

The Impact of Social Media Addiction on Youth: A Sociological Study

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Abstract:

India has experienced an extraordinary digital revolution over the past ten years, mostly due to the widespread availability of low-cost smartphones and the cheapest mobile data in the world. Social media platforms (Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat, Facebook, and Share Chat) have evolved from being communication tools to spaces for identity construction for India's youth, who make up the country's largest demographic. The influence of social media addiction on family structures, social capital, caste dynamics, mental health, and academic output is examined in this paper using a sociological lens, which goes beyond pathological or therapeutic frameworks. The paper makes the argument that addiction is a complicated reaction to the stresses of urbanization, globalization, and the breakdown of traditional community ties rather than just a loss of self-control, drawing on ideas of symbolic interactionism and network society.

Keywords: India, Social Media, Mental Health, Instagram, Communication, Youth.



Source: <https://image.slidesharecdn.com/effectsofsocialmediaonyouth-220208064537/85/Effects-of-social-media-on-youth-1-320.jpg>

Introduction:

The pervasive integration of digital platforms into the daily lives of adolescents has fundamentally reshaped socialization patterns and identity formation processes in the contemporary era ([Tolibov & qizi, 2025](#)). While these digital environments offer expansive opportunities for community building and self-expression, the transition from normative usage to compulsive dependency presents significant risks to the psychological well-being of young users ([Barman & Dakua, 2024](#); [Shukur et al., 2023](#)). Specifically, the constant pursuit of virtual validation and the exposure to curated online personas often exacerbate

social isolation and psychological vulnerability among youth ([Tolibov & qizi, 2025](#)). This phenomenon is further intensified by the Fear of Missing Out, which compels adolescents to maintain a perpetual state of connectivity to match the idealized experiences of their peers ([Sarkar & Hada, 2025](#)). Within this framework, problematic engagement often manifests as a decline in academic performance and a degradation of physical health, characterized by sleep disruption and heightened depressive symptoms ([Saiju, 2026](#)). Crucially, the manifestation of these addictive tendencies often transcends mere screen time, as compulsive patterns of behavior are more closely linked to a loss of control and acute withdrawal-like distress than to the sheer duration of platform engagement ([Saiju, 2026](#)). Consequently, the rise in daily usage, often averaging between three to seven hours among Indian youth, serves as a catalyst for increased aggression, impatience, and profound social detachment from familial structures ([Kumar & Dwivedi, 2025](#)). This erosion of traditional domestic interaction patterns highlights a significant socio-cultural shift, where digital connectivity paradoxically replaces meaningful interpersonal engagement with remote, fragmented communication ([Kulkarni, 2026](#)). This shift underscores the necessity of investigating how persistent digital mediation influences the development of self-esteem and the regulation of emotional responses in real-world environments ([Pandey, 2025](#); [Vijayalkshmi, 2025](#)).

“Approximately 60% of India's 500 million active social media users are between the ages of 15 and 30. Screen time of seven to nine hours per day became the norm as a result of the pandemic. Social media's addictive design, endless scroll, algorithmic recommendation, and fluctuating rewards have created a sociological dilemma even while it provides access to markets, knowledge, and peer approval. Young people are going through what sociologist Émile Durkheim called "anomie," which is a state of normlessness in which digital platforms have taken the place of traditional social regulators (family, community, and school) without offering meaningful social cohesiveness”. (<https://www.indiatodayne.in/lifestyle/story/economic-survey-flags-excessive-screen-time-as-public-health-risk-for-indias-youth-1339483-2026-02-01>).

According to symbolic interactionism (Herbert Blumer, Erving Goffman), social media turns into a "front stage" where young people present carefully constructed personas. The obsessive drive to control impressions likes, shares, and comments are social currency is the root cause of addiction. According to Manuel Castells' Network Society, Indian adolescents are torn between two networks: the global, digital networks and the traditional, place-based networks (caste, kin, local community). When the digital network provides greater perceived value (approval, anonymity, aspirational content) than the actual one, addiction develops.

Objectives:

1. To study the social media and its impacts on youths.
2. To study the Positive and negative effects of social media on youths.
3. To study the social impacts on social media users.

Methodology:

For present study Qualitative Method was adopted. Because Qualitative analysis explaining how and why Social media is important and how it is effects on youths.

How to Limit the Effects of Social Media on Youths:

The best way to reduce the harmful impacts of social media on young people is to combine conscious behaviours with institutional limitations. Establish distinct “tech-free” areas and times first. For example, prohibit phones from being used in the bedroom during the night to preserve sleep and take electronics away from the dining table to promote in person interactions. Second instead of teaching passive consumption teach active curation. Encourage young people to follow information linked to real passions or education while muting accounts that make them feel anxious or envious. Third establish a digital sunset to lessen the dopamine driven lure of frequent alerts by disabling push notifications and avoiding screens for at least half an hour before bed and after awakening. Lastly, to replace the empty gratification of scrolling with real world fulfilment, balance screen time with analog dopamine activities like physical exercise, creative hobbies or time spent outside. Youths can maintain social media’s benefits for connection while reducing its risks to mental health by viewing it as a tool to be used purposefully rather than an environment to live in.

Social Media Positive Effects:

- Helps in conversations around the world
- Date, information can be exchanged easily
- Money over SMS can be saved using WhatsApp
- Information can be directly sent to large number of people easily
- Helps in avoiding boredom
- A local businessperson may expand his business over website
- Helps in making friends and meeting new people
- Helps in seeking new job offers.

Social Media Negative Effects:

- Youths who use Facebook more may have psychological disorder including antisocial behaviours, mania and aggressive tendencies.
- Can be distractive -people check Facebook/WhatsApp very frequently
- Radiation-Phone calls, internet over phone, even idle phone has a lot of radiation around it.
- Addictions-Internet shopping, online chatting can be addictive.
- Effect of Health- Sitting all day Infront of Laptop/ Computer can disturb metabolism.
- Reduction in Physical Activities.

Sociological Impacts:**Redefining Authority and Family:**

The way social media has changed the authority of families is significant. Traditionally, parents, elders, teachers, and community leaders have been the most influential sources of information, guidance, and social values for children. Digital platforms have changed this format as well as the influence in a child's life in the form of online influencers, content creators, peers, and virtual communities. Therefore, children look for advice, validation, and social norms from digital spaces more so than they do from their families. This transformation in thinking will weaken the authority relationship that existed before and create intergenerational conflict related to what is considered acceptable behaviour, cultural values,

and lifestyle choices. From a sociological perspective, this transformation represents a migration from hierarchical forms of socialisation to network-based forms of socialisation with authority being decentralised and created or defined through digital interactions rather than through hereditary social roles. (Castells, 2010; Livingstone & Helsper, 2008))

Identity and Caste in the Digital Mirror:

Social networking sites (SNSs) serve a powerful purpose on the internet; they provide an environment to construct identities and present oneself online. Many youths create a digital profile that showcases who they want to be, not necessarily who they truly are. The images, updates, and communication through these media constantly negotiate one's identity due to audience feedback. The symbolic interactionist perspective of identity development explains that a person's identity is created through social interaction, and SNSs increase the rate and frequency of social evaluation by providing a platform where users can see their social evaluations in real-time. Therefore, these factors can lead to an increase in youth's obsessive thinking about their looks, popularity, and social acceptance; thus creating an identity that is based upon users' evaluation rather than their own personal experiences(Goffman, 1959; Boyd, 2014).

The Shifting Character of Social Capital:

The resources that people gather from their social networks (when people) trust and return Favors from each other and engage in their communities are referred to as social capital. Through social media addictions, the type of social capital has changed due to the expansion of digital connections while often reducing meaningful interpersonal connections. As young adults continue to use online platforms, they are able to gather a large number of acquaintances leading to what sociologists refer to as crossing "bridging social capital," or in other words, people connecting from multiple different types of groups of people. Too much reliance on social media creates weak "bond" social capital, which is based on strong emotional connections with family and close friends(Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007; Putnam, 2000).

Economic and Academic Repercussions:

Addiction to social media changes how people use their time, focus their attention, and motivate themselves, which affects how well they do in school. Many students spend too much time on social media instead of doing schoolwork, thereby making it harder for them to concentrate on and do their homework and encouraging them to put off doing their homework until later. As a result, repeated exposure to notifications and online interaction creates fragmented attention that makes it very difficult to continue learning over time. Because educational attainment is directly related to future job opportunities and social mobility, lower academic performance can lead to greater inequity in our societies(Junco, 2012; Kirschner & Karpinski, 2010).

Mental Health as a Social Fact:

According to Émile Durkheim, a sociologist, social facts are external social forces that affect how people behave and experience their lives. Social media addiction can be thought of as a modern-day example of social fact, because it is a consequence of broader technological, cultural, and institutional changes and not just a result of individual choices. Social media users experience a sense of pressure to be constantly connected to the online community, to keep a presence online, and to gain recognition online, creating a set of collective expectations for all users, which can affect their mental health. The most common

feelings associated with social comparisons and digital performance benchmarks in online communities include anxiety, loneliness, inadequacy, and emotional exhaustion (Durkheim, 1895/1982; Twenge, 2019).

As social media addiction is not only a personal problem but also a product of larger social reality, so too are the mental health issues resulting from using social media. One reason for this is due to the ongoing exposure to social media users' idealized lifestyles, which are created by other users and lead to feelings of inadequacy and lower self-esteem through social comparison (often referred to as cyberbullying), as well as lower emotional stability through social evaluation. The way in which being permanently connected is normalized has created blurred lines between public and private lives, which increases stress and reduces the ability of individuals to psychologically recover after long-term exposure to stressors. The use of a sociological perspective illustrates how collective forces in the digital arena collectively shape the mental health status of youth in many different social environments (Odgers & Jensen, 2020; Twenge & Campbell, 2018).

Coping Strategies and New Counter-Movements:

As awareness of social media addiction becomes more widespread, many coping methods & social movements have developed to promote healthier habits regarding one's digital life. Increased focus by families, schools, & community organizations on digital literacy, time management & mindful use of technology has created new systems for youth to learn how to assess the validity of online content, identify how technological design can lead to addiction, and how to balance digital engagement with offline pursuits. These initiatives reflect society's attempt to respond to technological change while attempting to limit any adverse impact resulting from these changes (Livingstone, 2014; OECD, 2021).

At the broader social level, there has been a growing number of counter-movements, including digital detox campaigns, slow media movements and digital well-being initiatives, aimed at challenging the culture of continuously being connected. These counter-movements encourage individuals to reduce their screen time, develop their face-to-face interpersonal relationships, and reclaim control over their attention. From a sociological perspective, such movements represent some form of collective resistance against society's over-dependence on technology and the commodification of human attention. The existence of these counter movements also illustrates how societies adapt to meet the challenges posed by emerging social problems through creating new norms, practices, and institutional responses designed to restore a balance between digital and offline existence (Newport, 2019; Syvertsen & Enli, 2020).

Suggestions:

1. At a minimum, families can build their own communication and emotional support system by creating a safe space for conversations with each other in the home. For example, parents can encourage open discussions of online activity, develop a set of guidelines for using screens, and model good digital habits. Studies show that when parents are involved (i.e., supervise) in their children's use of the Internet and/or social media, adolescent problems with using either are reduced and healthier psychosocial development occurs. (Livingstone & Helsper, 2008; UNICEF India, 2024).
2. Educational institutions should embed digital literacy and well-being programs within their curriculum to assist students critically assess the credibility of online information, identify addictive platform characteristics, effectively manage screen time, and create an appropriate level of balance

between both digital and non-digital lifestyles. Educational initiatives have been identified through research as being successful in promoting responsible technology use while reducing the negative impacts associated with over-using social media (Livingstone, 2014; OECD, 2021).

3. Policymakers and the tech sector need to partner together in order to create safer online communities for young audiences. For instance, social media platforms could add tools such as reminders regarding screen time usage, monitoring apparatus which provide a record of usage, age-appropriate configuration tools, and access to counselling resources. Public education initiatives should also inform families and local communities regarding the dangers of excessive social media usage and the importance of digital well-being (UNICEF India, 2024; OECD, 2021).
4. It is important to increase accessibility to mental health care for youth and young adults. Possible examples of assistance for youth include counseling, peer-support groups, and awareness programs to help young people deal with anxiety, loneliness, low self-esteem and Fear of Missing Out (FoMO). Many of these mental health issues result from excessive social media use. Addressing these mental health concerns timely can help prevent social isolation or other negative consequences associated with not seeking assistance early on due to the long-term ramifications of problematic social media use (Odgers & Jensen, 2020; Twenge & Campbell, 2018).

Conclusion:

The impact of social media on modern societies has changed the way we communicate, develop our identities, connect with others, and find out information about each other. While social networking sites present significant opportunities for interacting with others, building social connections and sharing your experiences, the prevalence of excessive and unregulated use has led to an increasing number of young people experiencing social media addiction. From a sociological perspective, social media addiction is indicative of larger changes occurring within the way we socialize, how we establish our authority structures, how we develop our social capital, and the values that shape our culture as we live in more interconnected communities (Castells, 2010; Boyd, 2014).

As the study demonstrates, social media addiction has an effect on various aspects of young people's lives: it alters how they interact with their family members, it disrupts traditional authority figures, it influences how they create their identities, it changes the way young people relate to each other, and it contributes to problems they are experiencing in school and in work (i.e., academic or employment) (Durkheim, 1982; Twenge, 2019). Additionally, excessive time spent engaging on social media has also been linked to increased levels of mental health problems such as anxiety and loneliness, increased levels of stress, decreased levels of mental well-being. In sum, social media addiction is a social problem that occurs as part of a larger technological and cultural transformation, and should not just be viewed as an individual behaviour issue (Durkheim, 1982; Twenge, 2019).

Digital literacy programs and digital detoxes mean that society can respond to new social problems with a shared approach. Creating sustainable solutions takes all parties working together - families, schools, policymakers, technology companies, mental health workers, and especially young people themselves. Society will benefit from using technology in a balanced way and thus create meaningful interactions among people. Society will therefore be able to obtain all of the advantages that come from using social media, while at the same time have fewer harmful consequences for youth development and social well-being (Newport, 2019; Syvertsen & Enli, 2020)

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