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Perception regarding impact of social media and cinema on materialism, and social comparison among youth perusing medical & paramedical courses: A cross sectional study

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Abstract--Background: Globalization has increased the significance of materialistic possessions in one's life. It is the pride one finds in possessing and owning material goods. Social comparison is a form of sociological self-esteem, where we derive our sense of self through comparing ourselves with others. In India majority of the population youth. Both social media and Cinema have tremendous impact on youth influencing their materialistic and social comparison behaviour. Objectives-The proposed study aims to explore the perception of youth impact of social media and cinema on materialism and social comparison & also to explore use and misuse of social media among youth who are pursuing medical & para medical courses. Methodology: A cross-sectional study was conducted among various medical and paramedical colleges in study area. A pre-tested questionnaire was used on causes for materialism and social comparison was via online using Google forms. Descriptive statistics were computed on the socio-demographic parameters. Chi-square test statistics was used to find the association between the variables. A

reliability analysis, using Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = 0.74$), was undertaken to test the reliability of each of the materialism factors. Results: In the present study it was found that materialism was seen in 158(30.9%) and social comparison was seen in 132(25.8%) participants. Image building in college and attraction to media celebrities was the most common reasons for materialism. Even the difference in living area whether rural/ urban areas didn't affect the materialistic and social comparison behaviour. Upward social comparison was seen in many, mostly related to physical attractiveness. Conclusion: In the present study it was found that one third participants were materialistic and one fourth participants were having social comparison behaviour. Social media and Cinema had a significant impact on materialism and social comparison. Most of the youth felt that both social media and cinema have impact on materialism & social comparison.

Keywords---Youth, Materialism, Social comparison, Social media, Cinema.

Introduction

Indian culture has undergone both modernization and westernization. Globalization has increased the significance of materialistic possessions in one's life. It is the pride one finds in possessing and owning material goods. Materialism has been defined as one's devotion to material needs and desires which diverges from spiritual premise (The Oxford English Reference Dictionary, 1995) but opposite to this description of materialism, in Indian thought, materialism has been explained as consistent with spiritualism and is considered as a balancing factor.¹

Social comparison is a form of sociological self-esteem, where we derive our sense of self through comparing ourselves with others. People have a tendency to make downward social comparisons with those who are worse off or less skilled than them, and this can raise their self-esteem. Conversely, upward social comparisons can reduce self-esteem, and are more likely with social media.²

A survey on 'Global Attitudes on Materialism, Finances and Family' (conducted by Ipsos - an independent leading market research firm, December 2013) showed that India is the second most materialistic country among certain Asia-Pacific Countries, after China. Materialism has great bearing on changing lifestyles of people in India.³

In India majority of the population are in young age. The consumption pattern of Indian youth shows that they are keen in spending more and saving less.⁴ Youth are more informative and conscious about the current trends in the market and are always in need to buy irrespective of their need. In general youth respond to advertisement more than others. According to a study, materialism among youth was 48 percent in the past, and now it has increased up to 62 percent of

students. It has become a belief that person who has more materialistic possessions has more satisfaction in life.⁵

Social media refers to web based tools and services that permit users to personally and informally interact, share, create and exchange information and ideas on networks. It includes social networking sites, online forums, services, blogs, discussion groups, mobile applications etc.⁶ Due to the increasing sale and usage of mobile phones, most of the social networking platforms have been accessed through them. India has about 290 million active social media users who spend the majority of their screen time on various social networking websites. Teens and adolescents, constitute 31% of total social media users in India (Statista, 2021). Facebook and Instagram are mainly used by the age group 18-24 years in India.⁷It is estimated that by 2021, over 3 billion people will be using social media.²

Since media creates huge difference in our beliefs, attitudes and perceptions, it is used generally for communicating the information to the mass.⁸ Social media is tremendous impact on youth, as it is more flexible medium for advertising than other media. Youth who are materialistic, respond to the advertisements in media and celebrities positively.⁵ Social media is influencing youth to purchase through online advertisements. In a survey conducted on youth it was found that the youth believe on the recommendations given by people on social media more than television ads.⁹

Youth who are continuously on social media also has the tendency of social comparison with their peer groups. With the development of information technology, a person's immersion in the field of mass media is steadily increasing. A significant portion of consumed media products is occupied by cinema.¹⁰ Cinema has more impact on youth, as youth generally follow the fashion and style of their favourite actors which in turn influences their behaviour regarding materialistic behaviour and also social comparison. Peer rejection is also related to materialism and self-esteem.¹¹ Parents who provide enough facilities and resources to their children also play a crucial role in the development of materialistic behaviour in an individual.

Rationale

Health care professionals are very important part of our society. Health and medicine are key areas of sociological specialization, but in the face of rapid global challenges, they are changing. For quite some time, the sociology of health and medicine has been an important specialty of sociology. Over the past decades, there has been an active dialogue on impact of sociology, not only within general sociology, but also within other scientific fields, most notably medicine and, more recently, social policy research and economics. The proposed study attempts to explore the perception of youth impact of social media and cinema on materialism and social comparison & also to explore use and misuse of social media among youth who are pursuing medical & para medical courses in various colleges of Mahabubnagar, Telangana.

Objectives

1. To explore the perception of youth perusing medical & paramedical courses on impact of social media and cinema on materialism and social comparison.
2. To explore use and misuse of social media among youth.

Methodology

Present cross-sectional study was conducted between February-2022 to March 2022 at Department of Community Medicine, SVS Medical College, Mahabubnagar, TS, India. Institutional Ethics Committee clearance was obtained prior to the start of the study. Study area was various medical and paramedical colleges in Mahabubnagar dist, which included Medical, dental, pharmacy & paramedical courses. Convenience sampling procedure was used in this study. A pre-tested questionnaire consisting information regarding demographic & most common causes for materialism and social comparison was used. The data was collected online using Google forms after taking informed consent.

Statistical tests used in the study

The statistical analysis procedures applied in this study were descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics, such as simple frequencies and mean value, were computed on the socio-demographic parameters. chi-square test statistics was used to find the association between the variables. The test of significance was tested at $p < 0.05$. A reliability analysis, using Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = 0.74$), was undertaken to test the reliability of each of the materialism factors. The calculations were performed with SPSS program, version 23.

Results

A total of 512 study subjects participated in the present study. Out of the total study participants, majority (69.1%) participants were females. Majority (87.5%) participants were aged above 20yrs, and the mean age was 19.42 ± 0.70 years. Majority (56.8%) were pursuing medical course, followed by Dental (15.4%), Pharmacy (13.3%) & Paramedical (14.4%). About 66.8% participants were from urban area. About 77.7% of the study participants were having $>10,000$ of family's monthly income. About 92.6% of the population use social media and 70.8% spend more than 2 hrs on social media. About 92% people watch movies and 21.5% participants follow the style/fashion of their favourite actors. Among all the social media platforms, Instagram was the major platform, used by 61.4%, followed by whatsapp (29.9%) and almost 37.9% of the participants use at least two social media platforms.

Materialism was seen in 158(30.9%) participants. Among all the behaviours of materialism, a desire to have more materialistic things was seen in majority (44.3%). Among the reasons for materialism, the most common reasons were, self image in college/society (37.9%) followed by need (31.3%). About 64.5% participants felt that social media has impact on materialism and 88% felt that cinema has impact on materialism. Almost 65.8% participants felt that there will be increase in the level of materialism towards celebrity endorsed products.

Social comparison was seen in 132(25.8%) participants. Upward comparison was seen in 65.9% participants. Among all the behaviours of social comparison, comparing with others having greater physical attractiveness was seen in majority (63.2%). About 65.6% participants felt that social media has impact on social comparison and 84.8% felt that cinema has impact on social comparison.

About 88.1% study population felt that Relationship dependency was important aspect for leading a satisfied life, while 11.9% participants felt that materialistic things was important. To get positive impact of social media & social comparison, majority(26.2%) felt that creating collaborative websites to share success stories & inspire others, followed by Innovation - try new ideas(22.5%) and Getting education material for better learning(22.1%). Among Measures to stop materialism, about 48.8% study population felt that to value life expectancies over materialistic possessions was the major measure.

Materialism and Social comparison was slightly higher in those aged above 20 years groups, but the difference was not statistically significant difference. There is a statistically significant difference in gender towards Materialism and Social comparison, which was more among females. There is no statistically significant difference in living area towards Materialism and social comparison. It was almost equal in both the areas. Materialism was slightly higher among higher income groups and the difference was statistically significant. Social comparison was higher among lower income groups, but the difference was not statistically significant.

Materialism and social comparison was more in participants who use social media and the difference was statistically significant. Materialism and social comparison was slightly more in participants who spent more no. of hours on social media, but the difference was not statistically significant. Materialism and social comparison was more in participants who watch movies and the difference was statistically significant.

Discussion

Social media & cinema has become an integral part of our daily life which cannot be ignored. The philosophy that nothing matters except material possessions and comforts is a common thinking of the youth now a days. Present study explores that majority (69.1%) participants were females (69.1%), were pursuing medical course (56.8%) and were aged above 20yrs (87.5%) and the mean age was 19.42 ± 0.70 years. Majority were from urban area (66.8%), and majority were having >10,000 of family's monthly income (77.7%).

About 92.6% of the population use social media and 70.8% spend more than 2 hrs on social media. Different findings were observed in a study conducted by Monica where 10% youth spend less than 1 hour on social media, followed by 47% youth spending about 3 to 5 hours, 29% spending more than 5 hours and 14% youth using social media 1 to 3 hours a day.¹² Majority of the youth are exposed to social media for larger periods due to various attractive offers available by Internet service provider companies like free data for three months, availability of 3G, 4G services at very lower costs etc. Among all the social media platforms,

Instagram was the major platform used by 61.4%, followed by whatsapp (29.9%) and about 37.9% of the participants use at least two social media platforms. Facebook and Instagram are the major social media platforms used by the age group between 18-24 years in India. About 91.2% of study population watch movies.

Materialism was seen in 30.9% participants and among all the behaviours of materialism, a desire to have more materialistic things was seen in majority (44.3%). The most common reasons for materialism were, self image in college/society (37.9%) followed by need (31.3%). Youth are always influenced by their peers in college, and this could be the reason for materialism. Majority participants (64.5%) felt that social media has impact on materialism. and 88% felt that cinema has impact on materialism.

Social comparison was seen in 25.8% participants, of which Upward comparison was seen in about (65.9%) participants. It is a human tendency to compare always with people who are better than them which could be the reason for it. Among all the behaviours of social comparison, comparing with others having greater physical attractiveness was seen in majority (63.2%). Physical appearance is a matter of concern in teenagers and youth and this could be the reason for comparing in physical aspects. About 65.6% and 84.8% study participants felt that social media and cinema has impact on social comparison respectively. As social media and cinema are the sources of entertainment among youth, it has a chance of influencing youth.

Materialism and Social comparison were slightly higher in those aged above 20 years groups, but the difference was not statistically significant. Almost all the age groups in youth have same level of thinking which could be the reason behind same level of materialism and social comparison.

There is a significant difference in gender towards Materialism, where females were found to be more materialistic. Similar findings were observed in a study conducted by Kavita Bhambhu where there was a significant difference in males and females for materialism. Social Comparison was significantly more in female subjects.⁴ Similar findings were observed in a study conducted by Ojha where social comparison was significantly higher among female.¹³ Generally females in youth are highly conscious of their physical appearance and this could be the reason for high social comparison among females.

Participants belonging to upper classes were significantly more materialistic. Similar findings were observed in a study conducted by MR Pinto where people of higher socioeconomic classes has high materialism.¹⁴ Social comparison was more in lower classes, but the difference was not statistically significant. Living area showed no significant difference towards Materialism and social comparison. Similar findings were observed in a study conducted by Kavita Bhambhu where there was no significant difference on the basis of living area i.e. urban/rural subjects.⁴ Increase in the access to mass media have made youth being conscious of possessing materialistic things in rural areas also.

Materialism was slightly higher in participants who spent more no. of hours on social media, showing no statistical significance. Different findings were observed

in a study conducted by Monali Neve where there was a significant difference between level of materialism and youth spending time on social media.¹⁰ No significant difference was found in Social Comparison who spent more time on social media. Different findings were observed in a study conducted by Newport academy on social media comparison and teen mental health, where social comparison was more among teens spending more amount of time on social networking sites looking at peers' profiles and photos.¹⁵

Similar findings were observed in a study conducted by Ojha where social comparison was not associated with time spent on social media.¹³ Different findings were observed in a study conducted by Oxford academic files, where passive Social media usage was positively related to upward social comparison.¹⁶ Materialism and social comparison was higher in participants who watch movies and the difference was found to be statistically significant. Youth generally follow the style and of their favourite actors in movies which could be the reason behind increase in the level of materialism who watch movies.

Conclusion

Youth constitute an important part of the society. Attitude & behaviour of medical & paramedical field professions are even more observed by society. In the present study it was found that youth were spending their valuable time on social media and cinema. Image building in college and attraction to media celebrities was the most common reasons for materialism. Even the difference in living area whether rural/ urban areas didn't affect the materialistic and social comparison behaviour. Upward social comparison was seen in many, mostly related to physical attractiveness. Social media and Cinema had a significant impact on youth's attitudes towards materialistic behaviour and social comparison.

Recommendations

Similar study can be done in similar or different areas with larger population where youth & students of all courses can be included. Human relations should be valued over materialistic possessions this fact must be imparted from home itself. Social comparison should be used in a positive way as motivation and inspiration. Social media usage should be limited as much as possible

Limitations

Time duration of the study was limited. The study was conducted in only one district. Students other than medical & paramedical field were not included, these were few limitations of this study, that is why these findings may not be generalized to all settings.

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Tables

Table No.1 Descriptive statistics of social demographic parameters

Parameters	Frequency(N=512)	Percent
Sex		
Female	354	69.1
Male	158	30.9
Age (19.42 ± 0.70)		
<20 years	64	12.5
>20years	448	87.5
Pursuing course		
Medical	291	56.83
Dental	79	15.42
Pharmacy	68	13.30
Para medical	74	14.45
Area/Community		
Rural	170	33.2
Urban	342	66.8
Monthly Income(Rs.)		
≤ Rs.10000	114	22.3
>Rs.10000	398	77.7

Table No.2 Perception of youth on materialism and social comparison

Parameters	Frequency (n=512)	Parameters	Frequency (n=512)
Usage of social media		Watching movies	
Yes	474(92.6)	Yes	471(92)
No	38(7.4)	No	41(8.0)
*Behaviour of Materialism	158(30.9)	*Behaviour of social comparison	132(25.8)
		(i) Upward social comparison	87(65.9)
Always want more material things(eg. New mobiles, watches, clothes, vehicles etc.)	70 (44.3)	comparing with others having greater physical attractiveness	55(63.2)
Share materialistic things on social media	32(20.3)	comparing with others having higher social status	31(35.6)
Giving importance to materialistic things rather than people	36(22.8)	comparing with others having more money/ material goods(mobile, watches, clothes, jewellery, vehicles)	24(27.6)
Your home is usually dumped with items you don't use regularly.	30(19)	With who are successful in studies	14(16.1)

Always fight with parents for want of materialistic things	22(13.9)	(ii) Downward social comparison	45(34.1)
		Low social status	33(73.3)
		Poor at studies	26(57.8)
		Physically not so attractive	25(55.6)
Impact of social media on materialism		Impact of social media on social comparison	
No	182(35.5)	No	176(34.4)
Yes	330(64.5)	Yes	336(65.6)
Cinema has impact on materialism		Cinema has impact on social comparison	
No	61(12)	No	78(15.2)
Yes	451(88)	Yes	434(84.8)

*multiple responses

Table No.3 Comparison of socio-demographic parameter with materialism and social Comparison

Parameter	Materialism			p-value	Social comparison			p-value
	Present	Absent	Total		Present	Absent	Total	
Age								
<20years	18	46	64	x ² - 0.25 p= 0.61 insignificant (p>0.05)	11	53	64	x ² - 2.82 p= 0.09 insignificant (p>0.05)
>20years	140	308	448		121	327	448	
	158	354	512		132	380	512	
Sex								
Male	35	136	171	x ² - 2.99 p =0.0001s ignificant (p<0.05)	33	138	171	x ² - 5.64 p= 0.01 significant (p<0.05)
Female	123	218	341		99	242	341	
	158	354			132	380		
Community/Area								
Rural	55	115	170	x ² - 0.26 p= 0.60 insignificant (p>0.05)	43	127	170	x ² -1.04 p= 0.85 insignificant (p>0.05)
Urban	103	239	342		89	253	342	

				(p>0.05)				
	158	354			132	380		
Income group(Rs.)								
<10000	22	92	114	x ² -19.02 p= 0.002 significant t (p<0.05)	34	80	114	x ² -1.25 p= 0.26 insignifi cant (p>0.05)
>10000	136	262	398		98	300	398	
	158	354			132	380		

*p<0.05 statistically significant.

Table No.4 Impact of social media on materialism and social comparison.

Social Media	Materialism		p-value	Social comparison		p-value
	Yes	No		Yes	No	
Use social media	152	322	x ² -4.36 p= 0.03 significant (p<0.05)	124	350	x ² - 0.47 p= 0.48 signific ant (p>0.05)
Don't Use social media	6	32		38	8	
	158	354	512	132	380	380
No. of hrs spent on social media						
<2hrs on social media	94	228	x ² -1.13 p= 0.28 significant (p>0.05)	79	243	x ² - 0.70 p= 0.40 insignif icant (p>0.05)
>2hrs social media	64	126		190	53	
	158	354	512	132	380	
Movies	Materialism		p-value	Social comparison		p-value
	Yes	No		Yes	No	
Watch	151	320	x ² -3.97 p= 0.04 significant (p<0.05)	123	348	x ² - 0.34 p= 0.55 signific ant (p>0.05)
Don't watch	7	34		41	9	
	158	354	512	132	380	

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