

RESEARCH PAPER

Addiction Among Adolescents to Social Networking Sites in Malaysia: A Hierarchical Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

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Abstract

Background: Social networking sites (SNSs) have changed the ways that we interact with each other. The use of social networking sites by adolescents is addictive, with numerous negative consequences. Various factors influence social networking sites addiction among adolescents.

Objective: We aimed to determine the prevalence of gender-specific social networking sites addiction among adolescents and the factors influence social networking sites addiction.

Methods: A quantitative, cross-sectional community-based research was conducted by face-to-face interviews among adolescents in all 11 administrative divisions of Sarawak, Malaysia. The multistage cluster sampling technique was followed, with an adolescent selected systematically from each household. An adapted and validated questionnaire, which included 20 items of social networking sites addiction, was used to collect data. We analysed 1344 adolescent's data using IBM SPSS Version 22.0. A partial least square structural path with mediation analysis was done using WarpPLS version 7.0.

Results: Three-quarters of the adolescents (76.2%) used social networking sites, but only two-fifths of them (40.4%) were addicted, with 15% having moderate-severe addiction to social networking sites. The most frequently used social networking sites was YouTube (77.9%), followed by Facebook (75.2%) and Instagram (59.0%). Self-esteem had a negative correlation, while adolescent risk behaviours directly affected social networking sites addiction ($p < 0.001$). The most potent predictors for social networking sites addiction were YouTube, Instagram, and Pinterest ($p < 0.05$).

Conclusion: Tackling risk behaviours and enhancing adolescents' self-esteem would reduce the tendency to be addicted to social networking sites.

Keywords: Adolescents, Addiction, Social networking sites, Social media

Introduction

Ever since its introduction, social networking sites (SNSs) have become a phenomenon that has taken the world by storm, with its usage growing exponentially over the years.¹⁻³ Social networking sites are defined as "Web-based services allowing individuals to create a public or semi-public profile within a limited system, which articulates a list of other similar users whom they share a connection and interest with, and at the same time view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system".^{1,4} Examples of current social networking sites frequently used by people worldwide include Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, YouTube, Instagram, Pinterest, Tumblr, Reddit, and Flickr.

People of all ages use social networking sites, but adolescents are the most avid users, with the prevalence of social networking sites increasing over the years.^{3,5} About 46.4% to 96.8% of the world adolescents were found to have accessed or engaged in social networking sites. However, these statistics varied and may be underestimated.^{2,6-10} Various theories, such as the Uses and Gratification (U & G) theory, examined adolescents' needs and motives for social networking sites consumption. The Prototype Willingness Model, which predicted the adolescents' willingness to engage in risky online activities, and the planned behaviour theory, which described the usage of social networking sites by the adolescents as positive behaviour, have been linked to the phenomenon of social networking sites usage by the adolescents.² Social networking sites' usage is a double-edged sword, as their usage was assistive from certain aspects but detrimental from other aspects.

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