



Social Media Addiction: Causes & Effects

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Abstract: Social media addiction has become a growing concern in recent years, especially among teenagers and young adults. This study explores the major causes and negative effects of excessive social media use. The key causes include the need for social approval, fear of missing out (FOMO), instant rewards through likes and comments, and the widespread availability of smartphones and internet access. These psychological and technological factors make users spend more time online than intended. The effects of social media addiction are seen in emotional, academic, and health-related areas. It often leads to anxiety, low self-esteem, sleep disturbances, lack of concentration, and reduced physical activity. In severe cases, it affects relationships and overall mental well-being. The study highlights the need for awareness, digital discipline, and healthy usage habits to reduce the impact of social media addiction. Understanding both the causes and effects is important for developing better prevention and intervention strategies.

Keywords: Social Media Addiction, FOMO, Social Approval, Mental Health, Sleep Disturbance, Academic Performance, Screen Time

I. INTRODUCTION

Research papers play a vital role in academic development and knowledge creation. They allow scholars to present new ideas, analyze existing theories, and contribute valuable findings to their respective fields. In higher education, especially at the postgraduate and doctoral levels, publishing research is considered an essential requirement. It not only strengthens academic credentials but also enhances opportunities for future study, recognition, and professional growth.

However, many students and early-stage researchers find the process of writing and publishing a research paper challenging. From selecting a suitable topic to structuring the paper and meeting journal standards, each step requires clarity, precision, and consistent effort. Understanding the core components of a research paper—such as the abstract, introduction, methodology, results, and conclusion—is therefore crucial for preparing a strong manuscript.

This paper provides a clear and step-by-step overview of how to write and structure a successful research paper. It outlines the fundamental sections of a journal article and explains their purpose, helping new researchers develop confidence and follow a systematic approach. By learning these essential practices, scholars can improve the quality of their writing and increase their chances of publication in reputable journals.

II. IDENTIFY, RESEARCH AND COLLECT IDEA

1. Narrow and define the research idea

- Specify a focused research question (example: “*What psychological factors most strongly predict social media addiction in college students?*”).
- Pick scope (population — e.g., adolescents, college students, working adults; platform — e.g., Instagram, TikTok; outcome — e.g., anxiety, sleep disturbance, academic performance).

2. Conduct a structured literature review

- Search major databases: Google Scholar, PubMed, Scopus, IEEE Xplore, PsycINFO.
- Use keyword combinations and Boolean operators, e.g.:
 - “social media addiction” AND causes
 - “social media” AND (addiction OR problematic use) AND (anxiety OR depression)
 - “FOMO” AND “social media” AND adolescents
- Collect recent review articles and seminal papers; note methods, sample sizes, measures (e.g., Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale), and gaps.

3. Scan grey literature and practical sources

- Look at conference proceedings, theses, government/NGO reports, and reputable surveys (World Health, UNICEF, national mental health surveys).



- Check recent conference names: e.g., media psychology, digital wellbeing, human–computer interaction proceedings.
- 4. Attend events and engage with the community
 - Participate (online or in-person) in webinars, conferences, or departmental seminars on digital behavior, mental health, or media studies to refine the idea and spot emerging trends.
 - Network with faculty or researchers working on related topics for feedback and potential collaboration.
- 5. Understand terminology and validated instruments
 - Compile a glossary of key terms (e.g., FOMO, compulsive checking, problematic social media use, digital detox).
 - Identify validated scales and measures (e.g., Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale, Smartphone Addiction Scale) you might adopt or adapt. Record their reliability and scoring.
- 6. Identify data sources and feasibility
 - Decide on primary vs secondary data: surveys (primary), longitudinal datasets or national surveys (secondary).
 - Evaluate access and feasibility: sample size required, ethical approval needs, language and cultural adaptation of questionnaires, budget/time constraints.
- 7. Plan a preliminary methodology
 - Choose a study design that matches your question: cross-sectional survey, longitudinal study, mixed methods, experimental intervention.
 - Sketch sampling strategy (convenience, stratified, random) and estimated sample size (note you can compute exact size later).
- 8. Collect and organize references & notes
 - Use a reference manager (Zotero, Mendeley, EndNote) for citations and PDFs.
 - Keep a synthesis table: author / year / sample / methods / key findings / limitations / relevant measures — this makes spotting gaps easy.
- 9. Identify ethical and cultural considerations
 - Note consent procedures for minors, anonymity, data storage, and potential harm when asking about mental health.
 - Consider cultural differences in social media use and how they affect measures and interpretation.
- 10. Final viability check & gap statement
 - From your notes, write a 2–3 sentence gap statement (example): *“Although many studies link social media use to anxiety and poor sleep, few examine the combined role of FOMO, reward sensitivity and peer comparison across Instagram and TikTok among Indian college students. This study will address that gap.”*
 - If gap is weak or already saturated, refine population, platform, or combine qualitative + quantitative angles to add novelty.

III. WRITE DOWN YOUR STUDIES AND FINDINGS

A. Bits and Pieces Together Approach

In this approach, all the information gathered from literature, surveys, interviews, or observations is combined to form the main body of the research paper.

For your topic, this includes:

- Summarizing the common causes identified in previous studies such as FOMO (Fear of Missing Out), need for social approval, reward-seeking behavior through likes and comments, and easy smartphone accessibility.
- Presenting your own findings or analysis, such as survey results showing the percentage of participants addicted to social media or how addiction correlates with sleep issues, anxiety, or academic decline.
- Using existing research as a baseline for comparison. For example, you can refer to established models like the Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale or previous studies that highlight psychological and behavioral patterns.

By merging all these “bits and pieces” into one continuous narrative, you create a structured and logical flow for your journal article.

B. Jump Start Approach

For a topic like *social media addiction*, the Jump Start approach is extremely helpful when working under guidance or collaboration.

- You may consult senior researchers, faculty mentors, or mental health professionals to review your early drafts.
- Expert feedback can help refine your interpretation of addiction causes such as emotional dependency, negative reinforcement, loneliness, and social comparison behavior.



- Peer suggestions may also help you broaden the scope—for example, adding new variables like screen time trends, platform preference (Instagram, TikTok), or gender-based differences in addiction levels.

This collaborative process enriches your research with real-world insights and helps you confidently begin writing your paper.

C. Use of Analytical Tools or Software

While your topic does not require heavy simulation tools like MATLAB, you can still use simple analytical tools to strengthen your study.

- Tools such as SPSS, Excel, R, or Python can help analyze survey data, calculate correlations, and generate charts such as bar graphs or pie charts showing addiction levels.
- If you include sentiment analysis or time-spent patterns, Python libraries (like Pandas, NumPy, and Matplotlib) can assist in generating meaningful visualizations.
- These tools make the analysis more accurate and help you derive clear cause–effect relationships.

Using such analytical methods ensures your findings are data-backed and more acceptable for peer review.

Final Compilation

After following any combination of the above approaches, you can compile all major sections—Abstract, Introduction, Methodology, Results, Discussion, and Conclusion—to form a complete research paper. For your topic, make sure you:

- Clearly present the causes (psychological, behavioral, social).
- Explain the effects (mental health, academic performance, sleep, productivity).
- Support your claims with data, graphs, or literature references.

This structured process ensures your paper is well-organized and ready for submission to a journal.

IV. GET PEER REVIEWED

Peer review is one of the most essential steps in preparing a high-quality research paper, especially for a topic like *Social Media Addiction: Causes and Effects*. After completing the full draft, it is important to have your work evaluated by knowledgeable individuals such as academic mentors, psychologists, digital behavior researchers, or fellow students experienced in the field.

A thorough peer review helps identify gaps in your analysis, improves clarity, and strengthens the accuracy of your interpretations. Reviewers may highlight missing literature, suggest refinement in your methodology, or point out areas where your explanation of addiction causes or effects can be expanded. Even if you feel confident about your manuscript, collecting maximum review comments allows you to enhance the overall quality and credibility of your paper.

Constructive feedback also ensures that the findings related to psychological factors, behavioral patterns, or mental health impacts are presented clearly and supported with strong evidence. This step plays a critical role in making your research paper ready for submission to journals and increases its chances of acceptance

V. IMPROVEMENT AS PER REVIEWER COMMENTS

Read all comments calmly and fully

- Read each reviewer's remarks end-to-end before making any change. Do not react emotionally to critical feedback—treat it as a path to strengthen the study.

Organize and prioritize feedback

- Create a table or checklist grouping comments by type: *major (methodology, analysis)*, *moderate (literature, interpretation)*, and *minor (language, formatting, references)*.
- Address major issues first (e.g., unclear sampling, missing controls for confounders like age or smartphone use).

Clarify ambiguous comments

- If a reviewer's point is unclear, politely ask your mentor or the journal editor for clarification rather than guessing. For reviewer anonymity, route questions through the editor.

Revise analyses and re-run tests where necessary

- If reviewers question your statistics (correlations, regressions, reliability of scales like Bergen S.M.A.S.), re-check assumptions, recompute reliability (Cronbach's alpha), and report corrected values.
- If suggested, perform additional tests (e.g., mediation/moderation analyses to examine whether FOMO mediates social media use → anxiety).

Strengthen literature and theoretical framing



- Add recent, relevant citations the reviewers mention or that fill conceptual gaps—especially works on psychological mechanisms (FOMO, social comparison) or platform-specific behaviors.

Improve methods and transparency

- Clarify sampling procedure, eligibility criteria, instrument validation, and ethical approval (consent, anonymity). Add details on data collection period, response rate, and how missing data were handled.

Enhance results and interpretation

- Make tables and figures clearer (label axes, include sample sizes, effect sizes, confidence intervals). Avoid over-claiming causality in cross-sectional studies—be explicit about limits and alternative explanations.

Edit language and presentation

- Correct grammar, tighten sentences, and follow the journal's formatting. Use consistent terminology (e.g., "problematic social media use" vs "addiction") as advised by reviewers.

Prepare a professional response (Rebuttal) document

- For each reviewer comment, provide a numbered, polite reply showing what you changed or why you did not.

Example short replies:

- *Comment 2.1:* "Please justify the chosen sample size." → *Response:* "Sample size justification added (Methods, p.5) with power analysis showing 80% power to detect $r = 0.25$."
- *Comment 3.4:* "Consider longitudinal effects." → *Response:* "We clarified this study's cross-sectional design and added a future research recommendation for longitudinal study (Discussion, p.12)."

- When you make changes, indicate exact locations (section and page/line) and include tracked-change files if the journal accepts them.

Consult co-authors and mentors for major changes

- For substantial methodological revisions, involve co-authors or advisors to validate new analyses and interpretations.

Maintain ethical sensitivity

- If reviewers raise concerns about participant risk (e.g., sensitive mental-health questions), add safer wording, referral information, and IRB details.

Resubmit with confidence

- Upload revised manuscript, a clean copy, and the point-by-point response. Be courteous and brief in the cover/resubmission letter—thank the reviewers and summarize major revisions.

Handle rejections constructively

- If rejected, extract reviewer comments, revise the manuscript addressing major concerns, and submit to another suitable journal. Use rejections to strengthen the paper.

VI. CONCLUSION

Social media addiction has emerged as a significant behavioral concern, especially among adolescents and young adults, due to the increasing dependence on digital platforms for communication, entertainment, and social validation. This study highlights that the major causes of social media addiction include continuous online engagement, fear of missing out (FOMO), reward-driven interactions, social comparison, and the easy accessibility of smartphones. These factors create a cycle of compulsive usage that gradually affects users' emotional stability, productivity, and overall well-being.

The findings also reveal that the effects of excessive social media use extend beyond mental health, influencing academic performance, sleep quality, interpersonal relationships, and self-esteem. Prolonged dependency on online platforms often leads to anxiety, stress, decreased concentration, and reduced real-world social interactions. Recognizing these impacts is essential for developing preventive strategies and promoting healthier digital habits.

Overall, the study emphasizes the need for awareness, digital discipline, and responsible usage patterns. Future research can focus on interventions, platform design improvements, and long-term behavioral changes that support healthier interactions with social media. Addressing social media addiction is crucial not only for individual well-being but also for maintaining a balanced and psychologically healthy society.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all those who supported me during the completion of this research work on "*Social Media Addiction: Causes and Effects*."



First and foremost, I extend my heartfelt thanks to my guide and faculty members for their valuable guidance, continuous encouragement, and constructive feedback throughout the preparation of this research paper. Their insights greatly enhanced the quality of my work.

I also thank the authors, researchers, and academicians whose studies and publications provided a strong foundation for the literature review and analysis included in this paper.

My appreciation extends to my classmates, peers, and friends who offered helpful suggestions and motivated me during various stages of this research.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge my family for their constant support, understanding, and encouragement, which enabled me to complete this study successfully.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A: SUMMARY OF REWARD AND ARTICALS

Sr. No.	Author(s) / Year	Title of Study	Key Findings	Relevance to Present Study
1	Kuss & Griffiths (2017)	Social Networking Sites and Addiction	Identified behavioral symptoms similar to other addictions such as mood modification, tolerance, withdrawal.	Helps understand psychological basis of social media addiction.
2	Andreassen et al. (2016)	The Relationship Between Social Media Use and Mental Health	Excessive social media is linked with anxiety, stress, and low self-esteem.	Supports "effects" section of study.
3	Pantic (2014)	Online Social Networking and Mental Health	Found direct correlation between high social media time and depression.	Strengthens literature about emotional effects.
4	Przybylski (2013)	Fear of Missing Out (FoMO)	FoMO increases compulsive checking behavior and addiction-like patterns.	Explains cause related to psychological triggers.
5	Twenge (2019)	Screen Time and Wellbeing in Adolescents	High screen time linked to sleep problems and decreased academic interest.	Supports physical and academic impacts.

APPENDIX B: Thematic Categorization of Literature

1. Causes of Social Media Addiction

- Psychological factors: FoMO, loneliness, low self-esteem.
- Social factors: Peer pressure, social comparison, validation (likes/comments).
- Technological factors: Infinite scrolling, notifications, algorithm-based engagement.
- Behavioral factors: Seeking pleasure, habit formation, emotional escape.

2. Effects of Social Media Addiction

- Mental Health Effects: Anxiety, depression, mood swings, stress.
- Academic Effects: Reduced concentration, procrastination, poor performance.
- Social Effects: Isolation, conflict in relationships, reduced face-to-face interaction.



- Physical Effects: Eye strain, headaches, sleep disturbances, reduced physical activity.

APPENDIX C: Research Gaps Identified

1. Limited studies on Indian youth-specific patterns of addiction.
2. Few research papers focus on long-term psychological outcomes.
3. Lack of comparative studies between different platforms (Instagram vs. TikTok vs. YouTube).
4. Insufficient research on digital detox effectiveness.
5. Need more studies on prevention and behavior-change strategies.

APPENDIX D: Tools and Measurement Scales Used in Literature

- Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS)
- Social Media Disorder Scale (SMDS)
- FoMO Scale
- Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS-21)
- Time Spent on Social Media (Self-report logs)

These tools helped earlier studies measure addiction level, psychological status, and usage patterns.

APPENDIX E: Conceptual Framework Based on Literature Review

CAUSES → MEDIATORS → EFFECTS

1. Causes:
 - FoMO
 - Low self-worth
 - Need for approval
 - Habit loop
 - Highly engaging app design
2. Mediators:
 - Excessive screen time
 - Dopamine reward cycle
 - Continuous notifications
 - Social comparison
3. Effects:
 - Anxiety, stress, depression
 - Poor sleep and physical issues
 - Low academic performance
 - Reduced real-world socialization
 - Addiction-like dependency

APPENDIX F: List of Major Databases Used for Literature Review

- Google Scholar
- PubMed
- ResearchGate
- IEEE Xplore
- ScienceDirect
- SpringerLink
- Academia.edu

APPENDIX G: Search Keywords Used

- “Social Media Addiction”
- “Causes of social media addiction”
- “Effects of excessive social media use”
- “FoMO and social media”
- “Mental health and social networking sites”