

EFFECT OF SOCIAL MEDIA USE ON EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND SOCIAL
COGNITION AMONG INDIVIDUALS WITH MENTAL ILLNESS AND HEALTHY
CLIENTS

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ABSTRACT

Social media has become a major mode of communication in Modern society, influencing emotional and social aspects of individuals. Its impact on Emotional Intelligence and Social Cognition is particularly important among individuals with mental illness, as these factors play a crucial role in interpersonal relationships, social functioning, and psychological well-being. Understanding this relationship may contribute to improved mental health outcomes and guide appropriate interventions. **Objective:** To determine the relationship between Social Media Use, Emotional Intelligence, and Social Cognition among individuals with Mental Illness and Healthy Clients. **Methodology:** A quantitative descriptive research design was adopted. A total of 60 participants were selected using a non-probability sampling technique, comprising 30 individuals with Mental Illness and 30 Healthy Clients. Data were collected using the Social Media Usage Scale (SMUS), Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS-SM), and Social Cognition Scale (SCS-SM). Data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics, including Frequency, Percentage, Mean, Standard Deviation, and Correlation Coefficient. **Results:** The mean Social Media Usage score was 26.63, SD $\pm$ 6.11 among Healthy Clients and 26.53, SD $\pm$ 4.02 among individuals with mental illness. Most participants demonstrated high social media usage, moderate Emotional Intelligence, and moderate to high Social Cognition. Moderate positive correlations were found between Social Media Usage and Social Cognition among Healthy Clients ($r = 0.54$) and individuals with Mental Illness ($r = 0.546$). Social Media Usage also showed moderate positive correlations with Emotional Intelligence among Healthy Clients ($r = 0.49$) and individuals with Mental Illness ($r = 0.42$). No statistically significant association was found between Personal variables on Emotional Intelligence and Social Cognition. **Conclusion:** Social Media Usage demonstrated a moderate correlation with Social Cognition and Emotional Intelligence in both groups, indicating its potential role in enhancing social and emotional functioning.

KEYWORDS: Social Media Usage, Social Cognition, Emotional Intelligence, Mental Illness, Healthy Clients, Psychological Well-being.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid growth of digital communication technologies has made social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), and WhatsApp integral to daily life. According to the 2023 Global Digital Report, approximately 4.76 billion people worldwide use social media, accounting for nearly 60% of the global population.^[1] While social media promotes

communication, information sharing, and social connectedness, excessive use has been associated with adverse effects on emotional well-being and cognitive functioning.^[2,3] Emotional Intelligence (EI), the ability to perceive, understand, and regulate emotions, is positively associated with resilience, stress management, and mental well-being, whereas lower EI is linked to poor coping and psychological distress.^[5,6] Social cognition,

which enables individuals to interpret and respond appropriately to social cues, is often impaired among people with mental illness, affecting their interpersonal functioning. Although studies have examined these variables independently, limited research has explored the relationship between social media use, emotional intelligence, and social cognition, particularly among individuals with mental illness and healthy clients in the Indian context. Understanding these relationships is important for psychiatric nursing, as it can guide evidence-based interventions, digital wellness programmes, and patient education to promote mental health and healthy social media use.^[4]

The exponential rise in Social Media Usage has created a paradigm shift in interpersonal communication and psychosocial functioning. With approximately 4.76 billion global users¹ and over 700 million internet users in India, A systematic review reported statistically significant correlations between problematic Social Media Use and symptoms of depression and anxiety. Furthermore, individuals with high social media engagement were found to have nearly twofold increased odds of perceived social isolation compared to low users. The communication contexts which we are using has limited non-verbal cues may leads to emotional regulation skills may be challenged. Excessive reliance on online interaction may reduce opportunities for direct emotional feedback and real-world social skill development.^[13]

Research suggests that impairments in Social Cognition account for approximately 20– 30% of variance in functional outcomes among individuals with severe mental illness.^[10] Therefore, considering the high prevalence of Social Media Use, the substantial burden of mental illness, statistically significant associations with psychological distress, and the limited research examining emotional and social cognitive outcomes in comparative populations, there is a clear need to conduct a systematic study assessing the effects of Social Media Use on Emotional Intelligence and Social Cognition among individuals with Mental Illness and Healthy Clients.

METHODOLOGY

A quantitative research approach was adopted for the present study. The study was conducted in selected Hospital and community areas of Mysuru, which provided access to individuals with Mental Illness as well as healthy individuals from the community by using purposive sampling. Data were collected Social Media Usage Scale, Emotional Intelligence Scale related to social media, Social Cognition Scale related to social media and selected personal variables. Prior to data collection, formal permission was obtained from the concerned authorities of the selected hospital and community settings at Mysuru. The purpose of the study was explained to the participants, and written informed consent was obtained. The data collected were coded and

entered into a master data sheet for analysis. Statistical analysis was performed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

RESULTS

The findings of the present study revealed that the majority of Healthy Clients (43.3%) and individuals with Mental Illness (33.3%) belonged to the age group of 21– 30 years. Female participants were slightly higher among Healthy Clients (56.6%) and mentally ill persons (53.3%). Most participants were graduates, accounting for 43.3% among Healthy Clients and 36.6% among mentally ill persons. The majority belonged to urban areas, including 56.6% of Healthy Clients and 60.0% of mentally ill persons. Regarding average daily screen time, most participants reported spending 2–4 hours daily on social media, comprising 33.3% of Healthy Clients and 46.6% of mentally ill persons. Full-time employment was common among both groups, accounting for 36.6% among Healthy Clients and 46.6% among mentally ill persons. Most participants were single, including 53.3% of Healthy Clients and 50.0% of mentally ill persons. The majority belonged to the lower socioeconomic group with monthly income below ₹10,000. Healthy Clients mainly used social media for socialization (36.6%), whereas mentally ill persons used social media more for news purposes (30.0%).

The mean Social Media Usage score among Healthy Clients was 26.63 ± 6.11 , whereas among mentally ill persons it was 26.53 ± 4.02 , indicating almost similar levels of Social Media Usage in both groups. High Social Media Usage was observed among 50.0% of Healthy Clients and 60.0% of mentally ill persons. Very high Social Media Usage was reported equally among both groups (13.3%). The findings also showed that moderate Emotional Intelligence was present among 66.7% of Healthy Clients and 80.0% of mentally ill persons. High Emotional Intelligence was observed among 6.6% of Healthy Clients and 6.7% of mentally ill persons. None of the participants demonstrated very low Emotional Intelligence. Regarding Social Cognition, 46.7% of Healthy Clients had moderate Social Cognition and another 46.7% had high Social Cognition. Among mentally ill persons, 60.0% had moderate Social Cognition and 40.0% had high Social Cognition. These findings indicate that the majority of participants in both groups demonstrated moderate to high Social Cognition and Emotional Intelligence. The study revealed a moderate positive correlation between Social Media Usage and Social Cognition among Healthy Clients ($r = 0.54$) and individuals with Mental Illness ($r = 0.546$). Similarly, Social Media Usage showed a moderate positive correlation with Emotional Intelligence among Healthy Clients ($r = 0.49$) and mentally ill persons ($r = 0.42$). These findings suggest that increased Social Media Usage was associated with better Social Cognition and Emotional Intelligence among participants. Chi-square analysis showed no statistically significant association between Social Media Usage on Social

Cognition, Emotional Intelligence and with their selected Personal variables such as Age, Gender, Education, Residence, Marital status, Monthly income, Screen time, Employment and Purpose of Social Media Use at 0.05 level of significance.

Recommendations: Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are suggested like Similar studies may be conducted with larger sample sizes. A Longitudinal study may be undertaken to examine the long-term effects of Social Media Use. And Intervention studies may be designed to improve Emotional Intelligence and Social Cognition among individuals with mental illness.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that Social Media Usage had a moderate positive influence on Emotional Intelligence and Social Cognition among Healthy Clients and individuals with mental illness. Although no statistically significant association was found between selected Personal variables and the study variables, the findings suggest that social media may contribute positively to emotional awareness, interpersonal understanding, and social interaction among participant.

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