



## Self-Objectification and Depression among Students Experiencing Facebook Addiction

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**Abstract:** Self-objection and Facebook addiction have important effects on the mental health of every individual. However, very few studies have examined the correlation between depression symptoms, Facebook addiction, and self-objectification. The present study had two main objectives; first, to explore self-objectification and depression among students with Facebook addiction, and second to find out the family system, gender, and academic performance based on differences in study variables. Data was collected from 378 purposively selected Facebook-addicted students using The Bergen Facebook Addiction Scale (BFAS; Andreassen et al., 2012), Objectified Body Consciousness Scale (OBCS; McKinley & Hyde, 1996), and Zung Self-Rating Depression Scale (SDS; Zung, 1965). Study results showed that depression has a significant positive connection with self-objectification and Facebook addiction. Similarly, significant gender difference exists in self-objectification, depression, and Facebook addiction. The result indicated significant academic performance base differences exist on self-objectification and Facebook addiction, whereas differences are non-significant in nature on depression. The result also revealed that significant family system base differences on self-objectification and depression, and Facebook addiction.

## Introduction

Several individuals make consistent use of social networking sites which have become central in their lives. Social media has become pervasive – Facebook has been proven to be the third most visited website after Google and YouTube (Miller, 2020), with 1.45 billion daily active users (de Bérail et al., 2019). In recent times, Facebook has gained an important place in the lives of students. For some of them, Facebook proves to be beneficial for engaging in social interactions, making new friends, acquiring new information from educational platforms readily available on Facebook, and many such activities. Studies

indicate that nowadays, one of the most frequently occurring problems in the educational domain is the excessive use of Facebook, which might become an addiction the university student (Eşkisu et al., 2020).

Self-objectification may be defined as the process in which an individual internalizes the perspective about their own appearance in context to social perception, which might lead to persistently checking and assessing their bodies (Veldhuis et al., 2020). Depression is characterized by a set of symptoms that include a lack of energy,

significant weight loss or gain, a lack of interest in daily actions, feelings of guilt or worthlessness, loss of concentration, sleep pattern alterations, and even recurrent thoughts of suicide or death (Paykel, [2022](#)).

Facebook addiction disorder (FAD) has been studied deeply by Brailovskaia et al., ([2019](#)). According to them, FAD is one of the six subcategories of behavioral addictions. The first one is salience, which is described as persistent thoughts regarding social working websites such as Facebook. The second one is tolerance, which is explained as increasing the time of engaging on Facebook is necessary to achieve a positive effect. The third is mood change which may be understood as using Facebook is related to improvement in mood (Abbasi & Drouin [2019](#)). The fourth category is seen to relapse, which explains the return of the initial pattern of using Facebook after an ineffective try to quit using it. It explains the amount of stress and anxiety experienced during the time of not using Facebook. (Stănculescu & Griffiths, 2021). The last one is conflict, which may be described as interpersonal issues that may arise from the prolonged use of Facebook (Xie & Karan, [2019](#)).

Studies have widely discussed the impact of self-image and self-concept in relation to mental health issues. Modica ([2019](#)) concluded that one of the many causes of depression is self-objectification. Another research conducted on college women showed that depression and body dissatisfaction is caused by self-objectification (Lamp et al., [2019](#)).

Yang et al. (2021) discovered that spending time on social networking is strongly related to depression. The results of research carried out by Chen et al., ([2022](#)) indicated that females experienced more body surveillance and self-objectification as compared to males, and women experienced more depressive symptoms than men (Vetter et a., [2021](#)). Additionally, Cudo et al., ([2020](#)) indicated that a greater number of women engaged in using Facebook as compared to men.

Tentama and Abdillah (2019) conducted a study exploring the link between academic success and one's self-image. It is considered necessary for individuals to work on their positive self-image, especially for those having learning problems. Khesht-Masjedi et al., (2019) concluded that depression has negatively affected academic performance among the majority of the student. Chakraborty ([2020](#), October) indicated that individuals who spent more time using Facebook could get less time studying and secured low scores in comparison to those who did not use Facebook. Similarly, another study conducted research on college-going individuals and concluded that there was an inverse relationship between time spent on Facebook and attaining good grades (Alamri et al., [2019](#)).

A number of factors have been explored with reference to family environment and vulnerability to social media addiction among students. O'Gara et al., (2020) studied the link between perceptions of teenagers regarding father-child and mother-child connectedness and found that most individuals were concerned about their parents' opinions and respected their views while taking important decisions. While a fourth of them explained that they were not comfortable talking about their issues to their mother, and one-third of male participants and over half of the female participants revealed that they could not talk about their issues to their father (Evans et al., [2021](#)). Additionally, rather than acquiring opinions from their parents, the young individuals preferred to give importance to the point of view of their peers. Such adolescents seemed to be experiencing body dissatisfaction, weight concerns, stress, substance abuse, lower self-worth, and suicide attempts (Delgado et al., [2022](#)).

A study carried out by Lodhi et al., ([2021](#)) indicated that individuals who belonged to joint family systems experienced a lower level of depression as compared to individuals coming from nuclear family systems. Kalaivani and Mary ([2018](#)) explain the fact that students belonging to

joint family systems have parents or other relatives to keep an eye on their social media usage, which inhibits them from becoming addicted to Facebook. On the other hand, students who belong to nuclear family systems get more privacy which in turn inclines towards using technology to spend their time and a greater chance of falling for Facebook addiction (Musarrat et al., 2022).

It is a fact that recently, the study of self-objectification, depression, and Facebook addiction has remained a topic of great interest to researchers, but still, its value in the current scenario cannot be ignored. One of the most important aims of conducting the present research is to study the variables in the Pakistani cultural context, as previously very limited studies have been conducted. This study is going to help the young generation, psychologists, and general society to gain awareness of the possible association between self-objectification, depression, and Facebook addiction. The present research was conducted to find out the association between self-objectification and depression with Facebook addiction, considering the demographics of gender, family system, and academic performance. Hence, the current study aspires to analyze the association of self-objectification and depression with Facebook addiction.

The present study anticipates assessing the correlation between self-objectification and depression among students experiencing Facebook addiction. It is assumed that the facts provided in the present research will be a helpful addition to the scientific literature. The current research will not only add to already existing literature but also will support other researchers in understanding the core factors in Facebook addiction among the student population.

Few studies have been carried out to study self-objectification and Facebook addiction. A recent study conducted on females by Engeln et al., (2020) indicated that greater time spent using Facebook and reading magazines was positively

correlated with self-objectification. Compared to Facebook, Instagram use causes more appearance comparison and lower body satisfaction in college women. According to Tosun and Kaşdarma (2019), spending time on Facebook was positively related to depression. Results indicated that self-objectification is one of the main causes of depression (Chauhan et al., 2021; Karim et al., 2019; Khan et al., 2019). Moreover, much work has recently been done on studying self-objectification in Pakistani cultures, such as one recent study by Ullah and Khan (2014), which examined the objectification of females in television advertisements in Pakistan and showed that the amount and type of body exposure and the outer appearance as showed on television leaves a great impact on the female viewers' view of their own bodies. A number of studies on depression in the Pakistani context are available, i.e., Zaffar et al. (2015) examined the relationship between depression, loneliness, Facebook addiction, anxiety, and academic performance and explored the great association between Facebook addiction and depression. Khan and Ahmed (2018) also conducted a study to assess the influence of Facebook addiction on the academic performance of students and concluded that there was a strong negative relationship among Facebook addiction and academic performance (Mahmood, 2014).

Although, no single previous research assessed the correlation among Facebook addiction, self-objectification, and depression. Hence, the current study will fill this missing gap in the literature as it is an extensive study on self-objectification and depression among students suffering from Facebook addiction. A number of researchers have provided influential evidence that self-objectification, depression, and Facebook addiction are substantial issues, both clinically and theoretically. The present study focused on two objectives. First, to explore the association between self-objectification and depression among students going through Facebook addiction. Second, to find out demographic differences (family system, gender,

and academic performance) on self-objectification and depression among students with Facebook addiction. Based on the objectives above, four hypotheses were formed: first, a Positive association will exist among self-objectification, depression, and Facebook addiction. Second, As compared to female students, there will display high self-objectification, depression, and Facebook addiction than male students. Third, Low achievers will demonstrate more self-objectification, depression, and Facebook addiction than high achievers. Fourth, students belonging to the nuclear family system will show more self-objectification, depression, and Facebook addiction than students belonging to the joint family system.

## Methodology

### Participants

In the present study, a sample comprised of (N = 378) students with Facebook addiction (n = 198 females, n = 180 males) were purposefully selected from colleges of Abbottabad, Haripur, and Mansehra cities. The sample was further divided on the basis of academic performance (high achiever; n=174, low achiever; n= 204) and family system (nuclear; n=135, joint; n= 243).

**Table 1.** Sample distribution table

| Demographic          | f   | %     |
|----------------------|-----|-------|
| Gender               |     |       |
| Male                 | 180 | 47.6% |
| Female               | 198 | 52.4% |
| Family System        |     |       |
| Nuclear              | 135 | 35.7% |
| Joint                | 243 | 64.3% |
| Academic Performance |     |       |
| High Achievers       | 174 | 46.0% |
| Low Achievers        | 204 | 53.9% |

## Research Instruments

**Objectified body Consciousness Scale:** In the current study Objectified body Consciousness

Scale was used to measure the level of self-objectification and consists of 24 questions in an individual (OBCS; McKinley & Hyde, 1996). It is divided into 3 subscales. The surveillance subscale measures the degree to which a person views their physical appearance from an outside observer's perspective (Items 1, 3, 7, 9, 14, 16, 18, and 20). The body shame subscale measures the extent to which an individual feels ashamed of their physical appearance if they do not conform to the societal standards of having an ideal body (Items 2, 5, 8, 11, 13, 15, 17, and 22). The control beliefs scale measures the level to which an individual believes that they can control their body weight and shape (Items 4, 6, 10, 12, 19, 21, 23, and 24). Each subscale has eight items, and the format of the scale is based on a 7-point rating scale. Moreover, a few items were reversely scored (items no 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 13, 15, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, and 24). The reliability coefficient of OBCS is .75. In the current study, the alpha reliability of OBCS was calculated to be .68.

**Zung self-rating depression scale:** This questionnaire was formulated by Zung (1965). It is comprised of 20 items. The scoring criteria consist of a four-point response category and have ten negatively worded items (1, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 15, and 19). These questions assess the predominant diagnoses of depression: psychomotor actions, physiological comparison, the prevalent reaction, and further problems. The alpha reliability of this scale is .73 (Zung, 1965). In the current research, the reliability of this scale was found to be .69.

**The Bergen Facebook addiction scale:** It is comprised of six items based on a 5-point rating scale (i.e. 5= Very often to 1= Very rarely) with a time limit for persisting behaviors of at least twelve months for measuring Facebook addiction. The participant who had scored 12 or more on the Bergen Facebook addiction scale was considered to be factbook addicted (Andreassen et al., 2012). The value of alpha reliability is .83 (Andreassen et

al. 2012). In the current study alpha reliability of this scale was calculated to be .81.

**Academic performance:** The academic performance of the students was assessed by the marks secured by them in their latest terminal examination. The scores were the average of all course subjects studied in a particular program, and the final assessment covered the full contents of the entire courses specified at this level.

### Procedure of the Study

For data collection, the educational institutes of Abbottabad, Mansehra, and Haripur cities were visited to seek approval. With the permission of the concerned establishment's branch and consent from teachers, each participant was approached personally by the researcher and was informed about the purpose of the study.

During the initial phase of screening, clear instructions were given firsthand. After obtaining their consent, as a screening measure, the Bergen

Facebook addiction scale was distributed among 658 participants. The obtained responses on the screening test it was evaluated 68% of students who scored 12 or more on the Bergen Facebook addiction scale were considered to be Facebook addicted and were therefore included in further study. Moreover, 280 either scored less than 12 scores on the screening test or refused to take part in the study and were excluded from the final sample of the research. Then, participants who were confirmed as Facebook addicted were requested to give responses on the remaining questionnaires; Objectified body consciousness and Zung self-rating depression scale. Statistical analysis was applied.

### Results

In the present research, alpha coefficients for all the instruments were satisfactory. Every instrument had an acceptable level of construct validity, as a significant item-total correlation was found on OBCS, SDS, and BFAS.

**Table 2.** The correlation coefficient of the Objectified Body Consciousness Scale, Zung Self-Rating Depression Scale, The Bergen Facebook Addiction Scale (N = 378)

| S. No | Scales | 1 | 2     | 3     | M     | SD    |
|-------|--------|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1     | OBCS   | – | .35** | .75** | 92.45 | 16.86 |
| 2     | SDS    | – | –     | .29** | 46.08 | 7.45  |
| 3     | BFAS   | – | –     | –     | 19.44 | 5.73  |

Note. SDS = Zung Self-Rating Depression Scale; BFAS = The Bergen Facebook Addiction Scale; OBCS = Objectified Body Consciousness Scale

\*\* $p < .01$ .

Table 2 results show that self-objectification has a significant positive association with Facebook addiction and depression. Similarly, depression has a significant positive correlation with

Facebook addiction. Students more indulge in Facebook usage experience depression and display a higher level of body objectification.

**Table 3.** Mean, Standard Deviation, and t-values of men's and women's scores on self-objectification, depression and Facebook addiction measures (N = 378)

| Variables | Male<br>(n = 180) |       | Female<br>(n = 198) |       | t(376) | P    | 95% CI |      | Cohen's d |
|-----------|-------------------|-------|---------------------|-------|--------|------|--------|------|-----------|
|           | M                 | SD    | M                   | SD    |        |      | LL     | UL   |           |
| OBCS      | 88.68             | 20.18 | 94.20               | 12.18 | 3.32   | .001 | -8.81  | -2.4 | .34       |

|      |       |      |       |      |      |     |       |     |     |
|------|-------|------|-------|------|------|-----|-------|-----|-----|
| ZUNG | 28.55 | 8.82 | 30.49 | 6.59 | 2.49 | .01 | -1.47 | .66 | .25 |
| BFAS | 42.72 | 6.97 | 47.61 | 7.88 | 2.10 | .02 | -1.23 | .72 | .11 |

Note. OBCS = Objectified Body Consciousness Scale; SDS = Zung Self-Rating Depression Scale; BFAS = The Bergen Facebook Addiction Scale.

\*\* $p < .05$ . \*\*\* $p < .01$ .

The results in Table 3 show that significant gender-based differences exist in self-objectification, depression, and Facebook addiction. The mean values of female students are

higher than the male indicating that females display a higher level of self-objectification, depression, and Facebook addiction than male students.

**Table 4.** Mean, Standard Deviation, and t-values of scores of high and low academic achievers on the Zung depression scale, self-objectification scale, and Facebook addiction scale (N = 378)

| Variables | High achiever<br>(n = 174) |       | Low achiever<br>(n = 204) |       | t(376) | P    | 95% CI |      | Cohen's d |
|-----------|----------------------------|-------|---------------------------|-------|--------|------|--------|------|-----------|
|           | M                          | SD    | M                         | SD    |        |      | LL     | UL   |           |
| OBCS      | 93.84                      | 11.81 | 79.01                     | 20.27 | 4.14   | .000 | -9.09  | 2.59 | .42       |
| ZUNG      | 28.39                      | 6.52  | 30.62                     | 8.85  | 2.88   | .004 | -.62   | 1.51 | .29       |
| BFAS      | 16.25                      | 5.55  | 19.98                     | 5.68  | 3.32   | .000 | 1.32   | 2.54 | .44       |

Note. OBCS = Objectified Body Consciousness Scale; SDS = Zung Self-Rating Depression Scale; BFAS = The Bergen Facebook Addiction Scale.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

Table 4 result shows that significant academic performance-based differences exist in self-objectification, depression, and Facebook addiction. On Facebook addiction, the mean scores of high achievers are higher on self-objectification and Facebook addiction, and high

achiever experience more self-objectification than low achievers. Moreover, results on the depression scale suggest that as compared to high achievers' students with low achievement were relatively more depressed.

**Table 5.** Mean, Standard Deviation, and t-values of family system's score on body objectification, facebook addiction, and Zung depression scale (N=378)

| Variables | Joint<br>(n = 243) |       | Nuclear<br>(n = 135) |       | t(376) | P   | 95% CI |       | Cohen's d |
|-----------|--------------------|-------|----------------------|-------|--------|-----|--------|-------|-----------|
|           | M                  | SD    | M                    | SD    |        |     | LL     | UL    |           |
| OBCS      | 86.53              | 19.33 | 98.38                | 11.04 | 6.02   | .00 | -12.04 | -4.68 | .61       |
| ZUNG      | 27.71              | 9.07  | 31.33                | 5.84  | 4.74   | .00 | -1.74  | .33   | .48       |
| BFAS      | 17.17              | 5.68  | 20.74                | 5.82  | 2.01   | .02 | -1.61  | .46   | .05       |

Note. OBCS = Objectified Body Consciousness Scale; SDS = Zung Self-Rating Depression Scale; BFAS = The Bergen Facebook Addiction Scale. \* $p > .05$ .

The result in table 5 shows that with reference to the family system, significant differences exist in self-objectification, Facebook addiction, and depression. Mean scores comparison shows that

students from the nuclear family system comparatively exhibit more body objectification, Facebook addiction, and depression symptoms.

## Discussion

The current research aimed at exploring depression and self-objectification among students with Facebook addiction. Similarly, gender, family system, and academic performance-based differences were explored on self-objectification and depression scales.

Data analysis was conducted to assess the association between study variables self-objectification, depression, and Facebook addiction (see Table 2). These findings are supported by some of the previous studies which showed a positive correlation between self-objectification and depression (Brailovskaia et al., 2019; Lamp et al., 2019). Similarly, researchers have assessed and claimed the existence of a positive association between self-objectification and Facebook addiction (Musarrat et al., 2022). Another study carried out on individuals experiencing Facebook addiction revealed their higher scores on the depression scale as well (Abbasi & Drouin, 2019). Similarly, have proved that Facebook addiction has a non-significant positive relation with self-objectification (Paykel, 2022) and depression (Eşkisü et al., 2020; Abbasi & Drouin, 2019; Stănculescu & Griffiths, 2021).

The findings of the present research also revealed significant gender-based differences in self-objectification, depression, and Facebook addiction scales. The current study indicated that female students exhibit greater self-objectification, depression, and Facebook addiction as compared to male students (see Table 3). These findings align with previous studies, such as one by Tiggemann and Andrew (2012), indicating that females suffer more from self-objectification than males. Similarly, Cudo (2020) also claimed that females are comparatively more engaged in spending time on Facebook as compared to males.

Female students tend to experience greater symptoms of depression as compared to males (Cudot al., 2020). A study carried out on Facebook use and its effects by Scheerder, Van Deursen, and Van Dijk (2019) showed that 70% of internet users

were females, and 65% were males (Cudo et al., 2020; Veldhuis, 2020) females displayed higher level of self-objectification (Chen et al., 2022) experience depressive symptomology (Daniels et al., 2020; Vetter et al., 2021).

While assessing academic performance-based differences, it was concluded that substantial difference was found in self-objectification, depression, and Facebook addiction (see Table 4). Tentama and Abdillah (2019) Examined students' academic achievement and self-concept and suggested that individuals need to develop a positive self-image, especially those having learning problems. Several studies have been carried out, i.e., Arefi et al. (2014) explored the link between academic success and self-image (Khesht-Masjedi et al., 2019) and depression have a negative impact on the academic performance of students.

The findings of the current study revealed that low-achiever students had a greater level of depression and Facebook addiction (Al Mamun & Griffiths, 2019). Moreover, students with a high level of achievement scored higher on the scales of self-objectification, and surveillance, (Harris et al., 2019), body shame, and control belief. These findings are supported by prior past research, such as one by Arefi et al. (2014) (as cited in Alrehaili, 2015), who concluded that academic self-concept and academic achievement are deeply associated with each other and it is necessary for all students to boost their self-concept.

Turner et al. (2018) indicated that depression has an inverse effect on the academic performance of students. Depression might be an important factor in the prevalence of suicidal attempts, unsatisfactory academic achievement, poor work performance, and somatic complaints (Ibrahim et al., 2013). Active Facebook users could manage less tie for studying as compared to non-users of Facebook (Kirschner & Karpinski, 2010); excessive Facebook use has an inverse effect on academics (Chakraborty, 2020).

Students belonging to nuclear family systems have greater scores on the scales of self-objectification and depression and experienced a higher level of Facebook addiction in comparison to the students who belonged to joint family systems (see Table 5). These findings are aligned with prior research, such as one by Shafiq et al. (2022), who concluded that the participants of the study who belonged to nuclear family systems experienced more depressive symptoms as compared to the ones coming from joint family systems. The findings of a detailed study carried out by Taqui et al. (2007), mainly focusing on the assessment of depression among adults who belonged to joint family systems, indicated that they suffered less from depression as compared to individuals who came from nuclear family systems. Ackard et al. (2006) found that body dissatisfaction, weight issues, depressive symptoms, drug use, lower self-worth, and suicidal thoughts were all deeply associated with the type of relationship teenagers had with their parents (Fatima et al., 2021). Additionally, young students who are accompanied by their parents along with other family members in their homes are less likely to fall for Facebook addiction as they have lesser privacy. On the other hand, individuals who live in nuclear family systems get frustrated by being lonely and can become more vulnerable to becoming Facebook addicted (Lodhi et al., 2021).

## Conclusion

Based on the study results, it is safe to conclude that self-objectification, Facebook addiction, and depression are strongly interrelated. Students with depressive symptoms and high self-objectification were more inclined to develop Facebook addiction. Male students exhibited self-objectification, depression, and Facebook addiction more than females. The joint family system can be one of the influential and supportive factors in decreasing self-objectification, depression, and Facebook addiction among students. The study results also concluded that low achievers are more likely to

develop a higher level of self-objectification, depression, and Facebook addiction, than high achievers.

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