

## A Study on Social Networking Addiction among Adults

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### ABSTRACT

The term social networking entails having connections in both the real and the digital worlds. Today, this term is mainly used to reference online social communications. The internet has made it possible for people to find and connect with others who they may never have met otherwise. Online social networking is dependent on technology and internet connectivity. Users can access social networking sites using their PCs, tablets or smartphones. The sample of 120 participants has been selected from Uttar Pradesh, Delhi-NCR and Gujarat. The participants in the study fall within the age range of 18 to 60 years. The scale was developed by Griffiths in 2005. The scale consists of 21 items and encompasses six dimensions- Saliency, Mood modification, Tolerance, Withdrawal, Conflict and Relapse. The statistical analyses applied for data analysis is ANOVA. The findings suggest that there is a significant difference in Social Networking among individuals aged 18-60 years at  $p < .05$ . There is a significant difference among the dimensions of Social Networking i.e. Saliency, Mood modification, Tolerance, Withdrawal, Conflict and Relapse across age-groups 18-60 years at  $p < .05$ .

**Keywords:** *Social Networking Addiction, Age groups*

**S**ocial networks are websites and apps that allow users and organizations to connect, communicate, share information and form relationships. People can connect with others in the same area, families, friends, and those with the same interests. Social networks are one of the most important uses of the internet today. Popular social networking sites such as Facebook, Yelp, Twitter, Instagram and TikTok, enable individuals to maintain social connections, stay informed and access, as well as share a wealth of information. These sites also enable marketers to reach their target audiences.

The term social networking entails having connections in both the real and the digital worlds. Today, this term is mainly used to reference online social communications. The internet has made it possible for people to find and connect with others who they may never have met otherwise. Online social networking is dependent on technology and internet connectivity. Users can access social networking sites using their PCs, tablets or smartphones. Most social networking sites run on a back end of searchable databases that use advanced programming

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languages, such as Python, to organize, store and retrieve data in an easy-to-understand format. For example, Tumblr uses such products and services in its daily operations as Google Analytics, Google Workspace and Word Press.

A social network will focus on user-generated content. Users primarily view and interact with content made by other users. They are encouraged to post text, status updates or pictures for viewing by others. Social networks allow the user or organization to create a profile. The profile contains information about the person and a centralized page with the content posted by them. Their profile may be associated with their real name. A social network has a way to form a lasting connection with other users. These connections are commonly called friending or following the other user. They allow the users to find other users and form webs of relationships. Often an algorithm will recommend other users and organizations they may want to form a connection with.

### *Social networking fulfills the following four main objectives:*

- **Sharing:** Friends or family members who are geographically dispersed can connect remotely and share information, updates, photos and videos. Social networking also enables individuals to meet other people with similar interests or to expand their current social networks.
- **Learning:** Social networks serve as great learning platforms. Consumers can instantly receive breaking news, get updates regarding friends and family, or learn about what's happening in their community.
- **Interacting:** Social networking enhances user interactions by breaking the barriers of time and distance. With cloud-based video communication technologies such as WhatsApp or Instagram Live, people can talk face to face with anyone in the world.
- **Marketing:** Companies may tap into social networking services to enhance brand awareness with the platform's users, improve customer retention and conversion rates, and promote brand and voice identity.

While there are various categories of social networking sites, the six most common types are the following:

- **Social connections:** This is a type of social network where people stay in touch with friends, family members, acquaintances or brands through online profiles and updates, or find new friends through similar interests. Some examples are Facebook, Myspace and Instagram.
- **Professional connections:** Geared toward professionals, these social networks are designed for business relationships. These sites can be used to make new professional contacts, enhance existing business connections and explore job opportunities, for example. They may include a general forum where professionals can connect with co-workers or offer an exclusive platform based on specific occupations or interest levels. Some examples are LinkedIn, Microsoft Yammer and Microsoft Viva.
- **Sharing of multimedia:** Various social networks provide video- and photography-sharing services, including YouTube and Flickr.
- **News or informational:** This type of social networking allows users to post news stories, informational or how-to content and can be general purpose or dedicated to a single topic. These social networks include communities of people who are looking for answers to everyday problems and they have much in common with web forums. Fostering a sense of helping others, members provide answers to questions, conduct

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discussion forums or teach others how to perform various tasks and projects. Popular examples include Reddit, Stack Overflow or Digg.

- **Communication:** Here, social networks focus on allowing the user to communicate directly with each other in one-on-one or group chats. They have less focus on posts or updates and are like instant messaging apps. Some examples are WhatsApp, WeChat and Snapchat.
- **Educational:** Educational social networks offer remote learning, enabling students and teachers to collaborate on school projects, conduct research, and interact through blogs and forums. Google Classroom, LinkedIn Learning and ePals are popular examples.

### *The advantages and disadvantages of social networking:*

- i) Social networking can be a double-edged sword. On one end, it provides unsurpassed social benefits, yet it can also make people more vulnerable to the spread of misinformation, as well as privacy and security threats.
- ii) Social networking offers the following benefits to consumers and businesses:
  - a) Brand awareness. Social networking enables companies to reach out to new and existing clients. This helps to make brands more relatable and promotes brand awareness.
  - b) Instant reachability. By erasing the physical and spatial boundaries between people, social networking websites can provide instant reachability.
  - c) Builds a following. Organizations and businesses can use social networking to build a following and expand their reach globally.
  - d) Business success. Positive reviews and comments generated by customers on social networking platforms can help improve business sales and profitability.
  - e) Increased website traffic. Businesses can use social networking profiles to boost and direct inbound traffic to their websites. They can achieve this, for example, by adding inspiring visuals, using plugins and shareable social media buttons, or encouraging inbound linking.

### *Social networking also has the following downsides:*

- i) Rumors and misinformation. Incorrect information can slip through the cracks of social networking platforms, causing havoc and uncertainty among consumers. Often, people take anything posted on social networking sites at face value instead of verifying the sources.
- ii) Negative reviews and comments. A single negative review can adversely affect an established business, especially if the comments are posted on a platform with a large following. A tarnished business reputation can often cause irreparable damage.
- iii) Data security and privacy concerns. Social networking sites can inadvertently put consumer data at risk. For instance, if a social networking site experiences a data breach, the users of that platform automatically fall under the radar as well. According to Business Insider, a data breach in April 2021 leaked the personal data of more than 500 million Facebook users.
- iv) Time-consuming process. Promoting a business on social media requires constant upkeep and maintenance. Creating, updating, preparing and scheduling regular posts can take a considerable amount of time. This can be especially cumbersome for small businesses that may not have the extra staff and resources to dedicate to social media marketing.

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*Although there are numerous social networking websites, the following sites are the most popular:*

- a. **Facebook:** Facebook users create profiles, share information and send messages and post status updates on their walls. Ranked the most active social networking platform by Data Report, Facebook has more than 2.9 billion active users. In 2021, the company was renamed Meta to reflect its business beyond just social media.
- b. **YouTube:** This popular video-sharing website enables users to share, upload and post videos and vlogs. According to Global Media Insight, YouTube has more than 2 billion monthly active users.
- c. **WhatsApp:** This free instant messaging app lets users send text messages, make video and voice calls, and share documents. According to WhatsApp, it has more than 2 billion users worldwide.
- d. **Instagram:** This free social media platform enables users to share long- and short-form videos and photos. It is primarily designed for iOS and Android smartphone users, but a desktop version is also available. However, sharing and uploading of content is only available through the Instagram app. Also owned by Meta, Instagram has over 2 billion monthly active users as of December 2021, according to CNBC.
- e. **TikTok:** This app is used for sharing and making personalized short videos. TikTok caters to a younger audience and is well known for being a lively and fun-to-use social networking platform. According to the Business of Apps newsletter, TikTok has more than 1.2 billion users as of the end of 2021.
- f. **Tumblr:** This microblogging site enables users to publish multimedia and other content types inside short blog posts. Users can also follow other users and make their blogs private. According to Finances Online, as of February 2021, Tumblr has more than 518 million user accounts.
- g. **Twitter:** Launched in 2006, this social media platform enables users to share their thoughts and opinions with a broad audience by posting messages known as tweets that contain up to 280 characters. According to Data Report, as of January 2022, Twitter has more than 436 million users.
- h. **Pinterest:** The Pinterest bookmarking site enables users to save and organize links to favorite online resources and destinations through tagging. According to Pinterest Inc., the platform has 431 million global monthly active users as of December 2021 -- a 6% decrease over the previous year.
- i. **Reddit:** Founded in 2005, Reddit provides a diverse collection of forums and subforums, also known as subreddits, on a variety of topics, including sports, breaking news and technology. Here, users can comment on each other's posts, as well as share news and content. According to Reddit, it has more than 50 million daily active users. This translates into 430 million monthly users as of 2019, according to The Small Business Blog.
- j. **Snapchat:** This multimedia app can be used on smartphones running Android or iOS. Founded in 2011, Snapchat enables users to send pictures or videos called snaps to friends. These snaps vanish after they have been viewed. According to Snap Inc., Snapchat has 319 million daily active users as of the end of 2021.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

**Jain et al. (2012)** observed the views of college students on the usage of social networking sites. Study was conducted the college students consist of different age group to know the awareness level on the problem associated with the excessive usage of social networking sites and how much social networking sites influenced them and also given their opinions about current problems like, human rights and corruption etc. in India. Research has been done on the youth belong Delhi-NCR region. 100 respondents were selected randomly from the sampling unit. This study was an exploratory analysis and data analysis was done and results were presented in terms of pie chart and ANOVA. Likert scale-based statements were used for the collection of responses. It has been found that females spend less time mostly for 15-35 minutes on these sites, yet females were the most responsive to these social issues.

**Kalra and Manani (2013)** found interesting results from the recent studies regarding the usage of social networking sites on academic performance. The research sample composed of 150 C.B.S.E. English language schools of Agra City Class XI graduates. Random Sampling technique was used to collect the sample. The students age of 16-18 years was participated in a survey. In terms of introversion and extroversion, the Introversion- Extroversion Inventory (2009) developed by Aziz and Gupta was used to identify the personality type. Grades earned in the previous class were used as an academic measure of the students. Results revealed that the academic performance of users and non-users on social networking sites (SNS) did not differ significantly. It was also observed that there was no significant difference exists between the academic performance of extroverts and introverts students.

**Anwar (2014)** examined the prevalence of social networking addiction among secondary school children and its relationship with their academic achievements. The secondary school students studying in class IX and X of different government and private schools of Lucknow city (capital of the state of Uttar Pradesh, India) constitute the population of the study. The investigation was conducted on 300 male and female students. It was found that internet usage among secondary school students has been rising, though it is controlled today but it might have a rising trend abruptly in future. The result has also shown that social networking usage pattern of male students is quite higher than the female students. It was found that average to high use of social networking positively influenced the academic achievements while no use and extremely high usage had a negative impact on academic achievements of the students.

**Meena P. S. (2015)**, "Social Networking Sites Addiction and associated Psychological Problems among Young Adults: A Study from North India." The aim of the study was to explore the prevalence of social networking sites addiction and associated psychological problems in young adults. A cross-sectional descriptive study involving 200 medical students of Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College, Ajmer was conducted to assess SNS addiction with a semi-structured Performa. The Depression Anxiety Stress scale-21 (DASS-21) and General Health Questionnaire-12 (GHQ-12) were used to assess participant's psychosocial status. And found out of 197 participants who completed the questionnaires 83 students (42.1%) were mildly effected, while 108 (54.8%) and 6 (3%) students were moderately and severely addicted to SNSs. Those with excessive SNSs use had higher rates of depression, anxiety and stress scores. The findings of this study indicate that excessive SNSs use among students is associated with increased psychological symptoms, including symptoms of stress and anxiety.

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**Misra, N., Dangi, S., & Patel, S. (2015)** “The study was conducted with an aim to study the effect of social networking sites and perceived social support on the psychological well-being of the youth.” The sample size was 100 which had 50 males and 50 females. All the participants were college going students or new entrants in the corporate sector. The participants were asked to fill the questionnaire– 1. Social Networking Sites Survey, 2. Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support Assessment, 3. Psychological General Well-Being Index. The results indicated a negative relationship between the usage of social networking sites and the psychological well-being while positive relationship existed between online perceived social support and psychological well-being. Certain gender differences were also found among the variables like perceived social support and attraction towards social networking sites.

**Sharma & Godiyal (2016)** conducted a study on the social networking sites usage by undergraduate students. The objective of the study was to know the online Social Networking Site usage pattern by the undergraduates’ male and female students. The sample consisted of 550 students studying in undergraduate classes in the various colleges of Dehradun affiliated to HNB Garhwal University. A self-developed inventory/checklist was used to know the status of use of Social Networking Sites by the college students. It was found that most of the undergraduates were using SNSs and that confirms to various other studies. Even those who are not member of any Social Networking Sites themselves were accessing them from others account. It was also found that male undergraduates were using Facebook the most while females’ top site was WhatsApp. SNSs are accessed mostly through the mobile phones and laptops. Least used are the tablets. For male entertainment is the top reason while for female it is education. For males staying in touch with friends was more important. For female preparation for competitive exams, knowledge sharing were important than other things.

**Bhattacharjee Dr. Sharmistha (2018)**, “Usage of online Social Networking Sites among school students of Siliguri, West Bengal, India.” The primary objective of this research was to find the pattern of school students’ SNS and its influence on their academic performance. A pretested and predesigned questionnaire was self-administrated anonymously by 388 randomly selected students of an English medium school situated in metropolitan city of Siliguri in West Bengal. Result of this study was 338(87.17%) students used SNS and spent an increased amount of time on these networks addiction was seen in (70.07%).

**Barman Lisa (2019)**, “Use of Social Networking Site and Mental Disorders among medical students in Kolkata, West Bengal”. The aim of this cross-sectional study, conducted among 200 undergraduate students of a medical college of Kolkata city, was to assess the pattern of use of SNS and the prevalence of anxiety and depression as well as to examine the relation, if any between the use of SNS and anxiety and depression. A structured questionnaire, State-Trait Anxiety Inventory and Becks Depression Inventory were used and examined with Mann-Whitney U-Test. Result revealed that more than 90% of students use more than one SNS or instant messaging system. Nearly 24% reported depression and 68.5% had state anxiety. STAI and BDI scores were significantly ( $P < 0.05$ ) higher among students who used SNS for 4 hours and more. Study concluded with more use of SNS and dependence on it was associated with anxiety and depression.

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### Objectives:

- To study the difference in Social Networking among individuals aged 18-60 years.
- To study the differences among all the dimensions of Social Networking i.e. Saliency, Mood modification, Tolerance, Withdrawal, Conflict and Relapse across age-groups 18-60 years.

### Hypothesis:

- There will be a difference in social networking among individuals aged 18-60 years.
- There will be differences among all the dimensions of Social Networking i.e. Saliency, Mood modification, Tolerance, Withdrawal, Conflict and Relapse across age-groups 18-60 years.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Sampling Stratification:

The sample of 120 participants has been selected from Uttar Pradesh, Delhi-NCR and Gujarat. The participants in the study fall within the age range of 18 to 60 years.

### Tool:

- **Social Networking Addiction Scale:** This scale was developed by Griffiths in 2005. The scale consists of 21 items and encompasses six dimensions- Saliency, Mood modification, Tolerance, Withdrawal, Conflict and Relapse. The scale has 7 alternatives and out of them one alternative has to be selected. Scoring is done by assigning 1 to the most negative response and 7 to the extremely positive response.

### Procedure:

The standardized scale developed by Griffiths in 2005 was used in the present study for the convenience and outreach of the participants of the study. It was uploaded as WhatsApp status and on other social networking sites, the help as rendered by friends, family and faculty members. Finally, the scoring was done in Google docs. The study considered includes the dimension-wise comparison of various comparative groups were carried on through the manual scoring in the end. The results entered to be analyzed and displayed.

**Statistical Analysis:** The statistical analyses applied for data analysis will be ANOVA.

## RESULT

**Table 1: Showing the difference in Social Networking among individuals aged 18-60 years.**

Social Networking Addiction	18-30	31-45	46-60	Total
N	40	40	40	120
Mean	83.9	74.5	59.6	72.7
Standard Deviation	27.9	25.1	20	26.3
Social Networking Addiction	SS	Df	MS	<b>F = 9.95</b>
Between the group	12033.9	2	6016.9	
Within the group	70719.2	117	604.4	
Total	82753.2	119		

From the table 1, the f-ratio is 9.95 which means the result is significant at  $p < .05$ .

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**Table 2: Showing the differences among all the dimensions of Social Networking i.e. Salienc, Mood modification, Tolerance, Withdrawal, Conflict and Relapse across age-groups 18-60 years.**

<b>Salienc</b>	<b>18-30</b>	<b>31-45</b>	<b>46-60</b>	<b>Total</b>
N	40	40	40	120
Mean	17.8	15.7	11.2	14.9
Standard Deviation	5.47	6.54	4.79	6.23
<b>Salienc</b>	<b>SS</b>	<b>Df</b>	<b>MS</b>	<b>F = 14.03</b>
Between the group	896.4	2	448.2	
Within the group	3735.8	117	31.9	
Total	4632.3	119		
<b>Mood Modification</b>	<b>18-30</b>	<b>31-45</b>	<b>46-60</b>	<b>Total</b>
N	40	40	40	120
Mean	14	13.7	10.2	12.6
Standard Deviation	4.09	3.84	4.25	4.39
<b>Mood Modification</b>	<b>SS</b>	<b>Df</b>	<b>MS</b>	<b>F = 10.85</b>
Between the group	359.2	2	179.6	
Within the group	1936.3	117	16.5	
Total	2295.5	119		
<b>Tolerance</b>	<b>18-30</b>	<b>31-45</b>	<b>46-60</b>	<b>Total</b>
N	40	40	40	120
Mean	12.6	11.7	9.17	11.7
Standard Deviation	4.48	5.06	3.58	4.62
<b>Tolerance</b>	<b>SS</b>	<b>Df</b>	<b>MS</b>	<b>F = 6.55</b>
Between the group	256.2	2	128.1	
Within the group	2285.1	117	19.5	
Total	2541.3	119		
<b>Withdrawal</b>	<b>18-30</b>	<b>31-45</b>	<b>46-60</b>	<b>Total</b>
N	40	40	40	120
Mean	13.9	11.4	10.3	11.9
Standard Deviation	7.06	6.27	4.35	6.15
<b>Withdrawal</b>	<b>SS</b>	<b>Df</b>	<b>MS</b>	<b>F = 3.91</b>
Between the group	282.7	2	141.3	
Within the group	4223.2	117	36.09	
Total	4505.9	119		
<b>Conflict</b>	<b>18-30</b>	<b>31-45</b>	<b>46-60</b>	<b>Total</b>
N	40	40	40	120
Mean	10.17	8.77	7.4	8.78
Standard Deviation	5.41	4.48	3.07	4.53
<b>Conflict</b>	<b>SS</b>	<b>Df</b>	<b>MS</b>	<b>F = 3.92</b>
Between the group	154.01	2	77.00	
Within the group	2294.3	117	19.6	
Total	2448.3	119		

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<b>Relapse</b>	<b>18-30</b>	<b>31-45</b>	<b>46-60</b>	<b>Total</b>
N	40	40	40	120
Mean	15.3	13.1	11.3	13.2
Standard Deviation	7.76	6.32	5.11	6.65
<b>Relapse</b>	<b>SS</b>	<b>Df</b>	<b>MS</b>	<b>F = 3.95</b>
Between the group	333.3	2	166.6	
Within the group	4930.1	117	42.1	
Total	5263.4	119		

From the table 2, the Saliency f-ratio is 14.03 which means the result is significant at  $p < .05$ . The Mood modification f-ratio is 10.85 which means the result is significant at  $p < .05$ . The tolerance f-ratio is 6.55 which means the result is significant at  $p < .05$ . The Withdrawal f-ratio is 3.91 which means the result is significant at  $p < .05$ . The Conflict f-ratio is 3.92 which means the result is significant at  $p < .05$ . The Relapse f-ratio is 3.95 which means the result is significant at  $p < .05$ .

### **INTERPRETATION & DISCUSSION**

The aim of the study was to study the difference in Social Networking among individuals aged 18-60 years and the differences among all the dimensions of Social Networking i.e. Saliency, Mood modification, Tolerance, Withdrawal, Conflict and Relapse across age-groups 18-60 years. Assessment of Social Networking Addiction is conducted using the Social Networking Addiction Scale developed by Griffiths in 2005. The sample of 120 participants has been selected from Uttar Pradesh, Delhi-NCR and Gujarat. The participants in the study fall within the age range of 18 to 60 years. The statistical analysis involves the use of ANOVA.

The findings of the study reveal a significant difference in social networking usage among individuals aged 18–60 years, as indicated by the F-ratio ( $F = 9.95, p < .05$ ). This suggests that age plays a crucial role in determining patterns and behaviors related to social networking. The results align with existing literature emphasizing how digital habits evolve across life stages. Younger individuals (aged 18–30) are typically digital natives, often displaying high levels of engagement with social networking platforms for personal, professional, and entertainment purposes. Conversely, middle-aged groups (31–45) may use social networking selectively, balancing professional obligations and family responsibilities. Older individuals (46–60) might exhibit lower usage due to generational differences in technology adoption or preference for face-to-face communication.

From the above result, the F-ratio of 14.03 ( $p < .05$ ) demonstrates that saliency is a significant factor in social networking addiction. Saliency reflects the extent to which social networking becomes central to an individual's thoughts, emotions, and actions. A significant result suggests that many participants prioritize social media over other activities, leading to behavioral patterns that disrupt daily routines and relationships. This supports previous research emphasizing the dominance of social networking in addictive behavior, often linked to compulsive usage and constant preoccupation. The F-ratio of 10.85 ( $p < .05$ ) indicates that mood modification is a significant driver of social networking addiction. Mood modification refers to the tendency to use social networking to manage or regulate emotional states, such as relieving boredom, stress, or anxiety. This significant result indicates that individuals frequently turn to social media for emotional support or as a coping mechanism. This reliance

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perpetuates a cycle of emotional dependency, reinforcing addictive tendencies. The F-ratio of 6.55 ( $p < .05$ ) underscores the significance of tolerance in social networking addiction. Tolerance involves the increasing need to spend more time on social networking to achieve the same level of satisfaction or gratification. The significant finding suggests that individuals experience a gradual escalation in usage, paralleling patterns seen in substance addictions, where higher "doses" are needed over time.

The F-ratio of 3.91 indicates that withdrawal symptoms were statistically significant at  $p < .05$  in this sample. Withdrawal refers to the discomfort or distress individuals feel when they cannot access social networking platforms. This result implies that some users may experience irritability, anxiety, or emotional instability when deprived of social media, similar to withdrawal symptoms seen in other forms of addiction. With an F-ratio of 3.92, conflict was also significant at  $p < .05$ . Conflict refers to interpersonal or intrapersonal struggles caused by excessive social networking. This includes arguments with family or friends, neglect of responsibilities, and internal guilt or regret over time spent online. The significance of this dimension highlights the detrimental impact of addiction on personal and professional relationships. The F-ratio of 3.95 indicates that relapse was significant at  $p < .05$ . Relapse refers to returning to excessive use of social networking after attempts to reduce or quit. This result suggests that despite efforts to moderate usage, many individuals struggle to maintain control over their habits, indicating strong addictive tendencies.

### CONCLUSION

The findings suggest that there is a significant difference in Social Networking among individuals aged 18-60 years. There is a significant difference among the dimensions of Social Networking i.e. Salience, Mood modification, Tolerance, Withdrawal, Conflict and Relapse across age-groups 18-60 years. Thus, all the hypothesis is accepted.

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### ***Conflict of Interest***

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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