



Social Media Addiction: Impact on Life

Pooja Rani

Department of Pediatric Nursing, Shri Mata Vaishno Devi College of Nursing, SMVDU (Kakryal), Katra, J&K

ABSTRACT

Checking and scrolling through social media has become an increasingly popular activity over the last decade. Although the majority of people use of social media is non-problematic, there is a small percentage of users that become addicted to social networking sites and engage in excessive or compulsive use. Social media use becomes problematic when someone views social networking sites as an important coping mechanism to relieve stress, loneliness, or depression. For these people, social media use provides continuous rewards that they're not receiving in real life, and end up engaging in the activity more and more. This continuous use eventually leads to multiple interpersonal problems, such as ignoring real life relationships, work or school responsibilities, and physical health, which may then exacerbate an individual's undesirable moods.

Keywords: Social media, Addiction, FOMO, Cyberbullying

1. Introduction

“Social Media Addiction Is Like Suicide In Daily Installments.”

-Bharat Nain

If you find yourself losing several minutes (or even hours) at a time after using social media, you're not alone. While social media first started as a way to connect with friends and family, it's since evolved into a coveted hobby used by all age groups.¹ In many ways, social media has enriched our lives by connecting and inspiring people. But there is a dark side as well. Aside from all the negative posts on social media, the cyberbullying, and the FOMO (fear of missing out) that exists, recent studies indicate that excessive social media use not only leads to poor decision-making, but people who use social media incessantly often have attitudes, thoughts, and behaviors that mimic those of a drug addict.²

2. What is Social Media Addiction?

Addiction usually refers to compulsive behavior that leads to negative effects. In most addictions, people feel compelled to do certain activities so often that they become a harmful habit, which then interferes with other important activities such as work or school.

Social media addiction is a behavioral disorder in which teens or young adults become delighted by social media. Teen social media addiction is characterized by the combination of an excessive media consumption, an increasing reliance on social media as a way to feel good, and an inability to stop this behavior despite suffering losses in friendship, decreased physical social engagement, and a negative impact at school work.³

3. Epidemiology

India currently has a total population of over 1.36 billion people. Of that population, 230 million or 70% are active social media users. At the end of 2018, the number of social media users in India stood at 326.1 million. At the end of 2019, this number has been estimated to grow to 351.4 million. On average,

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: pooja94@gmail.com

Indian users spend 2.4 hours on social media a day. Facebook has 241 million active users in India. There are 69 million people on Instagram in India as of November 2018. People between the ages of 18-24 are the largest age group for Instagram. India has 7.75 million users on Twitter. 15.1 million people use Snapchat daily. There has been a 40% increase in the number of daily users in India from 2018 to 2019.⁴

4. How it Affects Brain?

Social media is addictive both physically and psychologically. According to a new study by Harvard University, self-disclosure on social networking sites lights up the same part of the brain that also ignites when taking an addictive substance. The reward area in the brain and its chemical messenger pathways affect decisions and sensations. When someone experiences something rewarding, or uses an addictive substance, neurons in the principal dopamine-producing areas in the brain are activated, causing dopamine levels to rise. Therefore, the brain receives a “reward” and associates the drug or activity with positive reinforcement. This is observable in social media usage; when an individual gets a notification, such as a like or mention, the brain receives a rush of dopamine and sends it along reward pathways, causing him or her to feel pleasure.

5. Signs of Social Media Addiction

- Low self-esteem
- Increased isolation and loneliness
- Anxiety or depression
- Onset of social anxiety disorder
- A fear of missing out (FOMO)
- Disrupted sleep patterns
- Lose interest in other activities
- Decreased physical activity
- Neglect school or work in favor of social media.

6. Negative Effects of Social Media Addiction

- ✓ Negative effects to job or schoolwork due to the overuse of social media
- ✓ Increased use during other activities, such as hanging out with friends and family, or while eating
- ✓ Increased reliance on social media as a way to cope with problems
- ✓ Restlessness and irritability whenever we are not using social media
- ✓ Anger whenever social media usage is reduced
- ✓ Thinking about social media whenever we aren't using it

7. How to Avoid Excessive Use of Social Media?

- Deleting social media apps from smartphone.
- Meals, and recreational activities.
- Set aside a certain amount of time dedicated to social media per day.
- Leave phone, tablet, and computer out of the bedroom.
- Take up a new hobby that's not technology-related. Examples include sports, art, cooking classes, and more.
- Make it a point to see your friends and family in person when possible.⁵

8. Scales and measures for addiction

Several scales have been developed and validated that help to understand the issues regarding problematic social media use. Some of the scales used for social media addiction are Facebook Intensity Scale (FBI), Multi-dimensional Facebook Intensity Scale (MFIS), Social Networking Activity Intensity Scale (SNAIS) and Social Media Disorder Scale (SMD).

9. Management

No established treatments exist for social media addiction. Screen time recommendations for children and families have been developed by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Possible therapeutic interventions published by Andreassen include:

- ✓ Self-help interventions, including application-specific timers
- ✓ Cognitive behavioral therapy
- ✓ Organizational and schooling support.

Possible treatment for social anxiety disorder includes cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). Cognitive behavioral therapy helps victims of social anxiety to improve their ways of thinking, behaving, and reacting to stressful situations.

10. Discussion

An estimated 27% of children who spend 3 or more hours a day on social media exhibit symptoms of poor mental health. Overuse of social networking sites is much more problematic in children and young adults because their brains and social skills are still developing. Researches has shown that adolescents who habitually use social media from a young age have severely stunted social interaction skills. Despite the fact that users are interacting with each other on these platforms, many of them don't necessarily translate to the real world. Studies have found that these individuals have worsened social anxiety in groups, higher rates of depression, negative body-image, and lowered levels of empathy and compassion towards others when surveyed.

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