

Addiction to Social Media Platforms Among Undergraduate Students

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Abstract

Social media addiction is characterized by an excessive preoccupation with social media platforms, leading to an inability to control the urge to engage with them, which in turn disrupts various aspects of life. A substantial majority, approximately 90%, of individuals aged 18 to 29 years, utilize some form of social media. Statistics suggest that the global prevalence of social media addiction exceeds 210 million individuals. The study sought to assess the degree of social media addiction among undergraduate students, employing a non-experimental descriptive design. A total of 400 undergraduate students were chosen through convenience sampling from a degree college. The research utilized a demographic questionnaire and the Social Media Addiction Scale–Student Form. Findings indicated that 49% of participants exhibited a moderate to high level of social media addiction, while 63% demonstrated a moderate to very high level of addiction towards virtual information. Notably, significant correlations were observed between social media addiction and factors such as the students' field of study ($p = 0.000005$) and the amount of time spent on media per day for academic purposes ($p = 0.000474$). The study concluded that students displayed varying degrees of social media addiction, warranting interventions to regulate their social media usage behaviors.

Keywords: Social media addiction, undergraduate students, demographic questionnaire, academic purposes

INTRODUCTION

Social media denotes a digital technology platform enabling the exchange of ideas, opinions, and

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data across virtual networks and online communities. Social media addiction is characterized by excessive preoccupation and an irresistible compulsion to engage with social media platforms, often to the detriment of other essential aspects of life. Research findings indicate a prevalence of social media usage among younger demographics, with nearly 90% of individuals aged 18 to 29 years reported to engage with at least one form of social media. Globally, it is estimated that over 210 million individuals grapple with addictions related to internet and social media usage. There are 4.55 billion individuals actively engaged in social media use. WhatsApp stands out as the leading social media platform among

individuals aged 16 to 64 years. Instagram is the preferred choice for 36.6% of females and 31.2% of males in the 16- to 24-year age group, while 85% of teenagers utilize YouTube. Research indicates that 27% of teenagers experiencing poor mental health spend three or more hours daily on social media. Social media addiction can interfere with daily life and negatively impact social life. The literature states that younger generations are more attracted to social media and usage by them is enormous. This research aimed to assess social media addiction among undergraduate students [1–4].

OBJECTIVES

1. To assess social media addiction among undergraduate students.
2. To determine the association of social media addiction with selected demographic variables among undergraduate students.

HYPOTHESIS

H_1 : There will be a significant association between social media addiction and selected demographic variables among undergraduate students at the 0.05 level of significance..

METHODOLOGY

The research employed a quantitative approach with a non-experimental descriptive design, conducted at a degree college in Honavar that offers undergraduate and postgraduate courses (Figure 1). Participants were students aged 18 to 23 years, enrolled in regular undergraduate programs, meeting specific inclusion criteria. Data collection involved a Demographic Proforma and the Social Media Addiction Scale–Student Form (SMAS-SF), featuring four subscales: Virtual Tolerance, Virtual Communication, Virtual Problem, and Virtual Information. The scale, consisting of 29 items without reverse scoring, yielded scores from 29 to 145, with higher scores indicating increased self-perceived social media addiction (Table 1). The SMAS-SF demonstrated a reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) of 0.93. A pilot study on June 15, 2022, with 40 undergraduate students preceded the main study on June 16, 2022. Ethical clearance and formal permission from the college principal were secured before commencing data collection. The sample size comprised 400 subjects, including 95 BCom students, 119 BCA students, 68 BBA students, and 118 BSc students, selected using convenience sampling. Researchers introduced themselves to the subjects, explained the study's purpose, and obtained consent before administering the Demographic Proforma and SMAS-SF, with participants taking approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete the instruments.

RESULTS

Section A: Description of Demographic Variables of Undergraduate Students

A total of 67.50% undergraduate students are above 18 years and below 21 years. A total of 69% are females. The mean and standard deviation (SD) age is 20.05 ± 0.9 years. A total of 29.75% are studying BCA. 70.75% are from rural areas. In all 69.75% belong to nuclear family. Overall, 47.75% of undergraduate student's fathers are semiskilled workers, while 58.25% of subject's mothers are unemployed. A total of 32.75% of undergraduate student's family income is between INR 7887 and 13,160 with mean and SD of INR 22206.25 ± 14625.80 . Overall, 47.50% of undergraduate students have one sibling.

Table 1. Interpretation of Social Media Addiction Scale (SMAS) and its subscales.

Level of addiction	SMAS (Total) (1–29)	Virtual tolerance (1–5)	Virtual communication (6–14)	Virtual problem (15–23)	Virtual information (24–29)
Not addicted	29–51	5–8	9–16	9–16	6–10
Low level addicted	52–74	9–12	17–24	17–24	11–15
Medium level addicted	75–97	13–16	25–32	25–32	16–20
High level addicted	98–120	17–20	33–40	33–40	21–25
Very high level addicted	121–145	21–25	41–45	41–45	26–30

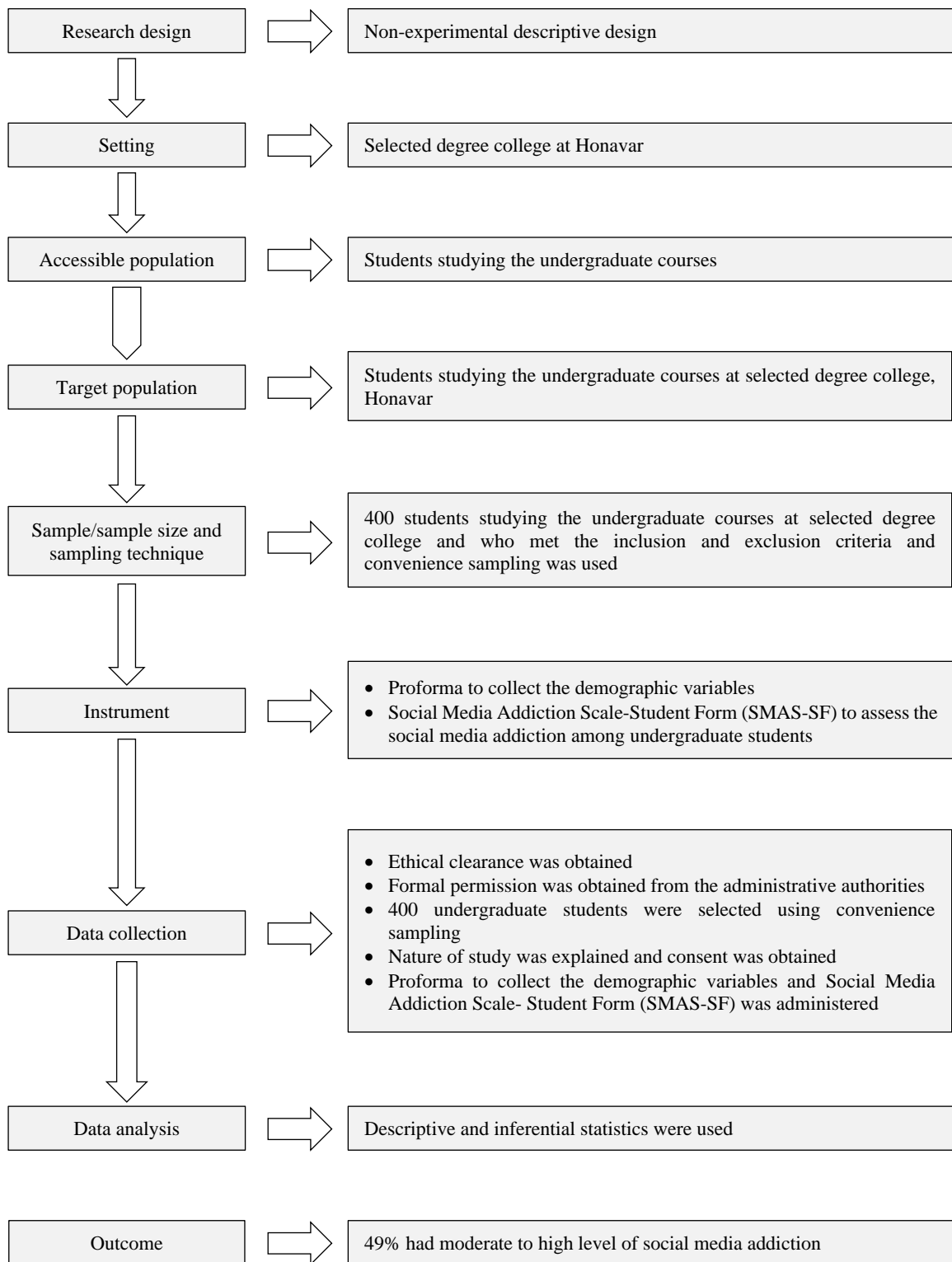


Figure 1. Schematic representation of the study design.

Approximately 90.25% of undergraduate students reside with their parents, and 98% utilize smartphones. A total of 244 undergraduate students use WhatsApp as first choice in their usage of social media and 115 use it as second choice of their preference. In all, 106 subjects use Instagram as a first choice of social media and 179 use it as second choice of their preference. A total of 69.25% of undergraduate students use the social media for recreation purpose, 59.25% subjects use social media

for academic purpose, 86.50% undergraduate students use it for 1 to 4 hours for recreational purpose and 65.25% use it for 5 to 8 hours for academic purpose. In all, 48.25% of participants get INR 1 to 500 as pocket money per month and 98.25% are recharge their mobile for INR 1 to 250 per month.

Section B: Assessment of Social Media Addiction Among Undergraduate Students

A cross-sectional study was undertaken to explore the correlation between demographic factors and Internet addiction among 400 students enrolled at Hormozgan University of Medical Sciences during the period of 2012–2013. The study found significant associations between internet addiction and various demographic variables (Tables 2–7).

Table 2. Frequency and percentage distribution of social media addiction based on items (virtual tolerance) among undergraduate students ($n = 400$).

S.N.	Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
<i>Virtual tolerance</i>						
1	I am eager to go on social media	39 (9.75%)	102 (25.5%)	139 (34.75%)	96 (24%)	24 (6%)
2	I look for internet connectivity everywhere so as to go on social media	59 (14.75%)	117 (29.25%)	82 (20.50%)	111 (25.25%)	41 (10.25%)
3	Going on social media is the first thing I do when I wake up in the morning	117 (29.25%)	131 (32.75%)	55 (13.75%)	59 (14.75%)	38 (9.5%)
4	I see social media as an escape from the real world	114 (28.50%)	110 (27.50%)	95 (23.75%)	58 (14.5%)	23 (5.75%)
5	A life without social media becomes meaningless for me	157 (39.25%)	124 (31%)	79 (19.75%)	32 (8%)	8 (2%)

Table 3. Frequency and percentage distribution of social media addiction based on items (virtual communication) among undergraduate students ($n = 400$).

S.N.	Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
<i>Virtual communication</i>						
6	I prefer to use social media even there are somebody around me	81 (20.25%)	118 (29.5%)	112 (28%)	76 (19%)	13 (3.25%)
7	I prefer the friendships on social media to the friendships in the real life.	125 (31.25%)	110 (27.5%)	78 (19.5%)	72 (18%)	15 (3.75%)
8	I express myself better to the people with whom I get in contact on social media	136 (34%)	120 (30%)	74 (18.5%)	55 (13.75%)	15 (3.75%)
9	I am as I want to seem on social media	82 (20.50%)	106 (26.5%)	104 (26%)	90 (22.5%)	18 (4.5%)
10	I usually prefer to communicate with people via social media	62 (15.5%)	108 (27%)	109 (27.25%)	99 (24.75%)	22 (5.5%)
11	Even my family frown upon, I cannot give up using social media	108 (27%)	157 (39.25%)	80 (20%)	49 (12.25%)	6 (1.5%)
12	I want to spend time on social media when I am alone.	14 (3.5%)	30 (7.5%)	76 (19%)	193 (48.25%)	87 (21.75%)
13	I prefer virtual communication on social media to going out	45 (11.25%)	114 (28.5%)	114 (28.5%)	107 (26.75%)	20 (5%)
14	Social media activities lay hold on my everyday life	78 (19.5%)	140 (35%)	86 (21.5%)	77 (19.25%)	19 (4.75%)

Table 4. Frequency and percentage distribution of social media addiction based on items (virtual problems) among undergraduate students ($n = 400$).

S.N.	Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
<i>Virtual problem</i>						
15	I pass over my homework because I spend much time on social media.	117 (29.25%)	144 (36%)	79 (19.75%)	44 (11%)	16 (4%)
16	I feel bad if I am obliged to decrease the time I spend on social media.	93 (23.25%)	142 (35.5%)	102 (25.5%)	51 (12.75%)	12 (3%)
17	I feel unhappy when I am not on social media.	109 (27.25%)	161 (40.25%)	78 (19.5%)	40 (10%)	12 (3%)
18	Being on social media excites me	46 (11.5%)	112 (28%)	128 (32%)	96 (24%)	18 (4.5%)
19	I use social media so frequently that I fall afool of my family	145 (36.25%)	143 (35.75%)	75 (18.75%)	28 (7%)	9 (2.25%)
20	The mysterious world of social media always captivates me	70 (17.5%)	139 (34.75%)	112 (28%)	71 (17.75%)	8 (2%)
21	I do not even notice that I am hungry and thirsty when I am on social media	191 (47.75%)	105 (26.25%)	36 (9%)	50 (12.5%)	18 (4.5%)
22	I notice that my productivity has diminished due to social media.	88 (22%)	111 (27.75%)	75 (18.75%)	82 (20.5%)	44 (11%)
23	I have physical problems because of social media use.	183 (45.75%)	119 (29.75%)	57 (14.25%)	24 (6%)	17 (4.25%)

Table 5. Frequency and percentage distribution of social media addiction based on items (virtual information) among undergraduate students ($n = 400$).

S.N.	Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	strongly agree
<i>Virtual information</i>						
24	I use social media even when walking on the road in order to be instantly informed about developments	153 (38.25%)	120 (30%)	71 (17.75%)	42 (10.5%)	14 (3.5%)
25	I like using social media to keep informed about what happens	41 (10.25%)	48 (12%)	87 (21.75%)	173 (43.25%)	51 (12.75%)
26	I surf on social media to keep informed about what social media groups share.	56 (14%)	118 (29.5%)	100 (25%)	108 (27%)	18 (4.5%)
27	I spend more time on social media to see some special announcements (e.g. birthdays).	38 (9.5%)	81 (20.25%)	95 (23.75%)	148 (37%)	38 (9.5%)
28	Keeping informed about the things related to my courses (e.g. homework, activities) makes me always stay on social media.	29 (7.25%)	65 (16.25%)	109 (27.25%)	158 (39.5%)	39 (9.75%)
29	I am always active on social media to be instantly informed about what my kith and kin share	82 (2.05%)	126 (31.5%)	101 (25.25%)	70 (17.5%)	21 (5.25%)

Table 6. Frequency and percentage distribution of social media addiction (SMA) based on domains and overall among undergraduate students ($n = 400$).

SMA domains	Not addicted		Low level addicted		Medium level addicted		High level addicted		Very high level addicted	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Virtual tolerance	60	15	151	37.75	113	28.25	63	15.75	13	3.25
Virtual communication	41	10.25	185	46.25	148	37	26	6.50	0	0
Virtual problems	94	23.50	200	50	97	24.25	9	2.25	0	0
Virtual information	21	5.25	122	30.5	162	40.5	90	22.5	5	1.25
Social media addiction (overall)	21	5.25	183	45.75	172	43	24	6	0	0

Table 7. Range of score, mean, and SD of social media addiction based on domains and overall among undergraduate students ($n = 400$).

Social media addiction	Scale score	Range of score	Mean	SD
Virtual tolerance	5–25	5–23	12.645	3.994
Virtual communication	9–45	9–38	23.987	5.647
Virtual problems	9–45	9–37	20.862	5.800
Virtual information	6–30	6–30	17.262	4.178
Social media addiction (overall)	29–145	32–118	74.758	15.356

Section C: Association of Social Media Addiction with Selected Demographic Variables of Undergraduate Students

The study revealed a noteworthy association between social media addiction and the academic field of study ($p = 0.000005$), as well as the daily hours spent on media for academic purposes ($p = 0.000474$). However, no significant correlations were observed between social media addiction and variables such as age ($p = 0.953816$), gender ($p = 0.007855$), place of residence ($p = 0.99596$), family type ($p = 0.96839$), parental occupations (father's occupation: $p = 0.32727$, mother's occupation: $p = 0.290488$), family income ($p = 0.859867$), number of siblings ($p = 0.956142$), accommodation status ($p = 0.737521$), social media usage for recreational ($p = 0.940508$) and academic ($p = 0.376318$) purposes, daily social media usage duration for recreational purposes ($p = 0.703234$), and monthly pocket money ($p = 0.119531$) at the 0.05 significance level. Hence H_1 , the hypothesis stating that there will be a significant correlation between social media addiction and selected demographic variables among undergraduate students is supported.

DISCUSSION

Regarding visual tolerance, findings from the current study indicated that 96 (24%) of the undergraduate participants agreed and 24 (6%) strongly agreed that they felt eager to use social media. Moreover, 25.25% (111 participants) agreed, and 10.25% (41 participants) strongly agreed that they consistently sought internet connectivity for accessing social media [5–8]. Additionally, 14.75% (59 participants) agreed, and 9.5% (38 participants) strongly agreed that they interacted with social media immediately upon waking up. Furthermore, 14.5% (58 participants) agreed, and 5.75% (23 participants) strongly agreed that they perceived social media as a means of escaping from reality. Lastly, 32 (8%) agreed and 8 (2%) strongly agreed that they believed life without social media would be meaningless for them. Regarding visual communication, the findings of the current study indicated that 76 (19%) undergraduate students agreed and 13 (3.25%) strongly agreed that they preferred using social media even when in the presence of others. Additionally, 72 (18%) agreed and 15 (3.75%) strongly agreed that they favored friendships formed on social media over those in real life. Furthermore, 55 (13.75%) agreed and 15 (3.75%) strongly agreed that they felt they expressed themselves better to individuals they interacted with on social media. Moreover, 90 (22.5%) agreed and 18 (4.5%) strongly agreed that they presented themselves on social media as they desired to be seen. Additionally, 99 (24.75%) agreed and 22 (5.5%) strongly agreed that they typically preferred communicating with others via social media. Furthermore, 49 (12.25%) agreed and 6 (1.5%) strongly agreed that they were unable to refrain from using social media even if their family disapproved. Moreover, 193 (48.25%) agreed and 87 (21.75%) strongly agreed that they desired to spend time on social media when alone. Additionally, 107 (26.75%) agreed and 20 (5%) strongly agreed that they favored virtual communication on social media over going out. Lastly, 77 (19.25%) agreed and 19 (4.75%) strongly agreed that social media activities significantly influenced their daily lives. With regard to visual problems, the present study revealed that 44 (11%) undergraduate students agreed and 16 (4%) strongly agreed that they pass over their homework because they spend much time on social media. A total of 51 (12.75%) agreed and 12 (3%) strongly agreed that they feel bad if they were obliged to decrease the time they spend on social media. In all, 40 (10%) agreed and 12 (3%) strongly agreed that they feel unhappy when they are not on social media. A total

of 96 (24%) agreed and 18 (4.5%) strongly agreed that being on social media excites them. In all, 28 (7%) agreed and 9 (2.25%) strongly agreed that they use social media so frequently that they fall afoul of their family. A total of 71 (17.75%) agreed and 8 (2%) strongly agreed that they felt constantly drawn into the intriguing realm of social media. Additionally, 50 (12.5%) agreed and 18 (4.5%) disagreed that they were oblivious to feelings of hunger and thirst while engaged with social media. Overall, 82 (20.5%) agreed and 44 (11%) strongly agreed that they notice that their productivity has diminished due to social media, whereas 24 (6%) agreed and 17 (4.25%) strongly agreed that they have physical problems because of social media use.

In terms of visual information, the current investigation indicated that 42 (10.5%) agreed and 14 (3.5%) strongly agreed that they utilized social media even while walking on the road to stay promptly updated on current events. Furthermore, 173 (43.25%) agreed and 51 (12.75%) strongly agreed that they enjoyed using social media to stay informed about ongoing occurrences. Additionally, 108 (27%) agreed and 18 (4.5%) strongly agreed that they browsed social media to stay informed about updates shared within social media groups. Moreover, 148 (37%) agreed and 38 (9.5%) strongly agreed that they devoted more time to social media to catch sight of special announcements. Likewise, 158 (39.5%) agreed and 39 (9.75%) strongly agreed that staying informed about topics relevant to their studies compelled them to remain active on social media. Lastly, 70 (17.5%) agreed and 21 (5.25%) strongly agreed that they frequently engaged on social media to promptly learn about updates shared by acquaintances and family members.

Regarding social media addiction, the current findings revealed that 151 (37.75%) undergraduate students exhibited a low level of addiction in terms of virtual tolerance; 185 (46.25%) undergraduate students were having low level addiction in virtual communication; 200 (50%) undergraduate students were having low level addiction in virtual problems; and 162 (40.50%) undergraduate students were having medium level addiction in virtual information. Overall, 183(45.75%) undergraduate students had low level social media addiction. Range of score for virtual tolerance was 5 to 23 with mean \pm SD of 12.645 ± 3.994 . Range of score for virtual communication was 9 to 38 with mean \pm SD of 23.987 ± 5.647 . Range of score for virtual problems was 9 to 37 with mean \pm SD of 20.862 ± 5.800 . Range of score for virtual information was 6 to 30 with mean \pm SD of 17.262 ± 4.178 . Range of score for overall social media addiction was 32 to 118 with mean \pm SD of 74.758 ± 15.356 .

The aforementioned results suggest that undergraduate students exhibit a level of addiction ranging from low to moderate in the domains of virtual tolerance, virtual communication, virtual problem, virtual information, and overall social media addiction. Intervention is warranted to regulate students' behavior in utilizing social media platforms. A study exploring the correlation between social media addiction, self-esteem, sensation seeking, and boredom among 105 college students aged 18 to 30 years reported a mean social media addiction score of 74.80 (SD = 15.75).

In a cross-sectional investigation comparing the prevalence of social media addiction among students from government and private pre-university (PU) colleges in urban Bengaluru, 1870 individuals were included through multistage sampling. The findings indicated that 1389 (74.2%) were active social media users, while 481 (25.8%) were non-users. The median duration of social media usage, represented by the interquartile range (IQR), was 3 (2, 4) years. Furthermore, the median monthly expenditure among participants was INR 200 (100, 600), with a median time spent on social media of 14 (7, 21) hours per week. Among social media users, 921 (66.4%) were male, and 468 (33.6%) were female. Overall, social media addiction was observed in 27.4% of the study subjects, with a prevalence of 24.0% in government colleges and 30.8% in private colleges.

However, among social media users, the prevalence of addiction was higher at 36.9%. Most participants exhibited mild addiction. Facebook was the most commonly used social media platform

among addicts (38.9%), while WhatsApp was preferred by non-addicts (41.2%). Internet gaming (31%) and Facebook (57.3%) were the predominant social media platforms used by addicts in government and private colleges, respectively. The study also identified a significant association of social media addiction with the course of study ($p = 0.000005$) and hours spent using media per day for academic purposes ($p = 0.000474$). It indicates that students who were studying degree course in computer application and science were using social media networks more frequently than students those who were studying the bachelor degree in arts and commerce and business administration as well as the students were using the social media sites more frequently for academic purpose rather than recreational purposes [9, 10].

There was no significant association found between social media addiction and age in years ($p = 0.953816$), gender ($p = 0.007855$), place of residence ($p = 0.99596$), type of family ($p = 0.96839$), father's occupation ($p = 0.32727$), mother's occupation ($p = 0.290488$), family income ($p = 0.859867$), number of siblings ($p = 0.956142$), accommodation status ($p = 0.737521$), using social media for recreation ($p = 0.940508$) and academic purposes ($p = 0.376318$), hours of using social media per day for recreation purposes ($p = 0.703234$), and pocket money per month ($p = 0.119531$) at a significance level of 0.05. The association of social media addiction with type of phone and recharge done per month could not be done since all the categories do not have the adequate number.

It suggests that regardless of age, gender, place of residence, family type, parents' occupations, family income, number of siblings, accommodation status, purpose of using social media, hours of daily use for recreation, and monthly pocket money, undergraduate students exhibited a low to moderate level of addiction towards social media. A cross-sectional study undertaken to explore the correlation between demographic factors and internet addiction among 400 students enrolled at Hormozgan University of Medical Sciences during the period of 2012–2013 found significant associations between internet addiction and various demographic variables. These variables include the purpose of internet usage ($p = 0.02$), gender ($p = 0.01$), academic status ($p = 0.03$), marital status ($p = 0.02$), age ($p = 0.01$), and educational level ($p = 0.02$).

CONCLUSION

The study results indicate that undergraduate students exhibit a level of addiction ranging from low to moderate in the domains of virtual tolerance, virtual communication, virtual problem, virtual information, and overall social media addiction. It calls for intervention to regulate the behavior of students in using social media networks.

Limitation

The subjects were selected using convenience sampling technique although random sampling method because of issues cooperatives from the subjects.

Recommendations

- A similar study can be conducted in school and community settings.
- A study can be done to compare the social media addiction between boys and girls in school and community settings.
- A study can be conducted among nursing students to know the level of social media addiction and its influence on other psychological parameters.
- Interventional studies can be conducted to reduce the negative impact of social media usage and improve health among adolescents using social media.
- An interventional study can be conducted to create awareness among parents and teachers regarding the negative impact of using social media and its remedial measures.
- A similar study can be replicated on a large sample and in other settings.

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