young adults represent the most active users of social media and are more susceptible to anxiety-related psychological concerns due to academic, professional, and social pressures. Simple random sampling was employed to select respondents in order to ensure that each individual in the population had an equal chance of being included in the study. This technique minimizes selection bias and enhances the representativeness of the sample, thereby improving the reliability and generalizability of the findings within the urban young adult population.

Data Collection

Data for the study were collected using both primary and secondary sources, ensuring methodological triangulation.

a) Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered to the selected respondents. The instrument comprised two major components:

- A social media usage scale measuring time spent, frequency of use, and emotional dependence on social networking platforms.
- An anxiety scale consisting of Likert-type self-report items designed to assess cognitive, emotional, and physiological symptoms of anxiety.
- Standardized Likert scaling was used as it allows for reliable measurement of subjective psychological variables.

b) Secondary data were obtained from scholarly journals, academic books, UGC CARE-listed research articles, and reports published by the World Health Organization (WHO). These sources provided theoretical grounding and contextual support for the study.

Variables

The study involved two primary variables:

The independent variable was social media usage, operationalized through frequency, duration, and emotional engagement with social networking platforms.

The dependent variable was anxiety, measured through self-reported psychological responses related to worry, tension, and emotional distress.

Clear identification of variables was essential to establish the direction of analysis in the correlational framework.

Tools for Analysis

Data were analysed using appropriate statistical tools suitable for psychological research. Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were used to summarize social media usage patterns and anxiety levels among respondents. Pearson's correlation coefficient was employed to examine the strength

and direction of the relationship between social media usage and anxiety. This statistical technique was selected due to its suitability for continuous variables and its wide acceptance in behavioral and psychological research.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Reliability Analysis

Table 1
Reliability Statistics

Scale	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Social Media Usage & Anxiety	24	0.879

Interpretation:

The Cronbach's alpha value of 0.879 indicates high internal consistency of the measurement instrument.

Descriptive Statistics

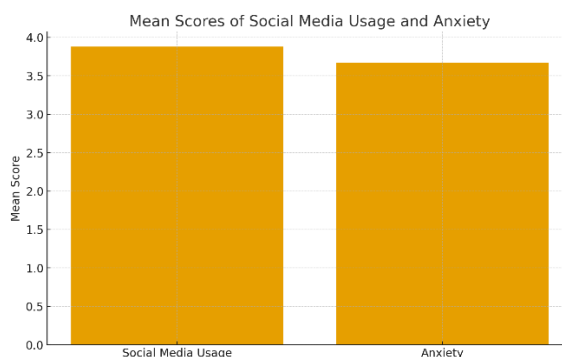
Table 2
Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
Social Media Usage	3.88	0.72
Anxiety	3.67	0.69

Interpretation:

The results indicate moderate to high levels of social media usage and anxiety among young adults in urban Bengaluru.

Chart 1
Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables



Correlation Analysis

Table 3
Correlation between Social Media Usage and Anxiety

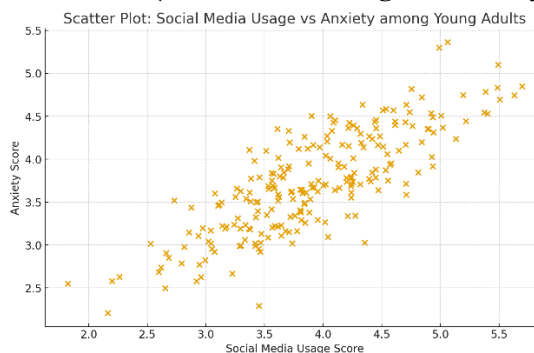
Variables	Correlation (r)
Social Media Usage & Anxiety	0.62**

Note: $p < 0.01$

Interpretation:

The correlation coefficient ($r = 0.62$) indicates a **strong positive relationship** between social media usage and anxiety. As social media usage increases, anxiety levels among young adults also increase. Therefore, **H₁ is accepted**.

Chart 2
Scatter Plot (Social Media Usage vs Anxiety)



The scatter plot illustrates a positive linear relationship between social media usage and anxiety. Higher usage scores are associated with higher anxiety levels, visually supporting the statistical correlation result.

Findings of the Study

- Young adults in urban Bengaluru spend considerable time on social media platforms.
- Moderate to high anxiety levels are prevalent among the respondents.
- A significant positive correlation exists between social media usage and anxiety.
- Excessive engagement with social media increases vulnerability to psychological distress.

Implications of the Study

Theoretical Implications

The study strengthens psychological theories linking digital behaviour, social comparison, and anxiety among young adults.

Practical Implications

- Mental health professionals should promote digital well-being strategies.
- Educational institutions should introduce awareness programmes on healthy social media use.
- Young adults must be encouraged to develop balanced online–offline lifestyles.

Policy Implications

Policymakers should integrate social media literacy and mental health education into youth development programmes.

Limitations and Scope for Future Research

- The study is limited to urban Bengaluru.
 - Self-reported data may involve response bias.
- Future research can adopt longitudinal designs and include other psychological variables such as depression and self-esteem.

II. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that social media usage has a significant psychological impact on anxiety among young adults in urban Bengaluru. While social media provides connectivity, excessive engagement poses mental health risks. Promoting mindful digital behaviour and psychological resilience is essential for safeguarding the well-being of urban youth in a digitally driven society.

III. REFERENCES (APA – INDIAN & GLOBAL)

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