



Research paper

## The Mediating Role of Perceived Social Support in the Relationship between Social Competences with Virtual Social Networks Addiction in Students

Talebzadeh, Sepideh <sup>1</sup>; Ahadi, Hasan <sup>\*2</sup>; Sedaghat, Mastrooreh <sup>3</sup>;  
Khalatbari, Javad <sup>4</sup>; Tizdast, Taher <sup>5</sup>

1. Ph.D. Student, Department of Psychology, UAE Branch, Islamic Azad University, Dubai, United Arab Emirates [talebzadeh.sepideh@yahoo.com](mailto:talebzadeh.sepideh@yahoo.com)
2. Corresponding Author: Professor, Department of Psychology, UAE Branch, Islamic Azad University, Dubai, United Arab Emirates [drahadi5@gmail.com](mailto:drahadi5@gmail.com)
3. Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Islamic Azad University, South Tehran Branch, Tehran, Iran [m\\_sedaghat@azad.ac.ir](mailto:m_sedaghat@azad.ac.ir)
4. Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, Tonekabon Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tonekabon, Iran [j.khalatbari@toniau.ac.ir](mailto:j.khalatbari@toniau.ac.ir)

### Abstract

The purpose of the present study was to investigate mediating role of perceived social support in the relationship between social competences with virtual social networks addiction in students. This was descriptive-correlation research. The statistical population was females in Karaj, Iran. A sample of 400 students was selected by convenience sampling method. The tools were the social networking addiction scale of Griffiths, social competence questionnaire of Gómez-Ortiz and social support scale of Zimet. Data were analyzed using Pearson correlation and structural equations modeling. The results showed direct effect of social competence and social support were significant on social networks addiction. Also, the results showed that perceived social support had a mediating role in relationship between social competences with social networks. We could conclude that the relationship between these variables should be taken into consideration in interventions addiction to social networks.

**Keywords:** Perceived social support, social competence, virtual social networks addiction.

### Introduction

Social networking platforms are virtual areas where individuals can create their virtual profiles and make friends with common interests. With the integration of social media into individuals' everyday lives, it has the potential to affect many parts of human behavior (Hussain, et al., 2020). According to Andreassen (2015), socialization in this virtual environment is a "normal" behavior for modern individuals. Individuals can interact with others in real life by creating social media profiles and connecting with others who share common interests (Griffiths, et al., 2014). Interacting with other individuals in this way provides opportunities for individuals to promote themselves on social media platforms. According to research, there is a relationship between social competence and virtual social networks, so that the most popular virtual social networks among students are Instagram and Facebook, and with the help of these social networks, students actively communicate with their classmates, friends and the family communicates (Sharov, et al., 2021). If such research is not carried out, it is not possible to

know the factors affecting addiction to social networks, and this lack of recognition can have negative effects on planning and also negative effects on prevention-based programs on addiction to social networks. Therefore, in this research, the hypothesis that perceived social support plays a mediating role in the relationship between social competence and addiction to social networks in students has been addressed.

## Method

This study employed a descriptive-correlational approach with a structural equation modeling type. The statistical population was all female students of Karaj city, Iran in academic year 2022-2023. In the current study taking into account the possibility of dropping some answer sheets, a sample size of 400 people was selected. After giving information about the purpose of the research, the method of implementation, the principle of confidentiality, the right to choose to cooperate and the right to withdraw while answering the items of the questionnaires were given to the students. We ensured that, ensuring that their answers are analyzed as a group was one of the ethical principles observed in this research. To explore investigate mediating role of perceived social support in the relationship between social competences with virtual social networks addiction in students, path analysis AMOS software was employed.

## Tools

**Social Networking Addiction Scale (SNAS):** This 21-item questionnaire utilizes a 5-point Likert scale. This scale measure 6 subscales namely salience, mood modification, tolerance, withdrawal, conflict and relapse. The composite reliability coefficient was reported for salience 0.81, mood modification 0.79, tolerance 0.78, withdrawal 0.86, conflict 0.75, and relapse 0.89 (Griffiths, 2005; Quoted from Shahnawaz & Rehman, 2020). In the present study, Cronbach's alpha coefficients of components were 0.70 to .0.91 and for total scale 0.71.

**Adolescent Multidimensional Social Competence - Questionnaire (AMSC-Q):** This 26 items scale with 7- point Likert type response had 5 subscales of cognitive reappraisal, social adjustment, prosocial behavior, social efficacy and normative adjustment. In the original version, composite reliability coefficient was reported as 0.86 to .93 (Gómez-Ortiz, et al., 2017). In the present study, these Cronbach's alpha coefficients were 0.71 to .0.81 and for total scale 0.92.

**Multidimensional Perceived Social Support Scale (MPSSS):** This 12 items scale with 5-degree Likert type response, had 3 subscales of family, friends and significant other's (Zimet, et al., 1988), reported Cronbach's alpha for subscales of 0.85 to 0.91 and for total scale 0.88. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were 0.77 to .0.86 and for total scale 0.86.

## Results

Prior to conducting path analysis, the skewness and kurtosis test confirmed normality assumptions. Given that, structural equation analysis relies on Pearson correlation coefficients derived from the sample correlation matrix, it is noteworthy that all correlations reached statistical significance ( $P < 0.01$ ). As Table 1 shows, the results indicated direct effect of social

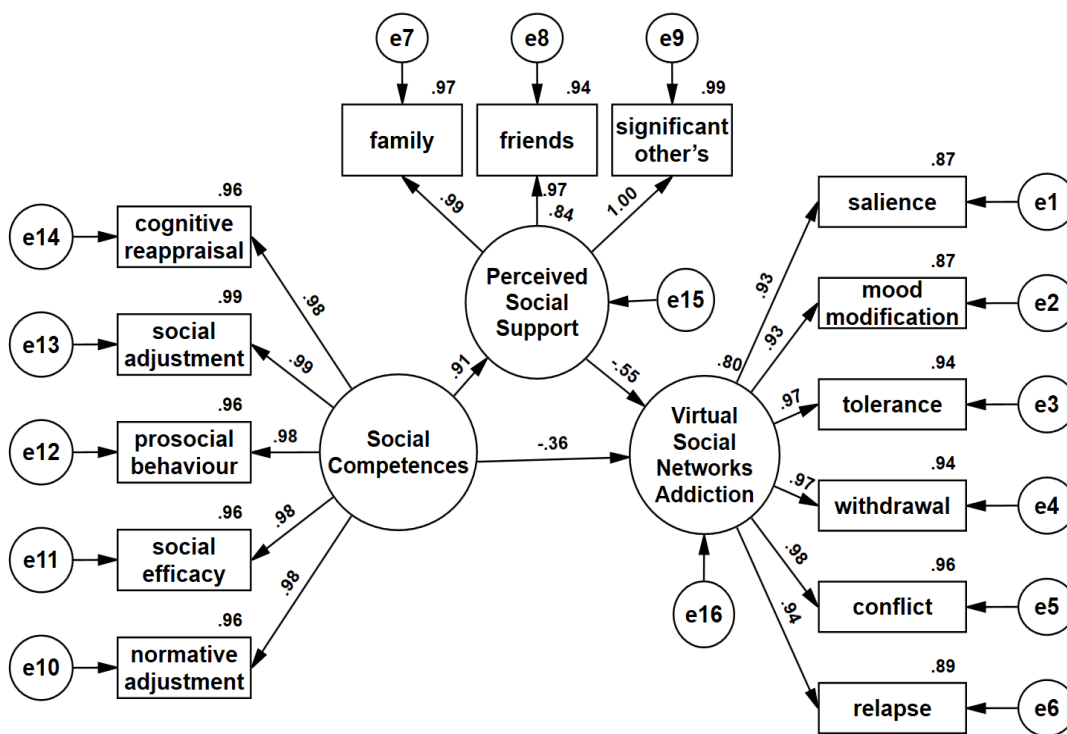
competence ( $\beta = -0.36$ , sig = 0.001) and social support ( $\beta = -0.55$ , sig = 0.001) were significant on social networks addiction. Also, the results showed that perceived social support had a mediating role in relationship between social competences with social networks. Also, Figure 1 showed the final and fitted model of the research, based on which the explained variance for social network addiction based on social competence with the mediating role of perceived social support was equal to 0.80.

**Table1. The standard and direct coefficients and bootstrap results**

Predictor variable	Criterion variable	Beta	SE	CR	p
Competence	virtual social addiction	-0.36	0.05	6-.05	0.001
perceived social	virtual social addiction	-0.55	0.05	-9.07	0.001

Indirect paths (bounds bootstrap)			
Indirect paths	bounds bootstrap		Sig
	Lower	Upper	
Competence - Social support - Social networks addiction	.31	.66	.001



**Figure 1: The Obtained model**

### Discussion and Conclusion

In explaining the above result, it can be said that when students' social competence is low, students cannot establish constructive and effective relationships with others when using virtual space, and by using this space excessively, they become addicted to it, and their use of virtual social networks it will be unplanned and unmanaged. Also, the wider the social relations, the more the access to support resources, and probably these social support resources can reduce

negative life events and behavioral addictions and act as a defense umbrella against stressful life factors and various problems of using virtual space works. In addition, students who feel isolated in relation to others, whether at school or in the family center, and the number and quality of their friendships are low, and they have less support from their families when facing problems, are more likely to it is at the risk of feeling inadequate and it is reciprocally associated with the increase in the use of virtual space, because being in virtual space and social networks is a place where students can find friends who understand their feelings and emotions and better in this The space feels peaceful. One of the most important limitations of this study is that the sample is limited to one city and in the form of an online link. Based on the results of this research, it is suggested that the relationship between these variables should be taken into consideration in interventions addiction to social networks.

## References

- Andreassen, C. S. (2015). Online social network site addiction: A comprehensive review. *Current Addiction Reports*, 2(2), 175-184. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40429-015-0056-9>
- Gómez-Ortiz, O., Romera-Felix, E. M., & Ortega-Ruiz, R. (2017). Multidimensionality of social competence: Measurement of the construct and its relationship with bullying roles. *Revista de Psicodidáctica (English ed.)*, 22 (1), 37-44. <https://doi.org/10.1387/RevPsicodidact.15702>
- Griffiths, M. D., Kuss, D. J., & Demetrovics, Z. (2014). Social networking addiction: An overview of preliminary findings. *Behavioral Addictions*, 1(1), 119-141. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-407724-9.00006-9>
- Hussain, I., Cakir, O., & Ozdemir, B. (2020). Studying internet addiction profile of university students with latent class analysis. *Education and Information Technologies*, 25(1), 4937-4959. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-020-10203-6>
- Shahnawaz, M. G., & Rehman, U. (2020). Social networking addiction scale. *Cogent Psychology*, 7 (1), 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311908.2020.1832032>
- Sharov, S., Vorovka, M., Sharova, T., & Zemlianska, A. (2021). The impact of social networks on the development of students' social competence. *International Journal of Engineering Pedagogy (iJEP)*, 11(3), pp. 84–98. <https://doi.org/10.3991/ijep.v11i3.20491>
- Zimet, G.D., Dahlem, N. W., Zimet, S. G., & Farley, G. K. (1988). The multidimensional scale of perceived social support. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 52 (1), 30-41. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/s15327752jpa5201\\_2](http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/s15327752jpa5201_2)

## Acknowledgments

Thanks are given to all the participants who responded to the research questions and participated and helped in the implementation of this research.

## Funding

This research did not receive any financial support.

## Conflicts of interest

Authors found no conflict of interests.



This article is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 4.0 International (CC BYNC4.0 license) (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

---