



Social Networking Sites' Addiction and its ill-effects: A study among youths of Delhi

Supriya Sinha¹ and Ketaki Chandiok²

¹ Post Graduate Student, Dyal Singh College, University of Delhi (Affiliated to Dept. of Anthropology, School of Social Science, IGNOU);

² Academic Counselor, Dyal Singh College, University of Delhi (Affiliated to Dept. of Anthropology, School of Social Science, IGNOU)
corresponding author's e-mail: <chandiokketaki@gmail.com>

KEYWORDS

Youth, Social Networking Sites, Social Media Addiction Scale (SMAS), Internet Addiction Test (IAT), ill-effects

ABSTRACT

With the onset of Web 2.0 technologies, dynamic user-generated content and growth of social media was seen in the society. Social Networking Sites (SNS) have become an inevitable part of our life. Despite its numerous advantages, uncontrolled extensive usage of social media has resulted in increasing the levels of addiction among the youth. Through quantitative methodology, the present study delineates social media usage among the youth, its levels of addiction and ill-effects caused due to social media usage. A self-designed questionnaire comprising of items from the Social Media Addiction Scale (SMAS) and the Internet Addiction Test (IAT) was used to gauge SNS addiction among youth. 50% of the research participants were found to be 'somewhat' addicted to social media platforms which pertains to the threshold of addiction and if preventive measures are not taken it may lead to extreme addiction. 73.3% of the population claimed deteriorating academic performance due to high SNS usage. 63.3% participants showed compulsive behavior when told to part from SNS.

Introduction

The use of mobile phones has increased over the past decades; they are now an essential part of business, commerce and society. They are often perceived as an emblematic technology of space-time compression, touted as a tool for anytime, anywhere connectivity. (Ito, 2005) Social networking sites (SNSs) are increasingly used by young people, to engage with others. There are SNS such as Myspace, Facebook, Whatsapp, Instagram, Skype, Tumblr, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Tik Tok, and many more. These sites provide specified services in different domains, for example, LinkedIn caters to professional networking. On account of its multifarious application, social media networking has increased, especially among young people and has become a driving force for the internet with their strong social presence. (Fuentes et al., 2015). However, uncontrolled usage of SNS can cause addiction and be detrimental to the young generation.

Such excessive usage promote addictive behavior among young adults. With a faster internet, there lies an elevated risk of SNS addition among young adults. The International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) affirms mental and behavioural disorders to be syndromes that may cause clinical disturbances in an individual's cognition or emotional regulation reflecting a dysfunction in developmental processes. Various researches show a rise in SNS addiction among youth leading to

behavioural changes such as loneliness, anxiety and stress. Hence, the present research gives a miniature understanding of a significant behavioral issue that needs immediate attention in the near future. The present study not only ascertains the usage of SNS among youth and their addiction levels but also explores the ill-effects caused due to excessive media usage.

Review of literature

Due to the rapid growth of technology, the use of internet is vital in most individual's daily routines. The introduction and increased usage of SNS such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, Hike, Orkut, Tumblr, etc; have revolutionized the way of communication. (Raj et al., 2018). The Global Digital Report (2019) estimates an annual addition of 288 million (9.0%) population as active media users across the world. The same report established a 24% annual growth of social media users, in the Indian context. A study in this context, has outlined that the rate of increase in internet usage from 2000-2017 was 933.8% (Sahin, 2018).

In a similar study conducted by the Pew Research Centre (2016), adult internet users access the web "several times a day." Once online, 76% of internet users across the 40 countries surveyed used social networking sites. In addition to social media use, another common internet activity is online gaming (Kuss and Griffiths, 2012; Kuss et al., 2014). The International Classification of Diseases in its latest version has included gaming disorders as an emergent behavioural issue. Social Network Games (SNGs) over social networking platforms have become popular and spawned a whole new subculture. (Shin and Shin, 2010). However, on in light of the current COVID-19 pandemic, World Health Organisation (WHO) has encouraged the 'Play Apart Together' campaign. The campaign involves the gaming industry to help people stay connected while maintaining social distance by organizing special gaming events and rewards (Mastrota, 2020).

Focusing specifically on social media addiction, Andreason and Pallesen (2014) defined it as a strong urge to use SNSs, impairing other social activities – studies/job, interpersonal relationship and psychological health and well-being. Individuals who use social media for longer duration have a desire to be notified of anything immediately. (Sahin, 2018) In a study conducted among Norwegian adults, internet use was strongly dependent on the age of the population with the highest frequency of users in the youngest age group (99.4%). The proportion of Internet usage was slightly higher among men than among women. A lower duration of Internet use was reported among people with low educational level and an unsatisfactory financial situation. Internet use was not correlated with marital status (Bakken et al., 2009).

Related literature has also reported that individuals demonstrate deficient self-regulation of internet use; tend to engage online to overcome negative moods such as loneliness or anxiety. Communicating online alleviates negative moods (known as mood alteration), which then reinforces online use. (Ryan et al., 2014) Another study established that some online affairs can evolve to real life meetings. It has been found that in the process of sharing sexual fantasies online, can alter patterns of sexual interest in real life (Young, 2004).

Research has consistently shown that various online activities such as online gaming and social media use may be potentially addictive to a small minority of individuals particularly adolescents and emerging adults (Cheng and Li, 2014; Kuss and Griffiths, 2012; Kuss et al. 2014; Ryan, et al., 2014).

Objectives of the Research

In wake of the above discussions, the present study would try to understand, 1. The internet usage and SNS addiction among youth, 2. To outline the relation between SNS addiction levels and demographic details, 3. To explore the relation between SNS addition and its ill-effects.

Methodology

A total of 118 participants (64 males and 54 females) in the age group of 20 to 28 years were recruited for the present study from universities in Delhi. A self-constructed questionnaire was developed for collecting demographic data, internet and SNS usage.

All 29 items from the Social Media Addiction Scale (SMA- Scale) were used to ascertain the addiction level of the sample. The scale developed by CengizŞahin is a 5-point Likert type scale consisting of 29 items. The validity of the data obtained from the scale items for the factor analysis was determined by using the Kaiser Meyer Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett test. The values have been obtained as KMO test value, .965; Bartlett test value $\chi^2 = 18304.06$; $df=400$ ($p=.00$). The reliability of the scale was calculated using the Spearman-Brown formula and Cronbach Alpha, which was found to be 0.91 and 0.93 respectively. (Sahin, 2018) The Internet Addiction Test was used to assess the ill-effect cause due to social media usage. The test was developed by Dr. Kimberly Young, to analyse symptoms of internet addiction and compulsivity in a variety of test setting. (Widyanto and McMurrin, 2004). Out of 20 items on the scale, 10 items were used for the present study to narrow down the scope of the study.

The questionnaire was developed in Google forms. The data collected was analyzed using SPSS version 20. The data was evaluated through mean, percentages, correlation and a chi-square test. The statistical results thus obtained were interpreted as below.

Results

The mean age of the sample population was found to be 22.77 years with a standard deviation of 2.86. Majority of the participants in the present study were male participants. Most participants were married. The sample consisted of more graduates than post graduates and above. Around 93% of the families of the sample population, belonged to the low income group (≤ 2 lakhs per annum).

Table 1: Demographic Details of the sample population.

| | | Number of Participants | Percentage of Population |
|----------------|----------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Gender | Male | 64 | 54.2 |
| | Female | 54 | 45.8 |
| Education | Graduation | 74 | 62.7 |
| | Post-Graduation or further | 44 | 37.3 |
| Marital Status | Single/Unmarried | 114 | 96.6 |
| | Married | 4 | 3.4 |
| Occupation | Student | 79 | 66.9 |
| | student and part time job | 8 | 6.8 |
| | Employed | 31 | 26.3 |

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|--|----|------|
| Personal Income (per annum) | ≤2 lakhs | 93 | 78.8 |
| | 2-6 lakhs | 19 | 26.1 |
| | ≥ 6 lakhs | 6 | 5.1 |
| Place of Stay | Residence (with family) | 71 | 60.1 |
| | Rented Accommodation (Hostel, paying guest, etc) | 47 | 39.8 |

99.2% of the participants showed availability on social networking platforms and used internet for at least 3 hours/day. 87.3% of the participants were present on more than 2 SNS. 88.1% of the sample population owned/carried one cell phone, while the rest owned more. 42.4% of the respondents spent less than 3 hours per day on SNS, 52.5% spent 4 to 7 hours on SNS each day while 5.1% spent more than 7 hours on SNS. (Data not shown) The present study showed 7.60% of the participants were 'not at all addicted', 36.44% had a 'slight' addiction score, 50% were 'somewhat' addiction, 5.08% were 'moderately' addicted score and 0.85% were 'extremely' addiction to social media. (Data not shown)

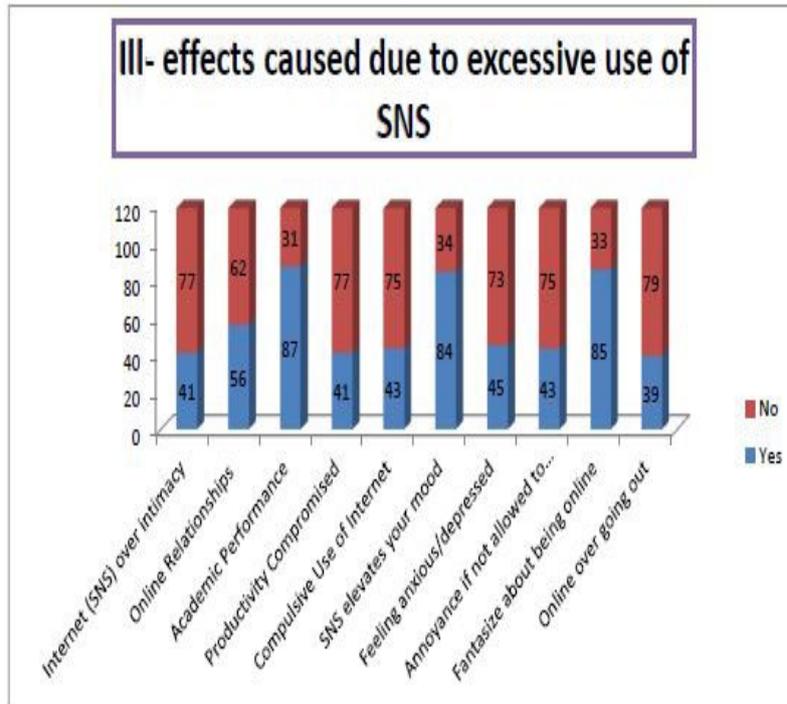
Table 2: Levels of Addiction viz-a-viz demographic details

| Not at all/ Slightly Addicted | | Levels of addiction among sample population | | | |
|-------------------------------|--|---|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| | | Somewhat Addicted | Moderately/ Extremely Addicted | Pearson's Chi-Square (p-value*) | |
| Gender | Female | 24 (20.3%) | 29 (24.6%) | 1 (0.8%) | 3.071 (p:0.215) |
| | Male | 28(23.7%) | 30(25.4%) | 6 (5.1%) | |
| Education | Graduation | 29(24.6%) | 40(33.9%) | 5(4.2%) | 1.952 (p:0.377) |
| | Post-Graduation or further | 23(19.55%) | 19(16.1%) | 2(1.7%) | |
| Occupation | Student/Unemployed | 31(26.3%) | 43(36.4%) | 5(4.2%) | 2.908 (p: 0.573) |
| | Student and Part time job | 5(4.2%) | 3(2.5%) | 0(0.0%) | |
| | Employed | 16(13.6%) | 13(11.0%) | 2(1.7%) | |
| Marital Status | Married | 3(2.5%) | 1(0.8%) | 0(0.0%) | 1.662 (p:0.435) |
| | Single/Unmarried | 49(41.5%) | 58(49.2%) | 7(5.1%) | |
| Personal Income (per annum) | ≤ 2 lakhs | 38(32.2%) | 50(42.3%) | 5(4.2%) | 3.564 (p: 0.468) |
| | 2-6 lakhs | 10(8.4%) | 7(5.9%) | 2(1.6%) | |
| | ≥ 6 lakhs | 4(3.4%) | 2(1.7%) | 0(0.0%) | |
| Place of stay | Rented Accommodation (Hostel, Paying guest, etc) | 24(20.3%) | 19(16.1%) | 3(2.5%) | 2.308 (p:0.315) |
| | Residence (with family) | 28(23.7%) | 42(33.9%) | 4(3.4%) | |

*p < 0.05, data is significant.

Male participants exhibited higher 'extreme' addiction as compared to the female ones. A similar trend was seen between participants in the graduation and post graduate groups. Students were found to be more addicted to SNS than participants who were employed. Participants in the lower income group, those unmarried and those residing with family showcased higher levels of addiction.

Figure: Ill-effects caused due to excessive mobile phone usage.



The present study recorded responses as a 'Yes/No' with respect to ill-effects caused due to excessive social media usage. The participants responded negatively when they were asked if they preferred internet (SNS) over intimacy. A similar trend was seen, when the participants were gauged for compromise in productivity, online relationships and compulsive use of the internet.

On contrary, the participants responded positively to mood elevation with the usage of SNS. A similar response was recorded for academic performance; the participants showed no signs of deterioration in academic performance due to social media usage. The participations did not report a feeling of anxiousness and annoyance when not allowed to use the internet. It was also found that participants preferred going out over using the internet.

Discussion

Social media contributes to the transformation of users from passive listeners to active content producers and it makes it easier to stay connected and to produce content by providing applications for different mobile devices and operating systems. (Sahin, 2018) There has been a positive correlation between the severity of internet addiction and the level of impulsivity. Evidences have shown that impulse control disorder and that trait impulsivity are markers for vulnerability to develop internet addiction. (Lee et al., 2012) The heightened use of social media and internet reported in the present study is in accordance with earlier research findings estimating a 933.8% increase in internet usage from 2000-2017 and increased use of SNS among youth (Sahin, 2018; Romero and Centallas, 2008; Balakrishnan and Griffiths, 2017; Ahmed and Qazi, 2015).

.The minimum duration of internet usage per day according to the present study has increased to 3 hours which in earlier research was found to be 30 minutes.(Khan, 2008) Currently, the main biological factors related to the Internet Addiction Disorder remain unclear (Lee et. al., 2012) likely factors include the imbalance of functional levels of dopamine (DA), serotonin (5- HT) and/or norepinephrine (NE), which are associated with the onset of mood and anxiety disorders as is the imbalance of serotonin and norepinephrine neuronal axon rearrangement.(Lee et al.,2012).Such long durations of internet usage can be justified as a result of the increased audio-visual content on SNS which the young generations are able to watch and share. It was reported individuals spending more time on social networking sites scored higher on the SMA-Scale showing higher levels of addiction. The present study shows men to be more addicted than women, similar to the findings of a study conducted in West Bengal, India. (Raj et. al., 2018) Single/unmarried participants are more addicted to SNS than the married population. Graduated participants were found to be more addicted than post graduated individuals; this could be due to increased responsibility with increased educational qualification. The lower annual income of the participants is related to a higher addiction level to SNS (Raj et. al., 2018).

The present study shows 65.3% of the population would prefer intimacy over internet (SNS) which is in contrast to earlier studies which establish that the process of sharing fantasies online can alter patterns of sexual interest of a person.(Young, 2004) As to online relationships, participants preferred face-to-face relationships in contrast to researches which conclude the younger generation is more susceptible to getting into an online relationship.(Krishnamurthy and Chetlapali, 2015) The present research shows an extensive use of SNS as a factor for deteriorating academic performance as in contrast to a similar study among university students of Pakistan.(Ahmed and Qazi, 2011) The participants responded negatively to the effect of productivity, supporting previous studies which concluded, technology enhances a person's productivity.(Ahmed and Qazi, 2011) Anxiety disorders are associated with pronounced functional impairments and reduced quality of life across the lifespan and importantly are linked with sleep- related problems (SRPs) in youth populations (Zhang et. al., 2013).

The present study showcased 63.6% of the sample population did not show compulsive behavior for the use of internet, this is in contrast to findings which delineates compulsive behavior if an individual is not allowed to use the internet.(Demetrovics et al., 2008) The results further indicate that the participants experienced elevation in mood after SNS usage substantiating earlier findings. With regard to feeling anxious/depressed and getting annoyed if not allowed to use internet, the participants responded negatively in accordance to earlier studies.(Christakis et al., 2011; Griffiths et al., 2014) The study showed participants preferred going out with family and friends over going online in contrast to conclusions which state more friends on SNS lead to avoid going out with friends.(Christakis et al., 2011) Research participants responded positively to fantasizing about being online in contrast to similar literature which establish that the younger generation rarely or occasionally fantasizes about going online (Christakis et al., 2011).

Conclusion

Overall the study acknowledges increasing use of internet, specifically social media, in the contemporary world and among youths in Delhi. From daily weather forecasts, news, information of public interest; to education, shopping and entertainment; people have taken to the social media to stay updated.

Systematic preventive measures must be taken to curb the increasing menace of SNS addiction among youth. Preventive measures should be taken to reduce social media use like turning off

notifications to certain apps to prevent the urge to keep checking the phone time and again, uninstalling irrelevant apps which otherwise increase the possibility of browsing one's phone more often. There can be boundaries fixed for phone usage for example- not using phones while eating, during leisure time with family and not browsing the phone after a set time at night. Avoid looking at your phone and checking social networking platforms, as the first thing in the morning. Restrictions at school, colleges, classrooms, hospital, workplaces, libraries, place of worship, etc could help in overcoming the ill-effects of excessive social media usage. Since the modern world must have social networking platforms as essentials, further research in causes related to its addiction and preventive measures is a must.

Acknowledgment: I would like to acknowledge the contribution of Department of Anthropology, Indira Gandhi National Open University and our academic coordinators at Dyal Singh College, New Delhi for their constant support.

References

- Ahmed, I., & Qazi, T. F., (2011). A look out for academic impacts of Social networking sites (SNSs): A student based perspective. *African Journal of Business Management*, 5(12), 5022-5031.
- Balakrishnan, J., & Griffiths, M. D., (2017). Social media addiction: What is the role of content in YouTube?. *Journal of behavioral addictions*, 6(3), 364-377.
- Christakis, D. A., Moreno, M. M., Jelenchick, L., Myaing, M. T., & Zhou, C., (2011). Problematic internet usage in US college students: a pilot study. *BMC medicine*, 9(1), 77.
- Demetrovics, Zsolt, Beatrix Szeredi, and Sándor Rózsa. "The three-factor model of Internet addiction: The development of the Problematic Internet Use Questionnaire." *Behavior Research Methods* 40, no. 2 (2008): 563-574.
- Griffiths, M. D., Kuss, D. J., & Demetrovics, Z., (2014). Social networking addiction: An overview of preliminary findings. In *Behavioral addictions* (pp. 119-141). Academic Press.
- Ito, M., (2005). Mobile phones, Japanese youth, and the re-placement of social contact. In *Mobile communications* (pp. 131-148). Springer, London.
- Khan, M. M., (2008). Adverse effects of excessive mobile phone use. *International journal of occupational medicine and environmental health*, 21(4), 289.
- Köse, Ö. B., & Doğan, A., (2019). The Relationship between Social Media Addiction and Self- Esteem among Turkish University Students. *Addicta Turk. J. Addict*, 6, 175-190.
- Krishnamurthy, S., & Chetlapalli, S. K., (2015). Internet addiction: Prevalence and risk factors: A cross-sectional study among college students in Bengaluru, the Silicon Valley of India. *Indian journal of public health*, 59(2), 115.
- Lee, H. W., Choi, J. S., Shin, Y. C., Lee, J. Y., Jung, H. Y., & Kwon, J. S., (2012). Impulsivity in internet addiction: a comparison with pathological gambling. *Cyberpsychology, behavior, and social networking*, 15(7), 373-377.
- Leung, H., Pakpour, A. H., Strong, C., Lin, Y. C., Tsai, M. C., Griffiths, M. D., ... & Chen, I. H., (2020). Measurement invariance across young adults from Hong Kong and Taiwan among three internet-related addiction scales: Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS), Smartphone Application-Based Addiction Scale (SABAS), and Internet Gaming Disorder Scale-Short Form (IGDS-SF9)(Study Part A). *Addictive behaviors*, 101, 105969.
- Raj, M., Bhattacharjee, S., & Mukherjee, A., (2018). Usage of online social networking sites among school students of Siliguri, West Bengal, India. *Indian Journal of Psychological Medicine*, 40(5), 452-457.
- Romero, N. L., & Centellas, F. C. (2008). New stages, new narrative forms: The Web 2.0 and audiovisual language. *Hypertext. net, Barcelona (Espanha)*, 6.
- Ryan, T., Chester, A., Reece, J., & Xenos, S., (2014). The uses and abuses of Facebook: A review of Facebook addiction. *Journal of behavioral addictions*, 3(3), 133-148.
- Sahin, C., (2018). Social Media Addiction Scale-Student Form: The Reliability and Validity Study. *Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology-TOJET*, 17(1), 169-182.
- Shin, D. H., & Shin, Y. J., (2011). Why do people play social network games?. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 27(2), 852-861.
- The Global State of Digital of 2019 Report. Retrieved from <<https://hootsuite.com/pages/digital-in-2019>>. (accessed on August 7, 2019)

- Widyanto, L., & McMurrin, M., (2004). The psychometric properties of the internet addiction test. *Cyberpsychology & behavior*, 7(4), 443-450.
- Mastrota, E., (2020). World Health Organization Teaming Up with Gaming Industry to launch “Play Apart Together” Campaign. Retrieved from: <<https://thenationaldigest.com/world-health-organization-teaming-oup-with-gaming-industry-to-launch-play-apart-together-campaign/>> (accessed on April 26, 2020)
- Young, K. S. (2004). Internet addiction: A new clinical phenomenon and its consequences. *American behavioral scientist*, 48(4), 402-415..
- Zhang, H. X., Jiang, W. Q., Lin, Z. G., Du, Y. S., & Vance, A., (2013). Comparison of psychological symptoms and serum levels of neurotransmitters in Shanghai adolescents with and without internet addiction disorder: a case-control study. *PloS one*, 8(5), e63089.