



RESEARCH PAPER

Analyzing the Social Media Usage and Narcissism among Youth in Pakistan

**¹Muhammad Manshoor Hussain Abbasi, ²Rimsha Aslam
and ³Syed Shams ul Hassan**

1. Assistant Professor, Department of Humanities, COMSATS University Islamabad, Pakistan
2. BS-Psychology Student, Department of Humanities, COMSATS University Islamabad, Pakistan
3. Assistant Program Officer, China Study Center, COMSATS University Islamabad, Pakistan

***Corresponding Author** manshoor_hussain@comsats.edu.pk

ABSTRACT

The objective of this research is to analyze the link between social media and narcissistic tendencies in Pakistani youth by analyzing approval-seeking behaviours, peer comparisons, and positive feedback. This study analyzes how social media influences the development of narcissistic tendencies in young Pakistanis. A purposively selected sample of participants was interviewed in semi-structured interviews as part of the data-gathering process for this qualitative study. Thematic analysis was employed to analyze semi-structured interviews. The results identified a direct link between narcissistic traits and the desire for social media acceptance. Positive online feedback boosts self-esteem but may lead to increased self-focus. To address the influence of social media on narcissistic tendencies in young people in Pakistan, it is recommended to implement specific interventions, enhanced digital literacy, and mental health support programs.

KEYWORDS Digital Narcissism, External Validation, Peer Comparison, Social Media and Narcissistic Traits

Introduction

In recent years, the rapid proliferation of social media platforms has significantly transformed the way individuals engage with one another and construct their identities (Muzaffar, et. al. 2020 & Andreassen et al., 2012). Among the youth in Pakistan, as in many other parts of the world, social media has become an integral part of daily life, shaping social interactions, self-perceptions, and interpersonal relationships. This phenomenon raises pertinent questions about the potential impact of social media usage on psychological well-being, particularly concerning the manifestation of narcissistic tendencies among young individuals. Narcissism, a personality trait characterized by an excessive sense of self-importance, a need for admiration, and a lack of empathy, has garnered increased attention within the context of social media use (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017). Particularly among young people, the pursuit of validation via metrics like likes, comments, and shares on social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter has become a regular habit. This group's growth and escalation of narcissistic tendencies may be impacted by this need for external validation.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the complex relationship between young people's narcissism in Pakistan and their use of social media. This study aims to explore how narcissistic traits might form and be reinforced as a result of seeking validation through social media interactions, such as likes, comments, and shares. Furthermore, the study will analyze how young people interpret and react to criticism on their social media posts, exploring any connections that might exist between these exchanges and narcissistic characteristics. Additionally, this research will analyze how peer comparison on social media platforms influences how narcissistic characteristics manifest and grow

in young Pakistani people. The continuous exposure to well-curated depictions of peers' lives while navigating the digital world may create an atmosphere that is favourable to social comparison, which may have an impact on the development of narcissistic tendencies.

Literature Review

Narcissism

Narcissism, as defined by the APA, encompasses excessive self-love, severe self-adoration, and an overemphasis on individual achievement, success, and appearance. This psychological phenomenon includes traits such as grandiosity, entitlement, and a persistent desire for admiration (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Narcissism was defined by Sigmund Freud as a psychological term connected to the ego's investment of libido (sexual energy) in the self. Primary and secondary narcissism are the two main types of narcissism that Freud identified. He contends that whereas secondary narcissism develops in adulthood and entails an excessive concentration on oneself, primary narcissism is a natural and necessary developmental stage in early infancy during which a newborn drives its libido inward and builds a love attachment to its ego. The exaggerated feeling of self-importance, incessant need for adulation, and lack of empathy are all characteristics of those with secondary narcissism. Secondary narcissism, according to Freud, is caused by problems with early development or unresolved conflicts (Freud, 1957). Kohut expanded self-psychology, viewing narcissism as a developmental stage influenced by caregivers' sympathetic mirroring for healthy self-esteem (Heinz, 1971). Kernberg focused on narcissism as a personality condition, identifying it with fragmented self-sense, grandiosity, and relational difficulties, categorizing it as a personality illness marked by weak self-esteem, guilt, and interpersonal challenges (Kernberg, 1975).

Dimensions of Narcissism

Narcissism exists in the form of different dimensions. In her study, Emmons says that grandiosity is at the heart of narcissism, where individuals acquire an exaggerated feeling of self-importance and superiority (Emmons, 1987). Narcissists desire continual attention and praise, a trait known as exhibitionism (Miller et al., 2011). Narcissistic people frequently believe they are entitled to special favours and preferential treatment (Rose, 2002). This dimension is concerned with the tendency to exploit others for personal advantage. To attain their aims, narcissistic people may deceive and exploit others. They see relationships and interactions through the prism of self-interest and use others as stepping stones to achieve their goals (Grijalva, et al., 2013). Moreover, it is difficult for narcissists to relate to or connect with the sentiments and experiences of others around them. Their attention is constantly drawn to themselves, making it difficult for them to recognize or grasp the feelings of others (Hepper et al., 2014). Narcissists may dominate talks and show little interest in other people's experiences. Their major focus is themselves, and they may ignore other people's viewpoints unless they agree with their self-image (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). According to some studies, narcissistic people are more likely to be aggressive, especially when their feeling of superiority is threatened, or they feel slighted by others. As narcissists want to exert control and safeguard their weak self-esteem, they may become violent verbally, socially, or physically (Dufner et al., 2013). Also, narcissists frequently have a fragile, easily damaged sense of self-worth despite their outward impression of assurance. Strong emotional reactions to criticism or rejection may result in protective actions or retaliation (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998).

Narcissism and Self-Presentation on Social Media

The emergence of social media platforms has given people new ways to exhibit themselves, enabling them to craft their online identities to attract adoration carefully. When considering how narcissism and social media use are related, this problem becomes very important. Moon et al. (2016) investigate the complex interaction between narcissism and self-presentation on Instagram, a visually rich social media site. Their research reveals how narcissistic tendencies impact how people present themselves online. The study discovered that those with high degrees of narcissism are more likely to engage in visible self-promotion on Instagram. This presents itself in the form of regular updates highlighting accomplishments, appearances, and personal experiences, all in the hopes of gaining appreciation and validation from their followers (Moon et al., 2016).

Facilitation Self-Presentation and Validation on Social Media Platforms

The growth of these platforms from text-based forums to aesthetically rich surroundings has created new opportunities for self-expression and self-promotion (Manago et al., 2008). Instagram, for example, emphasizes the value of visuals in delivering information by allowing users to create narratives about their lives through carefully chosen and altered photographs (Dijck, 2013). Through features such as the 'like' button and comment sections, social media sites create a feedback loop in which involvement from others acts as a sort of validation. This digital validation develops a sense of value and belonging, which can be especially tempting to people looking for validation, such as those with narcissistic tendencies (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008). In a study individuals who engage in online self-presentation must strike a delicate balance between integrity and impression management. The concept of the "digital self" arises, in which individuals create a persona that corresponds to their ambitions, ideal self, and the social norms of the digital world (Zhao et al., 2008). This carefully crafted digital persona not only represents their offline lives but may also include aspirational components. As a result, the convergence of social media usage, self-presentation, and validation becomes a critical lens through which to evaluate the changing landscape of juvenile behaviours in the context of narcissism.

The Intersection: Social Media and Narcissism

In a study (Vogel et al., 2014) one of the primary ways that social media contributes to the narcissistic relationship is by offering a platform for greater self-presentation. Social networking platforms' fundamental capabilities, such as profile editing, photo sharing, and status updates, enable users to create a desirable digital identity (McCain & Campbell, 2018). Individuals may strategically utilize social media to promote a specific image, changing how their online contacts see them. The continual exposure and virality potential of social media creates an incentive for users to engage in self-promotion, seeking acceptance and reinforcement from their online audience (Ong et al., 2011). Several global research has shed light on the link between social media involvement and narcissistic tendencies. Facebook's addictive nature, along with the craving for attention and affirmation, has been connected to narcissistic behaviour (Malik & Khan, 2015). A previous study has found that people with narcissistic tendencies frequently use social media as a forum for self-promotion and exhibitionism. Such research reveals how social media platforms may increase and assist the display of narcissistic characteristics.

The Role of Validation and Feedback

In a study (Andreassen et al., 2012) the measurable feedback of likes, replies, and emoticons on their postings particularly appeals to narcissists. These measures provide narcissistic people with an instant and obvious kind of affirmation that they may use to judge their level of acceptance and perceived social standing. Narcissistic people aggressively seek and emphasize positive comments and compliments on their postings, utilizing such feedback to improve their self-esteem and enhance their view of their unique characteristics, resulting in an increased need for attention (Ong et al., 2011). According to the research conducted by Carpenter, narcissists are more likely to deliberately seek platforms that allow them to publicly exhibit their successes, life experiences, and personal characteristics. Within the social media environment, these platforms act as a conduit for the exhibiting of these dimensions, allowing narcissistic persons to garner adulation from a larger and more extended audience (Carpenter, 2012).

Positive and Negative Impacts of Social Media on Youth

According to the study, the predominance of self-promotion and attention-seeking actions on social media platforms may lead to the development or worsening of narcissistic tendencies. Furthermore, those with narcissistic tendencies are more prone to participate in self-promotion and anti-social conduct on social media sites like Facebook (Carpenter, 2012). According to the study, social media is crucial in aiding the preservation of current relationships as well as the establishment of new ones, especially for persons who are geographically separated. These systems provide real-time communication, allowing users to stay in touch with family and friends while also receiving emotional support through difficult times (Valenzuela et al., 2009).

Theoretical Framework

The Social Comparison Theory and Psychodynamic Theory are particularly relevant theories when analyzing the dynamics of social media interaction and its impact on the emergence of narcissistic tendencies in young individuals in Pakistan. According to the Social Comparison Theory, people always compare themselves to others to assess their skills and viewpoints. This hypothesis contends that people with high levels of narcissism engage in upward social comparisons to boost their self-esteem and legitimize their self-worth (Festinger, 1954). While in the psychodynamic viewpoint has its roots in the psychoanalytic theory of Sigmund Freud. This viewpoint holds that unresolved tensions throughout early childhood development, particularly during the periods of psychosexual development, lead to the emergence of narcissism. Freud first regarded narcissism as a stage of development marked by egocentrism and self-love, but he also emphasized pathological narcissism as an excessive and unhelpful kind of self-love (Freud, 1957).

The purpose of this study is to investigate the connection between young people in Pakistan who use social media and narcissism. The growing use of social media raises questions about how some online behaviours—like peer comparison and approval seeking—may contribute to narcissistic tendencies. In the contemporary digital landscape, the intersection of narcissism and social media use among young individuals in Pakistan has become a subject of heightened significance. Despite the growing body of literature on narcissism and social media, there remains a noticeable gap in understanding the nuanced dynamics within the context of Pakistan. Existing research primarily originates from global perspectives, emphasizing the need for a dedicated

examination of this phenomenon within the unique cultural and societal framework of Pakistan.

Material and Methods

Sample Selection and Criteria

This qualitative study's sample was purposefully selected to offer a broad and in-depth view of the relationship between narcissism and social media use. The criteria for participant inclusion were formulated to encompass a variety of viewpoints, guaranteeing a comprehensive investigation of the research questions. The selection of participants was based on their level of competence and relevance to the research topic. People from three different domains made up the sample, and each one contributed important insights to the research. Five psychologists were chosen for the group based on their professional capacity to provide insights. Five members of the peer group were also included to offer viewpoints grounded in social dynamics. In addition, five social media-active content creators were selected for the sample to share their experiences as both producers and consumers.

Purposive Sampling Approach

To make sure that the sample reflected a range of experiences, opinions, and roles pertinent to the study topics, the purposive sampling approach was used. This methodology guaranteed a comprehensive portrayal of perspectives and experiences pertinent to the research inquiries of the study.

Data Collection

A purposively selected sample of participants was interviewed in semi-structured interviews as part of the data-gathering process for this qualitative study. This study aimed to collect comprehensive and deep insights into young people's experiences, beliefs, and actions related to narcissism and social media use.

Interview Structure and Length

Interviews were used to gather data. The length of the interviews ranged from 10 to 30 minutes, based on the answers provided by the interviewee. Zoom was used for online meetings during the interview process. The length of the interviews was carefully controlled to strike a balance between participant involvement and the depth of information.

Thematic Analysis

The collected material was examined using the thematic analysis method developed by Braun and Clarke.

Ethical Considerations

The participants' approval was acquired for the study once they were informed of its objective. Permission was obtained from research participants to record their voices during semi-structured interviews.

Instrument

Semi-structured interviews were the main method used to collect data for this qualitative study; the questions were specially created using the 5W and 1H rule questions. Flexible interviewing was made possible by semi-structured interviews.

Results and Discussion

Braun and Clarke's Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis was employed to examine semi-structured interviews. For every interview, an independent analysis was conducted. The six-step theme analysis framework developed by Braun and Clarke was followed in the data analysis procedure.

Transcription and Pre-Analysis Procedures

15 semi-structured interviews were transcribed using voice recordings with durations ranging from 10 to 30 minutes. Before analysis, the audio recordings were repeatedly listened to and documents were created. The retrieved documents underwent a thorough review to ensure a comprehensive understanding.

Thematic Identification and Synthesis

Utilizing Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework, a six-step thematic analysis was employed for systematically examining semi-structured interview data. Themes from the semi-structured interview questions were identified, and a detailed line-by-line analysis of papers followed. Information from three distinct domains was collected, categorizing themes into three groups. Multiple readings were conducted for familiarity, and initial codes were systematically generated to uncover significant themes, revealing overarching trends. Thorough review and refinement of codes, each assigned a precise definition, ensured consistency. Colour-coded for clarity, the numerous themes showcased diverse perspectives. Rigorous review cycles ensured the cohesion of related themes, aiming for a nuanced understanding of narcissism and social media. The resulting findings were synthesized into a comprehensive report, offering nuanced insights into the intricate link between social media usage and narcissism among Pakistani youth. Thematic analysis, known for its flexibility, facilitated a systematic exploration of qualitative data.

In this study, it is analyzed the intricate dynamics between narcissistic tendencies, social media use, and the perspectives of young individuals in Pakistan. We conducted in-depth interviews with content creators, psychologists, and members of peer groups to gain insights.

Content Creators

Diverse opinions and viewpoints surface in the field of content creation, each reflecting the complex interplay between producers and their digital platforms. To better understand the experiences, perspectives, and feelings of these four varied content creators, this analysis digs into participants' narratives. The thematic analysis reveals subtle aspects, such as how positive feedback affects confidence and how social media platforms affect the intricate dynamics of self-esteem. These narratives illuminate the complex relationship between identity and perception in the digital era, as well as the coping mechanisms for negative feedback and the attraction of an idealized self-image

Table 1
Description of themes and code (content creators)

Themes	Codes
Self-worth and validation	Positive feedback, happiness, confidence
Impact of social media on Self-Esteem	Social comparison, self-esteem, criticism
Coping Mechanism	Engagement, comparison, disappointment, motivation
Idealized Image on social media	Idealized Self-Representative, Aspirational Content, Attractiveness of

The analysis focused on content creators, resulting in four key themes. The first theme, "Self-Worth and Validation," emphasized how positive feedback significantly boosts content creators' happiness and confidence. It highlighted the direct connection between online affirmations and an improved sense of self-esteem. As one of the participants said: *"I feel someone like me who gets compliments online feels happier because they feel this sense of being wanted after all these years of feeling unwanted and left out"*

The second theme, "Impact of Social Media on Self-esteem," explored the widespread practice of social comparison. Individuals tend to evaluate their lives in comparison to the idealized personas presented on social media. This theme underlined the influence of others' opinions on shaping self-perception. The formation of one's self-esteem is also influenced by some criticism. As a participant stated, *"It's only that I block people!". You should just block,*" is an example of a tactic that is utilized to lessen the influence that unfavourable comments or criticism have on an individual's perception of themselves. The third theme, "Coping Mechanisms," revealed diverse strategies individuals use to navigate the impact of social media on their self-worth. Seeking engagement, managing disappointment, and finding motivation were identified as key coping mechanisms. The fourth theme, "Idealized Image on Social Media," discussed content creators' awareness of presenting an idealized self-image online. While acknowledging the allure of aspirational content, participants recognized the potential negative impact of unrealistic comparisons on self-esteem. Participants admitted that the temptation of projecting an idealized version of themselves on these platforms was something they found appealing. As a participant said:

"Social media can boost your self-esteem aur can also you know us ka negative impact b ho skta hai aur us mein yeh hai k agr ap lifestyle ko apni har cheez ko doosry se compare krna shuru kr dein ku k social media pe zroori nahi hai jo dusry dekha rhy hein wo reality hai. Obviously wo toh positive side hi dekhaien gy na k ap kbhi b. Apni personal life hai jo b un ki life mein negative cheezien ho rhi jein wo toh nahi show krien gy toh phir ap compare krna shuru ho jaty ho apni life ko un k sath phir ap fantasise krna shuru ho jaty ho k yeh dekho kitni khush naseeb hai. Kitni khush hai yeh kesy kpry pehnati hai ya yeh roz is ki bahir outing hoti hai wo phir ap ki self-esteem pe us ka impact hota hai."

These themes collectively shed light on the nuanced relationship between social media engagement and the development of narcissistic traits among Pakistani youth. The study highlights the importance of understanding how online interactions shape self-perception in today's digital landscape.

Psychologist

Within the realm of psychology, the respondent offered interesting perspectives on the complex connection between social media usage and narcissistic inclinations among the youth in Pakistan. The respondent emphasized the significance of self-

assurance and self-perception in alleviating the influence of competition on social media platforms. In addition, they emphasized the possibility of narcissistic traits being magnified when individuals pursue validation and popularity through social media, resulting in a lack of genuineness in their online identities.

Table 2
Descriptive Information of Themes and Codes (Psychologist)

Themes	Codes
Vulnerabilities to Social Comparison	Perception of money looks, and status affect youth's mindset. Youth's belief that wealth, looks, and status is essential for a good life.
Narcissistic Traits	Wealth and beauty comparisons contribute to potential narcissistic behaviours. Judgment and mistreatment based on perceived beauty or wealth.
Social Media's Role	Acknowledgement that social media can amplify but not solely cause narcissistic tendencies. Social media acts as an amplifier for pre-existing tendencies
Validation on Social Media	Desires to fit in, look cool, and gain fame as reasons for seeking validation, seeking validation and fame as primary motives behind social media use.
Connection with Narcissistic Characteristics	Emphasis on the influence of upbringing and environment on narcissistic traits, linking narcissistic traits more with upbringing and environment than with social media use.
Interactions on Social Media	Addressing root causes of seeking approval such as childhood trauma or desire to fit in. Recognition of underlying reasons behind seeking validation on social media.
Life Events and Vulnerability	Late teens and early twenties as particularly vulnerable phases for susceptibility, traumatic events, bullying, poor upbringing, and suppressed emotions as contributing factors.
Cultural Factors	Influence of cultural dynamics and peer pressure on validation-seeking behaviours. Cultural norms and societal pressures influence the need for validation and social media.
Coping Mechanisms	Advocating disciplined social media use and using it for productive purposes. Encouraging the use of social media for beneficial purposes.

One theme uncovers vulnerabilities to social comparison, emphasizing the influence of societal pressures related to income, attractiveness, and social standing on the youth's mindset. It also highlights the profound impact of these views, illustrating that individuals deemed valuable based on these criteria often face mistreatment. The revelation from the interviews indicated that individuals who are considered valuable are often treated poorly, as expressed by the statement, "*People are like 'pyary hein toh bahi mein barii chez hu,' and they treat people very badly.*"

Another theme explores narcissistic traits, underscoring how societal pressures regarding wealth and beauty contribute to potential narcissistic behaviours. The research indicates that the formation of narcissistic tendencies is influenced by personal experiences, societal norms, and environmental factors, with social media acting as an amplifier rather than the sole cause. Another participant said, "*Youth in Pakistan are*

influenced by a tech-savvy culture, gender norms, and the need for approval. These factors shape the psychological components of social media validation." To derive pleasure and have a pleasurable experience, individuals must possess either financial resources or an attractive physical appearance. The acknowledgement that social media platforms may enhance existing narcissistic tendencies but are not the exclusive catalyst constitutes another theme. Psychologists emphasize the multifaceted nature of influences, including upbringing and environmental factors, in shaping personality traits.

The theme of validation on social media analyzes the reasons individuals seek approval, such as the desire to fit in, look cool, or gain fame. Societal influences and the impact of peer conduct shape the pursuit of validation through digital platforms. One psychologist marked,

"The most important one is the desire to fit in, in a particular group, to look cool, to be with people who are classy and cool. Or to be unique, to be famous. Yeah. Or to be different than others."

Exploring the connection with narcissistic characteristics, psychologists emphasize the significant impact of parenting and environmental circumstances on the formation of narcissistic tendencies. Childhood experiences, societal standards, and cultural influences play a crucial role in shaping an individual's self-perception. One psychologist highlighted, *"In my practice, I've seen a correlation between a demanding or overly critical upbringing and the development of narcissistic traits. The environment at home plays a pivotal role in shaping one's personality."* Another psychologist stated, *"I've observed that narcissistic behaviours often have ties to the environment individuals grow up in. The emphasis on success, appearance, or wealth from an early age can foster these traits."* These discussions highlight the psychologists' belief that the environment and upbringing have a substantial role in the formation of narcissistic traits in individuals.

The theme of interactions on social media investigates the root causes of seeking approval, highlighting elements such as childhood trauma or the innate need to conform. Psychologists emphasize that the demand for validation frequently stems from previous life events, leading individuals to seek approval through online interactions. Life events and vulnerability highlight the susceptibility of Pakistani youth in their late teens and early twenties to social media influence. This phase is considered crucial for personal development, as individuals face various stressors and societal expectations. Participant A mentioned, *"Many seek validation due to past traumas. They're trying to fill a void they've carried since childhood. Social media becomes their means of seeking that approval they never received."* Participant B added, *"It's common to see the need for approval stemming from early life experiences. A desire to fit in, which might not have been fulfilled earlier, gets projected onto social media."* Participant C emphasized, *"In my sessions, I've observed that those with childhood issues tend to seek validation more, and social media offers an easy platform for that."* These exchanges exemplify the consensus among psychologists that the demand for validation on social media frequently stems from previous life events, particularly childhood traumas or unmet aspirations to belong, leading individuals to seek validation through online contacts.

Cultural factors explore how cultural dynamics and peer pressure influence validation-seeking behaviours on social media. The desire for social acceptance and adherence to societal conventions motivate individuals to seek approval on digital platforms.

Lastly, coping mechanisms suggest strategies for managing the impact of social media, advocating disciplined use and channelling it for productive purposes. Participants emphasized the importance of self-control, selective content consumption, and using social media beyond entertainment for meaningful endeavours. The research offers a nuanced understanding of the intricate relationship between social media and the development of narcissistic tendencies among young people in Pakistan.

Young Generation

Table 3
Descriptive Information of Themes and Codes (Young Generation)

Themes	Codes
Emotional Responses to Feedback	Positive feedback (Elation, Desensitization), Negative Feedback (Feeling low, Ignoring)
Behavioural Changes with Feedback Comparison, FOMO, and Peer Influence	Glow/Pride, Behavioral Shifts Influence on Mood/Confidence, Fear of Missing Out, Patterns of Comparison/Competition
Social Media and Self-Perception	Impact on Behavior, Hiding Vulnerabilities, Upbringing Influence
Narcissistic Tendencies and Social Media	Validation and Narcissism, Impact on Identity/Behavior

The analysis of the relationship between social media use and the development of narcissistic tendencies among young people in Pakistan unveils diverse perspectives. This analysis explores the nature of social media validation, investigating participants' preferences for informational content, random posts, and memes, demonstrating the varied nature of validation sought. Emotional reactions to feedback reveal evolving sensitivities to positive and negative comments over time, with participants expressing either elation or desensitization. Behavioural changes attributed to positive feedback showcase shifts in offline actions influenced by online validation, emphasizing the impact of fame on individuals' behaviour. A participant stated, "*Yeah, I do, because fame is a thing... certain people... they forget where they started... they begin to elevate themselves.*" This indicates how the positive feedback and validation received on social media can lead individuals to change their behaviour, feeling a sense of pride and elevation due to increased attention and validation.

The influence of social media on self-perception is marked by the concealment of vulnerabilities, a quest for positivity, and the influence of family values on online behaviour. Additionally, a noteworthy connection between the pursuit of validation and the development of narcissistic traits is observed, with individuals seeking approval to shape their identities and behaviours based on social media reactions. The interviewee discusses narcissism and validation by showing how social media validation pushes people to display their greatest moments and accomplishments to win over others' approval and attention. As a participant stated, "*They want social media validation. This is the main reason. They are checking and checking. every time, how many likes, how good it is.*" This never-ending quest for approval is indicative of narcissistic tendencies and a fixation on one's value as determined by social media approval. Moreover, there is a discernible impact on behaviour and identity. A participant notices behavioural shifts following positive reinforcement. "*They become an influencer person, they admire others also and share their positive everywhere... Positivity continues until validation isn't received, and when it starts, they change.*" These passages highlight how narcissistic traits and social media affirmation interact to shape behaviours and self-perception. This underscores the

significant role of online interactions in shaping the self-perception and behaviour of young individuals in Pakistani culture.

Discussion

Social media's pervasive influence on today's youth culture has caused concerns about how it may affect interpersonal relationships and mental health. This study analyzes the complex relationship between young people's use of social media and narcissism in Pakistan. It aims to address important issues related to behaviours that seek validation, how people react in social situations, and how peer comparison shapes narcissistic tendencies. The purpose of the qualitative study is to analyze the complex relationship between young people in Pakistan's use of social media and the emergence of narcissistic behaviours. The theme analysis, which was based on Braun and Clarke's approach, provided insightful information about the effects of coping mechanisms, idealized self-representation, seeking validation, and responding to social interactions through in-depth interviews with content creators, psychologists, and young people.

The first research question examines the relationship between the emergence of narcissistic characteristics and social media approval-seeking. Utilizing the Psychodynamic Theory and Social Comparison Theory to analyze the three research questions, we can gain a clear knowledge of the relationship between social media interactions and narcissistic tendencies among Pakistani youth. The response to the first question demonstrates a direct link between narcissistic tendencies and the desire for social media acceptance. The Social Comparison Theory and Psychodynamic Theory contribute to the understanding of how receiving positive feedback turns into a coping mechanism for people experiencing rejection. This implies that the desire for approval from others online may play a significant role in the emergence of narcissistic traits. According to the analysis, content creators are greatly impacted by receiving positive comments. Participants reported feeling happier and more confident after receiving compliments.

Proceeding on to the second question, study findings regarding how youth perceive and respond to social media exchanges indicate that social comparison is a significant factor in the development of self-esteem. People's perceptions of themselves are influenced by the frequent comparison of their lives to what they see on social media. We get a better understanding when we identify the connection between narcissistic tendencies and social comparison. Beyond surface-level observations, the study reveals that social comparison is a pervasive feature of social media use. People frequently assess their own lives by contrasting them with the carefully maintained internet personas of others. Participants' perceptions of this relationship show how important it is for other people's opinions to have an impact on how one perceives oneself. This qualitative study makes a substantial contribution to our knowledge of the psychological mechanisms that underlie the development of narcissistic tendencies in young people. The study provides a more thorough understanding of how social comparison, coping strategies and the influence of social interactions combine to lead to the emergence of narcissistic tendencies potentially.

The third question analyzes the impact of peer comparison on social media on the emergence of narcissistic tendencies. The study demonstrates that people are frequently presented in an idealized manner on social media, which encourages comparisons and fantasies about the lives of others. Understanding that people purposefully project an idealized image complicates how people express themselves on social media. This study underlines the significance of comprehending how peer

comparison shapes narcissistic tendencies. It underscores the necessity of a cautious strategy to support better online behaviours and mental health among Pakistani youth. The third research question analyzes the complex connection between young people's development of narcissistic tendencies and peer comparison on social media. A vital component is revealed by thematic analysis: social media's role in providing an idealized self-image and enabling peer comparison, which in turn sparks comparisons and fantasies about other people's lives. Participants' recognition that social media platforms provide a forum for people to showcase an idealized version of themselves is a significant finding. The discussion focuses on the possible drawbacks of using social media sites for peer comparison. Comparing one's life to the perfect representations of it that are posted online can lead to the emergence of narcissistic traits. This insight emphasizes how crucial it is to understand the psychological effects of peer comparison in the context of young people's use of social media. The study clarifies how peer comparison on social media can contribute to the development and aggravation of narcissistic tendencies in young people in Pakistan by concentrating on this aspect of the phenomenon.

Conclusion

The widespread impact of social media on today's youth has caused concerns about how it may affect mental health and interpersonal relationships. This study examined the intricate connection between young people in Pakistan who use social media and narcissism. Psychologists, young people, and content makers provided insights through thematic analysis. Positive comments on social media have become a potent tool for increasing self-esteem and contentment, acting as a coping method for enduring rejection sentiments. The rise of narcissistic characteristics was directly associated with seeking validation on social media. The study demonstrated how social comparison is ubiquitous, influencing self-esteem and interacting with coping strategies. It analyzed how peer comparison influences the emergence of narcissistic behaviours, with a focus on the idealized self-images that social media presents. The complexity involved was highlighted by content providers' recognition of conveying an idealized version and awareness of these relationships. The results point to the necessity of individualized interventions, healthy online conduct promotion, self-worth independent of comparisons, and critical self-reflection in the digital age. The research advances our knowledge of the psychological mechanisms that underlie narcissistic behaviours and offers guidance for programs aimed at promoting the mental health of youth in Pakistan.

Recommendations

The results of the study highlight the need for focused intervention strategies to address the relationship between youth use of social media and narcissistic tendencies in Pakistan. It implies that programs aimed at promoting healthy online behaviour, enhancing digital literacy, and fortifying support systems for mental health are essential. Given the possible negative effects on mental health that excessive social media use and narcissistic tendencies may have, the study highlights the value of strong support networks. It is thought that parental oversight and educational involvement are essential to fostering a supportive environment where healthy online boundaries are established through open conversation. The study's suggestions, taken as a whole, support a thorough strategy including a range of stakeholders to promote a healthy and balanced digital environment for Pakistani youth.

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