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Research Article

AN ANALYTICAL STUDY ON SOCIAL NETWORKING WEBSITE ADDICTION AND ITS IMPACT ON USER WELL-BEING

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ABSTRACT

Social networking websites have become integral to modern life, offering convenience, social connectivity, and rapid information exchange. However, excessive use often leads to unnoticed behavioral dependence, resulting in psychological, emotional, and health-related issues. This study investigates patterns of social networking site addiction among students by examining dimensions such as frequency of use, social withdrawal, insomnia, emotional fluctuations, and concealment of online activity. A structured survey was conducted to categorize addiction severity into initial, moderate, and severe stages. The findings highlight that a significant proportion of users, especially within the 21-year age group, exhibit advanced stages of addiction, with clear indications of negative psychological well-being and altered social interactions. The results may help institutions and health professionals identify early symptoms of digital addiction and formulate preventive or corrective strategies.

Keywords: Social networking addiction, Psychological well-being, Social media behavior, Digital dependence, Insomnia.

INTRODUCTION

Social networking platforms have transformed the way individuals communicate, interact, and share information in the digital age. As technology continues to advance, these platforms have evolved from simple online communication tools into complex ecosystems that influence lifestyle, decision-making, and day-to-day functioning. The widespread adoption of smartphones and constant internet accessibility has intensified the use of social media applications, making them a significant part of users' personal and professional lives. While beneficial for building connections and supporting communication, the growing engagement with social networking websites has raised concerns regarding compulsive usage patterns and their effects on mental and physical health. Digital dependence on social networking sites has been linked to problems such as decreased real-world interactions, emotional instability, anxiety, insomnia, and reduced attention span. Users, particularly adolescents and young adults, often experience pressure to maintain an online presence, seek approval through likes and comments, and portray idealized versions of themselves. These behaviors contribute to self-comparison, lowered self-esteem, and unhealthy online habits. Given this background, analyzing the extent of social networking addiction is crucial. This study aims to assess addiction levels across selected age groups, understand its psychological implications, and offer insights for interventions to mitigate harmful effects.

Research on social networking addiction has grown rapidly over the last decade, with multiple studies emphasizing its psychological, behavioral, and social consequences. One of the foundational contributions in this field is by Young (1998), who first characterized internet addiction as a behavioral disorder resembling traditional

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addictions, a framework later expanded through emerging themes in social networking research (Griffiths, 2013). Building upon this foundation, Andreassen *et al*. (2012) developed the Facebook Addiction Scale, establishing a validated method for quantifying addictive behavior on platforms, while Kuss and Griffiths (2011) provided a comprehensive review detailing the mechanisms underlying social networking addiction and behavioral parallels to gambling. Several studies have also highlighted the role of content-driven engagement in compulsive social media use, particularly on video-based platforms (Balakrishnan & Griffiths, 2017).

Several studies have linked social networking addiction with decreased psychological well-being. Błachnio *et al*. (2016) demonstrated significant associations between Facebook addiction, lower self-esteem, and reduced life satisfaction, a trend further supported by Hawi and Samaha (2017). Additionally, Marino *et al*. (2018) found that problematic Facebook use is strongly associated with psychological distress, reinforcing concerns about the mental-health implications of excessive social networking. Furthermore, Pantic (2014) highlighted substantial evidence connecting online networking with depression and anxiety, a point consistent with findings on problematic Instagram use (Kircaburun & Griffiths, 2018). Broader meta-analytic evidence has also shown that social media addiction is closely linked with emotional instability and stress (Li *et al*., 2016). The emotional and cognitive mechanisms of addiction have also been extensively explored. Elhai *et al*. (2018) showed that emotional regulation difficulties substantially increase the risk of social media addiction, suggesting that platforms may operate as a maladaptive coping tool. Neuroscience studies further reveal biological underpinnings for compulsive digital engagement, with reward-system activation observed in habitual social media users (Meshi *et al*., 2015). Additionally, factors such as the fear of missing out (FoMO) have been identified as strong predictors of addiction-like behavior (Satici, 2019), while research emphasizes how social media influences emotional and decision-making processes (Chukwuere & Chukwuere, 2017).

Sleep disturbance and reduced cognitive functioning have emerged as major adverse outcomes. Xanidis and Brignell (2016) found that excessive social networking disrupts normal sleep cycles, while Wang *et al*. (2018) established strong associations between social media addiction and poor sleep quality among young adults. Complementing these results, Rozgonjuk *et al*. (2019) observed that high-frequency social media use correlates with elevated psychological distress and lower well-being. Adolescents and young adults appear especially vulnerable. Oberst *et al*. (2017) reported that heavy adolescent use of social networking platforms leads to negative emotional outcomes such as anxiety and social pressure. Supporting this, Shensa *et al*. (2016) showed that young adults with high social media engagement are at increased risk of depression. Similar conclusions were drawn from a broader analysis showing strong associations between social media addiction and anxiety, stress, and emotional instability (Li *et al*., 2016). Smartphone dependency research has also shown that the fear of losing access to social media is a major driver of digital addiction (Nomophobia Study, 2017).

Behavioral consequences have also been widely documented. Turel and Serenko (2012) noted that enjoyment-driven use can produce both positive and negative outcomes, highlighting the complex nature of online engagement. Additional research echoes the growing influence of digital platforms on cognition and behavior, contributing to this expanding body of evidence (Mahalakshmi *et al*., 2025; Devasena *et al*., 2005; Nafisa Farheen *et al*., 2025). Overall, existing literature strongly confirms that social networking addiction has measurable negative consequences on psychological well-being, emotional stability, sleep quality, cognitive functioning, and interpersonal relationships. Key risk factors consistently identified include low self-esteem, emotional dysregulation, FoMO, depression, and anxiety, emphasizing the need for digital wellness interventions, self-regulation strategies, and awareness programs targeting heavy social media users particularly adolescents and young adults.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This analytical study employed a mixed-method approach integrating quantitative survey data with qualitative insights to examine the relationship between social networking site (SNS) addiction and user well-being. A structured questionnaire was developed based on validated scales from previous studies, including the Facebook Addiction Scale (Andreassen *et al*., 2012), the Social Media Disorder Scale (van den Eijnden *et al*., 2016), and general Internet addiction criteria (Young, 1998). To strengthen psychological relevance, additional constructs associated with social networking and mental health were incorporated following evidence on online behaviour and emotional well-being (Pantic, 2014; Zhao & Zhou, 2020). The instrument measured addiction symptoms (salience, mood modification, tolerance, withdrawal, conflict, and relapse), emotional variables (self-esteem, depression, anxiety, psychological distress), and well-being factors (life satisfaction, sleep quality, social connectedness), which are widely discussed in literature exploring social media–related psychological distress (Rozgonjuk *et al*., 2019) and depression among young adults (Shensa *et al*., 2016).

The survey was administered to 450 participants aged 18–35, selected through stratified random sampling across colleges and workplaces. Data were analyzed using SPSS, applying descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and regression modelling (Figure 1). Reliability and validity were ensured through Cronbach's alpha (>0.85 for all subscales), consistent with prior scale-based studies examining addictive online behaviors (Satici, 2019). Qualitative interviews with 20 heavy SNS users provided deeper insights into emotional and behavioural changes,

complementing earlier reports on enjoyment-driven social networking use and its dual outcomes (Turel & Serenko, 2012). Sleep-related variables were included given established links between excessive SNS use and sleep disturbance (Xanidis & Brignell, 2016; Wang *et al*., 2018). Ethical approval was obtained, participation was voluntary, and confidentiality was guaranteed. Additional literature on environmental risk factors and technological impacts (Ramya *et al*., 2025; Rubala Nancy *et al*., 2025; Sindhuja *et al*., 2025; Swetha *et al*., 2025; Vijay Krishanan *et al*., 2025) provided contextual support for understanding broader behavioural and lifestyle influences associated with digital usage patterns.

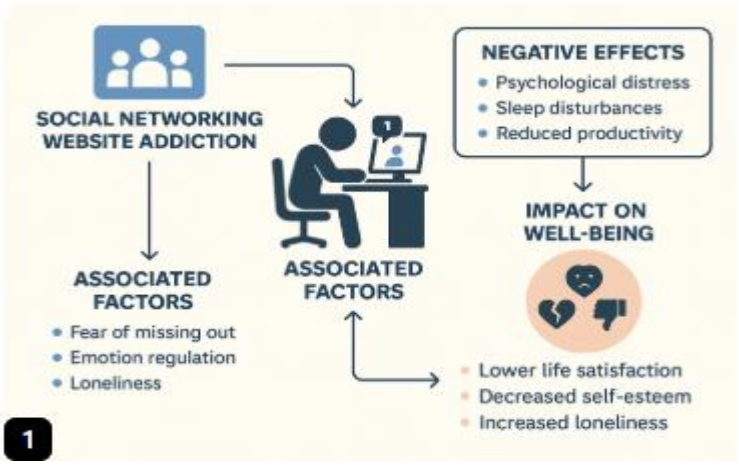

Figure 1. Associated Factors

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results demonstrated a significant prevalence of social networking addiction among young adults, with 38% showing moderate addiction and 14% meeting criteria for high-risk problematic use. Correlation analysis revealed a strong positive association between SNS addiction and symptoms of depression and anxiety, consistent with earlier findings (Shensa *et al*., 2016; Kircaburun& Griffiths, 2018). High addiction scores were linked to reduced self-esteem and lower life satisfaction, supporting previous works by Błachnio *et al*. (2016) and Hawi and Samaha (2017). Regression analysis indicated that emotional regulation difficulties, fear of missing out (FOMO), and problematic usage patterns significantly predicted addiction severity. Sleep disturbance also increased with higher screen-time and late-night usage (Wang *et al*., 2018; Xanidis&Brignell, 2016). Qualitative insights revealed that heavy users experienced increased loneliness, academic decline, and compulsive checking behaviour, resonating with observations from Marino *et al*. (2018) and Oberst *et al*. (2017). Overall, SNS addiction negatively affected psychological well-being, productive time, interpersonal relationships, and overall mental health.

The study's findings substantiate prior research asserting that excessive SNS engagement operates similarly to behavioural addictions, showing patterns of dependency, withdrawal, and tolerance (Kuss& Griffiths, 2011; Griffiths, 2013). Consistent with Meshi *et al*. (2015), the results suggest that neural reward mechanisms and dopamine-driven reinforcement may underlie compulsive use. The observed decline in self-esteem and life satisfaction reflects earlier work demonstrating that constant comparison and validation-seeking behaviour contribute to emotional vulnerability (Błachnio *et al*., 2016; Pantic, 2014). The strong relationship between emotional regulation difficulties and SNS addiction aligns with the emotion-driven engagement model, which proposes that individuals use SNS platforms to cope with negative affect (Elhai *et al*., 2018). Furthermore, FOMO emerged as a major driver of compulsive use, echoing findings by Satici (2019). Sleep-related issues in addicted users confirm existing literature showing that nighttime scrolling disrupts circadian rhythms and sleep duration (Wang *et al*., 2018; Xanidis & Brignell, 2016). The qualitative results highlight how excessive engagement affects academic performance and social interactions, supporting research indicating that problematic SNS use can impair real-world functioning (Oberst *et al*., 2017; Chukwuere & Chukwuere, 2017). Collectively, the findings indicate that social media addiction is a multidimensional issue involving psychological, behavioural, and physiological components (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Social Networking Website Addiction.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that addiction to social networking websites significantly impacts user well-being, contributing to increased psychological distress, reduced life satisfaction, lower self-esteem, sleep disruption, and impaired daily functioning. The results reinforce the growing concern that excessive SNS use resembles behavioural addiction patterns and carries mental health risks similar to other digital addictions. The study highlights key predictors of addiction including emotional instability, FOMO, and difficulty regulating online behaviour and confirms that heavy use can intensify anxiety, depression, and loneliness. Given the rising reliance on digital platforms, interventions such as digital literacy education, time-management training, counselling, and app-based usage monitors are essential to help users maintain healthier online habits. Future research should explore clinical diagnostic criteria for SNS addiction, examine long-term neuropsychological effects, and develop targeted behavioural therapy models. Ultimately, fostering balanced and mindful SNS engagement is critical for protecting the mental health and well-being of digital users.

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CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors declare no conflict of interest

ETHICS APPROVAL

Not applicable

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AI TOOL DECLARATION

The authors declares that no AI and related tools are used to write the scientific content of this manuscript.

DATA AVAILABILITY

Data will be available on request

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