

# ADDICTION OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES: A CRITICAL SITUATION

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## ABSTRACT

Social Networking Sites are the most beautiful offspring of the technology. These sites are used to stay connected with family members or other members of the society. At initial phase, they seemed to be mesmerizing, but as the time passes, they show their cruel face to the humanity. No doubt, SNS are not bad in itself, but their over use by the people is an alarming situation. Now, most of the people are caught into this web, and they find no way to get rescued or redeemed. They have become the slaves of technology, and this phenomenon has started to shake the life of people. There are diverse reasons for this dependence; among the structure of the modern society is the key one. This addiction leads to many problems and these problems can reduce the humanity to the basest level. Hence, we need to recognize this particular problem and then we should act accordingly.

**KEYWORDS:** Social Networking Sites, Addiction, Slavery, Web, Problem, Society.

A lot of hue and cry is made over the topic whether social networking sites are beneficial for the human beings or they have more hazardous consequences that can reduce the humanity to the basest level. A much speculations have been made in this regard but with little outputs. Social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, MySpace, Twitter and dozens of others allow people to stay in touch like never before. Social media has become so much a part of our culture that most people can hardly imagine life without sites like Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. According to the latest Pew Research Center report on Internet and Technology, the number of Americans who use social media on a regular basis went from 5% in 2005 to 69% in 2018. So the pace with which social media is flourishing itself is an alarming situation. Social networking

sites have numerous benefits for the users. Hu (2014) concludes that social media services allow users many different benefits, such as for example building and maintaining a networks of friends, that support the users in creating lasting powerful relationships that the users might not want to lose. That is why social media addiction is powerful. There is nevertheless an evident exposure to many hazards as the users in a way give away their own privacy to the service providers, for the maintenance of these relationships. The author state that with social media comes two essential and overlapping benefits, that is: relational and informational. Users gain benefits psychologically when creating groups online, maintain them, keeping contact and when they post information as they receive positive feedback. In the context of informational

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gain, users are provided with advertisement and information from their peers.

No doubt, the main reason of the creation of these sites was to provide entertainment to the masses by connecting them with each other. However, some people spend so much time on these sites that it begins to interfere with their lives. Psychologists are referring to this as a social networking compulsion or addiction.

Many people get addicted to these social networking sites. Social media addiction is a term that is often used to refer to someone who spends too much time on social media like Facebook and Twitter or other forms of social media. As a result, it affects the person's daily life. Although there is no official medical recognition on social media addiction as a disease, the negative habit of excessive use of social media has become a subject of much discussion and research. Addiction simply means a compulsive behavior that leads to negative effects. And in this case, social media addiction is referring to someone who has a compulsive use of social media. For example, people who constantly check updates on Facebook or spends hours of time on these sites can be termed as social media addicts.

"Addictive behavior" (e.g., smoking, eating, gambling, relationships, etc.) is defined as follows: "a repetitive habit pattern that increases the risk of disease and/ or associated personal and social problems" or "the behavior continues to occur despite volitional attempts to abstain or moderate use" (Marlatt et al., 1988,). Terms such as "excessive use," "addiction," "dependency," and "problematic use" have often been used interchangeably to refer to the negative aspects of SNS usage. In particular, SNS addiction refers to spending too much time on SNSs. This is diagnosed as addiction because it is categorized as cyber-relationship addiction (Choi and Lim, 2016).

It is said that Internet and social media addiction has become a common disorder in today's society. Thought of as a worldwide problem, it is nevertheless most commonly accepted as a term and most known of, in countries where computer access is general. The disorder has been associated with both neurological and psychological characteristics like depression, anxiety and poor impulse control. It is said that we become so addicted to the usage of the Internet that we disregard the given terms of condition and thus ignore all security threats. Researchers do nevertheless state themselves that more research is needed on the matter, and that all research has to be considered with respect to the amount of respondent that were tested, along with factors like age, gender and location (Shaw & Black 2008).

In an article on Internet Addiction Disorder, aka. IAD, Yuan et.al (2011) discusses IAD being associated with structural abnormalities in the brains gray matter. Using a voxel-based morphometric technique, the researchers were able to find multiple structural changes of the brain in IAD subjects. They were able to confirm that long-term Internet addiction would result in brain structural alterations. There were also images captured of the brain matter of IAD subject with a 3T Siemens scanner, capturing reduced gray matter volumes. In the article the researchers refer to IAD as a now common mental health problem, stating that though not being commonly used as a term, IAD indeed has attracted the attention of psychiatrists and the public. Data from the China Youth Internet Association demonstrated that the incidence rate of Internet addiction among Chinese urban youths is about 14%. It is worth noting that the total number of that percentage is 24 million (Yuan, K et.al (2011).

Shaw & Black (2008) discuss the problem of the fact that despite the attention Internet addiction has received; scientific understanding has not been very high, in part because of the lack of a

common definition and consistent terminology. The authors also discuss Internet addiction and in particular social media usage, as having the possibility to be linked to other disorders, such as OCD aka. Obsessive-compulsive disorder, and ICD aka. Impulse control disorder. The authors likewise discuss the 'National Institute on Drug Abuses' view on Internet addiction, labeling it as a "pure behavioral addiction" because it is not tainted by the presence of an "exogenous substance". The authors also discuss the matter of there being those researchers and authors whom in fact do criticize the attempts to categorize Internet addiction as a disorder stating that critics question the existence of Internet addiction due to the many alleged weakness in confirming its existence. Shaw & Black (2008) however, state that that type of criticism only trivializes and minimizes the attempts to understand or treat Internet addiction.

Andreessen and Pallesen (2014) stressed that there is scarce research on SNS addiction and therefore it might be difficult to determine the causal relationship and to identify the determinants of SNS addiction. Despite the criticism of SNS Addiction Scale, more research is needed to explore this concept and to uncover the mechanism behind addiction to SNS. The more instances of usage and more time spent on SNS cause SNS addiction to become more likely. Most evaluations of SNS usage are based on the number of times one uses SNS per day and the amount of usage each day however, few studies have concretely classified the behavioral standards of SNS addiction, such as those who use SNS four times per day and those who use it for more than 60 min per day or those who use it for more than five hours per day (Hong et al., 2014).

This addiction knows no limits, and continues to exceed every passing day. The reasons for this are diverse. The modern life style of the man has also forced him to get into the clutches of social

media addiction. The life of the modern man is so hectic, he has to leave his home and family behind to have good job, so due to this, he has to move away from home and family. To get into touch with those relatives, he has started to use SNS. With passage of time, his this activity turned into habit. The world of these SNS is so fascinating and attractive that man has completely immersed into this.

Many people are socially alone. So for them, SNS are good platform to get into this world. They start to use SNS to make new friends and they find some short term relations too. This search continues for months, and man ends up being caught in the clutches of SNS. Most of the time of such people is wasted on SNS. The other reason for this addiction is that SNS come up with eye catching features. These features attract number of users. For example Snapchat comes up with many such features. One of the principal concepts of Snapchat is that pictures and messages are only available for a short time before they become inaccessible. This concept of this application has fetched millions of users. Now everyone wants privacy, so sites those provide privacy to the users turn out to be successful. Apart from this, it has many other splendid features to lure the users.

What is more, modern man no more likes his relatives. He tries to find happiness out of his family circle. SNS are best platform to cope up the needs of such individuals. There is a constant dependency on the SNS. Modern man runs from real world, and tries to escape into some kind of imagery or dream world. SNS are best to get into some illusionary world. Man starts to make his illusionary world, by contacting even fake people. What is more serious is that, most of the accounts on such SNS are fake, which are used by the people for their personal benefits. Therefore, it can be asserted strongly that the psyche of the modern man has greatly contributed in the addiction of the SNS.

At the end, it can be opined that addiction of the SNS is playing havoc with the life of the modern man. This infatuation or craving has created numerous problems for the users. These days, man has become a tool of his tools. This is a serious threat that needs to be addressed at the drop of the hat; otherwise it would be too late to mend. People need to use these sites according to their needs, more specifically, in a limited manner. Otherwise, there would be birth of ultra-modern slavery.

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