



Volume 2	Issue 1	June 2024	DOI: 10.52472/jmhsr.v2i1.458	Page: 38-46
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## Social Media Addiction as a new form of addiction. Is it true?

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### ARTICLE INFO

*Keywords:* Addiction, Excessive Media Social Use, Mental health

*Received* : 05 May 2024

*Revised* : 01 June 2024

*Accepted* : 30 June 2024

### ABSTRACT

Social media is a product of technology that brings significant impact to spread information and connect people around the world and entertainment. As a result, users can access various information easily. In other hand, by using media social excessively lead to dependency that has appears numbers of symptoms that similar with addiction such as impairment in daily functioning (conflict), emerge negative emotions if unable to access social media (withdrawal), having trouble to decrease social media usage (relapse and reinstatement) and social media usage dominates in daily life (salience). However, it is very premature to determine that dependency to social media as a kind of addiction due dependency to social media can be declined without clinical intervention. One of the reasons for declining social media usage is caused by burnout which indirectly pushes the users to keep away from social media. Even though the negative impact from media social usage can not to be ignored due excessive access bring negative consequences to mental health

### INTRODUCTION

Social media is a platform to connect various people from various backgrounds, education and culture all around the world. According to Kaplan and Heinlein (2010) suggest that social media as “a group of internet-based applications that build on ideological and technological foundation of web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of users generated content”. Boyd and Ellison (2007) state that social media is able to facilitate users to create personal representation about themselves, so it can be accessed by other users from a wider scale. By referring to such definition, social media is an

internet based-application that aims to exchange information with others without meeting face to face.

There are various kinds of social media nowadays such as facebook, instagram, tiktok, twitter, snapchat, youtube, ect that create a lot of interesting features such as picture, video, music etc. The feature can attract the users to create their personal account and enjoy the entertainment. According to data from Radio Republik Indonesia (2024), the amount of social media users in Indonesia reached 191 million users, 73,7% from total population Katadata.id release the data that

Indonesia categorizes as 10 top countries with long duration in playing social media. According to this phenomenon, social media turn into basic needs which is hard to avoid nowadays. According to Drahošová and Balco (2017), they identify several advantages from social media, such as exchanging information, doing work remotely, data sharing and for education purposes. Exchanging the information is the most beneficial thing among the users.

However, despite all of the benefits of social media to bring ease to daily activity, excessive social media use may lead to negative consequences to psychological well-being such as depression, loneliness, and decreased self-worth (Lin et al, 2016). Currently, the term of media addiction takes attention from various parties due to “addiction” refers to excessive dependency on an object, and in this study the object is social media itself. Although, refer to Diagnostic Statistic of Mental Disorder V, this addiction still not considerate as clinical pathology, therefore the existence of social media addiction is still questioned, is it true it is a new kind of addiction like gambling and substance or it just inability of someone to regulate frequency of their social media usage.

Keane (2004) purpose that each of activity which has strong impact to change mood condition will risk someone became addicted to it even though for ordinary activity in daily life like eating and sport. Social media addiction is a condition where individuals exhibit excessive behaviour in the

use of social media, accompanied by an uncontrollable urge to use it. According to several studies, the symptoms of social media addiction are manifested psychologically in the form of mood changes, cognitive changes, emotional reactions that tend to be less adaptive, problems in interpersonal relationships, and a decline in academic performance (Hou, et al., 2019).

However, to categorize a problem behaviour into pathology requires some considerations due to establish diagnosis in the mental health area will bring negative stigma from society to individuals and it is not impossible that the stigma affects the whole family. There are many researchers attempting to reveal excessive behaviour in social media usage like having trouble to regulate behaviour in accessing social media, hence many people assume this behaviour is a new form of addiction and brings negative effects for the users. Current study is aimed to conduct systematic review from various research to reveal the existence of social media addiction.

There are three research questions that will be discussed in this study: Does the usage of excessive social media usage is a new form of addiction?, What are the factors that lead to users to access social media excessively?, How media social usage can influence state of mental health?.

## **METHODS**

Systematic review method is used in current study. We, gathered related various research that fit with the research topic. The main criteria of previous studies are restricted to scientific journals which were published between 2010-2023. Despite the usage of social media have been started before 2010, however the research about the effects to psychological well-being just started and took attention since 2010. Data collected from academic website that is <http://uindonesia.summon.serialssolutions.com>. The site is an academic platform that is facilitated by Universitas Indonesia to access various scientific journals from academic databases. The inclusion criteria for the previous study we used several keywords to obtain relevant studies; social media addiction, excessive social media use, personality and social media, attachment and social media, and fear of missing out on social network sites, psychological well-being and social media. Exclusion criteria include: internet-game addiction, smartphone addiction, computer addiction.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

According to the term "addiction" in the DSM V, the category of addiction disorders covers substance abuse, gambling addiction, and game addiction. The process of addiction, especially substance addiction, can be explained by aberrant learning theory, which posits that addiction is

caused by abnormal learning, both explicitly and implicitly. Robinson and Berridge (2003) stated that explicit learning by addicts toward an object will influence their level of declarative consciousness or expectation, modifying the relationship between act and outcome (A-O). This occurs due to cues from specific environments associated with rewards. This process distorts declarative memory in two ways: (1) fabricates conscious memories, making them vivid, and (2) exaggerates the declarative memory effect, aligning it with cognitive expectations toward the object of addiction to create an optimistic feeling. Such a process can alter how memory processes information, resulting in addicts always feeling that they need the addictive object to obtain pleasure and an optimistic feeling as an effect from the object.

Substance addiction is caused by the effect of the substance activating the reward system quickly and releasing feelings of pleasure as a form of reinforcement. This dynamic process is similar to gambling and game addiction. The symptoms of social media addiction are similar to those of other addictions, showing several signs such as disturbed social functioning (conflict), emerging negative emotions if unable to access social media (withdrawal), having trouble decreasing social media usage (relapse and reinstatement), and social media dominating daily activities (Turel & Serenko, 2012).

Neurologically, research by Turel, He, Xue, Xiao, and Bechara (2014) states that social media addiction has similarities and differences with drug addiction. One similarity is the appearance of automatic responses related to certain cues, causing someone "addicted" to social media to automatically be encouraged to open it without needing a lengthy cognitive process. This response is caused by excessive activity in the bilateral ventral striatum of the brain. According to aberrant learning theory, from the perspective of implicit learning, addiction is seen as an automated process of the Stimulus-Response (S-R) mechanism, where repetitive behavior leads to automatic behavior. This is similar to how procedural memory works, which does not require much cognitive attention (Robinson & Berridge, 2003).

In line with the previous research, the research that is conducted by Turel, Breves, and Bechara (2018) further explains that the morphology from the insula makes someone consistent with the use of excessive social media, where this process is mediated by delay discounting, so that the result shows that they are more likely to choose to get rewards that are obtained directly and immediately from the use of social media.

Turel and Serenko (2012) stated that addiction to social media is driven by the enjoyment it provides. This enjoyment leads to increased frequency and dependence on social media, resulting in cognitive responses becoming

automatic due to environmental cues (Turel & Serenko, 2012). Based on this explanation, the neurological mechanism underlying social media addiction appears to be similar to that of drug addiction. However, the similarity between the two does not imply that social media addiction holds the same status as drug addiction. The key difference is that social media addiction does not result in pathogenesis and primarily affects sensitivity in the amygdala, while inhibitory control functions remain normal (Turel et al., 2014).

Turel et al. (2014) explained that social media addiction manifests symptoms similar to other addictions, causing continuous users to experience disruptions in daily functioning. This disruption is attributed to the distortion of time perception when using social media. Users at high risk of developing social media addiction often feel that time passes very slowly when they are not accessing social media, prompting them to use it more frequently within short intervals (Turel, Breves, & Bechara, 2017).

The author concurs with Turel et al. (2014) that social media addiction exhibits symptoms akin to other addictions, with excessive use leading to addiction-related symptoms. However, the severity of the consequences is not as extreme as those associated with drug addiction, as social media addiction does not cause significant neurological or social impairments seen in drug and gambling addictions. Additionally, many individuals with

social media addiction can overcome problematic use without clinical intervention, unlike those with drug or gambling addictions. As discussed earlier, the primary function of social media is to serve as a platform for spreading information.

Regarding the phenomenon of excessive social media use, the World Health Organization (WHO) has raised concerns due to numerous negative consequences resulting from the inability to control social media usage. These effects negatively impact both physical health (e.g., eye damage, musculoskeletal issues, sedentary lifestyle) and psychosocial well-being (e.g., cyberbullying, sleep deprivation). Recent research has investigated the impact of social media on mental health. However, labeling this as "addiction" requires further consideration, as addiction implies a dependency that makes it difficult for individuals to overcome the habit.

The primary use of social media is to rapidly exchange information. This fast-paced information flow often leads to information overload, potentially causing user burnout. Consequently, users may begin to limit their social media usage. According to Luqman, Cao, Ali, Masood, and Yu (2016), social media use affects users' social needs, hedonism, and cognition. However, continuous access can lead to techno-distress, an unhealthy use of technology resulting in fatigue from constant social media use. This fatigue causes discomfort, leading users to voluntarily reduce or cease their

social media usage. Overexposure to information can also overwhelm users, causing fatigue (Bright, Kleiser, & Grau, 2014). Conversely, such feelings of fatigue and overload are typically not experienced by individuals addicted to drugs, gambling, or video games, as they continuously seek quick rewards, weakening their impulse control.

According to Bandura's cognitive process theory, addiction tends to refer to an inability to self-regulate when accessing social media (LaRose, Lin, & Eastin, 2003). Based on this, the author argues that excessive social media use cannot be categorized as an addiction. Addiction implies poor impulse control, whereas the issue here is more about excessive frequency of use and overexposure to information, leading to poor mental health.

Numerous studies have explored the dynamics of social media addiction, examining personality types, attachment styles, and the fear of missing out (FOMO) as predictors of excessive use (Blackwell, Leaman, Tramosch, Osborne, & Liss, 2018). Of these factors, which is the strongest predictor?

### **Attachment Style and Excessive Use of Social Media**

Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) defined attachment as a self-image and perception of others. They identified four attachment types: secure, preoccupied, dismissing, and fearful. According to Demircioğlu and Aslı Göncü Köse (2018), the

fearful attachment style is significantly associated with social media addiction, as individuals with this attachment style have difficulty building and maintaining direct interpersonal relationships, making social media a safer alternative. Blackwell, Trampusch, Osborne, and Liss (2017) identified anxious and avoidant attachment styles as predictors of excessive social media use, driven by the need to connect without direct interaction.

### **Personality and Excessive Use of Social Media**

Neurotic personalities are at risk of excessive social media use due to their tendency towards negative moods, using social media to compensate (Turel, Poppa, & Gil-Or, 2018). Neurotic individuals often experience anxiety regarding personal relationships, making social media an indirect means of connection (Blackwell et al., 2017). Another high-risk personality type is the narcissistic personality, driven by the need for ego gratification and recognition from others. Narcissists frequently update their achievements on social media to promote themselves (Andreassen, Pallesen, & Griffiths, 2017; Carpenter, 2012). This self-promotion reflects a grandiose self-view, increasing the likelihood of social media addiction (Casale & Fioravanti, 2018).

### **Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)**

FOMO is a strong predictor of excessive social media use, unrelated to personality traits or

attachment styles, and can affect anyone (Blackwell et al., 2017). FOMO manifests as anxiety about missing out on social activities and news (Franchina et al., 2018). This feeling can be explained by the theory of interpersonal attachment, which suggests that individuals have an inherent need to feel close to others (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). According to Beck (1988), FOMO aligns with the concept of extended self, where social media is perceived as part of one's self-concept. Being unable to engage with social groups online or offline leads to feelings of isolation and worthlessness, driving excessive social media use.

Franchina et al. (2017) noted that FOMO predicts Facebook and Instagram use. Przybylski, Murayama, DeHaan, and Gladwell (2013) explained that FOMO increases when individuals experience chronic deficits in psychological satisfaction, leading to high social media use to fulfill unmet needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness.

### **The Impact of Excessive Use of Social Media on Mental Health**

Excessive social media use, driven by FOMO, leads to impulsive behavior and cognitive fatigue (Dhir, Yossatorn, Kaur, & Chen, 2018; Liu & Ma, 2018). Burnout from information overload can lead to feelings of envy and depression, particularly among university students (Tandoc, Ferrucci, & Duffy, 2015; Lim & Yang, 2015). Social

comparison on social media often results in negative self-perceptions and psychological distress (Yabar et al., 2018; Lup, Trup, & Rosental, 2015).

Smartphone use for social media access contributes to depressive symptoms due to sleep disturbances caused by nighttime usage (Lemola et al., 2014; Cajochen et al., 2011). The light from smartphones interferes with circadian rhythms, inducing depression. Social media addiction negatively impacts well-being, leading to loneliness, poor self-esteem, and low academic performance (Satici & Uysal, 2015). The root cause of reduced well-being and quality of life is often maladaptive social comparison, which is prevalent in constant social media use. Comparing oneself to more successful individuals often results in dissatisfaction with one's life condition.

## CONCLUSION

This research aims to explain the dynamic factors leading to excessive social media use and its impact on mental health. Furthermore, it seeks to address the question of whether the term "social media addiction" is appropriate. Based on various systematic reviews, the author concludes that while social media addiction exhibits symptoms similar to those listed in the DSM V, it does not alter the brain's morphological structure or impulse control. Unlike pathological addictions such as those to drugs, gambling, and gaming, social media

addiction involves addiction-related symptoms rather than true addiction.

The author concurs with the WHO's consideration of excessive social media use as a new behavioral disorder due to its significant impact on psychological well-being. However, labeling it as an addiction is premature. The key distinction is that individuals with social media dependency can voluntarily quit or reduce their usage due to information overload and resulting fatigue. This voluntary cessation is not characteristic of the addictions described in the DSM V (drug addiction, gambling, and gaming).

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