

Overuse of Social Media Affects the Mental Health of Adolescents and Early Youth

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ABSTRACT

Social media besides being educative role, it increases connections and communications. If used properly, it also builds bridges over barriers and strengthens relationships. It encourages community participation and boosts ones confidence. Blogging can be therapeutic for who are confused, down, or need to vent frustrations. It unleashes one's own potential and helps to find an identity for his/her talent. Negative correlates of social media include, behavioural addiction, the decrease in real life social community participation and academic achievement, as well as relationship problems. Stalking and cyber bullying, identity theft, victimization to rumours, missing out attitude, aggressive and callous behavior and host of other mental and social abnormalities are also the result of excessive use of social media. Due to face book, mobile and tv, we are forgetting our basic values and culture, which leads to families breaking up. The good and bad affects of social media in the Indian context have been outlined in this article with the help of literatures, opinion of the exerts, news bits and content from blogs etc.

Keywords: *Overuse, Social Media, Mental Health, Adolescents*

In recent days, we witness a rising number of adolescents becoming the victims of behavioural changes and when we go through their history over a period of time, we learn that it is owing to the overuse of social media and most of them have internet addiction (1) There are growing news reports that the teenagers who engage in social media during the late night could be damaging their sleep and increasing their risk of anxiety and depression. Girls, more than boys seek comfort on social media when they are worried. Teens are so emotionally invested in social media that a fifth of secondary school pupil will wake up at night and log on(2). The report found that there was a "clear association" between longer time spent on social websites and the incidence of mental health problems. As per children wellbeing study also there is clear association between number of hours a child spent on social networking sites and children "difficulties score" - the official measure for the prevalence of mental health issues in children(3)

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Of late, we are witnessing tremendous misuse of social media. Our youth are falling prey to nefarious designs of terrorist outfits to carry out more anti-India activities, these dreaded organisations continues to use social media to trap more and more misguided Indian youths. The recent case of a man being lynched to death on mere rumors of his storing beef has caught national headlines. Investigations by the Police have revealed that the said incident also lead to fueling of social media activities (4). Indian cyber law requires intermediaries, including users of social media, to exercise due diligence while they discharge their obligations under the law. Service providers and intermediaries can be called upon by governments to remove or disable access to communally sensitive content, as well as also force them to give the details of the persons behind the incident. In the Shreya Singhal case, the Supreme Court has already held that the intermediaries are duty bound when they are called upon by any order of the government to move or disable access to any information as well as provide relevant information pertaining to the identity of the offenders. I believe this power is a very special power which has been conferred under the Information Technology Act, 2000, and needs to be more frequently used (5).

Children bullied frequently four times more likely to report symptoms of mental ill-health. Owing to cyber bullying, youngsters not just avoid going to school, but also become victim of depression and go to the extent of committing suicide. It is necessary on the part of parents to discuss and avail the required medical intervention,

The long hours of chatting and interacting with their friends on social networking sites “Children’s social skills and abilities to make small talk and actively listen, and develop empathy, are severely affected (6) They joke and send photos and videos without truly engaging with people, or truly listening to one another – and they send and make statements without seeing the immediate impact of their comments on the other person. At the other end of the conversation, these messages can be misconstrued.

Social media is more and more addictive among teenagers, excessive use of it has been referred to as behavioural addiction, which is defined as one’s inability to avoid being online to the point where it impacts on other areas of his/her life, including relationships, emotions, social life, school, and so on. It is also recognized that there are different forms of addiction based on the type of Internet activity – for example downloading, forming online relationships, compulsive shopping, accessing pornography and gaming.

Studies say that more than half the teenagers log in to social networking sites (SNS) multiple times in a day. SNS addiction incorporates the experience of the ‘classic’ addiction symptoms, namely mood modification (*i.e.*, engagement in SNSs leads to a favourable change in emotional states), salience (*i.e.*, behavioral, cognitive, and emotional preoccupation with the SNS usage), tolerance (*i.e.*, ever increasing use of SNSs over time), withdrawal symptoms (*i.e.*, experiencing unpleasant physical and emotional symptoms when SNS use is restricted or stopped), conflict

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(*i.e.*, interpersonal and intrapsychic problems ensue because of SNS usage), and relapse (*i.e.*, addicts quickly revert back in their excessive SNS usage after an abstinence period).

Psychologists have confirmed that playing violent video games is linked to aggressive and callous behavior (7). In fact, there have been institutes that have created a psychological scale to measure that addiction. Symptoms like people accessing sites like Facebook and Twitter to forget about their personal problems or spending a lot of time thinking about how to use social media indicate that there is an issue. *Facebook* users had lower Grade Point Averages and spent less time studying than students who did not use this SNS. Of the 26% of students reporting an impact of their usage on their lives, three-quarters (74%) claimed that it had a negative impact, namely procrastination, distraction, and poor time-management. (8)

A study shown that Children who go on social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram for more than three hours a day are more likely to have mental health problems. Such children risk their emotional and social development delayed as they spend so much time in virtual world. The pressure of 'always to be perfect' and the overwhelming urge to respond immediately to the texts and posts results into anxiety and a sense of missing out. The worst thing about this is that teenagers need more sleep than adults do, so night-time social media use could be detrimental to their health. Online bullying, slut-shaming etc. which are by-products of excess use of internet are hampering physical and emotional health of young people in our country (9).

Things like online multiplayer games, micro-blogging and other forms like people missing out on important moments in life have led to anti-social behaviours. A new study found that the more time people spent on social networking sites, the less they spent in exercising, with an increasing tendency to opt out of team sports. Spending seven to eight hours a day on these websites also leads to unhealthy snacking and hence obesity. Studies have found that while in practice, as social media interaction increases, problems self-esteem-related problems should decrease. But in reality, it was found that those who overindulged in online activities had very low self-esteem. They seem to behave counterproductively, bombarding their friends with negative tidbits about their lives and making themselves less likeable.(10)

Majority of social media users were under 30, with most being adolescents. According to research, 95% of teenagers who use social media have witnessed forms of cyberbullying on social networking sites and 33% have been victims of cyberbullying. Obscene face book comments put lot of pressure on youngsters and it led to disastrous repercussions in few cases, like major depression and suicides. It shows, how much is it important to be considered 'cool' and 'popular' and to get immediate and maximum comments or 'likes' on status updates or pictures and up in friends' count' by the day. However, it is important to note that in all the above cases, it was not the inherent nature of social media, but the fact that our need to be electronically connected at all (11.)

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Overuse of social media can refrain from participating in real world activities, today's generation lives more in the virtual than in real world, almost to a point of addiction. This 'Virtual social life' the outcome of too much indulgence in social media is eating away our 'real-time social life', e.g., relationships etc. People start spending less time with family and friends in real life and desire more for a cyber relationship. Facebook is good for staying in touch with family and friends, but bad for relationships. In a family where even all members remain together, they don't find time to interact with each other as they individually pre-occupied in their own virtual worlds in the social media.

Social media is playing the demon in shattering social relationships as it doesn't allow any privacy. The smartphone is becoming that "third person" in the bedroom and this doesn't allow for privacy or the development of romance. The most common impact of a break-up turns out to be stalking on social media as the need to stay updated with a former partner's daily routine is psychological. Trust personal opinions and space etc., the elements of relationships are weakening due to excessive use of social networking. Issues such as who has liked whose photo, who has commented what where and things like and even things like private chats have become relationship killers.

Excessive Facebook users are more likely to connect or reconnect with other Facebook users, including previous partners, which may lead to emotional and physical cheating. The main reasons for access are generally relief from boredom or for some sort of occupation while waiting, Couples find it easy to compare their relationships with others as well as compare their partners with social figures, leading to a drop in romance and development of problems in the relationship. (12). Social media create disturbances when priorities get misplaced and this affects relationships (13). Social media is a big source of projection of materialistic life as being good and attempts are made to replicate this. The desire to have the lost object of affection and love back in one's life, finding out about how others are doing without them - like have they adjusted better post break up than with them, have they moved on in life or not, whether the new relationship has given them happiness, has the new life made them forget their ex - are a few of the reasons for stalking (14).

Studies have shown that there is a greater tendency to stalk when the breakup was difficult on one or both of the individuals in a relationship. "Staying up-to-date about an ex also allows one to reassure oneself that the breakup is affecting the other the same way; it allows people to keep checking to make sure their significant other is just as unhappy and lonely as they are. Also, there is a natural anxiety and fear attached with any break-up - the fear that the ex may just find happiness elsewhere. Addiction to social media also leads to many behavioral changes post break-up. "One starts repeatedly checking and rechecking the smartphone and finds it difficult to fall asleep when accessing social media before bed. One becomes more agitated if unable to access social media, leading to a greater amount of perceived boredom (12).

Spending too much time online may increase your risk of catching a cold or the flu as excessive internet use can damage the immune function, a new study has claimed. -(15)

CONCLUSION

Social media in the form of Social Networking Sites (SNS) is seen as current 'global phenomenon' with an exponential rise in their use within the last few years. Extraverts use social networking sites for social enhancement, whereas introverts use it for social compensation (16)

Besides being educative role, social media increases connections and communications. If used properly, it also builds bridges over barriers and strengthens relationships. It encourages community participation and boosts ones confidence. Blogging can be therapeutic for who those are confused, down, or need to vent frustrations. It unleashes one's own potential and helps to find an identity for his/her talent (17)

Negative correlates of social media include, behavioural addiction, the decrease in real life social community participation and academic achievement, as well as relationship problems. Stalking and cyberbullying, identity theft, victimization to rumours, missing out attitude, aggressive and callous behavior and host of other mental and social abnormalities are also the result of excessive use of social media. Due to face book, mobile and tv, we are forgetting our basic values and culture, which leads to families breaking up.

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