

Social media and health: a critical review

Abstract

Social networking sites have been frequented by internet users. Unfortunately engaging in social media has been associated with delinquent behaviors such as cyber crime, security threat, and poor academic performance. Online database literature has revealed an increased prevalence of health hazards including musculoskeletal, visual, auditory, and psychological disorders along with social and familial disharmony among regular users of social media in comparison to their non-regular user counterparts. Data have revealed an increased presence of low self-esteem and poor wellbeing among regular users of social media. This review has focused on the posture, duration of engagement, physical and behavioral health hazards of regular users of social networking sites. A comprehensive rehabilitation curriculum (postural training, health education, and awareness program) was an effective strategy for prevention and minimization of health hazards of regular social media users.

Keywords: social media, social media disorders, health hazards and musculoskeletal disorders

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Introduction

Social media has involved a series of website and application designed to allow people to share content quickly, efficiently, and in real time. Excessive uses may be hazardous for one's health especially for students and members of the young productive age group. Rapid development of social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and Myspace are types of online social networking leading to profound changes in the way of people communication and interaction. These sites brought numerous advantages in terms of increasing connectivity, sharing ideas, and online learning. Conversely, social media influences human behavior leading to psychological problems. Studies have showed that children and adolescence spending long time on social media may exhibit symptoms of depression and low self-esteem.¹

Facebook has been the most popular type of social media utilized in modern society with more than 2.2 billion active users.² Billions of people who have actively utilized social media can help to connect the whole world in a chain. Excessive uses of social media for enjoyment may be associated with depression and anxiety.³ Social media gained popularity among the younger age group in order to enhance relationship building, passing of time, and mental health support. Psychological distress and suicidal ideation unfortunately have been a common phenomenon of middle and high school children who excessively frequent social media networks.⁴

Excessive usage of the electronic media may negatively affect adolescent sleep patterns causing sleep displacement and affecting the sleep onset-latency as well as the dynamic function of the body.⁵ This addiction was analyzed throughout the global health community involving all genders especially the young and productive age group who have been more vulnerable to these digital issues.⁶ Excessive internet uses especially among young age groups in Asia, America, and Europe may be associated with the onset of developmental disorders requiring health education intervention.⁷

The Internet has been utilized as a tool to effectively take part in research, curriculum development, and academic achievement.⁸ Engaging in Social media has demonstrated positive effects involving communication, socializing, and psychological well-being. Conversely, internet addictive behavior has shown to strongly

associate with psychological disorders among adolescence including abnormal peer relations, conduct problems, hyperactivity, and symptoms of emotional disturbance.⁹ Although social networking sites have demonstrated the greatest advancement in information technology, excessive uses of internet impaired the academic achievement of students.

Although Facebook has been utilized by college students for educational goals and making friends excessive uses may lead to addiction.¹⁰ Irrational behavior may involve one's personal, family, academic, professional and social life.¹¹ High school students addicted to Facebook may manifest an abnormal mental health status, somatic symptoms, anxiety & insomnia, social dysfunction, severe depression and mood swings.^{12,13} Some students with Internet addiction have expressed symptoms of loneliness. Addictive usage of social networking sites is a major concern in higher education.¹⁴ Homicidal death, youth violence, gang violence, self-directed violence, abnormal youth mental health status, and poor academic performance are types of negative impacts in which the usage of social media has had on the youth.¹⁵ Youth violence and taunting gang rivalry have been identified as a relative new trend among youth utilizing social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.¹⁶ Social environment was responsible for the development of addicted disorders among young age groups.

Preventive interventions helped students afflicted with social media addiction.¹⁷ Health education and awareness programs have provided interventional strategies for Ghana's national policy and multiple stake holders of schools, colleges, universities, public libraries, and government agencies to help minimize the risk of social media addiction among Ghanaian young groups.¹⁷ Awareness programs helped to prevent the onset of this addiction while proper medication has effectively treated substance abuse.¹⁸ Chemical addiction is known to stimulate the hypothalamus and pituitary gland causing abnormally increased serum levels of cortisol, but it is unknown how social media addiction affects the blood level of this hormone.¹⁹ Cortisol which is a steroid hormone produced in the adrenal glands may have an inhibitory effect on nicotine, gambling, alcohol, and other types of addiction.²⁰ The pituitary gland stimulates cortisol secretion from the adrenal glands leading to increased serum cortisol levels which

are abnormally high in chemical addiction.²¹ But, in social media addiction, undergoing research is being performed to discover if this disorder leads to an abnormal blood level of cortisol.^{22,23}

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Conflict of interest

Authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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