

19. SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION

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This paper discusses the prevalence and negative impacts of social media addiction, such as poor mental health, low academic performance, cyberbullying, and decreased productivity. It also suggests techniques to combat social media addiction, including setting limits, turning off notifications, and engaging in offline activities.

Social media refers to online platforms and applications that allow users to create and share content and interact with each other. According to a study, there are 4.89 billion social media users today. And the number is expected to grow up to 5.85 billion for 2027 [1]. Facebook has the largest number of monthly active users with 2.91 billion, followed by YouTube with 2.29 billion, and WhatsApp with 2 billion users.

A behavioural addiction defined by excessive and compulsive use of social media platforms is known as a social media addiction, also referred to as social media overuse or social media dependence. It is estimated that nearly 210 million people worldwide are affected by social media addiction [2].

In recent years, the issue of social media addiction has gained widespread attention as the use of these platforms has become increasingly ubiquitous. According to American Psychological Association, Social media overuse is linked to poor mental health, with those spending over two hours per day on social media reporting symptoms of anxiety and depression (that is 43 % of Americans). Being a great distraction for students, it is associated with lower academic performance: students who use social media for more than two hours tend to have a lower GPA than non-users (3.06 GPA vs. 3.82 GPA) [3]. Cyberbullying is also prevalent on social media, with 59 % of US teens experiencing some form of it [4].

Social media addiction can also be detrimental to work. Constant notifications and the desire for immediate gratification are very distracting, which lowers output and results in bad time management. Excessive social media use in the workplace is a major productivity killer, with 56 % of employers reporting is as such, according to CareerBuilder. However, despite growing evidence of the negative impact of excessive social media use on mental health, productivity, and social interactions, many people continue using these platforms routinely.

According to the research, that was conducted on BSUIR 18 years old students, almost 56 % of respondents use social media more than 2 hours every day, while more than 20 % of respondents report using it for more than 3 hours daily, as depicted in Figure 1.

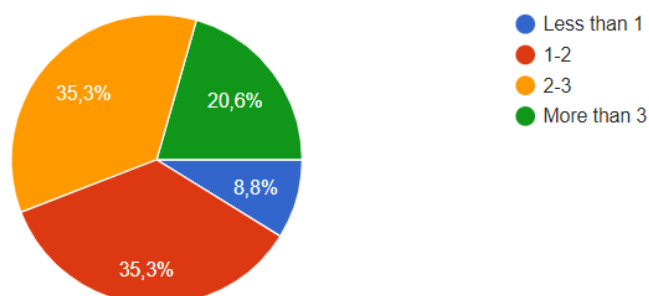


Figure 1 – Amount of hours of using social media

More than 55 % of respondents are dissatisfied with the time they spend on social media, as depicted in Figure 2.

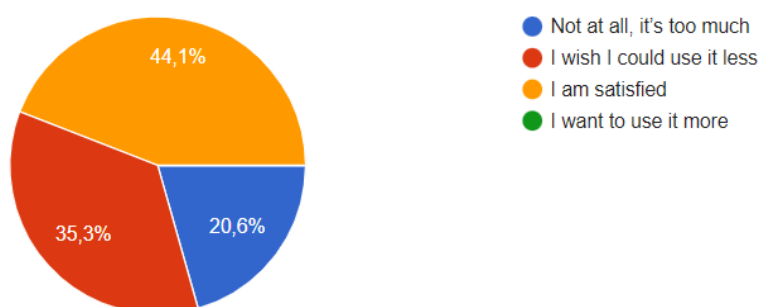


Figure 2 – Opinions on the amount of hours of using social media

Respondents also report negative consequences of using their favourite social media platform, as depicted in Figure 3.

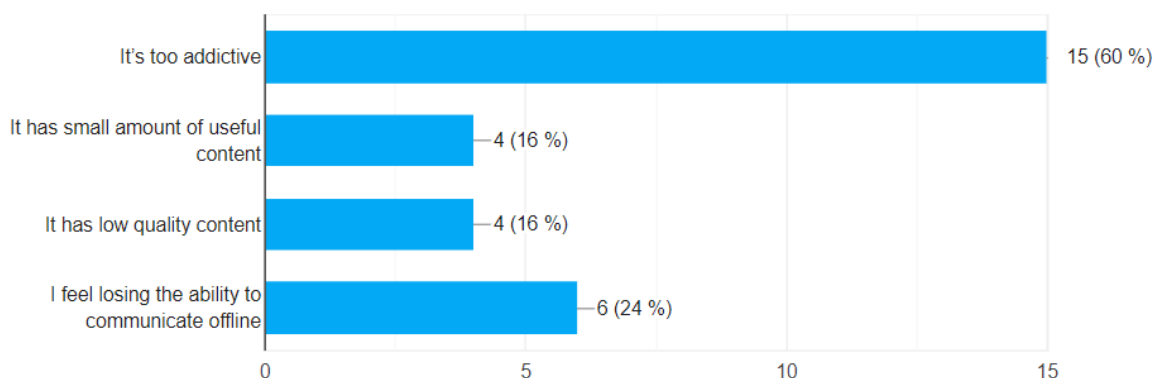


Figure 3 – Side effects of using social media

The comparison culture that is pervasive on social media platforms can have a damaging effect on individuals' mental health and self-esteem. Social media users often present a carefully curated version of themselves, showcasing their best moments and leaving out the less desirable aspects of their lives. This can create a skewed view of reality, as individuals compare their everyday lives to the highlight reels of others. As a result, many social media users may experience feelings of inadequacy and inferiority, leading to negative mental health outcomes such as anxiety and depression.

Moreover, the dependence on social media can also contribute to social isolation and loneliness. While social media platforms provide a sense of connection with others, this connection is often superficial and lacking in meaningful interactions. Spending excessive amounts of time on social media can lead to a neglect of face-to-face interactions, which are essential for developing and maintaining deep and meaningful relationships. As a result, social media users may experience feelings of social alienation and loneliness, further exacerbating mental health issues.

It is important to recognise the potential harm of social media addiction and take steps to mitigate its negative effects. By limiting social media use and engaging in offline activities, individuals can prioritise their mental health and build deeper, more meaningful connections with others.

People can take action to restrict their use of social media and combat social media addiction. To decrease the desire to check social media constantly, one may try these techniques:

1. Setting limits: a study by Pew Research Centre found that 59 % of adults who have tried to limit their social media use found it successful.

2. Turning off notifications: a survey conducted by the Royal Society for Public Health found that about 70 % of young people reported feeling better when they took a break from social media by turning off their notifications.

3. Engaging in offline activities: a study by the Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology found that trying offline activities (e.g., exercise, socializing with friends in person) can lead to significant reductions in depression and loneliness among young adults.

In conclusion, social media addiction has become a prevalent issue with the rise of social media usage. The addiction can lead to poor mental health, lower academic performance, and decreased productivity. Furthermore, it can result in social alienation and a skewed view of reality. With the increasing number of social media users and the negative impact of excessive use, it is crucial for individuals to take action to restrict their usage and find a better balance between their online and offline lives. Setting limits, turning off notifications, and engaging in offline activities are effective techniques to combat social media addiction and improve mental health and overall well-being. It is important to recognise the potential harm of social media overuse and take steps to prioritise personal health and relationships.

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