



Understanding the Multifaceted Impacts of Social Media Addiction on Minors: A Comprehensive Analysis of Psychological, Behavioral, and Physiological Dimensions

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ABSTRACT: Social media platforms have become ubiquitous in modern life, particularly for adolescents. This secondary research explores the impact of social media addiction on minors. Existing literature suggests a complex relationship between social media use and mental health. Studies highlight potential links between excessive use and increased anxiety, depression, and sleep disturbances in minors. Social media can also contribute to social comparison and negative body image perception. Employing a thematic analysis of data from academic journals, scholarly reports, and systematic reviews. The analysis focused on studies published within the last ten years to ensure the findings reflect the latest trends and developments in social media use and its impact on minors. Findings revealed concerning trends, including the negative impact on mental health, the potential for cyberbullying and social isolation, and the influence of family dynamics on social media addiction development. The discussion emphasizes the importance of promoting responsible social media use through open communication between parents and children, media literacy programs in schools, and content moderation efforts by social media platforms. Further research is needed to develop effective interventions and mitigate potential harm to minors' well-being.

KEYWORDS: adolescents' development, mental health, peer influence, physiological effects, risks, screen time.

INTRODUCTION

Social media platforms are becoming an undeniable aspect of modern life, particularly for minors. These platforms offer various features and functionalities that accommodate different requirements and tastes. Minors use social media to remain current on current events, follow their passions, interact with friends and family, and express themselves creatively. On the other hand, concerns regarding the possible harm that excessive social media use may do to minors' mental and emotional health become more common. The purpose of this secondary study is to look into how social media addiction affects young people. We'll discuss the study's main conclusions about the impact of social media use on sleep habits, overall development, mental health, and self-esteem.

Previous studies point to a complicated and multifaceted association between minors' usage of social media and mental health. Research by Stasburger & Hogan (2013) and Abi-Jaoude et al. (2020) point to possible connections between increased anxiety, depression, and sleep disruptions with excessive usage of social media. Minors may experience negative self-perception and inadequacy due to constant exposure to carefully chosen web content that presents idealized appearances and unachievable lifestyles. Furthermore, the stress of upholding a favorable online persona and the anxiety of losing out can result in obsessive social media browsing and interfere with sound sleep habits. Savaci et al. (2021) delve deeper into the behavioral factors leading to social media addiction, suggesting a cycle of seeking validation and approval online. Their research suggests that social media platforms can exploit psychological vulnerabilities in minors, creating a dependence on online validation and positive reinforcement through likes, comments, and shares.

Research Objectives

1. To analyze the psychological and behavioral impacts of social media addiction on minors, including its effects on:
 - a. Mental health;
 - b. Self-esteem;



- c. Academic performance;
- d. Interpersonal relationships.
2. To examine the physiological effects of social media addiction on minors:
 - a. Sleep patterns;
 - b. Brain development;
 - c. Overall physical health.
3. To identify common risk factors and triggers contributing to social media addiction among minors:
 - a. Environmental;
 - b. Individual;
 - c. Social factors.

METHODOLOGY

This research utilized a secondary research approach by examining existing scholarly publications, peer-reviewed journals, and credible online reports. The primary focus was on studies published within the last ten years to ensure that the findings reflect the latest trends and developments in social media use and its impact on minors.

To find relevant articles, researchers searched academic databases like Google Scholar and ResearchGate using a combination of keywords related to social media addiction in minors, such as "mental health," "adolescent development," and "screen time." Once the researchers had a pool of articles, they applied specific criteria to choose the most relevant ones.

The researchers also prioritized articles directly addressing their research goals and used strong research methods like surveys, experiments, or meta-analyses. Finally, the researchers ensured the source's credibility by selecting articles from peer-reviewed academic journals. After selecting the most relevant articles, the researchers moved on to data extraction. This involved collecting specific information related to their research objectives. The researchers looked for studies that explored the psychological and behavioral impacts of social media use on minors, such as anxiety, depression, and academic performance.

Additionally, the researchers searched for studies on the physiological effects, including sleep patterns and brain development. Finally, the researchers were interested in understanding risk factors and triggers for social media addiction in minors, focusing on environmental, individual, and social factors that might contribute to the problem.

Overall, this research approach allowed for a thorough investigation of the topic of social media addiction in minors, using credible and up-to-date sources. The specific criteria for article selection ensured that only the most relevant and reliable sources were used, and the data extraction process allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the psychological, behavioral, and physiological effects of social media use on minors.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The psychological, behavioral, physiological, and social implications of social media addiction among minors are multifaceted and far-reaching. The results and discussions presented in this research paper shed light on the intricate relationship between excessive social media use and various aspects of minors' lives. From mental health challenges such as increased risk of depression and anxiety to the erosion of self-esteem and academic performance, the impact of social media addiction is profound. Moreover, the physiological effects, including disruptions to sleep patterns and alterations in brain development, underscore the comprehensive nature of this issue. Additionally, the paper highlights the common risk factors and triggers contributing to social media addiction, encompassing environmental, individual, and social influences. By delving into these complexities, the research provides valuable insights into the urgent need for effective interventions and strategies to mitigate the detrimental effects of social media addiction on minors' well-being and development.

A. Psychological and Behavioral Impacts of Social Media Addiction on Minors

A.1 Mental Health

Social media addiction among minors can be a serious threat to their mental well-being. Studies have shown a strong correlation between excessive social media use and an increased risk of depression, anxiety, and low mood. Abi-Jaoude et al. (2020) suggest that constant engagement with smartphones and social media platforms can exacerbate existing mental health concerns in young people. This addiction can manifest in compulsive behaviors like constantly checking for updates and notifications, as well



as withdrawal symptoms like irritability and anxiety when disconnected from social media. Overall, this cycle can lead to a significant decrease in a minor's sense of well-being.

Further research by Tu Li (2023) emphasizes the detrimental impact of social media addiction on a minor's ability to develop healthy coping mechanisms. Minors struggling with social media addiction are constantly bombarded with idealized portrayals of others' lives, often leading to feelings of inadequacy and social comparison. Additionally, the risk of cyberbullying and the pressure to maintain a carefully curated online persona can contribute to heightened stress and psychological distress. In essence, social media addiction can create a toxic environment that hinders a minor's ability to develop healthy emotional resilience.

A.2 Self-esteem

Social media addiction can be a breeding ground for low self-esteem in minors. They are constantly bombarded with unrealistic beauty standards, filtered images, and curated lifestyles on social media platforms. These carefully crafted portrayals create a skewed perception of reality, where everyone seems to have a perfect life and appearance. This constant comparison with seemingly flawless online personas can lead adolescents to feel inadequate and insecure about their bodies and lives. Richards et al. (2015) further highlight the pressure to conform to these manufactured standards, which can result in a negative self-perception and a distorted sense of self-worth.

Furthermore, the addictive nature of social media creates a vicious cycle that further diminishes self-esteem in minors. They rely on external validation through likes, comments, and shares on their social media posts. This constant need for online approval can be all-consuming, leading them to seek external validation rather than building intrinsic self-worth constantly. This cycle can be particularly damaging during adolescence, a crucial time for developing a healthy self-image. Mustafaoğlu et al. (2018) emphasize digital technology's critical role in shaping children's perceptions of themselves. They argue that excessive social media use can distort their self-image and lead to a disconnect between their real selves and the online persona they feel pressured to portray.

A.3 Academic Performance

Social media addiction can be a significant roadblock to academic achievement for minors. The constant allure of social media platforms creates a breeding ground for distraction and procrastination. Minors struggling with social media addiction may find themselves constantly checking their phones, engaging in online interactions, and neglecting their schoolwork. This disrupts focus and reduces the time dedicated to studying and completing assignments, ultimately decreasing productivity in school-related tasks. O'Keeffe and Clarke-Pearson (2011) support this notion, highlighting how excessive screen time, including social media use, can negatively impact a minor's ability to concentrate and retain information. This impaired concentration can lead to difficulties understanding complex concepts, remembering crucial details, and performing well on exams, ultimately affecting their academic achievements.

Moreover, the addictive nature of social media can wreak havoc on sleep patterns. The constant notifications, glowing screens, and stimulating content can make it difficult for minors to fall asleep and stay asleep throughout the night. This sleep deprivation leads to fatigue and decreased cognitive functioning during school hours. Imagine sitting through a lecture or solving a math problem when you're running on fumes! This can significantly hinder a minor's ability to learn new information, retain what they've learned, and participate actively in class discussions, all contributing to overall academic performance. Surat et al. (2021) emphasize this point by highlighting the correlation between gadget addiction, which includes social media addiction, and poor mental health outcomes. These outcomes, such as anxiety and depression, can indirectly affect academic success by impacting motivation, focus, and overall well-being.

A.4 Interpersonal Relationships

Social media addiction can erode the quality and development of interpersonal relationships in minors' lives. Chung et al. (2021) highlight the potential for social media to replace real-world interactions. Excessive social media use can lead to a decrease in face-to-face interactions with friends and family. These in-person interactions are crucial for developing essential social skills like empathy, communication, and conflict resolution. Social media interactions, while seemingly social, often need more depth and nuance of real-world connections. The carefully curated online personas and fleeting nature of online interactions make it difficult for minors to build genuine and meaningful relationships. Furthermore, the constant pressure to maintain a specific online image and the need for online validation can further hinder the development of authentic real-life connections.



The negative impact of social media addiction extends to family relationships as well. Minors struggling with social media addiction may prioritize their online presence and interactions over spending quality time with family members. This can lead to feelings of isolation and neglect among family members, straining the overall family dynamic. Keskin et al. (2023) introduce the concept of "sharenting syndrome," where parents excessively share their children's personal information and experiences on social media platforms. This "sharing" can be done without the child's consent or understanding, leading to privacy concerns and potentially strained parent-child relationships. In essence, social media addiction can create a barrier between minors and the very relationships that are essential for their emotional well-being and healthy development.

B. Physiological Effects of Social Media Addiction on Minors

B.1 Sleep Patterns

Social media addiction disrupts sleep patterns in minors, creating a domino effect of negative health consequences. Excessive screen time before bed, a common feature of social media use, throws off the body's natural circadian rhythm – the internal clock that regulates sleep and wake cycles. This disrupts melatonin production, a hormone crucial for initiating and maintaining sleep. The constant stimulation from social media notifications, engaging content, and the fear of missing out (FOMO) keeps adolescents glued to their screens, delaying sleep onset and reducing overall sleep duration. Costello et al. (2024) delve deeper, highlighting how social media algorithms are designed to be addictive, keeping users engaged for extended periods and unwittingly promoting unhealthy sleep habits among minors.

The blue light emitted by electronic devices further exacerbates sleep problems. This blue light suppresses melatonin production, making falling and staying asleep even harder. The short-term consequences are readily apparent – minors experience fatigue, irritability, and difficulty concentrating during the day, hindering their ability to learn and perform well in school. However, the long-term effects are even more concerning. Chronic sleep deprivation puts minors at increased risk for developing several health problems, including obesity, diabetes, and even mood disorders like depression and anxiety. Hoque (2018) emphasizes this point in his research on the impact of digital device addiction on Generation Z. He highlights the critical need for interventions that promote healthy sleep hygiene, such as establishing screen-free time before bed, to mitigate the negative effects of social media use on sleep in this vulnerable population.

B.2 Brain Development

Social media addiction can leave a significant mark on the developing brain of minors, particularly in areas crucial for impulse control and decision-making. The constant barrage of stimulation from social media platforms, including notifications, likes, and the endless stream of engaging content, acts like a drug on the brain. This triggers the reward system, flooding the brain with dopamine, a neurotransmitter associated with pleasure and motivation. Over time, this can lead to a dependence on social media for those dopamine hits, creating addictive behaviors. Kim, Wi, and Kim (2023) further explore this concept, highlighting how media exposure during childhood and adolescence can have a lasting impact on social development, including changes in the brain's structure and function.

The negative effects of social media addiction extend beyond just behavior. Studies have shown that prolonged use can decrease gray matter density in the prefrontal cortex. This brain area is critical in cognitive control, encompassing skills like planning, focus, and resisting impulses. Additionally, social media addiction can also affect the amygdala, a region involved in emotional regulation. With a compromised prefrontal cortex and amygdala, minors struggling with social media addiction may have trouble making sound judgments, controlling their emotions effectively, and managing stress in healthy ways. The developing brain is particularly susceptible to these changes, making adolescence a vulnerable time for social media addiction to take hold and potentially have lasting consequences on brain development and function. Hamm et al. (2014) acknowledge this concern, emphasizing the need for further research to fully understand the long-term effects of social media use on the developing brains of children and adolescents.

B.3 Overall Physical Health

Social media addiction can be a significant roadblock to a minor's overall physical health. The allure of social media platforms often translates into a sedentary lifestyle characterized by excessive screen time and decreased physical activity. This lack of movement is a major contributing factor to a range of health problems in minors. Surat et al. (2021) specifically highlight the



link between gadget addiction, which includes social media addiction, and poor physical health outcomes among Generation Z. These health problems can include:

1. **Obesity:** Physical inactivity coupled with potential exposure to unhealthy food advertising on social media can increase a minor's risk of becoming overweight or obese.
2. **Cardiovascular diseases:** The lack of exercise associated with social media addiction can contribute to risk factors for heart disease, such as high blood pressure and unhealthy cholesterol levels.
3. **Musculoskeletal problems:** Poor posture and prolonged sitting associated with excessive screen time can lead to back pain, neck strain, and other musculoskeletal issues in minors.

Furthermore, social media addiction can create a vicious cycle that further exacerbates these health risks. Excessive social media use can lead to neglect of physical activity and outdoor play, activities crucial for maintaining a healthy weight and overall well-being. The constant engagement with the online world can leave little time or motivation for engaging in sports, spending time in nature, or simply playing actively with friends.

The physical safety of minors can also be compromised by social media addiction. Prolonged screen time can expose them to potentially harmful content, such as unrealistic beauty standards, cyberbullying, and even contact with online predators. This can lead to anxiety, depression, and stress, which can further impact their physical health. Social media addiction presents a multifaceted challenge to the physical health of minors. Parents, educators, and policymakers all have a role in addressing this issue. Efforts to promote a healthy balance between online and offline activities, encourage physical activity, and foster responsible social media use are crucial in protecting the physical well-being of this vulnerable population.

C. Common Risk Factors and Triggers Contributing to Social Media Addiction among Minors

C.1 Environmental

Environmental factors create a breeding ground for social media addiction among minors. The ever-present nature of smartphones and near-universal internet access provide constant opportunities for social media engagement, blurring the lines between online and offline worlds. This constant connectivity fosters a culture where social media use becomes normalized, making it easier for addictive behaviors to take root. Liu (2023) delves deeper into this concept, highlighting the influence of family dynamics and parental attitudes on a minor's susceptibility to social media addiction. Children raised in households where excessive screen time is tolerated or encouraged are likelier to develop problematic internet use patterns. Without clear boundaries and open communication about healthy technology use, minors may struggle to regulate their social media habits and fall prey to the addictive allure of these platforms.

Peer pressure and social norms within a minor's social circle can exacerbate the issue. In schools and communities where excessive social media use is the norm, adolescents may feel immense pressure to constantly check their profiles, like and comment on others' posts, and curate their online presence to fit in. The fear of missing out (FOMO) on social events, trends, or conversations online can be a powerful motivator, driving them to spend excessive time on social media platforms. Stasburger and Hogan (2013) emphasize the significant role peers and media play in shaping adolescents' attitudes and behaviors, including their social media habits. The constant barrage of perfectly curated online lives and the pressure to maintain a certain online image can create an unhealthy environment that fuels social media addiction among minors.

C.2 Individual

Individual susceptibilities and psychological factors can create fertile ground for social media addiction among minors. Surat et al. (2021) identify pre-existing emotional vulnerabilities that can make adolescents more likely to turn to social media in unhealthy ways. These vulnerabilities can include:

1. **Low Self-Esteem:** Minors struggling with low self-esteem may use social media to seek validation and approval from peers. The ability to garner likes and positive comments can temporarily boost their self-worth, leading them to crave this validation and fueling excessive social media use.
2. **Loneliness:** Social isolation or loneliness can also drive social media addiction. Minors lacking offline social connections may turn to online platforms to fill a void and feel connected to others, even if these connections are superficial.



3. Anxiety: Social media can also be used as a coping mechanism for anxiety. The constant stimulation and distraction it provides can offer a temporary escape from anxious thoughts and worries. However, this can become a crutch, and minors may become dependent on social media to manage their anxiety, leading to a cycle of excessive use.
4. Beyond emotional vulnerabilities, personality traits can also play a role. Keskin et al. (2023) highlight how individual differences can influence a minor's susceptibility to social media addiction. Here are some personality traits to consider:
 5. Impulsivity: Minors who are more impulsive may struggle to resist the constant notifications, alerts, and prompts to engage with social media, leading to compulsive checking and excessive use.
 6. Sensation-Seeking Behavior: Adolescents who crave novelty and excitement may be particularly drawn to social media platforms' fast-paced, ever-changing nature. The constant stream of new content, trends, and challenges can be highly stimulating, fueling their desire for more and potentially leading to addictive behaviors.

C.3 Social Factors

Social factors weave a complex web that significantly influences how minors interact with social media. Peer relationships and societal norms act as powerful forces shaping their online habits. Chung et al. (2021) delve into the influence of peers, highlighting how the desire to fit in and maintain social connections online can fuel social media addiction. Even without direct pressure, the need to keep up with friends' online activities and participate in group chats can lead minors to spend excessive time on social media platforms. This can create a vicious cycle where social media becomes a primary tool for maintaining friendships, reinforcing the need for constant engagement.

Beyond peer influence, societal norms surrounding technology use and online communication play a significant role. The constant barrage of messages about the importance of being "connected" and the pressure to maintain a curated online persona can fuel addictive behaviors in minors. Mustafaoğlu et al. (2018) emphasize the critical need to understand these social factors when addressing social media addiction among minors. The normalization of constant online presence and the emphasis placed on online popularity and social validation can create an environment where excessive social media use becomes the norm, potentially leading to addiction. By recognizing the influence of these social factors, we can develop more effective strategies to promote healthy social media habits and navigate the digital landscape in a balanced way.

CONCLUSION

This study provides a comprehensive exploration of the multifaceted implications of social media addiction among minors, touching upon psychological, behavioral, physiological, and social dimensions. The findings underscore a troubling association between excessive social media use and adverse mental health outcomes, including heightened risks of depression, anxiety, and diminished well-being. Moreover, the addictive nature of social media platforms can impede the development of healthy coping mechanisms and erode self-esteem among young individuals, exacerbating feelings of inadequacy and fostering a dependency on external validation.

Further exacerbating the issue, social media addiction emerges as a significant hindrance to academic performance, disrupting concentration, sleep patterns, and overall cognitive functioning. The constant allure of social media platforms leads to distraction and procrastination and contributes to fatigue and diminished focus during school hours. Additionally, the erosion of interpersonal relationships, both with peers and family members, underscores the profound societal impact of social media addiction on minors' emotional well-being and social development.

The study also elucidates common risk factors and triggers contributing to social media addiction, including environmental influences, individual susceptibilities, and social norms. The normalization of excessive screen time, coupled with peer pressure and the allure of online validation, creates an environment conducive to addictive behaviors among adolescents. Recognizing the intricate interplay of these factors is essential in devising effective interventions and strategies to promote responsible social media use and safeguard the holistic well-being of young individuals in the digital age.



RECOMMENDATION

Based on the comprehensive analysis of social media addiction among minors presented in this research, it is evident that urgent action is needed to mitigate its detrimental effects on well-being and development. The following recommendations are proposed to address this pressing issue:

1. **Develop Comprehensive Intervention Programs:** Collaborative efforts among educators, mental health professionals, policymakers, and technology companies are imperative in developing comprehensive intervention programs. These programs should focus on raising awareness about the risks of social media addiction, promoting healthy coping mechanisms, and providing resources for both minors and their caregivers to navigate social media use responsibly.
2. **Implement School-Based Initiatives:** Schools play a pivotal role in addressing social media addiction among minors. Integrating digital literacy and mental health education into the curriculum can empower students to make informed decisions about their online behavior. Additionally, creating supportive environments where students feel comfortable discussing their struggles with social media use can facilitate early intervention and support.
3. **Foster Open Communication:** Encouraging open communication between parents, caregivers, and minors is essential in addressing social media addiction. Parents should actively engage in conversations about healthy technology use, set clear boundaries, and serve as positive role models for responsible social media behavior. Establishing family agreements or contracts regarding screen time limits and online conduct can promote accountability and mutual respect.
4. **Promote Digital Well-being Tools:** Technology companies should prioritize the development of digital well-being tools that empower users to manage their online experiences mindfully. Features such as screen time tracking, notification management, and relaxation prompts can help minors establish healthier habits and reduce the risk of addiction.
5. **Empower Peer Support Networks:** Peer support networks within schools and communities can offer invaluable support to minors struggling with social media addiction. By fostering peer-led discussions, support groups, and mentorship programs, adolescents can feel less isolated in their struggles and find strength in collective efforts to promote responsible social media use.
6. **Advocate for Policy Changes:** Policymakers should advocate for policy changes that prioritize protecting minors' well-being in the digital realm. This may include implementing regulations on advertising targeted at minors, enforcing age restrictions on social media platforms, and allocating resources for research and intervention programs.
7. **Continued Research and Evaluation:** Continued research is essential to deepen our understanding of social media addiction among minors and evaluate the effectiveness of intervention strategies. Longitudinal studies tracking the impact of social media use on minors' well-being over time can provide valuable insights into trends and inform evidence-based interventions.

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