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Comparative Study of Insecurity and Inferiority in Young Adult Males and Females

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Abstract: ***The present study focused on a comparative analysis of insecurity and inferiority among young adult males and females. The main purpose of the research was to examine whether gender differences exist in these two psychological variables during young adulthood. A total sample of 86 participants (43 males and 43 females) aged between 18 and 25 years was selected using random sampling. This study follows comparative research. Data is collected using the inferiority complex scale (COMPIN-10) and the identity insecurity scale (IIS). The result is analyzed using a independent sample t-test. Finding there was no significant difference between male and female participants in insecurity and inferiority; variables null hypotheses is accepted. The study highlights that emotional challenges such as insecurity and inferiority are emphasizing the need for equal psychological support and mental health awareness among young adults.***
Keywords- Insecurity, Inferiority, Gender, Emotions, Health.

I. INTRODUCTION

In our new young generation, there are many important development stages in our human life, generally discovering the ages of 18 to 25 years. In this phase, many changes for adolescence to young adulthood involve many, such as psychological, emotional and social changes. During this time period, individuals started taking big responsibility for decisions and their lives. They focus on our higher studies, career development planning, and also making close relationships. We are establishing own role in society, and this age offers many growth opportunities for ourselves and independence. It creates confusion and pressure, which impacts mental health and emotional stability. Young adults progress in life, and they become more conscious of themselves and those around them. They assess their skills, looks, accomplishments, and social standing by comparing themselves to peers. According to Festinger`s Social Comparison Theory (1954), people form opinions about themselves by looking at others, especially when clear standards are not available. Today, social media has increased this trend by continuously revealing an ideal image of success and lifestyle. These comparisons can lead to discomfort and negative self judgement, creating feelings of insecurity and inferiority.

A. Insecurity

Insecurity can be described as a psychological condition in which an individual experiences self-doubt, confusion, and a lack of confidence in skills or self-esteem. Horney (1937) suggested that insecurity develops when individuals feel unsafe or unsupported in their environment, leading to anxiety and fear of rejection. Insecurity may lead to failures, objections, lack of encouragement, or fear of not being accepted by others. During young adulthood, insecurity is commonly observed because individuals are still exploring their status and future direction. Insecure individuals may always look for approval, feel anxious in social situations, or avoid challenges due to fear of failure. If such feelings continue for a long time, they may negatively affect self-esteem and emotional well-being.

B. Types of Insecurity

Insecurity has been identified:

1) Emotional Insecurity: Emotional insecurity involves fear of rejection, difficulty in trusting, and lack of confidence. Such individuals may feel insecure in relationships and need constant support (1978).
2) Social Insecurity: Social insecurity refers to trouble and anxiety in social situations. Individuals may fear negative criticism or rejection and therefore avoid being along with people.
3) Physical or Appearance-Related Insecurity: This type of insecurity is related to frustration with physical appearance. Social standards and media effects play a major role in creating body image issues, especially in young adults (Cash & Pruzinsky, 2002).

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4) Academic and Career Insecurity: Young adults may feel insecure about academic performance, career options, and future settlement. Competition and fear of unemployment contribute to this form of insecurity.

C. Inferiority

Inferiority refers to feelings of self-doubt, weakness, or lack of confidence when comparing ourselves with others. Alfred (1927), in his theory of "Individual Psychology", showed that feelings of inferiority are a normal part of human experience and come in early life. According to Adler, medium feelings of inferiority can encourage individuals to improve themselves, but too much inferiority may lead to psychological difficulties.

D. Types of Inferiority

Inferiority is of several types:

1) Physical Inferiority: This feeling develops when an individual`s physical appearance or health condition leads to a feeling of self-doubt.
2) Social Inferiority: Social inferiority includes the feeling of being less capable in social interaction or observing oneself as lower in social status.
3) Academic and Occupational Inferiority: This type is related to understanding the lack of intelligence, skills, or success in studies or a career.
4) Psychological Inferiority: Psychological inferiority refers to feeling emotionally weak or unable to lead with stress and challenges.

E. Insecurity, Inferiority, and Young Adulthood

A young adulthood is a stage where insecurity and inferiority may increase due to increased expectations and responsibilities. Erikson (1968) identified this stage as involving the clash of forming close relationships versus feeling alone. Individuals who lack self-confidence may find it difficult to form close relationships and may experience emotional insecurity and feel isolated. Such feelings can affect academic performance, career development, and interpersonal relationships. Persistent insecurity and inferiority are also associated with anxiety, depression, and low psychological well-being (Beck,1967). Gender socialization plays an important role in forming insecurity and inferiority. Males and Females are often raised with a wide range of expectations. Males and Females encourage to be independent and achievement-oriented, while females are expected to be emotionally sensitive and socially adjustable. Research by Rosenberg (1965) showed gender differences in self-value, with females often reporting lower self-value during late adolescence and early adulthood. Coopersmith (1967) emphasized the importance of social approval in self-esteem, growth, and particularly among females. As a result, females are more likely to experience emotional and social insecurity. Males, on the other hand, are more likely to experience inferiority related to achievement and ability. Pleck (1981) suggested that pressure to fulfil traditional masculine roles may result in stress and feelings of not enough when expectations are not met.

II. RATIONALE

Feelings of being less skilled or not sure of oneself are something many students face, especially when they are in their younger adult years. The provided questionnaires clearly reveal issues such as a lack of self-belief, fear of failure, self-doubt, uncertainty about identity, and concern over others' opinions. These feelings can significantly influence students` performance in school, their emotional well-being, their cooperation with peers, and their personal growth. Given this, it is essential to examine these emotions in a detailed and organized manner. This research benefits students by showing how negative self-perception and low confidence can impact their thoughts, actions, and daily lives. When students understand these feelings, they can focus on accepting themselves better, building their confidence, and becoming mentally stronger.

Recognizing feelings of insecurity and weakness early can help teachers, parents, and counsellors provide the right support and guidance. From a psychological perspective, this study offers an important understanding of how young people view themselves, how easily they feel troubled, and the challenges they face in understanding their identities. It can assist psychologists in developing better methods to support students through counselling, therapy and mental health programs. On a larger scale, this research raises awareness of mental health and promotes a society where individuals feel more accepted and confident. Overall, the study is significant because it highlights hidden emotional struggles and supports the healthy development of students' minds and emotions.

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III.REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Smith (1938) did early psychological study to examine the main reason why people feel inferior. The main goal was to discover personal and social factors that make people feel weak compared to others. The results show that inferiority many times stems from multiple failures, negative comparisons with others, and an absence of gratitude and growing up in a difficult family environment.

Gilbert, McEwan, Bellew, Mills, and Gale (2009) conducted a study to explore the relationship between cross-comparison behavior and the fear of being seen as inferior to others, and how these feelings impact mental health conditions. The study aimed to find out if working very hard to avoid being inferior in a competitive scenario could lead to higher levels of emotional stress. The findings revealed that people who had a great fear of being inferior experienced more depression, anxiety, and stress. The study also found that unhealthy competition and constantly comparing oneself to others caused higher emotional pressure and negative feelings about oneself.

Tripathy and Srivastava (2011) conducted a study to examine the impact of the students' point of view about their educational success on their feelings of not being like others and feeling unconfident. The main aim of the study was to examine whether the students' point of view about their performance in school influenced their self-confidence. From the study, it was evident that if the students felt they were not doing well in school, they would feel more insecure and had low self-esteem. On the other hand, if they felt they were doing well, they had fewer thoughts and more confidence.

Rani, Kamboj, Malik, and Kohli (2015) conducted a study to explore the relationship between emotional maturity, self-confidence, and insecurity in teenagers. The main objective of this study was to explore how emotional maturity affects feelings of insecurity and confidence in early teenagers. The study found that teenagers with high emotional maturity feel confident and have low feelings of insecurity. On the contrary, teenagers with low emotional maturity feel insecure and have low confidence.

Kabir and Rashid (2017) carried out a study, and their main objective was to examine the association between values of social relationships and feelings of inferiority in relation to psychological well-being. The study found that students who felt inferior had low psychological well-being. The study also established that relational values do not have an effect on psychological well-being. The study established an association between feelings of inferiority and psychological well-being. It was found that students who felt inferior having positive relational values such as cooperation, respect, and responsibility towards society were associated with better mental health and lower feelings of inferiority.

Another study was conducted by Tripathy (2017) to investigate how educational performance affects feelings of inferiority and insecurity among students. It was established that students who performed very poorly in their studies had more insecurity and low self-esteem, whereas those who performed well in their studies were more confident and had few negative thoughts about themselves. The study, therefore, shows that academic performance can greatly influence an individual's confidence and stability.

The researchers Akdogan, Aydin and Eken (2018) studied how university students with an abnormal perception of inadequacy in support they received helped develop their ability to create positive relationships and to develop a secure attachment style. What they found was that if the student had an insecure bond with the person they were getting help from, this was related to how they felt inferior to that person. emotions of male and female students when dealing with insecurity attached to Inferiority.

Patel (2018) looked at how self-context insecurity shows up in young people from different socio-economic backgrounds. Turns out, young people from lower-income backgrounds felt a lot more insecure than those with more money. Worrying about finances, having fewer opportunities, and always measuring themselves against others made things worse.

Wang, Liu, Yang, Yang, and Zhen (2022) did a study to look into how poor children feel scared and feel bad about themselves compared to others. The main aim was to see how poverty and the social environment influence how kids get along with others, and how they feel emotionally. The findings showed that when poor kids see kids from wealthier families, they are very inferior. This study found that being poor had a more effect on feeling inferior to a child living in a city or a village. These feelings made it difficult for them to make friends and be accepted by others.

Kumar and Srivastava (2024) presented a study connecting affection style, impressions of deficiency, and self-concealment among Indian university students. The study focused on young adults; standard intellectual questionnaires were used to calculate various attachment styles and levels of deficiency between the members. The results showed that students who had anxious attachment styles experienced great feeling of inadequacy and tend to hide their emotions from the people stronger. On the other hand, scholars accompanying secure attachment styles show lower levels of deficiency and better encouraging strength.

Stoyanova and Ivantchev (2025) looked into how self-confidence connects with feelings of inferiority in athletes and people who do not participate in sports. The findings indicated that athletes usually had higher self value and lower feelings of being inferior to non-athletes.

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Participating in sports regularly was connected with greater confidence, better emotional control, and a more positive view of oneself. In variation, non-athletes feel more inferior, especially when it comes to physical skills and comparing themselves with others. This study is relatable to the current research because it shows how self-value helps reduce insecurity and feelings of inferiority during young adulthood.

IV. METHODOLOGY

A. Objective

To study the comparison of Insecurity and Inferiority among Young adult males and females. It looks for identifying whether the gender differences are present in these psychological variables, and to understand the role of gender in affecting feelings of insecurity and inferiority among young adults.

B. Hypotheses

1) *H1:* There will be no difference between young male adults and young female adults in terms of Inferiority.
2) *H2:* There will be no difference between young male adults and young female adults in terms of Insecurity.

C. Variables

1) Inferiority
2) Insecurity

D. Tools

1) The Inferiority Complex (COMPIN-10)

The inferiority scale (COMPIN-10) is a self-report psychological tool developed by Nima et al. (2020) to measure inferiority. It is a 10-item short version of the scale to assess the level of an individual's experience of feelings of inferiority and reduced self-confidence when comparing themselves with others. The scale has various aspects of inferiority that I already mentioned in the introduction. It is widely used in research involving young adults to study feelings of inferiority and psychological well-being. Each of the 10 items is rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1(Strongly disagree) to 5(Strongly agree). Scoring is done by summing responses to all items to obtain a total score, with a higher score indicating levels decided of high inferiority and low inferiority. The COMPIN-10 is suitable for studies focusing on inferiority among young adults.

2) The Identity Insecurity Scale (IIS)

The identity insecurity (IIS) scale was given by Massey and Cionea (2022) to measure the level of insecurity experienced regarding their identity. The scale was a journal communication methods and measures instrument to capture feelings of insecurity. The scale is suitable for young adults, as identity concerns are significant in this age group. The number of items is 30, and the dimensions include individual, public, dissimilar, reactive, and social identity insecurity. Response format: Likert-type scale (agreement with statement). Scoring responses are summed or averaged. High scores indicate higher identity insecurity. Used in research helps assess identity-related insecurity and adjustment among young adult participants

E. Sample

1) *Sample population:* Young adults aged 18 to 25 years
2) *Sample size:* 86 young adults (43 males, 43 females)
3) *Sampling technique:* Random Sampling

F. Inclusion Criteria

1) Young adults between the ages range of 18 and 25 years
2) They should be either male or female
3) Young adults are able to read and write in English
4) Willingness to give responses
5) Education level currently enrolled in college or university
6) Consent provided to participate in the study

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G. Exclusion Criteria

1) Young adults below the age of 18 and above age 25 years
2) Participants refuse to give informed consent
3) Those not enrolled in college/university
4) Unable to understand or respond to the language of the questionnaire
5) Young adults under Psychiatric medication

H. Research Design

Comparative Research Design

I. Procedure

1) After deciding upon the variables appropriate questionnaire was selected to be used.
2) The questionnaire was used to collect data from the city
3) A consent letter was attached to their questionnaires.
4) Respondents were guided to reach each question carefully and then answer it.
5) There was fill to the questionnaires, but a minimum of 40 and a maximum of 100 participants involved equal number of males and females.
6) Data was analyzed using the manual formula SPSS/MS Excel version 27.

V. RESULT ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The following data analysis of the results using two t-test tables. Both tables compare the average level of Inferiority and Insecurity among young adults male and female, and check whether gender leads to any significant differences in the two variables.

Table 1:
Independent Sample T-Test Showing Significant Relationship Between Inferiority Of Young Male Adults And Young Female Adults

Variable	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	Sig. (2-tailed)
Inferiority Male	43	28.3023	10.50971	84	1.192	0.237
Female	43	25.9302	7.74103			

Table 1 indicates no significant difference between the inferiority of young adult males and females. Thus, in this case, hypothesis 1 is accepted.

The results, as given in Table 1 reveals that there is no significant difference between Inferiority of Young Male Adults and Young Female Adults. Since the t-value (1.192) is not significant at either the 0.01 or 0.05 level of significance, thus, hypothesis 1 is accepted.

Table 2:
Independent Sample T-Test Showing Significant Relationship Between Insecurity Of Young Male Adults And Young Female Adult

Variable	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	Sig. (2-tailed)
Insecurity Male	43	104.7209	43.11741	84	1.090	0.279
Female	43	95.4651	35.26454			

Table 2 indicates no significant difference between the insecurity of young adult males and females. Thus, in this case, hypothesis 2 is accepted.

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The findings of Table 2 show that there is no significant difference between the insecurity of Young Male Adults and Young Female Adults. Since the p-value (0.279) is greater than the 0.05 level of significance, hypothesis 2 is accepted.

1) Main findings: The main purpose of the study was to compare insecurity and inferiority among young adult males and females. The result of the independent sample t-test showed that there was no significant difference between males and females in both variables. The significance values were greater than 0.05, it means the null hypotheses were accepted. This indicates that gender does not significantly impact levels of insecurity and inferiority among young adults in the present example.

2) Compare with previous research: A few previous studies incompletely support these findings. Like Tripathy (2017) and Amani and Taqiyah (2024) talked about factors affecting insecurity and inferiority but did not strongly build gender differences. However, Akdogan et al. (2018) suggest that this may impact emotional experiences. This gap in findings may be due to gaps in cultural background, sample characteristics, and the tools used.

3) Possible reason / Explanation: In modern society, males and females face similar academic, social, and career pressures. According to the social comparison theory, individuals compare social media to similar levels of insecurity and inferiority in both genders.

VI. CONCLUSION

The main purpose of the present study is to compare insecurity and inferiority among young adult males and females. To examine whether gender differences occur in these psychological variables. The research focused on understanding how young adults experience feelings of insecurity and inferiority during an important stage of life. The study found no real difference between men and women when it comes to feeling insecure or inferior. The stats backed this up—both null hypotheses held up, so gender doesn't really shape these feelings among the young adults they looked at. What matters here is that the study shows guys and girls go through pretty much the same emotional struggles. That's a big deal for psychology and for society, because it makes the case for equal mental health support across the board. If we really get how insecurity and inferiority work, we can actually help young adults grow into more confident, emotionally healthy people.

VII. IMPLICATIONS

The study of highlights that male and female young adults may experience insecurity and inferiority equally. Therefore, counselling programs, mental health awareness and confidence building workshops should aim at both genders. Teachers and parents should provide emotional support without assuming that one gender is more affected.

VIII. LIMITATIONS

The study had a limited sample size of 86 participants and included students. Self-report scales were used, which may involve response discrimination. The research was also limited by time and assets, which did not limit wider data collection.

IX. FUTURE RESEARCH

It included a larger and more diverse sample from different regions. Researchers can also study other related variables like self-esteem, stress, attachment style, and social media impact. Qualitative methods such as interviews can provide greater understanding of emotional experience among young adults.

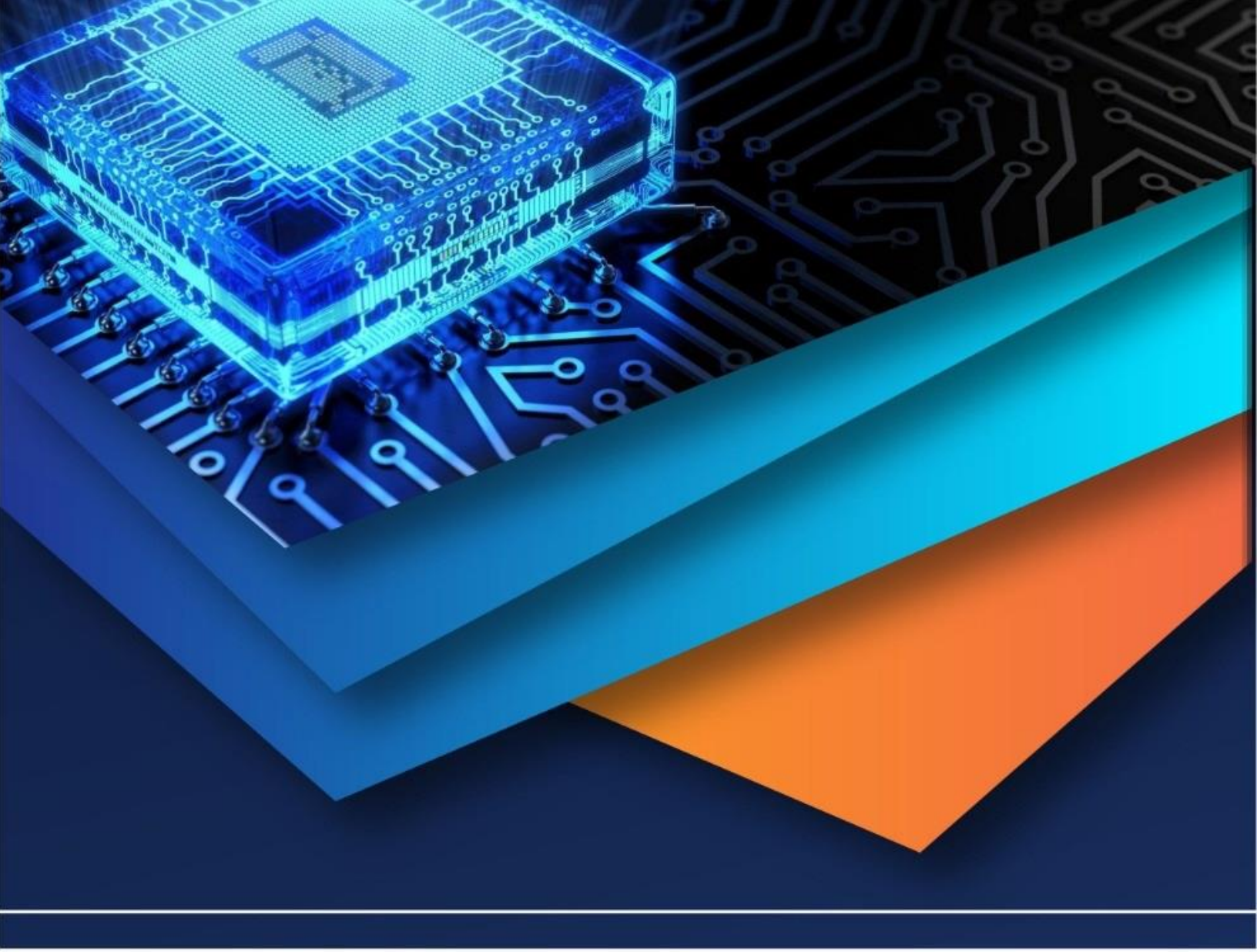
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