



Journal Homepage: - www.journalijar.com

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ADVANCED RESEARCH (IJAR)

Article DOI: 10.21474/IJAR01/21228

DOI URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21474/IJAR01/21228>



RESEARCH ARTICLE

INVESTIGATING THE IMPACT OF VIRTUAL WORLD LIKES ON TEEN SELF-ESTEEM IN SARAI JULLENA, NEW FRIENDS COLONY, NEW DELHI

Manjul Borah¹ and Apurva Amit Desai²

1. Assistant Professor, Dept. of Special Education, Himalayan University, Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh.
2. Assistant Professor, Dept. of Special Education, Vision Institute of Applied Studies, Faridabad.

Manuscript Info

Manuscript History

Received: 16 April 2025

Final Accepted: 19 May 2025

Published: June 2025

Key words:-

Virtual World, Teen Self-Esteem, Online Validation, Social Media, Gender Differences, Likes

Abstract

The present study explores how online validation through likes affects the self-esteem of teenagers. With social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, and Snapchat becoming central to teenage social life, the desire for online approval has grown significantly. Many teenagers now associate their self-worth with the number of 'likes' they receive, making online validation an important factor influencing their self-esteem and emotional well-being. The research was conducted using a cross-sectional survey involving 120 high school students aged 12 to 17, with an equal number of boys and girls from two schools in Sarai Jullena, New Friends Colony. A 15-item questionnaire measured their virtual world behavior, while Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale assessed their self-esteem. Based on their responses, students were classified as either highly influenced or least influenced by 'likes'. The findings showed that teenagers who were highly affected by 'likes' had lower self-esteem than those who were less affected. Girls were more negatively impacted than boys, with a greater drop in self-esteem scores. These results emphasize the need to raise awareness about the psychological effects of online validation and encourage healthy social media habits among teenagers.

"© 2025 by the Author(s). Published by IJAR under CC BY 4.0. Unrestricted use allowed with credit to the author."

Introduction:-

In this 21st Century, the digital landscape has undergone a profound transformation, moving beyond simple internet browsing to facilitate complex, global interactions. Platforms like Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, and Snapchat have emerged as pivotal players in this evolution, serving as dynamic virtual spaces where billions of users exchange ideas, images, and videos, often seeking engagement and approval from their peers. Recent government surveys reveal that these platforms collectively boast over 2 billion active users worldwide, underscoring their significance in modern social communication.

In India, the expansion of the virtual world has been notably rapid, with significant increases in online engagement across both urban and rural areas. For example, rural India saw a remarkable 120% rise in virtual world users within a year, illustrating that this trend is widespread beyond just metropolitan areas. For teenagers, the virtual world has become an integral part of daily life, providing a space for self-expression and social interaction. The immediate

Corresponding Author:- Manjul Borah

Address:- Assistant Professor, Dept. of Special Education, Himalayan University, Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh.

gratification offered by these platforms has transformed how teenagers allocate their time, often leading them to spend extensive hours scrolling through feeds and engaging with peers.

The Research conducted by the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) in 2020 provides insights into Virtual World usage among Indian teen ager. The study found that approximately 82% of teenagers aged 13 to 17 in urban areas are active on Virtual World platforms. The research also revealed that heavy Virtual World use is linked to increased anxiety and sleep disturbances among Indian teens, with many reporting a sense of pressure to maintain a constant online presence. The TISS study emphasizes the psychological and behavioral impacts of Virtual World on young people in India's urban centers. The growing prevalence of Virtual World has caught the attention of scholars interested in its effects on mental health. While these platforms offer opportunities for connection, there are concerns about the potential psychological risks of excessive use. Some experts argue that Virtual World strengthens social bonds by connecting people across distances, while others worry that it may erode face-to-face interactions, threatening the quality of real-world relationships.

A key area of concern is the impact of the virtual world on teenagers' self-esteem. In the digital age, many youths measure their self-worth by the number of "likes" they receive online. This virtual validation can greatly influence their self-image. Research indicates that spending excessive time on virtual platforms, such as Instagram and Facebook, can be linked to lower self-esteem. Reduced face-to-face interactions and feelings of isolation are significant issues in assessing the psychological effects of the virtual world on teenagers. One relevant study is "The Role of Virtual world in Teens Self-Esteem and Well-Being" by Valkenburg, Beyens, Pouwels, and van Driel (2021), which explores how extensive virtual world use impacts teen self-esteem.

The growing prevalence of Virtual World platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp has introduced new forms of interaction and validation, notably through the 'likes' that users receive on their posts. Recent literature has highlighted a range of effects these virtual interactions can have on teenagers' self-esteem and self-image. Dervishaj Hoxhaj et al. (2023) found a negative correlation between Virtual media use and both self-image and self-esteem among teenagers, emphasizing the detrimental effects of comparing oneself with others online and receiving validation through likes. Sharma et al. (2022) further identified significant relationships between social comparison and mental health issues, though their focus was primarily on the context of Instagram use in India. Valkenburg et al. (2021) revealed generally weak and inconsistent effects of virtual worlduse on teens' self-esteem, with only a small percentage experiencing notable negative impacts. Rawath et al. (2019) highlighted both the positive and negative aspects of virtual world, stressing the importance of mindful use to balance its benefits and potential health risks.

The present study –

1. Examined the effects of online acceptance and validation on teens.
2. Assessed the influence of gender on online acceptance and validation among teenagers.
3. Explored the impact of virtual world'likes' on teens self-esteem.

This research contributes to the development of strategies to promote healthy virtual worldusage and psychological well-being among teens by examining gender variations, cultural contexts, and underlying psychological mechanisms. This present study investigated the influence of this newly developed social currency "likes" and its possible consequences on teenagers' self-esteem, ultimately seeking to understand its impact on their real-life experiences and mental health.

Review of the Related Literature:-

Dervishaj Hoxhaj, B., Xhani, D., Kapo, S., & Sinaj, E. (2023, July) examined the impact of Virtual World on teen ager self-image and self-esteem. Using a quantitative approach, they surveyed 179 teenagers aged 13 to 19. The results revealed a negative correlation between Virtual World use and both self-image and self-esteem. The study highlighted that the number of likes received and the tendency to compare oneself with others online can significantly harm teenagers' psychological well-being. The findings emphasize the importance of monitoring Virtual World use and suggest the need for further research on effective interventions.

Sharma, A., Sanghvi, K., & Churi, P. (2022, April) investigated the connections between social comparison, colorism, and mental health among young adults in India, particularly in the context of Instagram use. Analyzing data from 726 participants through Structural Equation Modeling, the study found a significant relationship between

age and the social issues studied, while gender did not show a meaningful link. The research highlights the importance of raising awareness about these issues to promote responsible Virtual World use and safeguard users' well-being. The findings offer valuable insights for stakeholders and discuss the broader implications for online environments.

Patti M. Valkenburg, Ine Beyens, J. Loes Pouwels, and Irene I. van Driel (2021, Jan) investigated how virtual world use (SMU) affects teens' self-esteem. Their study, which involved 387 teens aged 13 to 15 (54% girls) over three weeks, found generally weak and inconsistent effects. Participants reported their SMU and self-esteem six times daily, totaling 34,930 assessments. Using Dynamic Structural Equation Modeling, they found that 88% of teens showed minimal impact of SMU on self-esteem, while 4% had positive effects and 8% had negative effects. The study highlights the need to account for individual differences in media effects research.

Rawath, S., Satheeshkumar, R., & Kumar, V. (2019, Jan-Feb) studied the impact of virtual world on young people. They found that 20% of participants valued virtual world for learning and staying connected with friends, 28% enjoyed the entertainment it provided, and 18% found it useful for job searching. However, the study also highlighted potential health issues and the impact on cultural values, stressing the need for mindful and responsible virtual world use to balance its benefits and drawbacks.

Methodology of the Study:-

Research Design:

In this study the researcher used a cross-sectional survey design, which examines data from a population or subset at a single point in time. A paper-and-pencil survey was administered to **120** high school students from two well-regarded schools in Sarai Jullena, New Friends Colony, New Delhi.

Population:

In this study population comprised of school going teenagers of Sarai Jullena, New Friends Colony, New Delhi.

Sample Size:

The study included a sample of 120 teenagers aged 12 to 17, with equal representation of 60 boys and 60 girls. Each school's sample was balanced as well, comprising 30 boys and 30 girls out of the 60 students.

Sampling Techniques:

In this study the researcher used purposive sampling technique.

Tools and Techniques:

A simple, comprehensive questionnaire was created to assess teenagers virtual world behavior. Distributed to 120 high school students (60 from each of two schools), it featured 15 questions on a 5-point Likert scale. The questionnaire, a revised version from the original one, aimed to quantify data on virtual world 'likes' influence. Participants were categorized based on their scores: above 60 for high influence and below 25 for low influence. Each participant's self-esteem was evaluated using Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale. The Rosenberg scale, a 10-item self-report tool, measures global self-worth through a 4-point Likert scale.

Statistical Analysis Technique:

To compare the self-esteem of two groups of teenagers; those highly influenced by virtual world "likes" and those less influenced, an independent samples t-test was used.

Results:-

Group	Category	Mean Score	Self-Esteem	Standard Deviation	t-Value	p-Value
Boys	Highly Influenced	26.6		3.82	-7.73718	<.05
	Least Influenced	32.53		2.78		
Girls	Highly Influenced	19.93		4.01	-10.83156	<.05
	Least Influenced	32.14		2.92		

The study aimed to understand how virtual world 'likes' influence teens self-esteem. The analysis revealed that teens who are highly influenced by 'likes' on virtual world exhibit significantly lower self-esteem compared to those less influenced. This was evident from the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale results.

For boys, those highly influenced by 'likes' had a mean self-esteem score of 26.6, whereas those least influenced had a higher mean score of 32.53. For girls, the mean self-esteem score was 19.93 for those highly influenced, compared to a higher mean score of 32.14 for those least influenced.

The study also investigated gender differences in the impact of virtual world 'likes'. Findings indicate that girls are more affected by 'likes' compared to boys. Girls who were highly influenced by 'likes' had a significantly lower self-esteem score (mean = 19.93) compared to those least influenced (mean = 32.14). Boys showed a similar pattern, with those highly influenced having a lower self-esteem score (mean = 26.6) compared to those least influenced (mean = 32.53).

Analysis using independent samples t-tests confirmed significant differences in self-esteem between teens highly influenced by 'likes' and those least influenced, supporting the hypothesis that 'likes' affect self-esteem. For boys, the t-value was -7.73718 with a p-value of <.00001, and for girls, the t-value was -10.83156 with a p-value of <.00001. Both results were significant at $p < .05$.

Online acceptance and validation, such as virtual world 'likes,' significantly affect the self-esteem of teenagers. The results confirm this hypothesis, as teens highly influenced by 'likes' exhibited lower self-esteem.

Female teenagers are more affected by virtual world 'likes' compared to male teenagers. This hypothesis is supported by the results, which showed that girls experienced a more significant decline in self-esteem in response to virtual world 'likes' compared to boys.

Discussion:-

This study investigated how virtual world "Likes" affect teens self-esteem, revealing that high influence from "Likes" is associated with lower self-esteem for both boys and girls. Teens who frequently compare themselves to idealized images on virtual world tend to experience negative self-evaluations and reduced self-worth. This supports the hypothesis that online validation negatively impacts self-esteem.

Additionally, the research highlights significant gender differences, showing that girls are more affected by virtual world "Likes" than boys. Girls engage more in posting selfies and social comparisons, experiencing greater fluctuations in self-esteem based on the number of "Likes" received. These findings underscore the importance of addressing the psychological effects of virtual world, especially for girls, to mitigate its impact on self-esteem.

This study examined how virtual world "Likes" affect teens self-esteem, revealing that increased influence from "Likes" is linked to lower self-esteem for both boys and girls. This finding aligns with the literature reviewed. Dervishaj et al. (2023) found a negative correlation between virtual world use, including the number of "Likes" received, and teenagers' self-image and self-esteem. Their research underscored the harmful psychological effects of online comparisons, reinforcing the idea that virtual world validation can significantly impact self-esteem.

Further supporting these results, Sharma et al. (2022) highlighted the broader implications of social comparison on mental health, emphasizing the importance of understanding virtual world's role in shaping self-perceptions. Valkenburg et al. (2021) reported mixed effects of virtual world use on self-esteem among teens, noting individual differences in outcomes. This variation underscores the need for nuanced approaches in understanding virtual world's impact. Additionally, Rawath et al. (2019) emphasized both the benefits and potential health issues of virtual world use, reinforcing the necessity for balanced and mindful engagement. Overall, these studies collectively highlight the significant influence of virtual world "Likes" on teens self-esteem, with gender differences further underscoring the need for targeted interventions.

Conclusion:-

We live in a digital age where virtual world is a central part of teens lives. With the rise of social networking sites, the lines between online and offline worlds are increasingly blurred. Young people are now deeply engaged with social media, often valuing virtual "likes" and other forms of online validation over real-world interactions.

While virtual world offers convenience and connectivity, there are growing concerns about its negative impact on teens well-being. Research on how online validation affects self-esteem is still emerging, but it's clear that virtual

world can significantly influence how young people view themselves. The constant need for "likes" and approval online can lead to unhealthy comparisons and lower self-esteem.

Our study highlights how teenagers, especially those in urban areas with easy internet access, use virtual world extensively. It shows that these platforms are a major part of their social lives, but it's important for teens to build self-esteem through real-life experiences and achievements, rather than relying on online validation. This research aims to shed light on the crucial issue of social media's impact on self-esteem and promote a deeper understanding of this challenge.

Recommendation for Parents:-

Monitor Social Media Habits:

Be aware of your child's social media activities. Regularly check their online interactions and set guidelines for healthy usage.

Implement Technology-Free Times:

Establish family rules for technology use, such as a technology switch-off time at night. Encourage all family members to put away their devices during certain hours, especially before bedtime, to promote better sleep.

Promote Healthy Online Practices:

Educate adolescents about the importance of self-esteem, self-recognition, and self-confidence. Consider organizing workshops or awareness programs to help them understand and manage the impact of social media on their self-perception.

Encourage Real-Life Interactions:

Support activities that build self-esteem through real-life experiences, such as hobbies, sports, and social events, rather than relying solely on online validation.

Raise Awareness About Social Media Effects:

Participate in or organize campaigns to inform others about the potential negative effects of social media on mental health and well-being.

References:-

1. Abell, L. & Brewer, G (2014). Machiavellianism, self-monitoring, self-promotion and relational aggression on Facebook. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 36(2014) 258-262.
2. Amichai-Hamburger, Y. & Vinitzky, G (2010). Social network use and personality. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 26(2010), 1289-1295.
3. Anderson, B., Fagan, P., Woodnutt, T., & Chansorto-Premuzic, T. (2012). Facebook psychology popular questions answered research. *Psychology of Popular Media Culture*, 1(1).23-37
4. Barker, V. (2009). Older adolescents' motivations for social network site user: The influence of gender, group identity, and collective self-esteem. *Cyberpsychology & Behavior*, 12(2), 209-213.
5. Bushman, Brad J. and Roy F. Baumeister (1998). "Threatened Egotism. Narcissism. Self-Esteem and Direct and Displaced Aggression: Does Self-Love or Self-Hate Lead to Violence?"
6. Chen, B & Marcus, J. (2012). Students' self-presentation on Facebook: an examination of personality and self-construal factors. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 28(6), 2091-2099. Christakis DA, Moreno MA. Trapped in the net: will internet addiction become a 21st century epidemic? *Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med*. 2009;163(10):959-960
7. Chen, W. & Lee, K. (2013). Sharing, liking, commenting and distressed? The pathway between Facebook interaction and psychological distress. *Cyber psychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 16(10), 728-734.
8. Chou, H.T. & Edge, N. (2012). "They are happier and having better lives than I am": the impact of using Facebook on perceptions of others' lives. *Cyber psychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 15(2), 117-121.
9. Chueng, C., Chiu, P., & Lee, M. (2010). Online social network: why do students use Facebook? *Computers in Human Behavior*, 27(2011), 1337-1343.
10. Derenne, J.L., & Beresin, E.V. (2006). Body image, media, and eating disorders. *Academic Psychiatry*, 30(3), 257-261

11. Ellison, N., Steinfield, C., & Lampe, C. (2007). The benefits of Facebook "friends": social capital and college students' use of online social network sites. *Journal of Computer-Mediated communication*, 12(2007) 1143-1168
12. Facebook wonge is linked to depressive symptoms. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*
13. Fardouly, J., Diedrichs, P.C., Vartanian, L.R., & Halliwell, E. (2015). "Social comparisons on social media: The impact of Facebook on young women's body image concerns and mood."
14. Grabe, S., Ward, L., & Hyde, J. (2008). The role of the media in body image concerns among women: a meta-analysis of experimental and correlational studies. *Psychological Bulletin*, 134(3), 460-476.
15. Hinduja S. Patchin J. Offline consequences of online victimization: school violence and delinquency. *J Sch Violence*. 2007;6(3):89-112
16. Indian, M., & Grieve, R. (2014). "When Facebook is easier than face-to-face: Social support derived from Facebook in socially anxious individuals.
17. Junco, R. (2011). The relationship between frequency of Facebook use, participation in Facebook activities, and student engagement *Computers and Education*, 58(1), 162-171.
18. Junco, R. (2011). Too much face and not enough books: the relationship between multiple indices of Facebook use and academic performance. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 28(2012), 187-198.