

Deleterious Properties of Social Media

Dr. Sewa Singh Bajwa

Associate Professor,
Department of Journalism and Mass Communication,
Ch. Devi Lal University, Sirsa

Abstract: Excessive use of everything leads to addiction. Technological advancements are oriented towards making the life of people more comfortable. Providing ease to the life style and bringing about qualitative changes has always been the latent objective of technological and mechanical advancements. The invention and introduction of telephone was aimed at making the vital link of communication possible between the people living at distant places as communication through exchange of letters used to be quite time consuming. Mobile phones, as cellular phone are usually referred to, made cordless telephony possible and hence enabled people to communicate with people living at far off places. Making phone call to any one, any time and virtually at place became possible. The ease of contacting near and dear ones revolutionised the communication patters of society to a great extent in advanced countries and to a bit lesser extent in developing countries. People started feeling the joy of calling or sending SMSs to their relatives and companions. Introduction of Smart Phones further multiplied the joy of telephony.

Keywords: Addiction, Comfortable, Mechanical, Revolutionized, Communication.

Introduction:

A variety of Social Networking Sites add to the mirth of telephonic communication. This is how Social Media got birth. It was an instant hit with people belonging to different strata of society though the youth got more fascinated and infatuated towards it. The intensity of using Social Media grew with every passing day. The youth, in particular, went mad about it. Parents would often complain about the unbridled indulgence in Social Media of their children. The overdose of Social Media soon started affecting the life style of heavy users. People started complain about problems in mental-psychological and sometimes physiological health. Socio-cultural values were feared to be at stake. This excessive use of Social Media definitely started casting bad effects on Mental Health. The American Academy of Paediatrics has warned about the potential for negative effects of social media in young kids and teens, including cyber-bullying and "Facebook depression." But the same risks may be true for adults, across generations. Here's a quick run-down of the studies that have shown that social media isn't very good for mental well-being, and in some ways, it can be pretty damaging.

Discussion:

As the excessive consumption of anything leads to addiction so stands true in the case of extreme use of Social Media. Overindulgence on Social Media nothing short of addiction. There are many who happily spend more than 8 hours on Social Media in a day. Such addiction is bound to cause ill effects on mental health though experts have not been in total agreement on whether internet addiction is a real thing, let alone social media addiction, but there's some good evidence that both may exist. A review study from Nottingham Trent University looked back over earlier research on the psychological characteristics, personality and social media use. The authors conclude that "it may be plausible to speak specifically of 'Facebook Addiction Disorder'...because addiction criteria, such as neglect of personal life, mental preoccupation, escapism, mood modifying experiences, tolerance and concealing the addictive behaviour, appear to be present in some people who use [social networks] excessively."

Some other studies all over the World have also confirmed that people tend to undergo a kind of extraction. A study a few years ago from Swansea University found that people experienced the psychological symptoms of withdrawal when they stopped using. Their recent follow-up study found that when people stop using, they also undergo small but measurable physiological effects. Study author Phil Reed said, "We have known for some time that people who are over-dependent on digital devices report feelings of anxiety when they are stopped from using them, but now we can see that these psychological effects are accompanied by actual physiological changes." Whether the findings of this study prove true of social media per se is unclear right now, but anecdotal evidence suggests they may be.

Social Media has become a synonym of happiness for many. Youngsters, in particular, endeavour to find friends and tend to spend hours while chatting with them. Even otherwise trolling internet and being active and online on Social Networking sites seems to provide them internal mirth and satisfaction.

The more we use social media, the less happy we seem to be. One study a few years ago found that Facebook use was linked to both less moment-to-moment happiness and less life satisfaction—the more people used Facebook in a day, the more these two variables dropped off. The authors suggest this may have to do with the fact that Facebook conjures up a perception of social isolation, in a way that other solitary activities don't. "On the surface," the authors write, "Facebook provides an invaluable resource for fulfilling such needs by allowing people to instantly connect. Rather than enhancing well-being, as frequent interactions

with supportive 'offline' social networks powerfully do, the current findings demonstrate that interacting with Facebook may predict the opposite result for young adults—it may undermine it.”

In fact, another study found that social media use is linked to greater feelings of social isolation. The team looked at how much people used 11 social media sites, including Facebook, Twitter, Google+, YouTube, LinkedIn, Instagram, Pinterest, Tumblr, Vine, Snapchat and Reddit, and correlated this with their “perceived social isolation.” Not surprisingly, it turned out that the more time people spent on these sites, the more socially isolated they *perceived* themselves to be. And perceived social isolation is one of the worst things for us, mentally and physically.

Heavy users of Social Media spend major part of their quality life in chatting and making calls to their virtual friends but they give a damn shit to their real life friends and family members. They concentrate on forming and cementing relations on Social Media. It is also noticed that Facebook users have a tendency of getting depressed. At times they also get isolated. It is because they develop comparison factor in their minds. There is found to be a sort of competition among Facebook users for getting maximum possible ‘likes’ and ‘comments’ for their posts. They fall into the trap of comparing themselves to others as they scroll through their feeds, and make judgements about how they measure up. One study looked at how people make comparisons to others posts, in “upward” or “downward” directions—that is, feeling that they’re either better or worse off than their friends. It turned out that both types of comparisons made people feel worse, which is surprising, since in real life, only upward comparisons (feeling another person has it better than you) makes people feel bad. But in the social network world, it seems that any kind of comparison is linked to depressive symptoms.

It is psychologically proven that making comparisons leads to jealousy. One tends to get envious if he fails to muster lesser support for his feeds. More ‘like’ for the feed of others triggers feeling of jealousy. One study on Facebook finds that “This magnitude of envy incidents taking place on FB alone is astounding, providing evidence that FB offers a breeding ground for invidious feelings.” It is evident that Facebook offers a breeding pulpit for the development of such jealousy. Feeling jealous makes a person want to make his or her own life look better, and post jealousy-inducing posts of their own, in an endless circle of one-upping and feeling jealous. Thus it turns into a vicious circle that goes on and on with each passing day. Another study looked at the connection between envy and depression among Facebook users and discovered that envy mediates the Facebook-depression link. That is, when envy is controlled for, Facebook isn’t so depressing. So it may be the envy that is to be blamed in the Depression-Facebook connection. Facebook users must not get touchy about the response they get for their posts. As and when they start comparing themselves with others, envy creeps in and this envy further leads to depression which may be suicidal at times.

It is widely accepted fact that usage of Social Media has become an addiction these days. It stands true so far as young generation in India is concerned. They remain glued to their mobile phone sets. People visit their Social Media accounts for attaining mental and psychological satisfaction but end up rendered frustrated as they find themselves caught in the delusion that their Social Media, especially Facebook, friends will help them by way of behaving in a cordial way. They have developed a sort of illusion that the more friends they have on Facebook will guarantee that they are more social. Having thousands of friends on Facebook does not stand as witness that the person is highly social. There seems to be a cap on the number of friends a person’s brain can handle, and it takes actual social interaction (not virtual) to keep up these friendships. So feeling like you’re being social by being on Facebook doesn’t work. Since loneliness is linked to myriad health and mental health problems (including early death), getting real social support is important. Virtual friend time doesn’t have the therapeutic effect as time with real friends. Hence, prudence demands that one should engage oneself in social pursuits in his day to day life but the young generation fails to understand this phenomenon. Undoubtedly Social Media has come as a saviour whenever one feels lonely but studies have found that taking a break from Facebook helps boost psychological wellbeing. Experts suggest that there needs to be moderation in the usage of Social Media as being online for a number of hours puts adverse effect on health. One who feels his life impossible or inadequate without Social Media has surely fallen a victim to Social Networking Sites. According to Ben Stegner chronic users are more likely to report poor mental health, including symptoms of anxiety and depression. Spending too long on social networking sites could be adversely affecting your mood. In fact, chronic users are more likely to report poor mental health, including symptoms of anxiety and depression. It doesn’t take much thinking to figure out why. Social media lets you see the carefully selected best parts of everyone else’s lives, which you compare to the negatives in your own life. Comparing yourself to other people is a sure path to anxiety, and social media has only made this easier to do.

Then there is cyber bullying. Stegner further says that while social media makes it easier to meet new people and make friends, it also enables cruel people to tear into others with little effort. Perpetrators of bullying can use the anonymity that social networks provide to gain people’s trust and then terrorize them in front of their peers. For instance, they might create a fake profile and act friendly to a classmate, then later betray and embarrass them online. These online attacks often leave deep mental scars and even drive people to suicide in some cases. And as it turns out, cyberbullying doesn’t just affect kids. Adults can become victims of online abuse, too. Since screens hide our faces, you can end up being a jerk on social media and other websites without even realizing it. The fear of losing someone due to some mistake or misunderstanding has been there in human life since times immemorial. But after the advent of Social Media the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) has become quite prevalent among heavy users. One feels pervasive negative effects of FOMO. It is just a form of anxiety that one gets when one feels scared of missing out on a positive experience that someone else is having. For instance, one might constantly check one’s messages to see if anyone has invited him out, or focus on his WhatsApp messages or Facebook feed all day to make sure that nobody is doing something cool without him. And that’s exactly what causes FOMO.

Then there is the issue of authenticity. Huge amount of data and certain other information is available on Internet as well as Social Media. But there is nothing to guarantee its authenticity. While the data can be manoeuvred, pictures can be easily edited with the precision that one hardly develops any doubt regarding their legitimacy and truthfulness. Heavy users tend to trust whatever information they get via Facebook or Instagram. Till date there is no way of knowing about their falsification. Hence one needs to be watchful before believing in the feed on Facebook, Instagram or YouTube. Blind trust on these sites may lead to many complications which may further creates multiple hazards. All we see on Social Media is not meant to be believed. For example, one may find unbelievably beautiful people wearing expensive clothes on their perfectly shaped bodies. Seeing them, one with moderate looks tends to develop inferiority complex. One must remember that there are a number of photo editing apps which can filter your image in no time. Someone with comparatively dark toned skin may get fairer with the application of these filters. Otherwise also one need to be realistic. The skin colour or expensive clothes do not solely make a person socially acceptable. More than this it is our deeds which determine our social acceptability in society. Therefore, it is prudent to surround yourself with people who love you for who you are, and you won't have to stress about Instagram or Facebook beauty.

Apart from the increasing incidents of anxiety and depression, spending too much time on social media can lead to poor sleep. Numerous studies have shown that increased use of social media has a negative effect on your sleep quality. Overdose and excessive use of Social Media is bound to upset your sleeping patterns. Stegner has stated in his study on negative effects of Social Media that if you feel like your sleep patterns have become irregular and have led to a drop in productivity, you must try to cut down on the amount of time you browse social media. This is especially the case when using your phone in bed at night. It's all too easy to tell yourself that you'll spend five minutes checking your Facebook notifications, only to realize an hour later that you've been mindlessly scrolling through the content you don't even care about. Don't let Social Media algorithms steal your valuable sleep.

Doctors and psychologists advise that a healthy person must have at least eight hours of sleep daily. Having sound sleep is more important than the sleep itself. So, one must not allow Social Media using habits to have the better of you. It must not command the reins of your life. It should not be allowed to call the shots. Your life is very precious and it must not, at any cost, be allowed to become a slave to technology. As we have discussed overdose of Social Media is bound to affect your health and over expectations from sheer strangers may lead to anxiety and depression.

Conclusion:

Social Media has become an integral part of the lifestyle of youth in India. Excessive and unbridled use of Social Media definitely causes multiple health and psychological problems. Hence one must mend the ways before it gets worse. The Fear of Missing Out needs to be dealt with on priority basis. One must understand that no one is indispensable in life. No message on Social Media is significant enough to propel you looking at your mobile phone screen every minute. Message notifications can be seen later on also. In order to avoid the ill effects of the excessive use of Social Media one must curb one's instincts. Spending quality time with friends and family members gives pleasure, mirth, joy and satisfaction which can never be had from the virtual world. But there is no denying in the fact that overdose of Social Media causes numerable negative effects on the users. It is also underlined that the young generation has become maniac about Social Media. Interest in real life friends have taken a nose dive. This disinterest leads one to take the shelter of Social Media. Due importance need to be attached to our real life social relations. Becoming unsocial in real life and feigning to be highly active on Social Media is a farce. The sooner one realizes it the better would it be.

References:

- [1] Alice G. Walton. *6 Ways Social Media Affects Our Mental Health* (*forbes.com*)
- [2] Ben Stegner. *7 Negative Effects of Social Media on People and Users* (*makeuseof.com*)
- [3] John Writh, *7 Negative Effects of Social Media on People and Users | Facebook For Parents*
- [4] Damon Beres, *Effects of Social Media: 10 Negative Ways It May Affect Your Brain* (*thehealthy.com*)
- [5] Damon Beres, *Weird Negative Effects of Social Media on Your Brain | Reader's Digest*
- [6] Daniel Bradbury Docekal, *7 Negative Effects of Social Media on People and Users | Experimental Space* (*wordpress.com*)
- [7] Frances Dalomba, *Social Media: The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly | Lifespan*
- [8] Lainie Petersen, *The Negative Effect of Social Media on Society and Individuals | Small Business - Chron.com*
- [9] Monica Munjial Singh and Mohammad Amiri, (PDF) *SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE: POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EFFECTS ON THE LIFE STYLE OF INDIAN YOUTH* (*researchgate.net*)
- [10] Nicloy Ganguly and Ponnuranram Kumaraguru <https://cacm.acm.org/magazines/2019/11/240373-the-positive-and-negative-effects-of-social-media-in-india/>
- [11] Rachel Ehmke, *Social Media Effects on Teens | Impact of Social Media on Self-Esteem* (*childmind.org*)
- [12] Sabrina Barr, *Six ways social media negatively affects your mental health | The Independent | The Independent*
- [13] Tatsey Ledford, *5 Negative Effects of Social Media on People and Users* (*thriveglobal.com*)
- [14] Waseem Akram, *A Study on Positive and Negative Effects of Social Media on Society* (*researchgate.net*)