UDERSTANDING THE RELATIONSHIP OF SOCIAL MEDIA USE WITH SOCIAL COMPARISON, LIFE SATISFACTION AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AMONG YOUNG ADULTS

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ABSTRACT- The use of social media has become an inevitable part and parcel of our daily living. The current research was aimed to study the association between social media use, social comparison, and life satisfaction with emotional intelligence as moderating variable. The data was collected from 347 individuals (n=89 Males, n=258 Females) with the age ranging from 16-35 years using the Survey Method with Purposive Sampling Technique. This research was completed in 6 months i.e., from July 2020 to Dec 2020. Data was collected through Self-Report Measures (The Electronic Interaction Scale for Time α= 0.75;Social Comparison Scaleα= 0.85, Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Testα=0.89 ; Satisfaction with Life Scaleα=0.78). In this study we first screened the participants for social media use through "The electronic interaction scale for time (EIST)". It was assumed that higher scores on EIST would be related to higher social media use. Then we addressed the question involving the relationship between social media use and the resultant self evaluations. We observed an inverse relationship between social media usage and life satisfaction and the same inverse relationship between upward social comparison and emotional intelligence. Similarly, a significant positive relationship between downward social comparison and Emotional Intelligence was also observed. Moreover, emotional intelligence did not moderate the relationship between social comparison and life satisfaction. Present findings further suggested that males and females differ in social media usage.

Keywords: Social Media Usage, Life Satisfaction, Social Comparison, Emotional Intelligence

I. INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

Social networks are soft wares that operate over the internet and cannot be tested separately from the internet. Today, with the explosion of Web 2.0 technologies, social media tools have allowed each user to become a content creator through account/profile development. More broadly than expected, people use social media. Excessive, problematic, and pathological usage contributes to individuals' personal, social, occupational, and educational problems.

Researchers do not agree on the detection of negative social networks or internet addiction (Wegmann & Brand, 2015). Cantered on the logical confusion surrounding the problematic classification of internet usage. The statistics provided by a global survey conducted by Pakistan Digital (2019) Digital Pakistan 2019 Report (Social Media) that between the time of one year, 22% of the total mobile users, recorded as active internet users. The report also mentioned that, with this percentage as active users there are 36.5 million which is 18% of total mobile users.

And using social media on mobile devices is around 20% with 35.8 million active users. Per year (2018-19) increase in digital life just for Smartphone subscriptions increased by 5.6 percent or 7.8 million, while 6.1& increased in active social media users. Google calculated the monthly traffic ratio over its all-famous apps including, Face Book, YouTube and WhatsApp.
Social media use as a source of social comparison
Frequent use of social media through various sites, facebook, whatsapp, twitter, not only allow the users to connect and maintain friendship but also make it convenient for the individuals to develop their personal and

specific profiles including their personal accomplishments, activities and daily habits (Boyd& Ellison, 2007). Therefore, it becomes an ideal platform for social comparison. The process of self-comparison with others and its role in self –protection and, self- enhancement has been focused by various researchers. The social comparison of skills (that comprise of comparing of successes and accomplishments) has been fundamentally judgmental and competitive. It focuses on assessing how well one is doing in comparison to others. The purpose of comparison of views does not necessarily separate the best from the worst, but it is to know more about social norms and facts, to build or alter one's value structures and to monitor behaviours. For example, as individuals face issues, they frequently attempt to engage in comparing themselves socially to discuss what others will do in a similar situation (Bachmair & Bazalgette, 2007).

Social comparison, which refers to the practice of comparing oneself to others, may take two forms. For example, people often boost and enhance their well-being by comparing themselves with those who are less competent and inferior to them. This type of comparison has been termed as Downward Social Comparison' (Buunk et al., 2006; Buunk et al., 2001). This is considered to be a comforting strategy but this comparison is short-term which provides temporary relief to the relevant person (Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Wehmeyer, 2013;). However, the strategy named as the downward social comparison has not been directly linked in dealing with distress and solution of such issues (Bravo et al., 2006; Buunk et al., 2001). Another type of social comparison which is found to be more common is upward comparison, in which a person compares himself socially with others who are more successful, better off and more competent than him.

Social comparison and its consequences

With the excessive use of social media, the users by their rosy portrayals by the masses may fall prey to the negative consequences of upward social comparison. The negative feelings being experienced by the person having an upward comparison include inferiority, jealousy, threats to identity and helplessness (Buunk et al., 2006). On the other hand, defeat and burnout are among those negative experiences which are being experienced upon persistent and consistent exposure to upward social comparison (Buunk et al., 2006). Similarly few studies attempt to provide other explanations on negative consequences of social media use on individual's life satisfaction.

Veenhoven (1993) defined the term Life Satisfaction as the grade or extent to which someone experience as a whole life quality positively. Life satisfaction is not confined to the present only rather it is linked to the past and future also. This relation has been highlighted by Diener (1999) through defining life satisfaction by means of a desire of someone to change his life and the perspective of significant others of his life. The physical and mental health of an individual is indicated through life satisfaction levels. Cribb (2000) has given life satisfaction the status of an assessment and evaluation by an individual about the conditions which are derived from comparing his desires and actual accomplishments. The association between one's desires and achievements are of great importance in terms of life satisfaction. Literature suggest that an individual tend to be more satisfied with life with having incongruity between his aspirations and accomplishments, whereas, for the affective theory, life satisfaction is related to emotions, which states that the dominance of positive emotions over negative emotions leads to life satisfaction (Diener and Lucas, 2003).

Along these critical aspects of social media usage and the consequent self comparison, the literature suggests that these variables may be influenced by emotional aspects. Within emotional variables, emotional intelligence (EI) is particularly important in various aspects of life. Poskey (2006) stressed that emotional intelligence is the acknowledgment of the feelings and emotions of oneself and others, which is being utilized as problem-solving strategy. Thompson (2009) defined EI as a process of understanding which involves knowledge of emotions of both; own self and significant others, the appropriate knowledge of such sentiments and the ability of a person to utilize this knowledge effectively. Salovey and Mayer (1990) gave a comprehensive understanding of EI which according to them is a combination of five sub-domains which include self-motivation, self-knowledge, relationship management, empathy and emotional management. These sub-domains are further defined as self-motivation which is the direction towards an aim; self-knowledge is the knowledge and gratitude of the feelings and emotions of anyone; relationship management is the management of interpersonal interactions; empathy is the understanding of the thinking of others along with verbal and non-verbal cues; emotional management is the control over emotional state and emotional responses (Basu & Mermillod, 2011).

Dogan and Demiral (2007) considered emotional intelligence as an ability by giving the status of life abilities to emotional intelligence being displayed by the person in his whole life. In terms of interpersonal relationships and emotional intelligence, Tugrul (1999) stressed that in interpersonal communication including labor and spousal relationships, emotional intelligence plays a vital role.

It has been apprehended in various societies that relationships through social media have diverted people's attention away from spending quality time with their families and intimate relations. The reason behind the misuse of social media and social networking sites happens to be social comparisons with approval and a sense of belongingness and attachment to the outside world which has become "The Global Internet Village". Right here in Pakistan, young people are losing their attention towards their studies owing to these modern technology gadgets. Instead of gaining in-depth and factual knowledge regarding a particular issue, students are more inclined towards acquiring superficial news. In other words, they want information that is "easily available" on social media sites. They have been found to be cautious particularly about their looks and status. A competition of show-off seems rampant. They are now used to compare themselves with others in a negative way and such competition has made them selfish, envious, and ego-centric. Consequently, their gratitude level has decreased which has affected their situation as well as their life satisfaction. Another line of research debates that the excessive use of the internet has negatively affected the mental health of students. At present, it is observed that people reflect their preferences as per comparison with others. This sense of comparability connects itself with emotional intelligence. It is because people tend to feel more satisfied emotionally if they succeed in constructing a "better looking" digital profile of themselves as compared to others. Thus, an integration of these shallow elements brings life satisfaction. However, due to the limited amount of work done on social comparison with emotional intelligence or life satisfaction, it is very hard to find supporting evidence in this regard especially among the social media users' population specifically young individuals.

Current Research

Having background knowledge on social media use, we assume that people can be quite interested in social media use with the intention of social comparison. Therefore, the present piece of study is designed to explore two important assumptions. First to find out the relationship between social media use, social comparison, emotional intelligence, and life satisfaction among the social media users population and secondly to find out if emotional intelligence moderate this relationship.

II.   METHOD

Sample
The purposive Sampling Technique was used in the present study to collect data from the sample of 347social media users with their age ranging from 16 to 35 years. The participants (male and female) were first screened through the Electronic Interaction Scale for Time (EIS_T) for the study with the age range of 16 to 35 years. The users of twitter, periscope, and LinkedIn were excluded from the study.
Instruments

Demographic Sheet. The demographic sheet comprised of information regarding the sample's age, gender, marital and socioeconomic status, family type (Nuclear, Joint), birth order, educational level, and time spent on the internet daily.

Electronic Interaction Scale for Time (EIS-T). It is a 7-point scale (0 to 6). Subjects who answered "0" on all three items were excluded from further analyses, and those who scored above 3 were included in the study. Higher scores were the indicator of higher frequencies of technology use. This tool has α = .81, which is considered as strong reliability (Nesi & Prinstein, 2015)

The Social Comparison Scale. It consists of 12items and the item response is recorded on 5 point Likert type scale ranging from 1to 5. Item 1-6 indicates upward comparison and items 7 to 12 consist of items that belongs to the downward comparison. It provides 2 separate indices and not be combined at the end. This scale has high validity and reliability α = 0.7–0.85 which is considered as strong (Gibbons & Buunk, 1999).

Schutte Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT). The scale is a self-report measure having 33 items using a five-point Likert scale. The reliability of the scale is 0.90 and it is considered a fairly reliable scale for adults and adolescents (Schutte & McKenley, 2002).

The Satisfaction with Life Scale. This scale is a short measure having only 5 items on a 7-point Likert scale. The coefficient alpha for the scale ranged from .79 to .89, indicating that the scale had high internal consistency (Diner, 1984).

III.   RESULTS

Table 1

Frequencies and percentages of demographic variables of Study (*N* = 347)

Variable	Category	f	%
Gender	Male	89	25.6
	Female	258	74.4
	1st born	84	24.2
	Middle	183	52.7
Birth Order			
	Youngest	74	21.3
	only child	6	1.7
	Graduate	153	44.1
Education Level	Postgraduate	141	40.6
	Other	53	15.3
	Single	280	80.7
Marital Status			
	Married	67	19.3
	Student	269	77.5
Work Status			
	Worker	78	22.5
	Lower Class	9	2.6
Social Economic Status	Middle Class	336	96.8
	Elite Class	2	0.6
	20,000+	28	8.1
	40,000+	63	18.2
Total Family Income			
	60,000+	99	28.5
	80,000+	157	45.2
	Joint	167	48.1
Family Type			
	Nuclear	180	51.9
	Nil, do not spend any time	2	0.6
	> 1 hrs	23	6.6
Time Spend on the Internet			
	1-3 hrs	141	40.6
daily			
	4-6 hrs	100	28.8
	7 hrs or more	81	23.3

	Nil, do not check at all	29	8.4
	1-5 times/day	98	28.2
Check your social media	6-10 times/day	68	19.6
accounts in a day	11-20 times/day	41	11.8
	Always	111	32.0
	Do not check at all	29	8.4

The frequency table above shows the percentage of the demographic variables of the sample. The table shows that the sample consists of 25.6% males and 74.4% females. About less than half (40.6%) sample's maximum time Spend per day on the Internet was about 1-3 hours and minimum spending time was less than one hour which is 6%. Moreover, 32% of the sample revealed that they check their social media accounts more than 20 times a day.

Table 2
Psychometric information of the Study Variables (N=347)

Variables	k	α	M	(SD)	Range		Skewness	Kurtosis
					Potential	Actual	Statistic	Statistic
Electronic Interaction Scale for Time	05	.75	14.75	(6.73)	5-35	5-32	1.07	1.29
Upward Comparison	06	.80	18.39	(4.93)	6-30	6-24	-.35	-.31
Downward Comparison	06	.85	17.60	(5.17)	6-30	6-24	-.18	-.47
The Schutte Self Report Emotional Intelligence Test	33	.89	122.2	(15.55)	33-165	69-152	-.78	1.17
Life Satisfaction Scale	05	.78	23.76	(5.89)	5-35	5-30	-.63	-.04

The table above shows the psychometrics /descriptive statistics of all scales used in the present study.

Table 3
Correlation of study variables (N=347)

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
Electronic Interaction Scale for Time	14.75	6.73	-	.25**	.26**	. -10*	-.14*
Upward Comparison	18.39	4.93			.40**	-.03*	-.37**
Downward Comparison	17.60	5.17	-	-	-	.08	-.13*
The Schutte Self Report Emotional Intelligence	122.10	15.15	-	-	-	-	.27**
Life Satisfaction	23.76	5.89					-

*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p< 0.001

Table No. 3 reveals that among all variables, significant relationship was found except downward comparison with SSEI.

Table 4

Independent Samples t-test for investigating the Gender difference in Electronic Interaction scale for Time, Social Comparison, Emotional Intelligence and Life Satisfaction (N=347)

Variables	Male		Female		t	p	95% CI		Cohen's
	M	SD	M	SD	(345)		LL	UL	d
Electronic Interaction Scale for Time	16.60	8.19	14.11	6.04	3.03	.003	.87	4.09	.35
Upward Comparison	18.49	5.42	16.36	3.76	1.22	.02	-1.06	1.32	.45
Downward Comparison Scale	18.31	5.97	17.36	4.86	1.50	.13	-.29	-2.20	.18
The Schutte Self Report Emotional Intelligence	121.9	17.73	122.3	14.18	-.46	.64	-4.53	2.78	.025
Life Satisfaction Scale	22.97	6.06	24.03	5.82	-1.46	.14	-2.48	0.36	.17

Table No.4 show significant mean differences between male and female respondents , where male's mean score was higher then females.

Table 5

Moderating role of Emotional Intelligence on Downward Social Comparison (Independent Variable) and Life Satisfaction (Dependent Variable) (N=347)

Variables	Model 1			Model 2		
	B		SE	B		SE
Constant	23.75***		.30	23.73***		.30
Downward Comparison	-.89**	-.15**	.30	-.92**	-.16***	.30
Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test	1.69***	.28***	.30	1.73***	.29***	.30
Downward Comparison x Self Report Emotional Intelligence Test				.29	.06	.27
R^2		.09			.10	
ΔR^2					.03	

***p<.001

Table No. 5 shows the moderation analysis for the moderating role of emotional intelligence in the link between downward social comparison and life satisfaction. In Model 1 R^2 value revealed that emotional intelligence explained 9% of the variance in the life satisfaction among the sample with F $(2, 344)$ = 18.91, p<.001. The findings revealed that Downward Comparison negatively predicted (b=-.15, p<.01) whereas, EI positively predicted life satisfaction (b= .28, p<.001) among the present sample. In Model 2 the R^2value of .10 revealed that predictors explained 10% of the variance in life satisfactin with F $(3,343)$ = 23.73, p<.001. The findings revealed that Downward Comparison predicted life satisfaction negatively (b= -.16,

p<.001), The Emotional Intelligence predicted satisfaction with life positively (*b= .29, p<.001)* and Emotional Intelligence did not moderate the relationship between downward comparison and life satisfaction a (*b= .06, p>.001*). We observed 3% change in the variance of model 1 and model 2 with ΔF (1, 343) = 1.56, *p<.001* through the ΔR^2 value of .03.

Table 6
Moderating role of Emotional Intelligence on Upward Social Comparison (Independent Variable) and Life Satisfaction (Dependent Variable) (N=347)

Variables	Model 1			Model 2		
	B		*SE*	*B*		*SE*
Constant	1.08		.048	.001		.049
Upward Comparison	-.34***	-.34***	.049	-.34***	-.34***	.049
Self-Report Emotional Intelligence Test	.23***	.23***	.049	.23***	.23***	.049
Upward Comparison * Self Report Emotional Intelligence Test				.005	.006	.045
R²		.19			.19	
ΔR²					.00	

***p<.001

Table No. 6 shows the moderation analysis for the moderating role of emotional intelligence in relationship with upward social comparison. In Model R^2 value of .19 revealed that upward social comparison explained 19% of the variance in life satisfaction (*F (*2, 344*) = 40.91, p<.001).* The results further showed that Upward Comparison negatively predicted (*b=-.34, p<.001*) whereas, EI positively predicted life satisfaction (*b= .23, p<.001*). In Model 2 the R^2 value is .19 revealed that the predictor explained 19% of the variance in life satisfaction (*F (*3, 343*) = 27.15, p<.001).* Findings further show emotional intelligence did not significantly moderate the relationship of upward social comparison and life satisfaction (*b =.006, p>.001*). The ΔR^2 value of.00, revealed 0% change in the variance of model 1 and model 2 with ΔF (1, 343) = 0.15, *p>.001.*

IV. DISCUSSION

Social media use is becoming part and parcel of today's life styles around the globe. Given such widespread use of social media, the current study had two main objectives: 1) to analyze the relationship between social media usage based social comparison, EI, and satisfaction with life and 2) to examine the role of emotional intelligence as a moderator between social media use, social comparison, and satisfaction with life among social media users.

We examined whether excessive social media usage is associated with lower levels of life satisfaction. Indeed the findings indicated that adolescents who frequently use social media had poor levels of life satisfaction. It showed that those with more use of social media are less satisfied with their lives. Such findings are also supported by some previous studies done by Geraee, et al. in 2019.

Similarly, we also examined that whether relative self evaluations (social comparison) based on social media has link with life satisfaction. The results revealed that participants life satisfaction levels were lower when the sample were exposed to upward social comparison. The finding of the current study is supported by some earlier studies in this regard. For example, Frijswijk and Bunk (2005) conducted a study on upward and downward comparison effects of social life on various age group individuals, where findings showed a negative association of upward social comparison with life satisfaction . Moreover, in literature we observed that the consequences of exposure to upward social comparison are generally quite negative. Moreover as hypothesised a significant negative association were found between upward social comparison and emotional intelligence. Moreover, a positive association has been observed between emotional intelligence and downward social comparison. Consistent with our findings a recent

study reveals that upward social comparison may be viewed as an indication of a low level of emotional intelligence (Hasanvand, 2011; Khaledian et al., 2015). Moreover, literature also suggests that social comparison and emotional intelligence are negatively correlated with the level of EI and upward comparison among social media users (Trigueros et al., 2018; Parra et al., 2020). Similarly, it was also observed from the literature that young adults, who are emotionally stable, mostly had higher levels of EI (Butler, 2014). In another study by Rahimi & Mammon, it was found that individuals with downward social comparison revealed higher levels of emotional intelligence (Rahimi & Hall, 2017; Wang & Mammon, 2017).

To explore the second objective, i.e., emotional intelligence significantly moderate the relationship between social media use, social comparison (upward & downward) and life satisfaction" we run moderation analysis. However, findings revealed non-significant moderating effect of emotional intelligence in the relationship between social comparison and life satisfaction was not significant. One possible explanation for the insignificant interaction might be the specific age group of the present sample. The majority of the present sample were mostly students and young adults between the age ranging from 21-26-year-old, where they have totally different roles and experiences as compared to middle adulthood counterparts. It would be safe to assume here that this age group of respondents could not have yet grasped the actual essence of life satisfaction which may be considered here as a precursor of emotional intelligence at least to some extent, the way it is presumed in middle adulthood in an individual's life span. It is therefore suggested that age group might matter while considering this interaction. Moreover, they might have confusion regarding their social comparison, whether to compare themselves upward or downward with others. Emotional intelligence is a very sophisticated concept. And we assume that it is basically a skill that grows and matures over time. It is not only considered as a predictor of the quality of good relationships but also an effective predictor for success and overall happiness It may take a specific period of time to develop strongly and in current study the present sample participants may not have attained their full potential emotional intelligence yet. As Esecoda & Aligre (2016) mentioned in their research where senior citizens and individuals in their late adulthood with higher emotional intelligence were inclined to sense advanced satisfaction in life. Equally, it was revealed that emotional intelligence forecasts satisfaction with life (Bermúdez et al., 2003; Extremera et al., 2007). Conversely, yet, it was not clearly found that emotional intelligence as a moderator might play some significant role in the link between context-specific life satisfaction, satisfaction with life in general and social comparison (Freudenthaler et al., 2008; Páez et al., 2006; Palomera & Brackett, 2006). Metaj & Macula (2017) through their research findings revealed that the relationship between emotional intelligence and life satisfaction was non-significant among social media users, with somewhat similar explantion that youth usually has not developed a sense of enough emotional intelligence and life satisfaction.

Findings further suggested significant differences between males and females in the daily usage of social media and upward social comparison. An explanation for this result is the fact that men use social media to make potential friends and to find people who have similar interests. This finding may be attributed to the possibility of the impact of traditional and cultural values and norms associated with females in Asian countries, where women do not share their identity/significant personal information.

On the other hand, males scored higher than females in the upward social comparison which might be because of their sociability. In Pakistani society, men are considered as a primary authority figure that provides financial support to their family. Thus they want to provide a better life to their family with maximum amenities possible. Therefore, males compare themselves more with the people who are higher in status than them. Owing to the competitive nature of males, ifthey lack something they become more stressed than females. A study by Alnjadat & Hamaidi (2019) showed a link between gender and social media usage, where men spent more time on social media as compared to women (Alnjadat et al., 2019). In the research findings by Vogal, Rose & Ecklis (2015) we found significant gender differences where men have greater social media usage (Vogal, et al., 2015).

V.   LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The study has several limitations including the fact sample of this study is comprised of only young adults i.e., we aimed to take a sample, age ranging from16-35 years only, whereas, majority of the current sample belonged to 21-26 years age range. Due to the prevailing situation of the pandemic, we were not able to physically collect the entire data and therefore some data was collected online. Therefore, there are chances that they did not respond to our questionnaires with desired care.

Implications

This study can help to understand the impact of social media on its users. This research will be helpful to determine the time spent on social media and its possible effects on an individual's personal life. This study can also help to understand the consequences of social media usage among its users and their comparisons with other media users on those social apps.

VI. CONCLUSION

The current research was carried out to explore the association of social media usage, social comparison, and life satisfaction with the emotional intelligence as moderating variable. The data was collected from the sample of 347 adolescents. On the basis of the results, it was proved that a negative association of social media usage and upward social comparison exists with life satisfaction. However, the moderating role of EI was not significant. In addition to this, gender differences varied on social media use, social comparison, emotional intelligence, and life satisfaction.

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