

# Social Networking Sites Addiction and Psychological Distress

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## Abstract

**In current rapid development of digital technology era, social network site (SNS) has become one of the most popular mobile services by providing a plethora of services for their users, more and more young people are walking on the edge of SNS addiction. Therefore, the antecedents and potential negative outcomes of SNS addiction have been explored in a large number of domains. However, limited attention has been paid to the relation between SNS addiction and people's psychological distress and its relationship between fatigue. Therefore, the present study discussed the effect of SNS addiction on individuals' psychological distress, as well as the effects of fatigue between SNS addiction and psychological distress.**

## Keywords

**Social Networking Sites Addiction; Fatigue; Psychological Distress.**

## 1. Introduction

As one of the basic applications in the Internet age, social networking sites (such as Facebook, etc.) are favored by people and have a large number of user groups. Relevant data shows that the usage of china mainstream social networking sites-WeChat and Qzone in the overall netizens reached 85.8% and 67.8% respectively, and social networking sites have become increasingly popular among young people(CNNIC, 2016). Social networking sites(SNSs) can provide users with an interactive platform by sharing personal information and pictures and obtaining feedback from other users, with strong user stickiness(Nesi & Prinstein, 2015). It is notable that SNSs has recently evoked questions germane to negative consequences on youth's lives(Ahn, 2011). As SNS is widely used worldwide, social networking sites have become an essential element in undergraduate students' daily lives, frequent use of social networking sites may lead to addiction to social networking sites(Alloway et al., 2013; Hong et al., 2014; Wu et al., 2013). Therefore, the negative impact of social networking addiction on individual psychosocial adaptation has gradually become the focus of researchers. A recent study by (Tandoc et al., 2015) have examined the effects of SNS addiction on students' mental health.

## 2. SNS Addiction and Psychosocial Distress

SNS addiction is defined as "being overly concerned about SNSs, to be driven by a strong motivation to log on to or use SNSs, and to devote so much time and effort to SNSs that it impairs other social activities, studies/job, interpersonal relationships, and/or psychological health and well-being"(Andreassen & Pallesen, 2014). Moreover, SNS addiction is a problem among users of all kinds, as well as for ordinary people, who will be influenced psychologically, physically and also socially impacted their lives(Ünal-Aydın et al., 2020). It has been shown that the symptoms of SNS addiction are similar to other addiction symptoms, which has six typical characteristics including salience, conflict, tolerance, withdrawal, relapse, and mood modification(Kuss & Griffiths, 2011). Essentially different from spending too much time on social networking sites, SNS addicts disfavor anything that interferes with social networking.

Even if the behavior leads to undesirable consequences, such as insomnia or relationship conflict, the SNS addict adhere to the behavioral pattern, in parallel to other addictive behaviors (Andreassen et al., 2012).

In accordance with the biopsychosocial framework for the etiology of addictions and the syndrome model of addiction, it turned out that the symptoms experienced by those addicted to using SNSs are similar to those experienced by those addicted to substances or other behaviors (Echeburúa & Corral, 2010). In line with this argument, students who are addicted to SNS excessively pay attention to SNS driven by strong motivation to log on or use SNSs, and devote a lot of time and energy to it (Andreassen, 2015). The nature of this social monitoring may be leading to the emergence of compulsive checking behaviors and excessive engagement in social media, and therefore, to negative psychological consequences such as anxiety, depression, and stress. Research further illustrated that excessive SNS-use was predictive for heightened internalizing problems and it also has been associated with high psychosocial distress (Müller et al., 2016).

### 3. SNS Addiction, Fatigue and Psychosocial Distress

Besides, researchers have illustrated that although SNS could provide a new channel for self-expression and connectivity and satisfy college students' need for belonging, excessive use of SNS may lead to adverse outcomes. Previous studies reveal that SNS addicts have less involvement in real-life communities, and the symptoms of mood swings and withdrawal experienced by SNS addicts could induce psychological distress. Moreover, emotion regulation is another important factor implicated in SNS addiction, psychological distress has also been linked to emotional regulation as some disorders (e.g., depression and anxiety) can be viewed as the result of difficulties in regulating emotions. Therefore, individuals suffering from SNS addiction may have more psychological distress.

Previous studies exploring the impact mechanism of SNS addiction on psychological distress focused on how addiction on social networking sites affected psychological distress through negative quality of peer interactions or reducing sleep quality. Fewer studies, however, examined the influence of SNS addiction on psychological distress from the perspective of fatigue factors.

Fatigue refers to a subjective state of an imbalance in the availability of inner resources needed to perform physical or mental activities. In the context of the information and communication technologies, fatigue is associated with information overload. There are researches demonstrated fatigue is the most common affective variables regarding the use of information and communication technologies. also found that excessive use of SNSs induces fatigue. For users addicted to social networking sites, since the surge of SNS has brought new types of overload, including too much information, involuntary extensions of social networking, and rapid changes in technological features of SNS, the process of dealing with these overload may be associated with fatigue.

Furthermore, research has showed that people who experienced more fatigue reported lower life satisfaction, which was positively correlated with psychological distress. Fatigue may also lead to the decline of individual self-control ability. According to the theory of psychological resources, self-control is an important cognitive resource, the lack of self-control ability will affect the evaluation process of individual stress events, which will lead to the decrease of happiness and induce negative emotions, it is reasonable to expect that individuals who experienced more fatigue would have higher psychological distress. In addition, fatigue could play a mediating role in the relation between compulsive SNS use and psychosocial well-being. Therefore, SNS addiction may affect individuals' psychological distress through the effect of fatigue.

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