SHORT COMMUNICATION

©2023 The Academy of Environmental Biology, India

Journal of Ecophysiology and Occupational Health, Vol 26(1), *DOI: 10.18311/jeoh/2026/51243, 33-42, March 2026*

ISSN (Online) : 0972-4397
ISSN (Online) : 0974-0805

Exploring the Relationships Between Maladaptive Daydreaming, Loneliness, and Problematic Social Media Use: A Correlational Study

Ritambhra Goswami[1], Siddharth Sharma[2*], Aditya Kumar Shukla[2] and Sneha Agrawal[3]

[1]Amity Business School, AUMP, Gwalior – 474002, Madhya Pradesh, India
[2]Amity School of Communication, AUMP, Gwalior – 474002, Madhya Pradesh, India; siddharth756@gmail.com
[3]Amity University Madhya Pradesh , Gwalior – 474002, Madhya Pradesh, India

Abstract

This study aims to examine the relationship between maladaptive daydreaming, loneliness, and problematic social media usage among adults, three psychological constructs that have gained increasing attention in the context of digital-era coping mechanisms. A sample of 100 individuals between the ages of 18 and 40 years (50 females and 50 males) was selected through convenience sampling. Data were collected using three standardized instruments: the Maladaptive Daydreaming Scale–16 (MDS-16), the UCLA Loneliness Scale, and the Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale. These tools measured the intensity of immersive daydreaming, perceived social isolation, and patterns of excessive or addictive social media use, respectively. Descriptive and inferential analyses revealed significant positive correlations among all three variables. Adults who reported higher levels of loneliness tended to engage more frequently in maladaptive daydreaming, suggesting that immersive fantasy activity may function as an emotional escape or compensatory strategy for unmet social needs. Similarly, loneliness demonstrated a strong association with problematic social media usage, indicating that individuals experiencing social disconnection may turn to online platforms in an attempt to fulfill belongingness needs. Moreover, maladaptive daydreaming and problematic social media use were also positively correlated, highlighting the possibility of overlapping cognitive and behavioral mechanisms rooted in avoidance, emotional regulation, or fantasy-based coping. Overall, the findings underscore the interconnected nature of loneliness, maladaptive daydreaming, and problematic social media use among adults. These results contribute to growing psychological research that emphasizes the need for interventions targeting social well-being, adaptive coping strategies, and balanced digital engagement.

Major Findings: Adults who experience higher levels of loneliness tend to engage more in maladaptive daydreaming and problematic social media use. A significant positive correlation was found among all three variables, with no notable gender differences observed.

Keywords: Adult Psychology, Coping Strategies, Digital Behavior, Loneliness; Maladaptive Daydreaming, Mental Health, Problematic Social Media Use, Psychological Well-being

1. Introduction

1.1 Maladaptive Daydreaming

Maladaptive daydreaming is a mental health disorder that happens when someone daydreams excessively, frequently for hours at a time. "Maladaptive" describes a subpar or detrimental attempt to use daydreaming to cope with or adapt to a problem. People "lose themselves" in vivid, detailed daydreams as a result of this. Studies have shown that this kind of daydreaming can also be compulsive. This

**Author for correspondence*

Article Received on: 25.08.2025 Revised on: 16.12.2025 Accepted on: 26.12.2025

suggests that stopping yourself from doing it is difficult, if not impossible. People who suffer from illnesses that impact their mental health or specific brain functions are more likely to engage in maladaptive daydreaming. Maladaptive daydreaming is frequently associated with the following conditions: ADHD, disorders of anxiety, and specific forms of depression, dissociative conditions, and obsessive-compulsive disorder. Another aspect that may contribute to maladaptive daydreaming is age. According to certain studies, it is more prevalent in younger individuals, particularly adolescents and young adults, but it can also affect kids. For the first time the term "Maladaptive Daydreaming"[1–3] was said by Eli Somer in 2002, who was the professor of clinical psychology in Israel, and also the PhD holder. The symptoms of maladaptive daydreaming are all related to the daydreaming itself. Daydreaming activity and feelings about daydreaming are the two main groups into which the symptoms typically fall. People experiencing excessive daydreaming are continuously suffering with negative emotions. According to Pa-C (2024), when someone uses extended periods of daydreaming, frequently for hours at a time, to deal with a problem, this is known as maladaptive daydreaming. Daydreaming is "maladaptive" since it significantly impairs and distresses the person. The daydreams frequently have intricate and colorful narratives that stir strong feelings. A person may become so engrossed in their daydream that they neglect their work and other responsibilities or begin to distance themselves from friends and family. Maladaptive daydreaming, however, is not a mental health condition.

Another article by Summer and Bagot[4], says that maladaptive daydreaming is the help children who struggle with sensory term used to describe a person who regularly has vivid, very distracting daydreams- so distracting, in fact, that they may stop focusing on the activity or people in front of them. These daydreams may be brought on by real-world events or triggers, such as a sound, smell, conversation topic, or movie. Maladaptive dreamers may detach from reality and inadvertently imitate the speech patterns or behaviors of fictitious characters in order to completely lose themselves in their illusion. Some daydreams contain creative and extremely comprehensive information, while others present an idealized image of the daydreamer. Maladaptive daydreaming may develop as a coping strategy in response to trauma because the inner world may appear safer than the situation taking place outside. During the COVID-19 lockout, for example, people were more likely to participate in maladaptive daydreaming, as their daydreams grew more vivid and they felt a greater urge to daydream. Also it has been discovered that university students frequently use maladaptive daydreaming as a coping mechanism for perceived stress and to compensate for unfulfilled desires for belonging. Stress-focused therapies may reduce maladaptive daydreaming, diminish its adverse consequences, and improve the welfare of college students since perceived stress is an intermediary variable.

1.2 Loneliness

Many of us have moments of loneliness. Nobody will experience loneliness in the same way because it is a subjective emotion. Some people believe that loneliness is the feeling we get when our demands for social engagement and connections aren't met. But being alone is not the same as feeling lonely. You may feel content if you don't see people too often. For some, though, this might be a lonely experience. Some people may only feel lonely occasionally. On the other hand, some people may experience constant loneliness. This feeling of loneliness is severe and persistent. It's possible to feel alone even when you're with other people. Some people might think that living alone is the only way to feel lonely or that loneliness is indicated by the lack of close friends or family. But even with a lot of social connection and assistance, loneliness can still exist. Especially if people don't loneliness worse. Some studies suggest that loneliness may increase stress levels. It is also associated with an increased risk of certain mental health conditions. For example, poor self-esteem, worry, depression, and trouble sleeping. Each person has a different set. Occasionally, we are unable to pinpoint the precise details of an interaction causing us to feel isolated. When someone feels that they don't have as many or as good social interactions as they would like, they feel lonely, which is an uncomfortable emotion. Loneliness is a profoundly personal experience; one can be alone without feeling lonely, and one may experience loneliness even when surrounded by other people. Even though loneliness has always been a problem, psychological studies on the subject are still in their infancy. Attachment theory, developed by psychiatrist John Bowlby in the latter half of the 20th century, emphasizes the importance of a strong emotional bond between the baby and the caregiver and serves as a forerunner to contemporary concepts of loneliness. That theory states that children

with unstable attachment styles experience loneliness when they behave in ways that cause their friends to reject them. These rejections impede their social skill development and deepen their mistrust of others, which perpetuates their loneliness. An important psychological theory of loneliness based on attachment theory was developed bythe sociologist Robert S. Weiss. Weiss listed six social expectations that, if unmet, result in loneliness. Social integration, attachment, nurturing, a sense of reliable relationship, value affirmation, and assistance during difficult times are some of these needs. As would be predicted given attachment theory, Weiss contends that friendships can help people avoid loneliness but cannot take the place of a close, intimate relationship with a spouse. As per the Sissons[5], said that the American Psychological Association defines loneliness as a sense of isolation that causes discomfort or uneasiness. People may experience emotional distress if their natural needs for intimacy and companionship are not met. If a person feels that their existing social connections do not equal the quantity or quality of relationships they would like to have, they may feel lonely. Some psychologists contend that loneliness is a normal part of lifend that it can even promote self-awareness and personal growth. Another study Luhmann *et al.*,[6] said that People experience loneliness when the quantity and quality of their social interactions do not meet their social needs. Most of the research has focused on individual-level loneliness predictors. However, macro-level factors related to historical time and geographic place may affect loneliness through their influence on individual-level characteristics. The four categories of macro-level factors—living conditions and individual resource availability, technology and digitalization, family and social life, and values and norms—may account for the differences in the prevalence of loneliness over historical time and geographic region. We provide an overview of empirical research on these variances in this review. Believe that a more nuanced understanding of how macro- level factors affect loneliness is necessary due to their significance for public policy, and recommend specific research directions.

1.3 Problematic Social Media Use

"Social media" refers to a variety of modern technologies which promote information and idea sharing among users. More than 5 billion people, or more than 62% of the global population, utilize social media sites including YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter). In early 2024, 94.7% of users used chat and messaging apps and websites, with social media platforms accounting for 94.3% of users. The Global Web Index indicates that 46% of internet users worldwide get their news from social media. This is similar to 40% of users that goto news websites in order to watch news. Gen Z and millennials were the most likely to watch news on social media compared to older generations. If using social media makes you lose hours or even minutes at a time, you're not alone. Originally used to stay in touch with friends and family, social networking has grown into a well-liked hobby that appeals to individuals of all ages. "Social media addiction" is not a recognized diagnosis. A growing number of people, however, are using social media excessively, which can be harmful to your mental and physical health.

Similar to other behavioral addictions, social media use can have detrimental impacts on your brain. You might use social media excessively and obsessively. You could become so used to scrolling through posts, pictures, and videos that it starts to get in the way of other aspects of your life.

Humans are social creatures. We need other people's companionship to flourish in life, and the caliber of our relationships has a significant impact on our happiness and mental health. You can prevent loneliness, feel more valuable, experience less stress, worry, and despair, and even live longer if you have a social network. However, if you lack strong social connections, your mental and emotional health could be in grave danger. Nowadays, a lot of people communicate with each other using social media platforms. Despite the benefits of each, it's important to remember that social media will never fully replace face-to-face communication. Social media has fundamentally altered how people communicate with each other. They are now essential to day-to-day existence. Many young people don't know much about the world if they don't have quick access to the Internet. Social media has changed how the younger generation builds relationships with each other. There is evidence that these platforms negatively impact users' mental health, despite the fact that they offer fantastic opportunities for creativity, learning, and innovation. The growth of the Internet and its uses has led to a considerable surge in interest in social networks. Their frequent use, mostly by young people, raises worries and starts a discussion about "social media addiction." They are used extensively throughout the world. One on the study conducted by

Shannon *et al.*,[7] stated that this study encourages future research that focuses on the underlying mechanisms of problematic social media usage and offers more evidence of the link between problematic social media use and poor mental health among adolescents and young adults

2. Existing Literature

Schimmenti *et al.*,[2] distinguish Maladaptive Daydreaming (MD) from other mental activities that involve the excessive or problematic use of fantasy, including lucid dreaming, autistic fantasy, dissociative absorption, daydreaming, mind wandering, fantasy proneness, and slow cognitive tempo. To increase comprehension and better clinical assessment, the methodology incorporates ananalysis of the similarities and differences between MD and these associated activities. The analysis and differential diagnosis of MD are demonstrated by a clinical case study. The results highlight how crucial it is to understand MD's distinct features in order to more accurately evaluate and diagnose the illness in clinical settings.

Somer *et al.*,[8] conducted a study creating a structured interview and diagnostic criteria for Maladaptive Daydreaming (MD), assess the reliability of these tools, and determine the best self-report cutoff score. A self-report questionnaire and two structured interviews with separate doctors were filled out by 31 controls and 31 MD patients. Although more extensive sample testing is required, the results show that MD can be accurately diagnosed using the structured interview, which also generated a reasonable cutoff score and matched well with the self-report measure.

Bigelsen *et al.*,[1] conducted research on understanding the features of Maladaptive Daydreaming (MD), a phenomenon that has just been described, is the aim of this study. The findings demonstrated that MD differs significantly from normative daydreaming in terms of quantity, content, experience, controllability, discomfort, and disruption of daily functioning. The results also revealed that maladaptive daydreamers had significantly higher rates of attention deficit, obsessive compulsive, and dissociation symptoms than controls. All things considered, the findings showed that MD is a clinical phenomenon that is not well understood, hinders everyday functioning, causes discomfort, and requires greater clinical and scientific attention.

Mar *et al.*,[9] conducted research understanding Daydreaming and happiness and life satisfaction appear to have a complex relationship. Here, we demonstrate that daydreaming usually involves social others, that the relationships between daydreaming and happiness variables like loneliness, perceived social support, and life satisfaction are influenced by the people we daydream about, and that the aspects of daydreaming that predict life satisfaction differ for men and women.

Specifically, daydreaming about people we are close to predicts higher levels of life satisfaction, whereas fantasizing about people who are far away predicts higher degrees of loneliness and lower levels of perceived social support. It is significant to note that these trends continue even when actual social network depth and breadth are statistically controlled, despite the fact that these ties are usually very small in quantity.

Somer[3] conducted a qualitative study to examine the characteristics and experience of MD. Six patients in a trauma practice were discovered to be displaying MD. Among the MD functions that were discovered were closeness, companionship, and calming; disengagement from pain and stress through desire fulfillment fantasies and mood enhancement was also recognized. The MD themes that recurred most often were: Captivity, Rescue and Escape, Idealized Self, Power and Control, Violence, and Sexual Arousal. MD dynamics were characterized by the Onset and Kinesthetic elements' themes. While MD seems to be preceded by a normal childhood propensity for imaginative creativity, adverse events were considered to have contributed to the development of MD. Theoretical explanations of MD's formation and functioning are discussed.

2.1 Loneliness

West *et al.*,[10] analyze loneliness literature on prevalence, demographics, psychiatric illnesses, and physical sickness. Large numbers of people, especially young women and women, were lonely, save for elderly unmarried men. The association between loneliness, depression, alcoholism, child abuse, and grief is studied. Few studies have examined loneliness and other psychiatric diseases. Loneliness is linked to physical sickness, and different explanations are examined.

Shannon *et al.*,[7] aims to methodically investigate the issues surrounding young people's usage of social media and how they relate to signs of stress, anxiety, and

depression. A total of 18 articles and 9269 participants participated in the review and meta-analysis. Stress, anxiety, and depression are moderately but statistically significantly correlated with problematic social media use, according to our metaregression. However, there was no evidence that these compiled links differed by age, gender, or year of publication.

Paakkari *et al.*,[11] conducted a study understanding social media use can develop into a potentially lethal addiction, even moderate use may have detrimental health impacts. Among social media user groups categorized as no-risk, moderate risk (of developing problematic behavior), and problematic use, the prevalence, correlations with personal characteristics and health, and increased health risk were all examined. Older age groups, those with little health literacy, those with moderate to low academic achievement, and those with limited parental supervision had the highest prevalence of problematic social media use (9.4%). The group most likely to fall into a moderate risk category (33.5%) was girls and adolescents with

low/moderate parental supervision and health literacy. The study confirmed the connection between problematic social media use and negative health outcomes and underlined the importance of regularly monitoring teens at intermediate risk who showed poor health outcomes.

Zahrai *et al.*,[12] conducted a research on the concept of self-control on social media is reviewed in this article. As seen by the development of applied frameworks, concepts of planned behavior gradually give way to concepts that support unplanned activity and a lack of self-control. This finding explains the application of dual-system theories and the present focus of study on the impulsive behavior of heavy social media users. However, the research methodology of the included publications primarily examined impulsive self-control failures using self- report questionnaires, which may have resulted in contradictory findings and a lack of theoretical support for self-control therapy. Every study that examined it claims that people's welfare is negatively impacted by social media self-control concerns.

Meshi *et al.*,[13] conducted a study examining any possible connections between social isolation and older people's usage of social media was the aim of this study.

Our investigations found no correlation between estimated daily social media use and perceived social isolation, while higher problematic social media use was associated with higher reported social isolation. Despite the lack of causal attribution, our findings indicate a relationship between problematic social media use and older adults' reported social isolation. When working with older people, researchers should be mindful of this possibility and watch out for maladaptive social media use. All things considered, our findings offer a valuable foundation for further research on older persons' usage of social media and social isolation.

Kircaburun *et al.*,[14] in their present study aimed to investigate the following:

how social media use motivations are influenced by demographics and the Big Five personality traits; how social media site preferences are influenced by demographics and use motivations; and how PSMU is influenced by demographics, personality, popular social media sites, and social media use motivations. The sample consisted of 1008 undergraduate students with ages ranging from 17 to 32. Because the results demonstrated that different personality traits predict different motives, that different motives predict platform preference, and that different individual differences, including personality, platform preference, and specific use motives, predict PSMU, they empirically support the uses and gratifications theory. MD and Loneliness

Seth and Bhargava[15] presented a thesis titles "Maladaptive daydreaming as a coping mechanism to escape loneliness". This study examine the connection between loneliness and Maladaptive Daydreaming (MD) makes them important psychological issues that require more investigation. This study looks at the relationships of 120 young Indians between the ages of 18 and 30. The study uses a quantitative technique to examine the prevalence of MD and its relationship to loneliness. The findings indicate a significant positive correlation between MD and loneliness. In keeping with its role as a coping mechanism, they also show that loneliness is a powerful predictor of MD. These results provide useful suggestions for dealing with psychological discomfort and social isolation in the context of Indian culture.

Constantine and Haque[16] conducted a study to examine whether perceived stress moderated the associations between loneliness and self-esteem and maladaptive daydreaming. The Maladaptive Daydreaming Scale, the UCLA Loneliness Scale, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, and the Perceived Stress Scale were completed by 119 college students, 71.40% of whom were female. Regression analyses with mediation were used to examine the hypotheses. Significantly, maladaptive

daydreaming was predicted by higher levels of loneliness and worse self-esteem. The association between maladaptive daydreaming and loneliness was somewhat mediated by perceived stress, while the association between self-esteem and maladaptive daydreaming was totally mediated by perceived stress.

Wu *et al.*,[17] presented a longitudinal study including 538 Chinese college students found the long-term relationship between loneliness and problematic social media usage, and they offer suggestions to academics and educators on how to approach these problems from a developmental perspective.

Moretta *et al.*,[18] conducted a study to find the relationships between loneliness and PSNSU symptoms (i.e., Preference for Online Social Interaction – POSI, mood regulation, weak self-regulation, and negative outcomes), as well as the likely moderating effects of gender for those with poor vs. good sleep quality. According to the results, those who have poor sleep quality report feeling more alone and having more severe symptoms of PSNSU. These symptoms may be brought on by hormonal, neurological, and metabolic processes that are connected to sleep disruptions. The gender differences between those with poor and good sleep quality are also evident in the data, which may help to clarify the nature of the connection between loneliness and PSNSU.

It was analyzed whether loneliness has an impact on the connection between PSMU and life satisfaction. According to preliminary analyses, life satisfaction and PSMU were negatively correlated, although the effect was greatly obscured by loneliness. Higher PSMU did not indicate poorer life satisfaction in individuals, according to a longitudinal study; however, it did predict higher levels of loneliness, which in turn predicted lower life satisfaction. The study found that the relationship between PSMU and life satisfaction is significantly influenced by loneliness. Additionally, it was confirmed that PSMU can gradually make people feel more alone.

Moretta and Buodo[19] reviewed, many research have examined the relationship between loneliness and Problematic Internet Usage (PIU) in recent decades. This study aims to provide an overview of the latest findings in this field and to pose some significant questions. The findings suggests that PIU and loneliness have been reported to have a small-to-medium positive connection in numerous cross-sectional studies. The correlation decreases as more variables are considered. Longitudinal studies indicate a dynamic relationship between loneliness and PIU.

Mishra and Kewalramani[20] conducted a study to investigate the relationship among a group of younger adults using social media, maladaptive daydreaming, and the imposter phenomenon. The results demonstrated a favorable correlation between social media use and maladaptive daydreaming. Additionally, people who reported utilizing social media more regularly were more likely to have maladaptive daydreaming tendencies. Additionally, it was found that social media use and the imposter phenomenon were positively correlated. It implies that excessive social media users also struggle with self-doubt. These results contribute to the corpus of prior research by highlighting the potential negative effects of excessive social media use.

Chirico *et al.*,[21] conducted research on Psychopathological symptoms (e.g., depression, anxiety, somatization, obsessive-compulsive, interpersonal sensitivity, and psychoticism), emotion regulation strategies (e.g., cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression), Problematic Social Networking Site Use (PSNSU), and maladaptive daydreaming-related variables (MD, i.e., interference with life and somatosensory retreat) were all examined in the current study. In comparison to non-MDers, the results showed that MDers scored much higher on all research variables, with the exception of cognitive reappraisal. The fact that MDers typically score higher on psychopathological symptoms lends credence to the notion that MD is a clinical condition, in which OC symptoms may be essential.

Costanzo *et al.*,[22] examined the relationships among a sample of community- dwelling individuals between attachment styles, maladaptive daydreaming, and Problematic Social Media Usage (PSMU).The results demonstrated that maladaptive daydreaming has a major mediating role in the associations between PSMU and preoccupied and fearful attachment types. This implies that maladaptive daydreaming contributes to the recognized link between excessive social media use and insecure attachment styles.

Zsila *et al.*,[23] in their study sought to expand on previous research on psychological correlates by investigating the connection between celebrity worship and compulsive behaviors such problematic Internet use, maladaptive daydreaming, desire for fame, and self-efficacy. The voluntary sample consisted of 437 Hungarian adults and adolescents. Hierarchical regression models found that high levels of celebrity worship were associated with maladaptive daydreaming, problematic Internet use,

and a desire for fame. Furthermore, women were more prone than men to become fixated on celebrities.

Uslu[24] presented a thesis titled "Understanding the relationship between media use and maladaptive daydreaming". This study examined the connection between media use and MD within the framework of the interactive online media infrastructure that exists today. The results have been occurred in three segments saying, maladaptive daydreamers who are more frequently provoked by media exhibit more severe forms of maladaptive daydreaming, according to the study's initial finding. Second, there is a correlation between the frequency of music listening and the frequency of daydreaming. Thirdly, a correlation is shown between the frequency of Internet browsing and the frequency of daydreaming.

2.1.1 Objectives

- To examine the relationship between maladaptive daydreaming, loneliness, and problematic social media usage among adults.
- To contribute to the growing recognition and understanding of maladaptive daydreaming as a psychological construct.

2.1.2 Hypothesis

- H1: There will be a significant positive correlation between maladaptive daydreaming and loneliness among adults.
- H2: There will be a significant positive correlation between loneliness and problematic social media usage among adults.
- H3: There will be a significant positive correlation between maladaptive daydreaming and problematic social media usage among adults.
- H4: There will be no significant gender differences in levels of maladaptive daydreaming, loneliness, and problematic social media usage.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Sample

Sample Description: Data collection was conducted in online versions from various different sources. The total sample terminated at 100, comprising of 50 females (50%), and 50 males (50%). The age range of the participants was 18-40 years.

Sampling Method: Convenience sampling was employed to collect data due to easy access in geographical proximity and willingness to participate in known contacts. Furthermore, establishing touch with maximum number of people was achieved via Snowball sampling for online data.

4. Research Design

The research design used for the study was correlational in nature. It was also a quantitative one. This type of research design was chosen because the study aims to explore the relationship between loneliness, maladaptive daydreaming, and problematic social media usage.

5. Tool Description

There will be the use of three scales: Maladaptive Daydreaming Scale (MDS- 16) developed by Somer *et al*[25]. UCLA scale for Loneliness by Russell. Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS) by Andreassen *et al*[26].

MDD- 16: Maladaptive Daydreaming Scale is developed by Somer *et al*., in 2016. To measure maladaptive daydreaming, a disorder marked by excessive, compulsive, and intense daydreaming that interferes with day-to-day functioning, and its frequency, intensity, and effects. The MDS-16 assesses important aspects of maladaptive daydreaming, such as its vividness, compulsiveness, emotional connection, and degree to which it interferes with daily tasks. It consists of 16 items that are scored on a 7-point Likert scale. The scale is a crucial tool for examining the phenomena in both clinical and research settings because it has shown excellent validity and reliability across a range of demographics.

UCLA Loneliness Scale: The UCLA Loneliness Scale is a popular self- report tool used to gauge people's subjective experiences of social isolation and loneliness. It was created by Russell, Peplau, and Ferguson in 1978 and subsequently updated by Russell in 1996. The scale evaluates a person's perceived quality of social ties using 20 items assessed on a 4-point Likert scale; higher scores indicate greater loneliness. In order to reduce answer bias and capture the relational and emotional dimensions of loneliness, it has both positively and negatively worded items. The scale has proven to be a useful tool for analyzing loneliness in social and psychological research because to its exceptional validity and reliability across a variety of demographics.

BSMAS: The Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS), a validated self-report instrument developed by Andreassen *et al.*,[26] is used to assess problematic social media use based on behaviors that resemble addiction. Relapse, conflict, withdrawal, salience, mood modulation, and tolerance are the six measures that make up the scale, which is founded on the core concepts of addiction theory. Each item is graded on a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 represents "very rarely" and 5 represents "very often." Higher scores indicate more problematic use. Because it has been shown to be extremely valid and accurate in a range of cultural contexts, the BSMAS is a widely used instrument for identifying patterns of excessive and compulsive social media use that interfere with day-to-day functioning.

6. Data Analysis

In order to investigate gender differences in these factors and the association between loneliness, maladaptive daydreaming, and problematic social media use, the data were analyzed using Jamovi. For every significant variable, descriptive statistics like mean and standard deviation were calculated. The direction and strength of the correlations between the variables were evaluated using Pearson's correlation. Additionally, the levels of loneliness, maladaptive daydreaming, and problematic social media use were compared between male and female participants using independent samples t-tests.

The socio-demographic details of the population under study in the Table 1.

Table 1. Socio-demographic details

Variable	Category	Percentage
Gender	Female	50%
	Male	50%
Age	18–29	97%
	30–40	3%

The Pearson's correlation is used to analyse the significant relationship between these variables. According to this all the relationships tested were positively at the 0.01 level of significance, which means that there exists a significant positive relationship between the three variables. Maladaptive Daydreaming and Loneliness indicates a small positive correlation, Loneliness and Problematic Social Media Usage indicates moderate positive correlation, and Problematic Social Media Usage and Maladaptive Daydreaming also indicates a moderate positive correlation.

7. Comparison Between Females and Males

According to the T-test applied after distributing the sample into females and males category. The difference in between the maladaptive daydreaming is not significantly fond. The difference in between the loneliness is somehow approached but is not significantly significant. And the same result is with the difference in between problematic social media usage. This indicates that gender does not play any significant role in the maladaptive daydreaming, loneliness, and problematic social media usage among adults.

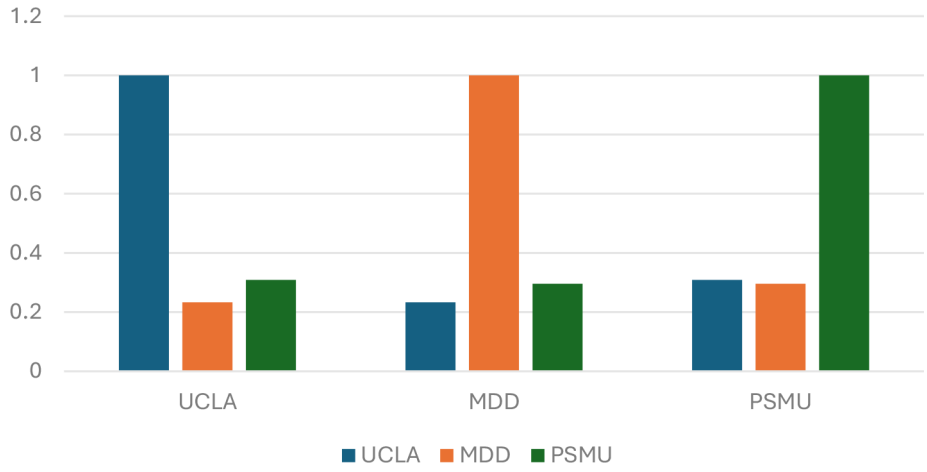


Figure 1. Correlation matrix showing relationships between loneliness (UCLA), Maladaptive Daydreaming (MDD), and Problematic Social Media Use (PSMU). All off-diagonal coefficients are positive, indicating that higher scores on one variable are associated with higher scores on the others

Table 2. Correlational analysis

Variables	Statistic	UCLA	MDD	PCMU
UCLA	Pearson Correlation	1	.233*	.309**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	—	0.02	0.002
	N	100	100	100
MDD	Pearson Correlation	.233*	1	.296**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.02	—	0.003
	N	100	100	100
PCMU	Pearson Correlation	.309**	.296**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.002	0.003	—
	N	100	100	100

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3. T-test analyses

Variable	Group	N	Mean	Median	SD	SE
MDD	F	52	53.5	52.5	18.59	2.578
	M	48	50.4	50.0	16.24	2.344
Loneliness	F	52	34.6	33.5	12.11	1.679
	M	48	30.3	31.0	12.69	1.831
PSMU	F	52	18.4	18.0	5.66	0.785
	M	48	16.5	17.0	5.05	0.729

8. Conclusion

The current study looked at the connection between adults' problematic usage of social media, maladaptive daydreaming, and loneliness. All three variables had strong positive associates at the 0.01 level of significance, according to the findings of the Pearson correlation study. These results imply that adults who experience loneliness are more likely to use social media problematically and to engage in maladaptive fantasizing. Furthermore, there was a positive correlation found between problematic social media use and maladaptive daydreaming, suggesting a potential shared mechanism of emotional regulation or escape. These results are in keeping with earlier studies that found loneliness can cause people to turn to virtual or fantasy worlds for solace, particularly in situations where they lack social connections. While excessive social media use may be an attempt to satisfy social connection through digital activity, maladaptive daydreaming may be a coping strategy to make up for emotional or social needs. The noteworthy correlations among these variables underscore the ways in which teenagers may adopt maladaptive psychological processes in an attempt to cope with emotional distress.

Remarkably, no significant gender differences were found in any of the three variables according to the independent samples t-test. Earlier research revealed that women might be more vulnerable to emotional disturbance or excessive usage of social media. But according to the current research, these psychological inclinations are felt identically by men and women, at least in this sample. This highlights the need for inclusive mental health programs that address the common issues that adolescents encounter in the digital and psychological sphere rather than being constrained by gender stereotypes.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the connection between problematic social media use, maladaptive daydreaming, and loneliness as well as any gender-based variations in these factors. The results showed that all three factors had strong positive relationships with one another. Increased maladaptive daydreaming and poor social media use were linked to higher loneliness levels. Maladaptive daydreaming and problematic social media usage were also found to have a moderately favorable connection, indicating that teenagers may have both of these characteristics.

In contrast, the independent samples t-test findings showed no significant gender differences in any of the variables, indicating that social media use, daydreaming, and loneliness were similar across males and girls. These findings emphasize how critical it is to address these problems globally, irrespective of gender. The study's overall findings highlight the need for more awareness and mental health assistance for teenagers who are struggling with emotional distress and behavioral issues associated with technology use and internal coping strategies.

9. References

1. Bigelsen J, Lehrfeld JM, Jopp DS, Somer E. Maladaptive daydreaming: Evidence for an under-researched mental health disorder. Consc Cogn. 2016; 42:254-266. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.concog.2016.03.017 PMid:27082138.
2. Schimmenti A, Somer E, Regis M. Maladaptive daydreaming: Towards a nosological definition. Ann Clin Psychiatry. 2019; 31(2):132-138.
3. Somer E. Maladaptive daydreaming: A qualitative inquiry. J Contemp Psychother. 2002; 32(2-3):197-212. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1020597026919
4. Summer J, Bagot K. Maladaptive daydreaming in children: Sensory processing and coping mechanisms. Dev Psych. 2024; 8(2):78-89.
5. Sissons C. What to know about loneliness: Causes, effects, and coping strategies. Medical News Today; 2023. Available from: https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/loneliness
6. Luhmann M, Bohn J, Holtmann J, Koch T, Eid M. I'm lonely, can't you tell? Convergent validity of self- and informant ratings of loneliness. Assessment. 2022; 29(6):1340-1356.

7. Shannon H, Bush K, Villeneuve PJ, Hellemans KG, Guimond S. Problematic social media use in adolescents and young adults: Systematic review and meta-analysis. JMIR Mental Health. 2022; 9(4):e33450. https://doi.org/10.2196/33450 PMid:35436240 PMCid:PMC9052033.
8. Somer E, Soffer-Dudek N, Ross CA. The comorbidity of daydreaming disorder (maladaptive daydreaming). J Nerv Ment Dis. 2017; 205(7):525-530. https://doi.org/10.1097/NMD.0000000000000685 PMid:28598955.
9. Mar RA, Mason MF, Litvack A. How daydreaming relates to life satisfaction, loneliness, and social support: The importance of gender and daydream content. Consc Cogn. 2011; 21(1):401-407. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.concog.2011.08.001 PMid:22033437.
10. West DA, Kellner R, Moore-West M. The effects of loneliness: A review of the literature. Compr Psychiatry. 1986; 27(4):351-363. https://doi.org/10.1016/0010-440X(86)90011-8 PMid:3524985.
11. Paakkari L, Tynjälä J, Lahti H, Ojala K, Lyyra N. Problematic social media use and health among adolescents. Int J Environ Res Public Health. 2021; 18(4):1885. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18041885 PMid:33672074 PMCid:PMC7919645.
12. Zahrai K, Boots D, Prescott J, Gavazzi SM. Self-control and problematic social media use: A systematic review. Curr Psychol. 2021; 42(8):6767-6791.
13. Meshi D, Elizarova A, Bender A, Verdejo-García A. Excessive social media users demonstrate impaired decision making in the Iowa Gambling Task. J Behav Addict. 2019; 8(1):169–173. https://doi.org/10.1556/2006.7.2018.138. PMid:30626194 PMCid:PMC7044593.
14. Kircaburun K, Alhabash S, Tosuntaş ŞB, Griffiths MD. Uses and gratifications of problematic social media use among university students: A simultaneous examination of the Big Five personality traits, social media platforms, and social media use motives. Int J Ment Health Addict. 2018; 18(3):525–547. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11469-018-9940-6
15. Seth M, Bhargava K. Maladaptive daydreaming as a coping mechanism to escape loneliness [Master's thesis]. Delhi: University of Delhi; 2024.
16. Constantine R, Haque S. Perceived stress mediates the relationship between loneliness, self-esteem and maladaptive daydreaming among college students. Curr Psychol. 2024. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-024-05678-9
17. Wu L, Zhang S, Chen Q, Xu F, Li J. Longitudinal associations between loneliness and problematic social media use among Chinese college students: A developmental perspective. Cyberpsychol Behav Soc Netw. 2024; 27(3):195–203.
18. Moretta T, Castellini G, Lelli L, Burkauskas J, Griskova-Bulanova I, Demetrovics Z, et al. Loneliness and problematic social networking site use: The mediating role of motives for social networking site use. Curr Psychol. 2023; 42(16):13607–13620.
19. Moretta T, Buodo G. Problematic internet use and loneliness: How complex is the relationship? A short literature review. Curr Addict Rep. 2020; 7(2):125–136. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40429-020-00305-z.
20. Mishra S, Kewalramani S. Social media use, maladaptive daydreaming and the imposter phenomenon among young adults: A correlational study. Int J Soc Psychiatry. 2023; 69(4):876–885.
21. Chirico A, Serino S, Cipresso P, Gaggioli A, Riva G. When music "flows": State and trait in maladaptive daydreaming. Front Psychol. 2022; 13:936277. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.936277
22. Costanzo A, Santoro G, Russo S, Lehrfeld J, Kashdan TB, Somer E, *et al*. The role of maladaptive daydreaming, dissociation, and emotion dysregulation among people with problematic social networking sites use. Addict Behav. 2021; 111:106581. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.addbeh.2020.106581
23. Zsila Á, McCutcheon LE, Demetrovics Z. The association of celebrity worship with problematic internet use, maladaptive daydreaming, and desire for fame. J Behav Addict. 2018; 7(3):654–664. https://doi.org/10.1556/2006.7.2018.76 PMid:30221539 PMCid:PMC6426373.
24. Uslu H. Understanding the relationship between media use and maladaptive daydreaming [Master's thesis]. Istanbul: Bahçeşehir University; 2015.
25. Somer E, Lehrfeld J, Bigelsen J, Jopp DS. Development and validation of the Maladaptive Daydreaming Scale (MDS). Conscious Cogn. 2016; 39:77–91. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.concog.2015.12.001 PMid:26707384.
26. Andreassen CS, Torsheim T, Brunborg GS, Pallesen S. Development of a Facebook addiction scale. Psychol Rep. 2012; 110(2):501–517. https://doi.org/10.2466/02.09.18.PR0.110.2.501-517 PMid:22662404.

Author Contribution

Dr. Ritambhra Goswami: Methodology, original draft preparation; Dr. Siddharth Sharma: Conceptualization , Data curation; Dr. Aditya Kumar Shukla: Resources, Supervision; Ms. Sneha Agrawal : Visualization, Software

Access this journal online	
	Quick Response Code
Website: www.informaticsjournals.co.in/index.php/JEOH/index	