

Susceptibility to Social Media Addiction in Adolescents with Insecure Attachment

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The use of social networking sites is rapidly growing among individuals of all ages. The term addiction to social media is characterized by the excessive use of social networking sites, in addition to the withdrawal symptoms, such as restlessness, compulsion, anxiety of missing etc. A huge number of researches have been conducted concerning the causes and impact of social media addiction. The present research is concerned with the examination of the contribution of attachment style and age in social media addiction. For this purpose 133 graduate students were taken by the method of convenient sampling. Data was collected by using Inventory for Attachment Style (IAS) and a prepared questionnaire for assessing social media addiction. The result of this study revealed that the individuals with insecure attachment were more vulnerable to fall the victim of social media addiction. Univariate ANOVA has shown that addicted and non-addicted social media users differed significantly with respect to attachment style ($F = 15.08$; $p < .01$). The correlation between attachment style and the Discriminant function suggested that insecurely attached individuals were more likely to be addicted of social networking sites, whereas securely attached individuals were less likely to be addicted of social media. Age of the participants was not found to be significant predictor.

Keywords: attachment style, insecure/secure attachment, social media addiction

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1. Introduction

It is not surprising in modern era to observe the ubiquitous use of the internet as an integral part of day-to-day life. One of the crucial uses of internet is to connect people with each other by providing easy access to different types of information. According to Soh and colleagues (2014), such type of social interaction based on easy access of information makes individuals vulnerable to be engaged in unhealthy and dysfunctional behavior. And such type of dysfunctional interaction among people through social networking sites, as stated by Kuss and Griffiths(2017), put them at the risk of getting addiction to social media. Such type of addiction is considered a form of behavioral addiction and comparable to substance addiction (Griffiths2005), and characterized by a compulsive behavioral pattern, significantly reduced interest in any other activity and withdrawal symptoms as well (Soper and Mille, 1983).

Brown (1993) and Griffiths (1996b,2005) have identified following six criteria in order to diagnose social media addiction.

- 1. Salience:** Referring to the exclusive use of social media with increased cognitive and behavioral absorption.
- 2. Mood modification:**Referring to consistent change in one's mood state by following the online interaction on social media.
- 3. Tolerance:**Referring to the increased use of social media in order to get the desired mood effects.
- 4. Withdrawal symptoms:**Experiencing physiological and psychological reaction of restlessness, confusion, anxiety when discontinuing the use of social media.
- 5. Conflict:**The state of compromise between social media use and resulting adverse effects (inflicted interpersonal relationships, occupational and educational activities).
- 6. Relapse:** Re-gaining addictive behaviors after a period of abstinence.

In the scientific investigations of behavioral addiction have revealed a number of factors related to such addictive behavior. Many of them have focused on personality traits. A growing body of research focused on the impact of attachment style also as its influence on addiction seems to be crucial logically. Flores (2004) stated clearly that addiction as an attachment disorder.

2. Attachment and Addictive Behavior

Attachment, described as the emotional bond between infant and caregiver is considered to set a pattern of interaction in the form of a script to be utilized for future close relationships. According to John Bowlby (1969/1982), the human beings are bequeathed with an innate psycho-biological system which works like as a regulatory system helping them to regulate their affective state (Flores2004), at every stage of development. Having experiences of any sort of deprivation in the early life can lead an individual to look for something in the external world in order to compensate that missing part. As in the case of drug use which help such deprived people to fulfill their deficiency in the intimate relationship, as stated by Flores(2004). Estevez and his colleagues(2017) claimed the same thing to happen in the case of non-substance-related addictions. The professional, who are engaged in addiction treatment, considered that a healthy attachment between infant and parents results into inoculation to the addictive behavior. As Flores (2004) also clearly accepted that the addiction related problem is the result of an unhealthy attachment. Attachment theory seems to have the efficacy of explaining the specific aspects of social media engagement. For example, attachment styles appear to influence time spent online and they can be used as frameworks to understand the reasons that drive social media usage. Risky behaviors have already been associated with attachment styles, and could represent a risk and predictive factor for addictive behaviors (Flores2004).

Addiction is usually considered as a disorder in self-regulation, and addicted individuals are characterized by unsuccessful attempts at self-repair (Flores2004). Various studies demonstrated the significance of emotional aspects in addictive behavior (Khantzian, 1990; Southam-Gerow & Kendall, 2002). As the ways of regulating emotions involve cognitive effort in order to focus or shift the attentional process, to monitor arousal-level, and to actively use the cognitive strategies to minimize unpleasant stimuli as well (Rothbart et. al., 2000), cognitive emotion regulation plays a crucial role in alcohol and other drug addictive behavior. Cole et. al. (1994) also found in their study that *emotional self-control* contributes in dealing with negative emotions such as sadness or anger by reducing an excessive level of arousal.

In their study Nikmanesh, Kazemi and Khosravi, (2015) found that loneliness and the difficulties in regulation of subsequent emotion significantly predict the risk of drug abuse among students of Universities of Sistan and Baluchestan, southeastern of Iran. Studies also indicated clearly that poor regulation of emotional response is positively related with substance-use among adolescents and adults (Bickel, Odum, & Madden, 1999; Petry, Bickel, & Arnett, 1998; Simons, Oliver, Gaher, Ebel, & Brummels, 2005). Patock-Peckham, Cheon, Balhorn, and Nagoshi (2001) also showed by conducting a study on college students that good self-control is inversely related to alcohol-related problems. Poor emotional regulation explains also the difficulty in recovering from interpersonal provocation or tendency to ruminate about sad experiences (Derryberry & Rothbart, 1997; Gillom et al., 2002). Loneliness, anger, fear, disappointment, guilt, boredom and excessive joy are the emotions which can be dangerous for people in recovery. In a study carried out by Valizadeh et al.(2017) it was proposed that the individuals with avoidant and ambivalent attachment styles are at higher risk for addictive behaviors, whether it's related to substance or non-substance abuse. As the result, insecure attachment, it can easily be explained how dysfunctional and negative emotions including maladaptive coping strategies and poor social skills, increase the risk of substance or non-substance addictive behavior (Dozier et al.1998).

3. Objectives of the Study

Following objectives have been formulated for the present study:

1. To test the probability of falling victim of social media addiction among insecurely attached individuals.
2. To test the probability of falling victim of social media addiction among securely attached individuals.
3. To test the difference between addicted and non-addicted individuals of social media due to age.

4. Hypotheses of the Study

Following objectives have been formulated for the present study:

1. Insecurely attached individuals have greater probability of developing Social media addiction.
2. Securely attached individuals have less probability of developing Social media addiction.
3. There is no difference between addicted and non-addicted individuals of social media due to age.

5. Method

Participants: For this study 133 graduate students, studying in colleges of Amroha, were selected to administer the social media addiction inventory and attachment style inventory. Many of the respondents were requested to fill the inventory through online mode on various social media platforms.

Variable: The variables, included in this study are as follow:

Independent Variables: Attachment Style (Secure/Insecure) and Age

Dependent Variable: Social Media Addiction

Used Tools for Data Collection: In order to collect the relevant and required data two inventories were used, which are as follow:

1. Inventory for Attachment Style (IAS): The construction of this inventory for measuring attachment was based on theories of Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters and Wall (1978) and Bartholomew (1990). The four subscale of this inventory measure the four styles of attachment: secure, anxious, dismissive, and fearful with 24 items (6 items for each sub-scale). The alpha-coefficients for the four subscales were .89, .78, .71, and .74 respectively. Its test-retest reliability ranges from .54 to .74. The validity of this test was found to be moderate to high.

2. Questionnaire for Social Networking Sites Addiction: This twelve-item questionnaire, prepared by Beth Morrissey MLIS for the assessment of addictive behavior for social networking sites, was downloaded from his web page for Teen Issues. The face validity of this questionnaire appears to be quite satisfactory. The items of this questionnaire has been given in appendix-I.

6. Results & Discussion

Table-1 shows the group statistics for the dependent variable, that is social media addiction with respect to attachment style and age.

The table reveals that while the overall mean score on attachment is 82.75 of 133 participants (mean age 23.12), the mean score of non-addicted participants (N= 102, average age 23 years and 7 months) on attachment style is 85.05 (SD= 11.50), as compared to the mean the of 75.19 (SD= 14.97) on attachment for those who were addicted (N= 31, average age 21 years and 5 months). As on the continuum of secure and insecure attachment higher score indicate secure attachment and lower score indicate insecure attachment. It means that as the individuals move towards the secure end of the continuum, the mean scores on social media addiction comes down. And as the move away from the secure end of the continuum their score raises on social media addiction scale. High score on social media addiction scale represents the tendency of addiction.

Table 1: Showing Group Statistics

Social Media Addiction		Mean	Std. Deviation	Valid N (listwise)	
				Unweighted	Weighted
Non-addicted	Attachment Style	85.0588	11.50447	102	102.000
	Age	23.6765	21.33846	102	102.000
Addicted	Attachment Style	75.1935	14.97424	31	31.000
	Age	21.4194	4.92459	31	31.000
	Attachment Style	82.7594	13.02919	133	133.000
	Age	23.1504	18.83682	133	133.000

When the discriminant analysis (see table-2) was performed with attachment style and age as independent variables to test the significance of difference between two groups of addiction and non-addiction, with a total number of 133 cases, it was found that addicted and non-addicted individuals differ significantly on attachment style only ($F= 15.08$, $p < .01$), not on age. The value of chi-square (14.45, $p < .01$) demonstrated that there is a significant difference between addicted and non-addicted individuals with respect to predictor variable. The correlation between predictor variables and the discriminant function suggested that attachment style is the best predictor of possibility of being addicted to the social media.

Table 2: Showing Univariate ANOVA in the Discriminant Analysis

	Wilks' Lambda	F	df1	df2	Sig.
Attachment Style	.897	15.084	1	131	.000
Age	.997	.340	1	131	.561

Table 3: Showing Wilk's Lambda and Chi-square for the difference Between Addicted and Non-addicted Social Users

Test of Function(s)	Wilks' Lambda	Chi-square	df	Sig.
1	.895	14.456	2	.001

Table 4: Showing Classification Results

		Social Media Addicted	Predicted Group Membership		Total
			No	Yes	
Original	Count	No	74	28	102
		Yes	13	18	31
	Percentage	No	72.5	27.5	100.0
		Yes	41.9	58.1	100.0

By observing the summary table it can be said that overall discriminant function successfully predicted outcome for 69.2 percent of the cases. The correct prediction for 72.5 percent of social media users could be made that they were not to be addicted. Because in 74 cases, we found that discriminant function correctly predicted that the social media users would not turn to be addicted and they didn't too, and in 18 cases users were predicted to be addicted and they did. Therefore it can be conclude that 58.1 percent of the users were correctly predicted to fall into the grasp of social media addiction. However 41.9 percent of the users were predicted not to be addicted, but they were addicted, and 27.5 percent of the users were predicted to be addicted but they were not addicted.

Following graph picture represent the distribution of non-addicted and addicted social media users.

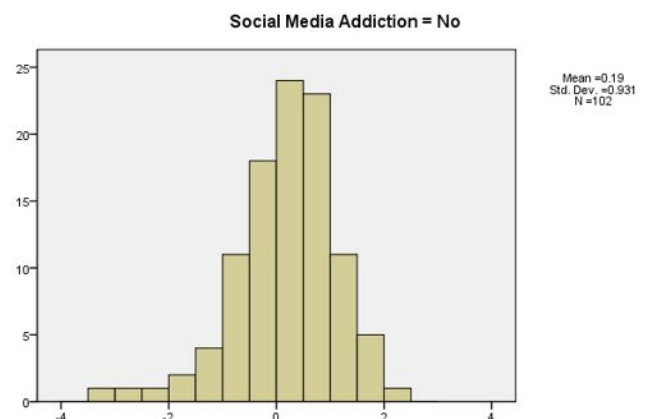


Figure 1: Canonical Discriminant Function 1

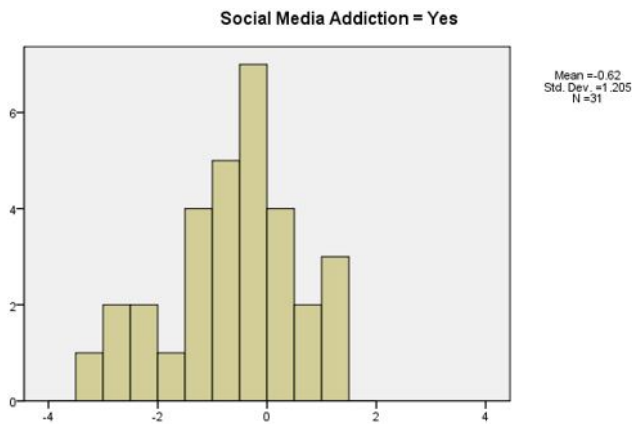


Figure 2: Canonical Discriminant Function 2

7. Discussion & Conclusion

As the result of the present study has been found in the line of previous findings indicating the connection of social media addiction goes back to earlier experiences and interaction of individuals with their primary caregiver. Findings have demonstrated that the children brought up in a well-functioning family tends to develop a healthy personality (Senormanci et al.2014), and less likely to develop addictive behavior in comparison of those children who experienced maladaptive emotional interaction with their primary caregivers or family members (Senormanci et al.2014; Estevez et al.2017). In the present research study results support that the addictive behavior of social media users significantly vary along with the movement on the continuum of secure and insecure attachment. It means it is possible to predict the possibility of acquiring the addictive behavior for the social media users. In the present research it has been found that in 58.1 percent cases social media users can be correctly predicted for being addicted of social networking sites. In conclusion it can be said that the addiction, and more specifically social media addiction, can stem from experiences during infancy or childhood. Overall, the results of the studies evaluated provide support for the association between social media addiction and secure/insecure attachment. Depending on the type of attachment (secure or insecure), individuals experience social media in different ways (Oldmeadow et al.2013). Some other studies conducted on effect of childhood trauma (such as physical and sexual abuse) on internet addiction also support the findings of present study (Odacı and Çıkrıkçı2014; Schimmenti et al.2014). The difference between addicted and non-addicted users of social media was not found due to the age of users.

So it can be conclude in this study that age does not contribute to the addictive behavior, specifically for social networking sites.

As the attachment styles can significantly predict social media addiction, and the findings indicate that a stronger parental attachment is related to lower level of motivation to use the social media as a mean to escape from everyday problems, as proposed by Soh et al.2014). Attachment to parents or substitute caregiver fulfills children's intimacy needs, by giving them what they are looking and willing for, and helps them to avoid escapism.

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