

Social media and Loneliness

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Introduction:

We are going to discuss the topic Social Media and Loneliness based upon a survey conducted by us. The project is divided into four major parts. First is the dataset, second, the survey description, then the survey results and finally, we did analysis based upon the results we got.

First basic question that comes to our mind is, "what is meant by loneliness and social media addiction?"

As we all feel lonely from time to time. Feelings of loneliness are personal, so everyone's experience of loneliness will be different.

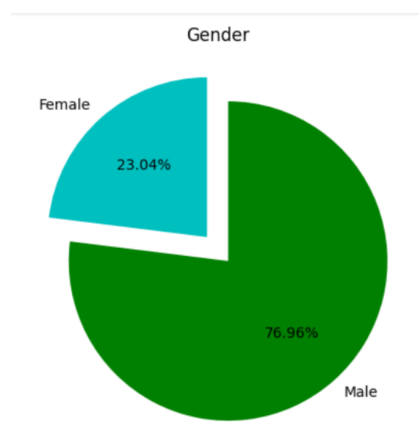
It is not necessary that if we are alone, then it means that we are lonely. It is possible that we have lots of social contact, and we are in a relationship or part of a family, and still feeling lonely. So, in our project, we are just trying to connect this social media addiction thing with loneliness. Basically, we are trying to find the relationship between social media addiction and loneliness, as if they are directly proportional or inversely proportional or is there any other relation between them.

Now, the question arises, "Why is there a need for scientific or psychological study for the relationship between loneliness and social media?"

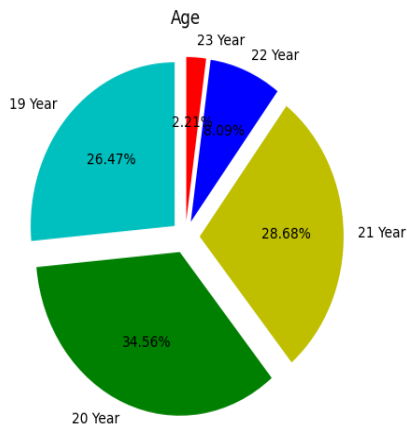
A study for finding the relationship between these two, was necessary because it can give us an idea, that if loneliness is increasing the social media addiction or social media addiction among students, is increasing their levels of loneliness and based on the findings, some steps can be taken on small and large levels to stop the addiction and its consequences. And also, as we know, addiction to anything is bad, and can affect our mental health, so this survey was conducted by us to find the conclusions and to make the students aware of it.

Now, we come to the **dataset**:

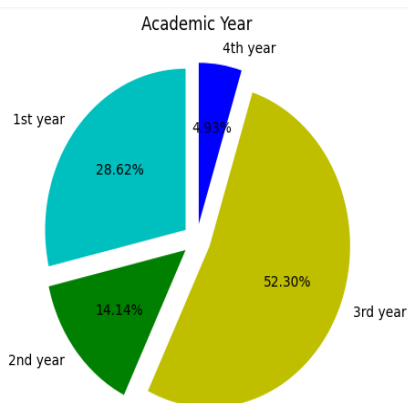
Almost 329 students filled our survey form and our result is based upon that only. Among these students, 76.96% are males and 23.04% are females.



26.47% are 19 year old students, 34.56% are 20 year old students, 28.68% are 21 year old students, 8.09% are 22 year old students and 2.21% are 23 year old students.



28.62% are 1st year students, 14.14% are 2nd year students, 52.30% are 3rd year students and 4.93% belong to 4th year.



Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses:

Theoretical Framework:

People need to get connected to others or feel a sense of belongingness. So when people lack connection with others, a sense of loneliness is developed and they think social media can provide emotional support to them. Social Media connection may not always compete with in-physical connection.

People belonging to different demographics such as age, gender, Academic Year, etc... may have different degrees of loneliness and social media usage. Some other factors such as daily social media usage time and point of initiation of social media have influence on the level of loneliness in one's lives. Introvertedness of a person also has an impact on social media usage and thus it may have a direct influence on loneliness.

People who prefer talking to online friends rather than offline friends, or what people prefer to do in free time like using social media, sleep and other activities may affect their social media usage time and thus impact on their loneliness.

For some people social media is a capital which helps them to increase emotional and social support, information and opportunities. Excessive usage of social media may lead to reduction of face-to-face communication, which is a negative social support and it has an impact on loneliness. People spending more time on social media to build relationships vs who spend more time to build their information and opportunities may likely have different influences on their loneliness.

People likely to compare themselves with others on social media may or may not have an influence on loneliness. Looking at other social media posts and stories, people start comparing others' personal lives or successes. So when a person starts feeling that they are not compatible with others, a feeling of loneliness is generated.

Covid-19 has a huge impact on social isolation, which enhances usage of social media and thus it may have an impact on loneliness.

Hypothesis:

1. People who are highly addicted to social media are highly lonely.
2. Highly lonely people are more addicted to social media.
3. Introverts are more lonely as compared to extroverts and also they are highly addicted to social media.
4. Students belonging to first and second years are likely to be highly lonely and addicted to social media as compared to third and fourth year.
5. Students who spend more time on social media are more lonely.
6. Students who prefer offline friends and who like to do outdoor activities are less addicted to social media and less lonely.
7. Introverts are more addicted to social media but they are less lonely.
8. Covid-19 has increased social media usage and increased loneliness.

Methodology:

A survey questionnaire was created and handed out to the participants with the purpose of collecting their responses. The survey form was divided into two sections. The first section consisted of questions that were specifically designed by our group and focused on the topic of interest. The second section included two standardised tests, one related to measuring loneliness and the other assessing social media addiction. In our analysis, we attempted to establish correlations between the questions in section A and the results obtained from the administered tests.

Sections 1:

We put some self designed questions to get an estimate of the level of addiction that students had. Questions such as Average time spent on social media, what they prefer doing in their free time, when they joined social media, Are they introvert or extrovert and few more.

Section 2:

This section consisted of two standard tests namely the Social Media Addiction Test and the Loneliness test. These tests gave us a Social Media Addiction scale(SMAS) and a Loneliness factor(LF) respectively.

Social Media Addiction Test(SMAT):

This test was originally called Bergen Social media Addiction test. In this test, 6 questions are asked, each having a score from 1 to 5. Here, score 1 denotes Very rarely, score 2 denotes rarely, score 3 denotes sometimes, score 4 denotes often and score 5 denotes very often.

SMAS calculation:

Total SMAS of the test = $6 \times 5 = 30$

If 4 out of 6 questions have 4 or more than 4 score, then the student is addicted to social media.

We also differentiated people as extremely addicted($20 < \text{SMAS}$), moderately addicted($14 < \text{SMAS} < 20$), not addicted($\text{SMAS} < 14$) on the basis of their SMAS.

Loneliness Test(LT):

This test is originally called the Loneliness measurement scale. In this test, 20 questions are asked, each having a score from 1 to 4. Here, score 1 denotes Very rarely, score 2 denotes rarely, score 3 denotes sometimes and score 4 denotes often.

LF calculation:

Total score of the test = $20 \times 4 = 80$

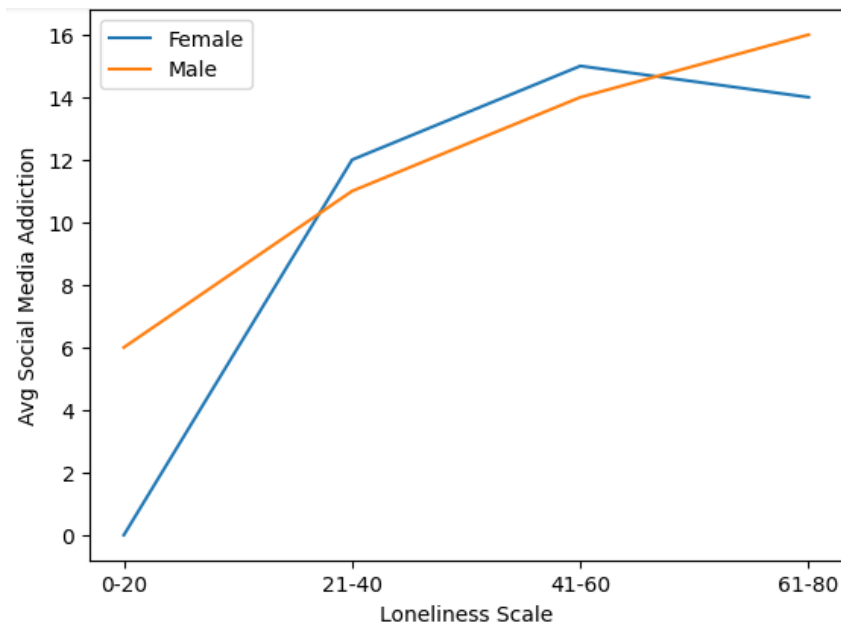
If score lies between 61 to 80 : highly lonely

If score lies between 45 to 60 : mildly lonely

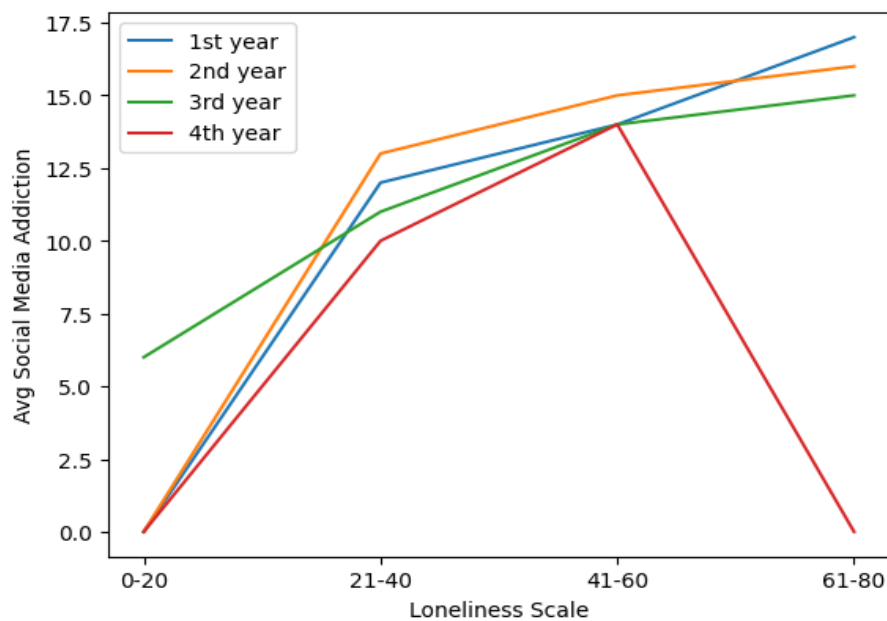
If score < 45 : not lonely

Analysis and Results:

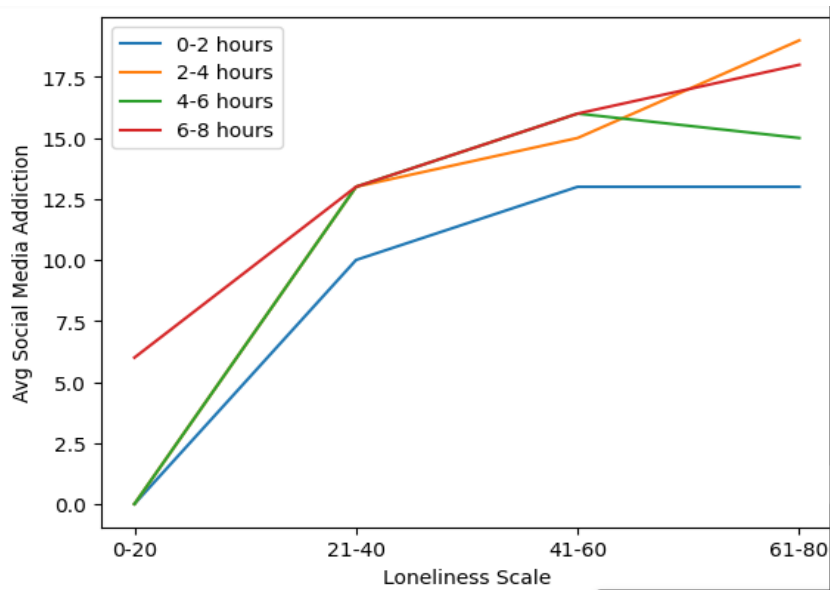
1. For both Males and Females, more lonely people are more addicted as compared to less lonely.



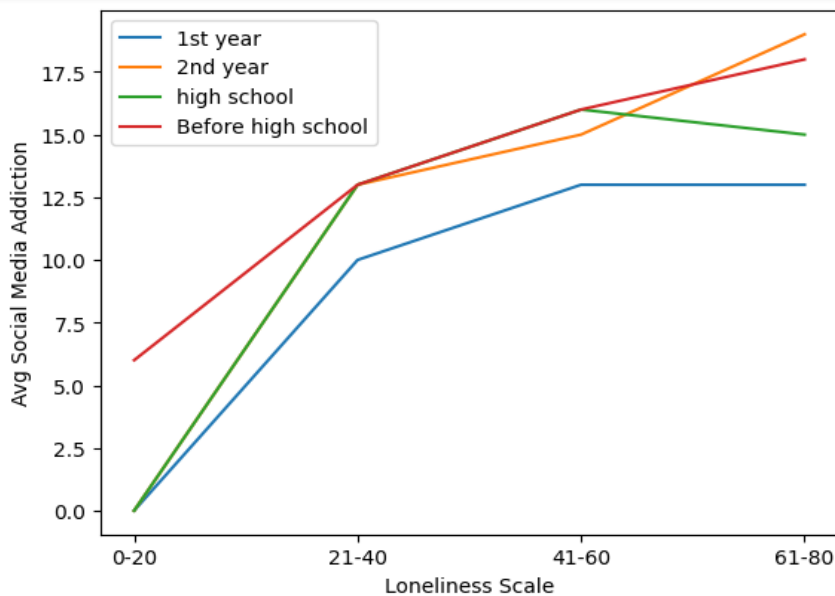
2. For all academic years, more lonely people are more addicted as compared to less lonely.



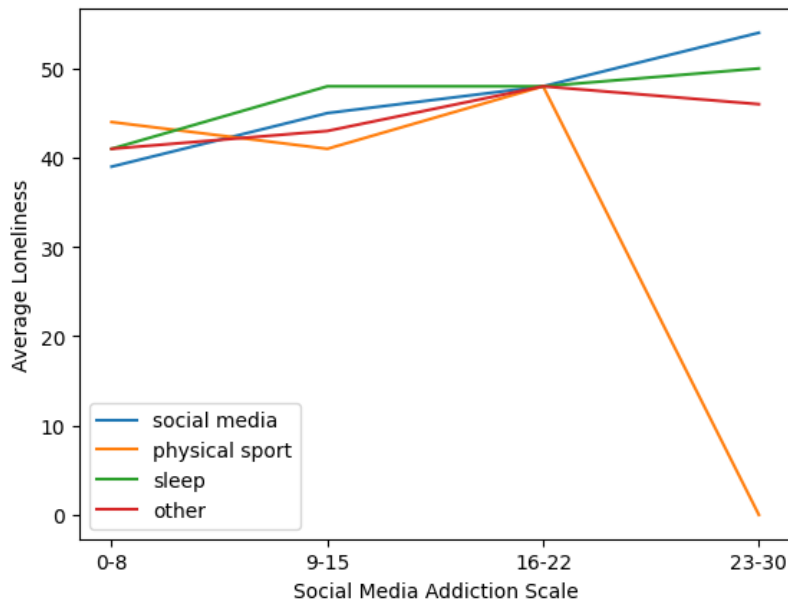
3. People spending more time on social media are found to be more addicted to social media as well as they are more lonely.



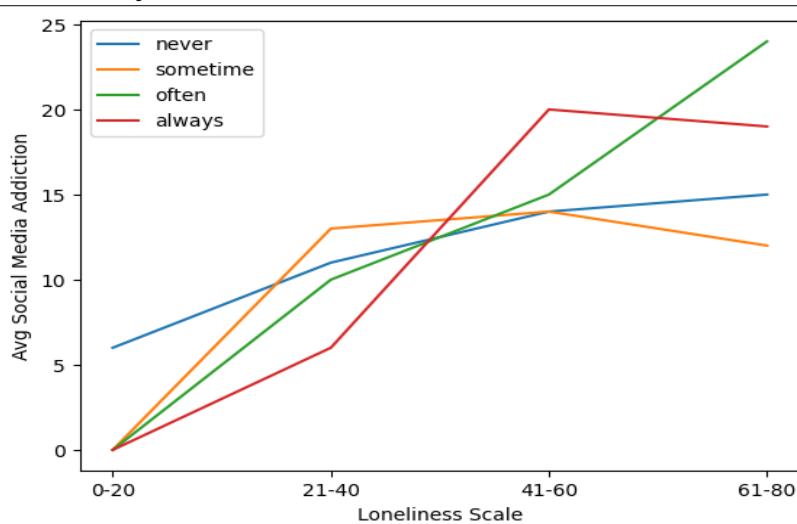
4. Students who joined social media at an early stage, in high school or before high school are found to be more addicted to social media and also they are highly lonely as compared to students who joined social media late i.e, in 1st year or 2nd year.



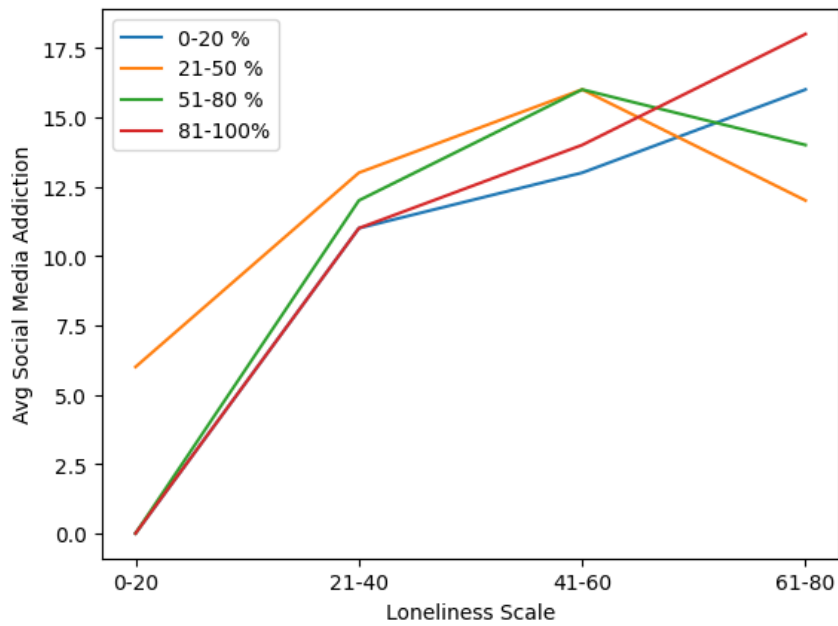
5. Students who prefer to use social media in their free time are found to be more addicted to social media as well as their loneliness level is also moderate.



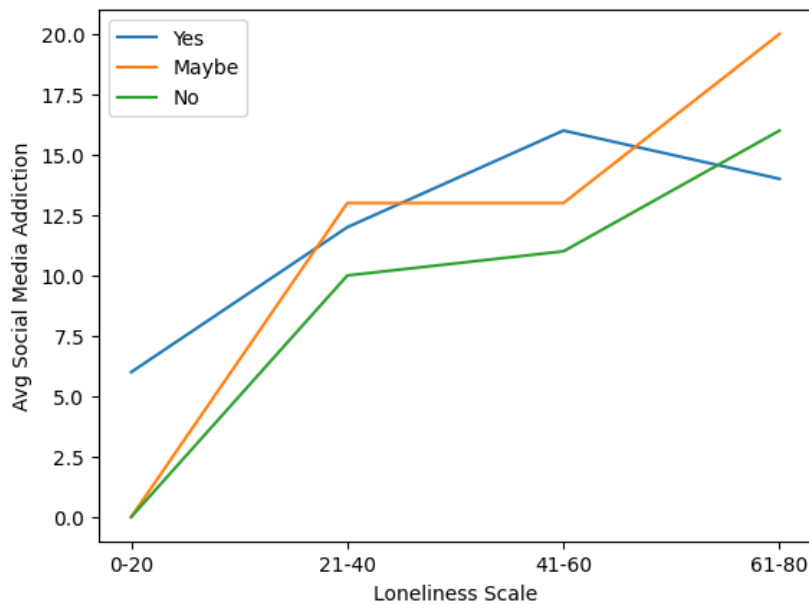
6. Students who prefer conversing with friends rather than using social media are found to be less addicted to social media as well as they are less lonely.



7. Those who know their social media friends personally rarely are found to be less addicted to social media but more lonely.

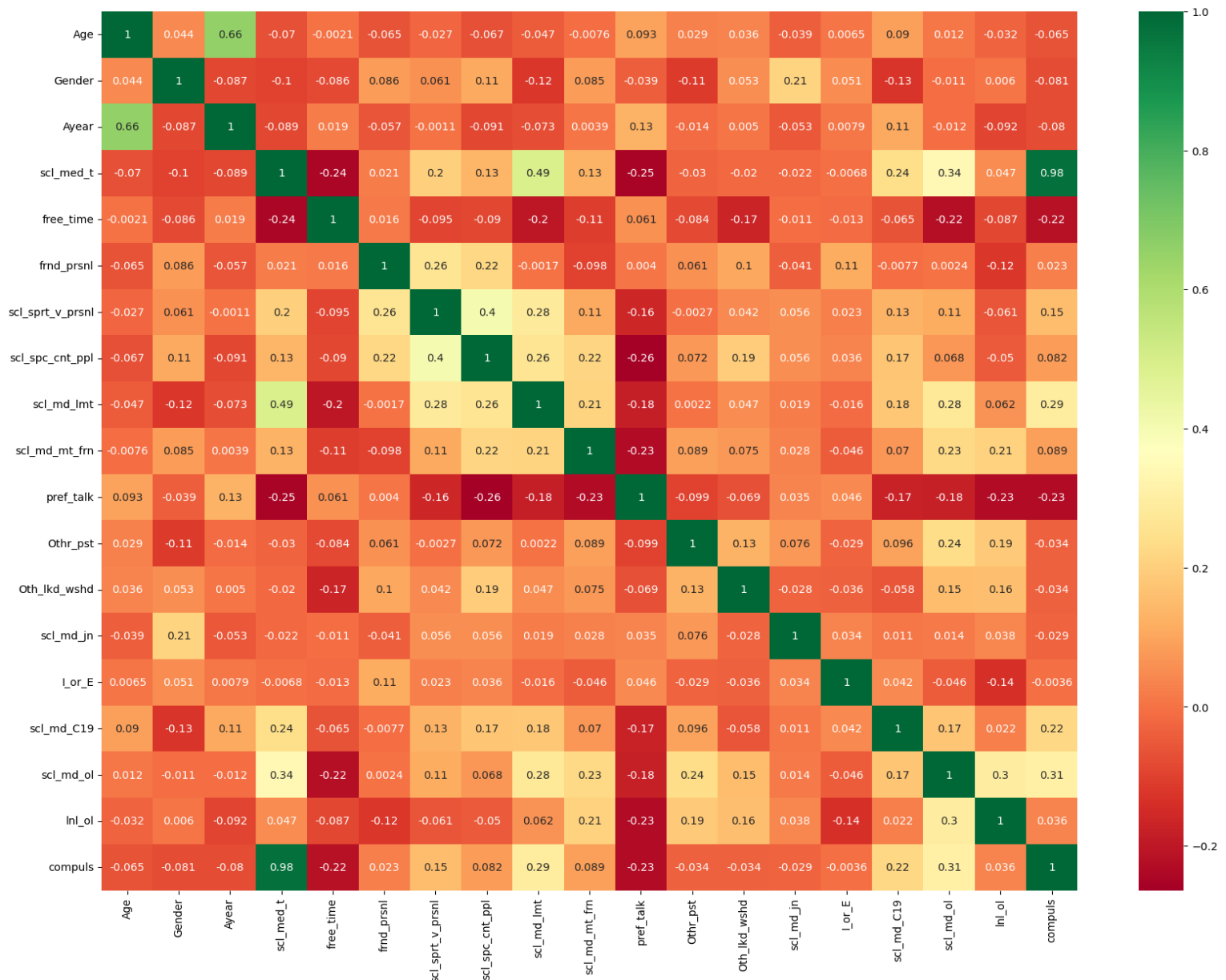


8. Those who think that their social media usage boosted during covid-19 are found to be more addicted to social media as well as they are more lonely.



Findings and conclusion:

The relationship between different factors and feelings of loneliness in relation to social media:



From our analysis it is shown that as social media usage increases, loneliness levels also boost up. For different demographics, loneliness is higher among female students as compared to male students. Students from 1st year and 2nd years are highly lonely as compared to 3rd and 4th years. Students aged 19 years and 20 years are highly lonely as compared to 21 and 22 years old.

Students whose social media usage span is more than 6 hours are highly lonely as compared to students who use social media for less time. Also, students who started using social media at an early stage are found to be more addicted to

social media, and their loneliness level is also high.

For introverts, social media addiction is high but their loneliness level is low, which clearly depicts that for introverts social media is a way for coping with their loneliness.

Students who prefer talking to offline friends and playing physical sport during their free time are less lonely. Covid-19 has increased social media usage and thus resulted in increased levels of loneliness.

The dependency between social media and loneliness is complex. For some, social media helps to increase social connections and provide a means to interact with others. But at the same time increased usage of social media increases loneliness.

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