

# Is Social Media Really Addictive? Emerging Dimensions of Research

Dr. Deepak Upadhyaya\*

Asst.Prof., Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Tripura University, P.O.Suryamaninagar, Agartala, Tripura.Pin-799022.

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## ABSTRACT

*Along with cheap internet recharge facilities and diffusion of smartphones in India in the recent past, social networking sites like Facebook has become immensely popular in India. Google is gradually replacing libraries and internet is replacing field based games and sports of children. After nearly seven decades of the invention of the Internet, the million dollar question that perhaps looms large on the users is the addictive behavior emanating out of prolonged use of the medium. Excessive Facebook usage or social media networking use may lead to syndromes like Facebook Addiction Disorder which is similar to any kind of substance abuse. However, in a developing country like India, there is a digital divide among information haves and have nots. The diffusion of the social media among the youths has been an emerging phenomenon in the society and little academic study has been done so far to dissect the problems of addiction to new media and suggest corrective measures in a developing country like India. This paper aims at understanding the various trends of social media usage in India and aims at offering a comprehensive idea of the types, patterns and the major studies conducted on social media addiction in India.*

**Keywords:** Social Media Addiction, Facebook Addiction, Internet Addiction.

## Introduction

No sooner than the NDA government came into power in 2014, there were visible signs of heralding a new era of the digital resurgence of India through the *Digital India Campaign*. The visionary Prime Minister of India Mr. Narendra Modi laid emphasis on extending services offered by the new digital technology to the teeming millions of Indians residing in hundreds of villages and small towns. The initiatives undertaken by the government of India in this regard has given a boost to *Facebook's* increasing popularity in India, bypassing barriers of age and gender. Combined with this, the decreasing prices of smart phones and easy availability of recharge facilities of internet packages even at '*pan shops*' across the country offered by multitude of services providers like Jio Telecom has definitely made India one of the largest internet and *Facebook* user nations in the world. The significance of the emerging scenario can be gauged from the fact that Mark Zuckerberg, the CEO of *Facebook* Incorporation visited India twice in the recent period and Narendra Modi too visited *Facebook* headquarters at Menlo Park, California. India has huge untapped potential for *Facebook*. The Digital India programme is aimed at bridging the existing gap of digital divide that exists between in 'India and Bharat'; developed urban metropolis representing 'India' and 'Bharat' signifying yawning poverty and deprivation that exists in rural India. However, studies have suggested that digitally enabled youths of the country are fast getting 'addicted' to social networking sites on the Internet.

A company that had its humble beginning in 2004, *Facebook* Incorporation has quickly grown by leaps and bound and penetrated the lives of millions of people across the globe in such a short span as the most user friendly social networking sites (SNS). Today it is widely adopted by people from all rank and file for many different reasons including social, recreational and business reasons. It has become synonymous with social networking so much so that it is one of the most preferred social networking tools among millions of youths in India for keeping themselves in touch with their friends and relatives. Students have reported its extensive uses and gratification in areas like interpersonal communication, entertainment, passing time, companionship, social interaction and academic purpose and the like.

## Is Internet Addictive?

Researchers like Kuss and Griffiths reveal that compared to general population, students and teenagers make the most use of SNS. Adolescents often expect entertainment and enjoyment from whatever actions they are occupied in and as *Facebook* is entertaining and cost effective to publicize their profile, which *Omar and Subramaniam* (2013)<sup>1</sup> describes as "process gratifications", they became addicted to it. The term addiction is commonly used to mention substance addiction, like nicotine addiction in the form of smoking cigarettes or chewing tobacco, or drugs addictions where the addicted person experiences deterioration in his or her psychological and physical health condition due to prolonged abuse of the substances. The term *Internet addiction* was first coined by *Goldberg* (1996)<sup>2</sup> and by it, the author meant that "individuals

primarily demonstrated certain undesirable consequences arising from excessive Internet usage in their lives" (Yu, 2011)<sup>3</sup>. Internet addiction, however, in contrast with substance addiction, is viewed as "severe psychological dependency or a behavioural addiction to the Internet" (Kandell, 1998<sup>4</sup>; Griffiths, 2000a<sup>5</sup>). On the other hand, Young (1996)<sup>6</sup> coined the term "Internet Addiction Disorder" listing diagnostic criteria, which many researchers refer to as a starting point for emerging research. Researchers such as Young (1996)<sup>7</sup> replace the word "substance" with "Internet" in their analysis of Internet addiction, concluding that similar symptoms such as tolerance, withdrawal, craving, and negative life consequences are present in Internet addiction as well. Further, Griffiths (1998)<sup>8</sup> considered Internet addiction to be a "kind of technological addiction (such as computer addiction), and one in a subset of behavioural addiction" (such as compulsive gambling).

Considered to be an emerging global communication phenomenon, social media or social networking sites (SNS) are defined as "web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or a semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection and, view and traverse list of connections and those made by others within the system (Boyd and Ellison, 2007<sup>9</sup>; Omar and Subramaniam, 2013<sup>10</sup>). Facebook is extensively accepted by people for many different reasons including social, recreational and business reasons (Dhaha, 2013<sup>11</sup>). Facebook is the most popular SNS with highest number of users, followed by WhatsApp, MySpace and Twitter (Fastcompany, 2015<sup>12</sup>). Facebook is also one of the most preferred social networking tools for keeping in touch among students who have reported its extensive uses and gratification in areas like interpersonal communication, entertainment, passing time, companionship and social interaction and the like (Sofiah et al., 2011<sup>13</sup>). The company itself declares that Facebook's mission is to empower individuals with "the power to share and make the world more open and connected" (Facebook, 2015<sup>14</sup>). Facebook is an embodiment of digital empowerment to individuals who can easily access it "to stay connected with friends and family, to discover what is going on in the world and to share and express what matters to them" (Facebook, 2015<sup>15</sup>) through various devices such as a computer, laptop, iPad, tablet and mobile phone provided there is internet connectivity. Recently, with the advent of smart phones, people are always on the go, they log on to Facebook without needing a personal computer and check their profiles almost all the time. Facebook subscribers are growing daily and as of December 2016 (Facebook Annual Report, 2016<sup>16</sup>) it has crossed more than 1.23 billion Daily active users (DAUs) on average for December 2016, an increase of 18% year-over-year. And the company feels that their "journey to make the world more open and connected is only one % finished". India is a leading country based on number of Facebook users. There are more than 294 million active users of Facebook in India as of October 2018 and it is followed by US, where there are 204 million users (Statista, 2018<sup>16</sup>). It further reveals that:

*As of January 2018, the highest numbers of male Facebook users during the measured period were between 18 and 24 years old and amounted to about 73.8 million. While among females, the highest numbers of users were the same age group, amounting to about 23.4 million in India.*

Literature, from western countries suggests that excessive use of social networking sites like Facebook can also be addictive for some individuals, especially youths who are in the age group 18 and 24 years, as the Internet has been (Ryan et al., 2014<sup>17</sup>). The exponential popularity of Facebook amongst the youths and students has further added to Internet addiction repository. Facebook addiction among the youths is fast becoming a matter of concern in the West as well as in developing countries like India. Recent research study conducted in a health university in India has also corroborated that individuals who tend to use the "site way too much" may land up getting addicted to Facebook (Masthi et al., 2015<sup>18</sup>).

Facebook addiction is an emerging type of addiction where students and youths in the age group 18-24 years are preoccupied almost all the time. Academic research has been so far mostly devoted to studying the usages and gratification of Facebook and such other social networking sites among the youths. Relatively little research has been directed to dissect the varying approaches to explain the effects of Facebook addiction in a digitally driven modern world, and India in particular where the youths and students are hooked to the Internet and mobile texting (Masthi et al., 2015<sup>19</sup>). There are few studies available on social media addiction of the youths and students, assessing whether they are digitally enabled or addicted to it.

### Review of Literature:

The idea of addiction can be applied to all types of substances or chemicals or services provided its usage is excessive, for instance, consequent upon the 'skyvasion' of television channels in India post 1990s, media addiction, especially TV addiction has become one of the commonly found addictive behaviours among the children in India who are often glued to the TV and a cup of Maggi soup when they return from their school.

*Masthi et al.* (2015<sup>20</sup>) have conducted a qualitative exploratory study in Bengaluru city covering six colleges affiliated to a medical university to find the burden of Facebook addiction among 400 students who were studying medicine, dentistry, pharmacy and physiotherapy. With regard to physical health, the authors have found that majority of the respondents had strain in their eyes (32 %), headache (17%), fatigue (16%), neck pain (14%), sleep disturbance (12 %), wrist pain (12 %) and back pain (10%). These were some of the common health issues reported as an effect of excessive use of Facebook. Besides the study reported that the burden of Facebook addiction was 7.25 % and high-risk behaviour was 24.75 %. Pharmacy and Bachelor of Physiotherapy students had more number of students with high risk behaviour and Facebook addiction than MBBS students. Male students had more high-risk behaviour than female students. With regard to mental health, the authors also found that 20 % of the subjects felt frustrated, 17 % felt anxious, 15 % had anger bouts and 10 % reported loneliness when they were not able to access *Facebook*. Further, it was found that when interrupted while using Facebook, 31 % respondents were annoyed, 13 % felt angry, 12 % felt sad and 10 % of the subjects yelled at the persons. Among the other addictive behaviour identified, the study reported that 19 % had often/very often lost sleep due to late night *Facebook* logins, 27 % often/very often stayed longer than intended on *Facebook*, 25 % often/very often got upset when a rude comment was made about them on *Facebook*, similarly 17 % often/very often got agitated when people did not like their photos, 8 % reported they often had feeling of euphoria when they on *Facebook* and 7 % students opined that their college work suffered a lot because of the amount of time they spent on *Facebook*. However, only 6 % of the respondents felt that they needed help for *Facebook* addiction.

*Al-Menayes* (2015<sup>21</sup>) has examined social media addiction with a sample size of 1327 college students at a large state university in Kuwait. Based on the Internet addiction scale developed by *Young* (1996)<sup>22</sup>, the study has found that social media addiction has three independent dimensions. The study has reported that the more time one spends using social media, the more the respondents exhibited symptoms of social media addiction. Further, satisfaction with social media was found to be positively correlated with social media addiction. Also, it was reported that the more experience a person has with social media, the more likely /she will be addicted to social media. The author has reported that social media usage comes at the expense of academic performance of the students. Individuals addicted to social media had lower academic grades than those who were not. As with all types of addictions, social media usage has been reported to interfere with normal functioning of daily life. Indeed, time spent using social media displaces the time usually allocated to studying. When it comes to the amount of time spent online, research studies in different countries revealed that individuals who consider themselves as Internet addicts reported greater degree of loneliness, depression, social anxiety, low self-esteem (*Selfhout et al.*, 2009<sup>23</sup>; *Sunet et al.*, 2005<sup>24</sup>; as cited in *Al-Menayes*, 2015<sup>25</sup>). *Wang et al* (2003<sup>26</sup>) reported that Internet addicts had a higher degree of loneliness and depression compared to non-addicts. Other studies revealed that computer self-efficacy was a significant correlate of problematic Internet use. Internet addiction was reported to be associated with poor mental health and low self-esteem in youths (*Yenet et al.*, 2009<sup>27</sup>).

*Balcian and Tiryaki* (2014<sup>28</sup>) reported of a study where the high school students in the Konya province of Turkey were also addicted to Facebook. Face to face interviews with 494 students of Turkey was conducted using the *Bergen's Facebook Addiction Scale* to determine the dimensions of *Facebook* addiction among the high school students. It was found that the addiction levels of female students were higher than the levels of male students. The study reveals that Facebook addiction level was found to be of higher level among the respondents who are connected to Facebook through both computers and cell phones than those who are connected only through computers or cell phones. It was also reported that the more *Facebook* using experiences of high school students increase the more their levels of *Facebook* addiction increase. Also the students exhibited more addiction to *Facebook* if they are every day users than other categories who are not daily users, i.e., *Facebook* usage frequency determines the degree of addition to it.

*Omar and Subramaniam* (2013<sup>29</sup>) have conducted a *Facebook* addiction study among 400 Malaysian university students from a public university. Three personality characteristics of the Facebook users (i.e.: shyness, loneliness and internal control) and four dimensions of gratifications sought from Facebook (i.e.: content, social, process and technology gratifications) were examined in this study. These variables were measured using 5-point *Likert scale* ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The study reported that the higher the amount of time spent on Facebook, the higher the level of *Facebook* addiction among respondents of the study. Time spent on *Facebook* were summed in hours and averaged to get the total scores which were used to represent the amount of usage in this study. The study also found that the tendency for shy people to be addicted to *Facebook* was considerably high. The study reported that 48 % of the youths (18-34 years old) of the country were having the habitual practice of logging onto *Facebook* as soon as they got up from their bed and 28 % of them would religiously check *Facebook* before going to bed

(Omar and Subramaniam, 2013<sup>30</sup>). This finding has hinted to a kind of *Facebook* addiction among the youths who cannot live without it. According to Omar and Subramaniam<sup>31</sup> content gratifications and loneliness were the main factors that equally contribute to *Facebook* addiction.

Osada(2013<sup>32</sup>) has studied Internet addiction among 299 Japanese college students using the Japanese version of Internet Addiction Tool (IAT). The study was divided into two groups- Internet Addiction Group (IAG) and Non-Internet Addiction Group (NIAG). The study reported the presence of Internet addiction among 5 % of Japanese college students. The addicts exhibited poor mental health and the IAG group illustrated more problematic Internet use and poorer mental health than the NIAG. Osada<sup>33</sup> further found that the IAG spent significantly more time online than the NIAG. In the study revealed that the IAG used the Internet more than the NIAG for the purposes of “Browsing personal websites, blogging, or using SNS” and “Searching for information.” However, the study revealed that as compared with the NIAG, the IAG set of respondents reported to unnecessarily and obsessively spending excessive time on the Internet beyond that required for gathering information.

Marcial(2013<sup>34</sup>) reports the findings of a survey study conducted with 355 students of the Silliman University, Philippines with an aim to measure empirically the prevalence and degree of *Facebook* addiction among them and found that 3 out of every 71 students were reported to be addicted to *Facebook*. The Bergen *Facebook* Addiction Scale (BFAS)<sup>35</sup> was adopted for the study. The study revealed that all *Facebook* addiction symptoms outlined in the literature were present among the Philippine university students, though it was only 4% of the 355 respondents were addicted to *Facebook* and most of the addicts were under 18 years of age. It was also reported that the respondents were anxious and socially insecure, not organised and less ambitious. The respondents also complained of delayed sleep-wake rhythm and their excessive use of *Facebook* had a negative impact on their studies. They exhibited behavioural symptoms like restlessness, unable to cut down the use of *Facebook* and were troubled when prohibited from using *Facebook*. Besides, the university students reported that they often failed in their endeavour to stop using *Facebook*. The university students had an urge to use *Facebook* more and more, being oblivious of their personal problems at the time of *Facebook* access.

It is safe to assume that the results of computer-based Internet addiction also apply to social media addiction since both are essentially dependent on the same medium. As a matter of potential addiction, Kuss and Griffiths (2011<sup>36</sup>) have found that SNS usage can lead to a variety of negative consequences like decreasing trend among the modern day youths to avoid real-life social or community involvement and worse academic performance as well as increasing trend of relationship problems among the youths.

*(...) reducing and jeopardizing academic, social and recreational activities are considered as criteria for substance dependence and may thus be considered as valid criteria for behavioural addictions, such as SNS addiction. In the light of this, endorsing these criteria appears to put people at risk for developing addiction and the scientific research base... supports the potentially addictive quality of SNS (Kuss and Griffiths, 2011<sup>37</sup>).*

Kuss and Griffiths, (2011)<sup>38</sup> are of the opinion that attraction is one of the four key components that may predispose individuals to becoming addicted to specific behaviours or substances. Accordingly, due to their egocentric construction, social networking sites allow individuals to present themselves positively that may help “raise their spirits” because it is experienced as pleasurable. This may lead to positive experiences that may go a long way in cultivation of social network addiction. Relevant literature suggests that factors contributing to the etiology of addiction like biological, psychological and social phenomenon may also hold true for social network addiction. To quote the authors verbatim-

*A behavioural addiction such as SNS addiction may thus be seen from biopsychological perspective. Just like substance-related addictions, SNS addiction incorporates the experience of the ‘classic’ addiction symptoms, namely mood modification (i.e., Engagement in SNSs leads to a favourable change in emotional states), salience (i.e., behavioural, cognitive, and emotional preoccupation with SNS usage), tolerance (i.e., ever increasing use of SNSs over time), withdrawal symptoms (i.e., experiencing unpleasant physical and emotional symptoms when SNS use is restricted or stopped), conflict (i.e., interpersonal and intrapsychic problems ensue because of SNS usage), and relapse (i.e., addicts quickly revert back in their excessive SNS usage after an abstinence period (Griffiths, 2005b<sup>39</sup>).*

Sofiah et al. (2011)<sup>40</sup> studied the association of motives for *Facebook* use and *Facebook* addiction behaviour with a sample of 380 female undergraduate and postgraduate students of IT Department from two large universities in Malaysia, one of them being a public university and the other, a private university. There were five motives identified by the scholar like Social Interaction Motives, Passing Time Motives,

Entertainment Motives, Companionship Motives and Communication Motives. These motives were among the major contributor to the addiction to *Facebook*. The study showed that students mostly used the SNS “to keep in touch with friends”. They used *Facebook* message application basically to nurture online and offline friendships and build social ties across distance. They used *Facebook* primarily “to pass time when they feel bored” and *Facebook* was the source of entertainment for many of the students for whom it was an economical tool for establishing communication ties (“to post comment on friends wall”, “to send messages to friends” and “to share information” were among the main communication motives) among other university students. Further, majority of the respondents used *Facebook* ‘to find long-lost friends.’ Findings of the study showed that there are significant relationship between the students’ motives for *Facebook* use and *Facebook* addiction. Among the five motives of *Facebook* use, passing time, entertainment and communication was the strong predictor of *Facebook* addiction. Following the study model presented by *Sofiah et al. (2011)*<sup>41</sup>, *Kavitha(2013)*<sup>42</sup> studied *Facebook* addiction with 140 female students from different management college in Mumbai city and reported identical results. The findings showed that there is a significant relationship between female student’s motives for *Facebook* use and *Facebook* addiction.

Other scholars like, *Echeburua and de Corral (2010)*<sup>43</sup> have also substantiated that the excessive use of new technologies and especially online social networking may be particularly addictive to young people. The authors have further claimed that those people addicted to using SNS experience symptoms similar to those experienced by those who suffer from substances or other behaviours. Another study by *Kirschner and Karpinski (2010)*<sup>44</sup> found that *Facebook* addiction has adverse effects on youths such as drop in their academic performance level. In addition to this scholars like *Barbera et al.(2009)*<sup>45</sup> have hypothesised that young vulnerable people with narcissistic tendencies are particularly prone to engaging with SNSs in an addictive way.

*Karaiskos et al. (2010)*<sup>46</sup> have studied social networking addiction behaviour extensively among the European youths and reported the case of a 24 year old female who was so addicted to SNS that it affected her professional and private life so much so that she was referred to a psychiatric clinic. She used *Facebook* excessively for at least five hours a day and was discharged from her job because of her negligence to work. She developed anxiety symptoms as well as insomnia, which implied that SNS addiction has clinical disorders

A study with 342 Chinese college students (aged 18 to 22 years) was undertaken by *Zhou (2010)*<sup>47</sup> using the Internet Addiction Scale (IAT) developed by *Young (1996)*<sup>48</sup>. This was a unique study in the sense that SNS game addiction was being studied with special reference to *Happy Farm*. The study reported that more than 24 % of the respondents were addicted to SNS gaming. Moreover, this study also ventured to understand the gratifications of SNS game use, loneliness, leisure boredom and self-esteem among the respondents. The findings indicated that there was a weak positive correlation between loneliness and SNS game addiction and a moderate positive correlation between leisure boredom and SNS game addiction.

*Pelling and White (2009)*<sup>49</sup> have found in a study conducted with 233 undergraduate university students, adopting the model of the Theory Planned Behaviour (TPB) that past behaviour, subjective norm, attitude, and self-identity significantly predicted both behavioural intention as well as actual behaviour. One week after the completion of the first questionnaire, participants were asked to indicate how many days during the last week they had visited SNSs at least four times a day. High-level users of SNS and those who looked for a sense of belongingness on SNSs appeared to be at risk for developing an addiction to SNSs. It was further reported that those who identified themselves as high level users of SNS and those who sought a sense of belongingness on SNSs were found to be more at risk for developing an addiction to SNS.

*Wan (2009)*<sup>50</sup> has studied SNS addiction among 335 Chinese College students (aged 19 to 28 years), using Young’s Internet Addiction Test scale. The scale was modified to specifically assess the addiction to a popular Chinese SNS known as *Xiaonei.com*. The results indicated that of the total sample, 34 % were classified as addicted. Loneliness was significantly and positively correlated with the frequency and session length of using *Xiaonei.com* as well as SNS addiction. The study found that more than 35 % of the Chinese college students were addicted.

According to a study by *LaRose and Eastin (2004)*<sup>51</sup> it was reported that the youths who spent more than four hours per day on Facebook can be classified as Facebook addicts. In this context literature reveals that social media practices can negatively affect students’ grade points as well as the amount of time students spend preparing for class (*Rithika & Selvaraj, 2013*)<sup>52</sup>. Recently, researchers like *Zaremohzzabieh et al. (2014)*<sup>53</sup> pointed out the following checklist to identify persons suffering from *Facebook* Addiction Disorder (FAD):

- a) Check your Facebook account in the morning
- b) Spend entire nights on the site, causing them to become tired the next day.
- c) Spend hours together on Facebook

d) *Whenever offline, enjoying a daydream about status updates and comments that have been received.*

The term 'social network addiction' is gaining currency in academic discourse and it is used to define the characteristic compulsive behavior that eventually leads to negative effects among the excessive users (Omar et al., 2013<sup>54</sup>; Menayes, 2015<sup>55</sup>). Like in most types of addictions, the users of Facebook are also reported to 'feel compelled to do certain activities' at frequent intervals of time which subsequently turns into a harmful habit that often impedes with other significant work including official or academic activities (Subathra et al., 2013)<sup>56</sup>. Facebook addiction is on the rise as addicted population are young adults in the age group 18-24 years who are also the most active users of Facebook. This age group constitute cohorts like students and youths who are preoccupied almost all the time on the internet (Griffiths, 2000a)<sup>57</sup>. Academic research has been so far mostly devoted to studying the usages and gratification of Facebook and such other social networking sites among the youths in Western settings (Griffiths, 2000b)<sup>58</sup>. Relatively little research has been directed to dissect the varying approaches to explain the effects of Facebook addiction in a digitally driven developing world like India in particular where the youths and students are hooked to the Internet and mobile texting (Masthi et al., 2015)<sup>59</sup>. While Internet penetration in India has exponentially grown over the years, a massive percentage of the country's population is still living in a state of digital divide between the netizens and net-illiterate citizens. The digital blackout to nearly 70 percent of the total population of India offers a massive potential for growth as well as a growing concern. If such a minor share of the population's activity is tantamount to creation of such severe cases of Internet addiction, social media addiction to be more particular, it is indeed a question to be pondered upon whether further Internet penetration vis-à-vis higher spectrum bandwidth is leading users to an age of progress or self-destruction. For instance, a study conducted on Internet and social media addiction among students of 18-21 age groups of college students in Coimbatore in 2013 found out that 98% of the selected respondents in the study were addicted to social network sites at a medium level (Subratha et al., 2013)<sup>60</sup>. The study further found that social media addiction reduces the ability to concentrate in the respondents' academic performance. The study concluded that a number of influencing factors including sex, source of motivation, amount spent every month, mode of accessing social network and time spent in every session have an influence over addiction to social network sites among the studied students.

Likewise another study was conducted among students of six colleges of Bengaluru observed that the burden of addiction was 7.25 % and high risk was 24.75 % in the study subjects. 61 (31.12%) males and 38 (18.62 %) females were categorized as high-risk behavior subjects. 12 (6.12 %) males and 17 (8.33 %) females were categorized as having Facebook addiction (Masthi et al., 2015)<sup>61</sup>.

*(...) the results of the above indicate that the extensive use of Facebook by students with extraverted personalities leads to poor academic performance. However, students who are more self-regulated control their presence on these platforms more effectively... (Masthi et al.<sup>62</sup>).*

However, there is no standard scale available for measuring Facebook addiction, nonetheless, literature reveals that the Bergen Facebook Addiction Scale (Andreassen et al, 2012)<sup>63</sup> has been widely used, adopted and validated by scholars across the world. In January 2011, the Bergen Facebook Addiction Scale was developed at the Faculty of Psychology, University of Bergen in collaboration with the Bergen Clinics Foundation, Norway. This scale consists of six core elements of addiction (viz- salience, mood modification, tolerance, withdrawal, conflict and relapse). Andreassen et al. (2012)<sup>64</sup> posits that the scale could be used to facilitate treatment, research activity, and clinical assessment. Further, it could be used for the estimation of Facebook addiction prevalence in the general population worldwide. The Bergen Facebook Addiction Scale suggests that scoring "often" or "very often" on at least four of the six items may suggest that the respondent is addicted to Facebook (Masthi et al, 2015<sup>65</sup>; Marcial, 2013<sup>66</sup>). Literature further reveals that weekly time commitment, social motives, severe depression, and anxiety and insomnia positively predicted Facebook addiction. This scale has been used by many researchers to decipher empirically the behaviour pertaining to online activities of youths and children.

In a recent cross country study conducted by Arora and Okunbor (2016)<sup>67</sup> it was reported that respondents from India were more dependent on Facebook as compared to respondents from the US. The Indian students felt restless without Facebook and considered it to be an integral part of their lives. This finding pointed out that the addictive streak is visible among Indian youths as compared to their counterparts in the US. The authors further refer to the following signs of Facebook addiction in their effort while comparing the cohort of university students between India and the US. The presence of any or some of them points to visible symptoms of Facebook addiction disorder:

- a) *Losing sleep over Facebook; staying logged in throughout the night and eventually becoming too tired for the next day;*
- b) *As a bench mark, spending one hour or more on Facebook is too much;*
- c) *Being obsessed with exes who reconnect on Face-book;*
- d) *Ignoring work for Facebook;*
- e) *The thought of getting off Facebook leaving the user in cold sweat...(Arora and Okunbor,2016)<sup>67</sup>*

Another recent study by *Martin Mihajlov&LucijaVejmelka (2017)<sup>68</sup>* refers to the world wide prevalence rate of Internet addiction, wherein the prevalence rate in India is 0.7 % among college going students and adolescents. The study reported that countries like UK and Qatar has high prevalence rate of 18.3% and 17.3 % respectively. Though India reported a small percentage, but it is on the rise nevertheless in India.

### Conclusion

The above mentioned studies offer understanding on the methods and scopes of decoding *Facebook* addiction and the level that the same has attained in a developing country like India. It offers new horizon for emerging research on *Facebook* addiction. There is a dearth of studies from the perspective of India. However, given that critical studies have found engrossing and concerning results about digital media addiction, especially among the youngsters, pose a contradicting note that offers scope for further studies on the area. Students, who have exhibited strong effect of social media addiction in India, hail from urban and rural areas alike. This feature offers heuristic provocation for survey-based work on relatively less untapped areas like the North-eastern part of India, owing to the fact that there has not been any major comprehensive work on social media addiction, *Facebook* addiction disorder to be more particular in any state of the NE region vis a vis all India. A large-scale survey-based study on the region is the call of the hour. However, such studies have to be considered limited in their validity and reliability since results of data based on self-reports and convenient sample surveys have indicated that they are not sufficient diagnosis to comment on psycho-social issues. This crisis is posed primarily because of the fact that small, self-reports questionnaire and perception studies based on reports of the respondents may be statistically inaccurate as most of the studies suffer from methodological limitations, skewed with regard to young adults and female gender. Respondents from this sociodemographic group are likely to be heavy social networking users.

The social networking sites in general and *Facebook* in particular have been diffused quickly and deeply penetrated student's life in countries across the globe and it is needless to say that *Facebook* has become more of an addiction than a fun activity among large number of college students in India. The students of a developing country may be digitally divided but certain social networking sites or social media platforms are those sites that have very fast diffusion in the developing countries as much as in developed countries. Obviously the circumstances that led to quick dispersal of *Facebook* in India are not far to be located but which is of particular concern is that it has given rise to a new phenomenon called *Facebook* addiction, particularly among the students. The above presented literature survey has revealed that repetitive use of SNS like *Facebook* brings about an addiction towards a non-substance issue and simultaneously creates several behaviour problem among the youths. This is why *Facebook* addiction is a growing concern among conscious parents, politicians, academicians, world leaders, healthcare professionals and mass media. However, *Facebook* is not the only social media platform that happens to lure the youths and captivate them to the point of reducing participation in many social activities in the real world, including negligence to class work. Research on the other SNS will supplement what literature has reported that excessive indulgence with *Facebook* may result in heralding a battery of negative effects on work, health, study and personal relationship of the youths who are most susceptible to its addictive nature. Are not other social networking sites equally addictive? It is recommended that further research can be expanded to other social networking websites like Instagram, Twitter, and so on.

Having said this, there is a dearth of empirical research conducted in India to uncover the led as to why social media is so addictive to the youths? Or, who are the youths that fall into the trap of it? Social media is a boon if used judiciously, or else its overuse may result in mental and physical disorders. Such studies would be timely to explore what factors contribute to social media addiction among the educated youths in India or among youths of different states and union territories within India. Are the youths of the country addicted to social media or empowered by it in furthering their academic pursuits? Are the youths of rural areas more addicted or urban areas? Many such questions needs to be explored by undertaking pan India studies by researchers. It would certainly add to lack of research literature and help to better understand social media addiction and suggest the policy makers, service providers and potentials users on how to make

the best out of worst of a powerful tool of communication such as social media networking sites. Griffiths (2012)<sup>69</sup> is of the opinion that *Facebook* addiction studies have erroneously become synonymous with social media addiction studies because *Facebook* is only one of the few websites that facilitates social networking and whatever scales are developed such as BFAS (Andraessen et al., 2012)<sup>70</sup>, FAS (Cam & Isbulan, 2012)<sup>71</sup> and FIQ (Elphinston & Noller, 2011)<sup>72</sup> and the like are concerned mainly with a particular company (e.g. *Facebook*), rather than the whole activity of social networking.

Hence, this paper suggests development of a robust tool applicable to developing countries like India for measuring all facets of social media addiction, not just *Facebook*, is the need of the hour. Empirical studies are needed for assessing the propensity to addiction social media networking sites as a whole rather than excessive usage of one particular service provider.

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