

Research Paper

A Study on Social Media Addiction among Adolescents

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ABSTRACT

We researched a study on “social media addiction among adolescents”. This study focused on the influence of social media addiction and demographic variables such as age and sex of the adolescence. The sample of this research was comprised of 100 adolescents from various schools and colleges in and around Coimbatore. For this study, purposive sampling method was used for the selection of respondents. To collect the primary data for the study, personal data sheet comprise of the demographical variables and Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS) were used. The BSMAS was developed by Andreassen and his colleagues and it consists of 6 items, each representing core elements of addiction and highly standardized. Analysis of data was carried out by applying mean, correlation and t-test were carried out to establish the relation among variables. The results indicates that, the social media addiction were high for the age group of 18-20 years and moderate to below 18 years. And the social media addiction were not significantly among the gender and other demographical variables.

Keywords: *Adolescents, Addiction, Social Media*

Social media addiction is real problem and it has grave consequences. Many people around the world are addicted to social media platforms and it is taking a toll on their personal as well as professional lives. They are not only ruining their lives but also impacting the lives of those around them.

Social media is a networking platform where people share their ideas, views, opinions, videos, audios, pictures, news, etc using an internet connection. Twitter, WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram are examples of social media websites. They enable people to stay connected with their friends and families. These days we find that more and more are idling their valuable time on social networking sites. They begin to post and repost pictures, videos, and daily activities on the website to get a higher number of ‘likes’. Gradually, social media begins to affect emotional and mental health, which leads to social media addiction.

Social media addiction hampers their productivity, concentration, emotional well-being, and mental IQ. They find it challenging to deal with peer pressure and start comparing their lives with others. They feel depressed and desperate. Their anxiety level rises. People should continuously keep assessing themselves by monitoring their activities on social

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media. They should keep a check on how much time they are spending on such websites. Furthermore, it would be best to take control of their actions before it converts into a social media addiction.

The term ‘addiction’ traditionally evokes thoughts of substances such as cigarettes, alcohol, or drugs. However, in recent years, there has been a notable rise in social media addiction, which has become a significant concern. Social media has embedded itself deeply into various facets of modern life, influencing personal relationships, professional interactions, and even daily routines. While social media offers several advantages, including the rapid dissemination of information, improved communication, and expanded networking opportunities, its negative effects cannot be ignored.

From a positive perspective, social media has revolutionized communication, allowing individuals to connect instantly across geographical boundaries. It has facilitated the spread of information at an unprecedented pace and created platforms for dialogue and collaboration on a global scale. Moreover, it has provided a space for social activism, enabling individuals and groups to raise awareness on important issues and foster community engagement.

Nevertheless, the negative consequences of social media usage are increasingly apparent. Many users experience detrimental effects on self-esteem and body image, largely due to the unrealistic portrayals of life and appearance that are often perpetuated on these platforms. Furthermore, social media usage has been linked to disruptions in sleep cycles, as users frequently engage with content late into the night. Cyber bullying, too, has become a pervasive issue, leading to significant emotional distress.

The American Psychological Association (n.d.) defines addiction as “a state of psychological and/or physical dependence on the use of drugs or other substances, such as alcohol, or on activities or behaviours, such as sex, exercise, or gambling”. In recent years, the concept of addiction has expanded beyond substance misuse to include compulsive behaviours linked with gambling, gaming, and, increasingly, social media use. Social media addiction is defined as an excessive reliance on social networking platforms, which has serious psychological and social implications. As the digital era evolves, recognizing and comprehending social media addiction becomes increasingly important in dealing with its rising influence on mental health and social functioning.

Theories related to Social Media Addiction

Uses and Gratification Theory

According to the Uses and Gratifications Theory, individuals use social media to satisfy needs such as social interaction, information seeking, and entertainment, which can lead to addictive behaviours when these gratifications are continuously sought (Katz et al., 1973). Key components of the Uses and Gratifications Theory as applied to social media addiction include:

- 1. Social Interaction:** Many individuals use social media to maintain relationships, foster new connections, and engage in social activities. The desire for social belonging and validation can lead to excessive use.
- 2. Information Seeking:** Social media provides a constant stream of information and updates, satisfying individuals' curiosity and desire for knowledge. This need for real-time information can result in prolonged engagement and dependence.

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- 3. Entertainment:** For many, social media serves as a source of entertainment, offering videos, memes, and other engaging content. The ease of access to entertainment can make social media highly addictive.
- 4. Escapism:** Social media can also offer an escape from real-world problems, allowing users to immerse themselves in virtual environments or idealized portrayals of life. This escape mechanism can lead to addictive behaviours as individuals use social media to cope with stress or avoid negative emotions.
- 5. Self-presentation:** The need to shape and project a desirable self-image online can be highly gratifying, encouraging users to spend excessive time curating posts, photos, and status updates. This desire for social approval and “likes” can foster dependence on social media platforms.

The Importance of Recognizing and Mitigating Social Media Addiction

Recognizing the prevalence of social media addiction is crucial in both personal and public health settings. Social media is important in many parts of modern life, including personal communication and professional networking. As a result, the line between appropriate use and addiction is easily blurred. Unlike substance addiction, which frequently has more evident results, social media addiction can go undiscovered for long periods of time, causing its effects to increase.

Furthermore, the psychological effects of social media addiction might be significant. According to research, those who spend too much time on social networking sites are more likely to sense social isolation and anxiety, while being continually “connected” online (Vannucci et al., 2017). This contradiction emphasizes the necessity of understanding the psychological underpinnings that drive social media addiction. Social media platforms are designed to keep users engaged for as long as possible using algorithms that push personalized content, trapping them in a consumption loop that develops dependence (Haidt & Allen, 2020).

Programs for mental health and digital literacy education can be extremely helpful in reducing the risks related to social media addiction. Encouraging people to adopt healthy social media practices, such as limiting their usage and paying attention to the content they consume, can support them in having a healthy, balanced connection with these platforms. To stop the spread of this digital addiction, legislative interventions like age limitations and the control of addictive design elements might also be required (Haidt & Allen, 2020). To summarize, social media addiction is a growing issue that follows the tendencies of other addictive behaviours. Addiction, defined as a state of psychological reliance, is fueled by the design of social media platforms that encourage user participation over well-being. The expanding corpus of evidence linking excessive social media use to poor psychological effects such as anxiety, despair, and loneliness emphasizes the importance of addressing social media addiction. Recognizing the significance of this issue is crucial to developing a healthier relationship with digital technology and protecting the mental health of current and future generations. By raising awareness, fostering healthy practices, and exploring policy solutions, it is feasible to lessen the negative consequences of social media addiction and promote a more balanced digital lifestyle.

Mobile and social media enable permanent connection between friends, family, or even strangers. Particularly adolescents have appropriated the cultural norm of “always being online,” especially since the exponential growth of social media (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017). They often rely on social media for communication with family and peers, information

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gathering, and—to a certain extent—emotional self-regulation (Bolton et al., 2013). Flemish research shows that the percentage of adolescents in secondary education using Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and/or Snapchat ranges from 65% among 12-year-olds to 92% among 14-year-olds (Mediaraven & LINC, 2018). Moreover, 70% of adolescents indicate that using their smartphone is similar to a reflex, a near-automated action (Mediaraven & LINC, 2018). In combination with the finding that most of the time online is spent on social networking sites (SNS; Barry et al., 2017; Oberst et al., 2017), this raises concerns about the impact of social media use on the well-being and development of children and adolescents both in the short- and long term (Bolton et al., 2013).

Problematic social media use,¹ and more specifically social media overuse, may lead to symptoms that are traditionally associated with substance-related addictions (e.g., withdrawal, conflict, and loss of control; Ahn & Jung, 2016; Blackwell et al., 2017; Chang et al., 2015; de Calheiros Velozo & Stauder, 2018; Durak, 2018; Elhai et al., 2016; Koo & Kwon, 2014; Kuss & Griffiths, 2017). Kuss and Griffiths (2017) state that, for a small minority of individuals, their use of social networking sites may become the single most important activity that they engage in, leading to a preoccupation with SNS use (salience). The activities on these sites are then being used in order to induce mood alterations, pleasurable feelings or a numbing effect (mood modification). Increased amounts of time and energy are required to be put into engaging with SNS activities in order to achieve the same feelings and state of mind that occurred in the initial phases of usage (tolerance). (p. 6) Although the research on social media addiction is still limited, the presence of similar symptoms has been medically validated in the context of internet addiction (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017). Durkee et al. (2012) argue that people are not addicted to the technology itself, but rather to the specific (social) activities they perform on it. For example, interactive online activities, such as gaming, chatting, and social networking, ensure that someone stays online longer than they had anticipated which increases the risk of addiction.

Need for the study

The need for the research of social media addiction is evident when considering the various risks associated with habitual social media use. Social media addiction may lead to negative consequences of adolescent's school performance, social behaviour and interpersonal relationships. In addition, social media addiction may also leads to other risks such as sexting, social media stalking, cyber-bullying, privacy breaches and improper use of technology. Given the seriousness of these risks it is important to have regulation in place to protect adolescents from the harms of social media addiction.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The sample size is 100 (50 males and 50 females) in the age group of 15 to 21 years were selected for the present study, from various schools and colleges of Coimbatore District, Tamil Nadu. We had split out the males and females into middle adolescents and later adolescents. A sample of hundred were selected using a non probability sampling method called purposive sampling.

Instruments

- **Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS):** The Bergen social media addiction scale was developed by Andreassen and his colleagues and consists of six items, each representing core elements of addiction (i.e., salience, tolerance, mood modification, conflict, withdrawal and relapse). The test-retest reliability for the

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BSMAS total score was acceptable, with Pearson's correlation coefficient of 0.75. The scale has high internal consistency reliability and promising concurrent validity of 0.70. The respondents were asked to answer each item by indicating the extent of their agreement on a 5-point Likert scale.

Procedure

The administration of the respective institutes were informed and verbal consent to conduct the study was taken. Consent was also taken from the respondents after explaining to them the purpose of the research as well as the academic use of the data later on. After rapport formation the questionnaire were give individually to the subjects. Before administering the test the respondents were briefed about the test in detail. We were assured that the responses would be kept confidential and that the research is for educational purpose only. Instructions were given clearly by the investigator and simple clarifications of word meanings were given on request without influencing responses.

The sample size is 100 (50 males and 50 females) in the age group of 15 to 21 years were selected for the present study, from various schools and colleges of Coimbatore District, Tamil Nadu. We had split out the males and females into middle adolescents and later adolescents. A sample of hundred were selected using a non-probability sampling method called purposive sampling. The tool used was Bergen social media addiction scale. The data were collected and statistically analysed using mean, SD, t-test and correlation.

Analysis of data

The collected data were tabulated and analysed by using the following statistical tools:

- Mean
- Standard deviation
- Percentage analysis
- Correlation
- T-test

RESULTS

Table 1 Shows the level of Social media addiction among males.

Level of addiction	No of samples (N=50)	Percentage
low	4	8%
moderate	40	80%
high	6	12%

The above table shows that the social media addiction among male respondents. It is recorded that out of 50 respondents, 80% of the male belongs to the moderate level of social media addiction, 8% of the males belongs to the low level of social media addiction and 12% of males belongs to the high level of social media addiction. By the evidence of the report, we interpret that the greater part of the male respondents are moderate level in social media addiction.

Table 2 Shows the level of Social media addiction among females.

Level of addiction	No of samples (N=50)	Percentage
low	7	14%
moderate	40	80%
high	3	6%

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The above table shows that the social media addiction among female respondents. It is recorded that out of 50 respondents, 80% of the females belongs to the low level of social media addiction, 14% of the females belong to the low level of social media addiction and 6% of the females belongs to the high level of social media addiction. By the evidence of the report, we interpret that the greater number of female respondents are moderate level in social media addiction.

Table 3 Shows the level of Social media addiction among middle adolescents.

Level of addiction	No of samples (N=50)	Percentage
Low	5	10%
Moderate	40	80%
High	5	10%

The above table shows the social media addiction among middle adolescents. It is recorded that out of 50 respondents, 40% of the respondents have moderate level of social media addiction, 10% of the respondents have low level of social media addiction and 10% of the respondents have high level of social media addiction. By the evidence of the report, we interpret that the major part of the respondents have moderate level of social media addiction.

Table 4 Shows the level Social media addiction among later adolescents.

Level of addiction	No of samples (N=50)	Percentage
Low	6	12%
Moderate	40	80%
High	4	6%

The above table shows that the social media addiction among later adolescents. It is recorded that the 80% of the respondents have moderate level of social media addiction, 12% of the respondents have low level of social media addiction and 6% of the respondents have high level of social media addiction. By the evidence of the report, we interpret that the major part of the respondents have moderate level of social media addiction.

Table 5 Shows the descriptive and inferential statistics of social media addiction among males and females.

Gender	Sample	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value	r-value	Significance
Male	50	17.38	3.225	0.136	0.270	0.158	Not significant
Female	50	16.34	3.684				

The mean value in social media addiction between males is 17.38 and females is 16.34, the standard deviation for males is 3.225 and females is 3.684, the t-value is 0.135, $r=0.158$ and the p-value is 0.270 which shows that there is no significant difference in social media addiction between male and female respondents.

Table 6 Shows the descriptive and inferential statistics of social media addiction among middle adolescents and later adolescents.

Adolescents	Sample	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value	r-value	Significance
Middle adolescents	50	17.04	3.44	0.607	0.263	0.161	Not significant
Later adolescents	50	16.68	3.55				

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The mean value in social media addiction among middle adolescents is 17.04 and for later adolescents is 16.68, the standard deviation for middle adolescents 3.44 and for later adolescence is 3.55, the t-value is 0.607, $r=0,161$ and the p-value is 0.263 which shows that there is no significant difference in social media addiction between middle adolescents and later adolescents.

DISCUSSION

In the present study, an attempt was made to find out the social media addiction among adolescents. In gender, most of the male and female belongs to moderate level of social media addiction and there is no significant difference in social media addiction between male and female. In age, most of the middle and later adolescents belongs to moderate level of social media addiction and there is no significant difference in social media addiction between middle and later adolescents.

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Conflict of Interest

We declared no conflict of interests.

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