

An Investigation of Social Media Addiction among Moroccan Adolescent Students



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ABSTRACT: This is a quantitative study that aimed at investigating the extent to which Moroccan adolescent students are addicted to social media platforms. Kimberly Young's Internet Addiction Test was adopted and adjusted to serve the objective of this study. The sample consisted of 200 Moroccan adolescent students from the region of Meknes. The results highlighted that Facebook is the most frequently used social media site among participants, while twitter is the least. Furthermore, when they go online, they prefer to communicate with family and friends, entertain themselves, and read about social issues. To add, the findings revealed that only 11% of participants are severely addicted to social media, 24 % are MILD or average social media users, and 61 % were reported to be moderately addicted. On the other hand, the test showed that 3.5 % of participants are not social media addicts. Finally, a statistically significant difference was proven among students in terms of their social media addiction level based on their educational stream. In the same vein, no statistically significant difference was revealed based on gender.

KEYWORDS: Addiction levels, Adolescents, Investigation, Social Media

I. INTRODUCTION

According to recent statistics, the ease of access to the internet and the variety of services provided, particularly by social media sites, have caused a large number of individuals, especially teens, to become hooked on them. Undeniably, many of their daily-life activities have become distinctly related to these platforms. This is clear evidence that social media have really succeeded in responding to today's needs and wants of teens. This, however, has driven many of them to heavily depend on such sites and consequently develop an addiction that may badly impact their personal, social, academic, and eventually professional life. More importantly, being in a critical transitional life period and with not enough filtering and defensive mechanisms may also drag many adolescents to be involved in a set of immoral and sometimes risky online practices, which are more likely to horribly ruin their future.

Internationally, the issue of social media has, in recent times, received more attention from the part of researchers as a way to get a deeper insight into the phenomenon, maximize its offered opportunities and reduce its challenges, especially for kids and teens. This issue is still overlooked in the Moroccan context. Therefore, this study comes as an attempt to identify the most frequently used social media sites by Moroccan adolescent students. It aims to identify which social media activities people engage in most frequently. Additionally, it evaluates the severity of individuals' addiction to social media platforms. Not least of all, the study assesses how the degree of social media addiction varies among demographics, specifically gender and educational level.

It is hoped that the findings of this research can guide Moroccan policymakers, syllabus designers, researchers, teachers, and parents to gain a deep insight into the phenomenon under investigation and contribute to the online empowerment of Moroccan teenagers through providing them with practical guidance on how to deal with the social media phenomenon in a responsible and effective way.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Social media have undoubtedly affected people's lives in a variety of ways due to the simple and affordable availability of Internet technology. They have been successful in providing a variety of solutions that largely satisfy the needs of all users, from young children to senior citizens. For instance, teenagers have found that these online platforms offer a setting that fully accommodates their requirements and preferences (Ahmed & Farooq, 2021).

Statistics from a wide range of research show that social media is teenagers' preferred online destination (Anderson & Jiang, 2018; Auxier & Anderson, 2021; Herring & Kapidzic, 2015; Lepi, 2014; Wallace, 2014). This explains why they are enthralled with their technical devices for hours on end. Using social media may be beneficial as long as it is rational and under control. However, when they are used carelessly and in excess, the results cannot be favorable. That is, excessive exposure to these platforms could lead to the development of a kind of addiction that is difficult to overcome.

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Walker (2017) defines social media addiction as “someone spending too much time using Facebook, Twitter and other forms of social media - so much so that it interferes with other aspects of daily life”. In line with this, psychologists are discussing the fast rise in FAD, which is described as "a condition that is defined by hours spent on Facebook, so much time in fact that the healthy balance of the individual's life is affected" (Summers, 2011). Evidently, the negative repercussions of social media addiction on users' lives are emphasized by both definitions.

Two mass media effect theories served as the framework of this study. The first is known as the "Uses and Gratifications theory," while the second is known as "Media Systems Dependency." When examining how new media affect people, it is evident that these two theories—which were created in the era of traditional media—still hold up (Narasimhamurthy, 2014; Whiting & Williams, 2013).

Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1974) created the Uses and Gratification Theory, which is intended to "examine, explain, and provide answers to why people use certain media and what benefits or gratifications they get after that" (Musa, Azmi, & Ismail, 2016). This media effect theory's fundamental premise is that consumers use media channels based on the level of satisfaction they obtain from them.

Sandra Ball-Rokeach and Melvin DeFleur introduced the Media Systems Dependency theory (MSD) in 1976 with the goal of illuminating how excessive exposure to mass media can have a variety of adverse effects on a user's life. Maureen said that “Dependency theory is a mass communication theory that seeks to explain the long-term effects of media on the audiences and society. This theory states that the more dependent an individual is on the media for having his or her needs fulfilled, the more important the media will be to that person” (2012, p1).

In fact, many adolescent users choose certain social media platforms judiciously to meet a specific set of demands. The dependency grows as needs are met to a greater extent. Unfortunately, this could lead to a subtly developing addiction that has the potential to completely disrupt the user's life. Teenagers are particularly at risk for developing this addiction because they are among the most frequent and active users of social media platforms. Most importantly, they go through a crucial stage of development called adolescence, which leaves them open to readily being influenced by what they are frequently exposed to. Because of this, there have been more studies undertaken globally to thoroughly examine, comprehend, and effectively address the phenomena of social media addiction among this category of users. (Alabi, 2012; Al-Menayes, 2015; Al-Samarraie et al., 2022; Dau, 2015; Gazi, çetin, & Çakı, 2017; Griffiths, 2013; Kircaburun, 2016; Simsek et al., 2019)

Remarkably, most studies mainly examined how teenagers' use of social media affected their lives. However, little research has been done, at least in the Moroccan context, on the subject of assessing other stakeholders who might have a say on this matter or exploring variances in social media addiction across factors such as the socioeconomic class, age, gender, and more.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Research design

This study aims to extensively examine the problem of social media addiction among Moroccan adolescent students and determine whether there are any significant differences in this regard across gender and educational stream. A causal-comparative design was used to accomplish the study's goals. According to Bretsh (2009), this method is one of the non-experimental research designs in which the researcher compares the characteristics of two or more groups of people to find "a relationships between independent and dependent variables after an action or event has already occurred". In other words, academics employ this strategy to investigate the causes or effects of existing disparities between or among groups of individuals.

Although it cannot expressly and clearly demonstrate a cause-and-effect link, it can persuasively suggest one. It is typically employed when the researcher finds that manipulating the independent variable would be impractical or unethical.

B. Research questions

The present study is an attempt to answer the following questions:

- What are the most frequently social media sites used by Moroccan adolescent students?
- How frequently do Moroccan adolescent students use social media, and what are their favorite activities?
- Are Moroccan adolescent students addicted to social media, if yes to what extent?
- Does the level of social media addiction significantly differ between Moroccan adolescent male and female students?
- Do different school streams report a significantly different level of social media addiction among Moroccan adolescent students?

C. Research hypotheses

The hypotheses of the study are listed as follows:

- Moroccan adolescent male students are more addicted to social media platforms than females.
- The school streams are more likely to report significantly different levels of social media addiction among Moroccan adolescent students.

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D. Participants

The participants in this study were 200 Moroccan adolescent students from different high schools in the region of Meknes. For time and financial constraints, the study made use of convenience sampling to reach informants and collect data about the issue under study.

200 Moroccan teenagers from several high schools in the Meknes region took part in this study. Convenience sampling was used in the study to reach informants and get information about the topic under study due to time constraints and financial limitations.

E. Instrument

The instrument used to collect data was a survey which was administered in a face-to-face setting. The survey included three demographic questions, along with six questions related to participants' social media common practices. Additionally, the last twenty items of the survey were adopted from the Internet Addiction Test (IAT), developed by Dr Kimberly Young whose consent was solicited and thankfully obtained. Instead of measuring Internet Addiction in general, various adjustments were made to enable the measurement of social media addiction among Moroccan adolescent students, in particular. The test's 20 items evaluate mild, moderate, and severe levels of social media addiction. The test reliability was re-verified and was found to be .91.

F. Data Collection

Statistical Package for Social Science 23.0 (SPSS 23.0) was used to process the collected data. A series of statistical operations were performed to produce and display both descriptive and inferential statistical results.

IV. RESULTS

In this part, data received from the questionnaire survey were thoroughly analyzed and clearly presented.

Descriptive statistics revealed that 45.5% of the participants were females and 54.5% were males. 1.5%, 13.5%, 46.5% and 38% of the participants were respectively fifteen, sixteen, seventeen and eighteen years old. Moreover, when participant students were asked about their educational stream; Sciences came at the top of the list with 38%, followed correspondingly by Art and Humanities (37%) and Economics (24.5%). Furthermore, 81.5% of the respondents said that they use their smart phones when they want to connect to social media accounts, 12% said that they use their computers, and only 6.5% said they use their tablets. It was reported that Facebook has the largest share among the social media platforms that participants utilize the most (98.5%). It was then followed by WhatsApp (91.5%) and YouTube (90%), with Twitter (7%) coming in last. (Fig 1)

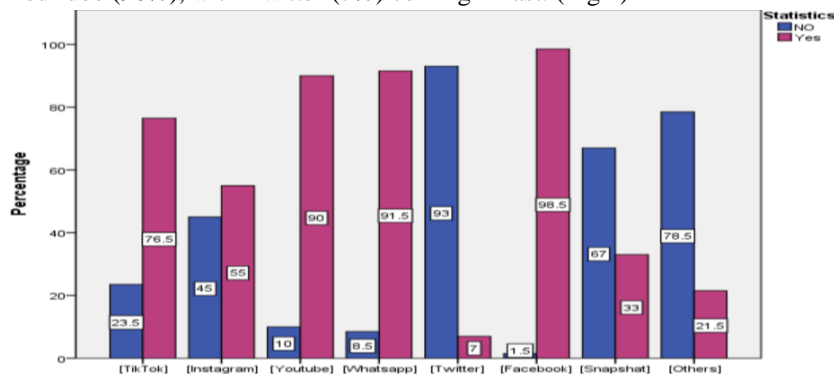


Fig. 1. The three most frequently used social media platforms

It was a little unexpected to know how much time respondents spend on social media platforms. 27.5% of them declared that they use social media for more than three hours a day, 45% responded to three hours, 19% responded to two hours and 3.5% responded to one hour, whereas only 5% use them for less than one hour a day. This assures that spending social media for such a long time surely impacts their lives in one way or another. (Fig 2)

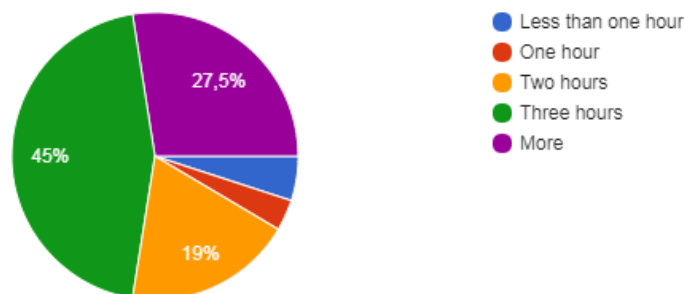


Fig. 2. Average amount of time spent on social media

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It was reasonable to ask respondents about their online habits given their admission that they often spend a lot of time on social media. The results showed that most, if not all, participants utilize social media as a medium for communication and keeping in touch with their other loved ones. Participating in entertainment-related activities ranks second in terms of what draws users' attention. The third thing they find exciting is keeping up with the most recent news, particularly stories that are related to social issues. On the contrary, they did not exhibit enough interest in subjects relating to education, economics, politics, and science. (Fig 3)

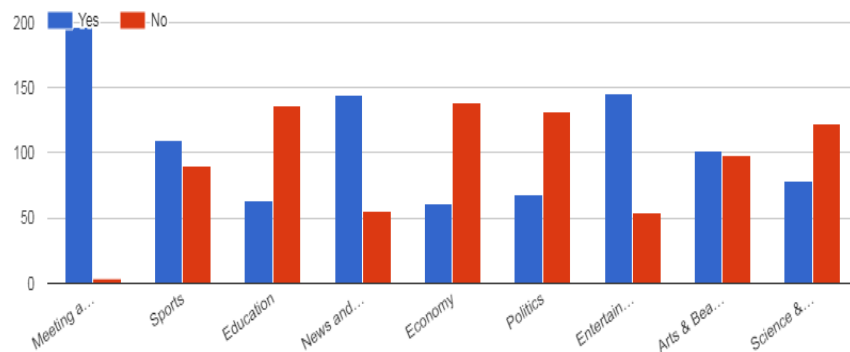


Fig. 3. Students' interests when using social media platforms

The table below shows that the mean score for participants' level of social media addiction is moderate ($M= 53.94$), and the standard deviation is slightly over average ($SD= 14.51$), indicating that scores are not centered around the mean. (Table1)

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Total	200	16,00	88,00	53,94	14,51
Valid	200				
Missin	00				

The percentage of participants' students who are addicted to social media is more easily understood via the pie chart. 11% of them are severely addicted. They are unable to successfully control how they use social media. There are 61% who are moderately addicted. This indicates that they frequently encounter problems because of their use of social media. Average or MILD users of social media make up 24%. They have sufficient control over their usage even if they are more prone to use social media for extended periods of time on occasion. However, the test results showed that 3.5% of participants are not social media addicts; they tend to use them infrequently since they do not rely on them for day-to-day tasks. (Fig 4)

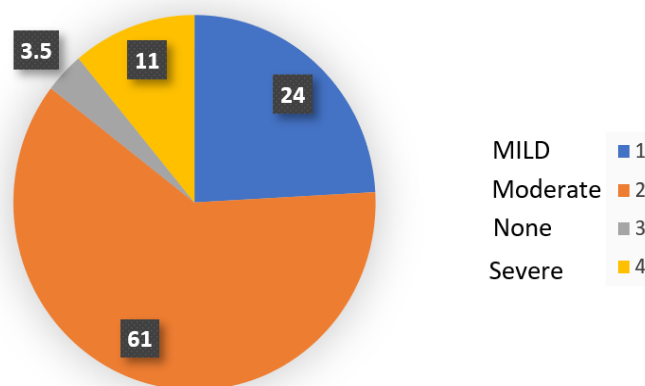


Fig. 4. Levels of students' social media addiction

An independent-samples T-test was run to determine if there is a difference in the level of social media addiction between males and females. The test revealed no difference between Males ($M= 55.11$, $SD= 12.03$) and Females ($M= 52.54$, $SD= 16.97$) in terms of the level of addiction to social media platforms, $M = 2.56$, 95% CI[-1.49 , 6.61] , $T(198) = 1.24$, $p = .21$.

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A one-way Anova test was conducted to see if there is a difference in the level of social media addiction across participants' educational streams. Participants were categorized into three groups. (Group 1: Sciences; Group 2: Arts and Human Sciences; Group 3: Economics). The test showed that there is a statistically significant difference at the $p < .05$ level among the mean scores of the three groups: $F(2, 197) = 3.12, p = .04$. Even if a statistical significance is reached, the actual difference in mean scores between the groups was quite small. The effect size, calculated using eta squared, was .08. Post-hoc comparisons using the games-Howell (homogeneity of variance not assumed) test indicated that the mean score for Group 1 ($M = 51.62, SD = 14.97$) was significantly different from Group 3 ($M = 58.14, SD = 12.55$). The other groups did not differ significantly from one another (group 1 vs. group 2; Group 2 vs. group 3). To put it differently, adolescent students who belong to the sciences stream score dissimilarly from those who are doing economics when it comes to their level of social media addiction.

V. DISCUSSION

The findings of this survey suggest that Facebook is the social media platform most frequently used by Moroccan adolescent students, at least in the Meknes region. This is consistent with the outcomes of several previous research (Murat KIRIK, 2015; Dau, 2015; and Thapa, 2017), which explains that this platform provides specific features that draw the interest of adolescent students. However, it was noted that Twitter came in last on the list, indicating that the services it provides do not fit their preferences (Kollewe, 2009).

The results also showed that students regularly engage in activities like socializing, having fun, and keeping themselves updated about what is going on in the world. This goes in line with the research finding of (Al-Jubayer, 2013; Omekwu et al, 2014; Dau, 2015; and Thapa, 2017), which all emphasized the point that teens use social media principally for social reasons. Surprisingly, topics related to education, economics, politics, and science do not receive enough attention from the part of adolescent students when they go online.

As for the measurement of the adolescent students' social media addiction, the study generally reported a moderate level of addiction. The outcome was relatively consistent with (Deniz & Gürültü, 2018; Simsek et al., 2019; Otu, 2015). Dissimilarly, an investigation conducted by Alejandrino et al. has drawn attention to a severe level of social media addiction among senior high students in Philippines (2018). The results of the present study allow us to conclude that social media addiction does exist in Morocco, but not to an alarmingly high degree. Teenagers there frequently rely on social media to fulfill their needs and desires. However, this needs to be dealt with straight away to prevent further escalation. Initiating a variety of social media literacy trainings and programs will, therefore, help optimize their daily online experiences. Finally, the study has demonstrated a statistically significant difference between students' levels of social media addiction based on their chosen academic path. The same was noted in the findings of (Alejandrino et al., 2018; Simsek et al., 2019). The participants' gender, on the other hand, did not show any statistically significant differences (Kirik, Arslan, etinkaya, & Gül, 2015).

VI. CONCLUSION

The social media phenomenon is gradually gaining ground in the Moroccan context, especially among adolescents who are said to be, by excellence, pure digital citizens. Their daily use of this technological outlets may result in positive outcomes, but the act of exaggeratedly and carelessly using them may pose a variety of challenges regarding their physical, psychological, and social lives. In line with this, this study found that people who use social media for a long time have considerable levels of social media addiction. Differently put, the over-reliance on social media leads to a detrimental impact, which may potentially increase in the years to come. This gives credits to the premises of both Uses and Gratification Theory and Media Systems Dependency theory. For this reason, there should be a serious interest in developing effective working mechanisms that strive at preventing, diagnosing, and treating such an addiction. There should be a complete involvement from the part of policy makers, parents, educators, and civic community in the process of preparing a new generation of social media literates who are capable to take utmost benefits from web 2.0 technology and reduce its undesirable adversities.

The study has some limitations that should not go uncited. It was constrained in terms of the number of participants involved and the processes used to choose them. This may have influenced the findings' generalizability. The study also confined itself to only looking into the existence or absence of social media addiction in the Moroccan environment. Future research ought to delve further into qualitative data to have a better understanding of the causes of social media addiction and its effects on adolescents' lives.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

With regards to the manuscript funding and ownership, the author has no conflict of interests.

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