

Psychological Impacts of Heavy Media Use: from the Perspective of Narcissism, Self-Esteem, and Social Comparison

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Abstract. In today's times, social media use has become an important part of a mobile phone owner's life. The present study investigates the psychological impacts of heavy media use, with a particular focus on narcissism, self-esteem, and social comparison. Narcissism in this study was categorised as Grandiose and vulnerable narcissism. The above factors are strongly associated with an individual's quality of life. Passive consumption of media tends to decrease self-esteem, while active participation presents a more complex relationship. Practical suggestions for media users, educators, and policymakers are discussed, emphasizing the need for balanced media consumption, enhanced media literacy, and regulatory measures to create healthier media environments. Mitigating the negative impacts of social media requires different entities to play their respective roles in influencing a positive online usage environment. Future research directions are proposed to address existing gaps, including longitudinal studies and interdisciplinary approaches to gain deeper insights into the long-term effects of media use on psychological health.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background and significance

Heavy media use has become a pervasive aspect of modern life, affecting various dimensions of psychological well-being. The significance of studying narcissism, self-esteem, can be exacerbated by the self-promotional nature of social media platforms [1]. Self-esteem, representing an individual's overall sense of self-worth, is similarly influenced by media interactions, often through the lens of social comparison [2].

1.2 Research questions and relevance

This study seeks to address the following research questions: How does heavy media use relate to narcissism and self-esteem? What role does social comparison play in mediating

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these relationships? These questions are highly relevant both in contemporary and historical contexts. In today's digital age, media consumption is ubiquitous, and its psychological impacts are increasingly evident [3]. Historically, the evolution of media from traditional forms to digital platforms has shifted the nature of social interactions and self-perception, making this research timely and pertinent.

1.3 Scope and objectives

The scope of this study encompasses various forms of media, including social media, television, and digital content. The primary objectives are to elucidate the relationship between media use and narcissism, examine how self-esteem is influenced by media interactions, and explore the mediating role of social comparison [4].

2 Literature review

2.1 Introduction of the main concepts

In this section, the authors will define important concepts relevant to the study. The heavy use of media, narcissism, grit, pride, and the comparison of the upper and lower social comparison. It is characterized by a lot of time spent on these platforms, often at the expense of other activities. Research has shown that heavy use of media affects all aspects of individual psychological happiness, including individual self-esteem and affects all aspects of individual psychological happiness and social comparison. It can be divided into two main types: Grandiose and vulnerable narcissism [5]. Large narcissists have a clear sense of confidence, dominance, and vulnerable narcissists include anger, defense, and anxiety [6].

Sufficiency is a key aspect of narcissistic personality disorder, referring to an unrealistic sense of superiority as unique or exceptional, and a sense of a right to special treatment. Grandiose narcissism tend to seek praise and validation from others to reinforce their own image [7].

Leon Festinger's social comparison theory holds that individuals decide their own social values and personal values according to the way they have accumulated with others. Upward social comparisons occur when individuals compare themselves to people they think are better or more successful, which leads to a lack of emotion and inspiration. Social comparisons involve comparing themselves to others deemed worse. This can improve the self-esteem by providing a sense of superiority.

2.2 Characteristics and classification

This section details the characteristics and classifications of different types of media users as the authors as narcissism and self-esteem issues.

Media user types and features:

These individuals consume media content rather than actively participating in the content or creating content themselves [8]. When you compare yourself to others, you are more likely to experience jealousy and inadequacy.

Active users create and share content, interact with others, and join the online community. They may experience higher levels of social bonding, but may also be more vulnerable to validation-seeking behaviours [9].

3 Relation between social media use and narcissism

3.1 Review of previous studies

Many studies have explored the relationship between media use and narcissism. Studies have used a variety of approaches including survey, experimental and longitudinal studies to understand this complex relationship.

For example, a study by Mehdizadeh investigated the correlation between social media use (especially Facebook) and narcissistic traits among 300 college students. Another study by Bavdi and Campbell examined the relationship between narcissism and the quantity and nature of content posted on social media platforms. The researchers combined self-report measures with content analysis, which included evaluating the types of posts, frequency of updates, and the number of friends and followers. They found that narcissists tend to post more self-promotional content and have a larger social network, suggesting that social media serves as a venue for narcissists to express themselves.

3.2 Comparative analysis

On comparison, there are both differences and similarities in the findings of the current studies. However, the extent of this behavior is viewed differently across studies. Some research indicates that self-promotion is a common behavior among all social media users, not just those with narcissistic traits.

One of the limitations of existing research is the reliance on self-reported countermeasures, which is biased by socially expected situations and inaccurate self-perceptions. Moreover, many studies have focused on specific age groups, such as college students, which limits the possibility of diffusion of the results to other groups.

3.3 Overview

The comprehensive review of literature is clear that heavy media use is associated with higher levels of narcissism, especially large narcissism. Future studies may benefit from adopting more objective measures of media use and narcissism, and exploring different populations to improve the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, longitudinal studies provide deeper insight into the causal relationship between media use and narcissism and contribute to understanding how these behaviors change over time.

Despite the body of evidence that rapid media use is associated with narcissistic traits, further understanding of the mechanisms driving this relationship and addressing the methodological limitations of research is needed.

4 Relation between heavy media use and self-esteem

4.1 Prior research overview

Research on the relationship between heavy media use and self-esteem provides crucial insights into how various media platforms influence individual self-perception. This body of work examines the impact of media focus, including social media, television, and other digital platforms, on self-esteem.

Cross-sectional surveys provide snapshots of media use and self-esteem at a single point in time, which allows researchers to identify associations but not causality. In contrast, active engagement, such as posting or interacting with friends, had more complex relationships with self-esteem, sometimes leading to an increase in self-esteem. These relationships are further

influenced by factors such as the nature of online interactions and the context in which they occur.

Longitudinal studies offer more powerful insights as they follow changes over time, providing a clearer picture of how media use affects self-esteem in the long term. By repeatedly measuring media use and self-esteem across different time points, the study was able to illustrate how prolonged exposure to certain types of media content can have lasting negative effects on self-esteem. In these studies, media use was measured through various methods, including self-reported surveys where participants detailed their frequency and type of media engagement. Future research should aim to integrate various methodological approaches, including more detailed longitudinal studies and controlled experimental designs, to unravel the intricate ways in which media use influences self-esteem over time. Additionally, understanding the role of factors like active engagement and the nature of online interactions will provide a more nuanced view of these relationships.

4.2 Comparative analysis

Comparison of results from different studies reveals how the heavy use of media affects the consistency and contradiction of self-esteem. The limitations and differences of the existing studies are evident. Many studies rely on self-reported data, and social expectations and inaccurate self-perception can cause bias. Furthermore, many studies focused on specific population groups such as adolescents and college students, and the dissemination potential of the findings was limited to a wider population.

4.3 Summary

Passive media consumption is often associated with decreased self-esteem due to negative social comparisons. However, active participation shows a more nuanced scenario, with some studies showing potential benefits and others highlighting the ongoing risk.

Methodologically, the reliance on self-reported data and the focus on specific age groups limit the robustness and generalizability of the findings. Future studies should aim to integrate more diverse populations and use longitudinal and experimental designs to better understand the causal mechanisms at play.

5 Discussion and suggestions

5.1 Overall conclusions

Review and analysis of the literature suggest that heavy media use is associated with narcissism, self-quotas, and relative separation from society. In understanding these dynamics, the role of social comparisons is crucial. Upward social comparisons, in which individuals compare themselves to people perceived as more successful or attractive, often lead to decreased self-esteem or increased feelings of inferiority. Conversely, lowering the social comparison creates an advantage over others that temporarily increases self-esteem. However, the overall effect of this comparison depends on the context and is influenced by factors such as frequency of media use, nature of consumed content, and individual psychological characteristics [10].

5.2 Practical suggestions

Individuals should develop a balanced approach to media consumption. Limiting passive consumption and increasing mindful participation can help reduce the negative impact on self-esteem. Users are encouraged to critically evaluate the content they consume and be selective about their social media interactions.

Educators play a crucial role in fostering students' media literacy. Integrating courses that address the psychological impact of media use and social comparison can equip students with the tools to navigate the digital environment more effectively. Activities that build self-esteem and resilience, such as collaborative programs and peer support groups, can help counteract the potential negative effects of media use. By promoting media literacy and resilience, educators can better prepare students to handle the pressures of social media. Policymakers should consider implementing regulations that promote healthier media environments. This may include guidelines for social media platforms to reduce the emphasis on likes and followers, thereby decreasing validation-seeking behaviors. Furthermore, policies that promote transparency in advertising and content creation can help users make more informed decisions about the media they consume. By fostering a more transparent and less validation-driven media environment, policymakers can contribute to the overall well-being of media users.

In summary, these practical suggestions aim to create a healthier media landscape, where individuals can engage with digital content in ways that support their self-esteem and psychological well-being.

5.3 Future research directions

Future studies aim to address the gaps and limitations found in the existing literature. Areas that can be explored are the long-term effects of mass media use on self-esteem and the characteristics of narcissistic poetry. Longitudinal studies that follow individuals over the long term can provide deeper insight into how these relationships change and into the underlying causal mechanisms. Furthermore, manipulating media using certain aspects of experimental design such as the type of content consumed and the nature of online interactions helps to isolate the factors that have the greatest impact on self-esteem and narcissism.

The study also aims to include more different populations to improve the generalizability of the findings. Studies focusing on different age groups, cultural context, and socioeconomic status may allow for a more comprehensive understanding of how media use affects different parts of the population. Furthermore, objective measures of media use such as tracking actual screen time and participation patterns can be incorporated, thereby reducing the bias associated with self-reported data.

6 Conclusion

The review and analysis of existing literature suggest that heavy media use is intricately linked with narcissism, self-esteem, and social comparison. Social media platforms, in particular, provide fertile ground for narcissistic behaviors, as they enable users to seek validation through likes and followers. The phenomenon of social comparison, where individuals measure their own worth against the perceived successes of others, is a critical factor influencing self-esteem. Upward social comparisons often lead to diminished self-esteem, while downward comparisons may offer temporary boosts in self-worth. However, the overall impact of these comparisons is context-dependent and influenced by individual psychological characteristics and the nature of media use. To mitigate the negative

psychological impacts of media use, individuals should adopt a balanced approach to media consumption. Limiting passive consumption and increasing mindful participation can help reduce the adverse effects on self-esteem. Educators should incorporate media literacy programs that address the psychological impacts of media use and promote resilience and self-esteem. Policymakers should implement regulations to create healthier media environments, such as reducing the emphasis on likes and followers and promoting transparency in advertising. Future research should aim to address the limitations of current studies by employing longitudinal designs to understand the long-term effects of media use on self-esteem and narcissism. Experimental approaches could isolate specific factors that impact these psychological traits. Including diverse populations in research can enhance the generalizability of findings, and utilizing objective measures of media use can reduce biases associated with self-reported data.

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