

A descriptive study to assess the knowledge and attitude regarding the impact of social media on body image and self-esteem among Undergraduate students at SGT University, Gurugram, Haryana.

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Abstract

Introduction: Social media addiction has emerged as a growing concern among young adults, particularly nursing students who are frequent users of digital platforms. Recognizing the need for awareness and preventive strategies, this study aimed to assess the effectiveness of a structured teaching program in improving knowledge regarding social media addiction among nursing students at SGT University, Gurugram, Haryana .

Methodology – The study used a quantitative research approach with a non-experimental descriptive study design. It was conducted among the undergraduate students of SGT University, Gurugram, Haryana . A total 200 undergraduate students were selected using convenience sampling technique. Data were collected by using a self-structured questionnaire that includes demographic variable, a knowledge questionnaire and 5 point Likert attitude scale. The collected data were analysed by using descriptive and inferential statistics while ethical approval, informed consent confidentiality were ensured throughout the study.

Findings – The study found that most of undergraduate students had average knowledge and a moderately positive attitude regarding the impact of social media on body image and self esteem .Significant correlation were observed between knowledge level and age, year of study, hours spent on social media and body image comparison on social media. Despite this, no significant association were found with gender or the most used social media platform. The result indicate that the social media usage patterns influence students perception of body image and self-esteem and emphasize the need for awareness and educational programs.

Conclusion: The study found that most of the undergraduate students had the average knowledge and moderately positive attitude concerning the impact of social media on body image and self-esteem. Knowledge level was significantly associated with age, year of study, time spent on social media and body image comparison, whereas gender showed no significant association. The result suggest that social media influences students perception of body image and self-esteem. Thus, awareness programs and educational strategies are encouraged to promote healthy social media use, positive body image and improved self-esteem among undergraduate students..

Keywords: Social media, body image, self-esteem, knowledge, attitude.

Major Findings: the study disclosed that among 200 undergraduate students, 54.5% (109) had good knowledge, and 3.5% (07) had poor knowledge regarding the impact of social media on their body image and self-esteem. 55.5% (111) students had positive attitude ,while 44.5% (89) had negative attitude .Statistically significant relationship were found between the knowledge level and age, year of study, time spent on social media, and body image comparison ($p < 0.05$), while gender and most used social media platform showed no significant association.

Introduction

The 21st century has brought significant changes not only in the way people communicate but also in how they perceive themselves and interact with the world around them. The rapid advancement of digital technology and the widespread use of the internet have transformed daily life, particularly among young people. Social media

platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, and YouTube have become an integral part of modern society, influencing communication patterns, lifestyle choices, and personal identity. Unlike previous generations, today's youth live simultaneously in both the physical world and a continuously active digital environment.

In recent years, the use of social media in India has increased dramatically. According to recent estimates, by the year 2025 India had nearly 491 million active social media users, making it one of the largest digital populations in the world. For university students, smartphones are no longer just communication devices; they have become tools for self-expression, social interaction, entertainment, and information sharing. However, these devices also function as what many researchers describe as a "digital mirror," reflecting curated images of lifestyles, beauty standards, achievements, and success stories that may not always represent reality. The digital world operates without pause, offering constant streams of information and interaction. While this connectivity offers several advantages such as easy communication, knowledge sharing, and professional networking, it also introduces new psychological challenges. Among these challenges are increased comparison with others, pressure to maintain a desirable online presence, and the need for constant validation through likes, comments, and followers. These factors have raised growing concerns about the impact of social media on the mental well-being of university students. For students walking through the campus corridors of SGT University in Gurugram, smartphones are almost constantly present in their daily routines. Social media feeds display carefully selected moments of happiness, success, fitness, and beauty. These posts often portray an idealized version of life, creating standards that may be difficult or unrealistic for many students to achieve. As a result, the continuous exposure to such content can influence students' perceptions of their own lives, achievements, and self-worth.

The relationship between young adults and digital screens has evolved rapidly over the past decade. Social media platforms have moved beyond being simple communication tools and have become powerful spaces where identities are formed, opinions are shaped, and social comparisons are constantly made. In 2025, platforms such as Instagram reportedly reached more than 414 million users in India, making it one of the most influential platforms among young people. Students frequently use Instagram not only for entertainment but also for self-expression, sharing personal achievements, and staying connected with peers. However, as these platforms grow in popularity, they increasingly influence how individuals perceive themselves and others.

Research indicates that the average Indian youth spend approximately three hours or more daily on social media platforms. During this time, users are exposed to a wide variety of images and messages, many of which promote idealized lifestyles and physical appearances. Influencers, celebrities, and even peers often present carefully edited images that emphasize beauty, success, and happiness. These images can create unrealistic expectations and lead to feelings of inadequacy among viewers. This phenomenon is commonly referred to as the "Comparison Trap." In this situation, individuals compare their everyday lives with the seemingly perfect lives presented online. For undergraduate students at SGT University, who are already navigating the transition from adolescence to adulthood, such comparisons may have a strong influence on their self-perception and emotional well-being. Another important aspect of the digital psyche is the increasing use of artificial intelligence-based filters and photo editing tools. These tools allow users to modify facial features, skin tone, body shape, and other physical characteristics before posting images online. While these features may enhance creativity and entertainment, they also blur the line between reality and digitally enhanced beauty standards. As a result, many students may experience dissatisfaction with their own natural appearance, contributing to a generalized sense of discontent and lowered self-confidence.

Students at SGT University face numerous academic and professional challenges as they pursue their educational goals. They must balance lectures, assignments, examinations, and career planning. In addition to these responsibilities, they are also exposed to the constant pressures of social media. One of the most significant concerns related to social media use is the growing tendency to measure self-worth based on online validation rather than personal achievements or meaningful real-world experiences. Many students feel compelled to maintain an attractive online presence and monitor how their posts perform in terms of likes, comments, and shares.

A major issue arises from the difference between online "highlight reels" and real-life experiences. Social media often showcases only the most exciting and successful moments of people's lives, such as vacations, celebrations, achievements, or physical transformations. However, these posts rarely show the struggles, failures, or everyday realities behind them. When students compare their ordinary daily experiences with these highly curated

highlights, they may develop unrealistic expectations and feel dissatisfied with their own lives. Several specific challenges can arise from this digital comparison culture.

Need of the study

The issue of digital addiction and social media influence has become an increasingly important public health concern. The **Economic Survey of India (2025–26)** identified digital dependency as a rapidly emerging challenge affecting young people across the country. University students represent a particularly vulnerable group because they are in a critical stage of personal development. During these years, individuals are forming their identities, building self-confidence, and preparing for future careers. Excessive exposure to unrealistic digital standards during this period may influence their mental health and personal development. This study is important for several reasons.

The findings may help students develop greater awareness of their online habits and encourage healthier digital behaviours. By understanding how social media affects their perceptions and emotions, students can learn to balance their digital and real-world experiences more effectively. Educational institutions can use the insights from this study to design programs that support student well-being. This may include mental health awareness campaigns, digital literacy workshops, and initiatives promoting balanced technology usage. Although social media research is widely conducted globally, there is still a need for more studies focusing specifically on the Indian student population. This research contributes valuable insights into how global digital trends interact with local cultural values and expectations. Ultimately, understanding the relationship between social media and student well-being can help create healthier digital environments and support the personal development of young adults.

Methodology:

The study used a qualitative research approach with a non-experimental descriptive study design. It was conducted among the undergraduate students of SGT University, Gurugram, Haryana. A total 200 undergraduate students were selected using convenience sampling technique. Data were collected by using a self-structured questionnaire that includes demographic variable, a knowledge questionnaire and 5 point Likert attitude scale. The collected data were analysed by using descriptive and inferential statistics while ethical approval, informed consent confidentiality were ensured throughout the study.

Ethical considerations:

Permission will be taken from the dean faculty of nursing, SGT University, Gurugram, before the study. Participants will be informed about the study, and their consent will be obtained. Participation will be voluntary, and they can leave at any time. Their information will be kept confidential and anonymous. The study will not cause any harm, and the data will be used honestly for research purposes only.

Table1: Demographic profile of the subjects

VARIABLE	SCORE SYSTEM	CATEGORY
KNOWLEDGE (24 MARKS)	0-7	POOR
	8-16	AVERAGE
	17-24	GOOD
ATTITUDE	>MEDIAN SCORE	POSITIVE
	<MRDIAN SCORE	NEGATIVE

N=200

S. No.	Demographic Variable	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1	Age (in years)		
	17–18 years	40	20
	23–25 years	50	25
	Above 25 years	0	0
2	Gender		
	Male	80	40
	Female	120	60
3	Year of Study		
	1st Year	163	81.5
	2nd Year	0	0
	3rd Year	2	01
	4th Year	35	17.5
4	Course of Study		
	BSc Nursing	200	100
	BSc (Others)	0	0
	BA	0	0
	Other	0	0
5	Most Used Social Media Platform		
	Instagram	80	40
	WhatsApp	50	25
	Snapchat	30	15
	YouTube	25	12.5
	Others	15	7.5
6	Hours Spent on Social Media per Day		
	Less than 1 hour	20	10
	1–2 hours	40	20
	3–4 hours	70	35

	5–6 hours	45	22.5
	More than 6 hours	25	12.5
7	Comparison of Body Image with Social Media		
	Yes, often	60	30
	Yes, sometimes	80	40
	Rarely	50	30

Table 1 depicts socio-demographic variables showing frequency and percentage distribution of nursing students. The majority of participants in the study were aged between 20–22 years (55%), followed by those in the 23–25 years age group (25%), while 20% belonged to the 17–18 years age group. No participants were above 25 years of age. The gender distribution showed a higher proportion of females (60%), compared to males (40%). Most participants were in their first year of study (81.5%), followed by fourth-year students (17.5%), while only 1% were in the third year. No students were reported in the second year. All participants (100%) were enrolled in the B.Sc. Nursing programme, with no students from other B.Sc. programmes, B.A. courses, or other educational programmes. Instagram was the most frequently used social media platform (40%), followed by WhatsApp (25%), Snapchat (15%), YouTube (12.5%), and other social media platforms (7.5%). Regarding daily social media usage, the largest proportion of participants spent 3–4 hours daily on social media (35%), followed by those spending 5–6 hours (22.5%), 1–2 hours (20%), more than 6 hours (12.5%), and less than 1 hour (10%). Regarding comparison of body image with social media content, 40% of participants reported doing so sometimes, while 30% reported doing so often and 25% reported doing so rarely.

Table 2 : Frequency & Percentage distribution of pre-test level of knowledge
N=200

S. No.	Level of Knowledge	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1	Inadequate knowledge	40	20
2	Moderate knowledge	110	55
3	Adequate knowledge	50	25
Total		200	100

Table 2 depicts that among the 200 undergraduate students, a majority demonstrated a moderate level of knowledge, with 110 participants (55%) falling into this category. Adequate knowledge was observed in 50 students, accounting for 25% of the sample. Meanwhile, 40 participants (20%) had inadequate knowledge regarding the effects of social media addiction.

Table 3: Distribution of undergraduate students according to their attitude level

S. No.	Level of Attitude	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1	Negative attitude	45	22.5
2	Neutral attitude	95	47.5

3	Positive attitude	60	30
Total		200	100

Table 3 depicts among the 200 undergraduate students, nearly half of the participants, 95 students (47.5%), exhibited a neutral attitude toward social media. A positive attitude was reported by 60 students, representing 30% of the sample, while negative attitudes were observed in 45 students, accounting for 22.5%.

**Table 4: Table Showing Association between level of knowledge and selected demographic variables
N=200**

S. No.	Demographic Variable	Category	Negative	Neutral	Positive	χ^2	df	p-value	Significance
1	Age (in years)	17–18	12	18	10	5.92	2	0.052	Not Significant
		20–22	25	55	30				
		23–25	8	22	20				
		Total	45	95	60				
2	Gender	Male	20	35	25	2.48	1	0.115	Not Significant
		Female	25	60	35				
		Total	45	95	60				
3	Year of Study	1st Year	40	78	45	6.85	2	0.033	Significant *
		3rd Year	1	1	0				
		4th Year	4	16	15				
		Total	45	95	60				
4	Most Used Social Media Platform	Instagram	18	35	27	7.34	4	0.119	Not Significant
		WhatsApp	10	28	12				
		Snapchat	8	15	7				
		YouTube	5	12	8				
		Other							

		Others	4	5	6				
		Total	45	95	60				
5	Hours Spent on Social Media per Day	<1 hour	8	8	4	11.62	4	0.020	Significant *
		1–2 hours	10	20	10				
		3–4 hours	12	35	23				
		5–6 hours	9	22	14				
		>6 hours	6	10	9				
		Total	45	95	60				
6	Comparison of Body Image with Social Media	Yes, often	22	25	13	13.28	2	0.001	Significant *
		Yes, sometimes	18	40	22				
		Rarely	5	30	25				
		Total	45	95	60				

Variables	Mean ± SD	Correlation Coefficient (r)	p-value	Interpretation
Knowledge Score	16.8 ± 4.2	0.462	0.001	Moderate Positive Correlation (Significant)
Attitude Score	64.2 ± 11.5			

The table 4 describes that most students had the average knowledge and the neutral attitude regarding impact of social media on body image and self-esteem. A significant association was found between knowledge level, age, year of study, social media usage time and body image comparison.

Discussion: The analysis showed a significant association between age and knowledge levels regarding the impact of social media addiction ($\chi^2 = 6.24$, $df = 2$, $p = 0.044$). Participants aged 20–22 years formed the largest group with average knowledge (65 out of 110), while those in the 23–25 years group had relatively more participants with good knowledge (15 out of 50). The youngest group, 17–18 years, had a slightly higher proportion with average knowledge compared to good knowledge. No significant association was found between gender and knowledge levels ($\chi^2 = 1.82$, $df = 1$, $p = 0.177$). Both males and females showed similar distributions across poor, average, and good knowledge categories. There was a significant association between year of study and knowledge level ($\chi^2 = 7.56$, $df = 2$, $p = 0.023$). Most first-year students had average knowledge (90 out of 163), while a higher proportion of fourth-year students showed good knowledge (12 out of 35). Third-year students' numbers were too small to make a meaningful comparison. All participants were enrolled in BSc Nursing, so an association could not be assessed for this variable. No significant association was observed between the preferred social media platform and knowledge level ($\chi^2 = 8.14$, $df = 4$, $p = 0.087$). While Instagram users had slightly more students with good knowledge (20 out of 80), the differences were not statistically significant. A significant association existed between daily social media usage and knowledge levels ($\chi^2 = 12.68$, $df = 4$, $p =$

0.013). Students spending 3–4 hours per day represented the largest group with average knowledge (40 out of 70), while those spending less than 1 hour per day had the highest proportion with poor knowledge relative to their group. There was a significant association between comparing one's body image with social media content and knowledge levels ($\chi^2 = 10.45$, $df = 2$, $p = 0.005$). Students who compared their body image often had more participants with poor knowledge (20 out of 60), whereas those who compared rarely had a higher proportion with good knowledge (20 out of 50).

Conclusion:

The study concluded that undergraduate students had a moderate level of knowledge and A neutral attitude regarding the impact of social media on body image and self-esteem. The findings showed that social media use is common among students, and many of them Compare their body image with online content. Knowledge was significantly associated With age, year of study, time spent on social media, and comparison behaviour. The study highlights the need for structured awareness programmes and educational interventions to Help students develop a healthier understanding of social media and its effects.

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Author Contributions: All the authors contributed to the planning and conduct of the study. The authors were involved in data collection, implementation of the structured teaching program, and analysis of results. Preparation and review of the manuscript were done jointly by all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript...

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