



Social Media Addiction and Mental Health among Adolescents: A Comprehensive Review of Prevalence, Psychological Consequences, and Intervention Strategies

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21542983>

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Abstract

Social media addiction has become one of the most pressing and rapidly escalating public health issues in our digital era. Its impact on the mental health, emotional growth, academic performance, and relationships of young people around the globe is both profound and far-reaching. This thorough review pulls together existing research on social media addiction in adolescents and young adults, exploring its definition, prevalence in both global and Indian contexts, psychological and physical effects, risk factors, and the underlying causes. It also looks at how these issues can differ by gender and highlights effective intervention strategies. By analyzing peer-reviewed studies published from 2000 to 2023, the review uncovers key themes, findings, and theoretical frameworks that have influenced this field, while also critically assessing what we currently know about social media addiction and its effects on young people's well-being. The review wraps up by pointing out significant gaps in the literature and suggesting future research paths, clinical practices, educational policies, and public health strategies to tackle the social media addiction crisis among youth in India. The findings emphasize the urgent need for coordinated, evidence-based, and culturally aware approaches to address social media addiction at individual, institutional, and societal levels.

Keywords: Social media addiction, adolescent mental health, psychological well-being, behavioral addiction, cognitive behavioral therapy, digital media, Internet addiction, India, gender differences, intervention

1. Introduction

The twenty-first century has brought about a remarkable shift in how we socialize, all thanks to the Internet and the explosion of social media platforms. These changes have reshaped the way people-especially teens and young adults-communicate, express themselves, build relationships, seek out information, and even shape their identities. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, YouTube, Snapchat, and TikTok have become the go-to spaces for young people to connect socially, providing them with incredible opportunities for creative expression, peer interaction, and access to a wealth of information and entertainment (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017) ^[15]. In India, where there are over 700 million Internet users and the largest youth population in the world, this social media boom has hit particularly hard and fast. The sharp drop in mobile data prices and the widespread availability of affordable smartphones have made social media accessible to adolescents in urban, semi-

urban, and rural areas alike, all at a speed that has far outpaced the development of necessary public health awareness, digital literacy programs, and mental health support systems (Prabhakaran *et al.*, 2016; Manjunatha, 2013) ^[21, 19].

Social media definitely has its perks - it helps us connect with others, provides valuable information and educational resources, amplifies voices that often go unheard, and fosters communities where people can support one another. However, it's important to recognize that these same platforms are designed to keep us hooked by tapping into our psychological weaknesses. This includes the teenage desire for social approval, the anxiety of missing out, and the way we can become addicted to the unpredictable rewards that come with social media use. For many teens, this leads to a cycle of obsessive and compulsive engagement with social media, which has been labelled in various ways, such as social media addiction, problematic

social media use, or social media disorder. This kind of behaviour can seriously disrupt their academic, social, emotional, and personal lives, much like the effects seen with substance use disorders and other behavioural addictions.

The growing recognition of social media addiction as a serious issue has sparked a surge of academic research over the last ten years. Scholars from various fields-like psychology, psychiatry, public health, communication studies, and education-have been busy documenting its prevalence, psychological effects, neurobiological factors, risk elements, and impacts across different groups and cultures. Yet, even with this wealth of international research, there's still a noticeable lack of studies focusing on social media addiction among Indian adolescents. Moreover, translating these global findings into culturally relevant prevention strategies, therapeutic approaches, and public health policies tailored for India has been a slow and insufficient process. This review seeks to fill that gap by offering a thorough overview of the current literature on social media addiction and its effects on adolescent mental health, especially in the Indian context. It will also highlight the key implications of this research for future studies, clinical practices, educational policies, and public health initiatives in India.

2. Defining and Conceptualising Social Media Addiction

2.1 Definitions and Conceptual Frameworks

The way we define and understand social media addiction has sparked quite a bit of discussion among scholars. This debate ties into larger controversies in the addiction field regarding where to draw the line on what constitutes an addiction and how we should classify certain behaviors as addictive (Griffiths, 2005; Walker, 2016) ^[27, 12]. The most commonly referenced and well-supported definition describes social media addiction as an obsessive or excessive use of social media platforms that negatively impacts various aspects of life, including academic performance, social interactions, and personal well-being. This can show up in behaviors like compulsively scrolling through feeds, choosing online connections over face-to-face relationships, and feeling withdrawal symptoms when access to social media is cut off (Van den Eijnden *et al.*, 2016) ^[25]. This definition is based on Griffiths' (2005) ^[12] components model of addiction, which outlines six key elements that all behavioral addictions share-salience, mood modification, tolerance, withdrawal, conflict, and relapse-and applies them specifically to how we engage with social media.

The Social Media Disorder Scale, created by Van den Eijnden and colleagues in 2016 ^[25], measures social media addiction through nine diagnostic criteria. These criteria are adapted from the American Psychiatric Association's suggestions for Internet Gaming Disorder and include things like being overly preoccupied with social media, experiencing withdrawal symptoms, needing to spend more time on it to feel satisfied, and trying unsuccessfully to cut back on usage. Other signs include losing interest in activities you once enjoyed, continuing to use social media despite facing problems, lying to others about your usage, using it to escape negative feelings, and risking relationships or opportunities because of it. This scale has gained traction

in research on social media addiction across various countries and cultures, showing strong psychometric properties such as high internal consistency and good validity. It's also linked to several negative psychosocial outcomes, including feelings of loneliness, depression, and poor academic performance (Van den Eijnden *et al.*, 2016) ^[25]. It's worth mentioning that social media addiction isn't officially recognized as a clinical disorder in the DSM-5 or the ICD-11. There's still a lively debate among experts about whether the evidence we have is enough to classify it as a separate clinical issue (Walker, 2016; Kuss & Griffiths, 2017) ^[27, 15]. Nevertheless, the growing body of research highlighting its prevalence, psychological effects, neurobiological factors, and how it responds to treatment has led many in the field to argue that social media addiction fits the criteria for a behavioral addiction. They believe it deserves the same clinical recognition and therapeutic focus as other established behavioral addictions (Griffiths, 2005; Andreassen *et al.*, 2016) ^[12, 2].

2.2 Distinguishing Problematic from Non-Problematic Use

When it comes to social media addiction, there's an important distinction to make. We need to differentiate between heavy or frequent use that doesn't really cause any major issues and the kind of social media use that's genuinely addictive. The latter is marked by a loss of control, compulsive behavior, and serious negative impacts on various aspects of life (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017) ^[15]. This distinction matters a lot because most teens who use social media-no matter how much time they spend on it-aren't actually addicted and don't face significant problems from their usage. The real clinical importance of social media addiction lies in its focus on that small group of users who engage in compulsive and harmful behaviors. By honing in on these individuals, we can better direct prevention and intervention efforts where they're truly needed, rather than labeling the typical social media habits of most teens as problematic (Van den Eijnden *et al.*, 2016; Andreassen *et al.*, 2016) ^[25, 2].

3. Prevalence of Social Media Addiction

3.1 Global Prevalence

The rates of social media addiction can really differ from one study to another and among different groups of people. This variation often comes down to the tools and criteria used to measure addiction, the characteristics of the people being studied, and the cultural and social settings where social media is used. Generally, estimates suggest that about 5% to 15% of adolescents and young adults struggle with problematic social media use, especially in studies that employ validated assessment tools. Interestingly, higher rates are often found in clinical or high-risk groups (Andreassen *et al.*, 2016; Van den Eijnden *et al.*, 2016) ^[2, 25]. For instance, a significant study by Andreassen *et al.* (2016) ^[2], which included over 23,500 participants, revealed that around 5% could be classified as social media addicts based on a validated assessment. This tendency was particularly pronounced among women and younger individuals. Additionally, Younes *et al.* (2016) ^[32] discovered that male university students in Lebanon showed even higher rates of potential social media addiction, underscoring how cultural

and demographic factors can shape these prevalence estimates.

3.2 Indian Prevalence

The data on social media addiction in India is somewhat scarce, but it consistently highlights a troubling trend: high and rising rates of problematic social media use among teens and young adults. One of the most thorough studies on this issue was conducted by Prabhakaran *et al.* (2016) ^[21], who looked into Internet and social media addiction among school-going teenagers using the Internet Addiction Test. Their findings were quite alarming, revealing that addiction rates could be as high as 98.9% for males and 8.7% for females in certain groups. However, these extreme numbers might be influenced by methodological challenges, such as varying cut-off thresholds across different subgroups.

More rigorous studies that employed validated screening tools have shown more moderate, yet still concerning, prevalence rates. For instance, Malhotra *et al.* (2014) ^[18] discovered that most young Indian social media users spent an average of 3.6 hours daily on social networking sites—a number that has likely surged since then, especially with the rapid increase in smartphone usage and mobile data availability in India over the past decade. A recent study in Chhattisgarh found that 50% of the adolescents surveyed met the criteria for social media addiction according to the Social Media Addiction Checklist. While this figure reflects the specific sampling method rather than a random population-based approach, it aligns with the high rates of problematic social media use reported in other Indian research, highlighting the scale and urgency of this issue in the country (Chouhan & Joshi, 2016) ^[8].

4. Psychological Consequences of Social Media Addiction

4.1 Depression, Anxiety, and General Mental Health

The psychological effects of social media addiction are well-documented, with depression, anxiety, and overall mental health issues being the most prominent. A growing body of research from various countries and methods consistently shows strong links between social media addiction and these negative outcomes. For instance, Andreassen *et al.* (2016) ^[2] conducted a large-scale study that revealed significant connections between addictive social media use and symptoms of depression, anxiety, and obsessive-compulsive disorder.

They found that those addicted to social media reported much higher rates of psychiatric symptoms compared to those who weren't addicted, across several diagnostic categories. Similarly, Twenge *et al.* (2018) ^[23] highlighted alarming increases in depressive symptoms, suicide-related behaviors, and suicide rates among American teens after 2010, directly associating these trends with the rise of smartphones and social media. This sparked considerable public and academic discussions about how digital media might be impacting the mental health of today's youth. In Scotland, Woods and Scott (2016) ^[29] discovered that social media use among adolescents was closely linked to poor sleep quality, anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem, with late-night social media activity being particularly harmful. In India, Awasthi and Verma (2017) ^[3] found that students addicted to the Internet faced significantly more mental

health challenges than their non-addicted peers, with female addicts experiencing even greater difficulties than males. This highlights the unique psychological toll that social media addiction can have on young girls in India.

4.2 Psychological Well-Being and Life Satisfaction

The effects of social media addiction on our mental health and overall life satisfaction have become a hot topic in recent studies. Researchers have consistently found a strong negative link between heavy or compulsive social media use and how happy people feel, their life satisfaction, and their overall positive emotions. For instance, Twenge and Campbell (2018) ^[23] carried out a massive study involving over 40,000 kids and teens in the U.S. They discovered that more screen time, including social media, was tied to lower psychological well-being across various aspects, showing a clear pattern where increased usage led to a decline in well-being. Similarly, Primack *et al.* (2017) ^[22] found that young adults who spent the most time on social media were about three times more likely to feel socially isolated compared to those who used it less often. This paradox suggests that platforms meant to foster social connections might actually intensify feelings of loneliness for their most engaged users. In another study by Zinna and Thanusri (2018) ^[33] in India, they found a significant negative correlation between social media addiction and happiness, indicating that chasing social validation and status online can seriously impact users' well-being. In our current investigation, we found that social media addicts in Chhattisgarh had a mean Well-Being score of 41.25 on a scale of 20 to 100, which was significantly lower than the 76.90 score of non-addicts. The effect of Addiction Status accounted for a staggering 87.7% of the variance in Well-Being scores, highlighting social media addiction as one of the most serious threats to the psychological well-being of adolescents documented in the research.

4.3 Emotional Expression and Emotional Maturity

The effects of social media addiction on how we express emotions and develop emotional maturity haven't been studied as much as its links to depression and anxiety. However, the research we do have shows a clear trend: compulsive use of social media can really hinder our ability to build healthy emotional skills. Instead of engaging in face-to-face interactions that help us grow emotionally, we often find ourselves relying on superficial, text-based chats and emojis. This kind of communication doesn't give us the chance to truly express our feelings or connect with others on a deeper level (Chouhan & Bhatnagar, 2002; Bashir & Ahmad, 2017) ^[7, 4]. The way social media addiction stifles emotional expression is closely tied to the wider range of psychological challenges seen in addicted teens. Being able to express emotions authentically and adaptively is crucial for building relationships, maintaining their quality, and achieving overall psychological well-being (Awasthi & Verma, 2017) ^[3]. In a recent study, social media addicts in Chhattisgarh scored significantly lower on the Emotional Expression Scale compared to non-addicts ($M = 30.15$ vs $M = 60.00$). The correlation between Social Media Addiction and emotional expression was the strongest of all the variables examined ($r = -.899$), indicating that disrupted emotional expression might be one of the most significant

and widespread psychological effects of social media addiction among Indian adolescents.

4.4 Body Image and Self-Esteem

The effects of social media addiction on body image and self-esteem have become a hot topic in research, especially when it comes to how social comparison plays a role in amplifying the negative impacts of social media on how adolescents view their own looks and self-worth. Fardouly *et al.* (2015)^[11] provided solid experimental proof that using Facebook can lead to body image dissatisfaction and a negative mood among young women, with these feelings often fueled by social comparison. Chua and Chang (2016)^[9] highlighted how Instagram can intensify appearance-related social comparison and anxiety about self-presentation among teenage girls in Singapore, which can seriously affect their self-confidence and body satisfaction. Vogel *et al.* (2014)^[26] showed that when people are exposed to social media profiles of attractive and successful peers, their self-evaluations and self-esteem take a hit compared to when they see profiles of average peers.

These insights are particularly relevant in India, where the global beauty ideals showcased on visually-driven social media often clash with traditional Indian cultural standards of beauty, creating a complicated and potentially harmful environment for social comparison among Indian adolescent girls (Malhotra *et al.*, 2014)^[18]. In our study, social media addicts in Chhattisgarh reported a significantly worse body image than non-addicts ($M = 25.00$ vs $M = 47.85$), with both male and female addicts showing equally severe body image issues. This finding challenges the notion that social media's negative effects on body image are solely a female issue and highlights that adolescent social media addicts, regardless of gender, are at risk of body image-related harm.

4.5 Death Anxiety and Existential Well-Being

The link between social media addiction and death anxiety is a fascinating yet often overlooked area that sheds light on the psychological effects of compulsive social media use. When users scroll through their feeds, they're constantly bombarded with a stream of content related to mortality—think news about deaths, accidents, violence, and natural disasters, as well as memorial pages and grief-related posts. This unfiltered exposure can really amplify young people's worries about death and existence, leading to heightened levels of anxiety (Krylova, 2017)^[14]. Research by Evren *et al.* (2014)^[10] indicates that Internet addiction in teens is closely tied to thoughts of suicide and self-harm, hinting that the death-related concerns stemming from excessive digital media use can, in severe cases, lead to harmful thoughts and actions. In a recent study, social media addicts in Chhattisgarh reported significantly higher levels of Death Anxiety compared to their non-addicted peers ($M = 45.00$ vs $M = 23.70$), with female addicts showing even more pronounced anxiety ($M = 48.30$). This aligns with the idea that social media addiction can create existential distress by increasing awareness of mortality and fostering death-related thoughts among vulnerable adolescents (Burke *et al.*, 2010)^[6].

4.6 Academic Performance

The effects of social media addiction on students' academic

performance have been well-documented in various studies and across different cultures. Research consistently shows that excessive use of social media can lead to decreased focus on studies, more procrastination, lower motivation to learn, and ultimately, poorer academic results (Lan & Lee, 2012; Evren *et al.*, 2014)^[16, 10]. For instance, Manjunatha (2013)^[19] discovered that using social networking sites significantly harmed the academic performance of Indian college students. Additionally, Malhotra *et al.* (2014)^[18] reported that Indian teenagers spend an average of 3.6 hours a day on social media, which directly cuts into their study time and academic involvement. In this study, there was a moderate negative correlation between academic performance and Social Media Addiction ($r = -.556$, $p < .001$), while a moderate positive correlation was found with five positive psychological outcomes. This highlights the direct and indirect negative effects of social media addiction on the academic success of adolescents, emphasizing how academic performance can both result from and influence social media use among Indian youth.

5. Risk Factors and Etiological Mechanisms

5.1 Psychological Risk Factors

The psychological factors that can lead to social media addiction include things like low self-esteem, high social anxiety, fear of missing out (FOMO), neuroticism, narcissism, and a strong desire for social validation and approval (Andreassen *et al.*, 2016; Kuss & Griffiths, 2017)^[2, 15]. When someone has low self-esteem, they can become especially susceptible to the addictive nature of social media, which provides instant and measurable feedback through likes, comments, and followers. This can give a temporary but significant boost to their self-worth and social identity, leading to a reliance on online validation that can spiral into addictive behavior. FOMO, the nagging worry that others are having more exciting experiences, acts as both a trigger and a result of social media addiction. It drives people to compulsively check their feeds to stay connected and feel included, while also being fueled by the constant comparison to others' seemingly better lives online (Van den Eijnden *et al.*, 2016)^[25].

Research by Lyvers *et al.* (2016)^[17] highlighted that frontal impulsivity—a trait linked to struggles with emotional regulation, self-control, and decision-making—was a key predictor of Internet addiction in young adults. This suggests that the emotional and self-regulatory challenges tied to impulsivity can make individuals more vulnerable to the enticing features of social media. Additionally, Wu *et al.* (2013)^[30] found that impulsivity and the expectation of positive outcomes were linked to addictive behaviors on social networking sites among young Chinese smartphone users, while a sense of Internet self-efficacy was negatively correlated. This indicates that strategies aimed at reducing impulsivity, adjusting outcome expectations, and boosting self-efficacy could be particularly effective in cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) programs designed to tackle social media addiction.

5.2 Social and Environmental Risk Factors

Social risk factors contributing to social media addiction include things like peer pressure, social norms that encourage heavy use of social media, and a lack of proper

parental supervision and monitoring of teens' online activities (Malhotra *et al.*, 2014; Prabhakaran *et al.*, 2016)^[18, 21]. The pressure to keep an active online presence, jump on social media trends, and quickly respond to messages and notifications can create a strong social pull for teens, making it hard to resist and often leading to compulsive use, even for those who are aware of its downsides. Research has shown that parental supervision plays a crucial role in protecting against social media addiction in India. For instance, Malhotra *et al.* (2014)^[18] found that the level of parental control significantly affected how much time kids spent on social media daily. Similarly, our current study found that higher parental supervision was linked to lower levels of social media addiction severity ($\beta = -.211, p < .001$) in the multiple regression analysis.

On the environmental side, factors like the easy access to affordable smartphones and mobile internet, along with the design features of social media platforms—such as infinite scrolling, push notifications, algorithm-driven content, and gamification—are all crafted to keep users engaged and glued to their screens. Additionally, the broader cultural shift towards increasing digitalization normalizes and even celebrates heavy social media use as a sign of social relevance and connection (Van den Eijnden *et al.*, 2016; Andreassen *et al.*, 2016)^[25, 21].

When it comes to social media, platform-specific factors play a crucial role. Take Instagram, for example—it's particularly linked to addictive usage and negative psychological effects, especially among adolescent girls. This is largely due to its focus on appearance-related social comparisons, the way users curate their self-presentation, and the algorithm's tendency to showcase idealized images of beauty and lifestyle (Fardouly *et al.*, 2015; Chua & Chang, 2016)^[11, 9].

6. Gender Differences in Social Media Addiction

The link between gender and social media addiction is quite intricate, with research revealing notable differences in how each gender experiences and manifests this addiction. For instance, a study by Andreassen *et al.* (2016)^[2] highlighted that women were significantly more likely than men to be identified as social media addicts in a large-scale study conducted in Norway. The researchers suggested that this trend stems from women's tendency to use social media primarily for social connections, emotional support, and self-presentation—factors that are more closely associated with addictive behaviors compared to the information-seeking and gaming interests that often dominate male users. On the flip side, other research has indicated that men may experience higher rates of Internet and social media addiction, especially when gaming and information-seeking are included in the mix. This suggests that the findings regarding gender prevalence can vary significantly based on the specific tools and activities being assessed (Prabhakaran *et al.*, 2016; Younes *et al.*, 2016)^[21, 32].

When it comes to the psychological effects of social media addiction, Awasthi and Verma (2017)^[3] found that in India, female Internet addicts reported more mental health challenges than their male peers, indicating that social media addiction might have a more severe psychological toll on girls and young women. Additionally, Chua and Chang (2016)^[9] pointed out that adolescent girls often face

intense pressure related to appearance and social comparison on these platforms, leading to significant issues with body image and self-esteem.

The current study revealed strong evidence that gender plays a significant role in how social media addiction affects psychological well-being. It turns out that female addicts experience more intense psychological challenges compared to their male counterparts across various factors, such as Well-Being, Death Anxiety, and the need for Psychological Counseling. Interestingly, female non-addicts tend to function just as well, if not better, than male non-addicts. This suggests a unique interaction where social media addiction seems to undermine the natural psychological strengths typically seen in adolescent girls (Patil, 2018)^[20].

7. Evidence-Based Interventions for Social Media Addiction

7.1 Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) has become the go-to psychological treatment for tackling social media and Internet addiction, thanks to a wealth of research backing its effectiveness. Studies have shown that CBT-based interventions can significantly cut down on compulsive social media use and enhance related psychological well-being (Beck, 2011; Young, 2011; Winkler *et al.*, 2013)^[5, 31, 28]. Young (2011)^[31] introduced the CBT-IA model, the first of its kind aimed specifically at Internet addiction. This model incorporates techniques like cognitive restructuring, behavioral activation, impulse control training, and social skills development to tackle the cognitive distortions and unhealthy coping mechanisms that fuel addictive Internet behavior. A meta-analysis by Winkler *et al.* (2013)^[28] revealed that CBT-based treatments consistently delivered the most robust results across various outcomes, leading to notable decreases in symptoms of Internet addiction, depression, anxiety, and social challenges.

In India, the Cognitive Behavioral Therapeutic Module (CBTM) explored in this study is a culturally tailored and validated CBT intervention aimed at adolescents in Chhattisgarh struggling with social media addiction. The CBTM consists of five key modules: Psychoeducation and Awareness, Cognitive Restructuring, Behavioral Strategies and Self-Regulation, Emotional Regulation and Coping Skills, and Relapse Prevention and Healthy Digital Habits. Remarkably, it has shown impressive therapeutic effects across all six psychological outcomes measured, with Cohen's *d* effect sizes ranging from 3.772 to 4.824. These figures not only surpass the large effect threshold but also represent some of the most significant therapeutic effects recorded in the global literature on social media and Internet addiction treatment (Beck, 2011; Winkler *et al.*, 2013)^[5, 28].

7.2 Other Intervention Approaches

While CBT-based interventions are recognized as the most effective for tackling social media addiction, other therapeutic methods have also shown potential in early research. For instance, Motivational Interviewing (MI) has been utilized both on its own and alongside CBT to address Internet and social media addiction. Initial findings indicate that MI can boost treatment motivation and readiness to change, especially for clients who feel uncertain about their habits (Winkler *et al.*, 2013)^[28]. Additionally, mindfulness-

based approaches-like Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)-have demonstrated effectiveness in managing the emotional ups and downs and avoidance behaviors that often accompany social media addiction. These methods help participants learn to observe and accept negative emotions without immediately turning to their smartphones as a coping strategy (Hayes *et al.*, 2011)^[13]. Furthermore, family-based interventions that involve parents in the treatment process-by educating them about social media addiction, offering guidance on monitoring and setting boundaries, and teaching communication skills-have also shown promise, particularly for younger adolescents, where parental involvement plays a crucial role in therapy (Malhotra *et al.*, 2014; Winkler *et al.*, 2013)^[18, 28].

7.3 Prevention Strategies

Prevention plays a vital role alongside treatment in tackling social media addiction within our public health efforts. A variety of prevention strategies have been suggested and put into action at individual, institutional, and societal levels, each with different levels of supporting evidence. One of the most recognized approaches is digital literacy education, which aims to arm young people with the knowledge, critical thinking skills, and self-regulation techniques they need to navigate social media safely and responsibly. This strategy is seen as essential for promoting well-being among the population (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017; Bashir & Ahmad, 2017)^[15, 4]. Additionally, parental education programs that offer practical advice on how to monitor their children's social media habits, set healthy boundaries, and discuss digital risks openly have shown promise in curbing adolescent social media use and its negative effects. This is especially true when these programs are paired with school-based digital literacy initiatives (Malhotra *et al.*, 2014; Prabhakaran *et al.*, 2016)^[18, 21]. Furthermore, screen time guidelines that provide research-backed recommendations for the appropriate amount of daily social media use for adolescents of various ages-similar to existing guidelines for physical activity and sleep-serve as an important policy tool for prevention on a larger scale (Twenge & Campbell, 2018; American College of Pediatricians, 2020)^[23, 1].

8. Social Media Addiction in India: Current Status and Future Directions

8.1 Current State of Research in India

Research into social media addiction in India has really picked up steam in recent years, but there are still some significant gaps. The current body of Indian literature has quite a few methodological issues - like relying on convenience samples, using assessment tools that aren't validated or culturally suitable, and employing cross-sectional research designs that make it hard to draw causal conclusions. Plus, there's a narrow focus on just a few psychological outcomes, which limits the quality, comparability, and real-world usefulness of the evidence we have (Bashir & Ahmad, 2017; Awasthi & Verma, 2017)^[4, 3]. Another concern is that most of the research is concentrated in major cities like Delhi, Mumbai, and Bangalore, leaving vast areas of the country - including states like Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and those in the northeast - largely unexamined, even though they have large

and rapidly growing youth populations online. It's crucial for the field to develop and validate assessment tools and therapeutic programs that are culturally relevant for Indian adolescents. Using Western tools and interventions without adapting them to the local context could lead to measurement bias and less effective therapy (Chouhan & Joshi, 2016)^[8].

8.2 Recommendations for Future Research

This review highlights several key areas for future research on social media addiction among Indian adolescents. There's an urgent need for longitudinal studies that track adolescents from early to late adolescence. This will help us understand the developmental paths of social media addiction, pinpoint critical times for preventive measures, and clarify the causal relationships between social media addiction and its psychological effects. We also need randomized controlled trials that use validated assessment tools, include active control groups, and have long-term follow-ups. This will provide solid evidence on the effectiveness and lasting impact of CBT-based and other therapeutic approaches for social media addiction in Indian youth. Additionally, neuroimaging studies that explore the brain's response to social media addiction and the neuroplastic changes brought about by CBT would greatly enhance our understanding of the biological mechanisms at play. Qualitative research, including in-depth interviews, focus groups, and ethnographic methods, is essential to enrich the quantitative data by offering detailed, context-rich insights into the experiences of Indian adolescents dealing with social media addiction. Finally, comparative studies across various Indian states, cultural groups, and socioeconomic backgrounds are necessary to determine how widely applicable current findings are and to uncover the cultural factors that influence the prevalence and psychological effects of social media addiction in different Indian settings (Malhotra *et al.*, 2014; Bashir & Ahmad, 2017)^[18, 4].

9. Implications for Policy and Practice

The insights shared in this article carry significant weight for clinical practice, educational policy, and public health in India. It's crucial for clinicians and school counselors to weave social media addiction screenings into their regular mental health evaluations for adolescents. They should also receive training in effective assessment and treatment methods-like Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and other CBT-inspired strategies-specifically for tackling social media addiction. Schools ought to roll out digital literacy programs, establish screen time guidelines, and foster parental involvement as part of a well-rounded approach to prevention. On a broader scale, national and state public health authorities need to create evidence-based recommendations for how adolescents should engage with social media. They should also invest in expanding mental health services for young people and collaborate with social media companies to make design changes that lessen the addictive nature of their platforms. Policymakers should think about implementing regulations that require platform operators to introduce tools for monitoring usage, controls for notifications, and age-appropriate content restrictions to shield young users from the more harmful aspects of social

media interaction (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017; Prabhakaran *et al.*, 2016; Bashir & Ahmad, 2017) ^[15, 21, 4].

10. Conclusion

Social media addiction has become one of the most pressing and rapidly escalating threats to the mental health, emotional growth, academic performance, and overall well-being of teenagers in India and around the globe. This review pulls together the current evidence on what social media addiction is, how common it is, its psychological effects, the risk factors involved, how it manifests differently across genders, and the interventions that have been proven to work. It underscores just how vast and serious this issue is, emphasizing the urgent need for coordinated, evidence-based, and culturally sensitive approaches at the individual, institutional, and societal levels. Numerous studies consistently show that social media addiction is linked to significantly poorer psychological outcomes - such as depression, anxiety, diminished well-being, emotional instability, negative body image, heightened death anxiety, and lower academic performance. This clearly highlights the clinical and public health importance of addressing this condition and the pressing need for effective solutions. The increasing evidence supporting the effectiveness of CBT-based interventions - including the CBTM specifically developed and validated for Indian adolescents in Chhattisgarh - brings real hope that the psychological damage caused by social media addiction can be both prevented and treated. It lays a solid empirical groundwork for creating scalable, culturally relevant, and easily accessible therapeutic programs that can reach the millions of Indian adolescents currently grappling with this issue, often without the recognition or support they need.

The issue of social media addiction isn't just a tech problem - it's a serious human crisis affecting the everyday lives of countless young people. Their mental health, growth paths, and future opportunities are being seriously compromised by platforms that take advantage of their weaknesses. Tackling this crisis calls for a united effort from researchers, healthcare professionals, educators, parents, lawmakers, and tech companies. We need to prioritize the well-being of young people in our approach to the digital age, treating it as a fundamental moral and public health issue, rather than an afterthought or a regulatory hassle. The evidence presented in this article shows that we have the knowledge and tools to make a difference - what we need now is the determination to act.

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