



REPERCUSSIONS OF SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION ON RELATIONSHIP CLOSENESS AND RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION AMONGST CHINESE UNDERGRADUATES

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Abstract:

In the current socio-digital epoch, the intricate interplay between social media addiction and its potential ramifications on romantic relationships remains largely enigmatic, especially within specific demographic subsets. This study aims to elucidate the repercussions of social media addiction on love relationship closeness and satisfaction among Chinese undergraduates. A cohort of 583 Chinese undergraduates was meticulously analyzed, encompassing an almost equal gender distribution and spanning across diverse academic ranks and relationship durations. Utilizing the "Social Media Addiction Scale - Adult Form (SMAS-AF)" and validated scales for assessing relationship intimacy and satisfaction, the research painted a multifaceted picture. Findings revealed a high inclination towards social media addiction ($X=4.20$), with specific aspects of engagement demonstrating profound agreement among participants. An analytic exploration of the addiction demonstrated a pronounced influence on cognitive faculties and emotional regulation while revealing less consistent challenges in curtailing usage. In the romantic realm, while relationship closeness yielded a moderate mean score of 3.38, love relationship satisfaction signaled a moderate-to-high satisfaction degree ($X=3.83$). Interestingly, while gender and academic progression remained non-determinants for addiction levels, relationship length emerged as a significant variable. Correlational analyses showcased a stark negative association between social media addiction and relationship closeness ($r= -.491$) but, surprisingly, a positive correlation with relationship satisfaction ($r= .129$). Such dichotomous outcomes advocate for deeper investigation, perhaps suggesting a paradigm wherein intensified digital engagement might enhance superficial relationship contentment at the potential cost of depth and closeness.

Keywords: social media addiction, relationship closeness, relationship satisfaction, media education, relationship wellbeing

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1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background and Problem Statement

The unerring march of science and technology has undeniably reshaped the contours of human existence, embedding itself in the most fundamental aspects of our daily interactions and experiences (Rustam et al, 2023; Hamid & Afshana, 2022; Nurbayani et al, 2017). Among the most salient manifestations of this technological revolution is the proliferation of social media, facilitated through the ubiquity of smart devices such as tablets and smartphones (Rustam et al, 2023; Nurbayani et al, 2017). Such omnipresence is particularly notable among younger demographics, including nowadays academic generations who have seamlessly integrated these technologies into their daily routines (Shaaban-Nejad, 2022; Singh, 2019). Although social media embodies a dualistic nature, providing both beneficial opportunities for connectivity and potentially detrimental consequences, it is increasingly apparent that the balance may be tilting toward the latter (Shaaban-Nejad, 2022; Hamid & Afshana, 2022). This concern primarily stems from excessive exposure to these devices, resulting in an alarming trend towards social media addiction (Fatah & Anindita, 2022; Bunz, 2021). The repercussions of such addiction are far-reaching and multifaceted, pervading diverse sectors of human life from professional to personal domains. Additionally, this burgeoning addiction seeds a maelstrom of psychological turmoil and instabilities, posing an ominously detrimental threat to individual mental health as well as well-being (Fatah & Anindita, 2022; Duradoni et al, 2020). Furthermore, it engenders detrimental impacts on love relationships, contributing to the dissolution of love relationship closeness and satisfaction, thus tarnishing the joy and contentment of life (Hu & Kong, 2023; Roh, 2021; Steers et al, 2016; Veit et al, 2016).

Indeed, the ascent of digital technologies, particularly social media, has precipitated profound changes in how people, particularly younger demographics, interact, learn, and form relationships (Huys, 2023; Pradhan & Singh, 2023; Punyanunt-Carter & Wrench, 2017). Notwithstanding the manifold advantages it proffers, social media has also ushered in unprecedented complexities and challenges. One of the most pressing issues that has emerged on a global scale is social media addiction, a behavioral phenomenon with potentially deleterious ramifications on individuals' psychological wellbeing and love relationships (Huys, 2023; Pradhan & Singh, 2023; Punyanunt-Carter; Kopecka-Piech & Sobiech, 2022; Ogolsky et al, 2019). In consonance with a growing corpus of research, this addiction is typified by excessive and compulsive use of social media platforms, which often results in significant impairment or distress (Nations, media, and platforms, 2023; Yigitcanlar & Kankanamge, 2022; Bossetta, 2022). Transitioning to an Asian context, social media addiction is an issue of heightened concern (Xuan, 2022; Tutgun-Ünal, 2020; Huang, 2013). The rapid technological advancements and the intrinsic cultural emphasis on social interconnectedness have engendered an environment conducive to the surge of social media addiction. For instance, in South Korea, the issue is so pervasive that the government has instituted stringent regulations and comprehensive programs to counteract the problem (Tutgun-

Ünal, 2020). China, as the world's most populous country and one of the biggest technology hubs, is not exempt from this burgeoning crisis. This issue is especially salient among the millennial and generation Z populations, with undergraduates being particularly susceptible due to their high engagement with digital technologies (Xuan, 2022; Rowell, 2019; Che & Ip, 2017; Wang, 2016).

Under this circumstance, the escalating prevalence of social media addiction among the younger generations in China, characterized by a gradual erosion of love relationship closeness, harmony, and satisfaction, constitutes a complex and exigent problem that demands rigorous investigation. The dualistic nature of social media—simultaneously a tool for connection and a catalyst for disconnection—makes it a perplexing issue requiring nuanced understanding (Weinstein & Siste, 2022; Hartley & Kassam, 2016). It is this very contradiction that may foster a deterioration in the quality of life and undermine the happiness and satisfaction derived from relationships (Aboujaoude et al, 2022; Nehring & Kerrigan, 2019). The implications extend far beyond the individuals afflicted, potentially undermining the social fabric of the academic community and society at large. Notably, the impact of social media addiction on love relationship satisfaction and closeness amongst Chinese undergraduates remains under-researched, leaving a lacuna in our understanding of this crucial area. Consequently, this study seeks to address this gap, employing a self-report investigation approach to discern the repercussions of social media addiction on relationship satisfaction and closeness in this demographic, thus contributing to a more nuanced and comprehensive comprehension of this pervasive issue over the love relationship dynamics among Chinese youth is not merely an academic endeavor but an urgent societal imperative. This research may contribute significantly to scholarly discourse and potentially catalyze preventative strategies, offering an antidote to the lurking perils of our digitally dominated epoch.

1.2. Research Question

This scholarly endeavor undertakes a comprehensive exploration of the manifestations of social media addiction, with a particular emphasis on the milieu of undergraduate students in China. The objective of this research is to delve into the ubiquitous nature of this behavioral, uncovering not only the demographic determinants that shape its interaction with love relationship satisfaction and intimacy but also evaluating the statistical relationship and the magnitude of its impact. Consequently, the ensuing conclusions would shed light on the frequently underestimated consequences of digital immersion on interpersonal bonds, thus cultivating a deeper comprehension of the prevailing communicative milieu. The current quantitative investigation was steered by the subsequent research inquiries enumerated below:

- 1) Among Chinese undergraduate students, how are the general intensities and frequencies of social media addiction, love relationship closeness and satisfaction?

- 2) In the context of Chinese undergraduates, are there any statistically significant differences among the background variables—namely gender, academic level and love relationship length and social media addiction?
- 3) How does the intensity and frequency of social media addiction among Chinese undergraduates statistically correlate with the degree of love relationship closeness and satisfaction

1.3. Research Value and Gap

This research carries intrinsic value through its theoretical and practical contributions to the discourse on the pervasive issue of social media addiction, particularly among Chinese undergraduates. Theoretically, the study deepens the scholastic discourse by dissecting the ambivalent role of social media; it serves as a nexus for interaction while simultaneously posing the risk of disconnection. It underscores the intricate link between social media addiction and its consequent influence on love relationship satisfaction and intimacy, thereby expanding our understanding of this contemporary predicament within the field of communication arts, media education, and psychology. Furthermore, the study amplifies the empirical landscape, exploring the oft-overlooked cultural and demographic variables that may affect the manifestation and impact of such addiction. This exploration fosters a more nuanced understanding of these variables and fortifies existing theoretical frameworks, highlighting the need for culturally-informed analyses in similar inquiries (Gennaro & Miller, 2021; Mahendran, 2019). From a practical standpoint, this study emerges as a crucial societal instrument, offering a refined view of the subtle yet profound impact this addiction etches on the social dynamics of China's youth. The findings of this study might well form the cornerstone for evidence-based preventative measures and interventions, mitigating the risks to personal wellbeing and relationship dynamics imposed by this burgeoning issue. In summation, this research could potentially provide a safeguard against the emergent challenges of our digital era, preserving the integrity of love relationships connections in the face of relentless technological evolution. By understanding and addressing the harmful implications of social media addiction, we can promote healthier love relationships dynamics among Chinese youth, thereby contributing to societal wellbeing at large.

In spite of the burgeoning corpus of literature on social media addiction and its psychological repercussions, a conspicuous gap remains in the context of China, particularly in relation to the specific population of undergraduate students (Liu, 2023, Li, 2023; Wan, 2020; Yang, 2018; Yang & Seo, 2017). This study seeks to bridge this lacuna by investigating the intricate nexus between social media addiction and love relationship closeness and satisfaction among Chinese undergraduates—a demographic that is increasingly intertwined with digital life, yet conspicuously underrepresented in existing empirical inquiries. Existing studies have predominantly revolved around Western contexts, or have approached addiction in isolation, without integrating crucial variables such as love relationships, or demographic determinants such as gender, academic level and love relationship length (Xuan, 2022; Wan, 2020; Rowell, 2019; Yang, 2018; Che & Ip,

2017). Furthermore, the dualistic potential of social media—as both facilitator of connectivity and instigator of psychological and relational discord—has not been rigorously examined within the unique socio-cultural fabric of China. Additionally, extant research lacks comprehensive methodological approaches; this study's employment of a self-report investigation paradigm represents a pivotal advancement, enabling a more nuanced and holistic interpretation of the phenomena in question. As China continues to ascend as a global technological epicenter, with its youth at the forefront of this digital revolution, understanding the social and psychological underpinnings of their media engagement is not merely an academic endeavor, but an urgent societal imperative (Ma et al, 2019; Kuang, 2018). Thus, this research is poised to contribute significantly to scholarly discourse, potentially informing culturally-sensitive interventions that address the unique contours of social media addiction within the Chinese context, thereby offering a targeted antidote to the lurking perils of our digitally dominated epoch.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Definition of Variables at Present Study

In the scholarly tapestry of this quantitative research, specific variables have been earmarked, reflecting their centrality in understanding the nexus between social media addiction and its concomitant impact on relationship closeness and satisfaction among Chinese undergraduates. Their operational definitions, harmonized within the contours of this study, are presented below:

Within the ambit of this research, Social Media Addiction (SMA) is conceptualized as a behavioral condition marked by an individual's excessive and compulsive use of social media platforms, culminating in significant impairment or distress (Batra & Sharma, 2023; Sun, 2022, Mieczkowski et al, 2020; Kahle & Valette-Florence, 2012). This usage is typified by an irresistible urge to engage in online interactions, coupled with an inability to regulate time spent on these platforms (Barclay & Nid, 2021; Zavattaro & Bryer, 2016). It is essential to note that while this definition is anchored in generalized addiction criteria, it has been tailored to the specificities of social media behavior, emphasizing not only the quantity of usage but also the qualitative impact on individuals' daily functioning (Batra & Sharma, 2023; Zavattaro & Bryer, 2016). Relationship Closeness (RC) could be regarded as a multi-dimensional construct, and RC in the present study is delineated as the extent to which individuals perceive emotional proximity, interconnectedness, and mutual reliance in their relationships (Goodfriend, 2020; Fletcher et al, 2019; Erber & Erber, 2016; Gorman & Jordan, 2015). It encompasses not merely physical intimacy but also the psychological depth and breadth of the bond shared with a significant other (Goodfriend, 2020; Slotter & Luchies, 2013). It's operationalized by the frequency of intimate interactions, shared experiences, mutual understanding, and the sense of emotional security within the relationship (Kulthoom, 2023; Bennis et al, 2021; Abela et al, 2020). Lastly, Relationship Satisfaction (RS), this

variable is comprehended as the subjective evaluation of the gratification and contentment derived from one's romantic relationship. Relationship satisfaction is determined by the alignment of one's expectations with the actual dynamics of the relationship, encompassing emotional, intellectual, and physical facets (Wiecha, 2023; Vowels, 2023; Pritamani, 2021). Within the parameters of this study, it particularly signifies the extent to which individuals feel their relationships meet the expectations shaped, in part, by social media's idealized portrayals (Chang & Lee, 2022; Geraee et al, 2019).

Furthermore, in the expansive academic discourse surrounding the multifaceted phenomenon of social media addiction, the discerning scholar invariably recognizes the necessity to elucidate the intricate interconnections between various demographic variables and their potential influence on this emergent malaise. As the researcher embarks on a meticulous survey-based investigation into the potential repercussions of social media addiction on love relationship closeness and satisfaction amongst Chinese undergraduates, it becomes imperative to underscore the pivotal role played by demographic determinants, specifically gender, academic levels, and the duration of love relationships (Hoffmeyer-Zlotnik & Warner, 2013). The rationale for such an analytical focus stems from the inherent disparities that manifest in the ways diverse demographic groups perceive, utilize, and are influenced by digital platforms. For instance, the experiential realities of a first-year undergraduate female with a nascent romantic involvement might diverge significantly from that of a fourth-year male undergraduate engaged in a long-term relationship. Such variances necessitate a thorough exploration to unveil any statistically significant differences among these background variables and their relationship with social media addiction. By establishing, or refuting, such correlations, researchers not only enrich the existing knowledge base but also provide educators, psychologists, and policy-makers with nuanced insights that can inform targeted interventions and pedagogical strategies aimed at promoting healthier digital interactions within this demographic. The pertinence of understanding these interconnections cannot be overstated in the context of a rapidly evolving digital milieu and its profound implications on interpersonal relationships.

2.2 Theories of Social Media Addiction, Relationship Closeness and Satisfaction

To truly grasp the multifaceted dynamics of social media addiction and its implications on relationship closeness and satisfaction, one must rely on a tapestry of theoretical frameworks that allow for a comprehensive exploration of these phenomena. The Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) serves as a foundational pillar in understanding the motivations underlying social media use (Floyd et al, 2022; Moore, 2022; Camilleri & Falzon, 2020). In the sphere of the contemporary Chinese undergraduate demographic, this theory offers an elucidative lens through which we can discern the specific gratifications being sought. Consequently, when these platforms morph into primary sources of gratification, the trajectory towards addiction becomes increasingly plausible. In tandem with UGT, the Cognitive-Behavioral Model of Pathological Internet Use

accentuates the interplay between the inherent features of social media platforms and the individual's psychosocial landscape (Zeng et al, 2023; Ede et al, 2023; Malak, 2018). For instance, specific stressors unique to Chinese undergraduates, such as academic pressures and potential social intricacies arising from the one-child policy, may intensify their reliance on social media as coping mechanisms (Zhang, 2021; Alpermann & Yang, 2020). Such an intersection of sociocultural and psychological variables, when viewed through the prisms of these theories, provides a nuanced understanding of the etiology of social media addiction.

Venturing into the domain of relationship dynamics, theories such as Attachment Theory and Social Penetration Theory offer illuminating perspectives on how digital engagement may modulate or mirror inherent relational patterns (Howe, 1995). The pertinent question being: can excessive online engagement, characteristic of addiction, influence the foundational attachment styles ingrained in individuals from early caregiver relationships? Such theoretical contemplation becomes vital in the context of young adults like Chinese undergraduates, who are negotiating the delicate balance between autonomy and connection. Moreover, the Social Penetration Theory invites reflection on how the digital inundation, typical of our epoch, might recalibrate traditional trajectories of relationship deepening (Lee & Lin, 2017; Carpenter & Greene, 2015). Such recalibration, influenced by social media addiction, necessitates a profound inquiry into its consequential effects on relationship closeness. Ergo, the integration of these theories enables a layered and cohesive approach to understanding the myriad repercussions of social media addiction on relationship dynamics.

In tandem, the Social Comparison Theory (SCT) sheds light on the oscillations of relationship satisfaction and closeness resultant from the ceaseless comparisons induced by idealized digital portrayals (Wheeler & Suls, 2019; Helm et al, 2019). The proclivity of young adults to engage in these comparisons, particularly in an environment replete with curated narratives, can undeniably shape their perceptions of relationship adequacy. To this, the Expectation-Confirmation Theory (ECT) further contributes by highlighting the chasm that might emerge between digitally mediated relationship expectations and the lived relational experiences (Ahmed et al, 2023; Zhigane et al, 2020). Such discrepancies, when not reconciled, can precipitate varying degrees of relationship satisfaction or dissatisfaction. In the specific context of Chinese undergraduates, the amalgamation of SCT and ECT provides a comprehensive framework. This amalgamation explicates the profound influences of social media-induced expectations and their subsequent validation or negation, all of which indubitably shape the contours of relationship satisfaction. In totality, these theoretical paradigms, when collectively harnessed, promise a holistic exploration of the complex interplay between social media addiction and relationship dynamics among Chinese undergraduates.

2.3 Empirical Studies of the Relationships among Three Variables at Present Study

The advent of social media has revolutionized interpersonal communication, engendering both connectivity and complexities, especially within the intimate confines

of romantic relationships. In examining the intricate tapestry of romantic bonds and social media, one observes a duality: while platforms can act as bridges, fostering closeness amongst long-distance couples and creating avenues for fresh connections, they may simultaneously introduce chasms into existing relationships, diminishing the quality and quantity of face-to-face interactions (Avunduk, 2021; Slosarikova, 2020). This paradox of connectivity and disruption is illuminated by recent research, which suggests that increased immersion in social media corresponds with declining satisfaction in romantic affiliations (Kirezli & Aydin, 2022; Akbari et al, 2022). Specifically, problems arise when social media catalyzes jealousy, suspicion, and even deception, resulting in palpable relational discord and dissatisfaction amongst couples (Scott et al, 2022; Aslan & Tolan, 2022). Furthermore, the omnipresence of online alternatives creates a new frontier of temptation, diverting emotional investments away from primary relationships, leading to potential physical and emotional infidelity amongst individuals ranging from 18 to 73 years (Shin et al, 2023; Logan, 2019). This proliferation of alternative virtual interactions underscores the detrimental effects of unchecked social media consumption. Notably, while such platforms can celebrate relationship milestones and provide a window into a partner's daily life, over-reliance or addiction can precipitate missed opportunities for genuine connection. Ramazanoğlu's (2020) research articulates this concern through the concept of missed bids wherein distracted individuals, engrossed in digital realms, unintentionally neglect their partner's attempts at connection. Consequently, the pervasiveness of social media requires couples to negotiate boundaries, ensuring that virtual worlds complement rather than compete with the tangible realities of their romantic relationships (Li, 2023; Kirezli & Aydin, 2022).

The intricate mosaic of scholarly discourse on the effects of social media on interpersonal relationships, notably amongst the cohort of Chinese undergraduates, reveals a spectrum of outcomes, mediated by a panoply of factors. Notably, Twenge and Campbell (2019) contended, in their groundbreaking analysis, that the ascendancy of social media engagement might be inversely related to face-to-face interpersonal intimacy, postulating a potential diminution in relationship closeness. This premise finds resonance in Chen et al (2020) systematic exploration, which delineated that, among Chinese undergraduates, heightened social media usage—transcending the norms of regular engagement and bordering on addiction—was concomitant with a palpable attenuation in the depth and quality of romantic affiliations. This perceived erosion, as they argued, emanated from myriad sources: the ephemeral nature of online interactions, the propensity to curate idealized personas leading to disillusionment, and the heightened susceptibility to external influences, diluting authentic, personal experiences. Delving into the psycho-emotional domain, studies such as those conducted by Jarrar et al (2022) foregrounded the disconcerting association between social media addiction and decreased love relationship satisfaction. The current analysis, leveraging both quantitative metrics and rich qualitative insights, ascertained that an over-reliance on virtual platforms precipitated not merely cognitive dissonance but also instigated insecurities rooted in comparison, and diminished emotional investment in real-world

relationships. It is imperative, however, to juxtapose these findings against contrarian perspectives. For instance, Chen et al. (2018) posited that when used judiciously, social media could serve as a potent tool to bridge relational chasms, particularly in long-distance relationships prevalent among students. This dialectical tension in the scholarly corpus underscores the exigency for a more nuanced understanding, taking into account both the quantity and quality of social media engagement, the individual's intrinsic personality and relationship dynamics, and socio-cultural milieus peculiar to the Chinese undergraduate demographic.

3. Research Method

3.1 Participants

In the quest to illuminate the potential ramifications of social media addiction on relational intimacy and contentment within romantic affiliations, a meticulous delineation of the research cohort is imperative. The inquiry enlisted a substantial assembly of Chinese undergraduate scholars, totaling 583 (N=583). A nuanced examination of the gender dispersion elucidates a nearly equitable distribution: females constituted 55.1% (N=321), whilst their male counterparts encompassed 44.9% (N=262). Analyzing the academic echelons of the participants, freshmen represented 28.1% (N=164), sophomores 26.2% (N=153), juniors 22.2% (N=129), and seniors 23.5% (N=137). Such a stratified distribution across academic levels fosters a robust analytical environment, allowing for multifaceted interrogations and conclusions. Furthermore, delving into the temporal dimension of their romantic engagements, the data reveals: relationships with a duration of less than a year accounted for 19.7% (N=115); those ranging between 1-2 years comprised 21.6% (N=126); relationships spanning 2-3 years represented a notable 29.0% (N=169); and those surpassing the three-year threshold constituted the most substantial bracket at 29.7% (N=173). This temporal gradation provides a panoramic vista into varying degrees of relational maturity, thereby enhancing the rigor and depth of the ensuing analyses in the context of social media's influence on love relationship dynamics amongst this demographic. Table 1 below yields a breakthrough of participant demographic data.

Table 1: Summary of Research Participants' Demographic Data

Categorical Variable	Number (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	262	44.9
Female	321	55.1
Academic Levels		
Freshman	164	28.1
Sophomore	153	26.2
Junior	129	22.2
Senior	137	23.5
Love Relationship (Engagement) Length		
Less than 1 year	115	19.7

1-2 years	126	21.6
2-3 years	169	29.0
More than 3 years	173	29.7

3.2 Research Instruments

In a pivotal investigation into the ramifications of social media addiction vis-à-vis amorous relationship closeness and satisfaction amongst Chinese undergraduates, a meticulous selection of research instruments was deemed quintessential. The "Social Media Addiction Scale - Adult Form (SMAS-AF)," authored by Şahin (2018), serves as a linchpin in delineating the multifarious dimensions of social media addiction. The robust internal consistency of this instrument, signified by a Cronbach's alpha of .967, bears testament to its reliability. The bifurcation of this instrument into two salient factors - virtual tolerance and virtual communication, with coefficients of .92 and .91 respectively, demonstrates an empirical precision in capturing the varied nuances of social media addiction. This dual-factor model, having undergone rigorous confirmatory factor analysis, emerged as both valid and reliable in discerning the intricacies of social media addiction among adults. The researcher-adapted version of scale's vastness, spanning a staggering 41 items, is segregated into discernible categories (a.k.a. dimensions), each probing into different facets of social media impact such as cognitive effect, mood modification, relapse, and potential conflict caused in a relationship by social media. Segueing into the domain of relationship closeness, the study employs the "Unidimensional Relationships Closeness Scale (URCS)" curated by Vilar et al. (2017). Its unidimensionality is corroborated by its high reliability across various relationship matrices, reflected in a mean alpha of .96. Supplementing this is the "Burns Relationship Satisfaction Scale (BRSS)" as delineated by Burns (1993). The BRSS, a succinct yet potent instrument with seven items, gauges relationship satisfaction in its multifarious avatars - from intimacy and closeness to conflict resolution. Its high internal consistency, encapsulated in a coefficient alpha of .94, is further accentuated by its strong correlations with other established measures of relationship satisfaction. The strategic modification in instructions for the present study reaffirms the researcher's commitment to contextual accuracy. The reliabilities of the previously mentioned scales are summed up in the following Table 2.

Table 2: Reliability Cronbach Alpha Coefficient of Three Scales

Name of Scale	Author(s)	Cronbach Alpha
Social Media Addiction Scale - Adult Form (SMAS-AF)	Şahin (2018)	.967
Unidimensional Relationships Closeness Scale (URCS)	Vilar et al. (2017)	.960
Burns Relationship Satisfaction Scale (BRSS)	Burns (1993)	.940

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

In the ever-evolving milieu of the digital age, academic inquiries concerning the profound implications of social media addiction on interpersonal relationships become paramount. The research at hand employs a quantitative questionnaire survey approach

to discern the ramifications of such an addiction on love relationship closeness and satisfaction amongst Chinese undergraduates—a demographic that exhibits an intricate juxtaposition of traditional values and rapid technological immersion. The data collection phase, spanning February to April 2023, meticulously curated a questionnaire encompassing three meticulously crafted scales—the Social Media Addiction Scale - Adult Form (SMAS-AF), the Unidimensional Relationships Closeness Scale (URCS), and the Burns Relationship Satisfaction Scale (BRSS). Alongside these scales, demographic specifics were ascertained. A stratagem of disseminating the online questionnaire link to a dedicated and anonymous social media education group was employed. This group was predominantly composed of Chinese university students, resonating precisely with the target cohort of the study. With the overt emphasis, "This questionnaire is exclusively investigating Chinese undergraduates who are in a relationship," a robust response was engendered with a commendable collection rate of 96%, yielding 583 valid questionnaires out of 607. On the other hand, navigating to the intricacies of data analysis, the quantitative data accrued via the questionnaire was subjected to rigorous analysis employing the SPSS 27.0 software. The gamut of analytical tools, ranging from descriptive statistics, percentage computation, mean scores determination, and standard deviation to advanced techniques like ANOVA, and Pearson Moment Correlation analysis, were employed to unveil profound insights encapsulating the research questions.

4. Results

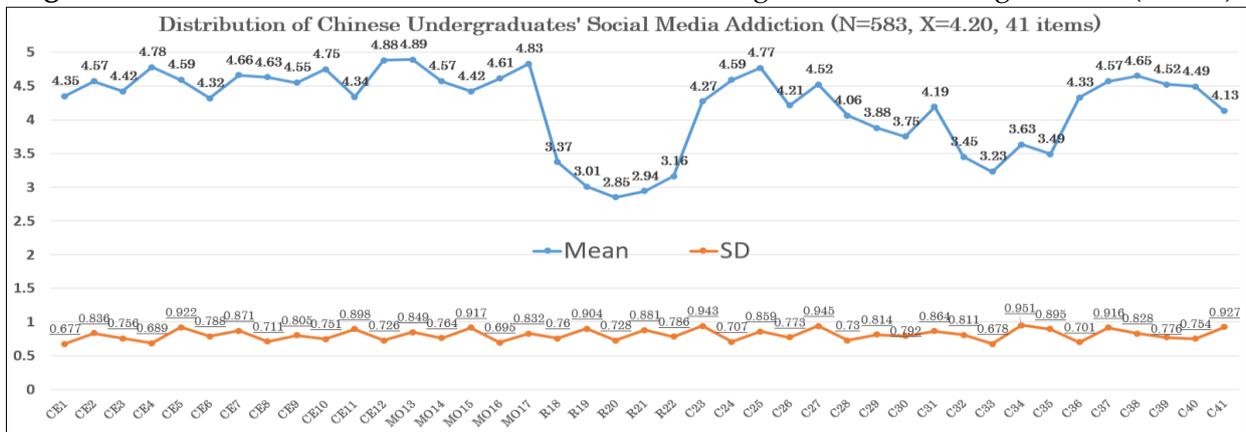
In an intricate quantitative survey exploration focusing on the implications of social media addiction, a discernible query emerges: among Chinese undergraduates, what are the prevalent intensities and frequencies of this addiction vis-à-vis love relationship closeness and satisfaction? The ensuing results delineate distinct facets: social media addiction, relationship satisfaction, and relational proximity.

4.1.1 Intensive Magnitude of Social Media Addiction amongst Chinese Undergraduates

Drawing from the data acquired through the Social Media Addiction Scale - Adult Form (SMAS-AF), it becomes markedly evident that the prevalence and intensity of social media addiction amongst this demographic is indeed significant. The comprehensive mean score for items from 1 to 41 stands at $X=4.20$ ($SD=0.876$, $N=583$), highlighting a high-level inclination towards social media addiction as seen in Figure 1. This mean score rests in the proximities of 'Agree' on the 5-degree Likert scale, thus underscoring the gravity of this phenomenon. To delve deeper into the particularities, a subset of items that displayed mean scores exceeding the threshold of 4.5 were meticulously examined, accentuating the importance of the standard deviation (SD) in capturing the spread of responses. Of the myriad items delineated, those with mean scores greater than 4.5 provide pivotal insights into specific aspects of social media addiction. Specifically, items

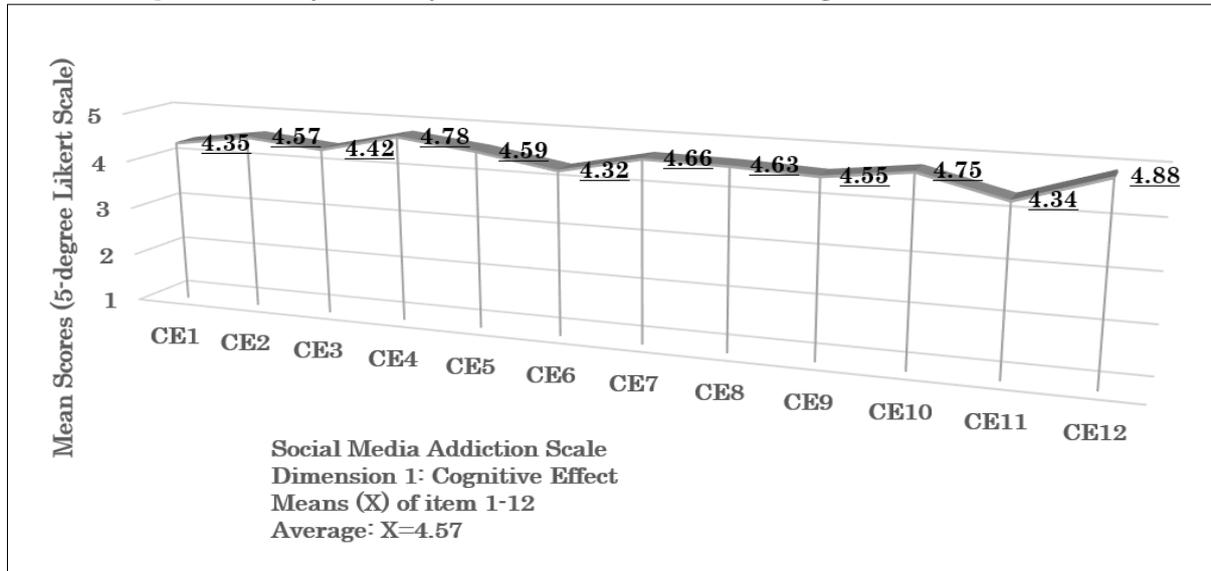
CE2, CE4, CE5, CE7, CE8, CE9, CE10, CE12, MO13, MO14, MO16, MO17, C24, C25, C27, C37, C38, and C39 depict means which exceed the aforementioned threshold, with scores ranging from 4.52 to 4.89. This consistently elevated score for these items indicates areas of profound agreement among participants regarding certain dimensions of their social media engagement. Notably, the associated standard deviations (SD), which oscillate predominantly between 0.677 and 0.945, intimate that while a majority of the responses are clustered around the mean, there exists a tangible variability in student responses. Such variability in scores suggests that while a significant portion of the sample demonstrates a pronounced alignment with certain aspects of addiction, there is also a faction that may not fully acquiesce with the dominant sentiment.

Figure 1: Pervasiveness of Social Media Addiction amongst Chinese Undergraduates (N=583)



Drilling down further, an analytic perspective discloses nuanced dimensions of this addiction. Considering the four identified dimensions: Cognitive Effect (CE), Mood Modification (MM), Relapse (R), and Conflict; they further expound the contours of this pervasive issue. For the cognitive effect dimension, which encompasses items 1 to 12, the average score stands at $X=4.57$, a figure pointing towards a pronounced influence of social media on cognitive faculties, with items like CE12 ($X=4.88$) reaching alarming heights as indicated in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Analytic Analysis of SMAS Dimension 1 Cognitive Effect (N=583)



In addition, the mood modification dimension, ranging from items 13 to 17, posted an even higher average of $X=4.66$, revealing that for many, social media serves as a potent modifier of emotional states. Particularly troubling were scores such as MO13's 4.89, suggesting strong reliance on social media for emotional regulation. Contrasting these, the relapse dimension, spanning items 18 to 22, secured a noticeably lower average of $X=3.07$. This perhaps indicates that while many are engrossed in social media, they seem not necessarily to face consistent challenges in attempting to curtail usage. The analytical advancements pertaining to the dimensions 2 and 3 of the SMAS are visually represented in Figure 3 and 4, as shown below.

Figure 3: Analytic Analysis of SMAS Dimension 2 Mood Modification (N=583)

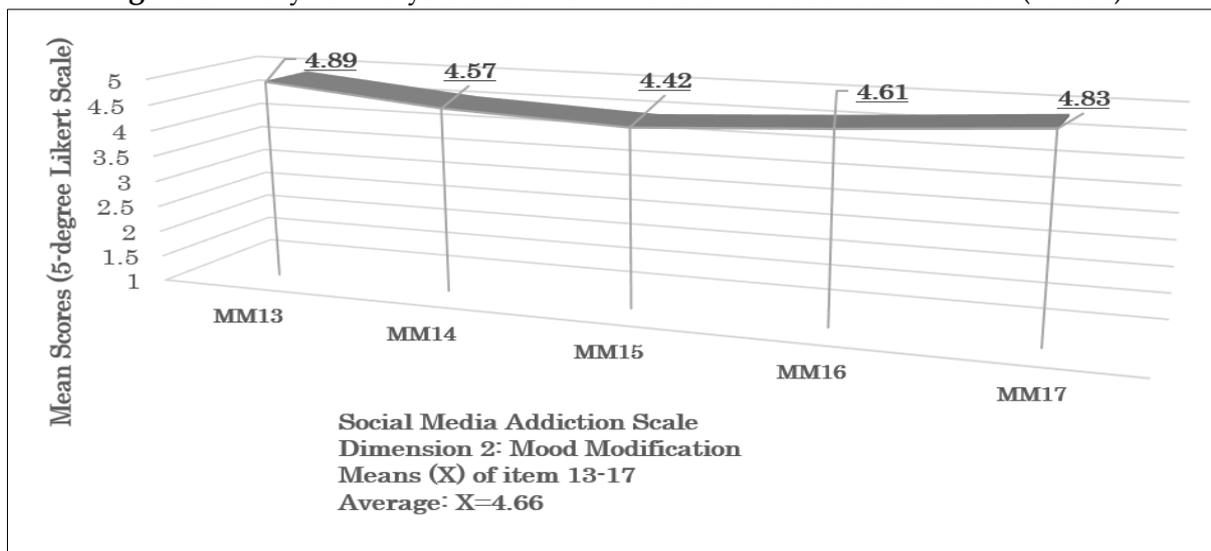
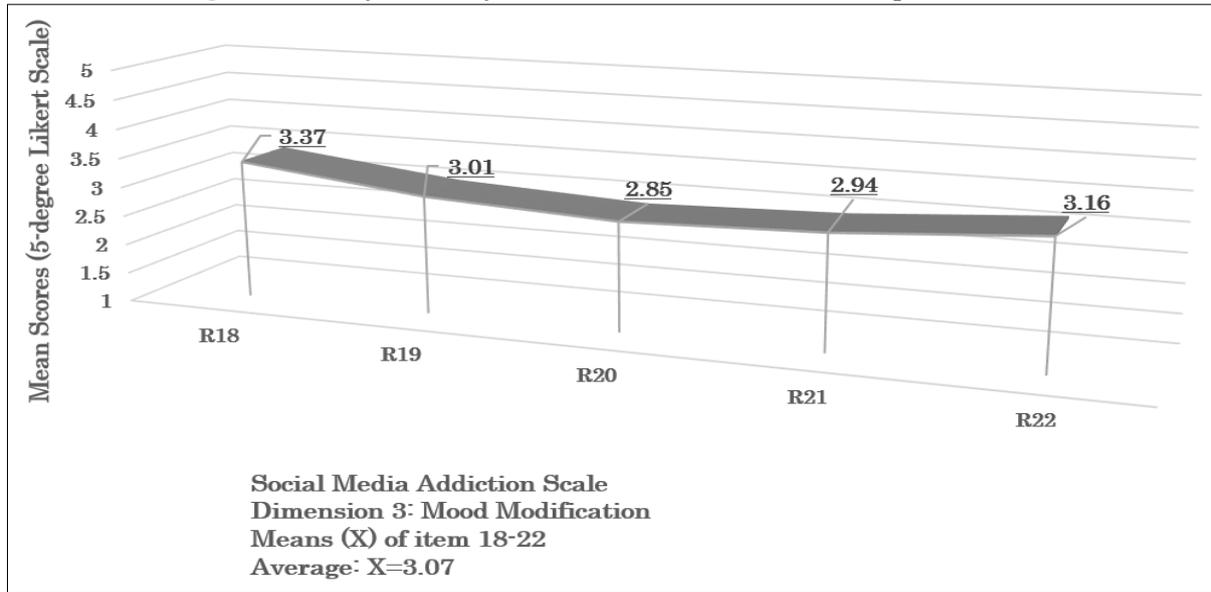
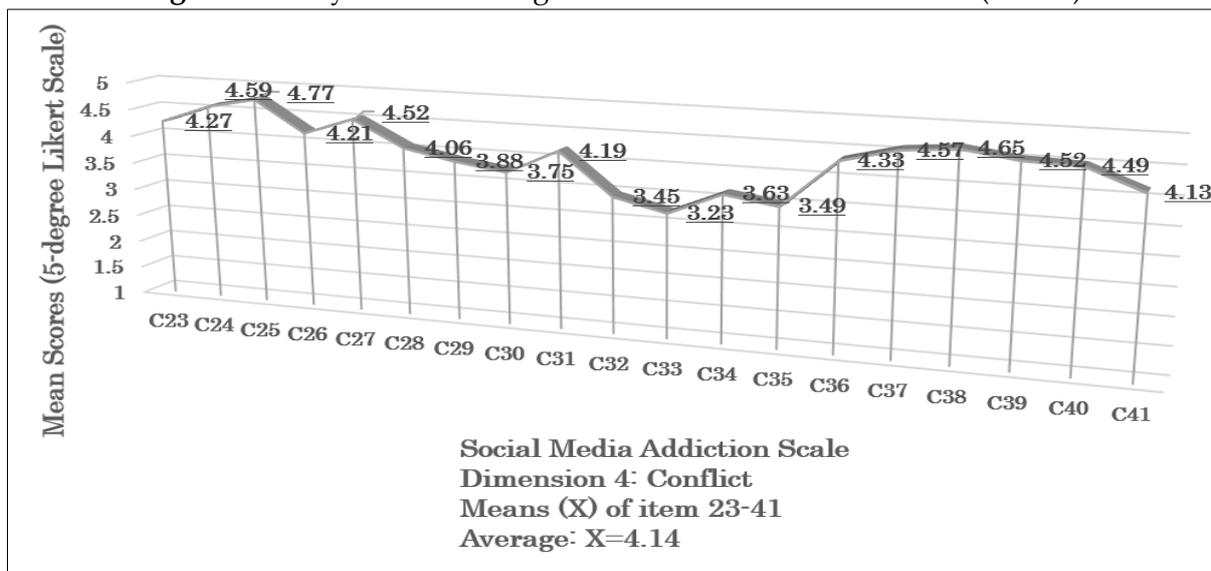


Figure 4: Analytic Analysis of SMAS Dimension 3 Relapse (N=583)



The final dimension, conflict, which stretches from items 23 to 41, recorded an average of $X=4.14$. This mirrors the potential conflicts these undergraduates might be experiencing, be it interpersonal due to their social media habits or intrinsic conflicts stemming from their awareness of over-reliance. The data from items like C25 ($X=4.77$) and C38 ($X=4.65$) underscore potential areas of tension. In sum, while there exists a holistic recognition of heightened social media engagement, the analytic breakdown offers a more granular understanding, suggesting domains where intervention might be most pertinent for this demographic. Figure 5 clearly depicts the analytical developments concerning the dimensions 4 conflict of the SMAS.

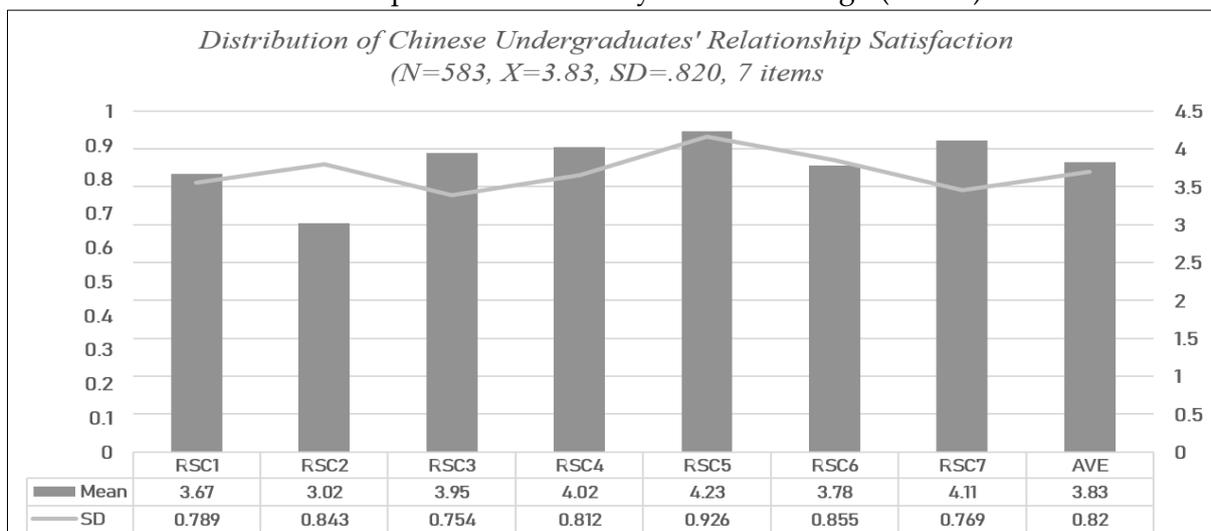
Figure 5: Analytic Breakthrough of SMAS Dimension 4 Conflict (N=583)



4.1.2 Chinese Undergraduates' Moderate-to-High Magnitude of Relationship Satisfaction

In the scholarly quest to illuminate the nuanced consequences of Social Media Addiction on the bedrock of romantic relationships amongst Chinese undergraduate students, the research segment denoted 4.1.2 offers a perspicacious glimpse into the sphere of love relationship satisfaction. Analyzing the composite data from the Love Relationship Satisfaction Scale, an initial assessment reveals that the average mean score stands at 3.83 with a standard deviation of 0.82, signifying a moderate-to-high degree of satisfaction across the sample size of 583 participants as shown in Figure 6 below. Delving deeper, the dimension of 'Satisfaction with your role in the relationship' (RSC5) emerges as the pinnacle with a mean score of 4.23, thus suggesting that the individuals resonate most profoundly with their distinct role within the relationship matrix. Concurrently, the dimension 'Resolving conflicts and arguments' (RSC2) exhibits the lowest mean at 3.02, perhaps alluding to the intricacies and challenges that accompany conflict resolution within these romantic liaisons. Dimensions such as 'Degree of affection and caring' (RSC3) and 'Intimacy and closeness' (RSC4) both exceed the average mean, thereby suggesting that such emotional bedrocks of relationships remain relatively robust.

Figure 6: Chinese Undergraduate Love Relationship Satisfaction Analytic Breakthrough (N=583)

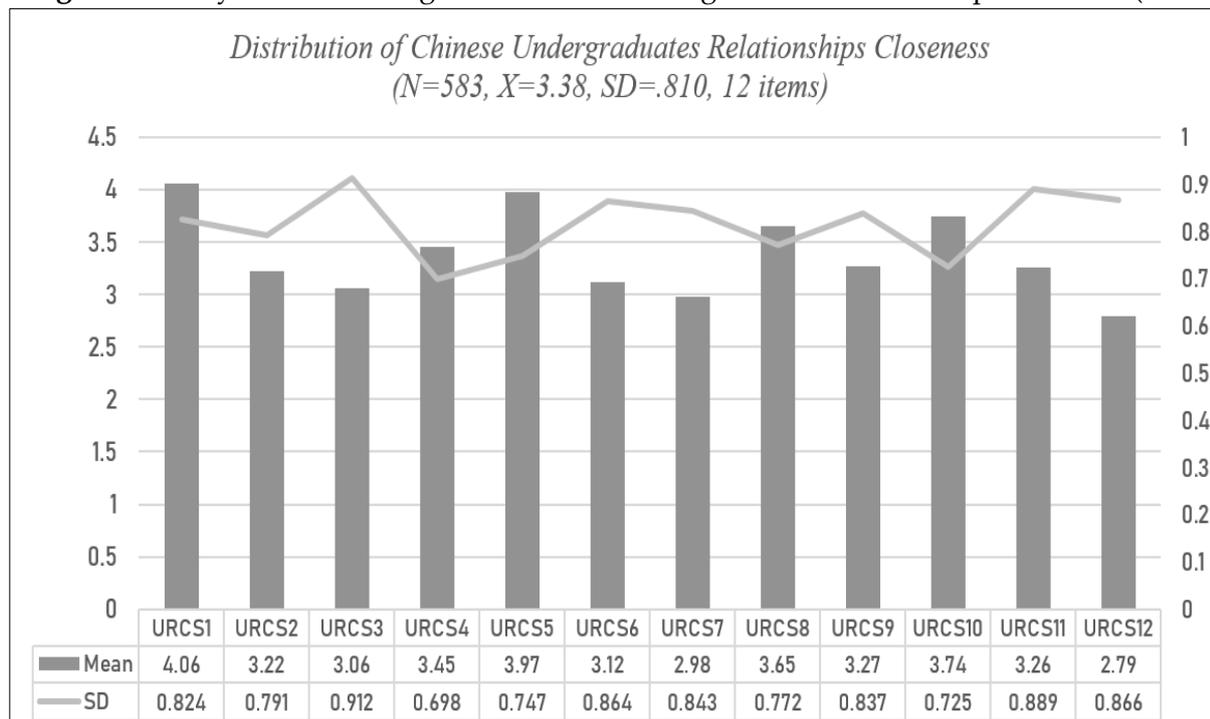


4.1.3 Chinese Undergraduates' Moderate-to-Low Magnitude of Relationship Closeness

To discern the intricacies of relationship closeness among Chinese undergraduates, we employ the Unidimensional Relationships Closeness Scale (URCS), a venerable metric that dissects the facets of relational intimacy. An analysis of means and standard deviations throws light upon the intensities and frequencies with which these students experience facets of closeness. Upon meticulous examination of the quantitative results, as shown in the following Figure 7, certain patterns emerge. The highest mean value in the URCS, recorded at 4.06 with a standard deviation of 0.824, belongs to the statement

"My relationship with my lover partner is close." This suggests a predominant sentiment among respondents that they perceive their relationships to be proximate. In stark contrast, the lowest mean (2.79 with an SD of 0.866) is associated with "I consider my lover partner when making important decisions", implying a possible autonomy in decision-making processes or perhaps the nascent stage of their relationships where such considerations have yet to take root. The aggregate mean value across the scale stands at 3.38, indicating a moderate level of relationship closeness among the sample group. Interestingly, items related to time spent together, such as "My lover partner and I want to spend time together" and "When I have free time, I choose to spend it almost with my lover partner", yield means of 3.97 and 3.27 respectively, which reflect the quintessential yearning of young love to share moments and create shared memories. Yet, it's worth noting that the scores associated with emotional and practical aspects of the relationships, such as disclosure of personal matters (3.06) or prioritizing the partner (2.98), tend to hover closer to the median. Such patterns potentially allude to the influence of cultural dynamics, societal expectations, or perhaps the overarching effects of digital immersion in shaping modern romantic entanglements.

Figure 7: Analytic Breakthrough for Chinese Undergraduate Relationship Closeness (N=583)



4.2 Statistically Significant Difference Found Exclusively in Relationship Length

In Section 4.2, which delves into the quantitative research findings pertaining to the 2nd research question, the researcher embarked on discerning whether any statistically significant differences emerge amidst the background variables: gender, academic level, and love relationship length vis-à-vis social media addiction among Chinese undergraduates. As elucidated in Table 3, the analysis of variance (ANOVA)

computations produced some salient revelations. Pertaining to the gender demographic, it was established that the divergence in social media addiction amongst male and female respondents was not statistically significant ($F=4.066$, $p=.117>.05$, $N=583$). This implies that, in the realm of this study's context, gender does not substantially influence or determine the proclivity for social media addiction among the sampled Chinese undergraduates. Furthermore, with regard to academic level as a differentiating variable, the results were akin to those of the gender demographic. There was an absence of a statistically significant difference in terms of social media addiction across varying academic levels ($F=5.254$, $p=.077>.05$, $N=583$). This suggests a remarkable uniformity in social media engagement patterns regardless of one's progression in the academic spectrum within the undergraduate domain. However, the most intriguing insight emanated from the examination of love relationship length. Contrary to the prior two variables, love relationship length manifested a statistically significant difference in social media addiction amongst the respondents ($F=4.928$, $p=.010<.05$, $N=583$). Hence, while gender and academic progression might not serve as determinants for social media addiction within this cohort, the length of one's romantic relationship appears to exert some measurable influence on the same. This unearths a plethora of possible interpretations and implications, warranting a more profound scrutiny in subsequent research undertakings.

Table 3: ANOVA Results of Demographic Variables

Demographic Variables		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Gender	Between Groups	.039	2	.039	4.066	.117 ($p>.05$)
	Within Groups	191.941	581	.330		
	Total	191.980	583			
Academic Level	Between Groups	1.066	2	.355	5.254	.077 ($p>.05$)
	Within Groups	190.914	581	.330		
	Total	191.980	583			
Love Relationship Length	Between Groups	.057	2	.019	4.928	.010 ($p<.05$)
	Within Groups	191.923	581	.331		
	Total	191.980	583			

*The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

4.3 Both Negative and Positive Correlation Detected

In addressing research question No.3, which sought to ascertain the statistical correlation between the intensity and frequency of social media addiction and the degree of love relationship closeness and satisfaction among Chinese undergraduates, the quantitative findings provide a compelling narrative. Emanating from a Pearson moment correlation analysis, there is a discernible and significant association between the variables in question. Initially, it is noteworthy to highlight that social media addiction among the participants demonstrated a substantive negative correlation with relationship closeness,

evidenced by a correlation coefficient $r = -.491$ for a sample size of 583 Chinese undergraduates ($N=583$). This result, significant at the $p < 0.01$ level (2-tailed), underscores the proposition that heightened social media engagement or dependency could be inversely proportional to the perceived closeness in romantic relationships. Thus, a higher degree of addiction might potentially result in decreased relational intimacy or closeness. In stark contrast, however, and somewhat counterintuitively, social media addiction exhibited a positive correlation with relationship satisfaction, with a correlation coefficient $r = .129$ for the same sample size. This positive association, also statistically significant at the $p < 0.01$ level (2-tailed), intimates that increased engagement with social media platforms might correspond with enhanced satisfaction within romantic relationships among the said demographic. These juxtaposing revelations necessitate a deeper exploration to comprehend the underlying nuances that might contribute to these distinct outcomes. Moreover, the subsequent analysis of variance, delineated in Table 4 below, would further elucidate the variance in relationship satisfaction and closeness based on different intensities of social media addiction, thereby offering a more granular understanding of this complex interplay.

Table 4: Results of Pearson Correlation Analysis among Variables

		Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Social Media Addiction (SMA)		4.2057	.57434	583
Relationship Closeness (RC)		3.4784	.65174	583
Relationship Satisfaction (RS)		3.5765	.62569	583
		SMA	RC	RS
SMA	Pearson Correlation		-.491	.129**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.987	.002
RC	Pearson Correlation	-.491		-.236
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.987		.389
RS	Pearson Correlation	.129**	-.236	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.389	

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

5. Conclusion and Discussion

In the intricate milieu of mass communication and digital age psychology, the findings from this investigation into the nexus between social media addiction and relational dynamics among Chinese undergraduates furnish substantial food for academic thought. Foremost, there's a palpable presence of social media addiction, with a mean inclination towards agreement on the addiction scale. The exhaustive analysis across multiple dimensions — cognitive effect, mood modification, relapse, and conflict — not only reaffirms the intensity of this addiction but also demystifies its multifaceted nature. The stratification based on specific dimensions, such as the profound influence on cognitive faculties or the ability of social media to modulate emotional states, is particularly revelatory. Yet, the more moderated scores in relapse dimensions may offer a glimmer of hope, suggesting that while addiction is present, there's also a latent capability for

moderation (Aboujaoude et al, 2022; Aslan & Tolan, 2022; Avunduk, 2021). On the relational front, the data denotes a moderately high satisfaction quotient and a respectable degree of relationship closeness. However, juxtaposing these two realms, a bifurcated picture emerges. While the pervasive grip of social media addiction seems to detract from relationship closeness, intriguingly, it appears to augment relationship satisfaction (Hu & Kong, 2023; Roh, 2021; Fatah & Anindita, 2022; Duradoni et al, 2020).

This exploration, underpinned by empirical rigor, brings to the fore some profound insights. One of the pivotal findings centers around the neutrality of gender and academic progression concerning social media addiction. Such uniformity, in the backdrop of rapid globalization and homogenized media consumption patterns, might be indicative of a transcending commonality in digital experiences across these variables. Yet, the discernible influence of the duration of romantic relationships on addiction offers a tantalizing dimension, hinting at a dynamic interplay between relational tenure and online engagement (Kirezli & Aydin, 2022; Gennaro & Miller, 2021; Geraee et al, 2019). Does a longer relationship, possibly suggesting deeper emotional bonds, serve as a buffer against the lures of the digital realm, or is it the reverse? While the data leans towards the former, the intricacies of this relationship warrant further exploration. Most fascinating, however, is the somewhat paradoxical relationship between addiction intensities and relational metrics (Li, 2023; Nehring & Kerrigan, 2019). The inverse correlation between addiction and relationship closeness suggests the possibly deleterious impacts of excessive digital immersion on relational bonds. Concurrently, the positive association between addiction and relationship satisfaction proffers an enigma. Could this be hinting at a new paradigm where the digital realm, with its incessant stimuli and opportunities for micro-affirmations, augments relational contentment, even if at the expense of depth and intimacy?

6. Recommendation

In light of these findings, academic and therapeutic interventions tailored towards Chinese undergraduates might consider bifurcating strategies based on the specific relational outcomes sought. For fostering deeper relational bonds and intimacy, strategies might emphasize digital detoxification, time management, and fostering real-world interactions, thereby mitigating the dilutionary effects of online engagement. However, understanding the satisfaction paradox requires a nuanced approach. Workshops exploring the sources of relationship satisfaction, especially in the digital age, could prove invaluable. The positive correlation between addiction and satisfaction might signal an underlying reliance on virtual affirmations and validations. Hence, psychoeducational interventions could focus on bolstering self-worth, emphasizing intrinsic sources of validation, and fostering genuine, in-depth communication skills. On a broader spectrum, future research should adopt longitudinal designs, tracing these patterns across different life stages, while also considering cultural, socioeconomic, and technological variables. Moreover, with China's unique socio-cultural fabric and digital

landscape, the incorporation of indigenous psychological constructs and paradigms could further enrich our understanding of this intricate dynamic.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

About the Author(s)

Dr. Li-Wei, Wei is a distinguished researcher, serving as a full-time Doctoral Pedagogue at the illustrious Chinese International College, a renowned institution within the acclaimed Dhurakij Pundit University. His broad spectrum of academic interest covers an impressive range of disciplines, inclusive of English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL), English for Specific Purposes (ESP), Writing Instruction, Language Education Studies, Media Education, Tourism Education, Research in Higher Education, Educational Psychology and to name but a few. Esteemed as an integral figure within the Thai-Chinese scholarly community at DPU Thailand, Dr. Wei has contributed to the academic world through an extensive corpus of insightful publications. Concurrently, he is engaged in an ongoing series of research projects aimed at broadening the horizons of his fields of expertise. His relentless pursuit of knowledge and dedication to his discipline align with his ultimate goal of achieving the respected title of professorship.

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