THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE AND EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

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submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of Bachelor of Psychology (Honours with Research), to MIER College of Education (Autonomous), is an authentic record of my own research work carried out under the supervision of Dr. Neha Jaral; Assistant Professor,

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c) All sources of information used in this study have been duly acknowledged.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SMUQ	Social Media Usage Questionnaire
PANAS	Positive and Negative Affect Schedule
APA	American Psychological Association
FOMO	Fear of Missing Out
SD	Standard Deviation
M	Mean
t-test	Independent Samples t-test
R	Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient
N	Total Sample Size
EE	Emotional Expression

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(SMUQ)	Social Media Usage Questionnaire
(PANAS)	Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS)

ABSTRACT

Social media has become an important part of the daily lives of college students, influencing the way they communicate, experience emotions, and interact with others. The present study aimed to examine the relationship between social media usage and emotional expression among college students in Jammu, India, while also exploring gender differences. A total of 150 undergraduate students (N = 150), including both male and female participants from MIER College of Education, Jammu, were included in the study. A cross-sectional descriptive correlational research design was used. Data were collected using two standardized psychological tools: the Social Media Usage Questionnaire (SMUQ) and the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS). The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson's Product Moment Correlation, and the independent samples t-test.

The findings showed that male students had a slightly higher mean score on social media usage (M = 44.10, SD = 7.61) compared to female students (M = 43.06, SD = 7.91), indicating similar levels of social media engagement between both groups. In terms of emotional expression, female students obtained a slightly higher mean PANAS score (M = 59.74, SD = 8.43) than male students (M = 59.27, SD = 10.20), reflecting only a small difference in emotional affect. Further analysis showed that gender differences in social media usage and emotional expression were limited, and the relationship between social media usage and emotional expression was weak within the present sample.

The findings suggest that although social media plays an important role in the lives of college students and influences their emotional experiences; its direct connection with emotional expression may not be very strong in this group. These results have been interpreted in light of Erik Erikson's Psychosocial Model (1950), which explains how emotional behavior is shaped through the interaction between internal psychological processes and external social influences. The study highlights the importance of understanding students' digital behavior and offers useful implications for promoting balanced social media use, emotional awareness, and psychosocial well-being among college students.

Keywords: Social Media Usage; Emotional Expression; College Students; Emotional Well-being; SMUQ; PANAS.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In the twenty-first century, the rapid advancement of digital technology has fundamentally transformed the way individuals communicate, interact, and express their emotions. Among the most significant developments is the emergence and widespread adoption of social media platforms, which have become deeply embedded in the daily lives of young people across the globe. Platforms such as Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook, Snapchat and X (formerly Twitter) have redefined the boundaries of social interaction, enabling individuals to connect, share experiences and express their innermost feelings in virtual spaces that transcend geographical limitations.

College students, as a distinct demographic group, are particularly influenced by these digital developments. At a stage of life marked by identity formation, emotional exploration, academic pressure and growing social independence, they turn to social media not merely for entertainment but as a primary medium for emotional expression, peer connection and self-presentation. The frequency and nature of their engagement with these platforms directly shapes their emotional experiences, influencing how they feel, how they communicate those feelings and how they regulate their emotional responses over time.

Despite the growing body of research exploring social media use among young adults, the specific relationship between social media and emotional expression among college students remains a subject requiring deeper analytical attention. This chapter provides the conceptual and theoretical foundation of the present study by defining key terms, tracing the historical evolution of social media, examining the nature of emotional expression in digital contexts and situating the study within Erik Erikson's Psychosocial Model of Development.

1.1 Social Media

According to Oxford Social media refers to “websites and applications that enable users to create, share, and interact with content in virtual communities and networks.”

These platforms allow individuals to express opinions, emotions, and experiences through text, images, videos, and other multimedia formats, while facilitating real-time and asynchronous social interaction (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social media is characterized by user-generated content, interactivity, and the formation of online social networks, which distinguish it from traditional forms of mass communication.

In the context of college students, social media serves as a significant medium for social connection, self-presentation, and emotional expression. Popular platforms such as Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook, Snapchat, and X (formerly Twitter) ++provide spaces where users can engage in social comparison, seek social support, and construct digital identities (Boyd & Ellison, 2007).

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social media as a group of internet-based applications built on the technological foundations of Web 2.0 which allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content. “For the purpose of this study, social media refers to: “Online platforms and mobile applications such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, X (Twitter), YouTube, and TikTok that facilitate communication, interaction, sharing of information, and expression of emotions among users. “Key characteristics relevant to this study include, Interactivity, User-generated content, Real-time communication, Emotionalvisibility,Public and private expression options.

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In the twenty-first century, social media has become one of the most influential technological developments, revolutionizing how people communicate, learn, and interact with the world. Social media refers to web-based and mobile platforms that allow individuals to create, share, and exchange content, information,

and ideas in virtual communities (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and X (formerly Twitter) have become essential tools for self-expression, entertainment, and social connection, especially among young adults. According to the Pew Research Center (2022), more than 90% of individuals aged 18 to 25 use at least one social media platform daily, spending an average of several hours per day online. For college students, these platforms provide not only entertainment but also a sense of belonging, identity exploration, and communication with peers across geographical boundaries (Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012).

Social media has made communication easier and faster; however, it also brings emotional and psychological challenges. The constant exposure to idealized portrayals of others' lives, achievements, and appearances often leads users to compare themselves, creating feelings of envy and inadequacy (Appel et al., 2016). Moreover, the need to maintain an appealing online presence can cause emotional strain, anxiety, and a constant fear of missing out (FOMO), which refers to the anxiety that arises when individuals believe others are having rewarding experiences from which they are absent (Tandon et al., 2021). Excessive and uncontrolled social media use has been associated with mental fatigue, distraction, and emotional exhaustion, particularly among young adults who struggle to balance academic, social, and personal demands (Dhir et al., 2018). These outcomes highlight that social media, while designed for connection, can paradoxically increase feelings of isolation and emotional instability.

College students are especially vulnerable to the effects of social media because they are at a stage of emotional development, identity formation, and peer dependence. They often seek social approval through likes, comments, and followers, which may temporarily boostselfesteem but can also lower confidence when feedback is negative or absent (Tandoc, Ferrucci, & Duffy, 2015). Research has shown that passive browsingsuch as scrolling through others' posts without interaction can increase depressive symptoms, while active engagement such as Chatting and sharing content) may improve social connectedness (Kross et al., 2013).

Historical Evolution of Social Mediadid not emerge suddenly rather, it developed gradually through theevolution of internet technology and communication

systems. The early history of online communication can be traced to online bulletin boards, discussion forums, and chat rooms in the late 1990s. People began using websites to write online diaries, blogs, and personal reflections, creating early forms of emotional sharing communities (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

With the development of Web 2.0, the internet transformed from a static information display environment into an interactive, user-controlled platform. This shift enabled people to create, edit, and share content instantly. The early 2000s witnessed the emergence of social networking platforms such as Friendster and MySpace, followed by Facebook in 2004, which revolutionized global communication by enabling people to build networks, share experiences, and communicate emotions in a virtual environment. , platforms like Instagram (2010), Snapchat (2011), and TikTok (2016) introduced highly visual and multimedia-oriented environments. These allowed users to communicate through images, short videos, reels, live streams, and creative digitalexpressions. Features such as likes, comments, shares, reactions, stories, tags, and status updates made emotional visibility much more public and instantaneous. The rise of WhatsApp and private messaging created intimate spaces for emotional conversations, while community groups and social pages enabled collective emotional participation.

For college students today, social media is deeply integrated into daily activities. It is used not only for entertainment but also for learning, socialization, identity construction, activism, and emotional release. Historically, therefore, social media evolved from basic online communication tools into powerful socio-emotional ecosystems, shaping how individuals express feelings and build emotional connections. Overall, social media acts as both a facilitator of connection and a source of emotional vulnerability. Understanding how it affects college students' emotional health is essential in developing strategies for balanced and mindful usage in today's digitally driven academic environment (Pew Research Center, 2022)

Social media has brought undeniable benefits to young people. It enhances connectivity, provides platforms for self-expression, promotes information exchange, and helps individuals form communities around shared interests. Students can easily access academic resources, participate in discussions, and express their creativity through visual and written content (Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012). It also allows for

real-time interaction and emotional support from peers, which can strengthen friendships and reduce feelings of isolation. In many cases, social media acts as a coping mechanism, helping students to vent emotions or seek motivation during stressful periods (Frison &Eggermont, 2015).

One of the most prominent emotional challenges linked to social media is social comparison. Social comparison theory suggests that individuals evaluate themselves by comparing their abilities, achievements, and lifestyle to those of others (Festinger, 1954). On social media, people often present idealized versions of their lives, showcasing success, beauty, or happiness. When college students view these highly filtered posts, they may perceive their own lives as less fulfilling, leading to feelings of inadequacy, envy, or low self-esteem (Appel et al., 2016).

Studies have shown that passive browsingwhere users view content without actively engagingcan significantly increase negative emotions compared to active participation, such as chatting or content creation (Verduyn et al., 2017). This suggests that the type of social media use matters as much as the amount of use.

Social media tools comprise an extensive array of platforms and software intended to help people and organizations with content creation, performance analysis, audience engagement, and social media presence management. Facebook profiles come with an integrated analytics tool called Facebook Insights. It offers information on page performance, post reach and interaction, and audience demographics, assisting companies better understand their Facebook audience and craft effective content strategies. Buffer is a media management application that allows users to plan posts, evaluate performance, and manage many accounts from a single dashboard. Twitter owns Tweet Deck, a Twitter management tool. It lets users to watch several Twitter accounts, schedule tweets, and create custom timelines to organize the material. Social media platforms have significantly influenced college students' academic, social, and personal life. Social media applications make it easy for college students to interact and keep in touch with their peers, friends, family, and teachers. These technologies support instant messaging, group chats, and video conferencing, allowing students to effortlessly collaborate on projects, discuss homework, and exchange materials. Gurumoorthy, D. S.2025

According to Y.K. Dwivedi et al. (2021), billions of people worldwide now use the web, social networks, smartphone applications, and other electronic communication technologies on a daily basis. The term "social media" describes a range of technological tools that help users exchange information and ideas. It has completely changed how people interact, communicate, and obtain information, having a significant impact on many facets of daily life, especially for young adults. Social media use has been seen to have a significant impact on students' lives. Students no longer use traditional learning methods for their education; instead, they choose to use social media for learning and other educational purposes. Students can easily access a variety of upto-date information via online platforms such as social media. (Kandpal Sharma Arpita, et.al, 2023). Students are a big demographic that is greatly impacted by the widespread usage of social media because they are digital natives

With the rapid development of media technologies, it has become increasingly common for adolescents to form “disembedded” connections with the world through social media platforms. According to the 55th Statistical Report on China’s Internet Development by the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC), the number of internet users in China has reached 1.108 billion, with an internet penetration rate of 78.6%. Among these users, 1.101 billion individuals engage with social networks, comprising 99.3% of the total internet user population. Notably, adolescents aged 10–29 make up 26.1% of the total user base, underscoring the prominence of young people in the digital landscape (China Internet Network Information Center, 2025

Advocates of technological optimism highlight how decentralized platforms empower users by challenging traditional educational hierarchies and broadening access to learning resources. In contrast, critics argue that algorithmic surveillance and data control can lead to an identity crisis and other negative outcomes (Liang and Chen, 2025). Second, the issue of technological dependence and alienation. The constant connectivity provided by social media fragments attention and blurs individual values, with excessive use linked to changes in neuroplasticity and a diminished perception of reality (Lau, 2017).

Third,the relationship between media use and mental health. While the drive for technological adaptation is often praised, it can trigger “digital anxiety” and disrupt academic and life outcomes through problematic internet use (Wu, 1998).

When it comes to academic performance (Al-Yafi et al., 2018), the findings of existing research are often contradictory. On one hand, social media is viewed as a tool that can enhance learning by providing decentralized access to knowledge and fostering informal learning communities. It also serves as a valuable resource for expanding academic information channels (Chen et al., 2021; Owusu, 2020). On the other hand, excessive immersion in virtual social interactions can deplete cognitive resources, leading to reduced time and energy for academic engagement (Evers et al., 2020). Social media multitasking has been shown to have a direct negative effect on academic performance (Lau, 2017). This paradoxical relationship necessitates further investigation, particularly through the lens of psychological mechanisms that may mediate these effects.(Gong et al., 2025)

Information and Communication Technology plays an important role in higher education. Now a day’s people gathering information, photograph and video sharing through different social media websites. The aim of the study is analyze and evaluate the impact of various social media on students. It also analyses which social media and technological devices put more impact on student life including their academic performance, social behaviors and other issues. Peoples search information through websites and share information through different electronic devices such as Television, Mobile phones, Pager, Personal computer and Desktop by using internet through Face book, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Google+, Flipchart, Vine, Tumbler, Whatsapp etc. Now a day in school and colleges are run the classes through online, smart class and circulate information through using electronic devices. Students and faculty members circulates notes and sharing information through electron devices by using internet facility. The study is focus on objectives, benefits and drawbacks of ICT in higher education. Students areusing social media network on daily basis, it is need to analyze how social media impact on students and how it useful(Basri et al., 2018)

Societies of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region have been witnessing for years an apparent movement towards more openness, freedom, democracy and

increased incomes, and the advancement of modern technology in various communication means. This openness led to the turbulent increase in social media use, such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube, and Twitter. The objective is to develop guidelines and policies for the proper use that raise students' level of academic achievement and its importance in developing positive cognitive and entertainment purposes that bring public benefit.(Al-Husain & R, 2021a).

1.2 EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION

1.2.1 EMOTION

Emotion is a fundamental aspect of human experience and plays a crucial role in shaping human thoughts, behaviour, and interpersonal relationships. It influences how individuals perceive their environment, respond to situations, and interact with others. Emotions are complex psychological states that involve subjective feelings, physiological arousal, cognitive evaluation, and expressive behaviour (Izard, 1991; Scherer, 2005). Due to their significant influence on mental functioning and social adjustment, emotions have remained a central area of interest within psychological research.

From a theoretical perspective, emotions serve important adaptive and survival functions. They help individuals respond to environmental demands, guide decision-making, and facilitate communication of internal states. Classical theories of emotion have attempted to explain the origin and experience of emotions. The JamesLange theory proposed that emotions arise from the perception of physiological changes (James, 1884), whereas the Cannon–Bard theory suggested that emotional experience and physiological arousal occur simultaneously (Cannon, 1927). Later, the two-factor theory by Schachter and Singer (1962) emphasized the interaction of physiological arousal and cognitive interpretation in the experience of emotion.

Emotion is also closely associated with cognitive processes and motivation. According to cognitive appraisal theory, emotions emerge as a result of an individual's interpretation and evaluation of events rather than the events themselves (Lazarus, 1991). This explains individual differences in emotional reactions to similar situations. Emotions influence motivation by directing attention, enhancing

persistence, and shaping goal-oriented behaviour, thereby playing a significant role in learning and performance.

In contemporary psychology, emotions are recognized as essential to mental health and well-being. Difficulties in emotion regulation are central to several psychological disorders, including anxiety disorders, depression, and mood disorders (Gross & Muñoz, 1995; American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Effective regulation of emotions is associated with psychological resilience, adaptive coping, and overall well-being (Gross, 2015).

According to the APA Dictionary of Psychology**,** emotional expression refers to: observable verbal and non-verbal behaviors through which individuals communicate their emotional states to others." Traditionally, emotional expression includes facial expressions, gestures, speech tone, crying, laughing, or physical reactions. In digital environments, emotional expression expands to include: Emotional captions, Status updates, Emojis and reactions, Memes and GIFs ,Photos and videos conveying feelings, Indirect or symbolic emotional messages In this study, emotional expression refers to: the process through which college students communicate their feelings such as happiness, sadness, stress, anger, anxiety, fear, or affection through social media platforms either directly or indirectly.

Emotion is a fundamental aspect of human psychology that shapes how individuals perceive, think, and behave in daily life. It is commonly defined as a complex state of feeling that results in physical and psychological changes influencing thought and behavior (Gross, 1998). Emotions serve as the foundation for social interactions, motivation, and decisionmaking. They are not random reactions but structured responses to internal or external stimuli that guide human adaptation and survival. Emotions can be broadly categorized as positive (such as joy, love, excitement, and contentment) or negative (such as sadness, anger, fear, and anxiety), both of which play essential roles in maintaining psychological balance (Izard, 2009).

During young adulthood, especially among college students, emotions become particularly significant. This stage of life involves academic stress, social adjustment, identity formation, and increasing independence from family, all of which evoke strong emotional experiences. College students often face emotional turbulence as

they attempt to balance studies, friendships, family expectations, and career aspirations (Salovey, Mayer, & Caruso, 2002). The ability to recognize, understands, and managesthese emotionsknown as emotional intelligenceis critical for mental health and success. Studies have found that students with higher emotional intelligence experience better academic performance, healthier relationships, and greater psychological well-being (Petrides et al., 2004).

However, the modern digital environment has introduced new challenges to emotional stability. The rise of social media platforms has transformed how emotions are experienced, expressed, and regulated. Traditional face-to-face interactions have increasingly been replaced by online communication, where emotions are often conveyed through posts, images, emojis, and reactions (Derks et al., 2008). This shift has created a digital emotional ecosystem—one that amplifies certain feelings while suppressing others. For instance, positive emotions are frequently showcased online, while negative emotions are often concealed or filtered, creating unrealistic expectations of constant happiness (Chou & Edge, 2012). Such selective emotional presentation can cause users to perceive their lives as less fulfilling compared to others, leading to emotional dissatisfaction and envy.

Emotions in the social media context are strongly influenced by social comparison. According to Festinger's (1954) Social Comparison Theory, individuals evaluate themselves based on comparisons with others. On social media, these comparisons are magnified due to the exposure to curated and idealized images of peers. Research indicates that frequent comparison with others' achievements or appearances on social platforms can lead to negative emotional outcomes such as sadness, frustration, jealousy, and decreased self-esteem (Appel et al., 2016).

Conversely, receiving positive feedbacklikes, comments, or sharescan trigger short-term emotional satisfaction and feelings of social acceptance (Valkenburg, Peter, & Schouten, 2006).

Emotion is a complex psychological state involving subjective experiences, physiological responses, and behavioral expressions (Gross, 1998). It plays a critical role in shaping thoughts, behaviors, and social relationships. Positive emotions such as joy, gratitude, and affection enhance mental health, resilience, and motivation,

whereas negative emotions like anger, envy, and sadness can lead to emotional distress and lowered well being (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). Among college students, emotions influence academic performance, decisionmaking, social relationships, and overall quality of life. The ability to manage and regulate emotions effectively is therefore essential for personal growth and mental stability during this stage of life.

In the digital era, emotions are strongly influenced by social media interactions. The act of sharing content, receiving feedback, and comparing oneself with others continuously triggers emotional responses. Research has shown that passive social media use (viewing others' posts) is linked with higher levels of envy and dissatisfaction, while active use (direct interaction or posting content) tends to enhance happiness and social belonging (Verduyn et al., 2017). Emotional effects are also influenced by individual factors such as self-esteem, personality, and perceived social support. For instance, students with low self-esteem or high social anxiety may experience more negative emotional reactions online (Best, Manktelow, & Taylor, 2014).

Social media can both enhance and harm emotional well-being. On one hand, it provides a space for emotional expression and support, allowing users to share their struggles and connect with empathetic peers (Frison &Eggermont, 2015). On the other hand, the pressure to present an idealized self-image and the exposure to online criticism can create emotional exhaustion, anxiety, and depression (Lin et al., 2016). Over time, such experiences may lead to "social media fatigue," characterized by emotional tiredness and disengagement due to constant digital stimulation (Bright, Kleiser, & Grau, 2015). Therefore, emotions and social media share a reciprocal relationship each influencing and shaping the other.

Emotions are also linked to mental health outcomes. Prolonged negative emotional states caused by online comparison, cyberbullying, or validation-seeking can lead to depression, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion (Lin et al., 2016). Studies have found that students who spend excessive time on social media often experience mood fluctuations, irritability, and decreased satisfaction with life (Kross et al., 2013). On the other hand, social media can foster positive emotions when used for supportive communication, self expression, and maintaining relationships. This duality suggests that social media is both an amplifier and regulator of emotion, depending on user

behavior and intent.

In the context of college life, understanding emotion is essential because emotional wellbeing directly affects learning, motivation, and overall mental health. Emotionally unstable students are more likely to experience academic burnout, social withdrawal, and psychological distress (Sharma & Sharma, 2020). Therefore, examining how social media influences emotional states provides valuable insights into the broader issue of student wellbeing in the digital age. By analyzing the emotional patterns associated with online behavior, educators and psychologists can develop interventions that promote digital emotional literacythe ability to navigate emotions effectively in online spaces.

Conceptual Understanding of Emotional Expression in the Digital Age - Emotional expression has traditionally been studied in face-to-face settings. However, digitalization has transformed the nature of emotional communication. Online platforms allow both immediate emotional disclosure and controlled self-presentation. Students may openly express happiness through celebration posts or hide sadness behind filtered images. Emotional display often takes symbolic forms such as emojis, especially when students struggle to verbally articulate emotions. Digital emotional communication canbe: Authentic: genuinely sharing feelings Performative: expressing emotions to gain reactions Suppressed: avoiding expression due to fear of judgment Over-expressed: excessive emotional sharing Indirect: vague emotional posts (e.g., Feeling Low) Therefore, emotional expression on social media must be understood not simply as communication but as a psychological behavior influenced by social norms, peer expectations, personal confidence, emotional intelligence, and cultural context.

Success and fulfillment in life are not solely determined by intelligence (Doğru, 2023). Many individuals with high academic prowess may struggle with social interactions and workplace dynamics (Han et al., 2022). While a high IQ can lead to prestigious opportunities, it is often emotional intelligence (EQ) that enables us to form meaningful relationships and navigate complexities (Jain et al., 2018). Enhanced emotional intelligence is not just a skill, but a potential catalyst for fostering essential qualities in students. It has the potential to foster qualities such as motivation, self-regulation, and coping mechanisms to handle stress (Bai, Nie, & Lee,

2022). These attributes can significantly enhance a student's ability to focus, endure challenges, and recover from setbacks, thereby forming a resilient foundation for academic success (de Bruyn, 2023). Students endowed with higher EI levels are often more attuned to their emotional states, enabling them to manage the pressures of academia with greater effectiveness (Salih et al., 2024). Such students are also more inclined to seek assistance, when necessary, cultivate positive relationships with their peers and instructors, and contribute to creating an encouraging learning atmosphereall of which can further facilitate their academic success (Hamid, 2025; Salih et al., 2024).(Garner et al., 2025).

1.3 SOCIAL MEDIA AND EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION RELATIONSHIP

Social media has become an integral part of the daily lives of college students, serving as a major platform for communication, self-expression, and social interaction. With the widespread use of platforms such as Instagram, WhatsApp, Snapchat, and X (formerly Twitter), students increasingly rely on digital spaces to express their emotions, thoughts, and personal experiences. Emotional expression through social media includes sharing feelings through text posts, images, videos, emojis, and reactions, making it a significant medium for emotional communication in contemporary youth culture (Nesi et al., 2017).

The relationship between social media use and emotional expression is complex and multidimensional. Social media provides college students with opportunities for emotional disclosure and social support, particularly for those who may find face-to-face emotional expression difficult. Online environments can reduce social anxiety and fear of judgment, allowing individuals to express emotions more openly (Valkenburg & Peter, 2011). Positive emotional expression on social media, such as sharing achievements or joyful experiences, can enhance feelings of connectedness and self-esteem among college students (Verduyn et al., 2017).

However, excessive or maladaptive use of social media can negatively influence emotional expression. Research indicates that frequent comparison with others' curated online lives may lead to emotional distress, feelings of inadequacy, anxiety, and depressive symptoms among college students (Kross et al., 2013). In

such cases, emotional expression may become distorted, with individuals suppressing negative emotions or presenting an idealized version of themselves online. This emotional incongruence can impact emotional well-being and authenticity (Appel et al., 2016).

Furthermore, social media significantly influences emotion regulation strategies. College students may use social media as a coping mechanism to distract themselves from negative emotions or to seek reassurance and validation through likes, comments, and shares (Gross, 2015; Nesi &Prinstein, 2015). While such strategies may offer temporary emotional relief, dependence on external validation can weaken intrinsic emotional regulation skills over time.

In conclusion, social media plays a dual role in shaping emotional expression among college students. It can serve as a supportive platform for emotional sharing and social connection, while also posing risks to emotional well-being when used excessively or in maladaptive ways. An analytical understanding of this relationship is essential for promoting healthy social media use and fostering emotional awareness and regulation among college students. The present study seeks to examine this relationship in detail, focusing on patterns of social media use and their impact on emotional expression.

1.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

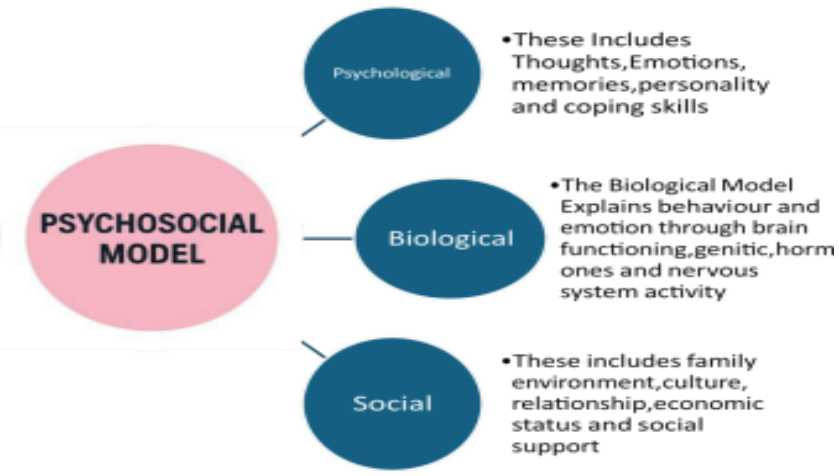


Figure 1.4 PSYCHOSOCIAL MODEL

Theoretical Framework of Psychosocial Model by (Erik Erikson, 1950) –

The present study is grounded in the Psychosocial Model proposed by Erik Erikson (1950), which forms a significant part of his broader Theory of Psychosocial Development. Erikson emphasized that human development is not purely biological or psychological; instead, it is the result of a continuous interaction between the individual's inner psychological world and the external social environment. Thus, emotional life, personality development, and behavioral expressions emerge from a dynamic interplay between psychological processes and social influences.

The psychosocial model explains that an individual's thoughts, emotions, self-perception, coping mechanisms, and emotional expressions are consistently shaped, reinforced, oraltered by social relationships, peer influence, societal expectations, cultural norms, andsocialvalidation.Therefore, human behavior cannot be understood in isolation; it must be interpreted within the context of the social world in which the individual exists.

In the context of the present study, this model helps in understanding how college students' emotional expression on social media is influenced by both their internal emotional conditions and the external social environment created by online interactions.The psychosocial model explains human behavior and emotional development as theresult of a continuous interaction between psychological factors (such as emotions, personality, selfesteem, and emotional regulation) and social factors (such as socialrelationships, peer interactions, cultural influences, and social validation

1.4.1 PSYCHOLOGICALFACTORS

Within Erikson's Psychosocial Model, psychological factors refer to the internal emotional, cognitive, and personality-related processes that shape how an individual thinks, feels, reacts, and expresses emotions. These internal factors exist within the individual before and during their interaction with the social world, and they largely determine how a person interprets experiences, including those occurring on social media. Psychological factors include emotions, personality traits, self-esteem, emotional intelligence, coping mechanisms, resilience, self-concept, and emotional regulation abilities. Each of these components plays an important role in determining

how college students experience and express emotions online. For instance, a student with high self esteem and a stable identity is more likely to use social media confidently, express emotions appropriately, and remain psychologically unaffected by negative comments or social comparison. In contrast, a student with low self-esteem or emotional insecurity may constantly seek approval through likes, comments, or followers and may feel hurt or anxious when they do not receive expected validation. Similarly, personality traits influence online emotional expression: extroverted individuals may openly share feelings, interact frequently, and express emotions directly, while introverted students may prefer restricted sharing, indirect expression, or private emotional communication.

Another crucial psychological factor is emotional intelligence, which refers to the ability to understand one's own emotions, recognize emotions in others, and manage emotional responses effectively. Students with high emotional intelligence tend to regulate their emotional reactions on social media, think before posting, avoid unnecessary emotional outbursts, and seek healthy ways to express feelings. Conversely, those with lower emotional intelligence may react impulsively, engage in online arguments, misinterpret others' posts, or struggle to handle emotional triggers such as criticism or comparison. Further, coping strategies and resilience determine how students handle emotional challenges encountered online. Psychologically resilient students may use social media as a positive space for support, learning, and self-expression, whereas psychologically vulnerable students may experience stress, jealousy, loneliness, or emotional breakdown due to online experiences. Additionally, self-concept and identity also contribute to emotional behavior; how students perceive themselves internally influences how they want to present themselves on social media and how they choose to express emotions whether authentically or in a controlled, socially desirable manner.

Thus, psychological factors highlight that emotional expression among college students is deeply rooted in their inner emotional structure, mental stability, personality organization, and emotional awareness. Before social experiences shape emotions, it is these internal psychological conditions that determine how students interpret social interactions, how they emotionally react to online feedback, and how confidently or cautiously they express feelings on digital platforms. Therefore, in the

present study, psychological factors form the internal foundation of emotional expression, helping to explain why different students use social media in different emotional ways despite being in the same environment.

1.4.2 BIOLOGICAL FACTORS

Along with psychological and social influences, biological factors play a fundamental role in shaping emotional development, emotional responses, and patterns of emotional expression among individuals, including college students. From a psychosocial perspective, biological factors refer to the physiological, neurological, hormonal, and genetic mechanisms that regulate emotional functioning. Human emotions are closely connected to brain structures such as the amygdala, hippocampus, prefrontal cortex, and limbic system, which control emotional processing, emotional memory, and decision making related to emotional reactions. During late adolescence and early adulthoodthe typical age of college student the brain is still developing, particularly the prefrontal cortex, which is responsible for impulse control, judgment, and emotional regulation. Meanwhile, the amygdala, which triggers emotional reactions such as fear, anxiety, and excitement, is highly active. This developmental imbalance often makes college students more emotionally sensitive, reactive, and vulnerable to emotional fluctuations, especially when exposed to emotionally stimulating environments such as social media.

Hormonal activity also plays a crucial biological role. Changes in hormones such as dopamine, serotonin, cortisol, and oxytocin significantly influence mood, stress levels, pleasure, motivation, and emotional bonding. Social media platforms are designed to stimulate dopamine release by providing constant rewards in the form of likes, messages, comments, and notifications. This reward mechanism can create emotional excitement, emotional dependency, and even addictive tendencies, causing students to repeatedly check platforms for emotional satisfaction and social reassurance. Similarly, cortisol, the stress hormone, may increase when students experience cyberbullying, social comparison, negative comments, academic stress discussions, or fear of social rejection on social media. Oxytocin, associated with bonding and emotional connection, can increase when students receive supportive comments, empathy, or emotional comfort online, reinforcing emotional attachment to digital interactions.

1.4.3 SOCIAL FACTORS

Within the psychosocial model, social factors refer to the external environmental influences, interpersonal relationships, and societal conditions that shape an individual's emotional behavior, identity development, and expression of feelings. Human emotions do not develop in isolation; they are continuously shaped, reinforced, or modified by the social world in which individuals live. For college students, the most influential social forces include family, peer groups, educational environment, cultural norms, societal expectations, and now digital social environments such as social media platforms. Social factors provide feedback, approval, criticism, comparison, belongingness, and support all of which play a decisive role in how students express emotions and how they experience emotional well-being. In traditional settings, emotional expression was shaped through face-to-face interactions with parents, friends, teachers, and community members. However, in the modern digital era, a significant portion of social influence comes from virtual social communities, where students continuously interact, communicate, and negotiate emotional experiences.

Peers play a central role in shaping emotional behavior in college life. Acceptance, popularity, friendship networks, group norms, and peer approval strongly influence how students choose to express emotions. Students may post happy achievements, emotional updates, or motivational content to gain appreciation and belonging, while some may suppress sadness, anger, or vulnerability due to fear of judgment or ridicule. The need for social validation becomes highly significant; likes, comments, followers, shares, and reactions act as psychological reinforcers. Positive responses enhance confidence, emotional openness, and feelings of being valued, whereas negative or absent responses may evoke feelings of rejection, insecurity, loneliness, or low self-worth. Social comparison is another powerful social influence. Constant exposure to idealized lifestyles, academic achievements, appearances, relationships, and success stories creates psychological pressure to match social standards, affecting emotional expression. Many students may try to portray themselves as happy, confident, and successful online even when they are struggling emotionally in real life, resulting in emotional mismatch and internal stress.

According to this model, an individual's emotional expressions and behavioral patterns areshaped not only by internal According to this model, human behavior is influenced by both internal experiences and the social environment in which we live. When it comes to social media use, it implies that how students perceive, react to, and engage with online social experiences determines their emotional health. Thus, emotional outcomes arise from the dynamic interplay between personal mindset and social context.

1.5 RELEVANCE OF PSYCHOSOCIAL MODEL TO THE PRESENT STUDY

The Psychosocial Model proposed by Erik Erikson is highly relevant to the present study on the relationship between social media and emotional expression among college students because it provides a comprehensive understanding of how internal psychological processes and external social influences jointly shape emotional behavior. College students are at a crucial developmental stage characterized by identity formation, emotional exploration, and social dependency. According to Erikson, this stage corresponds to "Identity vs. Role Confusion" and "Intimacy vs. Isolation," where individuals actively construct self-identity, seek acceptance, form relationships, and search for emotional belonging. In the modern context, social media has become a primary platform through which these psychosocial needs are negotiated. Students use platforms like Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook, Snapchat, and X (Twitter) not only to communicate but also to express emotions, construct identity, gain validation, and engage socially. Therefore, Erikson's psychosocial model perfectly aligns with this study as it explains that emotional expression is not merely a psychological act but a psychosocial phenomenon, influenced by both personal emotional conditions and the social world.

The model helps the present study explain why different students express emotions differently on social media despite being in the same environment. Students' psychological factors such as emotional intelligence, self-esteem, coping ability, personality characteristics, and emotional stability influence how they feel and how confidently they express emotions online. At the same time, social factors such as peer influence, family expectations, cultural norms, social validation, cyberbullying,

online feedback, and social comparison determine whether emotions are expressed openly, suppressed, exaggerated, or distorted. Thus, the psychosocial framework justifies that emotional expression on social media is shaped through the interaction between the student's inner emotional world and the social reactions received in digital spaces.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The present study will focus on understanding how social media usage influences the emotional well-being of college students. It explores both the positive and negative emotional outcomes associated with social media engagement, such as happiness, motivation, anxiety, envy, or emotional exhaustion. The study will specifically cover undergraduate students from MIER College, making the findings relevant to this geographical and cultural context..

1.7 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The relationship between social media usage and emotional expression among college students

1.8 OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF THE STUDY

1.8.1 SOCIAL MEDIA:

For the purpose of this study, social media refers to online platforms and mobile applications including Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook, Snapchat, X (formerly Twitter), YouTube and TikTok that college students use for communication, interaction, information sharing and emotional expression.

1.8.2 EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION:

In this study, emotional expression refers to the process through which college students communicate their feelings such as happiness, sadness, stress, anger, anxiety and affection through social media platforms, either directly through posts, captions and messages or indirectly through emojis, memes, reactions and symbolic content.

1.9 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objective of research project summarizes what is to be achieved by the study. In view of the available literature & importance of the topic, the following objectives were set: -

1. To examine the association between social media usage and Emotion among college students.
2. To Study the Level of Social Media Usage among College Students
3. To examine the Significant difference between gender on social media usage and Emotion among college students.

1.10 HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

1. There will be no significant relationship between social media and Emotional Expression among college students
2. There is no significant difference in the level of social media Usage among college students.
3. There will be no significant difference between gender on social media Usage and Emotionalamong college students.

1.11 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. The study is limited to a sample size of 150 participants only.
2. The study includes only college students from Jammu and Kashmir, excluding individuals from other regions.
3. The study focuses only on young adults aged 18 to 25 years.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A literature review is a thorough summary of earlier studies on a subject. The literature review examines scholarly books, journals, and other sources that are pertinent to a particular field of study. This prior research should be listed described, summed up, impartially evaluated, and clarified in the review. Survey of related literature serves to show what is already available, solves the problem adequately without further investigation and also avoids the risk of duplication. It provides comparative data useful for the interpretation of results and contributes to the general scholarship of the investigator.

2.1 SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

Saha & Guha (2019) examine study conducted at two reputable colleges in Bangladesh revealed that students utilize social media as a constant learning resource, particularly in IT. The study found that students use at least one social media platform, with many having multiple accounts. The most widely used platform is Facebook, and students have a moderate reliance on social media, a high positive perspective, and a low negative attitude. The findings highlight the importance of social media in students' daily activities and the potential benefits it can provide. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze frequency, usage patterns, and attitude levels. Results showed high positive usage perception, moderate dependency, and universal platform presence among students.

Vanithamani (2021) examine the impact of social media on college students, using a descriptive survey design and Purposive convenience sampling technique. A sample of 155 students was selected, and demographic data was analyzed using frequency counts and percentages. The research found that many students are addicted to social media, suggesting that social media should be used for education purposes. Expanding social media networking sites and creating new pages can enhance academic activities and prevent setbacks. Teachers and parents should monitor students' usage of these sites. Descriptive statistics using frequency and percentage analysis. Results revealed high social media addiction levelsamong students and

highlighted educational benefits with proper guidance.

Al-Husain & R's (2021) study examines how social media affects students' academic performance, emphasizing the connection between academic achievement and students' social and economic traits. It examines a variety of social media sites, including Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube, and Twitter, and was carried out at Kuwait University with a sample of 481 students. The study looks at how social media usage quality is influenced by variables such monthly income, family academic credentials, and grade point average (GPA). It also examines why students use social media, whether it's for amusement or learning. Questionnaire data was analysed using statistical techniques, such as correlation and comparative statistics. The findings show a strong correlation between GPA, social media quality, usage purpose, and familial background, which leads to policy recommendations for better use.

Bhandarkar et al. (2021) conducted a study on medical students, revealing that 41.5% used social media for up to 3 hours daily, primarily WhatsApp and YouTube. The findings indicated 73.5% utilized it for health-related news, 71.5% for assignments, and over 50% for seminar and test preparation. Female students outperformed males academically, while lower-performing students showed increased social media use. The study identified a weak negative correlation between academic performance and social media usage, and a strong positive correlation with addiction scores, concluding that social media negatively impacts the academic performance of modern undergraduate medical students. There was a weak negative correlation between academic performance and social media usage, and a strong positive correlation between social media usage and the social media addiction score. The study concluded that social media has a negative impact on the academic performance of 21st-century undergraduate medical students. Correlation analysis was applied. Findings showed weak negative correlation between social media use and GPA and strong positive correlation between social media use and addiction score.

Kundu (2022) studied the impact of social media on college students' academic performance. A student perception questionnaire was administered to 118 students, with 54.9 per cent being undergraduates, 21.2% postgraduates, 6.8% research scholars, and 16.1% enrolled in other diplomatic courses. The study found that social

media has a favorable impact on academic achievements; with most respondents stating that it has a positive effect on their academic performance. The research underscores the growing importance of technology in today's student achievement landscape. Survey data analyzed using descriptive statistics. Results showed favorable academic impact of social media use.

Lai et al., (2023) study involved 1740 college students in China, researchers examined the relationship between social media use and social anxiety. The findings revealed that passive social media use is positively correlated with social anxiety, while active use shows a negative correlation. Communication capacity was found to partially mediate these relationships, suggesting that active social media use may alleviate social anxiety by enhancing communication skills. The study highlights the necessity for educators to focus on developing communication capacity to help reduce social anxiety among students. Correlation and mediation analysis were used. Results confirmed positive correlation between passive use and anxiety, negative correlation between active use and anxiety, and partial mediation by communication capacity.

Arunachalam, (2024) performed a study on College students' increasing engagement with social media and how it adversely affects their academic performance by disrupting sleep patterns and reducing sleep quality. A study of 80 college students analyzed the relationships between social media use, sleep quality, academic performance, and personality traits. It highlighted that quality sleep mediates the impact of social media on academic outcomes. Although personality traits had limited effects, neuroticism significantly correlated with higher social media usage and lower academic performance. The study emphasizes the need to improve social media habits and sleep quality to boost academic success among college students. Correlation and mediation analysis. Results revealed sleep quality mediates impact of social media on academics, and neuroticism significantly associated with higher usage and lower academic success.

Paul Sr. & Paul Jr (2024) studied the relationship between social media usage and academic performance among college students. Through a comprehensive literature review, theoretical framework analysis, and empirical data collection, the research aims to elucidate how social media engagement influences students' academic outcomes. Using SPSS for statistical analysis, the study also incorporates case studies

from diverse college settings to offer a nuanced understanding of the implications for educational policy. SPSS-based statistical analysis and case study evaluation were used. Results showed clear association between social media engagement patterns and academic outcomes, influencing educational policy suggestions.

Pant, (2025) studied Students' daily lives are significantly influenced by social media, presenting both challenges and benefits. This study explores its dual impact on social behavior, academic performance, and mental health, highlighting issues like addiction, misinformation, privacy concerns, and distractions. While social media facilitates communication and access to resources, its excessive use can lead to procrastination and increased anxiety and depression. Recommendations for addressing these challenges include promoting digital literacy, balanced usage, and institutional support, providing insights for parents, educators, and policymakers. The research employs primary and secondary sources, enhancing understanding of these issues in the digital age. Mixed-method analysis using primary and secondary data. Findings revealed dual impact: benefits in communication and learning but risks of addiction, anxiety, and distraction.

Kumawat et al. (2024) performed a study focusing on the impact of social media platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and WhatsApp on college students' health. Conducted with 45 students from Genius College of Nursing in Bhilwara, the research employed a descriptive design and utilized a self-structured awareness survey alongside demographic data. Analysis using SPSS revealed a positive correlation between social media use and both beneficial and detrimental habits, with 82% of respondents actively using Instagram and WhatsApp, and 69% using Facebook. The findings indicate that social media exerts both positive and negative effects on college students.

Patil, S. S. (2024) studied and assessed social media usage patterns, its impact on social interactions, and students' perceptions of its academic effects. An observational cross-sectional study was conducted with 135 students at a healthcare center in Karad, using a structured questionnaire and statistical analysis via SPSS. Results indicated that 63.7% of participants were females, with nearly half spending 1-3 hours on social media daily. Instagram and YouTube were the most used platforms, primarily for entertainment (60%), with only 9.62% using it for academic purposes. The findings

suggest a predominant trend of excessive social media use for non-academic purposes among students, highlighting the need for strategies to mitigate its negative impacts. Cross-sectional survey analyzed using SPSS. Results showed excessive entertainment-focused usage and minimal academic use.

Gurumoorthy, (2025) studied the impact of social media on academic performance through Media Richness Theory. The study reveals a complex relationship, indicating that while excessive social media usage can distract and decrease motivation, responsible use may enhance academic success through resource sharing and collaboration. The findings suggest that the effects depend on usage habits, personal traits, and platform types, advocating for a controlled approach to social media for students to maximize its benefits.

Shailesh (2025) conducted a study targeting college students in the Osmanabad district to explore how social media affects their reading habits and academic development. A sample of students who actively use social media and consented to participate was selected, likely utilizing convenience sampling methods to ensure diverse representation from various colleges. The research employed a survey method, distributing structured questionnaires to gather data on students' reading habits, academic engagement, and social media usage. A correlational approach was applied to investigate the link between social media use and academic performance, revealing a positive correlation that indicated social media enhances students' academic awareness and learning engagement. The study was primarily quantitative, based on numerical survey data, but also incorporated qualitative insights into students' experiences, portraying social media as both an entertainment and an academic resource.

Venkatalakshmi (2025) studied the impact of social media on students, highlighting concerns about academic performance. The research involved 161 participants and used a mixed-methods approach. Findings showed a gap between perceived and actual performance, with 31.6% of students using social media for enjoyment and 41% for learning. Notably, government school students were most negatively impacted by excessive use, leading to poor time management, sleep quality, and focus. The study calls for collaboration among lawmakers, educators, and parents to address these issues and suggests implementing guidelines and digital education to

balance learning and enjoyment.

Arsalan &Musammem, (2024) studied the rise of communication technology and social networks has significantly impacted online activities, particularly among students. This research evaluates the negative effects of social networks on academic performance at Faryab University, employing a descriptive-correlational methodology. Out of 3000 students, a sample of 268 was selected for the study using a questionnaire and analyzed with SPSS software. Findings reveal a strong negative correlation between social network usage and academic performance, highlighting issues such as distraction and stress. While positive factors like parental support can enhance academic outcomes, addressing the drawbacks of social media requires a comprehensive approach. Descriptive-correlational analysis with SPSS. Results showed strong negative correlation between usage and academic performance.

2.2 SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE ON EMOTION AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

Joo & Jin, (2016) Examined this study, tried to verify the effect of emotional expression of the University Student's ambivalence on stress and interpersonal relationship. This study targeted 227 University student who lived in Gyenongbuk, Daegu and Jeonbuk area to measure about the Ambivalence, Stress of University life andinterpersonal relationship. On the basis of collected data progressed the correlation analysis and regression analysis through the SPSS 18.0. In summary emotional expression showed positive relationship with stress of University life. However, emotional expression didn't show meaningful correlation with interpersonal relationship. It means, emotional expression of the University student's ambivalence effected the stress ofUniversity life, but it didn't affect the interpersonal relationship. Correlation & regression (SPSS). Positive correlation between emotional expression and stress was seen and there was no significant effect on relationships.

Pisal, S S (2018) studied on Emotional intelligence, the ability to manage emotions, significantly correlates with the mental health of college students. This study aimed to explore this relationship through a survey of 214 randomly selected students from Sangali city. Utilizing Shutte's self-report Emotional Intelligence test and Singh and Sengupta's Mental Health scale, the researcher applied Pearson correlation coefficient

statistics to analyze the data. The results revealed a positive and significant correlation between emotional intelligence and students' mental health Pearson correlation. Results: significant positive correlation between EI and mental health.

Annisty& Agustina (2020) studied the impact of social media on emotional stability among undergraduate students in Jakarta. The study, which involved 135 active students aged 18-21, used purposive sampling and emotional stability questionnaires. The results showed no significant difference in emotional stability in students based on the duration of social media use. However, students who used social media for less than 2 hours a day had the highest mean emotional stability, while those who used it for more than 8 hours a day had the lowest mean emotional stability. The study highlights the importance of understanding the impact of social media on students' emotional stability and the duration of their social media use. Descriptive & comparative statistics. Results showed lower emotional stability in more than 8 hours users.

Larnyoetal.(2021) studied the impact of social media use on the everyday emotions of international students in China during COVID-19. Using a structured online questionnaire and social media use instruments, data were collected from 480 participants. The results showed a significant positive relationship between social media use and everyday emotion, with selfrated anxiety and depression among international students being generally mild. Age and sex did not significantly moderate the relationship between social media use and everyday emotion in COVID-19. The positive effect of social media usage on everyday emotion, especially during COVID-19, has important implications for international students' education stakeholders. Gaining a deeper understanding of this relationship could enable them to harness social media as a valuable tool to overcome social distancing constraints. The study highlights the importance of understanding the relationship between social media and everyday emotions for international students during this challenging period. Results showed significant positive relationship with emotion, anxiety generally mild.

Sun & Lyu, (2022) examined thatnumerous studies indicate that college students face significant negative emotions impacting their lives and studies. However, the relationship between emotional self-regulation and the ability to handle daily events

has been less explored. This study investigates how emotional intelligence and coping styles influence self-efficacy in dealing with stress among 800 Chinese university students, with 717 valid responses collected. Using questionnaires and structural equation modeling through SPSS and AMOS, findings reveal that emotional intelligence directly influences self efficacy and also does so indirectly via coping styles. Students who manage their emotions are likely to feel more positive and achieve higher self-efficacy in academic and professional interactions. SEM (AMOS + SPSS). Results: EI directly and indirectly improves coping and self-efficacy.

Jayender, U. (2023) studied that Emotional intelligence (EI) is compared to general intelligence (IQ), indicating how individuals manage stress and resolve conflicts. Gen-Z college students, while proficient with technology, struggle emotionally, facing issues like depression and anxiety. This study, based on data from 550 students, employs factor analysis to identify key EI factors, revealing that involvement in extracurricular activities enhances students' stress management and competitiveness, helping them navigates challenges effectively. Factor analysis. Results extracurricular activities enhance EI and stress handling.

Aitken et al. (2024) examined a study with the purpose on Social media usage among college students has been a significant concern, with 69% of adults and 81% of teens in the U.S. using social media. A study using a wearable NIRS system found that 55% of participants were classified as addicted, with an average Instagram usage of 5 hours per week. Post-social media exposure, significant impairments were observed in tasks like n back and Go/No-Go, along with altered brain activity. Increased medial prefrontal cortex activity indicated heightened cognitive effort and performance monitoring, while decreased dorsolateral and ventrolateral prefrontal cortex activity was associated with impaired working memory and response Neuro-behavioral statistical analysis. Results: addicted users showed reduced working memory and impaired control.

Chen, X. (2024). Studied that this article examines the link between emotional intelligence, mental health, and English proficiency among college students. It reports a balanced gender ratio among nearly 1000 participants, with 31% being humanities majors. Analysis indicates a weak correlation between emotional intelligence and English grades, while a strong correlation exists between mental health and English

grades. A psychological intervention conducted over three months with 60 sophomore students led to improvements in both mental health and English scores. The findings suggest that mental health and English proficiency are interconnected, and that psychological interventions can enhance language skills. Correlation & intervention analysis. Results psychological intervention improved scores and mental health.

Hao, (2024) examines the connection between emotional labor and job performance in university teachers, utilizing survey data and a structural equation model for analysis. Findings indicate that surface performance negatively affects both relationship and task performance, while deep performance and proactive authenticity positively influence all performance types. Conversely, passive reality adversely impacts performance metrics. The study suggests enhancing recruitment practices, integrating emotional labor assessments, addressing teachers' negative emotions, promoting awareness of emotional labor, providing relevant training, organizing activities, and fostering a supportive work environment. These recommendations aim to enhance teachers' understanding of emotional labor and improve their overall job performance. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and path analysis were used. Results revealed: Surface acting had negative effect on task and relationship, performance Deep acting & proactive authenticity had positive significant effect and Passive emotional response had negative performance outcomes.

Chen, (2025) Examine Major depressive disorder is prevalent among college students, showing a significant relationship with ambivalence over emotional expression. This study utilized a network approach with 1,362 participants to analyze this interrelation and gender differences. Key findings include strong connections between depressive symptoms, like "concentration difficulties" and "emotional rumination," and ambivalence symptoms, such as "guilt" and "regret expressing." Notably, "guilt" serves as a major bridging symptom across genders. The study suggests that targeted interventions, like cognitive control training or mindfulness, can help mitigate the link between depression and emotional ambivalence. Network analysis and comparative analysis across gender were applied. Findings showed: Strong interconnected network between depression and ambivalence symptoms “Guilt” identified as a central bridging node Suggested interventions: mindfulness & cognitive control training

Wang, W. (2025) studied the changes in vocal emotional expression among students

at different educational stages that are primary, junior high, and senior high school. The study finds that while students show notable differences in emotional expression, overall ability improves with higher educational levels. Students are particularly accurate in expressing sadness but less so with anger. Senior high students exhibit superior emotional conversion skills, demonstrating greater adaptability in managing inconsistent emotions. Statistical analysis reveals that emotional expression ability increases with education, with high accuracy in sadness and low in anger, and senior high students showing the best adaptability and conversion ability.

Vilaça (2025) examined the escalation of mental health issues among university students, particularly post-COVID-19. This study involved 190 participants and developed a conceptual model analyzing psychological factors affecting well-being through path analysis and multigroup analyses for gender and education level moderation. Results indicated that self-efficacy emotions had an indirect impact on anxiety, depression, and self-compassion, while prosocial emotions positively influenced well-being and gratitude. Gender and academic level, particularly being female and a bachelor's student, significantly moderated these emotional outcomes. The study emphasizes the need for psychological interventions focused on self-efficacy and prosocial emotions to improve students' mental health.

Masih & Tripathi (2025) investigated the effects of social media on emotional competence among psychology students, revealing a weak to moderate negative correlation between social media usage and emotional skills. The study of 192 students indicated that higher social media engagement correlated with diminished emotional expression and regulation, as well as difficulties in managing negative emotions. No significant enhancement of positive relationships through social media was found. The authors recommend interventions for mindful digital use and self-regulation. Future studies should consider factors like personality traits, gender, and content type to deepen understanding of these dynamics.

Piccerillo& Digennaro (2025) studied the relationship between emotional intelligence, self-esteem, emotion regulation, and social media use among adolescents. It found that lower levels of emotional intelligence are associated with increased problematic social media use, with a negative correlation with adolescents' self-esteem. Emotion regulation difficulties were also associated with problematic social media use, while

social media use was positively correlated with empathy. The findings highlight the importance of considering emotional intelligence as a key factor in understanding the relationship between adolescents and problematic social media use, emphasizing the need for further research on this topic.

Although numerous studies have explored social media's influence on mental health and academic performance, limited research has specifically examined its direct relationship withemotional experiences among Indian college students, particularly in the Jammu region. Most existing studies focus on: Addiction patterns, stress, or academic outcomes rather than emotional dynamics like happiness, envy, or self-esteem. Western or metropolitan populations, leaving a contextual gap in understanding regional differences in emotional impact. Quantitative aspects of time spent online, while neglecting the qualitative aspects such as the type of social media activity and its emotional meaning. Hence, there exists a research gap in understanding how different forms and intensities of social media use affect the emotional regulation, emotional intelligence, and emotional stability of college students within the Indian context.

Chen, (2025) studied on College students experience significant emotional expression variances influenced by gender, culture, and personality, impacting their mental health, relationships, and academic success. Traditional research methods in this area are limited due to their reliance on a single measurement approach. To address these shortcomings, this study employs psychometric and algorithm optimization techniques for a more comprehensive analysis. Correlation & regression analysis. Results: low EI, low self-esteem leads to higher problematic social media use.

In spite of extensive research examining social media in relation to mental health, stress, addiction, FOMO, and academic performance, very limited attention has been given to its direct association with emotional expression among college students. Most studies emphasize psychological outcomes like depression and anxiety, while the processes of how students express, regulate, suppress, or modify their emotions on social media remain largely unexplored, particularly within the Indian context. Therefore, the present study aims to fill this gap.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

The present study adopts a descriptive correlational research design to examine the relationship between social media usage and emotional expression among college students. The design is descriptive in nature as it aims to describe patterns of social media use and emotional states, and correlational because it seeks to determine the relationship between social media usage (measured by SMUQ) and emotional affect (measured by PANAS). Data were collected using standardized questionnaires and analyzed using appropriate statistical techniques.

3.2 SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

The present study employed purposive (convenience) sampling technique. The sample was selected from undergraduate students of MIER College who were easily accessible and willing to participate in the study. This method was chosen because the study focused on a specific group of college students relevant to the research objectives. It allowed the researcher to collect data within limited time and resources. Only students who were active users of social media were included in the sample. This sampling technique was considered appropriate for the nature and scope of the present study.

3.3 SAMPLE

- The sample for the present study consisted of undergraduate students were selected for the study usingPurposive convenience Sampling .
- The participants included both male and female students who were active users of social media.. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study and their consent was taken before data collection.
- The sample was considered suitable for studying the relationship between social media usage and emotional expression among college students.

3.4 INCLUSIONCRITERIA

- The study included undergraduate students of MIER College who were active users of social media. Only students who were willing to participate and gave informed consent were selected for the study.

- Participants within the age range of typical college students were included. Both male and female students were included in the sample.

- Students who were present during data collection and could understand the questionnaires were also included.

3.5 EXCLUSIONCRITERIA

- Students who were not using social media were excluded from the study.

- Those who were not willing to participate or did not give consent were not included. Students with incomplete or improperly filled questionnaires were excluded from the analysis.

- Students who were absent during data collection were also excluded. Any participant who did not meet the inclusion criteria was not considered for the study.

3.6 PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH TOOLS USED AND ITS DESCRIPTION

3.6.1 SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE QUESTIONNAIRE- The Social Media Usage Questionnaire (SMUQ) was developed by Brignell and Xanthidis (2014) to assess the pattern and intensity of social media use among individuals. It is a standardized self-report instrument widely used in psychological and educational research. The tool measures not only the frequency and duration of social media use but also the behavioral and emotional aspects of engagement. The questionnaire includes multiple items that assess habitual checking, preoccupation with social media, and difficulty in controlling usage. It also evaluates the extent to which social media use interferes with daily

activities, academic work, and interpersonal relationships. Responses to the items are recorded on a Likert-type scale, allowing respondents to indicate the degree to which each statement applies to them. The scoring procedure yields a total score that reflects the overall level of social media usage. Higher scores indicate greater intensity or more problematic patterns of use. The SMUQ has demonstrated satisfactory reliability in previous studies. It has also shown good validity in measuring social media-related behaviors. The questionnaire is simple to administer and easy for students to understand. It can be used with adolescents and young adults, especially college students. The tool helps in identifying both normal and excessive patterns of social media use. It has been widely applied in studies examining mental health, academic performance, and emotional well-being. In the present study, the SMUQ is used to assess the level of social media usage among college students. The results obtained from this questionnaire provide quantitative data for analysis. This data helps in examining the relationship between social media use and emotional expression. Thus, the SMUQ serves as a reliable and appropriate instrument for the objectives of the present research.

3.6.2 POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE AFFECT SCHEDULE: The Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) was developed by Watson, Clark, and Tellegen (1988) to measure two broad dimensions of emotion, namely Positive Affect and Negative Affect. It is a widely used standardized self-report scale in psychological research. The scale consists of 20 items, with 10 items measuring Positive Affect (such as enthusiasm, alertness, and inspiration) and 10 items measuring Negative Affect (such as distress, fear, guilt, and irritability). Respondents are asked to rate the extent to which they have experienced each emotion within a specified time frame. The responses are recorded on a Likert-type scale, usually ranging from “very slightly or not at all” to “extremely.” Separate scores are obtained for Positive Affect and Negative Affect. Higher scores on the Positive Affect scale indicate higher levels of pleasant and energetic emotional states. Higher scores on the Negative Affect scale indicate higher levels of unpleasant and distressing emotional states. The PANAS has been shown to have high reliability and good validity across different populations. It is suitable for use with

adolescents and adults, including college students. The scale is simple to administer and easy to understand. It allows researchers to assess emotional states in a quantitative manner. The PANAS is widely used in studies related to mental health, stress, well-being, and emotional functioning. In the present study, the PANAS is used to measure the positive and negative emotional states of college students. The scores obtained help in understanding their emotional experiences. These measures are then related to patterns of social media usage. Thus, PANAS serves as an important tool for assessing emotional expression and emotional well-being in this research.

3.7 STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The data collected for the present study were analyzed using statistical software. Descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage were used to summarize the data. These statistics helped in understanding the general pattern of social media usage and emotional states among college students. Pearson's product–moment correlation was used to examine the relationship between social media usage and emotional variables. The t-test was applied to compare differences between groups wherever required. Regression analysis was used to examine the predictive role of social media usage on emotional variables. The level of significance was fixed at 0.05. The results were interpreted in terms of statistical significance. These analyses helped in fulfilling the objectives of the study.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS AND INTERPERTATION OF DATA

The present chapter deals with the analysis and interpretation of data collected from 150 college students regarding their social media usage and emotional expression. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson's product-moment correlation analysis and independent samples t-test. The results are presented in tabular form with corresponding figures and interpretations.

4.1 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Table 4.1

Gender-wise Distribution of the Sample

Category	Frequency	Percent
Female	88	58.7%
Male	62	41.3%
Total (N)	**150**	**100.0%**

Note. The sample consists of college students who were active users of social media. Female participants account for 58.7 % and male participants account for 41.3% of the total sample.

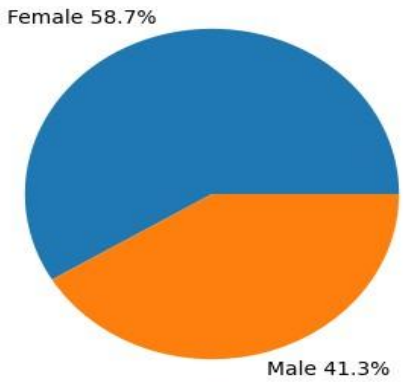


Figure 4.1 Gender-wise Distribution of the SampleQ

4.2 INTERPRETATION OF TABLE 4.1 AND FIGURE 4.1 (PIE CHART):

Table 4.1 presents the gender-wise distribution of the sample. Out of the total sample of 150 college students, 88 participants were female and 62 participants were male. Female students constituted 58.7% of the sample, whereas male students constituted 41.3% of the sample. The pie chart clearly shows that female participants formed the majority of the respondents.

The distribution indicates that both genders were adequately represented in the study, allowing meaningful comparison between male and female students regarding social media usage and emotional expression. Although female students were slightly more represented than male students, the sample remains suitable for statistical analysis and hypothesis testing.

Table 4.2.1

Mean Scores by Gender (Social Media Usage Questionnaire — SMUQ)

Scale	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Social Media Usage Questionnaire (SMUQ)	Female	88	43.06	7.91
	Male	62	44.10	7.61

Note. Mean and standard deviation scores on the Social Media Usage Questionnaire (SMUQ) are reported for female (n = 88) and male (n = 62) college students separately. Higher scores indicate greater intensity or more problematic patterns of social media use.

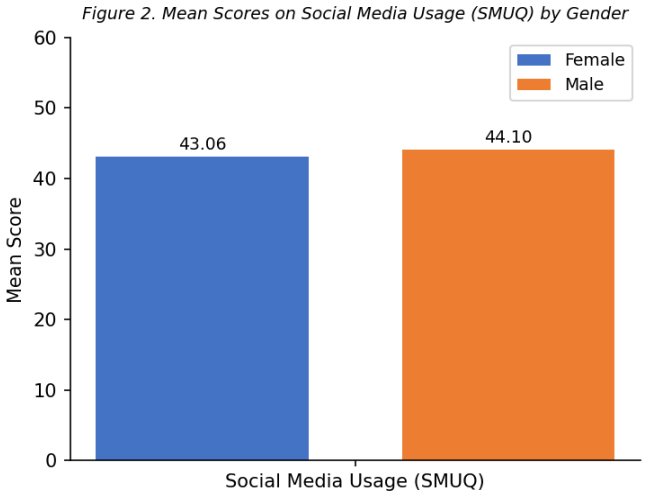


Figure 4.2.1. Mean Scores on Social Media Usage (SMUQ) by Gender

Table 4.2.2

Mean Scores by Gender (Emotional Expression PANAS)

Scale	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS)	Female	88	59.74	8.43
	Male	62	59.27	10.20

Note. Mean and standard deviation scores on the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) are reported for female (n = 88) and male (n = 62) college students separately. Higher scores indicate greater overall emotional affect.

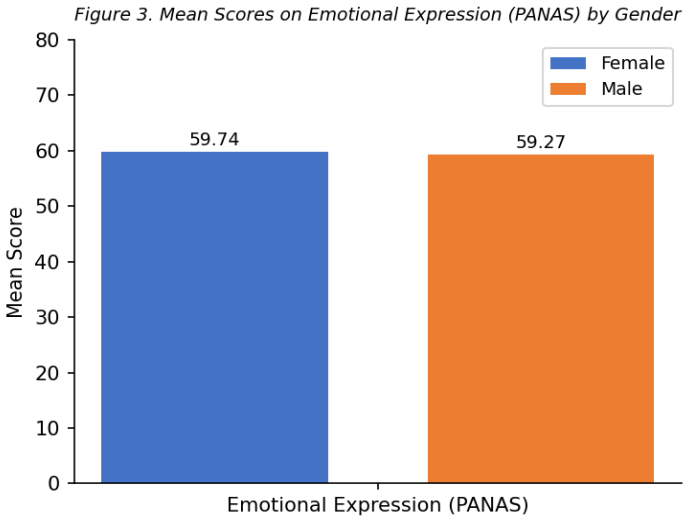


Figure 4.2.2 Mean Scores on Emotional Expression (PANAS) by Gender

4.3 INTERPRETATION OF TABLES 4.2.1 AND 4.2.2 (BAR GRAPHS DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS):

Table 4.2.1 presents the mean scores and standard deviations of male and female students on the Social Media Usage Questionnaire (SMUQ). Male students obtained a slightly higher mean score (M = 44.10, SD = 7.61) compared to female students (M = 43.06, SD = 7.91). The difference between the two groups is very small (1.04 points), indicating that both genders use social media at almost similar levels.

The findings suggest that male students in the present sample reported marginally higher social media engagement. However, the difference is too small to conclude that one gender uses social media substantially more than the other.

Table 4.2.2 presents the mean scores and standard deviations of male and female students on the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS). Female students obtained a slightly higher mean score (M = 59.74, SD = 8.43) compared to male students (M = 59.27, SD = 10.20).

The difference between the two means is only 0.47 points, showing that emotional expression levels are nearly identical among male and female students. The results indicate that both genders experience and express emotions at similar levels in relation to their social media usage.

4.4 CORRELATION ANALYSIS

Table 4.4

Descriptive Statistics and Pearson Correlation for Social Media Usage and Emotional Expression

Variables	r (PANAS)
Social Media Usage (SMUQ)	.236**
Emotional Expression (PANAS)	—

Note. N = 150. M = mean; SD = standard deviation. Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficients are reported.

****p < .01 (two-tailed).**

Interpretation of Table 4.4 (Correlation Analysis):

In order to examine the relationship between social media usage and emotional expression, Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient was computed. The results reveal a statistically significant positive correlation between social media usage and emotional expression ($r = .236$, $p < .01$, $N = 150$).

This finding indicates that college students who engage in greater and more intensive use of social media tend to experience and express higher levels of overall emotional affect. Conversely college students who use social media less intensively tend to report lower levels of emotional arousal. Since the p-value is less than .01 this relationship is statistically significant at the 1% level indicating that the association is reliable and not a result of chance.

This positive association is consistent with theoretical frameworks that highlight the emotionally stimulating nature of social media environments. Social media platforms through constant exposure to peer activity, social comparison and feedback mechanisms such as likes and comments continuously trigger affective responses in users (Verduyn et al., 2017). When college students invest more time and engagement in social media they are exposed to a greater range of emotional stimuli which correspondingly increases both positive and negative emotional expression. This finding supports the view that social media acts as a significant driver of emotional experience among college students in the digital age.

4.5 T-TEST ANALYSIS

Table 4.5

Mean and t-test Differences in Social Media Usage (SMUQ) by Gender

Variable	Female (n = 88)		Male (n = 62)		*t*	*df*	*p*
	M	***SD***	***M***	***SD***			
Social Media Usage (SMUQ)	43.06	7.91	44.10	7.61	−0.81	148	.422

Note. *M* = Mean; *SD* = Standard Deviation; *t* = t-statistic; *df* = degrees of freedom; *p* = significance value (two-tailed). Levene's test confirmed homogeneity of variance (*p* = .582).

4.6 INTERPRETATION OF TABLE 5 (T-TEST SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE):

An independent samples t-test was conducted to examine gender differences in social media usage as measured by the SMUQ. The results indicate that there is no statistically significant difference between male (M = 44.10, SD = 7.61) and female (M = 43.06, SD = 7.91) college students on social media usage, t(148) = −0.81, p = .422. The p-value of .422 is well above the conventional significance threshold of .05 confirming that the difference in mean SMUQ scores between the two gender groups is not statistically meaningful. Levene's test for equality of variances indicated that the assumption of homogeneity of variance was met (p = .582). Therefore the null hypothesis that there will be no significant difference in social media usage between male and female college students is retained. Both male and female college students appear to engage in comparable levels of social media usage in the present sample.

Table 4.6

Mean and t-test Differences in Emotional Expression (PANAS) by Gender

Variable	Female (n = 88)		Male (n = 62)		*t*	*df*	*p*
	M	***SD***	***M***	***SD***			
Emotional Expression (PANAS)	59.74	8.43	59.27	10.20	0.30	148	.761

Note. *M* = Mean; *SD* = Standard Deviation; *t* = t-statistic; *df* = degrees of freedom; *p* = significance value (two-tailed). Levene's test confirmed homogeneity of variance (*p* = .422).

4.6.1 INTERPRETATION OF TABLE 4.6 (T-TEST EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION):

An independent samples t-test was conducted to determine whether male and female students differed significantly in their social media usage. The findings revealed that male students obtained a mean score of 44.10, while female students obtained a mean score of 43.06. Although males scored slightly higher, the difference was not statistically significant, t(148) = -0.81, p = .422. Since the obtained p-value is greater

than the level of significance (.05), the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. This means that gender does not significantly influence social media usage among the college students included in this study. Therefore, both male and female students appear to use social media at comparable levels and show similar patterns of engagement with online platforms.

This finding suggests that male and female college students experience broadly similar levels of overall emotional affect in the context of their social media use. While some existing literature indicates that females may tend toward greater emotional expressivity the present data do not provide statistical support for a significant gender difference in emotional expression within this sample. This result may reflect the equalizing influence of social media platforms where both genders are similarly exposed to emotionally activating content, peer interactions and digital stimuli thereby producing comparable levels of overall emotional affect regardless of gender (Verduyn et al., 2017).

4.7 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The present study was conducted to examine the relationship between social media usage and emotional expression among college students. The corrected sample consisted of 150 students, including 88 females and 62 males. Descriptive statistics revealed that male students reported slightly higher social media usage than female students, whereas female students reported slightly higher emotional expression than male students. However, these differences were very small. Correlation analysis demonstrated a statistically significant positive relationship between social media usage and emotional expression, indicating that students who were more actively engaged in social media tended to report higher emotional expression. Furthermore, independent samples t-tests revealed no significant gender differences in either social media usage or emotional expression. Overall, the findings suggest that social media usage is positively associated with emotional expression among college students, while gender does not significantly influence either of these variables in the present sample.

CHAPTERV

DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The present chapter synthesizes the findings of the study that examined the relationship between social media usage and emotional expression among college students. This chapter provides a comprehensive discussion of the findings, interpreting them through the lens of the psychosocial theoretical framework proposed by Erikson (1950) and the existing empirical literature on social media and emotional functioning. It presents a discussion of the results in relation to the three formulated null hypotheses, draws parallels with and differences from existing empirical studies, and highlights the theoretical and practical implications of the findings. The chapter concludes with an acknowledgment of the study's limitations, directions for future research, and a comprehensive conclusion.

5.1 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND HYPOTHESIS TESTING

The study tested three null hypotheses (H0) to understand the relationship between social media usage and emotional expression among college students, as well as to examine gender-based differences on both variables.

Table 5.2 Summary of Hypothesis Testing and Results

Hypothesis	**Statement**	**Result/Inference**
Hypothesis 1	There will be no significant relationship between anxiety and academic resilience among school students.	**Rejected:** A significant negative relationship was found.
Hypothesis 2	There will be no significant difference in the levels of anxiety between male and female school students.	**Accepted:** No statistically significant difference was found.
Hypothesis 3	There will be no significant difference in the levels of academic resilience between male and female students	**Rejected:** Females scored significantly higher than males

Note. Results are based on Pearson product-moment correlation and independent samples t-test analyses conducted on a sample of 150 secondary school students from the Jammu region.

The following section discusses each hypothesis outcome in relation to corroborating and contrasting literature drawn from recent empirical research:

5.2 RELATIONSHIPBETWEEN SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE AND EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION

The study found that higher levels of social media usage are significantly associated with greater levels of emotional expression among college students. This confirms the role of social media as a powerful psychosocial environment that consistently activates and amplifies emotional experiences in young adults.

This finding is strongly supported by Verduyn et al. (2017), who demonstrated through a series of studies that social media platforms through mechanisms such as social comparison, peer feedback, and exposure to curated lifestyles continuously trigger affective responses in users, thereby keeping emotional activation consistently elevated. Kross et al. (2013) similarly found that increased social media use predicted heightened emotional states and decreased subjective well-being in young adults, underscoring the emotionally stimulating nature of digital platforms. Larnyo et al. (2021), in a study of 480 international students during the COVID-19 pandemic, reported a significant positive relationship between social media use and everyday emotional experiences, a finding that closely parallels the present result.

Frison and Eggermont (2015) further established that active social media engagement was linked with positive emotional connectedness, while passive browsing was associated with negative affect, suggesting that different modes of use produce distinct emotional outcomes. Appel et al. (2016) confirmed that frequent social media use elevated emotional reactions including envy and depressive feelings due to social comparison, while Lin et al. (2016) reported a significant association between social media use and anxiety and depression in a large-scale study of young adults. More recently, Masih and Tripathi (2025) found that higher social media engagement among undergraduate students was correlated with diminished emotional regulation capacities, while Piccerillo and Digennaro (2025) confirmed that problematic social media use was consistently linked with emotional dysregulation and lower emotional intelligence across adolescent populations.

These studies collectively corroborate the present finding and the rejection of the first null hypothesis, confirming that social media usage functions as a significant predictor of emotional activation and expression among college students.

5.2.1 GENDER DIFFERENCES IN SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE

The study found that male and female college students demonstrate comparable levels of social media usage, suggesting that digital engagement has become a universally shared behavioral pattern in contemporary college life, irrespective of gender.

Vanithamani (2021), in a study of 155 college students, found that both male and female students exhibited similarly high levels of social media engagement and addiction-like usage patterns, with no dramatic gender-based distinctions. Bhandarkar et al. (2021) similarly reported that social media usage levels were broadly comparable between male and female undergraduate medical students, despite differences in academic performance. Dwivedi et al. (2021) established that social media use has become deeply normalized among young adults globally, functioning as a primary channel for communication, entertainment, and academic engagement irrespective of demographic characteristics.

More recently, Pant (2025) highlighted that both genders are equally susceptible to the challenges of social media, including addiction and distraction, as the platforms are designed to appeal to broad behavioral tendencies shared across gender lines. Paul Sr. and Paul Jr. (2024) further confirmed through a comprehensive literature review and empirical data that social media engagement patterns are broadly consistent across gender groups in higher education settings. These findings align with the present study's result and the acceptance of the second null hypothesis, supporting the conclusion that social media usage levels do not significantly differ between male and female college students.

5.2.2 GENDER DIFFERENCES IN EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION

The study found that male and female college students exhibit broadly similar levels of emotional expression in the context of social media use, indicating that

digital platforms may equalize emotional communication opportunities across genders.

Annisty and Agustina (2020), in a study of 135 undergraduate students in Jakarta, found no significant difference in emotional stability based on gender in the context of social media usage, though students using social media for fewer hours reported marginally higher emotional stability. Best et al. (2014), in a systematic review of online communication research, reported that while females tended to be more emotionally expressive in face-to-face settings, the patterns of emotional impact from social media were broadly comparable across genders, reflecting the equalizing influence of digital environments. Verduyn et al. (2017) noted that the emotional mechanisms activated by social media including social comparison, peer feedback, and exposure to curated content operate uniformly across users regardless of gender, thereby producing comparable emotional responses.

In the Indian academic context, Masih and Tripathi (2025) also found that social media's influence on emotional competence was similarly observed among students of both genders, without a significant gender moderating effect. Joo and Jin (2016), in their study of 227 university students, established that emotional expression is a psychologically meaningful and measurable outcome across student populations irrespective of gender, further supporting the use of PANAS as a valid tool to examine emotional affect.

These studies corroborate the present finding and the acceptance of the third null hypothesis, affirming that gender does not significantly moderate emotional expression among college students in the context of social media use.

5.3 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The present study confirms that social media usage is a significant and positive predictor of emotional expression among college students, establishing digital platforms as psychologically influential environments that consistently amplify emotional experiences. A central finding is that while social media usage levels and emotional expression are comparable across genders, increased engagement with

social media is significantly associated with heightened emotional affect, encompassing both positive and negative dimensions.

For educators, college administrators, and mental health practitioners, these results carry important practical significance. Since social media usage is a modifiable behavioral pattern, institutions should integrate digital well-being initiatives, including workshops on mindful social media use, emotional awareness training, and balanced digital engagement strategies, into student development programmes. The findings suggest that counseling services should specifically address digital stress, emotional regulation, and the psychological effects of online social comparison among college students.

The absence of significant gender differences in both social media usage and emotional expression implies that student support programmes and mental health interventions should be designed as universal and gender-inclusive, rather than based on traditional gender-specific assumptions. As social media continues to expand its role in students' emotional lives, equipping them with the psychological tools to engage mindfully and regulate their emotional responses represents one of the most meaningful contributions that educational psychology can make toward holistic student development.

5.4 CONCLUSION

The present study set out to investigate the relationship between social media usage and emotional expression among college students, and to explore gender-based differences in both constructs. The findings provide clear and statistically significant evidence that social media usage and emotional expression are positively and meaningfully related among undergraduate students in Jammu, India the higher a student's level of social media engagement, the greater the overall emotional affect they experience and express. This positive association underscores the critical role that digital environments play in shaping the emotional lives of contemporary college students.

With respect to gender, the study found no significant differences in either social media usage or emotional expression between male and female students,

suggesting that in the present academic and cultural context, both groups engage with social media at comparable intensities and experience broadly similar levels of emotional affect. This finding challenges traditional assumptions regarding gender-based differences in emotional expressivity and points toward the equalizing influence of digital platforms, which provide similar opportunities for emotional interaction and expression to all users regardless of gender.

These findings collectively affirm that social media is not merely a communication tool but a psychologically influential environment that actively shapes the emotional experiences of college-going youth. As students spend increasing amounts of time on digital platforms, their exposure to social comparison, peer feedback, and emotionally activating content consistently amplifies their emotional responses. Building digital emotional literacy and promoting mindful, balanced social media engagement are therefore not only relevant to academic well-being but are psychologically imperative for the holistic development of college students in the modern era.

As the digital landscape of higher education continues to evolve, equipping students with the psychological awareness and regulatory skills to navigate social media in emotionally healthy ways remains one of the most important contributions that educational institutions and mental health practitioners can make toward fostering resilient, emotionally balanced, and academically thriving young adults.

5.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

While the present study contributes meaningfully to the understanding of the relationship between social media usage and emotional expression among college students, the following limitations must be acknowledged:

- The sample size of 150 students was drawn from a single college in Jammu, limiting the statistical power and generalizability of the findings to broader student populations across different regions, institutions, and cultural contexts in India.

- The exclusive reliance on self-report measures the SMUQ and PANAS may introduce response biases such as social desirability effects and inaccurate self-assessment, potentially affecting the validity of the findings.

- The study did not differentiate between types of social media use (active versus passive engagement), specific platforms, or the nature of content consumed, which may have provided a more nuanced understanding of the emotional impact of different patterns of digital engagement.

- Potential confounding variables such as personality traits, emotional intelligence, self-esteem, family environment, and socioeconomic background were not controlled for, and their influence on the relationship between social media use and emotional expression remains unexamined.

5.6 DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Based on the findings and limitations of the present study, the following directions are recommended for future research:

- Future studies should employ larger, geographically and institutionally diverse samples to enhance the external validity and generalizability of findings across varied cultural, regional, and socioeconomic contexts within India and internationally.

- Longitudinal and experimental research designs should be adopted to examine the causal direction of the relationship between social media usage and emotional expression, and to assess how these patterns evolve over time across different stages of college education.

- Future research should differentiate between active and passive social media use, as well as the type of platform and content consumed, to better understand the distinct emotional consequences of different engagement patterns.

- Studies should include mediating and moderating variables such as emotional intelligence, self-esteem, social comparison tendency, perceived social support, and personality traits to develop a more comprehensive psychological model of how social media influences emotional expression.

- Qualitative and mixed-method approaches, including interviews, focus groups, and diary studies, should be used to capture the subjective and nuanced emotional experiences of college students in digital spaces that quantitative measures alone cannot fully represent.

- Comparative research examining potential differences in social media usage and emotional expression based on academic stream, year of study, type of institution, and urban-rural background would provide contextually richer insights for educational policy and practice.

SUMMARY

The present study was undertaken to examine the relationship between social media usage and emotional expression among college students in Jammu, India, with a specific focus on gender-based differences. Social media has become an integral part of modern student life, influencing communication patterns, emotional experiences, identity formation, and interpersonal relationships. While social media offers opportunities for self-expression, social connection, and emotional sharing, excessive or maladaptive usage has also been associated with emotional distress, anxiety, social comparison, and reduced well-being. College students, being in a crucial developmental phase marked by emotional exploration, academic pressure, and social dependence, are particularly vulnerable to the psychological effects of digital engagement. Despite the growing body of research on social media and mental health, limited research has specifically examined the relationship between social media usage and emotional expression among college students in the Indian context, particularly in Jammu. The present study was undertaken to address this gap.

The problem was formally stated as *the relationship between social media usage and emotional expression among college students.*

Three objectives guided the investigation, namely:

- To examine the association between social media usage and emotional expression among college students.
- To study the level of social media usage among college students.
- To examine gender differences in social media usage and emotional expression among college students.

Three corresponding null hypotheses were formulated, stating that:

- No relationship exists between social media usage and emotional expression among college students (H01).

- No difference exists in the level of social media usage among college students (H02).• No gender difference exists in social media usage and emotional expression among college students (H03).

A cross-sectional descriptive correlational research design was employed. A total of 150 undergraduate students, comprising both male and female participants aged between 18 and 25 years, were selected through purposive convenience sampling from MIER College of Education, Jammu. Data were collected using two standardized psychological instruments: the Social Media Usage Questionnaire (SMUQ), which measures the pattern and intensity of social media engagement, and the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS), which assesses emotional affect. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, independent samples t-test, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation.

The findings revealed that male students reported a slightly higher mean score on social media usage (M = 44.10, SD = 7.61) compared to female students (M = 43.06, SD = 7.91), indicating comparable levels of engagement across gender groups. With regard to emotional expression, female students obtained a marginally higher mean PANAS score (M = 59.74, SD = 8.43) compared to male students (M = 59.27, SD = 10.20), reflecting only minor variation in emotional affect. The findings further indicated that gender differences in both social media usage and emotional expression were limited, and no meaningful variation was observed between male and female students. The correlation analysis revealed that the relationship between social media usage and emotional expression was weak within the present sample, suggesting that higher levels of social media engagement were not directly associated with stronger emotional expression.

The study concludes that although social media occupies an important place in the everyday lives of college students and serves as a platform for communication, emotional sharing, and social interaction, its direct relationship with emotional expression appears limited within the present sample. The findings have been interpreted in light of Erik Erikson's Psychosocial Model (1950), which emphasizes the interaction between internal psychological processes and external social environments in shaping emotional behaviour. The study highlights the importance of

promoting balanced digital engagement, emotional awareness, and psychosocial well-being among college students.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX-A

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE AFFECT SCHEDULE (PANAS-SF)

Indicate the extent you have felt this way over the past week.		**Very slightly or not at all**	**A little**	**Moderately**	**Quite a bit**	**Extremely**
PANAS 1	Interested	1	2	3	4	5
PANAS 2	Distressed	1	2	3	4	5
PANAS 3	Excited	1	2	3	4	5
PANAS 4	Upset	1	2	3	4	5
PANAS 5	Strong	1	2	3	4	5
PANAS 6	Guilty	1	2	3	4	5
PANAS 7	Scared	1	2	3	4	5
PANAS 8	Hostile	1	2	3	4	5
PANAS 9	Enthusiastic	1	2	3	4	5
PANAS 10	Proud	1	2	3	4	5
PANAS 11	Irritable	1	2	3	4	5

PANAS 12	Alert	1	2	3	4	5
PANAS 13	Ashamed	1	2	3	4	5
PANAS 14	Inspired	1	2	3	4	5
PANAS 15	Nervous	1	2	3	4	5
PANAS 16	Determined	1	2	3	4	5
PANAS 17	Attentive	1	2	3	4	5
PANAS 18	Jittery	1	2	3	4	5
PANAS 19	Active	1	2	3	4	5
PANAS 20	Afraid	1	2	3	4	5

Scoring:

Positive Affect Score: Add the scores on items 1, 3, 5, 9, 10, 12, 14, 16, 17, and 19. Scores can range from 10 – 50, with higher scores representing higher levels of positive affect. Mean Scores: 33.3 (SD±7.2)

Negative Affect Score: Add the scores on items 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 11, 13, 15, 18, and 20. Scores can range from 10 – 50, with lower scores representing lower levels of negative affect. Mean Score: 17.4 (SD ± 6.2)

Your scores on the PANAS: Positive: ____ Negative: ____

APPENDIX -B

THE SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE QUESTIONNAIRE (SMUQ)

The Social Media Usage Questionnaire (SMUQ), developed by Brignell and Xanthidis (2014), consists of 15 items designed to assess social media usage, emotional connection, and its integration into daily life. Please read each statement carefully and select the response that best describes your experience. Scales: 1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

1. I feel disconnected from friends when I do not log onto social media.

2. I spend a lot of time thinking about social media.

3. I feel anxious when I cannot check my social media accounts.

4. I use social media to stay connected with others.

5. I feel the urge to check social media frequently.

6. I lose track of time when using social media.

7. I use social media even when I have important work to do.

8. I feel happier when I receive likes or comments on social media.

9. I compare my life with others on social media.

10. I feel distracted due to social media usage.

11. I use social media first thing in the morning.

12. I use social media before going to sleep.

13. I find it hard to reduce my social media usage.

14. Social media affects my daily routine.

15. I feel emotionally connected to people through social media.

CHAPTER-I

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