

SOCIAL NETWORK SITE ADDICTION AND YOGA - Review Article

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ABSTRACT

In the present time where everyone is glued to the screens, SNS addiction has about to become a norm of the present society. This excessive use of social media has turned into an addiction for both young and old. The SNS has many similarities with behaviour and substance addictions. *Yoga*, on the other hand, is a way to bring balance and achieve peace in life. *Yoga* can reduce SNS addiction in the population. *Yoga* is a holistic approach which includes *Asanas* (postures), *Pranayama* (breathing exercise), *Dhyana* (meditation). Studies on *Yoga* suggest that it can bring positive changes in neural physiological and behavioural processes that are associated with addiction.

Keywords: Social Network Site (SNS), *Yoga*

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary world where social life is sought online, it is very difficult to put aside the electronic devices (cell phone, tablet, computer) even for a few hours. The constant beeps of notification from SNS applications have made it very hard to focus on the day to day activities. These trends are changing from excessive use of SNS to SNS addiction.

Phones have become a constant companion of the modern man from morning to evening day to day activities. People do not hesitate in using their smartphones even in the restrooms. In a recent survey in the US, it is found that 80 per cent of men and 69 per cent of women use their phones in the restroom.¹ This prolonged and incessant use of SNS has been insinuated as a behavioural addiction. India has 566 million cell phone users until December 2018 in which 87 percent or 493 million were regular internet users. This number of internet users will reach 627 million in 2019.²

There is very high similarity among drug dependence, behavioural addictions (SNS addiction, sex, exercise, shopping, video game playing etc.).³ Similar to substance-related addiction, behavioural addiction is a disorder that affects the neural circuitry of the brain's reward system.⁴ Recent evidence shows the role of *Yoga* in the management of drug dependence. This parallel is now being used in the management of SNS Addiction. In this paper, an attempt was made to understand recent advancements in the field of SNS addiction and how *Yoga* can be used to address this problem. **Material and Methods:** *Yoga* classics, commentaries, modern literature, research journals were thoroughly studied and then an effort was made to understand the role of *Yoga* in controlling SNS addiction.

Social Network Site Addiction: The first SNS called Six Degrees was started in 1997. This site for the very first time allowed the users to create a profile, a way to

interact with online network of friends and other acquaintances.

Andreassen and Pallesen has defined SNS as “being overly concerned about SNS’s, to be driven by a strong motivation to log on to or use SNS and to devote so much time and effort to SNS that it impairs other social activities, studies, job, interpersonal relationships, psychological health and wellbeing.”⁵ This is in congruence with other addiction’s (chemical/substance) symptoms. chemical and behaviour addicts have seven core symptoms: salience, tolerance, mood modification, conflict, withdrawal problems and relapse.^{6,7}

The SNS addicts spend considerable time on SNS (salience), they get a feeling of wellbeing and forget about their problem and worries (mood modification). With time the time spent on SNS to get the same pleasure increases (tolerance). When stopped from accessing SNS, they experience irritability, stress, become troubled (withdrawal symptoms).

The exorbitant amount of time spent on SNS leads to a reduction of time spent on studies, job and hobbies. They ignore their friends and family members. Thus, health deteriorates, sleep quality falls, the relationship fell apart (conflict). They try to stop or spend less time on SNS but ultimately fails (relapse).

Causes:

1. Personality traits: Personality factors like neuroticism, conscientiousness, impulsivity and narcissism play a role in developing an addiction to social media.^{8,9,11,12} Neuroticism is a state in which a person feels emotions of fear, anxiety, depression and guilt. Neuroticism is related to SNS addiction in a positive way.⁸ Conscientiousness is a personality trait of being careful, efficient, organised, self-disciplined, achieving higher goals this state is inversely related to SNS addiction.^{8,9} Narcissism is defined as “incessantly pursue adoration from others, and to participate in egotistical thinking and behavior”.¹⁰ Narcissism is positively associated with SNS addiction. The tendency to act on impulse is correlated with SNS addiction positively.¹³

2. Inherent psychological needs: Inherent psychological needs like competence, autonomy and relatedness are linked with SNS addiction.^{14,15} The ability to create profiles and successfully garner followers ranging from

few hundreds to millions satisfy the basic psychological needs of competence and autonomy. The need for relatedness means connectedness and being cared for by others is fuelled by positive comments and likes. Research also shows that addiction to SNS occurs due to feeling of loneliness and to reduce it.¹⁶

3. Social skills: The addiction to SNS occurs when a person has poor communication skills. One who cannot represent oneself among his peers prefer a virtual way to communicate which leads to addiction to SNS.¹⁷

4. Rewards: Positive outcomes (likes, shares, comments, followers) on SNS is seen as rewards. This will elicit addiction in the users who have negative perceptions of their selves and equates these rewards with success. If it happened in the past, the behaviour is bound to repeat itself.^{18,19}

5. Environment: The presence of siblings, parents, peers on these SNS has a positive impact on a person’s addiction.¹⁶ When a young adult sees his role model in these SNS his inclination towards these sites increases.

Adverse effects of SNS addiction:

Health: SNS addicts show sleep difficulties²⁰ and decrease in sleep quality.²¹ Study showed link between SNS addiction and Insomnia, its after-effects on the body.

1. Performance:

Studies show SNS addicts have a poor grade and bad performances in academics.²² As a lot of time spent on SNS applications which hampers thinking and disturbs sleep. Ultimately academic performances take nosedive. A study showed loss of job in poor performance at workplace.²³

2. Relational:

Actual relationships suffer as SNS addicts spend time online becoming more irritable, depressed and anxious. The person becomes withdrawn socially and have trouble to cope with social norms.

Yoga: Maharshi Patanjali in second century BC has given *Ashtanga Yoga* in his book *Patanjali Yoga Sutra*. *Ashtanga Yoga* comprises of *Yama* (ethical discipline), *Niyama* (observances), *Asana* (posture), *Pranayama* (breath control), *Pratyahara* (withdrawal of senses), *Dharana* (concentration), *Dhyana* (meditation) and *Samadhi* (self-realisation). Today *Yoga* is

considered as a medicine to body and mind which can help in managing physical, psychological and spiritual aspects of addiction.²⁵ *Pranayama* and *pratyahara* divert a person's attention from the outer world to inner self. *Yoga* helps in achieving control of one's internal self. Meditation involves the engagement of a conscious mental process and disengagement of sensory awareness. Meditation involves union with one's self without ego.²⁶

So, *Yoga* helps in bringing a state of relaxation, which gives the ability to face situations calmly and helps in performing duties with ease.²⁵ *Yoga* brings positive emotions while decreasing negative emotions, depression and anxiety.^{27,28,29} Studies shows that *Yogic* practices increase natural transmitters such as Gamma-aminobutyric acid, serotonin, melatonin, Oxytocin and β endorphins and at the same time decreases stress hormone cortisol.^{30,31} Continuous *Yoga* practice helps in impulse control, better decision making, control over stress and emotions because continuous *Yoga* practice calms limbic system and augments prefrontal cortex functioning.³² The amygdala which is responsible for fear anxiety, stress, post-traumatic stress disorder can be relaxed by continuous *Yogic* practices. There is also a decrease in the size of the amygdala which is evident in fMRI of *Yogic* practitioners.³³

The *yogic* breathing techniques help in calming the nervous system very quickly which results in better control during emotional distress, helps in sound sleep.^{34,35} The *Yoga* practice brings positive changes in lifestyle, helps in better communication with others, increases outdoor recreational activities.³⁶ *Yoga* helps to improve mood and self-regulation skills to tackle stress.³⁷ children and young adult's mental health depends on healthy relations with their teacher, peers and being able to manage their emotions.³⁸ Studies has shown *Yoga's* positive effect in maintaining emotional balance in reducing stress.³⁷

DISCUSSION

SNS addiction is a new kind of behavioural addiction. Which is on the rise because of the deep penetration of the internet in the Indian masses. All the individuals exposed to the internet and networking sites do not

develop SNS addiction. As the factors required for SNS addiction development are embedded in the personality (Neuroticism, Narcissism, Impulsivity etc) of the individual, on his social skills, self-esteem and the environment.

Yoga, on the other hand, can give a solution to almost all these problems. All the negative personality traits can be addressed by *Yama*, *Niyama* and *Pratyahara*. *Yoga* helps in achieving control of one's inner-self and in withdrawal or decreased engagement of the senses.²⁶ So, that material world's rewards do not bring imbalance in thought processes. *Yoga* decreases depression, stress and anxiety^{27,28} which are the basis to engage in virtual networking sites to ease these mal feelings. Poor communication skills which lead an individual towards SNS addiction can be prevented by *Yoga*, as *Yoga* helps in developing better communication skills.³⁶ *Yoga* encourages individuals to go outside and indulge in outdoor activities³⁶. Peer pressure is a cause to engage in unhealthy networking, whose basis is a sense of insecurity, emotional upheaval in young adults and individuals. Performing *Yoga* during emotional distress helps in bringing balance³⁷, positivity and confidence. Thus, helping in reducing peer pressure and ultimately SNS addiction.

CONCLUSION

SNS addiction is increasing rapidly with increase in digitalization, affordable data prices and device availability. *Yoga* can be attributed as a solution to as SNS addiction as *Yoga* helps in attention problem of children. It improves academic performance, brings emotional balance and self-regulation. *Yoga* achieves relaxation because it reduces sympathetic nervous activity. The sympathetic nervous system is activated when a person is subjected to a lot of sensory stimulation (phone, TV and games).

SNS addiction is a menace in the present time. *Yoga* can play a role in its controlling SNS addiction. There, is a need for various clinical studies to assess the effect of *Yoga* on various aspects (physical psychological, behavioural attributes) of SNS addiction with representative samples. Studies are needed to address the

emotional, relational and performance problems of SNS addictions through *Yogic* practices.

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