



# An Empirical Research On Social Media Addiction In Young & Middle Adults

Dr. Neetu Jain<sup>1\*</sup>, Jahanvi Aggarwal<sup>2</sup>, Vishal Khanna<sup>3</sup>, Dr. Neelam Sharma<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>\*Assistant Professor, Bharati Vidyapeeth (deemed to be university) Institute of Management and Research, New Delhi

<sup>2</sup>M.B.A Student, Bharati Vidyapeeth (deemed to be university) Institute of Management and Research, New Delhi

<sup>3</sup>Research Scholar, Bharati Vidyapeeth (deemed to be university) Institute of Management and Research, New Delhi

<sup>4</sup>Head CRC & Associate Professor, Bharati Vidyapeeth (deemed to be university) Institute of Management and Research, New Delhi

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**ARTICLE INFO****ABSTRACT**

Human beings have fundamental needs to belong and to relate, for which interpersonal communication is the key. Social media is internet-based and gives users quick electronic communication of content, such as personal information, documents, videos, and photos. Social media is typically used for social interaction and access to news and information, and decision making. Understanding the causes, consequences, and remedies of social media addiction is thus of paramount importance. The aim of the current study was to study the levels of social media addiction in young adults and middle adults, and to compare both the samples. Social media addiction scale (SMAS) was used for this and Google form was created for the same. The sample for the current study was young adults and middle adults. Both groups had different age ranges, ranging from 18 to 25 years old for young adults and 45 to 55 years for middle adults. The result was found from the analysis that there was a significant difference in the levels of social media addiction in young adults and middle adults, implying that the alternative hypothesis was retained.

**KEYWORDS:** Social media, Social media addiction, Social media addiction scale (SMAS).

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## INTRODUCTION

### MEDIA & MEDIA PSYCHOLOGY

**Media** is the plural form of medium. It describes any channel of communication. This can include anything from printed paper to digital data. In general, media refers to television, radio, newspaper, internet and other forms of communication. It describes the various ways through which we communicate in society. Because it refers to all means of communication, everything ranging from a telephone call to the evening news on television can be called media.

**Media psychology** is the branch and specialty field in psychology that focuses on the interaction of human behavior with media and technology. Media psychology is not limited to mass media or media content; it includes all forms of mediated communication and media technology-related behaviors, such as the use, design, impact and sharing behaviors. This branch is a relatively new field of study because of advancement in technology. It uses various methods of critical analysis and investigation to develop a working model of a user's perception on media experience. These methods are used for society as a whole and on an individual basis. Media psychologists are able to perform activities that include consulting, design, and production in various media like television, video games, films, and news broadcasting. Media psychologists are not considered to be those who are featured in media (such as counselors-psychotherapists, clinicians etc.), rather than those who research, work or contribute to the field.

Perhaps the definition that best captures the depth and breadth of the field is offered by Karen Dill in *The Oxford Handbook of Media Psychology* (2012): "Media psychology is the scientific study of human behavior, thoughts, and feelings experienced in the context of media use and creation."

There are several **forms of media** available today, although some have fallen into obsolescence already:

- **Traditional media** includes newspapers, journals, radio, television, magazines, and even billboards. Traditional media is broadly divided into two subcategories: print media and broadcast media.
- **Print media** is the oldest form of media and includes all types of printed paper publications, such as newspapers, magazines, books, reports, clinical journals, leaflets, essays etc.
- **Broadcast Media** was introduced at the beginning of the 20th century in the form of radio and (later) television. As the introduction of TV downsized the importance of radio as a means for people to access information in the form of news, broadcast TV is now starting to fall behind as online media sources take over.
- **Digital media**, which makes up an increasingly vast portion of modern communications, is comprised of intricately encoded signals that are transmitted over various forms of physical and virtual media, such as fiberoptic cable and computer networks. Modern digital media include the Internet as a whole, but on a more granular level, “media” is used to indicate websites, blogs, podcasts, videos, digital radio stations, and mobile phones, as well as the communication methods used to transmit data such as instant messaging, video calls, and emails.
- **Computer media** is a term that is often used in informatics with several different meanings. It is used to describe the electronic devices used to store data, such as hard drives, USB drives, DVDs, CD-ROM, and floppy disks. It also refers to the transmission media (cables) used to link workstations together such as coaxial cables, fiber optic cables, and traditional electrical wires (twisted-pair wires). More broadly, all technologies used to communicate information such as videos, pictures, sounds, and presentations are often referred to as media or multimedia (if they combine different types of media).
- **Mass media** include all of those media channels which can reach a large number of people at the same time. Traditional mass media include TV and radio channels, as well as national and international magazines, while digital mass media mostly refers to social media platforms and popular online magazines. Some find it reasonable to include some video games such as massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs).
- **Social Media** have been mentioned already, as these platforms are included in both the mass media and digital media categories. They consist of applications and websites used by people to share content in real-time, using their computers or smartphones. They represent a revolutionary technology that influenced the last decade by allowing everyone to share virtually any kind of information at the global level

### SOCIAL MEDIA & ITS TYPES

Social media is a collective term for websites and applications that focus on communication, community-based input, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration. People use social media to stay in touch and interact with friends, family and various communities. Businesses use social applications to market and promote their products and track customer concerns. The idea that social media are defined simply by their ability to bring people together has been seen as too broad, as this would suggest that fundamentally different technologies like the telegraph and telephone are also social media (Schejter & Tirosh, 2015).

Social media are interactive technologies that facilitate the creation and sharing of information, ideas, interests, and other forms of expression through virtual communities and networks (Kietzmann & Kristopher, 2011; Obar & Wildman, 2015).

In 2019, Merriam-Webster defined social media as "forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and micro blogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos).

### FEATURES OF SOCIAL MEDIA:

While challenges to the definition of social media arise due to the variety of stand-alone and built-in social media services currently available, there are some common features (Obar & Wildman, 2015).

1. Social media are interactive Web 2.0 Internet-based applications.
2. User-generated content—such as text posts or comments, digital photos or videos, and data generated through all online interactions — is the lifeblood of social media.
3. Users create service-specific profiles for the website or app that are designed and maintained by the social media organization.
4. Social media helps the development of online social networks by connecting a user's profile with those of other individuals or groups.

### HISTORY OF SOCIAL MEDIA:

In less than a generation, social media has evolved from direct electronic information exchange, to virtual gathering place, to retail platform, to vital 21st-century marketing tool.

#### ● **Social Media Before 1900**

The earliest methods of communicating across great distances used written correspondence delivered by hand from one person to another. In 1792, the telegraph was invented. This allowed messages to be delivered over a

long distance far faster than a horse and rider could carry them. Although telegraph messages were short, they were a revolutionary way to convey news and information.

Two important discoveries happened in the last decade of the 1800s: The telephone in 1890 and the radio in 1891.

Both technologies are still in use today, although the modern versions are much more sophisticated than their predecessors. Telephone lines and radio signals enabled people to communicate across great distances instantaneously, something that mankind had never experienced before.

#### ● **Social Media in the 20th Century**

Technology began to change very rapidly in the 20th Century. After the first super computers were created in the 1940s, scientists and engineers began to develop ways to create networks between those computers, and this would later lead to the birth of the Internet.

The earliest forms of the Internet, such as CompuServe, were developed in the 1960s. Primitive forms of email were also developed during this time. By the 70s, networking technology had improved, and 1979's Usenet allowed users to communicate through a virtual newsletter.

By the 1980s, home computers were becoming more common and social media was becoming more sophisticated. Internet relay chats, or IRCs, were first used in 1988 and continued to be popular well into the 1990's. In 1999, the first blogging sites became popular, creating a social media sensation that's still popular today.

#### ● **Social Media Today**

After the invention of blogging, social media began to explode in popularity. Sites like MySpace and LinkedIn gained prominence in the early 2000s, and sites like Photobucket and Flickr facilitated online photo sharing. YouTube came out in 2005, creating an entirely new way for people to communicate and share with each other across great distances.

By 2006, Facebook and Twitter both became available to users throughout the world. These sites remain some of the most popular social networks on the Internet. Other sites like Tumblr, Spotify, Foursquare and Pinterest began popping up to fill specific social networking niches.

Today, there is a tremendous variety of social networking sites, and many of them can be linked to allow cross-posting. This creates an environment where users can reach the maximum number of people without sacrificing the intimacy of person-to-person communication. We can only speculate about what the future of social networking may look in the next decade or even 100 years from now, but it seems clear that it will exist in some form for as long as humans are alive.

### **USES OF SOCIAL MEDIA:**

● **Communication:** The tools that are used in the communication sector are basically a very well-known form of social media platform. These tools include Blogs and websites where you are provided an ability to create articles and blogs to interact, communicate, inform and empower your audiences. Other uses also include social media sites such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram that further increase the chances of communication between individuals with the help of personal details, comments, image, video posts, and a lot more. Businesses can communicate with their audiences in a productive manner.

● **Collaboration:** Most of us use many different tools that have a social aspect attached to them and we use these tools on a regular basis as well. For example, Wikipedia, it is a knowledge platform that provides the people with an ability to update their views. It is basically an Encyclopedia that is online and can be used and updated by anyone. Also, there is another example in the form of Google Docs that enables the people to edit and share documents and that too online. It also allows downloading and uploading files with the help of this collaborative tool, which is known as social media as it enables multiple users to take advantage of a singular platform.

● **Opinions & Reviews:** Nowadays, with the help of social media, anyone can review anything these days. For example, the blogs or the websites. With social media, anyone will be able to find reviews for any restaurant in their website or you could also review a blog in the comment section. Businesses can ask people to share their feedback or testimonial on the social media pages that will automatically convince more users to make a purchase from them. A person can start a discussion or can ask your users to share their reviews or opinion on your Twitter or Facebook posts. They can launch any product or ask feedback of your even participants on Social Media Page, so next time one can offer better services to them.

● **Brand Monitoring:** This type of presence in the online world is all possible with the help of social media. These tools are the ultimate help when it comes to summarizing all the feedbacks and comments about any particular business. Uses of Social Media are immense in empowering a person to know what people are talking about their brand, product or service. This will also enable them to manage the reputation of their brand on the web. Even, if anyone is talking negative about their brand, they can resolve that issue right away, so their online reputations stay intact.

● **Entertainment:** Well, the world of gaming was never really dependant on the social media platforms but now they are. Games like Farmville and Mafia Wars are the primetime games that are played on the social media sites. Also, the entertainment industry is all dependent on the social media platforms as well. Take the example of sites that promote entertainment. There are many channels that promote live entertainment and it

is all due to the use of social media. These sites not only increase the interaction between the people but they also keep the people entertained. Movies and television shows are also promoted via different social media portals. Televisions shows are launched on social media sites. Variety of entertainment videos are also created by businesses to inform, entertain and engage their audiences.

- **Media Sharing:** Well, one of the most popular and well-known sites that can be used for sharing media is YouTube. With over 500 million followers, this website is already on the map due to the amazing things that it offers to its users. Also, Vimeo is another site that helps in sharing media. These are also the sites that help people create the channels and have interactions with one another. Also, there are some sites that can help share music as well. Sites like Spotify and others come with specific features of sharing music, which can be all well and good for the people. With the help of social media, a person can now have the chance to download and upload media content with ease.

- **Paid Advertising:** Uses of social media are also very effective running paid ads on different social media portals. Social platforms like Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Snapchat, Pinterest, etc. enable you to run paid ads on them. Social Media channels already enjoy a wide audience base that a person can demographically target to optimize the online presence of your brand, product, and services. They can also track the performance of their paid ad campaigns and accordingly, and can tweak their campaign to ensure better results (Marketing91, 2018).

### TYPES OF SOCIAL MEDIA:

- **Social Networks:** A social networking site is a social media site that allows us to connect with people who have similar interests and backgrounds. Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are three of the most popular examples of a social network website. These platforms allow us to connect with our friends, family, and even brands. Most social network sites let users share thoughts, upload photos and videos, and participate in groups of interest.

- **Social news:** A social news site allows its users to post news links and other items to external articles. Users then proceed to vote on said items, and the items with the highest number of votes are most prominently displayed. A good example of a social news site is **Reddit**.

- **Bookmarking Sites:** Bookmarking sites allow users to save and organize links to any number of online resources and websites. A great feature of these sites is the ability for the users to “tag” links, which makes them easier to search, and invariably, share with their followers. **Pinterest**, **Flipboard**, **StumbleUpon** are a few popular example of a bookmarking site.

- **Media Sharing:** Media sharing websites allow users to share different types of media, with the two main ones being image sharing and video hosting sites. Most of these sites also offer social features, like the ability to create profiles and the option of commenting on the uploaded images or videos. These platforms mostly encourage user-generated content where anyone can create, curate, and share the creativity that speaks about them or spark conversations. For example, **Pinterest**, **YouTube**, etc.

- **Micro blogging:** These sites that allow the users to submit their short written entries, which can include links to product and service sites, as well as links to other social media sites. These are then posted on the ‘walls’ of everyone who has subscribed to that user’s account. The most commonly used micro blogging websites are **Facebook** and **Twitter**.

- **Social Review Sites:** Review sites like **TripAdvisor** and **Yelp** show reviews from community members for all sorts of locations and experiences. This keeps people out of the dark and allows them to make better planning or decisions when it comes to choosing a restaurant for their date. Not just beneficial to regular users like you and me, businesses can also get to understand the customer’s perspective. Both the good and bad, this can help them to identify what’s working and discover areas with room for improvement.

- **Community Blogs:** Sometimes all a person wants to do is share that one message, and really not everyone on the internet wants to invest in running and maintaining a blog from a self-hosted website. This is where shared blogging platforms like **Medium** and **Tumblr** give people a space to express their thoughts and voice.

- **Sharing Economy Networks:** While it might not occur to someone directly, but websites like **Airbnb** isn’t just to find holiday rentals or activities. These sharing economy networks bring people who have got something they want to share together with the people who need it.

### COMMONLY USED SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS:

- **Instagram:** Instagram has become one of the most popular social media platforms for teens and young adults. Beautiful photography, stunning visuals, unique designs, selfie-style video that speaks directly to the audience and a cohesive theme to the content will help a person stand out on Instagram.

- **YouTube:** A whopping 73% of U.S. adults report regularly using YouTube, with a heavy concentration in the age range of 15 to 34 years olds. YouTube is broadly popular amongst both men and women, and usage tends to go up alongside income and level of education. Depending upon the type of business and who the audience is, both long-form and short-form video content can work very well on this platform. Most viewers tune in for a combination of education and entertainment, so whether you’re teaching the audience about

emerging marketing tactics or streaming video gameplay, work hard to retain their attention throughout the videos. Additionally, if starting a YouTube channel feels ambitious, partnering with YouTube influencers who are excited about your mission could help you test the waters before you dive in.

- **Facebook:** 68% of U.S. adults report using Facebook, with 51% saying they're active multiple times daily. Usage is spread pretty evenly amongst males and females, while users tend to get increasingly active as age increases (especially beyond the 40+ year old demographic). The more interesting, engaging or even polarizing your content is, the more likely it is to go viral on Facebook. Lean heavily on short videos, eye-catching images and attention-grabbing headlines to attract an audience. For Facebook groups, interactive content and conversation-starters are the way to go. Consider live streams and polls.
- **Twitter:** 63% of Twitter users are between the ages of 35 and 65, with males making up nearly two-thirds of those people. Twitter has become a very popular medium to communicate breaking news, digest bite-sized content, and communicate directly with your users in real-time. Videos and images tend to stand out best, but a well-timed written tweet still works wonders if the person is hopping on trending topics and are particularly witty.
- **TikTok:** Around 50% of TikTok's audience is under the age of 35 in the U.S., with the majority of that audience concentrated amongst those between the ages of 16 to 24. Entertaining, interesting, comedic and sometimes nonsensical short-form video content usually set to the tune of popular songs. Think fun, catchy music-video style content.
- **Pinterest:** With over 320 million monthly users, Pinterest boasts one of the most concentrated audiences of women amongst all social media sites. Nearly 80% of their users are female, with a heavy concentration amongst millennials. Vertically-formatted images do best on this platform, due largely to the browsing experience users are presented with. Polished imagery with clear copy that conveys what the Pinner will see if they click through performs best. Numbers, lists, and quotes should be a big part of the strategy here.
- **Snapchat:** Young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 make up a massive 78% of active users who partake in the platform's over 14 billion daily video views. Users tend to skew slightly more toward females, with the majority accessing the app daily. Video-driven storytelling. If a person have a knack for creating compelling (usually selfie-style) short videos that can entertain & educate a young audience, then Snapchat is a no brainer platform for a person to form connections with their customers.

## ADDICTION

Addiction is an inability to stop using a substance or engaging in a behavior even though it is causing psychological and physical harm.

The American Society of Addiction Medicine (2019) defines addiction as “a treatable, chronic medical disease involving complex interactions among brain circuits, genetics, the environment, and an individual’s life experiences. People with addiction use substances or engage in behaviors that become compulsive and often continue despite harmful consequences.”

An addiction is a chronic dysfunction of the brain system that involves reward, motivation, and memory. It's about the way your body craves a substance or behavior, especially if it causes a compulsive or obsessive pursuit of “reward” and lack of concern over consequences.

People experiencing addiction are also prone to cycles of relapse and remission. This means they may cycle between intense and mild use. Despite these cycles, addictions will typically worsen over time. They can lead to permanent health complications and serious consequences like bankruptcy (Tyler, 2018).

Social media addiction is considered as a kind of internet addiction (Kuss & Griffiths, 2012). Individuals who spend too much time on social media have a desire to be notified of anything immediately, which can cause virtual tolerance, virtual communication and virtual problem. Behaviors that force the person into these actions can be explained as social media addiction.

## SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION

Social media addiction is a psychological condition that compels someone to be overly concerned about social media, spending so much time on these platforms that it impacts other aspects of their life. Social media addiction can be viewed as one form of Internet addiction, where individuals exhibit a compulsion to use social media to excess (Starcevic, 2013). Individuals with social media addiction are often overly concerned about social media and are driven by an uncontrollable urge to log on to and use social media (Andreassen & Pallesen, 2014). Studies have shown that the symptoms of social media addiction can be manifested in mood, cognition, physical and emotional reactions, and interpersonal and psychological problems (Balakrishnan & Shamim, 2013). It has been reported that social media addiction affects approximately 12% of users across social networking sites (Wolniczak et al. 2013).

### **SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF SOCIAL MEDAI ADDICTION:**

- engaging in social media in secrecy or isolating themselves

- withdrawing from people, places, and things previously enjoyed
- negative effects to your job or schoolwork due to the overuse of social media (e.g., scrolling through your apps at work or instead of studying)
- increased use during other activities, such as hanging out with friends and family, or while eating
- increased reliance on social media as a way to cope with problems
- restlessness and irritability whenever you're not using social media
- anger whenever social media usage is reduced
- thinking about social media whenever you aren't using it, so much so that it's the first thing you turn to whenever you have the opportunity (Cherney, 2020).

Excessive social media use has not been recognized as a disorder by the World Health Organization or the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5)*. Controversies around **problematic social media use** include whether the disorder is a separate clinical entity or a manifestation of underlying psychiatric disorders. Researchers have approached the question from a variety of viewpoints, with no universally standardized or agreed definitions. This has led to difficulties in developing evidence-based recommendations.

### **CAUSES OF SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION:**

The use of social media creates rewarding, pleasurable feelings that can cause mood changes. People can build a tolerance to social media and even experience psychological withdrawal symptoms when they stop using it. This development can lead to social media addiction, where people continue to use it in order to escape unpleasant withdrawal symptoms.

- **Variability of Rewards:** The biggest cause behind social media addiction is technology's variability of rewards. For example, someone may post a selfie that receives a lot of responses, leading to pleasurable feelings about themselves. When they post another selfie and do not receive the same response, they may wonder what they can do differently to achieve the same success. This can cause them to pour more time into social media – they want to be rewarded again.
- **Incentives:** Social media outlets also incentivize us to use them. High-status celebrities or businesses may offer giveaways to their followers, asking them to share information with friends for a higher chance of winning. People see their idols interacting with fans, and they also want to be able to communicate with these celebrities. Restaurants and delivery services constantly advertise deals for social media users, rewarding them for checking in or using their services online. All of these can easily make people feel as if they're "missing out" when they're not on social media.
- **Addictiveness :** Yes, social media – and online media in general – is addictive in a certain sense of the word. The companies that run today's most successful social networking apps and websites work hard on improving and growing the amount of people they can bring onto their platform, alongside maximizing the amount of time a person spends on their platform. The more time a person spends, the more ads they can run, and the more they're likely to make a profit off their product. In the end, it's a matter of business, and any great online platform is built for brutal efficiency when it comes to getting people to stay.
- **Social Anxiety:** For people who struggle to maintain a relationship or communicate in person, online media provides the perfect environment to communicate and self-express. While this is a positive thing, it isn't generally healthy to avoid addressing major issues of social anxiety, especially due to all the negative emotional and physical effects of excessive screen time and online consumption.

### **CONSEQUENCES OF SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION:**

An immediate consequence of excessive social media use is that it takes away from time spent elsewhere. This includes time with family and friends, and engaging in hobbies and exercise. It may also begin getting in the way of important life obligations and productivity. As this happens, it is likely that others will begin noticing, and relationships will become compromised.

Social media has been shown to cause higher rates of depression and anxiety. In addition, social media affects the way people interact in face-to-face environments. When people get used to interacting through technology, it can become harder to interact in person.

Many people report that they find their lives being ruined by social media. Their constant usage leads them to rely on social media even though it is destroying their careers and personal relationships. They become distracted, unproductive and depressed, but they still need social media.

Excessive social media use may also sway your ability to independently make decisions. Since peer pressure in face-to-face situations has been known to have this effect as well, it's no surprise that social media can have the same impact. People either begin questioning themselves or want to just go with the flow when the majority believes something different. Although children and teenagers are generally more likely to be swayed by peer pressure, this happens with adults as well (Mackey, 2009).

## USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AMONG YOUNG ADULTS AND OLDER ADULTS

Both teen and adult use of social networking sites has risen significantly, yet there are shifts and some drops in the proportion of teens using several social networking site features. Social media is a powerful tool that can connect family and friends across long distances as well as link people with similar interests. Social media has been widely adopted by younger adults, but older adults have been less likely to use such applications. When it comes to the other platforms in the survey, 40% of adults say they ever use Instagram and about three-in-ten report using Pinterest or LinkedIn. One-quarter say they use Snapchat, and similar shares report being users of Twitter or WhatsApp. TikTok – an app for sharing short videos – is used by 21% of Americans, while 13% say they use the neighbourhood-focused platform Next-door. Additionally, a vast majority of adults under the age of 65 say they use YouTube. Fully 95% of those 18 to 29 say they use the platform, along with 91% of those 30 to 49 and 83% of adults 50 to 64. However, this share drops substantially – to 49% – among those 65 and older (Pew Research Center, 2020).

### IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA

#### **The Positive Aspects of Social Media:**

While virtual interaction on social media doesn't have the same psychological benefits as face-to-face contact, there are still many positive ways in which it can help a person stay connected and support their wellbeing. Social media enables to:

- Communicate and stay up to date with family and friends around the world.
- Find new friends and communities; network with other people who share similar interests or ambitions.
- Join or promote worthwhile causes; raise awareness on important issues.
- Seek or offer emotional support during tough times.
- Find vital social connection if you live in a remote area, for example, or have limited independence, social anxiety, or are part of a marginalized group.
- Find an outlet for your creativity and self-expression.
- Discover (with care) sources of valuable information and learning (Robinson, 2020).

#### **The Negative Aspects of Social Media:**

Multiple studies have found a strong link between heavy social media and an increased risk for depression, anxiety, loneliness, self-harm, and even suicidal thoughts. Social media may promote negative experiences such as:

- **Inadequacy about life or appearance.** Even if a person knows that images you're viewing on social media are manipulated, they can still make you feel insecure about how you look or what's going on in your own life. Similarly, we're all aware that other people tend to share just the highlights of their lives, rarely the low points that everyone experiences. But that doesn't lessen those feelings of envy and dissatisfaction when you're scrolling through a friend's airbrushed photos of their tropical beach holiday or reading about their exciting new promotion at work.
- **Fear of missing out (FOMO).** While FOMO has been around far longer than social media, sites such as Facebook and Instagram seem to exacerbate feelings that others are having more fun or living better lives than you are. The idea that you're missing out on certain things can impact your self-esteem, trigger anxiety, and fuel even greater social media use. FOMO can compel you to pick up your phone every few minutes to check for updates, or compulsively respond to each and every alert—even if that means taking risks while you're driving, missing out on sleep at night, or prioritizing social media interaction over real world relationships.
- **Isolation.** A study at the University of Pennsylvania found that high usage of Facebook, Snapchat, and Instagram *increases* rather decreases feelings of loneliness. Conversely, the study found that reducing social media usage can actually make you feel *less* lonely and isolated and improve your overall wellbeing.
- **Depression and anxiety.** Human beings need face-to-face contact to be mentally healthy. Nothing reduces stress and boosts your mood faster or more effectively than eye-to-eye contact with someone who cares about you. The more you prioritize social media interaction over in-person relationships, the more you're at risk for developing or exacerbating mood disorders such as anxiety and depression.
- **Cyberbullying.** About 10 percent of teens report being bullied on social media and many other users are subjected to offensive comments. Social media platforms such as Twitter can be hotspots for spreading hurtful rumours, lies, and abuse that can leave lasting emotional scars.
- **Self-absorption.** Sharing endless selfies and all your innermost thoughts on social media can create an unhealthy self-centeredness and distance a person from real-life connections (Robinson, 2020).

Let us now deep dive into some other positive & negative sides of social media:

#### **PHYSICAL IMPACT:**

- Numerous medical and scientific studies have shown alarming results when testing people who use smartphones for more than four hours a day and those who don't. Smartphone users tend to develop rounded

shoulders, spinal curvatures, vertebrate disorders, and associated neck pain and headaches caused by these ailments.

- Smartphones emit blue light, which is very bright for our eyes. Looking at our smartphones in bed is especially harmful, as this direct exposure to light can be damaging to our retinas, which can lead to macular degeneration (i.e., worsening eyesight). Also, a growing number of ophthalmologists are beginning to believe there's a link between smartphone use and cataracts, with younger and younger patients experiencing cataracts instead of the typical 75-and-older crowd.
- Sleep is one of the most important factors in our overall health. Staring at smartphone screens in bed is like tricking the body into staring into a brightly-lit landscape, which delays melatonin production and prevents us from having quality sleep patterns, resulting in a host of health issues (Holistic Bonfire, 2016).

### **PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT:**

• Users of social media may experience bullying, shaming, negative responses to their posts. These users may also experience discomfort due to comparison of their self-image and life satisfaction to other users. Additionally, negative social media behaviors can cause isolation, depression, and mood changes based on negative content users see while scrolling (Belluomini, 2015).

• There are some benefits associated with social media use. These include—but are not limited to—awareness and destigmatizing mental health, additional access to resources, and a platform for individuals to relate to one another regarding their mental health symptoms while using the apps (Lattie et al., 2019). Social media can also serve as a positive outlet to reduce the potential barriers individuals of all backgrounds face when living with a mental health diagnosis (Andrews et al., 2018).

### **COGNITIVE IMPACT:**

- Social media has the ability to both capture and scatter your attention. With a simple “refresh,” constant new information is at your fingertips. Through a process called “variable-ratio reinforcement,” you are constantly excited and rewarded to see fresh new posts.
- A study observing memory and processing speed in older adults' use of social media indicated that the process of training and subsequent socializing to use social media platforms may have contributed to an increase in cognitive functioning (Myhre et al., 2017).
- Research has also reported more efficient working memory and greater verbal abilities in adolescent children who have used Facebook for over one year (Myhre et al., 2017).
- The authors implied that social media may decrease the attention spans, or the effective working memory of its users, and therefore further research is highly warranted.
- Studies addressing media multitasking (i.e., using Facebook while watching television) have reported that individuals engaged in media multitasking showed decreased working memory performance (Uncapher et al., 2016).

### **SOCIAL IMPACT:**

- People may contact with friends using social media, and this improved online communication deepens their relationship.
- According to the survey, over 52 percent of kids who stay online believe social media has aided their friendships, and around 88 percent of people say staying online has aided them in staying in touch with pals they don't see on a daily basis.
- As previously said, young individuals have an insatiable desire to create new mates. Around 57 percent of kids who stay online claim they use social media to find new pals.

### **WAYS TO REGULATE SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION**

Whether a person has social media addiction or is just on the apps more than they need to be, the good news is there are ways that can help decrease the overall use. Consider the following tips to help achieve a healthier balance with social media:

- **Turn Off Social Media Notifications:** When a person stop notifications from disturbing the normal routine, they might find it easier to concentrate on the daily tasks and not get distracted so easily. Social media notifications are a constant reminder that something is happening in the online world and a person might feel like they're missing out. So to quell this FOMO, turn off the notifications. The bonus is, when a person do come around to check their social media, they may have a build-up of more notifications which will make it more exciting and will make the experience more rewarding.
- **Limit Social Media Screen Time:** Set a timer on the watch or phone to limit the amount of time spend on the social media. Choose a limit depending on the severity of the social media dependence — say an hour a day, which equates to seven hours per week — and whenever a person check their accounts, start the timer

going. When a person reaches their limit, be strong and don't be tempted to add on extra time. This will be a strong test of the willpower, but it will be worth it in the end.

- **Get A New Hobby Outside of Social Media:** Think of things that brought joy before doom scrolling and anxiously refreshing for new notifications, and reintroduce them to life or pick up a new hobby to fill the spare time. Maybe learn a new skill or do something a person have always wanted to do but never had the time. It will probably surprise one at how much free time they have when they stop mindlessly scrolling through their newsfeed. Plus the new hobby — whether it's knitting, playing guitar, or cooking — will keep their mind and hands preoccupied when they're craving social media. That being said, resist the urge to share progress on Instagram.

- **Check In With Friends and Family:** A person can never really know what's going on with someone from their Instagram feed. Instead of assuming that you're all up to date with what your friends or family are up to, why not shoot them a text or give them a call? Even if you can't hang out in person safely, you can stay connected without tapping through Instagram Stories. Need to spice up your Zoom happy hour? Try turning it into a weekly game night. Long phone calls may have fallen out of fashion, but there's nothing more rewarding than really connecting with someone in more than bite size chunks.

- **Delete the unwanted Social Media Apps:** A common chorus among experts in *The Social Dilemma* and those who make their money writing digital detox guides is to uninstall apps you aren't using often. It'll remove the temptation, the notifications, and the temptation to scroll mindlessly. If a person absolutely needs to check it, there's always the laptop. In fact, maybe even delete the ones that are being used. Having an extra step to go through when a person feel the urge to hate-read someone's Twitter feed will make them think about whether it need to be done or not (Bustle, 2016).

## OBJECTIVE

1. To study the levels of social media addiction in young adults and middle adults.
2. To compare the levels of social media addiction in young adults and middle adults.

## **HYPOTHESIS**

**H<sub>o</sub>:** There will be no significant difference in the levels of social media addiction between young adults and middle adults.

**H<sub>A</sub>:** There will be a significant difference in the levels of social media addiction between young adults and middle adults.

## METHOD

### **DESIGN**

A between-group design was used in this study. It is an experiment that has two or more groups of subjects each being tested by a different testing factor simultaneously. This design is usually used in place of, or in some cases in conjunction with, the within-subject design, which applies the same variations of conditions to each subject to observe the reactions. The simplest between-group design occurs with two groups; one is generally regarded as the treatment group, which receives the 'special' treatment, (that is, is treated with some variable) and the control group, which receives no variable treatment and is used as a reference (prove that any deviation in results from the treatment group is, indeed, a direct result of the variable.). This design was used here as we needed to study two different groups of participants, one being young adults and the other being middle adults. The design was considered appropriate to know if there is a significant difference in levels of Social media addiction between the young adults and the middle adult or not.

### **SAMPLE**

Two different groups of participants were used here, young adults and middle adults. Two different groups were used as we needed to see if there is any significant difference in their levels of social media addiction or not. A total number of 135 participants were a part of this study, out of which 89 were young adults and 46 were middle adults. Both groups had different age ranges, ranging from 18 to 25 years old for young adults and 45 to 55 years for middle adults. The type of sampling which was used to select the participants of both the groups was purposive sampling. Purposive sampling (also known as judgment, selective or subjective sampling) is a sampling technique in which researcher relies on his or her own judgment when choosing members of population to participate in the study.

### **TOOLS USED**

Social Media Addiction Scale was used in this study. Social Media Addiction Scale (SMAS) is developed by Tutgun-Ünal and Deniz (2015) in order to measure social media addiction of university students, having performed all validity and credibility tests. It is a scale that consists of 41 items and 4 factors (occupation, mood modification, relapse and conflict). It is a 5 point Likert scale with "Always," "Often," "Sometimes," "Seldom," and "Never." SMAS has 4 factors which explain 59% of the total variance. The specific consistency coefficient of the scale is Cronbach alpha .967. The highest point to be obtained from SMAS is 205; the lowest is 41. The

sub scales can be assessed among themselves. Accordingly, the items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 on the scale are concerned with the occupation aspect; and measure the cognitive occupation effect of social media. The items 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17 on the scale are concerned with mood modification; and measure the emotive effect of social media. The items 18, 19, 20, 21 and 22 on the scale are concerned with the relapse aspect; and measure how the desire to control social media use fail and lead to repetitive reuse. The items 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, and 41 on the scale are concerned with the conflict aspect; and measure how social media cause potential problems in an individual's life.

### **PRECAUTIONS**

1. Pandemic precautions were taken due to which Google forms were used for the conduction purpose with both the participants.
2. Stable connection was ensured for hassle-free administration.
3. It was ensured that the participant was not receiving any external help and was answering on their own.
4. The participant must Know Basic English.
5. Instructions were made clear to the participants.
6. It was ensured that the participant had no prior knowledge of the Social Media Addiction Scale.
7. No feedback was given at the time of the conduction but at the end proper debriefing and feedback was done.

### **INSTRUCTIONS**

The following instructions were provided before the beginning of the test -

1. This form consists of 4 sections. The first section requires your demographic information, the second section consists of an informed consent and the third section of brief questions to help us understand social media usage in young adults and middle adults. Fourth section requires an introspective report.
  2. Kindly fill all the details and if in case you face any difficulty then kindly contact the referred student.
  3. The test consists of (30 items). It is structured in a Likert scale format.
  4. For all the given statements you have five possible answers:
    - i. NEVER
    - ii.RARELY
    - iii.SOMETIMES
    - iv.OFTEN
    - v.ALWAYS
- \*Opt the most suitable option.
5. Introspective report instructions: Please add a brief description of your experience while filling out this survey by sharing how you felt, feedback on the questions, anything else that you would like to say.
  6. After writing the introspective report, submit the form.

### **PROCEDURE**

Firstly, the questionnaire using the Google form was developed which was titled as "Levels of Social Media Usage". At the start of the questionnaire all the instructions and section wise division clarification was given on the form and then preliminary data was collected through the form from the participant. After that the informed consent was presented in the Google form. The questionnaire was formed by using The Social Media Addiction Scale.

After the development of the Google form the participants were pre-informed about the questionnaire and the individual date and time was given to the participants. An informed consent was taken digitally by each participant considering the current COVID situation. The participants were informed that the practical was only conducted for the study purpose and not for any other purpose. They were assured that the data will not be disclosed to anyone in any case. Before each participant was called the questionnaire link was pre-organized. After that the participant was called at the given date and time. When it was ensured that the participant was briefed about the right and that the subject was comfortable enough, the questionnaire link was given by the researcher. The participant was also pre-informed about the rights and that the responses are being recorded for future reference.

All the instructions related to the questionnaire were given to the participant. Participant was informed that there is no time limit to answer any question and as the questions are mainly close ended they have to stick to the instructions that are provided to them. The participant was instructed that for each of the statements below, they have to click on the number to which they feel the statement is true for them.

The participant was told that simple clarification on the questions regarding their meanings will be given on request and the participant was also suggested to give the first natural answer that comes to their mind instead of giving socially desirable answers as no one is going to judge their answers. After all the instructions were made clear the participant was asked to provide the link and the participant was asked to answer each question accordingly.

After the completion of the questionnaire they were asked to submit the questionnaire. After they submitted the form, debriefing was done so that they leave the study with a clear head and they were thanked for their participation in the research and were told that when the research will be completed, the results will be shared with them if they want to know.

### **SCORING**

- Items were scored on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 representing Never and 5 representing Always.
- The highest point was 205 and the lowest point was 41 in this scale.
- Here, higher scores meant higher addiction levels.
- At the end, all the scores were added together to get a final score across the four factors and the total score.
- Then after calculating the final score, the range of scores and what they meant was interpreted for example, 41-73: no addiction, etc.
- The scoring was done using the Jamovi software 1.6 and an independent t test was performed using the same.
- There was no negative scoring used in this scale.

### **RESULT**

**TABLE 1.1: SHOWS LEVEL SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION IN YOUNG ADULTS AND MIDDLE ADULTS**

DIMENSIONS	N		MEAN		DF	t Score
	YA	MA	YA	MA		
OCCUPATION	89	46	36.7	28.5	133	4.60*
MOOD MODIFICATION	89	46	14.5	11.8	133	2.85*
RELAPSE	89	46	13.5	10.4	133	3.39*
CONFLICT	89	46	44.3	35.2	133	3.01*
TOTAL	89	46	109	85.9	133	3.95*

\*p = < 0.05 , YA= Young adults, MA = Middle adults

Table 1.1 shows levels of social media addiction in young adults and middle adults.

- There is a significant difference between young adults ( $M = 36.7$ ) and middle adults ( $M = 28.5$ ) in terms of occupation as  $t = 4.60^*$  (For significant results, p-value should be less than 0.05).
- There is a significant difference between young adults ( $M = 14.5$ ) and middle adults ( $M = 11.8$ ) in terms of mood modification as  $t = 2.85^*$  (For significant results, p-value should be less than 0.05).
- There is a significant difference between young adults ( $M = 13.5$ ) and middle adults ( $M = 10.4$ ) in terms of relapse as  $t = 3.39^*$  (For significant results, p-value should be less than 0.05).
- There is a significant difference between young adults ( $M = 44.3$ ) and middle adults ( $M = 35.2$ ) in terms of conflict as  $t = 3.01^*$  (For significant results, p-value should be less than 0.05).
- There is a significant difference between young adults ( $M = 109$ ) and middle adults ( $M = 85.9$ ) in terms of total level of addiction as  $t = 3.95^*$  (For significant results, p-value should be less than 0.05).

### **DISCUSSION**

The aim of the present practicum was to study the levels of social media addiction in young adults and middle adults. The sample for the current study was young adults and middle adults. A total number of 135 participants were a part of this study, out of which 89 were young adults and 46 were middle adults. Using The Social Media Addiction Scale, a questionnaire was created. Google form was used for the conduction of the practical. The form was divided into 4 sections, the first seeking to gather the participants' demographic details, the second section consisting of an informed consent, the third section consisting the question to study social media usage and the fourth and the last section consisting of an introspective report.

Firstly, the questionnaire using the Google form was developed which was titled as "Levels of social media usage". After the development of the Google form the participants were pre-informed about the questionnaire and the individual date and time was given to the participants. An informed consent was taken digitally by each participant considering the current COVID situation. In order to make the participant comfortable, rapport formation was used. When it was ensured that the participant was briefed about the right and that the subject was comfortable enough, the questionnaire link was given by the researcher. After the completion of the questionnaire they were asked to submit the questionnaire. After they submitted the form, debriefing was done. The analysis of the data was done using the Jamovi software.

After the conduction, the data from all the 135 participants was pooled and results were calculated for difference in the levels of Social media addiction between the young adults and the middle adults using Jamovi software. Independent sample t test was used for calculating the results because we have to study the comparison between two independent groups of between the young adults and the middle adults.

Based on the two objectives, (A) to study the levels of social media addiction in young adults and middle adults; and (B) To compare both the two samples. Null and alternative hypothesis was formed i.e., There will be no significant difference in the levels of social media addiction between young adults and middle adults, according to the null hypothesis, and there will be a significant difference in the levels of social media addiction between young adults and middle adults, according to the alternative hypothesis.

Social media is internet-based and gives users quick electronic communication of content, such as personal information, documents, videos, and photos. Social media is typically used for social interaction and access to news and information, and decision making. Social media addiction is a behavioral addiction that is defined by being overly concerned about social media, driven by an uncontrollable urge to log on to or use social media, and devoting so much time and effort to social media that it impairs other important life areas (Addiction Center, 2021). Social Media Addiction Scale (SMAS) is developed by Tutgun-Ünal and Deniz (2015) in order to measure social media addiction of university students, having performed all validity and credibility tests. It is a scale that consists of 41 items and 4 factors (occupation, mood modification, relapse and conflict).

We can see from table 1.1 of the results that there are four aspects, namely occupation, mood modification, relapse, and conflict, where there is a significant difference between young people and middle adults. Although social media may provide new forms of social connection and broaden relationships (Baker & Moore, 2008), its use can have adverse effects on the physical and mental health, family life, and social life of individuals, especially adolescents and young people (Frost & Rickwood, 2017). Many studies have demonstrated that using social media problematically may be related to psychopathology (e.g., anxiety, depression, self-injurious behaviour, suicide risk and suicidal ideation), personality aspects (e.g., low self-esteem, and high impulsivity), and academic (e.g., low school connectedness, and poor academic performance) (Shafi et al., 2019; Shensa et al., 2017).

Excessive usage of social media has been shown to have a harmful influence on family relationships, general interpersonal relationships, and occupation (Zheng, 2014). Addiction was shown to be significant in the occupation aspect in young adults ( $M = 36.7$ ) and middle adults ( $M = 28.5$ ) respectively, with  $t = 4.60^*$  (For significant results, p-value should be less than 0.05).

Social media use becomes problematic when someone views social networking sites as an important coping mechanism to relieve stress, loneliness, or depression. This continuous use eventually leads to multiple interpersonal problems, such as ignoring real life relationships, work or school responsibilities, and physical health, which may then exacerbate an individual's undesirable moods (mood modification). Addiction was shown to be significant in the mood modification aspect in young adults ( $M = 14.5$ ) and middle adults ( $M = 11.8$ ) respectively with  $t = 2.85^*$  (For significant results, p-value should be less than 0.05).

Relapse (i.e., addicts quickly revert back in their excessive Social media usage after an abstinence period). The dopamine-inducing social contexts that social networking sites provide are primarily to blame for the phenomenon of social media addiction. Addiction was shown to be significant in the relapse aspect in young adults ( $M = 13.5$ ) and middle adults ( $M = 10.4$ ) respectively with  $t = 3.39^*$  (For significant results, p-value should be less than 0.05). Using uses and gratification theory, media are utilized in a goal-directed manner for the purposes of pleasure and need satisfaction, which are akin to addiction (Katz et al., 1974).

Conflict refers to conflict interpersonal problems ensue because of social media usage. If we consider the specific effects of social media use on relationship quality, we would expect that social media use reduces relationship satisfaction, which then triggers both relationship conflicts (over social media use) and negative relationship outcomes such as infidelity (through social media use). Addiction was shown to be significant in the conflict aspect in young adults ( $M = 44.3$ ) and middle adults ( $M = 35.2$ ) respectively with  $t = 3.01^*$  (For significant results, p-value should be less than 0.05). It was discovered that a disproportionate percentage of adolescents with social media addiction reported high levels of conflict with their parents as well as low levels of contact with their parents (Wolak et al., 2003). Previous research has revealed that using social media might exacerbate conflicts and have harmful consequences.

Social media users between the ages of 18 and 34 are more likely than older age groups to prefer to engage with their friends, acquaintances, and family through social media. They are also more likely to listen to other people's thoughts on social media, say something they feel free to speak, and feel important when they provide comments on brands or items they have used (Bolton, 2013). Addiction was shown to be significant in the total aspect in young adults ( $M = 109$ ) and middle adults ( $M = 85.9$ ) respectively with  $t = 3.95^*$  (For significant results, p-value should be less than 0.05). Furthermore, young adults today use more social media for the same reasons as other members: leisure, study, information, or entertainment, socializing, experimenting, and experiencing a sense of community (Valkenburg et al. 2006). As can be seen, there was a significant difference in the amount of media usage by young adults and middle adults. As a result, the alternative hypothesis, i.e., There will be a significant difference in the levels of social media addiction between young adults and middle adults is retained.

Social media addiction can be viewed as one form of Internet addiction, where individuals exhibit a compulsion to use social media to excess (Starcevic, 2013). Studies have shown that the symptoms of social media addiction

can be manifested in mood, cognition, physical and emotional reactions, and interpersonal and psychological problems (Balakrishnan & Shamim, 2013). An estimated 27% of children who spend 3 or more hours a day on social media exhibit symptoms of poor mental health. Social media addiction could possibly impact elders' health risk factors, by more isolation, psychiatric comorbidities, increasing suicidality and deteriorating prognosis; in a context of hypothesized increasing prevalence of this problematic use. Almost 20 to 67% of people aged over 55 years old are connected to Internet (Commission E, 2013). While many people are able to use social media on a daily basis with no problem, those suffering from a social media addiction are consumed by their need to use and engage on social networking sites. Luckily, the condition is very treatable and many have successfully recovered. Reducing screen time is a great way to combat problematic social media use; however, if the addiction is too severe you may require professional help (Addiction Center, 2021).

## CONCLUSION

The aim of the practical was to study the levels of social media addiction in young adults and middle adults and to compare both the samples sing Social Media Addiction Scale. It was found from the above result and analysis that there was a significant difference in the levels of social media addiction in young adults and middle adults, implying that the alternative hypothesis was retained.

## LIMITATIONS

This study had few limitations. First, because of the current situation of the pandemic, many of the researchers weren't able to meet the participant in person. Hence, uniformity couldn't be achieved.

Second, the size of the sample was relatively small. Thus, future studies should use datasets with larger sample sizes to confirm or refute the current findings.

Third, age range may have affected the results.

And lastly, the assessment was only at a quantitative level, no qualitative assessment was done which could have a better insight.

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