

Downsides of Virtual Communication Sites:

Stress, Addiction and Disorder

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Social media is a leading influential and trending communication platform for today's world. It connects humankind at a global level and brings the information from the entire world to a small screen within a few minutes. However, the glare and power of social media have trapped the users, thus making them unable to recognize the stress it is causing in their lives. Today, some people are not satisfied with the small world around them, so they try to seek different information, people, things, and the cultures present in the whole world. It is impossible to know everything, but this fact is usually ignored. Thus, people are spending more and more time on social media trying to know everything about everyone, which is making them addicted to it. This addiction is spreading across the whole globe, affecting children to old-aged people, especially teenagers. Thus, it is necessary to question the usage of social media and spread awareness about the stress and addiction, it is causing and the impacts on the mental health of the users. Social media have certain beneficial vantage points that help people connect with the world but also many outlets that are affecting people's lives in negative aspects.

Social media have drastically changed the communication medium in the last decade, providing the benefit of communicating with others within no time which helps people to stay connected with their loved ones. This not only helps with communicating with friends and family, but also allows users to create their own social platform where they can present themselves in the way they want to be presented and liked by others. Social media also allow people to follow famous celebrities, role models and politicians with a closer look at their lives. As everyone has a shadow and every good thing comes with a bad side effect, social media have drawbacks, too. Social media provide the human mind with so much information that we seek further for more. This creates a stressful environment as users will never be able to discern all the information which social media provide them in their feeds. The likes of Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, and streaks on Snapchat act like rewards which increases the dopamine stimulation in the brain. Scientists

have proven that “dopamine causes us to seek, desire, and search” for more information, and rewards which are exactly what social media provides the users (Seiter, 2019, “Dopamine”). Therefore, it makes users seek more likes and streaks, making them addicted to these social networking sites.

Social media influence is mounting, which is increasing the risk of addiction for users of social networking sites. Its over-usage is growing unintentionally, as users think that social media won't affect their lives in a negative aspect as it is a virtual communicating source. According to a recently published newspaper article, “Social networking sites such as Facebook and Instagram are known to cause stress in users, known as technostress from social media” (“Lancaster University,” 2019, p. 539). The stress is usually the result from questioning self-beauty, miscommunication with friends or loved ones on social media sites, likes on posts, and news feed. The users tend to switch from one activity to another on social media or switch between different social networking sites which causes them to generally ignore the stress triggered by social media activities. Therefore, the stress is never gone; it is transferred from one outlet of social media to another. Thus, increasing technostress leads to social media addiction, which blurs the effect of stress on the psychological wellbeing of the users, making it a daily routine.

The ignorance from the technostress eventually leads to social media addiction. This addiction is usually the result of the stress that social networking sites create in users' lives. It seems like social media addiction is not a big deal as it is not as bad as other addictions which are harmful to our health. But social media addiction is proven to damage social proficiencies and endanger the quality of connections that people cultivate with others (Sriwilai & Charoensukmongkol, 2016, p. 428). Thus, social media addiction affects our concentration, social and working abilities which drag away the user's focus from their work, studies, friends, sports, and many other activities leading them to become prisoners of their phones and social media. According to a research conducted by Pontes, Taylor, and Stavropoulos (2018), there are six components of social media addiction which are “salience, mood modification, tolerance, withdrawal

symptoms, conflict, and relapse” (p 241). All these components of social media addiction are the hazardous effects of social networking on the everyday lives of users. However, addicted social media users generally ignore the fact that they are addicted to social networking sites. Thus, addiction usually ends up in social media disorder.

Social Media Disorder is not an individual disorder; its branches also cover Internet addiction, Internet Gaming Disorder, and Facebook Disorder. It’s hard to find evidence for a specific social networking platform as users generally have accounts on more than one social media outlet. And, the symptoms for all three disorders are intertwined and are mostly caused due to stress. As discussed above, users tend to switch between the different activities on the internet as stress increases in their on-going activity. But there are evidences provided by a study which suggested that “social media disorder...is an emerging mental problem, particularly among adolescents” (Van Den Eijnden, Lemmens, & Valkenburg, 2016, p. 484) which includes symptoms as attention deficit, and many symptoms such as depression, loneliness, self-esteem, and impulsivity. All these symptoms are associated with ADHD which is a “neuropsychiatric syndrome characterized by marked symptoms of lack of attention... impulsiveness which comprise the individual’s functioning in social, work, and school contexts” (Settanni et al., 2018, p. 165). ADHD is correlated with addictive disorders and mood disorders which intertwined with Social Media Disorder. Adolescents, who are mostly engage on social media activities, are likely to have symptoms of both ADHD and Social Media Disorder. These disorders not only effect adolescents but also the adult population who are highly addictive to social networking sites.

Another consequence for social media users to get addicted or stressed out about social networking sites is "fear of missing out" (Pontes, Taylor, & Stavropoulos, 2018, p. 241). Therefore, today, teenagers and many social media users, who are addicted to it, are finding daily activities and conversations very difficult. These symptoms are dragging them more towards social media, as they find it more rewarding and a joyful

place than the real world. Social media users prefer online interaction as the best communication medium because they feel safe and confident interacting with others online (Pontes, Taylor, & Stavropoulos, 2018, p. 241). Thus, addicted social media users are withdrawing from daily life activities and putting their health, future and relationships in danger.

The stimulating power of social media is leading users into darkness. The stress caused by social media platforms is generally leading the lives of numerous people into the darkness of addiction, and eventually Social Media Disorder. It is not only detrimental to the psychological wellbeing of users, but also social media is pulling them away from the important daily life activities and making communication difficult in real life for users who are usually engaged in social media activities for most of their time. Stress, addiction, and disorder caused due to social media are the untouched and ignored aspects that need to come in the spotlight. There are no doubts about the privileges that social media bestow upon our world today, but negative aspects of social media are not negligible, either.

## References

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