Social Media Behaviors and Psychosocial Predictors of Social Media Addiction

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INTRODUCTION

Social media addiction is an ongoing problem. Maladaptive social and personal factors associated with addiction can include:

- Preoccupation with social media
- Withdrawal symptoms
- Replacing important activities (sleep, eating) with social media
- Escape from problems (problem coping)
- Loss of relationships

Prior research has identified several independent factors related to social media addiction:

- Desire for belongingness
- Lack of conscientiousness
- High levels of extraversion
- Low self-esteem
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Stress

METHODS

Participants
This study included 504 undergraduate students at Texas State University who completed an online survey via Qualtrics.

Measures
Demographics: Age, Gender, Race/Ethnicity
Social Media Behaviors: Number of friends/followers/following and amount of time per day
Psychosocial Factors:
- Perceived Stress Scale (PSS)
- Interpersonal Support Evaluation (ISE-12)
- Interal Personal Reactivity Index (IRI): contains 4 subscales: Perspective-Taking, Fantasy, Empathic Concern, Personal Distress
- Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale
- Big-5 Personality Inventory: measures Openness, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, and Neuroticism
- Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ): Validated self-report measure used to evaluate the presence of Axis I Psychopathology (Somatization Disorder, Major Depressive Disorders, Panic Disorder and Anxiety Disorder)

Outcome Variable: Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS)

Statistical Analysis
Univariate statistical analyses were used to assess the relationship between the BSMAS scores and the individual predictors. Pearson and Spearman correlations were used for continuous predictors and Independent t-tests and ANOVAs were used for categorical predictors. A Hierarchical Multivariate Linear Regression was used to identify the key social media behaviors and psychosocial factors most associated with social media addiction. The alpha level was set at p<0.05.

RESULTS

Univariate Comparisons identified the following as significant predictors of Social Media Addiction:

- Females
- Younger age
- Higher levels of Intensity on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat
- More friends/followers/following connections
- More hours per day use of social media
- Higher Need for Participating on Social Media
- More likely to compare themselves to others they perceive to be better or worse off than themselves
- Less concordance with Online-Offline Identity
- Higher perceived stress
- Lower perceived social support
- Lower levels of Perspective-Taking and Empathic Concern on Empathy Scale; Higher levels of Personal Distress on Empathy Scale
- Lower Self-Esteem
- Lower Agreeableness and Conscientiousness
- Higher Neuroticism on Big-5 Personality Scale
- Presence of Axis I Pathology: Major Depression, Anxiety Disorder, Somatization Disorder, and Panic Disorder
- Lower Quality of life

Hierarchical Multivariate Linear Regression identified these factors as most significantly related to Social Media Addiction, when all factors are considered simultaneously:

- Greater Facebook and Snapchat Intensity
- High Need for Participating in Social Media
- More likely to compare themselves to others better and/or worse off than themselves
- Higher perceived stress
- Lower Empathic Concern
- Lower Conscientiousness
- Presence of Major Depressive Disorder

IMPLICATIONS

The results from this study highlight social media behaviors and psychosocial factors associated with high levels of social media addiction. Using this information will help us to develop prevention and intervention strategies that can target these predictors, which, in turn, may help reduce social media addiction and its harmful effects on both the individual and society.

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