



## Social media: As a tool to modify the components of self identity

Priyam Sharma

Ph.D. First Year, Department of Psychology, University of Delhi, New Delhi, India

### Abstract

This paper is associated with the study to identify the impact of social media on self identity among youth. How social media impacts on the construction and reconstruction of self identity of an individual which may be destined to create differences from his/her social identity. This study is to conduct a research on 100 subjects including both male and female using questionnaire method. Both qualitative and quantitative research methodology are to be used to adopt multidisciplinary approach with an attempt of without losing the specificity and objectivity in fulfilling the purpose of this paper. The paper successful in looks about the realities of social media; how it is forming and deforming the self- identity alienating youth from their social identity that may even result into the radicalization of youth in state of Kerala when coming into contact with ISIS on social media. It would further look into the possibilities of how it can act as a modifier of the human behavior in term of their self identity or their perceptions regarding themselves.

**Keywords:** social media, self identity, modify the component of self identity

### Introduction

In contemporary society there is need to use our power of observation to reveal hidden media environment and to make out meaning of our media environments and their effects. Media is considered as environments within which people sense making experience is manifested itself through and in communication. Media is to examine as physical, sensorial, perceptual and symbolic environments or structures in which people tries to make sense of their own world. According to Henri Lefebvre "Everyday life is profoundly to all activities and encompasses them with all their differences and their conflicts, it is their meeting place, their land, their common ground. And it is in the everyday life that the sum total relations that make the human and every human being a whole takes its shape and its form. Another observation is given by Dr. Navin Kumar in his article where he explains the dynamics of our everyday activities.

His article says that everyday life has both kind of potential boredom and stress at one side of coin and authenticity, vitality and growth at the other. In dealing of new forms of technology, new mode of communications resulted both feeling of loneliness and social participation at the same time. Social media like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Pinterest, Youtube, Whatsapp so forth claim to make world open and connected, it brings people more close together, and it helps in building common understanding. It is helping people to build community (being local connect global).

Identity construction is continuous process which develops through successive stages over the course of socialization with intra-psycho and relational roots (Scabini & Cigoli, 2000). People can identify with lots of different groups, like their gender, race, nationality, or political. Self identity define as having clearly self define goal, values and belief, on which

person is unequivocally committed. Which helps giving a direction, purpose and meaning to life. Social media impacts on the construction and reconstruction of self identity of an individual which may be destined to create differences from his/her social identity. My study will explore that those who use social media extremely are more likely to exhibit distorted self identity.

Self-identity comprises a number of "self-images" that lie on a continuum, with personalised self-schemata at one extreme and self-characteristics related to social categories at the other (Hagger, Anderson, Kyriakaki, Darkings, 2007).

Cheek (1989) defined PI as private self-conceptions and subjective feelings, and SI as public image and social roles and relationships. personal or individual self, which reflects our private beliefs about our psychological traits and abilities; relational self, which reflects how we see ourselves in the context of our intimate relationships; social self, which reflects how we see ourselves in more general interpersonal contexts, including our social roles and reputation (i.e., self-presentation); collective self, which reflects how we represent our various reference group identities.

Now a days, people are increasingly getting connected to social networking websites like Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp and Instagram, where users themselves publish content publicly in contrast to the traditional mass media (TV, Radio etc.) that are being relayed by the government or corporate controlled entities. Excessive engagement with these social media may create the symptoms of self-obsession, self-centric attitude and low empathy toward others. This is mainly attributed to the relative isolation from the society because of spending a bigger time on this virtual media and simultaneously ignoring or avoiding the social interactions on ground. In order to do more organized study the paper has

three objectives as given below.

### Objectives

1. To study interaction among youths on social media.
2. What is correlation between excessive use (addiction) of social media and psycho-social phenomena of self identity?
3. To analyse the impact of social media on self identity formation among youth.

### Hypothesis

1. There is significant difference between male and female in context of social media interaction.
2. Women will score higher on social media addiction scale.
3. Addictive social media user will score high on personal identity and low on social identity.

As far as impact of social media is concerned, Hakim Khalid Mehraj, Akhtar Neyaz Bhat and Hakeem Rameez Mehraj (2014) in their journal describe the various types of impact of media over individual, family and society as whole. They talk about all the positive and negative impact of media with describing different theories like the cultivation theories, social learning theories so forth. Media plays both constructive and destructive roles. they concluded their journal by putting the point that people need to decide the limits of their use.

Moreover, Danielle Bringham (2010) in his thesis tries to explain that whether watching or listening media is going to have some effect or not? This question is deal under the area of violence, alcohol, sex and body image. He found proof that media influence people which changes person's attitude about sex, morals, body image, drinking and reality. Under his research he concluded that on a large scale most students did not believe that their values, norms are influenced by the television and movies.

Next significant study is by Kun-Hu Chen and Grace Ya (2010) whose aim of the study was to investigate the relationship between self identity and health related quality of life. He concluded that for better life experience of in-depth awareness of the self is very important. Campbell's (1990) finding that self-clarity and certainty are related to self-esteem, which, in turn, is an important negative correlate with depression in many other studies (Fenzel 1994; Harter and Marold 1992). In another study, Wu and Yao (2007) also indicated positive relationship between self-certainty and adolescent quality of life while individuals perceived higher sense of control.

For more deep understanding Cecilie Schou Andreassen, Stale Pallesen, Mark D. Griffiths (2016) conducted the study whose aim was to examine the association between addictive use of social media, narcissism and self esteem. Concluding there finding as establishing a positive relationship. Narcissistic were associated with higher score on BSMAS. Female scored higher on Social media addiction scales. Addictive social media use reflects a need to feed the ego and attempt to inhibit a negative self- evaluation.

In order to study the dynamics of self Yadollah Mehria, Seyed

Mostafa Salaria, Milad Sabzeharaye Langroudi, Hamid Baharamizadeha (2011) conducted studies and try to describe self as it is a highly important psychological construct which helps in providing framework for understanding the world in better manner. They concluded that individual who reported emotional instability had difficulty in maintaining a clear sense of self in relationship, experience greatest interpersonal distress and other psychological problem. In contrast those who better able to regulate their emotion, think clearly under stress, and stay in good emotional contact also maintain clear sense of self which shows highest level of psychological and interpersonal well being. Long and Chen () his study examines to identify the impact of internet usages on self identity development. The four dimensions of identity development are – decision making, identity formation, self reflection, and ego strength or fidelity. Researcher found positive relation among them.

To support the arguments originated from qualitative analyses of the literatures described above, the primary level survey has been conducted. This supports the paper's analysis quantitatively.

### Method

#### Participants

Participant for this research paper is 15 to 29 years with the equal distribution of 50 male and 50 female, a total of 100 participants, so that the analysis could reach closer to the reality as much as possible. Their profile in terms of gender, educational qualification, profession, social category, economic status, permanent residence is created. My research is focused on youth residing in Delhi and NCR. Survey conducted included the questionnaire to calculate the scores on Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale and Aspects of Identity Questionnaire (AIQ). Also, a subjective question is taken to ask- "How is your experience with social media? Write your opinion regarding social media and its effect on you" at the end of questionnaire. These questions were framed to define in context of personal and social self experiences, with interaction to social media.

Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS) is modified version of the previously validated Bergen Facebook Addiction Scale (BFAS; Andreassen *et al.*, 2012). Modification is made by using the term 'social media' instead of 'Facebook'. Term Social Media is defined as "Facebook, whatsapp, Twitter and the like" in the instructions. All questions contain 5 point Likert scale spanning from Very rare (1) to Very often (5). The items correspond with diagnostic addiction criteria (American Psychiatric Association, 1994).

Aspect of Identity (AIQ-IV) – The development of the Aspects of Identity Questionnaire (AIQ) began with the selection of items from Sampson's (1978) list of identity characteristics that were judged to represent the domains of personal and social identity (Cheek & Briggs, 1981, 1982). Subsequently, some items were reworded, others eliminated, and new items were developed to improve the reliability and content validity of the measures (Cheek, 1982/83; Cheek & Hogan, 1981; Hogan & Cheek, 1983). Psychometric analyses indicated that certain items originally scored in the social

identity category (e.g., "Being a part of the many generations of my family") were tending to cluster on a third factor representing communal or collective identity. A third scale for this domain was developed (Cheek, Underwood, & Cutler, 1985) and has now been expanded (Cheek, Tropp, Chen, & Underwood, 1994). Neither the social nor collective scales focus on intimate relationships with close friends or romantic partners, so a fourth scale for relational identity orientation ("Being a good friend to those I really care about") was added to the AIQ-IV (Cheek, Smith, & Tropp, 2002). Four -factor model of AIQ is designed in order to study four different component of self identity which are given below-

1. Personal or individual self, which reflects our private beliefs about our psychological traits and abilities.
2. Relational self, which reflects how we see ourselves in the context of our intimate relationships.
3. Social self, which reflects how we see ourselves in more general interpersonal contexts, including our social roles and reputation (i.e., self-presentation).
4. Collective self, which reflects how we represent our various reference group identities.

**Material and Procedure**

Participants were invited to complete questionnaire. Appropriate instructions were given regarding assigning their responses in close ended and open ended questions. The attempt has been made to diversify the profile of these people as much as possible in terms of their professions, social groups and socio-economic status as well. Data were analysed using Microsoft excel for closed ended questions and plotted on scattered diagram and separate subjective analysis were done for open ended questions.

**Result**

Percentage of addictive use of social media among total youth participants was 22%. Out of which Female addicted with social media is 25% and male constitute 19.5%. It justifies the hypothesis that women among the social media addicted individuals are higher in terms of percentage. A variety of reason may be responsible. The prominent one may be because women are not as active in public space as men are. Although society in India is changing overwhelmingly, it traditionally being patriarchal and has been providing less exposure and less avenues of free interaction face to face, women use to spend more time on virtual media than their male counterpart. This also proves another hypothesis correct that there are significant differences between male and female in context of social media interactions.

Addicted social media Participants reported the mean scores on the AIQ-IV subscales as; Personal identity 16.1 and social identity 13.571. For MALE who are addicted, correlation coefficient between the addiction of social media with their personal identity is 0.2106 ( $R^2 = 0.2106$ ) and with social identity is 0.1081 ( $R^2 = 0.1081$ ). While for female who overuse social media, correlation coefficient between scale on social media addiction scale and their personal identity is 0.1121 ( $R^2 = 0.1121$ ) and with social identity is 0.0019 ( $R^2 = 0.0019$ ). This correlation among the variables can be easily seen in the following scatter diagrams.

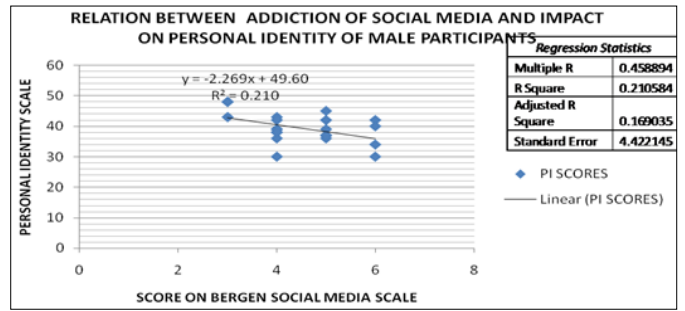


Fig 1

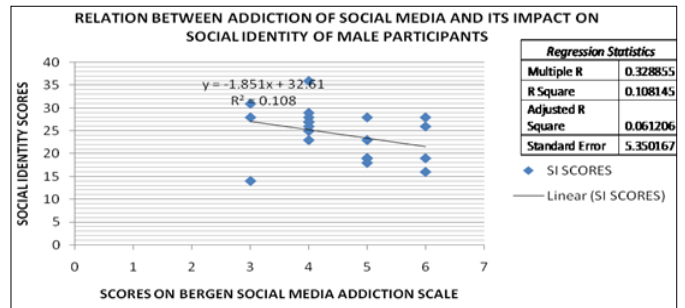


Fig 2

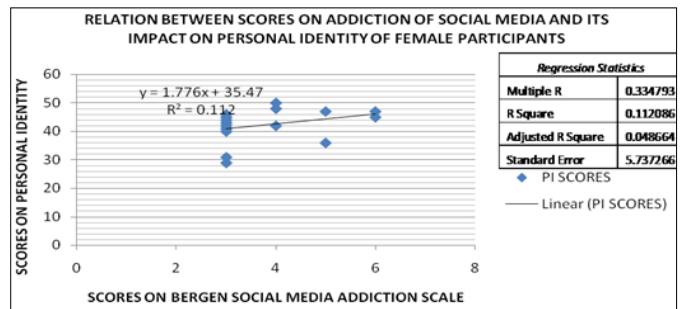


Fig 3

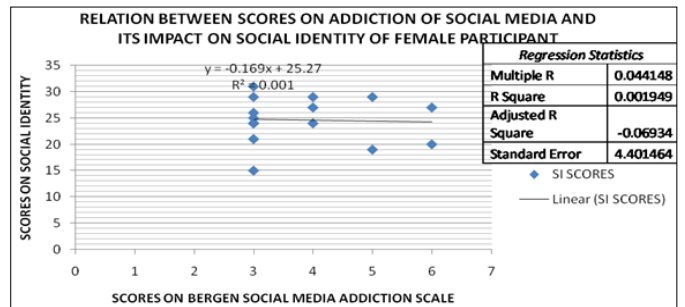


Fig 4

**Discussion**

Fig-1 and fig-2, shows that with the increasing level of addiction of social media, the personal identity (personal aspirations and standard, for example, feeling that I am a sensitive person) and social identity (basis of self regard-public recognition and praise from others for example, feeling that I am a popular professor) gets weakened. This distorts the original self identity of males what they have before being addicted to social media. And, this distortion is even higher in case of personal self- identity (private belief regarding

personal traits, values and abilities).

Fig-3 and Fig-4 depicts very interesting findings about the female participants. With the addiction level of social media increasing, the personal self identity gets strengthen among the women. This is entirely opposite to the case of male participant. This shows that a women who is much addicted to the social media has very exaggerated and inflated private beliefs about her abilities, values, and traits. This is pointing towards the development of Narcissistic characteristics when she develops self-loving, self-pampered and unsympathetic towards other individual.

As far as psychological application of this research finding is concerned, the present trend of the problem of mis-utilisation and under or over- utilization of social media by an individual and its subsequent alteration of self-identity can be materialized in the favor of getting benefits from our demographic dividend. Demographic dividend here refers to the competitive advantages our economy has because of the fact that India has the largest share of youth (working) population. Demographic dividend occurs when the proportion of working people in the total population is high because this indicates that more people have the potential to be productive and contribute to growth of the economy. Youth's self perception and self-belief on their private abilities can enhance the productivity and economic efficiency of India, if their reformation of self by social media be in a right orientation. Otherwise, the same thing may turn the youth's belief and perception in favour of Naxalism, insurgency, left- wing extremism, communalism or any other violence threatening the unity and integrity of India. And another reality is, it is the youth in India who are going to be affected mostly either positively or negatively. A robust, cheaper, safe and optimal use of social media (i.e. core subject of my research paper if utilized properly) would be an instrument of successful formulation and implementation of government policies and programmes.

Also, the paper provides social, psychological, and political dimensions associated with the propagation on social media and how that influence the self- identity formulation and consequently development of personality traits, value system and attitude among the youth. Psychological application of the paper would enhance the academic output along with an attempt to provide solution to the psychological problem associated with the social media. As these are highly speculated in the country where the influence of social media is continuously expanding and hence reconfiguring the self-identity of youth.

As far as limitation of the paper is concerned, the correlation co-efficient in all these cases (fig: 1, 2, 3, 4) are not much high that shows there are not so much strong relationships among the variables on x and y axes. However, that also gives a clue to the argument negating the assumption already established in today's scenario that the overuse of social media necessarily impact personal and social identity. The findings here show that though social media affects the personal and social identity but neither uniformly in all situations nor in a particular direction. This reinforces the notion that a person even if overusing social media shows interest in the contents, posts or videos which are in accordance with his/her pre-

established perception, biasness, and ideas. He/she avoids those things on social media which he doesn't like and therefore even addiction of social media can not necessarily impact his identity; personal or social.

So, in order to modify the components of self identity in favour of development of a peaceful and prosperous society, the nature of contents being posted on the social media is also important. These contents act as input which can be an agent of change as far as the perceptions, belief and values are concerned that one carries prior to get engaged with social media. If one starts spending a good time on social media, it is nature of the contents of posts, videos, photographs, which either reinforces the perceptions and beliefs already one has or start building self identity in a different way. For getting influence in a way helpful in making such a self identity which could be beneficial for the individual and society, contents on social media should be provided to build the perception and self of such kind.

## References

1. Barker RG. Ecological psychology: Concepts and methods for studying the environment of human behavior. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. 1968.
2. Boase J, Horrigan J, Wellman B, Rainie L. Pew report: The strength of Internet ties. Washington, DC: Pew Internet and American Life Project. 2006.
3. Bowd K. Social media and news media: Building new publics or fragmenting audiences? In Griffiths M. & Barbour K. (Eds.), *Making Publics, Making Places*. South Australia: University of Adelaide Press. 2016, pp. 129-144.
4. Boyd D. Why youth (heart) social network sites: The role of networked publics in teenage social life. In D. Buckingham (Ed.), *Youth, identity, and digital media*. Cambridge: MIT Press. 2007, pp. 119-142.
5. Coiera E. Social networks, social media, and social diseases. *BMJ: British Medical Journal*. 2013; 346(7912):22-24.
6. Donath J. Identity and deception in the virtual community. In M. Smith & P. Kollack (Eds.), *Communities in cyberspace*. London, England: Routledge. 1998, pp. 29-59.
7. Dutton W, Helsper EJ, Gerber MM. *The Internet in Britain: 2009*. Oxford, England: Oxford Internet Institute. 2009.
8. Earl J. The dynamics of protest-related diffusion on the web. *Information, Communication & Society*. 2010; 13:209-225.
9. Ellison N, Steinfeld C, Lampe C. The benefits of Facebook "friends": Social capital and college students' use of online social network sites. *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication*. 2007.
10. Gilbert E, Karahalios K. Predicting tie strength with social media. In CHI '09: Proceedings of the 27th annual SIGCHI conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems. New York, NY: ACM Press. 2009, pp. 211-220.
11. Goffman E. *The presentation of self in everyday life*. New York, NY: Anchor Books. 1959.

12. Gray M. *Out in the country: Youth, media and queer visibility in rural America*. New York: New York University Press. 2009.
13. Greitemeyer T. Effects of Prosocial Media on Social Behavior: When and Why Does Media Exposure Affect Helping and Aggression? *Current Directions in Psychological Science*. 2011; 20(4):251-255.
14. Hewitt A, Forte A. Crossing boundaries: Identity management and student/faculty relationships on the Facebook. Poster session presented at CSCW, Banff, Alberta, Canada. 2006.
15. Hogg M, Ridgeway C. Social Identity: Sociological and Social Psychological Perspectives. *Social Psychology Quarterly*. 2003; 66(2):97-100.
16. Hogg M, Terry D, White K. A Tale of Two Theories: A Critical Comparison of Identity Theory with Social Identity Theory. *Social Psychology Quarterly*. 1995; 58(4):255-269.
17. Howard J. Social Psychology of Identities. *Annual Review of Sociology*. 2000; 26:367-393.
18. Kleine R, Kleine S, Kernan J. Mundane Consumption and the Self: A Social-Identity Perspective. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*. 1993; 2(3):209-235.
19. Kuo A, Margalit Y. Measuring Individual Identity: Experimental Evidence. *Comparative Politics*. 2012; 44(4):459-479.
20. Marcussen K. Identities, Self-Esteem, and Psychological Distress: An Application of Identity-Discrepancy Theory. *Sociological Perspectives*. 2006; 49(1):1-24.
21. Meyrowitz J. *No sense of place: The impact of electronic media on social behavior*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. 1986.
22. Miller D, Costa E, Haynes N, McDonald T, Nicolescu R, Sinanan J *et al*. Academic studies of social media. In *How the World Changed Social Media*. London. 2016, pp. 9-24.
23. Miller D, Costa E, Haynes N, McDonald T, Nicolescu, R *et al*. Does social media make people happier? In *How the World Changed Social Media*. London. 2016, pp. 193-204.
24. Pratt M, Foreman P, Scott S, Lane V, Gioia D, Schultz M, Terry D. Identity Dialogues. *The Academy of Management Review*. 2000; 25(1):141-152.
25. Quan-Haase A, Collins JL. I'm there, but I might not want to talk to you. *Information, Communication & Society*. 2008; 11:526-543.
26. Rea M, Silver D. Personal Identity and Psychological Continuity. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*. 2000; 61(1):185-193.
27. Robert EL, Roberts, Bengtson V. Relationships with Parents, Self-Esteem, and Psychological Well-Being in Young Adulthood. *Social Psychology Quarterly*. 1993; 56(4):263-277.
28. Robinson L. The cyber self: The self-ing project goes online, symbolic interaction in the digital age. *New Media & Society*. 2007; 9:93-110.
29. Turkle S. *Life on the screen: Identity in the age of the Internet*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster. 1997.
30. Walker M, Lynn F. The Embedded Self: A Social Networks Approach to Identity Theory. *Social Psychology Quarterly*. 2013; 76(2):151-179.
31. Watson J. Psychology as the behaviorist views it. *Psychological review*. 1913; 20:158-177.