

Measuring the Level of Social Media Addiction Among University Students in Light of Certain Personal Variables:

A Field Study at the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences, University of Ghardaia

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Abstract

The present study aimed to investigate the level of social media addiction among university students in the Wilaya of Ghardaia, and to determine whether there are differences in addiction levels based on gender and academic discipline.

To answer the research questions, a descriptive methodology was employed. The study sample consisted of 95 students. Data were collected using the Social Media Addiction Scale developed by Basma Hussein Eid Younes (2016).

The findings of the study revealed the following:

- The level of social media addiction among students in the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences was moderate.
- There were no significant differences in the level of social media addiction based on gender.
- There were no significant differences in the level of social media addiction based on academic discipline.

Keywords: addiction – social media – university students.

Study Problem

The rapid technological advancement of our modern era has led to qualitative transformations in various aspects of life, particularly in the field of communication. Traditional means such as travel or postal mail are no longer the primary methods of communication, especially after the widespread expansion of the internet across the globe. The internet has effectively turned the world into a "global village," eliminating geographical and temporal barriers, and facilitating open interaction, exchange of ideas, and experiences among individuals regardless of distance or time (Kiyous, 2021, p. 6).

Social media and online networks have opened the doors to a massive influx of information, news, and data. While these platforms have brought people closer in the digital sense, they have simultaneously contributed to social isolation and a decline in face-to-face human interaction. This has led many individuals, particularly adolescents and youth, to excessive and compulsive use of social media, which can result in harmful and even destructive consequences (Abdelrazak, 2020, p. 213).

The digital revolution has brought about rapid changes and impressive developments across all areas of life. Platforms such as Facebook and Instagram have become powerful tools for communication and knowledge-sharing, especially among young people. They allow users to access information and build relationships across traditional, geographical, and social boundaries. However, this overuse has also led to the emergence of both acceptable and problematic behaviors at individual and societal levels, with one of the most concerning being social media addiction.

Accordingly, this study seeks to address the following research questions:

Research Questions

1. What is the level of social media addiction among students of the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences?
2. Are there significant differences in the level of social media addiction among the study sample based on gender?
3. Are there significant differences in the level of social media addiction among the study sample based on academic major?

Research Objectives

- To identify the level of social media addiction among university students.
- To examine differences in the level of social media addiction according to gender.
- To examine differences in the level of social media addiction according to academic discipline.

Operational Definition

Social Media Platforms:

Digital platforms through which students and others communicate and exchange ideas.

Previous Studies

- Yamina Boubaaia (2016): The level of Facebook addiction and its relation to the emergence of certain psychological issues among high school students.
- Ahmed Saidan Mahdi Al-Azmi & Youssef Rashed Al-Murtaji (2017): Aimed to assess social media addiction and the role of social anxiety, self-efficacy, and social competence in predicting addiction among Kuwaiti high school students.
- Salem D. Hamid Obaid & Ali Dawood Suleiman (2019): Focused on internet addiction among secondary school students and the impact of gender and academic specialization (scientific vs. literary).
- Boufarrak & Maqroudh (2019): Explored internet addiction among middle school students and examined differences based on gender, residence, and educational level in Mascara Province.
- Nassima Tabass & Khadija Mellal (2021): Studied internet addiction among university students.

- Jamila Ben Amour & Amal Khalifa (2021): Focused on Facebook addiction as a model of social media dependency.

LIMITS OF THE STUDY :

Spatial scope: The study was conducted at the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences, University of Ghardaia.

Time scope: The study was conducted during the 2023/2024 academic year.

Human scope : The study was conducted on first-year students in the common core program at the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences.

Theoretical Framework

Addiction (Definition):

Linguistically, addiction refers to persistence and dependence. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines addiction as a **psychological or sometimes physical condition resulting from interaction with a substance or behavior**, characterized by compulsive use to experience its effects or to avoid withdrawal symptoms. Individuals may become addicted to multiple substances or behaviors (Boubaaia, 2016, p. 52).

According to Hussein Eid Younes (2016, p. 23), addiction is a state in which an individual cannot abstain from a particular behavior or substance, continually craving increasing amounts to satisfy their need.

Types of Addiction:

- **Material Addiction:** Includes substances like drugs, alcohol, tobacco, caffeine, tranquilizers, and sedatives.
- **Behavioral Addiction (Non-material):** Includes behaviors like internet addiction, compulsive shopping, and video game addiction (Malouhi, 2019, p. 72).

Definition of Social Media

Linguistic Definition:

Derived from the verb “to connect,” which denotes making something mutual or shared. Social communication refers to the transition from individual to social interaction involving message transmission, symbols, and meaning through sound, visuals, or written signs (Boubaaia, 2015, p. 56).

Technical Definition (wiseGEEK, 2011):

Social networking sites are web-based platforms that allow individuals to create personal profiles and share information such as photos, videos, and blog posts (Alsawafi, 2014, p. 18).

Origin of Social Media

Several early networks emerged in the late 1990s, such as Classmates.com (1995) and SixDegrees.com (1997), which introduced user profiles and messaging. These platforms, although pioneering, were not commercially successful and were shut down. From 1999 to 2001, many other platforms emerged but struggled to gain traction. However, in 2005, MySpace gained massive popularity, followed closely by Facebook, which began growing rapidly, especially after opening its API to developers in 2007. By that time, Facebook had surpassed 115 million users globally (Kafi, 2016, pp. 110–111).

Major Social Media Platforms

The internet hosts various social networking platforms such as:

- **Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram**
- Blogging and forum platforms
- Media sharing platforms like **YouTube** and **Flickr**
 - Collaborative tools by **Google** and **Yahoo**, focusing on collective editing, publishing, and interaction (Kiyous, 2021, p. 42; Kanaan, 2014, p. 170)

Key Features of Social Media

According to Al-Miqdadi (2013, pp. 26–27), social media platforms have distinct characteristics:

- **Participation:** Encouraging contributions, feedback, and blurring the line between content producers and consumers.
- **Openness:** Open to feedback, content modification, voting, and commenting with minimal access barriers.
- **Conversation:** Two-way communication allowing interaction and discussion around events or content.
- **Community:** Facilitates the rapid formation of online communities centered around shared interests, making the world a digitally connected village.
- **Connectedness:** Platforms are interlinked, enabling cross-platform sharing and rapid information dissemination.

Field Study Procedures

Study Sample:

- **Pilot Sample:**

A preliminary sample of 30 students from the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences was selected to assess the psychometric properties of the study instrument.

- **Main Sample:**

The main sample consisted of 95 students, as shown in the tables below.

Table 01: Distribution of the Main Sample According to Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	31	33%
Female	64	67%
Total	95	100%

Table 02: Distribution of the Main Sample According to Academic Major

Academic Major	Frequency	Percentage
Psychology	38	40%
Sociology	15	16%
Human Sciences	22	23%
Islamic Sciences	20	21%
Total	95	100%

Study Instrument:

In accordance with the study’s nature, objectives, and chosen methodology, the most suitable tool for data collection was a questionnaire. The instrument used was the Social Media Addiction Scale developed by Basma Hussein Eid Younes (2016), consisting of 30 items.

Psychometric Properties of the Instrument:

1. Construct Validity (Extreme Groups Method):

The results are shown in the table below:

Table 03: T-test results between the high and low groups on the scale

Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	T-value	Degrees of Freedom	Significance Level
Upper Group	10	43.50	3.34	10.26	18	0.000
Lower Group	10	31.10	1.85			

This indicates that the scale has **good discriminative validity**.

2. Split-Half Reliability:

Table 04: Split-Half Reliability Coefficients

Statistic	Value
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Pearson correlation coefficient	0.78
Spearman-Brown correction coefficient	0.88

The split-half reliability was calculated by dividing the items into two halves. The **Pearson correlation coefficient** was **0.78**, and after applying the **Spearman-Brown correction**, the reliability rose to **0.88**, indicating **high instrument reliability**.

3. Cronbach's Alpha Reliability:

Table 05: Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient for Internal Consistency

Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
30	0.87

The reliability was calculated using **SPSS software**, and the result of $\alpha = 0.87$ indicates a **high level of internal consistency**.

Statistical Methods Used:

Data were processed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, Version 20). The following statistical techniques were employed:

- Frequencies and percentages
- Arithmetic mean
- Standard deviation
- Pearson correlation coefficient
- Independent samples t-test
- One-way ANOVA (Analysis of Variance)

Presentation and Discussion of the Study Results

First Hypothesis:

"The level of social media addiction among university students is moderate."

Table 06: One-Sample T-Test

Variable	Sample Size	Mean	Hypothetical Mean	Std. Deviation	Degrees of Freedom	T-value	Significance (p-value)
Social Media Addiction Level	95	23.34	30	11.99	94	5.40	0.000

As shown in Table 06, the sample mean (23.34) is significantly lower than the hypothetical mean (30), and the T-test value of 5.40 is statistically significant at the 0.05 level ($p < 0.05$). This leads us to accept the hypothesis that the level of social media addiction among university students is moderate.

This result can be attributed to a balanced use of social media platforms and a growing awareness among students regarding the psychological and academic risks of excessive usage. These risks include negative effects on academic performance (e.g., school dropout, reduced motivation to learn), and mental health issues (e.g., anxiety, sleep disorders, social isolation). Such awareness may be promoted through guidance programs, time management workshops, and parental involvement in monitoring digital behavior.

Second Hypothesis:

"The level of social media addiction among university students differs according to gender."

Table 07: Independent Samples T-Test

Variable	Gender	Sample Size	Mean	Std. Deviation	Degrees of Freedom	T-value	Significance (p-value)
Social Media Addiction Level	Male	31	11.90	7.5	93	1.58	0.116
	Female	64	11.89	6.80			

Table 07 indicates no statistically significant difference ($p > 0.05$) between males and females in their level of social media addiction. The mean scores for both genders are nearly identical (11.90 for males and 11.89 for females). Therefore, we reject the original hypothesis and accept the null hypothesis, indicating that gender does not significantly affect the level of social media addiction.

This result may be explained by the fact that social media usage is no longer gender-specific. Both males and females are equally drawn to these platforms for similar reasons, such as social interaction, stress relief, and escapism. While the type of content consumed may differ (e.g., males may prefer humor, sports, or gaming content, while females may be more interested in cooking, beauty, or home décor), the overall level of engagement remains comparable.

Third Hypothesis:

"The level of social media addiction differs among university students based on their academic major."

Table 08: One-Way ANOVA Test

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F-value	Significance (p-value)
Between Groups	354.320	3	118.107	0.81	0.48

Within Groups	13,169.216	91	144.717		
Total	13,523.537	94	Total		

According to Table 08, the F-value is 0.81, and the result is not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). Therefore, we reject the original hypothesis and conclude that academic major does not have a significant effect on the level of social media addiction among university students.

This finding suggests that students from different academic disciplines (e.g., Psychology, Sociology, Humanities, Islamic Studies) exhibit similar behaviors in terms of time spent on chatting, gaming, and social sharing via social media, regardless of their academic background.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study aimed to investigate the level of social media addiction among university students in the Wilaya of Ghardaia, focusing on the following objectives:

- Assessing the prevalence of social media addiction among university students.
- Exploring gender- and major-based differences in addiction levels.

The key findings are as follows:

- The level of social media addiction among university students is moderate.
- There is no significant difference in addiction levels based on gender or academic major.

Recommendations:

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Develop counseling programs to help addicted students reduce their dependency on social media platforms.
- Organize awareness campaigns for students on the risks of excessive social media use.
- Conduct further studies to explore the issue in different academic and social contexts.
- Implement parental awareness programs to enhance their positive role in monitoring their children's online behaviors.
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