

# Anti-Social Media: Implications of Social Media in the Form of Stressors on Our Daily Lives

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**Abstract**—This research aims to investigate the role of social media (Snapchat, Facebook, Twitter, etc.) in our daily lives and its implication on our everyday routine in the form of stressors. The study has been validated by a social media survey with 150 social media users belonging to various age groups. The study explores how social media can make an individual anti-social in his or her life offline. To explain the phenomenon, we have proposed and evaluated a model based on social media usage and stressors including burnout and social overload. Results, through correlation and regression tests, have revealed that with increase in social media usage, social overload and burnout also increases. Evidence for the fact that excessive social media usage causes social overload and burnout has been provided in the study.

**Keywords**—Burnout, emotional exhaustion, fatigue, stressors, social networking, social media, social overload.

## I. INTRODUCTION

LIVING in the 21<sup>st</sup> century without the Web and Internet and more precisely, without social networking sites seems to be like living in the Stone Age. Due to the introduction of numerous social networking sites in the early 2000's, our lives are being affected by them in unimaginable ways. Such sites have invisibly become a part of our daily lives serving as a source of reflection of personal identity and a bridge for social interaction. Due to no face-to-face communication involved, individuals tend to portray themselves as they want others to see them. Hence, social media has proved to be an effective *self-wanted* socializing site.

In 1997, the very first social site named *Sixdegrees.com* was established followed by the creation of *Friendster* in 2002 and *MySpace* in 2003. After its introduction in 2003, *LinkedIn* became a famous social networking site among business persons and professionals. Twelve years back, a top social networking site *Facebook* was launched in 2004 for the students of Harvard University up to the time when it was publically accessible in 2006. *Tagged* (2004), *Bebo* (2005), *Twitter* (2006), *Google Plus*, *Pinterest*, *Instagram* and many more websites are part of the shiny cocoon of Social Networking Sites [6]. The amount of Internet users in Pakistan is about 10-15% of the total population. Despite of the low percentage of Internet users, the users of social media consists of 50% of that population. Due to this much higher percentage the corporations have increased their digital market spending by minimum of 45% [12].

Since, the presence of Internet is very compelling for

adolescents, previous researches have shown that the peer pressure developed through online interactions can influence the personality development, self-esteem and self-identity of young adults. The most important and serious concern related to social networking sites is the matter of privacy or disclosure of personal information by users. This disclosure of private information, which sometimes leads to stalking, harassment, and bullying etc., causes serious ramifications on the minds of individuals as they continue to add stress to real life.

Some studies suggest that academic performance of young adults can also be affected by Social Networking Sites. An article, "Too much face and not enough books", revealed the relationship between Facebook usage by individuals and their academic performance [10]. Junco found that time spent on Facebook had a negative relationship with the Grade Point Average of students. In 2010, Kirschner and Karpinski and later on, some other researchers have studied that the addiction and obsession of social networking negatively influences on academic performance [13].

It is evident from the literature mentioned above that various researchers around the world have studied the effects of social networking sites, in different aspects, on lives of people. However, no research has been conducted, to the best of our knowledge, studying the change of social networking sites to (anti)social networking sites in their real meaning. Social media which involves a large number of android apps as well, consuming a greater part of our everyday life, is affecting the time we attach to actual face-to-face interactions or socializations.

As everyone has unlimited access to Internet and various technological gadgets that aid people to engage in social networking, anytime, anywhere in the world; this unlimited worldwide access has paved the way for the excess usage of social networking sites, leaving important marks in one's daily routine. Starting the day from posting a morning selfie on Instagram to ending your day with a late night conversation on WhatsApp, we are under the sword of online technology. With all the advancements, our everyday stress level has also increased with increased liability of staying updated with what is happening online and loss of offline, real interaction with our surroundings.

Based on previous researches and given the dramatic percentage usage of social media across the globe and within the country, social media holds an impact on our daily lives and plays a role of a stress creator. Our current study aims to fill the research gap by studying the footprints of social networking sites in our lives and raising the question that: With thousands of benefits involved for social networking

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lives, have we forgotten the impacts that these social networking sites are having on our daily lives? Has online socializing actually made us an offline anti-social person?

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Usage of Social Media

The term social media is very vast. Some academic researchers and managers often confuse what to include in the term social media and what not to include. In 1979, a discussion system was developed by Tom Truscott and Jim Ellis, students of Duke University. Around 20 years from today, a social networking site “Open Diary” was created by Bruce and Susan Abelson. The worldwide availability of the Internet allowed more sites to emerge including MySpace (2003) and Facebook (2004). The term “Social Media” was coined at that time and emerged quickly. According to Kaplan and Haenlein, virtual worlds are also included in this category. The definition of social media includes both Web 2.0 and User Generated Content [11]. There are various types of social media which includes YouTube, Twitter, Wikipedia and many other social networking sites.

### B. Social Overload

Another kind of stressor which is induced by the usage of social media is known as *Social Overload*. It has been explained as “the kind of stress which is induced by the social environment, in terms of social stimuli, and leads immediately to a situation of being overloaded, the stressor proposed within this research is named social overload” [19].

Social Psychology has been discussing the phenomenon of crowding since 1980’s. According to the study, with the increase in the population of neighborhood, the social interactions of an individual rise accordingly. With increased social interactions and contacts, a person realizes the increased demand of social responsibility (attention) by other individuals, which cause a rise in social overload. McCarthy and Saegert (1978) argues that “high densities contribute to social and cognitive overload by increasing the number of other people with which an individual may have to deal and ... that some experience of them is difficult for the individual to avoid” [19].

### C. Burnout

According to [17], the term *Social Burnout* is defined as “a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization of others, and a feeling of reduced personal accomplishment”. Many researchers have previously contended to differentiate the process of burnout from depression, strain [21], disillusionment [8] etc. However, Leiter proposed that burnout is a process which can be inferred in the framework of stress-strain-coping [14]. The origin of the process of burnout is different kinds of stress. The variables, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization of other and feelings of reduced personal accomplishment predate the term burnout. As reported by Maslach and Jackson, emotional exhaustion is referred to as psychological and physiological strain because of its relation with psychological and physiological processes such as

depression, fatigue, anxiety, irritability so on and so forth [16].

According to [2], Depersonalization is a behavior that an individual acquire in defense of undesirable demands and threats, due to which it is referred to as a psychological strain. Personal accomplishment is related to self-efficacy [4]. Gecas explained that self-efficacy is the combination of the ability well as motivation to be in control. Burnout comprises of following two factors [9]:

#### 1. Emotional Exhaustion

*Emotional exhaustion* has been defined as “feelings of being emotionally overextended” [26]. Emotional exhaustion includes the feeling which imposes an excessive burden on individual who use social media excessively. It is a behavioral stressor whose consequences can lead to high voluntary turnover rate of employees and poor performance in their jobs. Baker & Berenbaum explain that when a person feels unable to perform the job responsibilities, to fulfill the pressing requirements of the job and to cope with a stressful job environment, the feelings of emotional exhaustion rise [3]. Emotional exhaustion leads to negative and less desirable outcomes on the job and can also result in the mental and physical illness of an individual [25].

#### 2. Fatigue

Increased usage of social media results in one of the stressors that is *Fatigue*. It is defined as “an aversive and potentially harmful psychological reactions of the individual to stressful [situations]” [7]. Fatigue is the result of continuous change in technology and one’s social environment. Many studies show that aggression can be a result of mental fatigue. According to [22], mental fatigue fades one’s ability to be involved in thoughtful and vigorous processing which produce impolitic and inconsiderate social behavior, giving rise to conflicts and aggression. When thought process of an individual gets affected, inattentiveness becomes apparent which give rise to the feelings of aggression in adolescents [23].

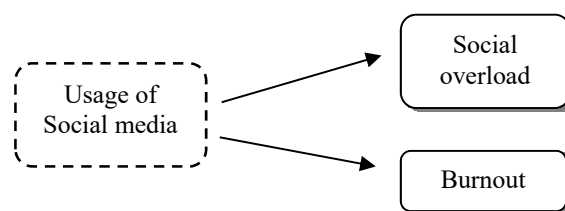


Fig. 1 Theoretical model of the study, Usage of Social Media and Social Overload

The phenomenon of social overload explains that an average person receives a large amount of notifications from his friends, colleagues, family and relatives etc. Most of the notifications received by an individual are trivial, which can cause the feelings of social overload. This phenomenon is the same as the phenomenon of real world, the increased demand for social responsibility results in the feelings of being overloaded.

The virtual space demands the users to fulfill unwanted

social demand, just as they do so in real life, which includes taking care of friends and making them happy. For example, Facebook sends you a notification when any of your friends has his or her birthday which makes it liable for you to send a message of congratulations to your friends online, not because it is demand but because it fulfills your online social responsibility of taking care of a friend. Unconsciously, individuals accept it as their responsibility to help others and to contribute toward the quality life of others. Greater social media addiction results in social overload which includes minor everyday hassles, even if it's replying to a text message only [15]. On the basis of the above mentioned findings, we have developed our second hypotheses as:

H1: Use of social media by an individual causes Social Overload.

#### A. Usage of Social Media and Burnout

No evidence has been found till yet to prove that increased social media usage causes social burnout (exhaustion, cynicism, lack of personal achievement). According to Schumar and Buchwald (2012), social media usage at the workplace helps employees to reduce stress from their tough and lengthy work routine. Many studies show that interacting with family and friends through social media during their work hours helps to decrease social burnout as it provides social support to employees in times of need [20]. The studies conclude that increased social interaction online with family improves their relationships and hence reduces stress.

In contrast to the above mentioned studies, increased social media usage during work can cause more distraction leading to less actual work hours, and thus, affecting the employees' ability to complete their tasks [10]. This is applicable not only for employees but also for all individuals. Also, as individuals have more online interactions, the number of real life interpersonal interaction decreases which leads to depersonalization causing burnout. Online interaction makes it easy to communicate remotely but individuals may lack the motivation to interact in person. Also, increased negative reviews of other's about one's achievements and more achievements by others can help individuals to develop negative self-esteem which can cause decreased personal achievement [15].

#### 1. Usage of Social Media and Fatigue

Gross (2011) has found that interpersonal interaction through social media has proved to be a great source of social fatigue. When people observe what others are doing via their shared stories on various social networking sites, it creates relative comparison. People tend to search for information and photos that relate to them, the most. However, when people are unable to find the related information, they have to go through more and more information to find relevant information which induces social media fatigue [5].

#### 2. Usage of Social Media and Emotional Exhaustion

According to Charoensukmongkol, lack of mindfulness while using social media causes emotional exhaustion. As employees increase their use of social media, they face more

distraction and believe that they are unable to fulfill their job demands and cannot complete their work and end up facing emotional exhaustion [24].

Based on the above mentioned studies, we believe that in this era of technology, when we wake up using phone alarms and the last thing we do before going to bed is to check our phone, the increased use of social media is causing social burnout among individuals. On the basis of the above mentioned findings, we have developed our hypotheses as:

H2a: Use of social media by an individual causes Burnout.

H2b: Use of social media by an individual does not cause Burnout.

### III. METHODS

#### A. Sample Size and Data Collection Procedure

As social media is greatly used in Pakistan, data were collected from 150 individuals who belonged to different categories and age groups in order to generalize our results. The level of study was individual level and the type of study was cross-sectional, as data were collected at one time. The sample included college students, university students, working and non-working class from private and government sectors of Islamabad, Pakistan. The sample included 50% female respondents. The average age of respondents was 20.76 years with standard deviation 2.50.

There were no educational boundaries defined for the respondents as social media, these days, is commonly used by every other person in the country. Also, no institute or organization was specified to collect the data, as social media usage is not bound to institutes or organizations and is widely used for networking throughout the world.

#### B. Measures

##### 1. Social Media Usage

Social media usage was measured using 8-item questionnaire which was initially developed by Andreassan and colleagues. However, this questionnaire was developed to check Facebook addiction level and was named as *Bergen Facebook Addiction Scale* [1]. We modified this questionnaire to tap our variable 'Social Media Usage' for research purposes. The scale we used to check the variable was different from the originally developed scale. A 5-point Likert scale was used to check the variable (1= Strongly Disagree, 5= Strongly Agree). A sample item for this questionnaire is: "I spend a lot of time thinking about the Social Networking Sites that I use or planning how to use them."

##### 2. Social Overload

Social overload was captured with the help of 6-item questionnaire and a 5-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 5=Strongly Agree). The scale was initially developed by Maier et al. [15]. We have adapted the items to fit our context. A sample item for this questionnaire is: "I feel irritated because I take too much care of my friends' well-being on social media."

### 3. Burnout

In order to tap 'Burnout', we used the scale which was initially used by Maier et al. [15]. It is a composition of two scales. The first one focuses on *Emotional Exhaustion* and was introduced by Maslach et al. [18]. The second one addresses emotional as well cognitive irritations which we have considered as *Fatigue*. Both scales were adapted to the context of social media and participants were asked to indicate their answers on a 5 point scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 5=Strongly Agree). A sample item for this questionnaire is: "I feel burned out (exhausted) from using social media".

### IV. RESULTS

We conducted a reliability analysis in order to examine the internal consistency reliability of 25-item Social Media questionnaire. The results revealed that  $\alpha$  value of this scale was above the conventional standards; therefore, this scale was reliably measured in our study.

TABLE I  
 RELIABILITY ANALYSIS

Variable	No. of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Social media usage	8	0.824
Social overload	6	0.826
Burnout	11	0.858

The correlation results for Hypothesis 1 indicated that usage of social media is positively and highly significantly correlated with social overload ( $r = 0.496, p < 0.05$ ). This indicates that individuals who use social media also suffer from stressor of social overload.

The Correlation results also indicated that there is a positive and highly significant relationship between usage of social media and burnout ( $r = 0.460, p < 0.05$ ).

TABLE II  
 CORRELATION ANALYSIS

	1	2	3
1	1		
2	0.496**	1	
3	0.460**	0.627**	1

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) i.e.  $p < 0.05$ . N= 150

Regression analysis supports Hypothesis 1 by revealing that social media usage has positive effect on arise of feeling of social overload ( $\beta = 0.496, p < 0.05$ ). Also, the regression results presented in Table III revealed that social media usage has positive effect on burnout ( $\beta = 0.460, p < 0.05$ ). Hence, hypothesis 2a is supported.

TABLE III  
 REGRESSION ANALYSIS

	Social Overload		Burnout	
	B	R - square	$\beta$	R - square
Social media usage	0.496*	0.246	0.460*	0.211

N=150, \* $p < 0.05$

### V. DISCUSSION

Social media is playing a vital role in our everyday life. With its increasing benefits each passing day, its negative impacts should not be ignored. As we have become more involved in today's digital age, we also need to understand the negative consequences that social media has on routine life. The main objective of this study is to investigate the stressors that social media (Social Networking Sites) add to our daily lives and how those stressors create an impact on our lives.

The results from correlation and regression analysis confirmed that with greater use of social media, social overload and burnout increase with consequences such as fatigue and emotional exhaustion. Firstly, the analysis shows that the individuals for whom excessive use of social media has become part of their everyday routine tend to experience a greater level of social overload as compared to other individuals. With greater numbers of social interactions online, a greater level of social responsibility is felt by individuals, which may or may not involve personal willingness to take that responsibility. The demand for increased social responsibility unconsciously governs the minds of individuals and creates the feeling of social overload.

Moreover, evidence has been found that with the increase in the use of social media, burnout increases. Although a limited use of social media helps us to ignore our problems for a while and relax, increased social media usage can divert us from our actual life. With the increased level of depersonalization in real life, burnout increases. Increased comparison with other's lives online and decreased responses to personal accomplishments can result in fatigue and emotional exhaustion which in results in burnout. Therefore, when using social media on an everyday basis, one must be aware of the stressors that are affecting our lives. Also, one must maintain an optimum level of social media usage to enjoy its benefits and to avoid the stressors and negative consequences.

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