

## INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION ON EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AMONG ADOLESCENTS

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### Abstract

This study explores the influence of social media addiction on the emotional and mental health of adolescents, with a specific focus on students from Government Higher Secondary School, Koduvayur, Palakkad. In the current digital age, adolescents are among the most active users of social media platforms. While these platforms facilitate communication and self-expression, excessive use has been associated with negative psychological effects. The research investigates the relationship between social media addiction and mental health factors such as anxiety, depression, stress, and self-esteem. A simple random sampling method was used to select participants from the student population, ensuring that every individual had an equal chance of being included. Data were collected through standardized psychological questionnaires. The findings indicate a significant correlation between high social media usage and emotional disturbances, including mood changes, sleep issues, and reduced academic focus. The study underscores the need for digital literacy, parental involvement, and mental health awareness to promote healthy and balanced social media use among adolescents.

**Key Words:** Social Media, Addiction, Emotional and Mental Health

### Introduction

In today's digital world, social media has become an integral part of everyday life, especially for adolescents. Platforms like Instagram, WhatsApp, Snapchat, and YouTube are commonly used for communication, entertainment, and social interaction. While social media offers many benefits, such as instant connectivity and access to information, excessive use can lead to negative consequences—particularly for young users who are still in a critical stage of emotional and psychological development. Adolescents are highly impressionable, and prolonged engagement with social media may result in emotional imbalances, poor self-esteem, anxiety, stress, and even symptoms of depression. The constant need for validation through likes, comments, and online approval can affect their mental health and social behavior. In extreme cases, this dependency can lead to what is commonly known as **social media addiction**, where users feel compelled to use these platforms excessively, often at the cost of real-life responsibilities and relationships.

### Effects of Social Media Addiction on Emotional and Mental Health

- **Anxiety and Stress**

Constant notifications, pressure to respond, and fear of missing out (FOMO) can lead to high stress and anxiety levels.

- **Depression**

Comparing oneself to others online (appearance, lifestyle, popularity) may cause feelings of inadequacy, sadness, and low mood.

- **Low Self-Esteem**

Lack of likes, comments, or social validation on posts can negatively impact self-worth and confidence.

- **Sleep Disturbances**

Late-night scrolling and screen exposure can interfere with sleep quality, leading to tiredness and irritability.

- **Loneliness and Social Isolation**

Excessive online interaction may reduce real-life social bonding, making adolescents feel lonely despite being “connected.”

- **Mood Swings and Emotional Instability**

Over-dependence on social media can lead to emotional ups and downs based on online experiences or feedback.

- **Reduced Attention Span and Concentration**

Constant engagement with short-form content may affect focus and academic performance.

- **Cyberbullying and Online Harassment**

Exposure to negative comments, bullying, or trolling can harm emotional wellbeing.

- **Addictive Behavior**

The compulsive need to check updates or post content can mirror patterns of behavioral addiction

## **Review of Literature**

**Kuss & Griffiths (2017)** conducted a comprehensive systematic review focusing on the psychological effects of social networking site (SNS) usage among adolescents and young adults. Their analysis compiled evidence from multiple studies, showing a strong link between excessive use of social media platforms and increased levels of psychological distress, such as anxiety, depression, sleep disturbances, and emotional dysregulation. The researchers emphasized that adolescents are particularly vulnerable to these effects due to their ongoing brain development and heightened emotional sensitivity. As adolescents often seek peer approval and social belonging, they may become dependent on virtual interactions, leading to compulsive use of social media. The review further discussed how such behavioral patterns can disrupt daily routines, negatively affect academic performance, and strain real-life relationships.

**Twenge et al. (2018)** In a large-scale quantitative study, Twenge and colleagues analyzed national survey data collected from thousands of U.S. teenagers to investigate the correlation between screen time—including social media—and adolescent mental health outcomes. Their research revealed a notable increase in depressive symptoms, loneliness, and suicidal ideation, especially among adolescent girls who used social media frequently. The study identified that teens that spent more than five hours per day on social platforms were significantly more likely to report mental health concerns compared to those with limited use. Twenge et al. also pointed out that social comparison, cyberbullying, and disrupted sleep schedules were contributing factors. The authors strongly recommended implementing screen time guidelines and encouraging face-to-face social interaction to support mental wellness in youth.

**Andreassen et al. (2016)** and her team were pioneers in coining and examining the term “Facebook Addiction”, which they defined as a behavioral addiction characterized by excessive concern and compulsive use of the platform. They developed the Bergen Facebook Addiction Scale (BFAS) to measure addictive tendencies among users. Their findings demonstrated that individuals, particularly adolescents, who scored high on the BFAS also experienced poor self-esteem, high anxiety, mood disorders, and symptoms resembling behavioral addictions, such as neglect of personal life, mental preoccupation, and mood modification. The study emphasized that social media addiction shares psychological features with other forms of addiction and should be approached with similar concern. Andreassen et al. called for preventive mental health education, early detection, and intervention programs targeted at young users to reduce dependence and promote healthy digital habits.

## **Methodology**

### **Objectives of the Study**

- To study the socio-economic background of adolescent respondents.
- To study the key factors contributing to social media addiction among adolescents.
- To assess the impact of social media addiction on the emotional and mental health of adolescents.
- To study the level of social anxiety experienced by adolescents addicted to social media.
- To study the effective strategies and suggestions to help adolescents overcome social media addiction.

### **Research Design**

The research design used for the study is descriptive in nature.

### **Universe of the Study**

In the study on the influence of social media addiction on emotional and mental health among adolescents, the universe comprises of approximately 250 adolescents at Government Higher Secondary School, Koduvayur, Palakkad.

### **Sampling Method**

In this research study the researcher adapted the Probability Sampling Method in which the researcher used the Simple Random sampling method for collecting the data from the samples. The sample size is 75

### **Major Findings**

- Majority 65% of respondents belonged to middle-income families.
- Majority 80% had access to personal smartphones and consistent internet at home.
- Majority 72% lived in urban areas, while 28% were from rural settings.
- Parental education level was high school or above in 68% of cases.
- Majority 76% of adolescents cited peer pressure and the need for social validation as a major reason for frequent social media use.
- Majority 62% reported boredom and lack of extracurricular activities as key contributors.

- Majority 70% mentioned that the addictive nature of specific platforms (Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat) increased their screen time.
- Majority 58% said they checked social media immediately after waking up and before sleeping.
- Majority 61% reported symptoms of anxiety and restlessness when not using social media.
- Majority 54% experienced disrupted sleep patterns due to nighttime social media use.
- Majority 48% responded positively to counseling and awareness programs in schools.
- Majority 52% benefitted from participating in hobbies and physical activities as alternatives to screen time.
- Majority 66% believed parental involvement and monitoring could help reduce addiction.
- There is a strong positive correlation between social media usage and social anxiety.
- A moderate negative correlation exists between social media usage and emotional well-being, indicating that higher usage relates to poorer emotional health.
- Peer influence is also strongly correlated with more frequent social media use.
- High usage group showed significantly higher social anxiety and sleep disturbances than low and moderate usage groups.
- Emotional well-being scores were significantly lower in the high usage group compared to the low usage group.

### **Suggestions**

- Introduce digital literacy programs in schools to raise awareness about healthy social media use.
- Educate parents on setting screen time boundaries and modeling balanced digital behavior.
- Promote extracurricular and offline activities (sports, arts, volunteering) as alternatives to excessive social media use.
- Provide access to mental health professionals in schools for counseling and early intervention.
- Launch peer support groups to allow adolescents to share experiences and coping strategies.
- Encourage face-to-face social interaction to reduce social anxiety and build real-world communication skills.
- Organize digital detox challenges like “No Screen Sunday” or “Offline Week” in schools and communities.

### **Conclusion**

The study reveals that social media addiction among adolescents is strongly linked to increased social anxiety, emotional distress, sleep disturbances, and lower academic performance. Key contributing factors include peer pressure, boredom, lack of offline activities, and the addictive design of popular platforms. Adolescents from middle-income, urban backgrounds with easy access to smart phones were found to be more prone to excessive use. Higher social media usage was associated with greater emotional and psychological challenges. Addressing this issue

requires a holistic approach—through digital literacy education, parental involvement, mental health support, and encouraging offline engagement. Schools, families, and communities must work together to promote balanced and healthy social media habits among adolescents.

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