# Influence of Social Comparison on Life Satisfaction in Young Adults: A Study Amongst the Indian Population

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**ABSTRACT**

This study delves into the intricate relationship between social comparison and life satisfaction among young adults within the Indian population. Social comparison plays a significant role in shaping individuals' perceptions of their own lives relative to others'. Young adulthood, marked by developmental transitions and identity formation, presents a crucial period where individuals are particularly susceptible to the influences of social comparisons. Employing both the Social Comparison Scale (SCS) and the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), this research investigates the extent to which social comparison impacts life satisfaction. A sample size of 120 young adults was selected using convenience and stratified random sampling techniques. The findings reveal a robust positive correlation between social comparison and life satisfaction ($r = 0.560$, $p < 0.01$), shedding light on the nuanced dynamics of social comparison processes and their implications for subjective wellbeing among young adults in Indian context. This study highlights the critical role of understanding social comparison dynamics within the unique cultural and developmental landscape of the Indian population, providing valuable insights for interventions aimed at fostering the subjective well-being of young adults.

**Keywords:** social comparison, subjective well-being, life satisfaction, satisfaction with life scale, young adults

## 1.1 Subjective Well-being

Subjective well-being is how an individual perceives experiences and how they evaluate different aspects of their lives (Suh et al., 1999). It is often used to assess mental health and happiness. Moreover, it is often a strong predictor of individual wellness, health, and longevity (Diener & Diener, 2000). The application of subjective well-being goes beyond individual implications. It is increasingly being used as a tool to assess societal health (Wilkinson, 2009). Psychologists use it to understand how individuals perceive their lives, and this insight influences choices in public health, economics, and social policies. Policymakers count on SWB evaluations to understand how societies are faring and whether the established rules and policies are making a positive difference.

SWB is mostly thought of as having three components (Diener, 1984):

1. Life satisfaction is the cognitive component of SWB, which is defined as how people evaluate their lives in general and in specific domains of life (such as work satisfaction and marriage satisfaction).

2. Frequent Positive Affect is a crucial element of subjective well-being (SWB). It refers to the frequency and intensity of positive emotions that a person experiences. Positive affect is often seen as one side of the emotional experience coin, with negative affect being the other. SWB research suggests a balance between positive and negative affect is important for wellbeing. Research suggests that positive affect improves physical health, greater resilience, and social engagement (Steptoe, 2013).

3. Infrequent Negative Affect pertains to how frequently and how intensely an individual feels negative emotions, including sadness, fear, anxiety, and anger. High levels of negative affect can disrupt the emotional balance needed for SWB. It can cloud one's judgment and lead to lower life satisfaction, a key element of SWB. Chronic negative affect can have negative consequences beyond just feelings. Research suggests links between high negative affect and poor physical health (Steptoe, 2008).

## 1.2 Variables

### 1.2.1 Life satisfaction

It refers to the subjective feeling towards one's overall quality of life and to the extent they feel happy and satisfied. This cognitive aspect involves a subjective and personal evaluation where individuals reflect on the quality and fulfilment derived from different areas of their lives. It's not just about specific events or momentary feelings; it's more about the broader impressions and judgments that people make about their lives as a complete package.

When an individual expresses high global life satisfaction, it signifies a subjective sense of contentment and fulfilment aligned with their standards and values. Conversely, a lower rating implies they see a gap between how things are and how they want them to be. It's essentially a personal judgment about their entire life.

Life satisfaction is frequently measured with multi-item self-report measures such as the Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) or with single items assessing global happiness with one's existence (Diener, Inglehart, & Tay, 2013).

There are two types of theories about life satisfaction

Bottom- up theories: According to these theories, life satisfaction stems from satisfaction in the different domains of life. This means that people use their overall life appraisal as a measure of their satisfaction with different areas of their lives, such as relationships, jobs, health, and leisure. Based on the bottom-up assumptions, individuals' life satisfaction results from the collective contributions of wellbeing in the domain in question.

Top-down theories: These theories argue that the overall subjective well-being acts as a predicator or decider of the domain-specific satisfaction. The core idea of these theories is that people's general outlook on life determines how they evaluate life satisfaction in different areas of their lives. The higher the overall satisfaction with life, the more likely individuals are to view the different domains positively. On the other hand, lower levels of overall satisfaction with life may lead to a negative view of the satisfaction perceived in specific domains of life (Heady, Veenhoven, & Wearing, 1991).

The main factors that determine life happiness are still unclear, however, researchers suggest the factors fall into one of the four main categories in which they should be considered.

1. Life opportunities
2. Course of events
3. Flow of experiences
4. Life evaluation

It is a multifaceted concept influenced by various factors such as subjective well-being, needs satisfaction, cognitive appraisals, set-point theory, and social comparisons. It encompasses individuals' overall evaluations of their lives, considering domains like work, relationships, health, and personal goals.

### 1.2.2 Social Comparison

The human desire for self-evaluation is a fundamental aspect of social psychology. This innate drive stems from our need to understand our place in the social world. One such influential theory that aligns with this concept is the Social Comparison Theory, proposed by Leon Festinger in 1984.

The perception individuals hold of their abilities, circumstances, and behaviours is dynamically shaped by the nature of social comparisons undertaken (Gregory Fong, et al. 2010). Upward comparisons, those directed towards individuals perceived as superior, can influence self-perception in contrasting ways. However, they can also serve as a motivator for improvement. Downward comparisons, on the other hand, can inflate self-esteem or lead to complacency.

Individuals tend to engage in social comparison due to the unavailability of readily available objective information (concrete, measurable facts). They may not have accurate access to one's educational attainment, salary or job position readily. Ironically, even when objective information is available, social information tends to be more influential. Social information is qualitative data based on perception or beliefs fathered from social environment. Some examples include cultural norms, peer comparisons or media portrayals.

This process of comparison can trigger emotional (affective), behavioural, and cognitive responses. Many therapeutic observations have found that the tendency to engage in negative self-evaluation and view oneself as inferior is linked with psychological difficulties, including depression (Trinh & Robins, 2009). Social comparison is an ongoing process that shapes our perception throughout life. There are certain motivations for people to compare themselves with others.

First, comparison allows one to self-evaluate and determine their position in certain settings (Lockwood & Waite, 2004).

Secondly, it allows self-improvement (Gregory Fong et al., 2010). There can be instances where upward comparison can trigger a competitive spirit, or it could create discrepancies between current abilities and what we desire, therefore creating a need to close the gap. In both cases, comparison acts as a motivating force.

Thirdly, it helps with self enhancement (Trinh & Robins, 2009). Comparing oneself to those perceived as worse off can boost self-esteem and give one a sense of pride. Finally, social comparison can also be done to know more about someone—a way to understand others.

Social comparison enumerates how not only does it help with the evaluation of oneself but also lets us understand other individuals. To delve deeper into the process of comparison, researchers have developed various tools. The Social Comparison Scale (SCS), developed by Allan and Gilbert (1995) is based on Leon Festinger's social comparison theory.

It is a self-report questionnaire that assesses a person's perception of their social rank across various dimensions. The SCS uses 11 bipolar scales (inferior or superior) for aspects like attractiveness, social skills, and intelligence. The results reveal the perceived social standing of the individual as compared to others.

## 1.3 Life satisfaction and social comparison in young adults

As per Erik Erikson's psychosocial stages, young adulthood is an important period for identity formation (Erikson, 1968). Individuals solidify their sense of self where social comparison is often used as a tool for exploration as they actively explore their values, interests, and aspirations (Arnett, 2000). Moreover, it helps them assess their strengths, weaknesses, and place in the world. It plays a vital role in navigating this transition by identifying role models, understanding appropriate social behaviour, witnessing how others deal with problems, and understanding one's social responsibility.

The young adult transitions from a child-focused system to an adult-focused system, during which they undergo significant changes such as identity formation, social and emotional learning, social awareness, and independence. They are expected to become financially independent, establish long-term relationships, become parents, and become active members of the community. Thus, social comparison is bound to happen.

During this transitional period, the tendency to engage in social comparison is quite prevalent. As individuals are navigating these pivotal years, the tendency to indulge in social comparison is distinct, thus influencing their life satisfaction levels. Social comparison yields both negative and positive outcomes. It can work as a motivating factor to strive for improvement, or it could trigger negative emotions and behaviours. Therefore, it can impact the well-being of an individual (White et. Al, 2006). However, excessive or unhealthy social comparison, both online and offline, can affect the individual's self-identity and mental health or deteriorate social relationships.

It is to be highlighted that the exposure and adoption of social media platforms have significantly impacted the dynamics of social comparison during young adulthood. It has instigated a shift in individuals' expectations and norms, altering their perceptions of success and happiness. The "perfect" virtual presence of one creates space for another to compare and measure their accomplishments and experiences against them. Consequently, it can also redefine personal growth and self-worth, with both positive and negative implications for their overall well-being.

## 1.4 Social Comparison in the Indian Context

India, being a collectivistic society, emphasizes interdependence and social cohesion. Such cultures focus more on social relations and roles than individual identity. The important institution is primarily the family, and the interests of the family are of utmost priority. Thus, the individual is responsible for acting appropriately, as their actions can impact the entire family.

In addition, the deeply rooted values and traditions of Indian culture form the very basis of society. Practices such as seeking the blessings of elders or community leaders can instil a positive social comparison and lead people to follow their path within a social structure "to be like them.".

However, with the exposure of media, western culture has started to assimilate within the population, impacting social comparison among young children. The spread of social media introduced many young Indians to Western concepts of individualism, materialism, and selfpromotion. This might lead to a tension between conventional collectivist beliefs and the urge to attain personal goals through social comparison. Due to increased advancements in the society, the current scenario of how self-perception can impact life satisfaction warrants further research. The tendency to compare oneself vary across time and period depending on emerging trends, beliefs of the society, comparison based on attractiveness and perceived sense of "fitting in". These comparisons can affect how good we feel about our lives, and it varies from

place to place. That's why it's important to keep studying how society changes, especially in countries like India.

## CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In their groundbreaking study, Kirkpatrick & Lee (2024) delve into the complex realm of motherhood portrayal on social media, aiming to understand its effects on new mothers. With a sample of 464 participants, they meticulously examine how individual factors like social comparison orientation and self-esteem interact with media depictions. Their objective is clear: to uncover how these dynamics shape new mothers' experiences and mental well-being in the digital age.

In a comprehensive survey encompassing over 5,000 respondents, Gao et al. (2022) delve into the impact of shyness on cyberbullying, shedding light on the intricate relationship between individual differences and self-esteem. Their findings reveal that shyness renders victims more susceptible to cyberbullying, with self-esteem and personal characteristics acting as mediating factors. Importantly, the study underscores the need for targeted prevention methods, tailored to gender and developmental stages, focusing on mitigating the effects of shyness, social comparison, and self-esteem on cyberbullying vulnerability.

Ruggieri et al. (2021) embark on a journey to explore the psychological ramifications of online social comparisons during the COVID-19 quarantine. Through a cross-lagged panel study conducted in Italy, they uncover a nuanced interplay between online social comparison and psychological distress, revealing both heightened distress during quarantine periods and subsequent improvements over time, influenced by social comparison experiences. Their findings underscore the potential of online social comparison to alleviate psychological distress amidst the challenges of pandemic-induced quarantine.

In another enlightening study, Liao et al. (2021) probe into the intricate relationship between social comparisons and happiness amidst income disparities across different countries. Their research unveils a fascinating pattern, wherein individuals report higher levels of happiness in countries marked by greater income inequality, highlighting the role of social comparison in shaping subjective well-being within unequal socio-economic environments.

Finally, Midgley et al. (2021) delve into the unique influence of social media comparisons on individuals' self-esteem, mood, and quality of life. Through a series of studies involving 798 participants, they reveal the detrimental effects of frequent and stringent upward comparisons on social media platforms like Facebook. Their findings highlight the heightened vulnerability of individuals with low self-esteem to negative self-evaluations stemming from excessive social media comparisons, emphasizing the need for a nuanced understanding of the impact and attributes of social media comparison in contemporary society.

Moreover, Sim & Prihadi (2020) examined how social media comparison influences life satisfaction, hypothesizing that mattering and state self-esteem mediate this relationship. Participants aged 18 to 35 completed questionnaires measuring comparison orientation, mattering, self-esteem, and life satisfaction. Results from 147 participants revealed significant contributions to life satisfaction, with state self-esteem fully mediating the impact of mattering. Implications, limitations, and suggestions for future research are discussed.

Kross et al. (2020) delve into the intricate role of social networking sites (SNS) in influencing individuals' happiness through social comparison. Amidst increasing debates regarding the potential risks posed by heightened SNS usage on well-being, their study reveals that passive engagement on SNS often leads to increased social comparisons, particularly with those perceived as better off, subsequently resulting in

diminished satisfaction. They assert that social comparison stands as a primary driver behind the impact of SNS on well-being, particularly pronounced among frequent comparers.

McCardle and Speck (2019) explore the relationship between Western consumerism, globalized media, and social comparison across diverse cultural contexts. Surveying college students from the USA, China, Croatia, and India, their research delves into the influence of materialism on societal comparisons, revealing intriguing links between materialism, individualism, and mediated comparison. Their findings shed light on nuanced variations in the interplay between individuality, collectivism, and materialistic influences across different societies.

Pham et al. (2019) investigation draws on survey data from rural households in Thailand and Vietnam to elucidate factors shaping households' perceptions of welfare. Focusing on subjective evaluations of overall welfare and social comparison, their study underscores the impact of relative poverty, living conditions, economic and environmental risks, and attitudes toward risk acceptance on households' well-being. They highlight asymmetrical comparisons in wealth perceptions between the two nations, emphasizing differential sensitivities to income changes and natural hazards.

Vignoli et al. (2019) delve into migrants' subjective well-being, analyzing how social comparisons with reference groups within the host country affect life satisfaction. Through a nuanced examination of comparison dynamics with natives and other migrants, they unveil patterns indicating increased life satisfaction as disparities between migrants and reference groups diminish. Their findings underscore the significance of social comparison in understanding integration patterns, particularly accentuated among second-generation migrants.

Hinz et al. (2018) investigation focuses on evaluating the efficacy of the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) in measuring life satisfaction among German citizens. Through a comprehensive analysis involving approximately 10,000 respondents, their study affirms SWLS as a robust tool for assessing life satisfaction, with significant connections observed between life satisfaction and various factors including mental health, optimism, relationship status, and income. They advocate for the continued use of SWLS in future research endeavors.

Bergagna & Tartalglia's (2018) study delves into the relationship between self-esteem and Facebook usage among young individuals, particularly emphasizing the influence of selfesteem levels on social interactions on Facebook. Surveying 250 Italian students, their findings reveal nuanced associations, with women's self-esteem directly impacting their Facebook interactions, while indirect effects were observed among individuals with low selfesteem. Their research sheds light on gender differences in the importance of social comparison through Facebook, highlighting the complex interplay between self-esteem and social media usage.

Vries & Kühne's (2015) exploration into the influence of Facebook on the self-perceptions of young adults provides valuable insights into the effects of social media usage on individual well-being. By focusing on the 18 to 25-year-old demographic, the study highlights a concerning trend: increased negative social comparison resulting from heightened Facebook use. This finding raises important questions about the potential impact of social media on individuals' self-esteem and self-image, particularly in vulnerable age groups where identity formation is crucial.

Expanding on this, Fardouly et al. (2015) delve deeper into the effects of Facebook usage, particularly among women, on moods and body image. By comparing Facebook use with exposure to an online fashion magazine or a neutral website, the study reveals the unique influence of social media on women's perceptions of themselves. The findings underscore the complex relationship between social media

exposure and body image concerns, shedding light on the potential psychological consequences of prolonged social media use, especially in terms of appearance-related comparisons.

The study by Kaneez (2015) provides further context by examining the socio-cultural implications of divorce on women's well-being in India. By investigating both Hindu and Muslim communities, the research highlights the broader societal factors contributing to individual well-being. The findings suggest that divorce can have profound social, emotional, and financial repercussions for women, underscoring the importance of considering cultural context in understanding well-being outcomes.

Nabi & Keblusek's (2014) exploration of the role of envy and hope in mediating social comparison offers additional insights into the psychological mechanisms underlying individuals' responses to social media content. By surveying female students, the study reveals the differential impact of envy and hope on behavioural motivation, highlighting the nuanced ways in which emotions influence social comparison processes.

Bedi et al. (2014) examination of cultural determinants of well-being among older individuals in India and Britain expands our understanding of the socio-cultural factors shaping individual happiness and life satisfaction. Through qualitative interviews, the research uncovers the unique cultural values and social dynamics influencing late-life well-being, emphasizing the importance of cultural context in understanding subjective well-being.

Bartolini et al. (2013) investigation into subjective well-being among Germans provides valuable insights into the socio-economic determinants of happiness over time. By analysing longitudinal data, the study highlights the complex interplay between income changes, demographics, and social capital in shaping individual well-being trajectories. The findings underscore the need for a holistic approach to understanding well-being outcomes, considering both economic and social factors.

Aguilar et al. (2013) exploration of social comparisons and subjective well-being further emphasizes the significance of social context in shaping individuals' perceptions of happiness and life satisfaction. The research underscores the importance of relative position on the income ladder in influencing subjective well-being, highlighting the role of social comparisons in shaping well-being outcomes.

Moradi et al. (2013) study on the relationship between income, family relationships, and subjective happiness among employees in Tehran offers additional insights into the factors influencing individual well-being within specific cultural and socio-economic contexts. By examining the interplay between income, family dynamics, and subjective happiness, the research sheds light on the multifaceted nature of well-being determinants in diverse cultural settings.

Asadullah & Chaudhury's (2012) investigation into subjective well-being in Bangladesh provides valuable insights into the relative importance of absolute versus relative income in shaping life satisfaction. Through household data and village surveys, the study reveals the complex dynamics of income comparisons and their impact on subjective well-being, highlighting the role of socio-economic context in shaping individual happiness.

Giacolini et al. (2012) conducted an analysis of social comparison and submissive behaviors in adolescents further enriches our understanding of the connections between social comparison processes and mental health outcomes. By examining the role of submissiveness in mediating social comparison effects, the research highlights the importance of considering individual differences in understanding the psychological impact of social comparisons.

Paterson et al. (2011) investigation into the role of stigma perception and social comparisons among individuals with intellectual disabilities offers additional insights into the complex interplay between

social factors and self-esteem. The study underscores the importance of addressing stigma and negative social comparisons in promoting positive self-concept and well-being among vulnerable populations.

Micu & Coulter's (2012) cross-cultural study on social comparison motives among women in the USA and Romania reveals cultural differences in self-perceptions and product evaluations, highlighting the need for a nuanced understanding of social comparison dynamics across diverse cultural contexts. By comparing self-evaluations and product perceptions in different cultural settings, the research sheds light on the role of cultural values and norms in shaping social comparison processes.

Peck et al. (2007) investigated into social comparison and subjective well-being among older adults further deepens our understanding of how comparison processes influence mental health outcomes, particularly among older populations. By examining the role of social comparison in shaping well-being perceptions among older adults, the study underscores the importance of social factors in promoting positive aging outcomes.

White et al. (2006) researched on the mechanisms of social comparison illuminates the multifaceted nature of comparison processes and their implications for individual well-being. By exploring the potential benefits and harms of social comparison, the study underscores the need for a nuanced understanding of these processes to mitigate negative outcomes and foster positive social interactions. Through their findings, White et. al highlight the variability in the effects of social comparison, emphasizing the importance of considering individual differences and contextual factors in understanding its impact on well-being. This study serves as a valuable addition to the broader literature on social comparison and its role in shaping individual attitudes and behaviors.

Buunk et al. (2001) study sheds light on the impact of Facebook usage on individuals' selfesteem, particularly among young people. Through correlational and experimental studies, they reveal that frequent Facebook use is associated with lower trait self-esteem, primarily due to exposure to constant social comparisons. This highlights the potential negative consequences of excessive social media usage on psychological well-being, emphasizing the need for individuals to be mindful of their online behaviors. Building on this, Buunk et al.a (1995) investigation delves into the psychological effects of social comparison among individuals receiving payments under the Disablement Insurance Act. By examining participants' reactions to interviews about problems or successful coping, the study uncovers the nuanced dynamics of upward and downward social comparisons. Interestingly, the findings suggest that feeling in control plays a pivotal role in shaping individuals' responses to social comparison, with upward comparisons leading to positive feelings when one feels in control, but negative feelings when one lacks control. This underscores the complex interplay between perceived control and social comparison processes in shaping individuals' emotional responses and well-being outcomes.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY
### 3.1 Rationale
Social comparison is the process of evaluating oneself with others while life satisfaction is the cognitive component of subjective wellbeing. It is the degree to which a person views the-ir whole life positively. Previous studies have focused primarily on social comparison and its interaction with various factors such as mental health. There is also limited exploration of this relationship in the Indian context and among young adults. As a result, this paper attempts to find the relationship between the nature of social comparison and life satisfaction in young adults in the Indian population.

## 3.2 Aim

The paper aims to investigate the influence of social comparison on the life satisfaction of young adults in the Indian population.

## 3.3 Objectives

To study the relationship of social comparison on the life satisfaction among young adults in Indian population.

## 3.4 Hypothesis

There is a significant relationship between social comparison and life satisfaction among young adults in the Indian population.

## 3.5 Research Design

The present study uses a correlational research design to investigate the influence of social comparison on the life satisfaction of young adults in the Indian context. A comprehensive review of existing literature was conducted to identify gaps in current research. For the research, stratified random sampling and convenience sampling was used to gather the data.

## 3.6 Description of Sample

The current study employed stratified random sampling and convenience sampling. The target population comprises young adults aged 18 to 26 years residing in various regions of India. The individuals were asked to fill out the questionnaires in accordance with social comparison and satisfaction with life scale. The total number of samples was 120 (male = 73, female = 47).

## 3.7 Description of Tools

### 3.7.1 Social Comparison Scale

The Social Comparison Scale was developed by Allan and Gilbert (1995) to measure perceived social rank and social standing compared to others. The semantic differential scale consists of 11 bipolar constructs. For example, the scale asks

"In relationship to others, I feel:"

Inferior 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Superior

Participants rate themselves on a ten-point scale by making an overall relative comparison of themselves. The scale includes judgments related to rank, attractiveness, and perceived sense of how they "fit in" with others in society. Higher scores indicate a more positive self-evaluation compared to others while low scores indicate feelings of inferiority and generally low self-esteem. The scale has been found to have good reliability, with Cronbach's alphas of 0.88 and 0.96 in clinical populations and 0.91 and 0.90 in student populations (Allan and Gilbert 1995, 1997). Criterion-related validity was demonstrated by significant associations with relevant outcomes like psychological adjustment and interpersonal relationships. Additionally, discriminant validity has been demonstrated through weaker correlations with unrelated constructs, further affirming the scale's ability to accurately measure social comparison tendencies.

### 3.7.2 Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) is a well-known psychological measure created by Ed Diener (1985) that assesses a person's overall satisfaction with life. The scale is a measure of self-esteem that aims to capture subjective well-being, focusing on global life satisfaction. It measures the judgment or cognitive component of subjective well-being. The test consists of five statements related to general life satisfaction. Respondents are asked to rate how much they agree or disagree with each statement on a 7-

point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 7 (strongly agree).

The completion time is 1 minute. Scores consist of raw scores ranging between 5 and 35. A higher score signifies higher life satisfaction. Scores are classified into six categories along with interpretative text (for example, a 30-35 score is extremely satisfied, while a 5-9 score is extremely dissatisfied). SWLS has high internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.87$) and excellent test-retest reliability ($r = 0.82$) over two months. Concurrent validity was established as a positive correlation was found between SWLS scores and measures of well-being and self-esteem scales, while a negative correlation was found with neuroticism and clinical symptoms checklists (Diener et al., 1985).

## 3.8 Procedure for Data Collection

The collection of data started by collecting demographic details of the individuals followed by 11 items of the Social Comparison Scale and 5 items of the Satisfaction with Life Scale. The purpose of the study was explained, and informed consent was obtained from the individuals who volunteered and fulfilled the inclusion criteria, i.e., age (18–26 years) and of Indian nationality. The participants were assured of the confidentiality of their responses.

## 3.9 Statistical Analysis

For the study, inferential statistics was used. Pearson correlation was used to measure the strength of the relationship between social comparison and life satisfaction of young Indian adults. The scores of social comparison and satisfaction with life scale were correlated using SPSS.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULT

A sample of 120 (males= 74, females=46) were administered Social Comparison Scale and Satisfaction with Life Scale.

The participants who scored high in SCS tend to perceive themselves positively. They perceive themselves better in terms of social rank, attractiveness and how they "fit in a society". Meanwhile, participants who scored high in SWLS tend to have higher life satisfaction. They have an overall satisfaction with their life and feel fulfilled across various domains of their lives.

The Pearson correlational analysis revealed a significant positive correlation between social comparison and satisfaction with life among young adults in Indian population. The findings suggest that as scores of SCS increase, the scores of SWLS increase. It also implies that the perception of social comparison (such as rank, attractiveness, "fitting in") are linked with overall evaluation of life satisfaction.

The mean social comparison score is 71.177, with a standard deviation of 19.229, suggesting high levels of comparison among young adults. They perceive themselves as higher in social rank, attractiveness, and fitting into society. The mean satisfaction with life (SWLS) score is 22.644, indicating moderately high levels of life satisfaction among young adults. However, with a standard deviation of 7.758, there's notable variability in life satisfaction scores within the sample.

The significant correlation coefficient suggest that the relationship is unlikely due to random chance and is indictive of a meaningful association between social comparison and life satisfaction.

**Table 1 Correlation between social comparison and satisfaction with life among young adults in Indian population.**

| Variables | n | M | SD | 1 2 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| SCS | 120 | 71.177 | 19.228 | - |
| SWLS | 120 | 22.644 | 7.758 | 0.560** - |

*Note:* **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 1. shows that the correlation between social comparison and satisfaction with life among young adults was found to be significantly positive.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The study aims to study the influence of social comparison on the life satisfaction of young adults in Indian population.

As previous studies have only highlighted social comparison with factors such as mental health (Sanghvi et. al, 2022), this paper delves to find the association between social comparison and life satisfaction of young adults in Indian context.

This research offers several strengths as compared with pre-existing research. These include a) focus on life satisfaction; b) young adult population and c) in Indian context.

Participants who reported high scores in the social comparison scale (SCS) are interpreted to have positive self-perception as compared to others. While participants who scored high on satisfaction with life scale (SWLS) are interpreted to have positive life satisfaction. This indicates that individuals who perceive themselves positively as compared to others, tend to report higher satisfaction with life.

As hypothesized, the finding revealed a significant relationship between social comparison and life satisfaction in young adults in Indian context. There was strong positive relationship between social comparison and satisfaction with life (r= 0.560, p<0.01). It implies that the perception of social comparison (such as rank, attractiveness, "fitting in") can influence overall evaluation of life satisfaction. In context of young adults in India, the findings hold relevance due to the unique sociocultural environment that influences the life and actions of young generation. Young adulthood constitutes an important developmental phase in the life of an individual, during which many major shifts take place, such as education, career planning, and building of peer relations. In India, the society and cultural norms have heavy influence on the experiences and perceptions of young generation which to some extent is the main reason for social comparison.

Building upon the prior research, this study found a consistent association between positive self-comparison and positive subjective well-being (Diener & Diener, 1996). The social comparison increases life satisfaction, but it depends on the direction and type of comparison being made. Individuals may have engaged in upward or downward social comparison. Upward social comparison is feeling better than others which can be motivating and inspire one to set higher goals to work harder. They could have also indulged in downward social comparison that refers to feeling better off than others. It is a temporary boost to life satisfaction, make one feel grateful but could be a fragile source of happiness.

Another reason could be the dispositional tendency to engage in comparisons. A study with 96 participants was conducted to evaluate social comparison with satisfaction with one's social life. Only individuals with characteristics of comparing themselves reported their social life as better when evaluated with comparison target with bad social life. The findings reported that people who frequently compare

themselves with others, are more likely to evaluate their social life really based on the experiences and situations of others. (Buunk et al.,2007).

The findings of this shed light on the importance of considering both upward and downward social comparisons in understanding their impact on individuals' perceptions of life satisfaction. While upward comparisons may serve as motivators, downward comparisons could offer moments of gratitude but may also be fragile sources of happiness. This highlights the complexity of the relationship between social comparison and subjective well-being, suggesting the need for nuanced interpretations and interventions tailored to individual differences in comparison tendencies.

Furthermore, the dispositional tendency to engage in comparisons adds another layer to the discussion, emphasizing the need for interventions that address not only external social influences but also internal cognitive processes. Recognizing the role of individual differences in comparison tendencies can inform our understanding of how individuals navigate social environments and perceive their own life satisfaction relative to others.

Considering the results, the significant positive bivariate findings in this study reflect the understanding that the appropriate approach to social comparison in young Indians should be based on social comparison. The interventions that aim to bring about satisfying lives should include the socio-culture context as well as the particular problems that young adults in India are facing. It is suggested that life satisfaction can be increased if individual focuses on positive and productive comparisons. Moreover, comparison can be done to identify areas for improvement and set achievable goals.

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

The current study provided valuable insights into the influence of social comparison on life satisfaction among young adults in Indian population. There was a positive correlation between social comparison and life satisfaction in young adults in Indian context. The findings revealed that the participants who viewed themselves in positive light reported high levels of life satisfaction. The findings suggest that young adults in India tend to engage in frequent social comparison, perceiving themselves relatively high in terms of social rank, attractiveness, and societal fitting.

While the findings offer valuable insights, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations in the study design and methodology. Firstly, the sample size of 120 participants may limit the generalizability of the findings to a larger group of young adults in Indian population. Moreover, the use of social comparison scale developed by Alan and Gilbert in a western context may not capture the process of social comparison in Indian culture. Although, the influence of western culture is prevalent in India, it cannot deny the fact that India has its unique cultural norms, values and social dynamics. Potential confounding variables such as socioeconomic status, education background and religious beliefs could lead to inaccurate conclusion. Although this study is subject to some limitations, it reveals significant dimensions that the future research can focus on. The measuring scales should be culturally sensitive and relevant to the changing trends in Indian context. this paper emphasizes the need for interventions and support systems aimed at fostering healthy social comparison behaviours and enhancing life satisfaction among young adults in India. By addressing these factors, policymakers, psychologists, and other stakeholders can work towards promoting overall well-being and mental health in this demographic group.

Overall, this study contributes to the broader field of psychology by deepening our understanding of the complex interplay between social comparison and life satisfaction and its implications for young adults in the Indian context.

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