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Social - Media and Internet Addiction - Current Trends and Future Implication for Adolescents and Adults

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ABSTRACT:

Introduction: Social media is a double-edged sword. It provides us with lots of information, communication facilities, and many other benefits in work, education, and even leisure time. Because technology is becoming more widely available, social media and internet addiction among adults and teenagers has become a major problem. Reduced productivity, sleep disruptions, mental health problems, and diminished social skills are some of the negative consequences of this addiction trend. Raising awareness and educating people about the dangers of excessive internet use is essential as technology advances.

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the association between time spent and life satisfaction and social media addiction in adults and adolescents. A prospective study design based on observational Performa was employed.

Methodology: In this study, 127 adolescent and young students were included in a multistage random sample. Two tools were utilized in this study included; Tool I: Internet Addiction Test (IAT); Tool II: Social Media Addiction Scale Student Form (SMAS-SF).

Results: Over half of the adolescents were found to be extremely addicted to social media. Most of them spent excessive amounts of time on these platforms, and more than three-quarters exhibited a tendency to waste time in their daily lives.

Conclusion: This study found that more teens are getting hooked on social media—and it's starting to mess with their sense of purpose and long-term goals. It's a good idea to offer regular educational programs that help teens understand what responsible social media use looks like—and how to make the most of their online accounts without falling into trouble.

KEYWORDS: Social Media Addiction; Internet Addiction; Mental Health; Digital Well-being & Excessive Internet Use

INTERODUCTION

The new millennium has arrived with the rapid spread of modern technology, especially the electronic communication revolution, bridging information for all. Globally, about 3.5 billion people were using Internet in 2016 through modern gadgets like smart phones and computers with 82% of the population in the developed world and 35% of population in the developing world [1]. The commonest use of Internet is to share and learn new information through work, Google, g-mail, apps, online payments, social media, etc. Nowadays, the majority of individuals on the world are almost completely dependent on social media in their daily life.

Over the past ten years, social media platforms and internet usage have grown rapidly both in India and globally. Concern over whether it is excessive and, if so, whether the amount of time spent is an addiction is developing (Goel et al., 2013). Social media and the internet are widely used in India, particularly among the youth. Studying social media and internet usage patterns and their potential effects on mental health concerns was therefore deemed essential.

Significant changes have occurred globally in recent years with respect to the growth of social networks, the internet, and the number of users. Users of social networks can exchange ideas, opinions, views, sentiments, and personal, social, and educational experiences. We can maintain relationships with people thanks to social media technology like Facebook, Instagram, and other social media platforms. Our innate desire to connect with people is beneficial to both our mental and physical health. As per the Vice President and Media Director of Behavioral Health at Lee Health "There's growing evidence to suggest that some individuals can develop a dependency on social media that's not unlike an addiction to alcohol or drugs." Social media and other platform like smartphones have in a way to take over from outdoor activities for millions of children around the world. It has become a common sight to spot a tween glued to the screens of their smartphones and other gadgets. However, the reality is cruel. As per the recent

report is published by the Local Circles, a community social media platform, as many as 40% of Indian parents have accepted that their children between 9 to 17 years are addicted to videos, gaming and social media **(Sarkar, S. & George, L.,2022)**.

The study states that 55% of urban Indian parents have admitted that their kids, ages 9 to 13, use smartphones all day. Up to 71% of parents acknowledged that their 13–17-year-old children have access to smartphones for the majority of the day.

The symptoms of addictive social media use are similar to those of any other substance use disorder, including mood swings. The dopamine-producing social contexts that social networking sites offer are largely responsible for the phenomenon of social media addiction. In order to keep users utilising their goods as much as possible, social networking sites like Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat create the same brain circuitry as gambling and recreational drugs.

METHODOLOGY

STUDY SETTING

The study was carried out throughout Delhi and a portion of the NCR. Total 127 samples of male and female by random sampling method between the age group of 10 to 35 years (Adolescents age (10-19) Adults (20-35 years) by using two scale i.e., Internet Addiction Test (IAT) and Social Media Addiction Scale Student Form (SMAS-SF).

STUDY DESIGN

Use structured and closed ended questionnaire for data collection. This tool was developed by the researcher to collect the socio-demographic data and internet addiction data having two sections. Section A collected demographic status includes age, gender, religion, type of family, number of siblings, place of stay, educational stream, and platform which they use and section B includes enquiring about the social media usage pattern using access, usage and source of information about social media sites.

The Internet Addiction Test (IAT), developed by Kimberly Young, is one of the most widely used measures to diagnose IA. The IAT comprises numerous indicators of recurrent addiction behaviours including attributes of obsessive use of the internet (e.g., escapism, compulsivity, and dependency) and consequences of addictive use (e.g., personal and social conflicts, and personal and occupational performance deficiency). The IAT has been adapted to evaluate online sexual activities, and a modified version is utilized to assess smartphone addiction.

The Social Media Addiction Scale Student Form (SMAS-SF; **Şahin, 2018**) was developed to measure the social media addictions of secondary school, high school and university students. In order to establish a trial form for determining this construct, the authors created a conceptual framework by examining the research concerning this construct. The resulting 29-item scale was evaluated in a Turkish sample of students from 12 to 22 years of age who were studying in different departments of a university as well as secondary and high school students. Factor analysis, reliability, and validity results were reported for these items

DATA ANAYSIS

Data analysis was done using excel and SPSS software. Statistical test such as frequency, mean, standard deviation and t-test were used for data analysis. The results were interpreted and discussed in the project report.

RESULTS

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to classify and analyse the data according to the goals of the study. Data analysis was done using SPSS version 16.0. The results of the study were divided into

Objective 1: To study social media and internet addiction, trends among adolescent and adults.

Table 1: Distribution of Internet Addiction Levels Among Adolescents and Adults by Internet Addiction Test

Addiction Level	Total N (%)	Adolescents N (%)	Adults N (%)
Normal (0-30)	4 (3)	0 (0)	4 (3)
Mild (31-49)	33 (26)	1 (1)	32 (25)
Moderate (50-79)	62 (49)	6 (5)	56 (44)
Severe Dependence (80-100 & above)	28 (22)	4 (3)	24 (19)
Total	**127 (100)**	**11 (9)**	**116 (91)**

Scores are based on the Internet Addiction Test (IAT). Categories are defined as Normal (0–30), Mild (31–49), Moderate (50–79), and Severe Dependence (80–100 & above). Percentages are calculated from the total sample size (N=127). The majority of participants (49%) fall within the moderate addiction level.

A thorough summary of the respondents' age distribution is also included in the table. 6% of those polled are in the adolescent age range, which is a comparatively lesser percentage. 56% of the responders are in the adult age bracket, making up the majority. In conclusion, a concentration of respondents in the adult category may be seen in the age distribution.

Objective 2: To determine the causes of social media and internet addiction among adolescent and adults.

SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION SCALE STUDENT FORM (SMAS-SF)

The Social Media Addiction measure Student Form (SMAS-SF) measure was employed by the researchers to evaluate the study participants' social media addiction. Şahin (2018) created the SMAS-SF to assess secondary school, high school, and university students' degrees of social media addiction. The five-point Likert scale has four subscales and 29 items. Virtual tolerance (items 1–5), virtual communication (items 6–14), virtual problem (items 15–23), and virtual information (items 24–29) are the subscales.The scale's lowest possible score is 29, and its greatest possible value is 145. Addiction status was divided into four categories based on the scale scores: No addiction (29–58), Mild (59–87), Moderate (88–116), and Severe (117–145). A high score indicates that the person believes they are a "social media addict."

Data Analysis and Interpretation

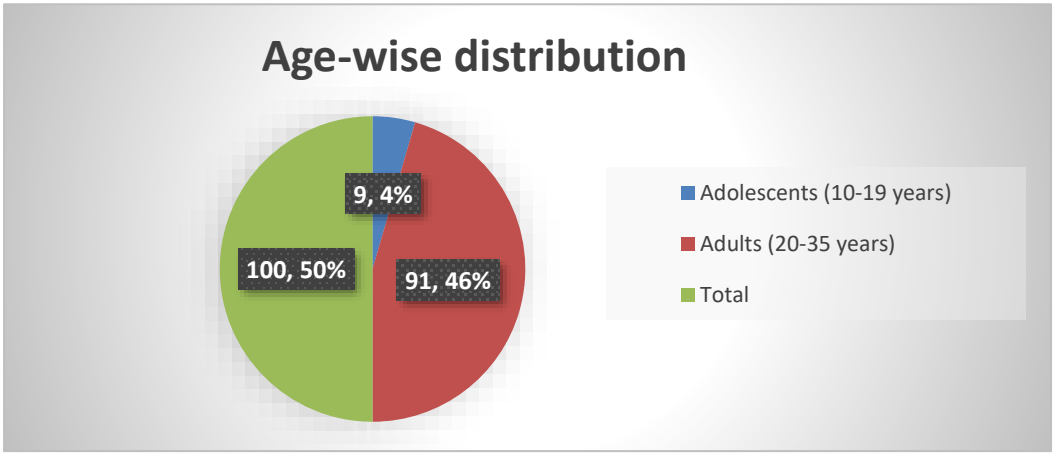


Figure 1. Respondent Distribution Across Age Categories

The figure 1, gives a thorough rundown of the respondents' age distribution. 9.0% of those polled are between the ages of 10-19, which is a comparatively lower percentage. 91% of those surveyed are between the ages of 20-35. In conclusion, a concentration of respondents in the 20–35 age range can be seen in the age distribution.

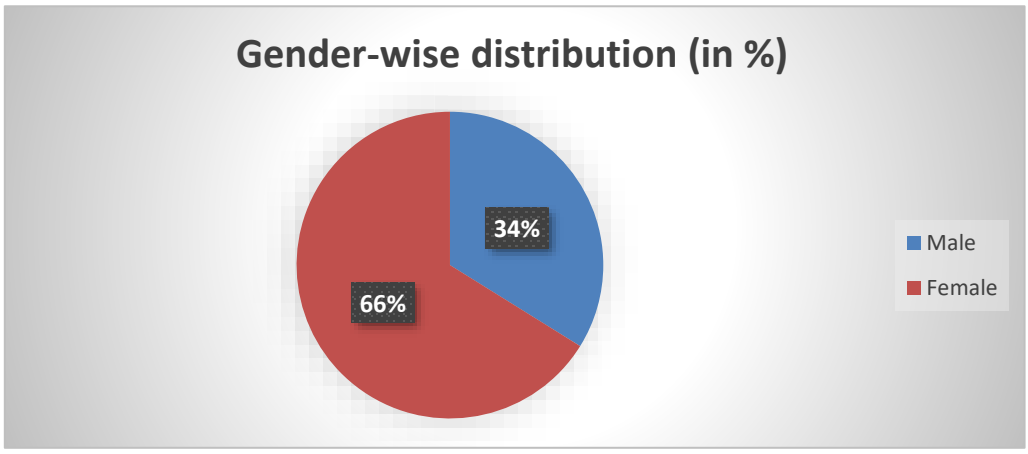


Figure 2: outlines the respondents' gender distribution. Of those surveyed, 33.9% identify as male and 66.1% identify as female. The gender distribution shows that there were more female respondents (N=127) in the survey sample.

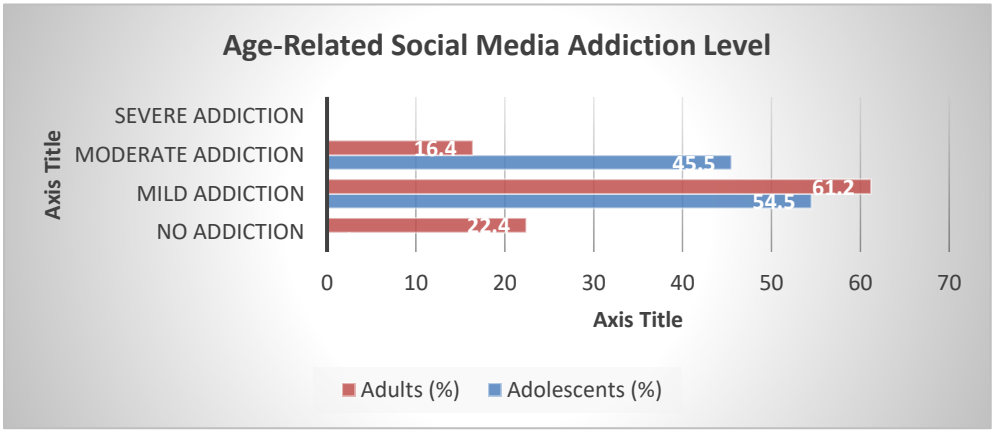


Figure 3: gives a thorough picture of the prevalence of social media addiction in various age groups. Among adolescents, none have no addiction, 54.5% have mild addiction, 45.5% have moderate addiction, and none have severe addiction. Of those adults, 22.4% are addiction-free, 61.2% have mild addiction, 16.4% have moderate addiction, and none have severe addiction. All things considered, the table provides a thorough understanding of how social media addiction is distributed throughout various age groups.

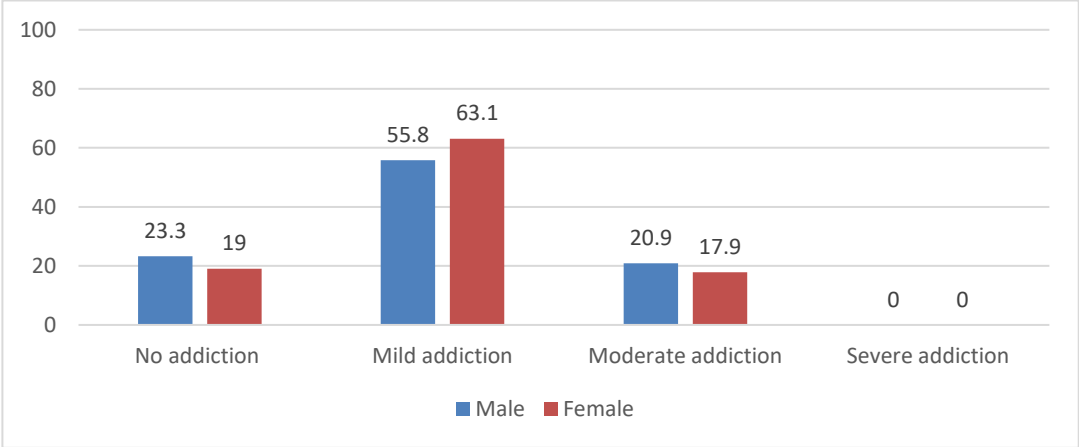


Figure 4. Social Media Level Addiction in relation to gender

This figure explores the connection between gender and social media addiction. Of men, 23.3% say they have no addiction, 55.8% say they have light addiction, 20.9% say they have moderate addiction, and none say they have severe addiction. 19% of women say they have no addiction, 63.1% say they have light addiction, 17.9% say they have moderate addiction, and none say they have severe addiction. All things considered, this table offers a complex picture of how social media addiction differs by gender.

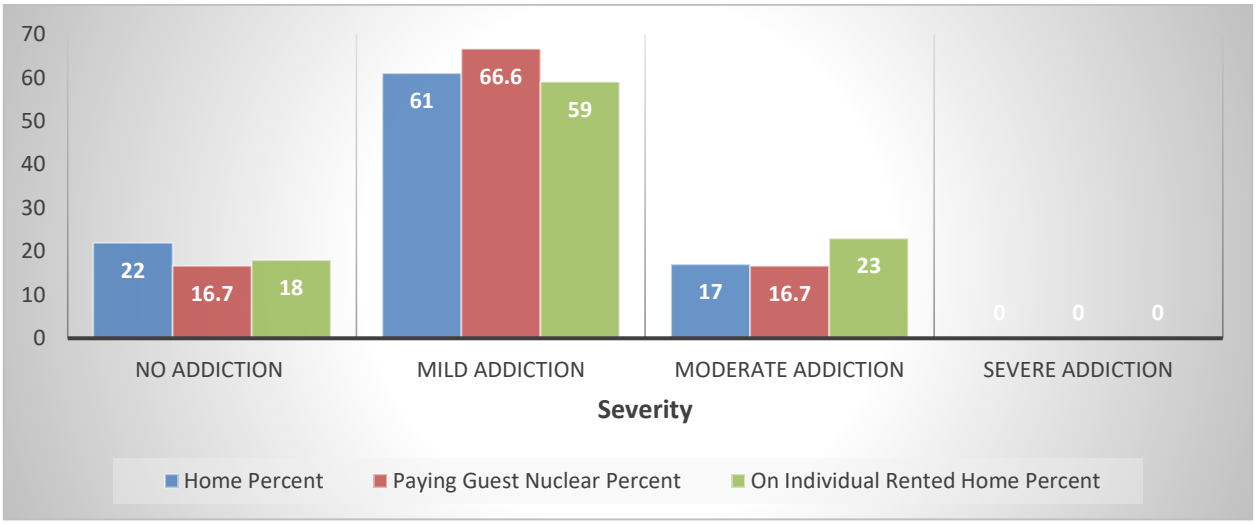


Figure 5. Social Media Level Addiction in relation to residece

The relationship between social media addiction and place of residence is examined in this table. At home, 22% say they are not addicted, 61% say they are mildly addicted, 17% say they are moderately addicted, and none say they are severely addicted. 16.7% of Paying Guest Nuclear employees say they have no addiction, 66.6% say they have light addiction, 16.7% say they have moderate addiction, and none say they have severe addiction. 18% of people who rent an individual home report having no addiction, 59% have mild addiction, 23% have moderate addiction, and none have severe addiction. The table offers important information about how common social media addiction is in various home contexts.

Objective 3: To obtain the demographic details of the participants.

S. No.	Variable	Category	N	%	Adult N (%)	Adolescent N (%)	Total N (%)	P-Value
1.	Gender	Male	43	33.9	NA	NA	NA	NA
		Female	84	66.1	NA	NA	NA	NA
		Total	**127**	**100**	**NA**	**NA**	**NA**	**NA**
2.	Marital Status	Married	44	34.6	NA	NA	NA	NA
		Unmarried	83	65.4	NA	NA	NA	NA
		Total	**127**	**100**	**NA**	**NA**	**NA**	**NA**
3.	Staying At	Home	87	68.5	NA	NA	NA	NA
		Paying Guest/ Nuclear	6	4.7	NA	NA	NA	NA
		Individual Rented Home	34	26.8	NA	NA	NA	NA
		Total	**127**	**100**	**NA**	**NA**	**NA**	**NA**
4.	Number of Siblings	No siblings	1	0.8	NA	NA	NA	NA
		One	43	33.9	NA	NA	NA	NA
		Two	43	33.9	NA	NA	NA	NA
		Three	39	30.7	NA	NA	NA	NA
		More than three	1	0.8	NA	NA	NA	NA
		Total	**127**	**100**	**NA**	**NA**	**NA**	**NA**
5.	Education Status	Illiterate	1	0.8	NA	NA	NA	NA
		High School (10th)	5	3.9	NA	NA	NA	NA
		Higher Secondary (12th)	16	12.6	NA	NA	NA	NA
		College (Graduation)	54	42.5	NA	NA	NA	NA
		Higher Education (Professional/ Postgraduate)	45	35.4	NA	NA	NA	NA
		Others	6	4.7	NA	NA	NA	NA
		Total	**127**	**100**	**NA**	**NA**	**NA**	**NA**
6.	Occupation	Farmer	1	0.8	NA	NA	NA	NA
		Service (Private/ Government)	71	55.9	NA	NA	NA	NA
		Student	41	32.3	NA	NA	NA	NA
		Unemployed	3	2.4	NA	NA	NA	NA
		Business	4	3.1	NA	NA	NA	NA
		Housewife	6	4.7	NA	NA	NA	NA
		Labourer	1	0.8	NA	NA	NA	NA
		Total	**127**	**100**	**NA**	**NA**	**NA**	**NA**
7.	Use of social media every day	Number of participants use social media every day	NA	NA	105 (83%)	9 (7%)	114 (90%)	0.36
		Number of participants did not use social media every day	NA	NA	11 (8%)	2 (2%)	13 (10%)	

		Total	**NA**	**NA**	**116**	**11**	**127**	
8.	Unlimited Wi-Fi at Home/Hostel	Number of participants have unlimited Wifi at home/ Hostel	NA	NA	79 (62%)	7 (6%)	86 (68%)	0.76
		Number of participants did not have unlimited Wifi at home/Hotel	NA	NA	37 (29%)	4 (3%)	41 (32%)	
		Total	**NA**	**NA**	**116**	**11**	**127**	
9.	Most Used Social Media Platform*	Facebook	NA	NA	33 (26%)	1 (1%)	34 (27%)	
		WhatsApp	NA	NA	83 (65%)	5 (4%)	88 (69%)	
		Instagram	NA	NA	81 (64%)	6 (5%)	87 (69%)	
		YouTube	NA	NA	69 (54%)	7 (6%)	76 (60%)	
		Other (Snapchat & Twitter)	NA	NA	34 (27%)	1 (1%)	35 (28%)	
10.	Hours Spent on social media per Day approx?	1–2 hours	37	29.1	NA	NA	NA	
		2–4 hours	58	45.7	NA	NA	NA	
		4–6 hours	26	20.5	NA	NA	NA	
		6–8 hours	3	2.4	NA	NA	NA	
		8–10 hours	2	1.6	NA	NA	NA	
		10 hours or more	1	0.8	NA	NA	NA	
		Total	**127**	**100**	**NA**	**NA**	**NA**	
11.	How does the time pass when you use social media?	Slower	NA	NA	4 (3%)	4 (3%)	8 (6%)	NA
		As always	NA	NA	48 (38%)	0 (0%)	48 (38%)	
		Faster	NA	NA	64 (50%)	7 (6%)	71 (56%)	
		Total	**NA**	**NA**	**116 (91%)**	**11 (9%)**	**127 (100%)**	
12.	Use of Internet	Number of participants use internet	NA	NA	107 (84%)	10 (8%)	117 (92%)	0.87
		Number of participants did not use internet	NA	NA	9 (7%)	1 (1%)	10 (8%)	
		Total	**NA**	**NA**	**116 (91%)**	**11 (9%)**	**127 (100%)**	

*Values are presented as frequency (N) and percentage (%). Adult and adolescent percentages are based on the respective subgroup totals (adult n=116; adolescent n=11). *Multiple responses were permitted for the most-used social media platform; therefore, percentages may exceed 100%. P-values represent comparisons between adults and adolescents, with $p < 0.05$ considered statistically significant —NA= Not applicable/not calculated.

Out of 127 participants, females were in majority (66.1%) and 34.6% were married and 65.4% were unmarried. Most of the participants lived at home (68.5%), had one or two siblings (33.9% each) and had graduate-level education (42.5%), followed by higher/professional or postgraduate education (35.4%). More than half of the workers (55.9%) were in private/government services. When it came to digital media, 90% were using social media daily, and 68% had unlimited wi-fi at home/hostel. Most used platforms were WhatsApp and Instagram (69% each), followed by YouTube (60%). The most common daily duration of social-media usage was 2–4 hours (45.7%), followed by 1–2 hours (29.1%). More than half of the participants (56%) felt that time flew by when they used social media. Internet use was also high with 92% reporting regular use.

There was no significant difference in daily social-media use ($p = 0.36$), availability of unlimited Wi-Fi ($p = 0.76$) and internet use ($p = 0.87$) between adults and adolescents with all p-values > 0.05.The results indicate high levels of social media and internet use among the participants in the study, with similar trends between adults and adolescents.

DISCUSSION

The findings from this study reveal significant demographic trends and behavioural patterns concerning social media addiction, particularly in relation to gender. The sample was predominantly female (66.1%), with males comprising only 33.9% of participants. This gender distribution suggests that the study's outcomes may be more reflective of female behaviour and experiences, particularly in the context of social media use and addiction. Additionally, the overwhelming majority of participants were adults (91.3%), which aligns with the broader trend of increased social media usage among adults compared to adolescents, who represented just 8.7% of the sample.

The data on social media addiction indicates nuanced differences between male and female participants. Among males, a notable portion (23.3%) reported no addiction, with the majority exhibiting mild (55.8%) to moderate (20.9%) levels of addiction. Interestingly, none of the male participants reported severe addiction. In contrast, female participants showed a slightly different pattern, with fewer reporting no addiction (19%) but a higher percentage demonstrating mild addiction (63.1%). Moderate addiction was slightly lower among females (17.9%) compared to males, and similarly, no females reported severe addiction.

These findings suggest that while both genders are affected by social media addiction, females may be more prone to mild addiction, whereas males have a marginally higher tendency toward moderate addiction. The absence of severe addiction in both genders could imply that while social media use is prevalent, it has not escalated to critically harmful levels within this particular sample.

Moreover, the preference for social media platforms highlights Instagram as the most frequently used platform among the participants, followed by WhatsApp, YouTube, and Facebook. This trend is consistent with global patterns of social media usage, where visual and communication-centric platforms like Instagram and WhatsApp dominate, especially among younger demographics (Kuss & Griffiths 2017; Andreassen 2015; Kelly et al. 2018).

The study's findings on social media platform preferences offer valuable insights into contemporary digital behaviour. Instagram emerged as the most frequently used platform among the participants, reflecting its dominant position in the social media landscape. This preference for Instagram aligns with broader global trends, where the platform's visual-centric nature and user-friendly interface have made it particularly popular among a wide range of demographics, especially younger users (Fujiwara & Martin 2023; Ngcobo, 2023; Manca, 2020).

Following Instagram, WhatsApp was the second most frequently used platform among the participants. WhatsApp's popularity is largely due to its functionality as a messaging app that offers end-to-end encryption, making it a preferred choice for private and group communications (Abiodun et al. 2020; Santos & Faure, 2018). Its widespread adoption is also facilitated by its simplicity and the ability to share various media types, including text, images, and voice notes. WhatsApp’s role as a primary communication tool in many countries further solidifies its position as a go-to platform for daily interactions (Costa et al. 2022; Plaza & Plaza 2019).

YouTube, the third most frequently used platform, continues to be a major player in the digital space, particularly for video content consumption (Arthours, 2018). The platform’s vast array of content, ranging from educational videos to entertainment, attracts a diverse audience. YouTube's recommendation algorithm, which suggests videos based on user behaviour, keeps users engaged by continuously offering relevant content. This platform is particularly popular among users who prefer long-form content and those who seek instructional or how-to videos (Rohde & Mau, 2021; Strangelove, 2010).

These results show that the unique features and user experiences that each social media network provides have an impact on users' choices for those sites. While YouTube and Facebook serve consumers looking for longer-form material and more extensive social networking capabilities, Instagram and WhatsApp's prominence points to a shift toward more visual and quick communication techniques. When developing strategies to interact with audiences across various platforms, stakeholders such as educators, advertisers, and mental health experts must have a thorough understanding of these preferences.

Overall, the study shows that social media addiction was generally low, but internet addiction was generally moderate. This result emphasises how crucial it is to comprehend the various facets of internet use and addiction, especially in connection to certain platforms and demographic factors like gender (Balakrishnan & Griffiths 2017; Montag & Hegelich 2020). The study's findings add to a more complex knowledge of how social media impacts various demographic groups, which might be useful for creating focused interventions and educational initiatives meant to reduce the dangers of social media addiction.

CONCLUSION

The present study highlighted the increase in social media addiction among adolescents and its negative impact on their life goals. Regular educational programs are recommended to help identify acceptable social media use among adolescents and to promote proper use of social media accounts.

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