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## The Correlation between Social Media Addiction and Life Satisfaction among University Students

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**Abstract:** This study aims to compare Social Media (SM) addicts and non-addicts in life satisfaction among university students. In particular, it seeks to verify the extent to which there is a statistically significant relationship between the addiction of SM among university students and their life satisfaction, focusing on the variables of gender, specialization, and academic level. Omani university students are among the groups that use and are affected by SM, and their life satisfaction is affected by this use, which is worthy of research. The participants consisted of 481 (264 female, 217 male) university students. SM Addiction Scale-Adult Form and Life Satisfaction Scale (ESWLS) were used in the data collection process. The results indicated that there is a negative relationship between life satisfaction and SM addiction. There are statistically significant differences between the addicts and non-addicts students in terms of life satisfaction in favor of the non-addicts. Statistically significant differences also are found between male and female; science and humanities; senior and freshmen levels in terms of SM addiction and life satisfaction. The study puts conclusions and recommendations in light of the above results.

**Keywords:** social media, addiction, life satisfaction, university student, Oman.

### 大学生社交媒体成瘾与生活满意度的相关性

**摘要:** 本研究旨在比较大学生中社交媒体 (SM) 成瘾者和非成瘾者的生活满意度。特别是, 它试图验证大学生 SM 成瘾与他们的生活满意度之间存在统计显著关系的程度, 重点是性别、专业和学术水平等变量。阿曼大学生属于使用 SM 并受其影响的群体, 他们的生活满意度受此使用影响, 值得研究。参与者包括 481 名 (264 名女性, 217 名男性) 大学生。在数据收集过程中使用了 SM 成瘾量表 - 成人形式和生活满意度量表 (ESWLS)。结果表明, 生活满意度与 SM 成瘾之间存在负相关关系。在生活满意度方面, 成瘾者和非成瘾者学生之间存在统计学上的显著差异, 有利于非成瘾者。男性和女性之间也存在统计学上的显著差异; 科学与人文; SM 成瘾和生活满意度方面的高级和新生水平。本研究根据上述结果提出结论和建议。

**关键词:** 社交媒体成瘾, 生活满意度, 大学生, 阿曼。

## 1. Introduction

Social Media (SM) such as Snapchat, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, and Twitter are electronic places directed by policies, regulations, and standards through which people meet and communicate to satisfy their

needs and objectives. They are one part of technological tools commonly used by adults and students to be recognized and socialize with others [1]. People also visit SM sites to engage in games, entertainment, socializing, exchanging photos, and messaging each other [2].

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SM use has contributed to a perceptible change like communication as they form a complex network of interactions between individuals and members of groups. SM may have some encouraging effects such as linking people together socially and economically, promoting friendship at a distance, and mitigating bad effects caused by modern life. The rapid increase of SM use largely puts forth a huge impact on young users and attracts the researchers' interests. However, only a few studies investigate the relationship between Internet addiction and life satisfaction [3]. This study was conducted to bridge this research gap mainly in the Omani context by investigating the effects of social media addiction among university students and its relation to life satisfaction. The following sections review the study variables: life satisfaction, SM addiction, and their relation.

Life satisfaction is important for human physical and mental well-being. It can be defined as the extent to which an individual actively and subjectively assesses the fulfillment and quality of his/her life's needs and ambitions [4, 5]. It can be conceptualized as the difference between reality and the ideal influenced by socioeconomic status, education, experiences, family, and friends [6]. It is also affected by self-esteem, optimism, loneliness, and depression [7, 8, 9].

Research suggests that life satisfaction may increase or decrease throughout one's age [10, 11]. Older people can manage their feelings more effectively using the positive effect to influence one's satisfaction of life [12]. In addition, research shows gender differences where females have lower life satisfaction than males [10, 13].

SM use has decreased the amount of time young people spend interacting with their normal social surroundings. Excessive use of the Internet had negative effects on these youngsters represented in the addiction symptoms accompanied with emotional trauma and psychological and social alienation among their local community. Addiction may be categorized as excessive or intricate use when someone spends between 8.5 - 21.5 hours per week on the Internet [14]. [15] show that students usually spent three up to six hours a day on SM through their mobiles.

SM addiction may passively affect individuals' personal and social lives as they gradually lose their personal and moral responsibility and communication abilities [16, 17]. However, people who suffer from shyness have positive attitudes towards SM as it provides them with a better means to communicate [18]. In the education field, [19] found that 78% of the reviewed studies emphasized several unfavorable effects between the university's learners' SM addiction and their achievement, happiness, and social interaction. In addition, [20] study revealed that spending more time on SM can lead to lower academic achievement, and SM addiction among students may result in psychological disorders such as depression and anxiety.

A review of studies on the relation between SM addiction and life satisfaction showed three categories of research results. The first category of studies has shown a positive relationship [8] and [21]. In addition, [22] study showed that addiction of SM has a positive association with life satisfaction.

The second category of studies account represents the main bulk of research findings showing a negative relationship between SM use and life satisfaction. This is evinced by studies such as [16, 23-26]. [27] found that life satisfaction significantly affects social media addiction as addicted individuals have depressing lives that drive their continued addictions to these media. The study [28] showed that life satisfaction had a negative correlation with Facebook use. Studies [25, 29] corroborated this finding, indicating a significant negative correlation between active Facebook use and life satisfaction. Individuals with long-term use of Facebook can explain this tendency to view other people as more content with their lives, which makes them dissatisfied with their own. [30] illustrated the 'cyclic' negative association indicating that these individuals spend even more time using SM applications to stop thinking about their dissatisfaction and then look for satisfaction again.

The third category of studies conducted on university students found a moderate to no correlation between life satisfaction and social media addiction [3, 23].

The growth of SM has been ever-increasing between Saudi Arabia and the UAE users showing that the Internet has become a multilateral platform that communicates multiple and diverse opinions from/to all sectors of society [31]. [32] explains that some Arab states have adopted SM to perform governmental duties and that officials now utilize SM to communicate with the public.

Research results showed that using SM has enhanced a sense of social presence for university students in different Arab countries on the education level. It also showed a statistically significant relationship between daily use of SM and cyber addiction, jealousy, and frustration. Some friends' practices on SM such as blocking, deception, lying, insulting, and defamation lead to frustration among Arab university youth [33]. [34] found a positive correlation between the use of SM and depression, anxiety, introversion among university students. She also found that it is possible to predict students' mental disorders in light of their use. There are statistically significant differences between male and female students in their anxiety and depression in their use of SM favor males. The study [35] revealed a low level of SM addiction among intermediate education students and a statistically significant difference in addiction according to gender variable. On the contrary, [36] found that SM improves Saudi students' academic achievement. Her study shows that one of the strongest

reasons that push female students to use Facebook and Twitter is the ease of expressing their opinions and ideological trends, which they cannot express. The results also indicated that the students benefited from SM to strengthen their friendships [36].

Regarding the relationship with life satisfaction, [30] found a strong positive correlation between life satisfaction and SM addiction among university students indicating that SM addiction positively influences life satisfaction.

Omani people have reasonably enjoyed stable and healthy lives, and Oman ranked second in the Arab world on the Quality of Life Index 2017. Therefore, about [10] definition, life satisfaction for an Omani student can be defined as the extent to which s/he accomplishes better quality of his/her life's needs and ambitions, specifically those related to academic achievement.

Findings showed that most Omani students use SM to look for information and complete educational activities every week, communicate and chat, share files and resources, and discuss instructional assignments. Although using SM improves their IT skills, they do not develop their thinking skills [37]. In addition, [38] found that Omani students, due to cultural reasons, approach new SM with "caution," which means that cultural elements and metacognitive skills can be used for better SM instructional design. [39] found that SM addiction prevailed among 21.1% of Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) university students and that endurance and conflict were the most common symptoms of this addiction. They found no significant differences in SM addiction concerning gender but significant differences concerning usage hours and GPA.

It seems that the Omani university students are among the groups who use and are affected by SM, and therefore their life satisfaction seems to be influenced by this use, which makes it necessary to investigate this particular aspect of their lives. Disclosing SM's negative and positive impacts could help institutions at higher educational levels reduce passive effects and reinforce positive ones towards more stable student's personalities. Therefore, the study's problem is to analyze the effects of SM addiction on Omani university students' life satisfaction.

The study aims to answer the following main question: What is the correlation between SM addiction and life satisfaction among undergraduate students of an Omani university, SQU, in particular? Specifically, the study seeks to address the following sub-questions:

1. Is there a significant relationship between university students' SM addiction and their life satisfaction?
2. Are there differences between addictions of SM among university students in terms of life satisfaction?

3. Are there differences in SM addiction and life satisfaction according to gender, specialization, and academic year?

## 2. Materials and Methods

### 2.1. Participants

The study participants were 481 students (264 females, 217 males) who study in an SQU in Oman and are between 18 and 24 years old. All students completed the survey forms.

### 2.2. Ethical Considerations

The researchers obtained acceptance approval from the SQU, where they have implemented the study. In addition, participants' consent to participate in the study was also collected through e-mail and WhatsApp before distributing the instruments.

### 2.3. Data collection instruments

#### 2.3.1. SM Addiction Scale

The researchers designed a two-section scale. The first section collects demographic data on the respondent's gender, academic level, college, specialization, SM use, and mobile device ownership. The second section was offered to verify the study sample's addiction to SM by applying the "Addiction Scale" (AS) designed by [40]. Selecting this scale came due to its wide application by many previous studies. In addition, the researchers have adapted it to the Omani context through the below steps followed by [41]:

1. They have translated it into Arabic and reformulated all eighteen phrases related to addiction to fit SM addiction.
2. Then, the draft of the modified scale was presented to a panel of language reviewers and specialists in educational technology and media.
3. After making the modifications recommended by the reviewers' panel, the researchers explored the scale's validity on a sample of (35) university students from different SQU colleges.
4. The scale was then modified linguistically because of the sample's feedback. The Cronbach Alpha's coefficient was calculated and found at high reliability of (0.86).
5. To determine the level of SM addiction among the respondents, their mean score was calculated, and those who fall in the range between 1.00-2.99 on 5 points scale was described as 'non-addicts'; and those who fall in the range between 3.00-5.00 on 5 points scale was described as 'addicts'.

#### 2.3.2. Life Satisfaction Scale

The Extended Satisfaction with Life Scale (ESWLS) was originally developed by [42] with 50-item (using 5-point Likert scale; 1 for low satisfaction and 5 for high satisfaction) to measure life satisfaction in nine domains

with each domain composed of five items. For contextualization purposes, only twenty items and four domains (Social Satisfaction, Self – Satisfaction, Physical Satisfaction, and Family Satisfaction) of ESWLS were selected to measure the Omani students' satisfaction. Confirmatory factor analyses of the adapted ESWLS shows acceptable scores on test-retest reliability at ( $r = 0.82$ ) with internal consistency at ( $r = 0.89$ ). Item-total correlations varied from 0.64 to 0.78. Chi-square value ( $\chi^2 = 10.129$ ,  $df = 2.026$ ,  $p = 0.072$ ) is seen as significant. The fit indexes were found IFI = 0.994, TLI = 0.987, CFI = 0.994, SRMR = 0.020, RMSEA = 0.043. Chi-square multiple correlations were ranged between 0.39 and 0.50.

**2.4. Data Analysis**

The research data was analyzed using SPSS 23.0 (Statistical Package for the Social Science) program. The data concerning students, SM addiction, and life satisfaction were interpreted considering, Pearson Correlation Coefficient analyzed correlation among life satisfaction and SM addiction, arithmetic means, standard deviations; and a t-test was conducted to compare gender, type of specialization, academic level with life satisfaction.

**3. Results**

**3.1. The Correlation between Life Satisfaction and SM Addiction**

The correlation between life satisfaction and SM addiction was examined through the Pearson correlation Coefficient. Table 1 shows the results of the correlational analyses between the variables analyses.

Table 1 The relationships between life satisfaction and SM addiction

Variables	SM addiction
Social satisfaction	- 0.28**
Self – satisfaction	- 0.63**
Physical satisfaction	- 0.67**
Family satisfaction	- 0.41**
Total life satisfaction	- 0.52**

\*\* p < 0.01.

According to the Table 1 findings, there is a significant negative correlation between life satisfaction and SM addiction.

**3.2. The Differences between the Addicts and Non-Addicts**

The differences between the addicts and non-addicts in terms of life satisfaction were calculated using a t-test. Table 2 shows the results of the analysis.

Table 2 Results of t-test regarding the SM addicts and non-addicts in terms of life satisfaction

Life satisfaction scores	Addicts (n = 278)		Non-addicts (n = 203)		t	p
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
	2.81	0.76	3.83	0.84	3.67	.001

According to the Table 2 findings, there is a statistical difference ( $t = 2.93$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) between addicts and non-addicts of SM in terms of life satisfaction in favor of the non-addicts.

**3.3. The Differences in SM Addiction and Life Satisfaction**

The differences in SM addiction and life satisfaction according to gender, specialization, and academic year

*3.3.1. Gender*

*3.3.1.1. SM Addiction*

There were 18 items on the scale, and the range of possible responses for each item was between 1 to 5, so the minimum possible score was 18, and the maximum possible score was 90. Table 3 shows descriptive statistics and t-test findings of gender variables.

Table 3 Results of t-test regarding gender effects for all participants on SM addiction

Life satisfaction scores	Male (n = 217)		Female (n = 264)		t	p
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
	3.19	0.89	2.64	0.79	2.85	.001

According to the Table 3 findings, there is a statistical difference ( $t=2.85$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) between males' and females' effects on SM addiction in favor of males.

*3.3.1.2. Life Satisfaction*

There were 20 items on the scale, and the range of possible responses for each item was between 1 to 5, so the minimum possible score was 20, and the maximum possible score was 100. Table 4 shows descriptive statistics and t-test findings of gender.

Table 4 Results of t-test regarding gender effects for all participants on life satisfaction

Life satisfaction scores	Male (n = 217)		Female (n = 264)		t	p
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
	3.85	0.88	3.17	0.83	2.93	.001

According to the Table 4 findings, there is a statistical difference ( $t = 2.93, p < 0.01$ ) between males and females in terms of life satisfaction in favor of males.

### 3.3.2. Specialization

#### 3.3.2.1. SM Addiction

There were 18 items on the scale, and the range of possible responses for each item was between 1 to 5, so the minimum possible score was 18, and the maximum possible score was 90. Table 5 shows descriptive statistics and t-test findings of the specialization variable.

Table 5 Results of t-test regarding specialization effects for all participants on SM addiction

Life satisfaction scores	Science (n = 223)		Humanities (n = 258)		t	p
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
	2.96	0.89	3.62	0.79	3.02	.001

According to the Table 5 findings, there is a statistical difference ( $t = 3.02, p < 0.01$ ) between science and humanities specialization effects on SM addiction in favor of humanities specialization.

#### 3.3.2.2. Life Satisfaction

There were 20 items on the scale, and the range of possible responses for each item was between 1 to 5, so the minimum possible score was 20, and the maximum possible score was 100. Table 6 shows descriptive statistics about life satisfaction.

Table 6 Results of t-test regarding specialization effects for all participants on life satisfaction

Life satisfaction scores	Science (n = 223)		Humanities (n = 258)		t	p
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
	2.83	0.88	3.51	0.86	2.97	.001

According to the Table 6 findings, there is a statistical difference ( $t = 3.51, p < 0.01$ ) between science and humanities specialization in terms of life satisfaction in favor of humanities specialization.

### 3.3.3. Academic Year

#### 3.3.3.1. SM Addiction

There were 18 items on the scale, and the range of possible responses for each item was between 1 to 5, so the minimum possible score was 18, and the maximum possible score was 90. Table 7 shows descriptive statistics about the academic year variable.

Table 7 Results of t-test regarding specialization effects for all participants on life satisfaction

Life satisfaction scores	Senior (n = 201)		Freshmen (n = 280)		t	p
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
	3.87	0.91	3.11	0.89	2.82	.001

According to the Table 7 findings, there is a statistical difference ( $t = 3.11, p < 0.01$ ) between senior and freshmen levels effects on SM addiction in favor of senior level.

#### 3.3.3.2. Life Satisfaction

There were 20 items on the scale, and the range of possible responses for each item was between 1 to 5, so the minimum possible score was 20, and the maximum possible score was 100. Table 8 shows descriptive statistics about life satisfaction.

Table 8 Results of t-test regarding academic level effects for all participants on life satisfaction

Life satisfaction scores	Senior (n = 201)		Freshmen (n = 280)		t	p
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
	3.42	0.79	2.93	0.85	2.93	.001

According to the Table 8 findings, there is a statistical difference ( $t = 2.93, p < 0.01$ ) between senior and freshmen levels regarding life satisfaction in favor of senior level.

## 4. Conclusion

SM has become a daily means of communication that allow people to link with their co-workers for entertainment and learning purposes, and undoubtedly this leads to more social interaction, speed of achievement, and accuracy of performance. SM has spread widely among university students on sites such as Facebook and Twitter. The daily exchange of information and data through SM has become noticeable and influential. It affects their self-concept, relationships with colleagues and families, life satisfaction, and future visions. SM use is noticeable, it increases and reflects on the students' academic performance, and its impact must be studied. Therefore, this study focuses mainly on SM addiction among university students. The findings included variables of gender, specialization, academic year, and life satisfaction; and showed a negative relationship between SM addiction and life satisfaction. This finding coincides with [16, 23-27] studies that generally concluded that people addicted to SM have lower life satisfaction, happiness, and well-being. However, the findings of this study do not support [8, 21, 30] studies that found that using SM had positive effects on life satisfaction.

This study is considered important through its contribution to enriching the global and regional literature on using SM as a technological media in the Omani context, where the number of its users is increasing now among university students. The results of this study can contribute to the development of a theoretical framework for educators to enable them to identify the pros and cons of using SM and then improve the positive aspects of using it and reduce the negative effects. This should, in turn, reflect the benefit of enhancing their students' satisfaction with life and raising their academic achievement. The more positive their life satisfaction is, the more they appreciate themselves and express their opinions to show their understanding, awareness, and adaptation with the surrounding university community and build good social relationships with their teachers and classmates. The study also contributes to paving the way for researchers. In the future, it is possible to conduct correlational research between the Internet and SM addiction and the social support provided by family members and groups of friends, with a focus on parenting and friendship patterns.

In the scope of these findings, the study recommends the training of university students on the effective use of SM and raise their (and families) awareness of the SM negative effects. More importantly, to make them more positive about their life satisfaction, they benefit from the educational SM to conduct instructional assignments, research, and activities. This keeps them active in searching the information and link it to the 'real world.

The participants of the study are limited to a small sample of Sultan Qaboos University. Therefore, this may limit the generalizability of its findings to larger samples.

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