

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Perceived Parental Negligence and Social Media Addiction among Adolescents: Moderating Effects of Social Isolation

Noreena Kausar ^a Rutab Ahmed Jan ^b

Abstract: The objective of the present study was to investigate the relationship between perceived parental negligence, social media addiction, and social isolation among adolescents. Through purposive sampling, 1188 adolescents (boys & girls) were selected from 4 cities (Gujrat, Kharian, Sara -Alamgir & Jalapur Jattan) in Pakistan. Data were collected by using the Multidimensional Neglectful Behavior Scale (Ross & Strauss, 1995), Social Media Addiction Scale (Şahin, 2018), and UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russel, 1996). Findings indicated a strong positive relationship between perceived parental negligence, social media addiction and social isolation ($p > .01$) in adolescents. Results indicated that boys scored more on the perceived parental negligence, loneliness and social media addiction scale as compared to girls. Further, adolescents who were in the age group of 10 to 14 years were more addicted to social media and experienced a higher level of parental negligence and loneliness than adolescents of other age groups. Moreover, it was also revealed that perceived parental negligence was a significant predictor of social media addiction ($F=14.645$, $p < .01$). Moderation analysis indicated that social isolation significantly moderates the relationship between perceived parental negligence and social media addiction.

Keywords: Perceived Parental Negligence, Social Media Addiction, Social Isolation, Adolescents

Introduction

Although the fast development of information technology and easier access to the internet improves the lives of adolescents, the rise in time spent on the internet highlights the issue related to problematic use of the internet at the level of addiction. Social media addiction (SMI) is defined as a behavioral pattern in which an individual fail to manage a strong urge or an intense need to use social media, which causes clinically significant disturbance in the social, emotional, and behavioral functioning of one's life (Putri & Khairunnisa, 2018). Social media comprises apps that aid in the formation of social relationships, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, Line, and other communication tools that may be downloaded from the internet (Pentina, Guilloux & Micu, 2018). Issues in familial relationships are associated with social media addiction (Savcı & Aysan, 2017). According to Sahin and Togay (2020), social media addiction is caused by family conflict or sadness. The child interprets family discomfort as neglect on the part of parents and to overcome such feelings, seeks another source to spend time, hence finding a way to escape from stress.

Parental neglect is also known as parental indifference, a condition in which parents are emotionally distressed and lose interest, focus, affection, and care for their children. It is a state in which parents fail to meet the physical, emotional, and psychological needs of their children (Sarwar, 2016). It is viewed by the child as neglect on the part of his parents having detrimental influences on his cognition and other aspects

^a Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Gujrat, Gujrat, Punjab, Pakistan.

^b Research Scholar, Department of Psychology, University of Gujrat, Gujrat, Punjab, Pakistan.

of life. Such types of negative feelings and deprived perceptions among children result in several adjustment issues hence they face different levels of impairments in daily life functioning (Mendo-Lázaro et al., 2019).

Parental negligence includes not only failing to fulfill the needs of children but also failing to treat them well. Aggressive parenting or violent conduct by parents reduces children's cognitive capacities and negatively impacts children's emotional and social patterns (Glaser, 2000). Family engagement is the most important and necessary part for an individual since it influences the biological, social and mental well-being of teenagers. By involving children in healthy activities, family functioning plays a vital role in sustaining healthy connections. A child who communicates well with his or her parents is more socially engaged and has a large group of friends (Haines et al., 2016).

Adolescents who utilized social networking sites extensively had poor verbal communication because they spent most of their time on social media and developed relationships on social media, avoiding engagement in reality and becoming socially isolated (Stankovska, Angelkovska & Grncarovska, 2016.) Social isolation is described as a failure to engage with others, connect with them and satisfy their social needs (Khullar, 2016). It is defined as a lack of social contact that results in loneliness. Many things contribute to this condition, including unemployment, a lack of contact, and physical or health concerns. Isolation may be defined as a lengthy stay at home, a lack of resources to go out and engage, a lack of community involvement, and a lack of connection with family and friends. According to Twenge et al. (2019), teenagers became less involved in real life as a result of forming contacts on social media, which resulted in isolation.

Parental negligence, social isolation and social media addiction were explored in different cultures through different studies. Parental neglect and internet usage has been studied by many researchers. According to the Musetti et al. (2020) when parents become detached from their teenage children, they start feeling of loneliness or indulge in other activities like unhealthy use of internet. Sahin and Togay (2020) conducted a study on teenage of 583 and found that there is a relationship between social media addiction and parent adolescents' relationship. They further reported that how teenage interact with their parents and what type of experiences they have in their relationship with parents are important. A gap in their relationship may leads towards the unhealthy use of social media. Youssef et al. (2020) studied 456 Lebanese citizens and highlighted that loneliness is significantly correlated with excessive use of social media. They further reported that individuals who made them engage in social media they experienced more social detachment and loneliness. Another finding highlighted in their study is the gender difference in social isolation as they reported that female had more social isolation as compared to male due to the social media use. Zhu et al. (2019) conducted a study on 356 Chinese students by using a self-report questionnaire. They found that parental neglecting is strongly associated with unhealthy and excessive use of mobiles. As far as parent disengaged with their children, children in result made them engage in mobiles. Hence, parental detachment increases the vulnerability of unhealthy use of mobiles. Similarly, Kwak et al. (2018) also reported that smart phones addiction is significantly related to neglect from parents through conducted research on 1170 South Korean students of middle and high schools. Lim and You (2018) also reported a relationship between perceived parental neglect and teenage dependency on mobile phone usage. The data of 485 primary school children in grades 4–6 were collected for this purpose. The findings revealed that parental negligence had a statistically significant positive relationship with mobile phone reliance and social isolation. Wu et al. (2016) conducted a cross-sectional study on 2021 students to explore the relationship between parenting approaches and internet addiction. The findings indicated that 25.3% of the teenage respondents had internet addiction. Internet addiction was positively predicted by low-income, separated, and dysfunctional families.

The current study focused on parental negligence, use of social media, and social isolation among adolescents. Keeping in view Pakistan's cultural perspective, the current study tried to investigate the parental role in adolescents' over-engagement with social media. In the last decade, family dynamics in Pakistan is

transforming and parental involvement in the upbringing of their children is also in a transition phase. Due to less involvement of parents, adolescents are engaging themselves in social media and getting away from family networks, hence they are becoming isolated from their social life, and experiencing behavioral, emotional and social issues. Furthermore, the current study directed the exploration of several alternative views. This study is significant in creating an understanding of the parental role in their adolescents' healthy development and highlights the factors related to over-involvement in social media and from resulting social isolation.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to:

1. Assess the relationship between perceived parental negligence, social media addiction, and social isolation in adolescents
2. Measure the differences in perceived parental negligence, social media addiction and social isolation among adolescents in relation to demographic variables of the participants

Hypotheses of the Study

The hypotheses of the study are as follows:

1. Perceived parental negligence would significantly predict social media addiction among adolescents
2. Social isolation would moderate the relationship between perceived parental negligence and social media addiction

Method

Study Design, Setting and Participants

A cross-sectional research design was used in the current study. The participants comprised of 1188 adolescents studying in government and private schools of Gujrat, Kharian, Sara-Alamgir, and Jalalpur Jattan, Pakistan. The purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample from the targeted population. Adolescents from class 6th till matriculation who used social media were included in the sample. Further, students with physical or mental health issues, whose parents, had divorced or students living with single parents were excluded from the sample. The study was conducted in 2021 after Covid-19 breakthrough.

Instruments

The instrument of the study consists of five parts:

Consent Form: The initial part of the study was based on the participant's consent form, and it included the research topic, purpose, ethical considerations, and the participant's signature.

Demographic Form: Based on the literature review and cultural perspective, demographic variables of gender, age, number of siblings, birth order, educational institute, class, father occupation, residential location, and family system of the participants were included in the study.

Translation of Scales: The following three scales were translated into Urdu before being used. For translation the researcher First and foremost, take the author's permission. The scales were then submitted to five experts (Ph.D. professors) from the Department of Psychology at the University (Name Masked for review). The experts were approached individually. After discussing the objective of translation, they were requested for translating the scales into Urdu. Following the translation, all five translations were examined, and the one that conveyed the meaning closest to the original was chosen.

Multi-dimensional Neglectful Behavior Scale (Ross & Strauss, 1995): The Multi-Dimensional Neglectful Behavior Scale (MNBS) Urdu version was used. It consisted of 40-items questionnaire intended to assess how children view their parents' neglect. It contained a few items with reverse scoring, but the abbreviated form only had 20 items with no reverse scoring. It caters to a variety of children's needs, including physical, emotional, supervisory, and cognitive requirements. Clinicians might also utilize it to standardize the results of the case they're looking at. It is an 8-point scale with 20 elements ranging from 0 to 7. The higher the number recorded by the participant, the more he/she perceived neglect. The scale has an alpha reliability of .93.

Social Media Addiction Scale (Şahin, 2018): Urdu version of the Social Media Addiction Scale (SMAS) was used to assess social media addiction. It is a five-point Likert scale with 29 items and four sub-dimensions. The subdomain of virtual tolerance consisted of 1-5 items, virtual communication consisted of 6-14 items, and the subdomain of the virtual problem consists of 15-23, whereas 24-29 items constitute the virtual information sub-domain. No reverse scoring was used in the scale. The score ranges from 29 to 145. The higher the score, the more the person is perceived as an addict to social media. The scale's alpha reliability is .93.

UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell, 1996): Loneliness Scale (UCLA) in Urdu version was used to measure an individual's feelings related to loneliness or social isolation. It is comprised of 20 items on 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1(never) to 4(often). Higher scores indicate a higher level of social isolation whereas low scores indicate low level of social isolation. The alpha reliability of the scale is .96.

Procedure

Permission from the higher authorities of schools and colleges was obtained. After the permission, the participants were approached in their classes. They were briefed about the aims of the study. Written consent was also taken from the participants and their rights to confidentiality and withdrawal from the research were also conveyed. Then the participants were instructed how to fill the questionnaires and also asked if there is any ambiguity. Then the questionnaires were administered in groups and participants were told to fill in according to their perceptions. On average each administration was completed in 30-35 minutes and returned to the researcher as directed. Initially, 1350 students were recruited for the study but only 1188 students completed the surveys. The data were collected between March and April 2021. In the end, the researcher expresses gratitude to the participants for their participation and cooperation

Statistical Analyses

The data were analyzed by using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS-21). The frequency, percentages, mean, and standard deviations of data were described using descriptive statistics. The correlation between perceived parental neglect, social media addiction, and social isolation among participants was investigated using the Spearman correlation. The mean differences in demographics were determined by using the Mann-Whitney U test. Further linear regression was used to investigate the role of perceived parental negligence in predicting social media addiction. Moderation analysis was also used to determine the moderating role of social isolation between perceived parental negligence and social media addiction.

Ethical Consideration

The Advanced Study and Research Board of the University granted permission to conduct the research. Scales were used after prior permission from the authors, and some scales were available for public use for research. During the research, the information acquired from the participants was kept confidential and their identities were anonymous. Participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Results

Table 1

Summary of Demographic Characteristics of Sample

Characteristics	F	%
Gender		
Male	572	48.1
Female	616	51.9
Age		
10-14 years	637	53.6
15-18 years	551	46.4
Classes		
6 th	244	20.5
7 th	220	18.5
8 th	219	18.4
9 th	263	22.1
10 th	242	20.4
Type of Educational Institute		
Private	620	52.2
Government	568	47.8
Residential area		
Rural	424	35.7
Urban	764	64.3
Family system		
Joint	556	46.8
Nuclear	632	53.2

Table 1 showed that the sample consisted of 48.1 % boys and 59.1% girls. Results indicated that most of the adolescents (53.6 %) fell in the age range of 10–14 years while 46.4 % fell in the age group of 15–18 years. It was also indicated that 52.2 % of adolescents attended private schools, while 47.8% were enrolled in public schools. The majority of adolescents were living in urban areas (64 %) and in nuclear families (53.2 %).

Table 2

Correlation Coefficient among Perceived Parental Negligence, Social Media Addiction and Social Isolation among Participants(n=1188)

Variables	1	2	3
Perceivedparentalnegligence	-		
Social media addiction	.541**	-	
Social Isolation	.343**	.49	-

Note: correlation is significant at the $p < 0.01$ level,

Table 2 indicated that there was a significant positive relationship among perceived parental negligence, social media addiction and social isolation $p > .01$ in participants.

Table 3

Differences among Perceived Parental Negligence, Social Media Addiction and Social Isolation in relation to Participant's Gender and Age groups(n=1188)

Variables	Mean rank	Z	U	p
Perceived Parental Negligence				
Male (N=572)	667.04	-7.028	134681.5	.000
Female (N=616)	527.14			
10-14 Years (N=637)	643.41	-5.287	144338.5	.000
15-18 Years(N=551)	537.96			
Social Media Addiction				
Male (N=572)	608.24	-1.434	167710	.01
Female (N=616)	579.70			
10-14 Years (N=637)	622.54	-2.622	160044	.009
15-18 Years(N=551)	570.25			
Social Isolation				
Male (N=572)	635.45	-3.970	152750	.000
Female (N=616)	556.47			
10-14 Years (N=637)	635.31	-4.414	149498.5	.000
15-18 Years(N=551)	547.32			

Note: PPN: Perceived Parental Negligence, SMA: Social Media Addiction, SI: Social Isolation

Results of the table-3 indicated a significant difference in the mean scores of the male and female participants in perceived parental negligence ($Z=-7.028$, $p<.05$) social isolation ($Z=-3.970$, $p<.05$) and social media addiction was found ($Z=-1.434$ $p>.05$). Particularly, results indicated that male students had a higher level of perceived parental negligence, social media addiction, and social isolation. Similarly, table 3 also showed a significant difference in perceived parental negligence, social media addiction and social isolation among participants in relation to age groups. Results suggested that adolescents between age group of 10 to 14 years' experience higher level of perceived parental negligence (Mean Rank=643.41, $Z= -5.28$, $p=.00$), social media addiction (Mean Rank= 622.54, $Z=-2.62$, $p=.00$) and social isolation (Mean Rank = 635.31, $Z= -4.41$, $p= .00$) as compared to adolescents of other age group.

Table 4

Coefficient of Linear Regression with Perceived Parental Negligence as Predictor of Social Media Addiction among Participants (n=1188)

Variables	B	S. E	R ²	F	ΔR^2	95%CI	
						LB	UB
Constant	75.810	1.220	.012	14.645	.011	73.417	78.203
PPN	.108	.028				.053	.164

Table 4 indicated that perceived parental negligence is the significant predictor of social media addiction among adolescents ($F=14.645$, $p<.01$) with $R^2=.012$, explaining a 1.2% variance in social media addiction.

Table 5

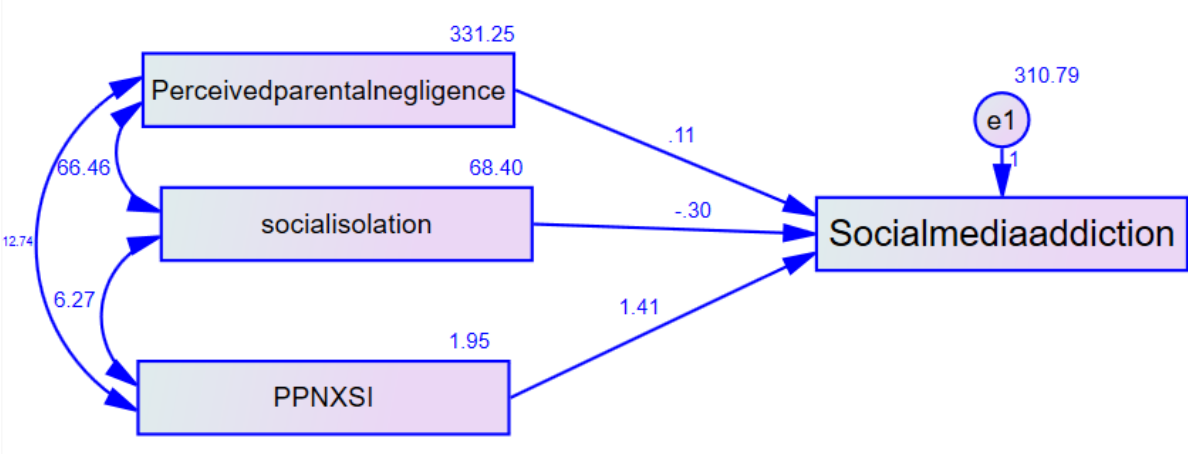
Moderating Effect of Social Isolation in the Relation Between Perceived Parental Negligence And Social Media Addiction

Variables	β	S. E	t	p
Constant		9.17	12.10	.00
Perceived Parental Negligence	-.403	.183	-3.97	.00
Social Isolation	-.308	.167	-2.16	.03
Perceived Parental Negligence X Social Isolation	.683	.003	3.03	.00

Model 1: $R^2 = .027$, $MSE = 3403.03$, $F = 10.913$, $df1=3$, $df2=1184$, $p=.00$

Table 5 indicated that social isolation played a significant moderating role between perceived parental negligence and social media addiction ($F(1, 1184) = 10.913, p < .001$). Findings revealed that both the predictive variables as well as their interaction had a significant effect on social media addiction (see figure 1).

Figure 1
Moderating Effect of Social Isolation in the Relation between Perceived Parental



Negligence and Social Media Addiction
Note: PPNXSI= Perceived Parental Negligence X Social Isolation

Discussion

Parents play an important role in the life of their adolescents. The child or adolescent always wanted attention from his/her parents. If parents do not focus on the needs of their children, it can create a lot of disturbance in their lives. Recently due to the increase in technology, children are becoming addicted to social media and if they are neglected by parents their addiction increase to a severe level which leads to social isolation and loneliness. Therefore, the present stud aimed to explore the relationship between perceived parental negligence, social media addiction, and social isolation among adolescents.

The results of the study revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between perceived parental negligence, social media addiction and social isolation among adolescents. Wu et al. (2016) strengthen the findings of the current study by reporting that if parents engage in children’ activities and get involve in their children's routines, it would reduce the chances of their unhealthy use of social media. Cetinkya (2019) and Zhu et al. (2019) supported the current findings by explaining the relationship between parental perceived negligence and social media addiction. They further highlighted that in response to parental neglect, adolescents and children tends to over obsess with social media and hence became socially isolated.

Current findings indicated that boys reported more parental neglect and social isolation as compared to girls. The findings are consistent with the study findings of Celandri et al. (2019) which also reported that girls experienced less parental negligence and social isolation as compared to the boys.

Results highlighted that perceived parental negligence is a significant predictor of social media addiction as reported by the adolescents. Ding et al. (2017) supported the findings by indicating the parental; negligence as strong predictor of social media addiction among Chinese middle school students. Similarly, Lim et al. (2019) also confirmed the findings by reporting that mobile phone dependency is significantly predicted by parental negligence among adolescents. Bashir et al. (2022) reported that parental neglect has significant relationship with mental health issues among adolescents.

Further the findings also stated that social isolation is significantly moderates the relationship between social media addiction and perceived parental negligence among adolescents. Zhen's (2021) supported the findings by indicating that social isolation mediates the relationship between social media addiction and parental negligence.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be inferred that children's behavior was influenced by perceived parental negligence. They become socially isolated and spend the majority of their time on social media, which may lead to a loss of cognitive ability. Parents failed to meet the requirements of their children by not paying attention to them or by being too preoccupied with their personal lives, which had a direct impact on children's social communication, and they preferred to live alone. To control children's conduct and divert their attention to beneficial activities, community-based awareness and training programs based on good parenting styles and counseling are critical. It is vital to acquire insight through psycho-education.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

The strength of this research was that it was the first research in the district of Gujrat that measure the relationship between parental negligence, social media addiction and social isolation among adolescents. Another strength of the study is the inclusion of adolescents from both private and public sectors so it can be generalized to the students of both educational institutes. One of the limitations of the study was that the data were collected only from four cities in Pakistan so, the findings cannot be generalized to adolescents from other areas of Pakistan especially to adolescents from big cities.

Future Recommendations

Future researches can focus on different regions of Punjab in order to broaden the scope of the study findings. Comparative analysis among students from metropolitan cities and small cities will highlight the geo and socio-economic factors related to parental training patterns, social media use and its effects on adolescents' behavioral patterns.

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