

Social Media Addiction and its relationship with Self-esteem in University Students

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Abstract

Social media are virtual spaces created with the purpose of improving communication between human beings due to the speed at which information can be sent either from one room to another or even between different countries, despite the fact that it has many advantages. Excessive or uncontrolled use of these technological spaces brings with it a series of effects on a psychological level, since by spending a lot of time on social networks, the user begins to think that other people have the life they want and feel insufficient with themselves, being affected their self-esteem. The objective of this study is to establish the relationship between addiction to social networks and self-esteem in university students, for which a sample of 280 participants was used, 218 men and 74 women between the ages of 17 and 25 from a public university, to whom the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale and the Social Media Addiction Scale were applied. The results show a negative relationship between the levels of addiction to social networks and its dimensions: occupation ($p = -0.281$), mood change ($p = -0.402$), relapse ($p = -0.310$) and conflict ($p = -0.386$) with the levels of self-esteem, in addition there is no significant difference in terms of the comparison of the sex in a higher or lower level of addiction ($p = 0.218$), which makes it clear that the sex to which they belong does not represent a determining factor in addiction.

Keywords: Addiction, Self-Esteem, University Student, Social Media.

Introduction

Currently, social networks are Internet sites through which it is possible to relate, communicate, share content and create communities among users with similar tastes. They can also be used as a tool for the democratization of information that transforms people into receivers and producers of content [1].

Beyond this definition, social networks have been created with the purpose of facilitating the interaction between human beings through the use of an account in any of the multiple existing networks that can be created anonymously or partially, the use of these digital platforms brings with it a number of advantages such as facilitating connectivity between individuals, greater field of job offers and being a great source of entertainment but there are also several disadvantages such as scams or data theft in addition to a possible addiction to them and the presence of errors regarding the censorship of certain types of content[2].

Classification of social networks is divided into: professional networks (LinkedIn, Xing, and Viasdeo, among others), generalist networks (TikTok, Facebook, Snapchat, and Twitter) and specialized networks (Ediciona, eBuga, CinemaVIP, 11870). Although there are more types of social networks, these are the most general and those with the highest level of visits and therefore a greater coupling of information. Similarly, define virtual social networks as spaces where friends can maintain their rela-

tionships, chat with each other and share information [3].

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 2022, addiction to video games and gaming are the only two non-substance addictions, however, when talking about addiction to social networks, it is only referred to as “problematic internet use” without including it in the diagnostic manuals. The type of content published and observed on social networks also has a great influence on the mental health of users, as these types of publications reinforce narcissism, obsession, among other problems that generate a higher prevalence of various psychiatric disorders.

On the other hand, the German Research Institute, estimates that the evaluation of dependence on social networks should be carried out under certain criteria: the fact of continuously thinking about these platforms while at school or doing some other activity, the presence of certain withdrawal symptoms such as irritation, nervousness or sadness if the cell phone or any other device with internet connection is not nearby. In this study it was found that 85% of adolescents spend about three hours a day on social networks, with females spending more time than males (182 minutes in relation to 151 minutes), the most used social networks: WhatsApp with 66%, Instagram with 14%, Snapchat with 9% and Facebook with 2%.

In this sense, the United Nations Children’s Fund conducted a

study in Spain where it shows that the use of the Internet has had a massive increase in recent years due to the state of confinement caused by the COVID19 finding that 65-85% of children use social networks of which about 40% do not know how to use it safely and only 16.9% of adolescents claim to have parental control in the use of the Internet.

In a census conducted in Ecuador by the National Institute of Statistics and Census, most of those who are in social networks enter through their Smartphone, this boom has been given by the recent pandemic situation, leading to Ecuadorian users must be more time connected to send, review and share information of all kinds. Currently there are 10.17 million internet users and 14 million social network profiles, a number that represents 78.8% of the total population that has access and uses social networks where it is evident that those who spend most of the time are adolescents and young adults between 15 to 29 years of age [4].

Young adults and adolescents are those who are interconnected with each other thanks to social networks, they can communicate with several of their friends at the same time and are able to find any type of information [5]. Argue that young people, in addition to being pioneers in the use of social networks, also form their own being in parallel to their development [6]. In the study conducted by, it is shown that these new digital citizens are the ones who use these services the most and contribute to the construction of social reality [7].

The use of these technological tools, mainly social networks, has consequences at the psychological level; studies show a significant relationship between high levels of depression and the use of social networks in the university population [8]. While in the study conducted by [9]. There is also a significant relationship between addiction to the internet and social networks with low levels of self-esteem and self-efficacy results that are confirmed by who find that those with severe internet addiction suffer from strong symptoms related to depression, low self-esteem and problems in verbal fluency [10].

Indicates that addiction to social networks is negatively related to the level of self-esteem, since those who present a higher level of addiction see their self-esteem affected [11]. Similar results were presented by where they point out that observing selfies causes low self-esteem and life satisfaction in individuals while observing groupies causes an increase in self-esteem and life satisfaction [12].

The use of social networks has had a higher level of integration in modernity, so they have become something extremely important and indispensable in the lives of all people, especially young adults. It is for this reason that there is a need to understand the impact they have on the psychological field in order to prevent and treat mental disorders resulting from addiction to social networks. Being so exposed to the almost perfect visual or auditory content that is shared on social networks, a feeling of inferiority arises in the individual because he or she cannot reach this surreal image, generating a discontent with his or her own self-concept and self-esteem.

Knowing the importance of self-esteem in social networks, it is necessary to define it, it is known as the valuation of oneself in which thoughts, emotions, feelings, experiences and attitudes that the person collects throughout his life and that will influence his way of relating to others are involved. This is a process that develops in the life cycle of the individual as a result of the interactions that he/she has with others, which enables the proper development of the "I" thanks to the acceptance of others [13].

Self-esteem has been defined by several authors, the classic definition by Rosenberg understands it as a feeling with oneself that can be positive or negative, built by means of a self-evaluation of one's own characteristics. Self-esteem is divided into two levels: high; formed by the set of positive perceptions and attitudes that a person has of him/herself, the greatest capacity for commitment and responsibility with what he/she does or wants to do, and low; it makes people have difficulty when facing problems, they cannot make decisions or assume commitments and even less have leadership, they are usually sad, worried, insecure, fearful, with feelings of guilt and inferiority, with many destructive self-criticisms, few social skills and low mood [14].

Those who have a higher level of self-esteem are able to receive criticism of different kinds and take them in the best way without personalizing them or feeling less for the "defects" that can be found, they are able to recognize and understand that in some cases they were at fault or were wrong in some way which generates motivation to take on new challenges and work to meet the proposed goals. In contrast, low self-esteem causes the mood to be affected by minimal situations and they take any observation personally leading them to feel hurt or attacked, as they do not have the self-confidence to do so [15].

Different elements configure self-esteem, which have been stated by affective component: affective response perceived of oneself; behavioral component: intentions one has at the moment of acting, according to the opinions one has of oneself and what one is willing to do; cognitive component: representations, beliefs, ideas and descriptions one makes of oneself in different aspects of one's life. The convergence of these three components in each individual is what allows the existence of self-esteem established within each human being.

Based on the information presented above, it is considered that the main problem is addiction, since it involves the loss of control and dependence that the use of social networks generates in the individual. Therefore, the present research aims to determine the relationship between addiction to social networks and the self-esteem of university students, in view of the increase in their use, especially during the current post pandemic world situation where there is a boom in connectivity. The research is of great importance since it investigates a population that was born in a technological era bringing with it a series of individual and collective changes and this affected their emotional levels.

Method

The research approach is quantitative because data were collected; non-experimental, correlational because it is expected to

determine the relationship between addiction to social networks and self-esteem. And crosssectional.

Participants

We worked with a sample of 280 Ecuadorian students, of which 25.3% were men and 74.7% were women, aged between 17 and 25 years, with a mean of 20.3 and a standard deviation of 1.70, students of Clinical Psychology and Nutrition and Dietetics, belonging to the Faculty of Health Sciences. The inclusion criteria considered: being legally enrolled from 1st to 7th semester in the university from September 2022 to August 2023 and the written informed consent of the student, excluding students who were not enrolled or were part of a leveling program.

Materials

Social Media Addiction Scale (SMAS)

This instrument was designed in a Turkish population, translated into English and reviewed by experts for use in the Spanish version. It is composed of 41 items on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from never to always, which were assigned scores of: Always (S): 5, Almost Always (CS): 4, Sometimes (AV): 3, Rarely (RV): 2, Never (N): 1. Subsequently, the direct score is obtained by summing all the items and is evaluated as follows: No Addiction (41-73), Low Addiction (74-106), Moderate Addiction (107-139), High Addiction (140-172) and Very High Addiction (173-205). The reliability of the instrument shows a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.967 and considerable content validity.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965)

Likert scale to evaluate self-esteem consisting of 10 items, which are subdivided into 5 direct items, and 5 inverse items (3, 5, 8, 8, 9, and 10). It has 4 possible response options ranging from "strongly disagree", "disagree", "agree" to "strongly agree", each with a score from 1 to 4, giving a total of 40 points, there are no good or bad answers. Therefore, the scores obtained

range from 10 to 40 total points. The scale has a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.86.

Procedure

The topic was previously selected and then approved by the assigned tutors. Subsequently, we managed to obtain permissions and gain access to the population in which the study was carried out, digitizing the instruments to be used through Google Forms in order to send the link to the participants so that they could respond to the questionnaires.

Before applying the instruments, the objective of the study was explained to the participants and they were asked for their written consent to participate in the study, following deontological and research subject protection criteria. The application was carried out as a group in classrooms, either at the end of the class or during the course of the class, all of this within the university facilities. The participants who wished to participate were given the link where the digitized instruments were located and were given verbal instructions to respond, clarifying that if they had any doubts regarding any item they could ask questions, this took approximately 30 minutes.

Data Analysis

To analyze the information, descriptive statistics calculations, frequency table, correlations, comparison of means, and non-parametric tests were used since the normality criteria were not met by applying the ShapiroWilk test. The JAMOMI 2.3.16 statistical program was used to process the information.

Results

This section presents the main results based on the study conducted. The data on the sociodemographic variables of the sample are presented below.

Categories	Frequencies	% of Total
University Degree		
Nutrition & Dietetics	144	49.3%
Clinical Psychology	148	50.7%
Gender		
Male	218	74.7%
Female	74	25.3%
Semester		
First	70	24.0%
Second	61	20.9%
Third	31	10.6%
Fourth	93	31.8%
Fifth	22	7.5%
Seventh	15	5.1%

Table 1: Sociodemographic distribution of the sample

Table 1 shows that Nutrition and Dietetics students represent 49.3% and Clinical Psychology 50.7%, the semester with the highest percentage evaluated is the fourth semester with a percentage of 31.8%.

The results of the level of addiction to social networks in university students are shown below.

Level of social network addiction	Frequencies	% of Total
High Addiction	54	18.5%
Moderate Addiction	108	37.0%
Very High Addiction	1	0.3%
Low Addiction	86	29.5%
Non-Addiction	43	14.7%

Table 2: Level of social network addiction

Table 2 shows that the majority of the surveyed sample shows a moderate level of addiction (37.0%), while only 14.7% do not show any level of addiction.

The results obtained in relation to the self-esteem levels of the surveyed population are shown below.

Self-esteem levels	Frequencies	% of Total
Slightly Low Self-Esteem	241	82.5%
Balanced Self-Esteem	12	4.1%
Overvalued self-esteem	39	13.4%

Table 3: Self-esteem levels

Table 3 shows that 82.5% of the total sample surveyed had slightly low self-esteem, compared to 13.4% with overvalued self-esteem and only 4.1% with balanced self-esteem.

The following is the comparison between the sex of the participants and the addiction to social networks.

		Statistical	ql	p	Difference in averages
TOTAL	T of Welch	-1.24	134	0.218	-4.79

Table 4: Comparison of Social Networking Addiction and Gender

Table 4 shows that there are no statistically significant gender differences in the level of addiction to social networks with a p-value of 0.218, indicating that gender does not make a difference in the presence of higher or lower levels of addiction to social networks in the population.

The relationship found between the study variables in university students is shown below.

		Self-esteem levels		Social Network Addiction	
OCCUPATION	R of Pearson	-0.281	***	0.870	***
	valor p	<.001		<.001	
MOOD MODIFICATION	R of Pearson	-0.402	***	0.816	***
	valor p	<.001		<.001	
RELAPSE	R of Pearson	-0.310	***	0.832	***
	valor p	<.001		<.001	
CONFLICT	R of Pearson	-0.386	***	0.944	***
	P value	<.001		<.001	

Table 5: Relationship between social network addiction and self-esteem

Table 5 shows the correlation between self-esteem and addiction to social networks, in the dimension of occupation there is a negative correlation with a p-value of -0.281 indicating that the more social networks are used the less time is spent on other activities of daily living; in terms of mood modification there is a negative correlation with a p-value of -0.402 showing that the lower the self-esteem presented when using social networks

there is an improvement in mood. The relapse dimension has a negative correlation with a

P-value of -0.310, indicating that users have little self-control in the use of social networks, which causes them to use them again and again. In the conflict dimension, a p-value of -0.386 was found, indicating a negative correlation, which means that

the higher the level of addiction to social networks, the more harmful the effects on the user's lifestyle.

Discussion and conclusions

This study finds a negative relationship between social network addiction and its sub dimensions: occupation, mood modification, relapse and conflict with users' self-esteem levels. Similar results were obtained in the study by where significant evidence is found that the abusive use of the internet generates low levels of self-esteem and self-efficacy in university students [5].

($p = -0.46$), in addition to the affectation found with self-esteem, the participants who have a higher level of addiction see their self-efficacy affected, giving as a result that despite the fact that social networks are of great help as a mass communication tool, it should be taken into account that their excessive consumption brings with it a series of affectations in the individual's mental health.

In the same way find a relationship between social network addiction and self-esteem, stating that those who score low on self-esteem levels are associated with higher levels of social network addiction ($r = -0.17$, $p < .001$) as well as sleep problems since participants who use their mobile devices to connect to the network at night see their quality and routine for sleeping affected, being the users of the social network Facebook those who show lower levels of self-esteem [16].

found that the university population with low self-esteem tends to take refuge in social networks, since this is where they feel more comfortable and therefore generate a kind of dependence on them ($p = -0.292$) [17]. Seeing the apparently perfect images in social networks, the individual tends to feel less because he/she is not capable of having a life like the one he/she observes in the digital media, creating a direct affectation in his/her self-esteem.

Find that taking "selfies and groupies" and posting them on social networks has become a popular online activity [18]. Looking at selfies causes low self-esteem and life satisfaction in individuals while looking at groupies causes an increase in self-esteem and life satisfaction in individuals ($b = -0.12$, $p < 0.05$) this because individuals when viewing selfies on social networks tend to compare themselves to the content of the image feeling bad about not looking like what they are viewing.

On the other hand, it is found that there is no statistically marked difference in relation to the levels of addiction to social networks according to the sex of the participants. The same results are confirmed by who find that the total addiction levels do not have a significant relationship with the sex to which the participants belong ($p = 0.253$) however they find a significantly important difference in terms of dimensions being women who tend to use social networks more as a tool for mood and occupation modification [18].

In the same line evaluates university students finding that there is no statistically significant difference in terms of excessive use of social networks [19]. However, he finds that women are those

who score higher in the dimensions obsession, lack of control and addiction to social networks, these dimensions are related to the cognitive aspect, which means that they are the ones who are more concerned about the aspect of control in the use of social networks, thus giving a more favorable picture to the female gender compared to the male gender.

Unlike the study where they find that males evidenced higher scores than females ($p = .035$) being these who obtain higher scores in the dimensions of lack of personal control regarding the use of social networks which leads to have a higher level of addiction and therefore greater affectation in their self-esteem as well as more mental problems generating problems in their interpersonal relationships [20].

Although the excessive use of social networks and internet is not formally considered as a type of addiction, they have very similar symptoms to any other type of addiction to any substance such as mood change, relapse and conflict. Social networks influence the way the individual presents him/herself to others as well as the levels of self-esteem. Furthermore, it has been discovered that this excessive use and the lack of self-control when using these virtual spaces lead to important consequences at the emotional, health, personal and interpersonal levels. This causes changes in the individual's daily routines which results in mental problems such as depression, changes in self-perception, personality problems, anxiety and also problems at school level with classmates and teachers as well as sleep problems/physical health problems [18].

This study concludes that there is indeed a negative relationship between addiction to social networks and its components with self-esteem in university students; it was also sought to know if there are differences between genders and, according to the results obtained, it is found that it does not represent a statistically representative factor in the levels of addiction to social networks. Regarding the evaluation of the addiction levels of the university students, it is found that the presence of moderate addiction is more frequent, representing 37.0% of the total sample, while only 14.7% do not show any level of addiction. On the other hand, the levels of self-esteem in the university population show that 82.5% of the total sample surveyed have slightly low self-esteem compared to 13.4% who have an overestimated self-esteem and only 4.1% have a balanced self-esteem.

The collection and manifestation of the data obtained in this study can serve as support for future research in larger samples where it is desired to obtain information related to these two variables, in addition to this they are also useful to provide more accurate statistics and thus guide psychotherapeutic interventions in which these virtual spaces despite having a number of advantages are affecting the quality of mental health of individuals as well as their way of relating to the world and their own being.

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