

A REVIEW ON SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION

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ABSTRACT

Social networking sites are online communities in which users can create public profiles, interact with real-world friends, and connect with others who share common interests. They are regarded as a 'global consumer phenomenon,' with usage increasing at an exponential rate over the last few years. Anecdotal case study evidence suggests that some users may develop a 'addiction' to social networking sites on the Internet. However, there is a dearth of contemporary scientific literature examining the addictive properties of social networking sites on the Internet. Thus, this review of the literature aims to provide empirical and conceptual insight into the emerging phenomenon of SNS addiction by outlining SNS usage patterns, examining motivations for SNS use, examining the personalities of SNS users, examining the negative consequences of SNS use, examining potential SNS addiction, and examining SNS addiction specificity and comorbidity. The findings indicate that SNSs are primarily used for social purposes, most notably network maintenance. Additionally, extraverts appear to use social networking sites for social enhancement, whereas introverts appear to use them for social compensation, all of which appear to be associated with increased usage, as do low conscientiousness and high narcissism. Negative correlates of SNS use include decreased participation in real-world social communities and academic achievement, as well as relationship difficulties, all of which may be indicators of potential addiction.

Keywords: Social Media, Addiction, Real World

INTRODUCTION

"I am a recovering alcoholic. When asked why she does not see herself as capable of assisting her daughter with her homework, a young mother responds, "I just get lost in Facebook." Rather than assisting her child, she spends her time chatting and perusing social networking sites [1]. While this case is extreme, it suggests the emergence of a new mental health problem as Internet social networks proliferate. Newspaper articles have also reported similar cases, indicating that the popular press was among the first to recognise social networking sites' potential addictive qualities (SNS; i.e., [2,3]). According to such media coverage, women are more likely than men to develop SNS addictions [4].

SOCIAL MEDIA POPULARITY

The widespread popularity of social networking sites on the Internet may be cause for concern, particularly in light of the steadily increasing amount of time people spend online [5]. People engage in a variety of activities on the Internet, some of which have the potential to be addictive. Rather than developing an addiction to the medium itself, some users may develop an addiction to specific online activities [6]. According to Young [7], there are five distinct types of internet addiction: computer addiction (i.e., computer game addiction), information overload (i.e., web surfing addiction), net compulsions (i.e., online gambling or online shopping addiction), cybersexual addiction (i.e., online pornography or online sex addiction), and cyber-relationship addiction (i.e., an addiction to online relationships). SNS addiction appears to fit into the latter category, as the primary reason for using SNSs is to establish and maintain both online and offline relationships (for a more detailed discussion of this please refer to the section on motivations for SNS usage). From a clinical psychologist's perspective, it may be plausible to speak specifically of 'Facebook Addiction Disorder' (or more broadly, 'SNS Addiction Disorder') because addiction criteria such as neglect of personal life, mental preoccupation, escapism, mood modifying experiences, tolerance, and concealment of addictive behaviour appear to be present in some individuals who use SNSs excessively [8].

SOCIAL NETWORKING

Social networking sites are online communities in which users can create public profiles, interact with real-world friends, and connect with others who share common interests. SNSs are "web-based services that enable individuals to create a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system." [9]. The emphasis is on established networks as opposed to networking, which entails the creation of new networks. SNSs enable individuals to connect and share media content, thereby embodying the primary Web 2.0 attributes [10], within the constraints of their respective structural characteristics.

In terms of SNS history, the first social networking site (SixDegrees) was launched in 1997, based on the concept that everyone is connected to everyone else via six degrees of separation [9], which was initially dubbed the "small world problem" [11]. Facebook, the most successful current social networking site, was founded in 2004 as a closed virtual community for Harvard students. The site grew rapidly, and Facebook now has over 500 million users, half of whom log in daily. Additionally, time spent on Facebook increased by 566 percent between 2007 and 2008 [12]. This statistic alone demonstrates the exponential growth of social networking sites and also suggests a possible reason for an increase in potential social networking site addiction. The appeal of SNSs, hypothetically, can be traced back to their reflection of contemporary individualist culture. Unlike traditional virtual communities, which emerged in the 1990s on the basis of

members' shared interests [13], social networking sites are egocentric. Individuals, rather than communities, are the focus of attention [9].

Internet addiction has been linked to egocentrism [14]. According to some, the egocentric nature of SNSs may facilitate the engagement in addictive behaviours and thus serve as an attractive factor for people to use them in potentially excessive ways. This hypothesis is consistent with the PACE Framework for the aetiology of specific addictions [15]. Attraction is one of four critical factors that may predispose individuals to develop an addiction to certain behaviours or substances over others. As a result of their egocentric structure, SNSs enable individuals to present themselves positively, which has been shown to "raise their spirits" (i.e., improve their mood state) when perceived as pleasurable. This may result in positive experiences that may foster and facilitate the development of SNS addiction.

CONSLUSION

A behavioural addiction such as SNS addiction can be viewed biopsychosocially [16]. As with substance-related addictions, SNS addiction entails the experience of 'classic' addiction symptoms, including mood modification (i.e., engagement in SNSs results in a positive change in emotional states), salience (i.e., behavioural, cognitive, and emotional preoccupation with SNS use), tolerance (i.e., ever increasing use of SNSs over time), and withdrawal symptoms (i.e., experiencing physical withdrawal symptoms) (i.e., addicts quickly revert back in their excessive SNS usage after an abstinence period).

Additionally, scholars have suggested that the aetiology of addictions is influenced by a combination of biological, psychological, and social factors [16,17], which may also be true for SNS addiction. As a result, SNS addiction is thought to share a common etiological framework with other substance-related and behavioural addictions. However, because SNS use is distinct from other forms of (Internet) addiction (i.e., pathological use of social networking sites rather than other Internet applications), the phenomenon appears worthy of individual consideration, particularly in light of the potentially detrimental effects of both substance-related and behavioural addictions on indwelling individuals.

There is a dearth of scientific literature on the addictive properties of social networks on the Internet. Thus, the purpose of this literature review is to provide empirical insight into the emerging phenomenon of Internet social network usage and potential addiction by (1) outlining SNS usage patterns, (2) examining motivations for SNS use, (3) examining the personalities of SNS users, (4) examining the negative consequences of SNSs, (5) examining potential SNS addiction, and (6) examining SNS addiction.

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