

# Chapter 12

## Development and Validation of the Social Media Self- Esteem Scale for Adolescents

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Development of the self is a vital aspect during the period of adolescence. Interaction with peers contributes to the development of various aspects of self. Due to the technological advances in today's times, adolescents interact with their peers through social media sites and portals. It is essential to study this development in light of the increasing use of social media by adolescence. Thus, the study aimed at developing an item pool to tap the construct of social media influencing self-esteem of adolescents following the procedure of tool construction. Participants included adolescents ranging between 16 to 18 years of age, who have at least one social media account for personal use. There were 110 participants for the first phase and 397 participants for the second phase of the study. The scale has eight items with the overall reliability of .7. It indicates a fitting measure of self-esteem influenced by social media, with looking-glass self theory, according to which individuals develop their self, based on their perceptions of others responses to their behaviour.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Adolescence is a period where interaction with peers becomes significant for the development of the self (Long & Chen, 2007). The feedback from their peers plays a vital role in the development of the adolescent's identity (Erikson, Theory of identity development, 1959). With society becoming sophisticated and technologically advanced, one must consider the developmental influences these new technologies

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have on adolescents. Thus interaction with peers has become more influential because of technology (Hawi & Samaha, 2016).

There is widespread use of social media due to increased ownership of Smartphone and tablet ownership and advancement of technologies and substantial applications, to the extent that it often leads to addiction (Hawi & Samaha, 2016). According to a survey conducted by The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) Social Development Foundation (ASDF) in 2015 on Indian teenagers found that 95% of teens use the internet, 81% use social media and 72% use social media for more than once a day. Hence the online platforms play a crucial role in the social and emotional development of adolescents (O'Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011).

The internet has enabled new forms of interactions through uploading content on social media which could be photographs, of themselves or anything they like. The pictures are not only to celebrate the various important events in one's lives but also to record their daily life routines and interactions. Seeing that social media is an essential part of an adolescents' life, it does influence the way they think about themselves. Through posting pictures and other content, communication on social media, affects the adolescent (Stefnone, Lackaff, & Rosen, 2011).

Much of the content to present an online self is posted on social media. This self-presentation may be with a motivation to create a favourable impression on others, which corresponds to one's ideals. Now social media is a space where the teenagers can present themselves and explore the effects of this online self-presentation. The teenagers receive feedback on this self-presentation which may be positive or negative, which in turn affects their self-esteem (Herring & Kapidzic, 2015). When adolescents upload a post on social media, the response to it influences their self-esteem (Pounders, Kowalczyk, & Stowers, 2016). People receive recognition on social media through the number of likes or comments from their 'high-status friends' on the posts they put up, which may boost their self-esteem (Blease, 2015, as cited in Gallagher, 2017). Also, if they do not receive as many likes and comments as they thought they would, it affects their self-esteem. If they receive a large number of negative reactions to their posts, there would be an adverse effect on self-esteem (Gallagher, 2017).

The tone of the feedback received on social media influences adolescents' self-esteem. If they receive positive responses, it enhances their self-esteem, and if they receive negative responses it reduces their self-esteem (Valkenburg, Peter, & Schouten, 2006). Responses through "likes" and "comments", makes individuals aware of their limitations and shortcomings, which could lower their self-esteem or increase their self-esteem depending on the responses and how they have presented themselves (Gonzales & Hancock, 2011).

Enhanced self-esteem due to the responses they receive on their posts could have a detrimental effect on their behaviour. The response they receive on their self-presentation on social media enhances their self-esteem which could lead to a decrease in self-control and being involved in impulsive or indulgent behaviours (Wilcox & Stephen, 2013). Low self-esteem, on the other hand, could lead to the development of poor mental and physical health (Trzesniewski, Donnellan, Moffitt, Robins, Poulton, & Caspi, 2006). Therefore, a scale is developed to determine how social media influences adolescents' self-esteem.

Looking-Glass Theory of Self forms the theoretical background for developing the scale. According to this theory, one's self-concept is developed based on how one believes they appear in front of others. The self being involved in the social environment, must also be influenced by it. Thus, one's ideas about self are affected by how others evaluate us and more importantly, how we view these evaluations (Gecas & Schwalbe, 1983).

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