

# Between Habit and Addiction: An Overview of Preliminary Finding on Social Networking Sites Usage among Teenagers

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## ABSTRACT

Social networking sites (SNS) usage have impacted our lives in many ways. Researches on SNS usage mostly were focus on adults compared to teenagers. Nowadays, teenagers are so mesmerize with the SNS applications offered by the provider until they get addicted to it. Yet, SNS addiction is not an isolation process. It started off with high engagement and originated from habit behaviour. This study focuses on exploring and analyzing the usage of SNS among the teenagers in Malaysia specifically in urban area. It also examined the SNS habit and addiction behaviors of the teenagers and emphasized the differences of the behaviors between genders. An online survey form was distributed among the teenagers in urban area. The data were analyzed using SPSS and cross tabulations were constructed to understand the correlation between gender and SNS behaviors. From the analysis, comparisons between genders were done based on the frequency of the SNS habit and addiction behaviors. Based on the preliminary findings, it shows that there are slightly differences between the genders across the behaviors that may have shed some light for other researchers in the niche area.

## CCS Concepts

• Information systems → Social networking sites

## Keywords

Social networking sites; habit behaviour; addiction behaviour; SNS usage.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Social networking sites (SNS) usage is widely used around the world. Since its existence, it has bring some behavioral influences especially for teenagers. The usage of SNS such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat has becoming a trend among the teenagers. It is shaping their identities by changing their social lifestyle [1].

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People are easily to get attracted to new technologies especially if the technologies bring information fast and accurate at the end of their fingers. This is what SNS has offered to the users, where information comes straight to them without even have to face difficulties. This shows how our society really depending on the SNS usage. The engagement with the SNS has bring some advantages such as a fast way to communicate with family and friends; maintain the social relationship by updating their life status; and encourage self-promotion and self-disclosure [2]. Still, spending time too much on the SNS will yield negatives result as well without them knowing it [3]. These positive and negative consequences are caused by the behavioral of the SNS usage. Griffiths [4] has stated that the disproportionate use of SNS has started to worry not just the usage among the adults but also the usage among the teenagers as well.

The attractiveness of SNS features that contribute to the amount of usage is not just based on how many people accessing and using it but also need to take consideration of other descriptive factors. It could be the type of SNS platforms, device used to access the SNS, age, or even types of gender. Apparently, the dark side of SNS usage covers all aspects of a teenager's life involving the psychological, emotional, physical health and also the social growth. According to [5], SNS preferences and amount of SNS usage are different between genders. This paper focuses on two SNS usage behavioral which is habit and addiction among the teenagers in urban area in Malaysia. The paper will discuss an overview of preliminary finding on the SNS usage among the teenagers and also compare the SNS habit and addiction behavior between genders.

## 2. RELATED WORKS

### 2.1 SNS Usage among Teenagers

Previous researches have shown that SNS usages among teenagers are diverse and different between genders. Males use SNS for social compensation and social identity gratification while females use SNS to keep in touch with their families and friends [6]. Females also are very preserved not to expose their personal information compared to males. According to Muller et. al [7] research, even though females are a passionate SNS user, the ones that are really addicted to SNS is among the males. This is opposed with Kuss and Griffiths [8] finding where they have claimed that females are more exposed to SNS addiction. In addition, Kuss and Griffiths have found that males tend to be seriously engaged with SNS games compared to females. This can be related to the reason why males use SNS for social identity gratifications [9]. They felt sense of gratifications when they are able to beat their online games mates during the game match.

Young adults such as university students adopt SNS platforms in order to communicate with friends, encouragement from friends who have SNS account, keep in touch with relatives and families and also planning regular meetings with friends [8]. Students also use SNS to maintain offline relationship while some students prefer the online platform as a medium of communication [10].

SNS use among the teenagers has led to some serious issues such as addiction. However, addiction does not occur by itself. It is formed based on certain circumstances involved with high engagement and habits on the usage of SNS.

## 2.2 SNS Habit

Habit is defined as the result of an automated process in which individuals will pay less attention to their behavioral performance once habit was formed and this kind of formation could be involved with non-reflective cognitive processing [11][12]. The habit formation was based on the characteristic like unintentionally, uncontrollability, lack of awareness and efficiency [13]. It is a repetitive action that happened without consciousness within a specific long-term time frame [14]. Previous studies on habit behavior were more focused on theory and measures of Information System (IS) habit that related to IS continuance intention use. Based on the studies, it can be concluded that if using SNS can becoming a habit, the behavior of continuing using SNS will be mostly control by habit instead of reasoned action.

Previous IS research emphasized that IS usage is mainly influenced by intention. IS continuance has been examined variously as implementation, incorporation and routinization in IS implementation [15]. Many IS continuance research has adopted Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) as a basis theory on how user come to accept and use the technology. The TAM model suggests that perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEOU) are two factors that influence users on how and when they will use when user are presented with new technology.

Limayem [16] has studied three factors that were tested in order to see the relationship with habit, which is satisfaction, frequency of past behavior and comprehensiveness of usage. Her study on IS continuance has found that these three factors are positively correlated with habit. It is also indicated that enjoyment with SNS usage may expedite high engagement. The enjoyment of using SNS also will result of habitual use and when it goes stronger it will potentially lead to addiction. This is in line with [17] study where they argue that the habit of SNS use mediates the transition from normal SNS usage to SNS addiction where the learning process makes the behavior become so automatic that eventually they become uncontrollable.

Turel and Serenko [18] believed that perceived enjoyment have impacted on IS study, not only positive impact that may improve and build up user experience with the system but also adverse consequences that they termed as “bad habit” or known as technology addiction. Technology addiction can be originated from the development of strong IS use. According to them, technology addiction can be manifested from several core symptoms, which is conflict, withdrawal, relapse and reinstatement, and behavioral salience. In their study, they have compared three types of addiction, which is computer and video games; online auction websites; and SNS and put it in context based on the core symptoms. From the comparison, they have identified the similarity of technology addiction with the core addiction symptoms. Since the SNS demonstration have similar addiction with the game addiction such as producing an

immediate social conflicts and damages, they have considered to investigate high engagement as a result to enjoyment.

## 2.3 SNS Addiction

SNS addiction creation are based on three theoretical model which is the cognitive behavioural model; the social skill model; and socio-cognitive model [19]. This formation lead to a suggestion that people who turn to SNS to release stress or depression confront with the evolution from a regular SNS use to problematic SNS use [17]. LaRose [20], stated that a regular SNS user tend to use SNS intermittently which then causes problems at work or study or even ignore relationship with their family and friends. In other words, SNS usage provides satisfaction and self-efficacy for those who are not good at interacting face to face

According to Griffiths [21], any behavior such as social networking usage that meet the six elements of addiction behavior can be defined as addiction. The description of six elements is as below:

1. Salience – Salience behavior triggers when we are tenaciously dwell on about using the SNS and enthusiastically waiting to use it in no time. It happens when SNS plays an important role in our lives, which affects not only our thoughts but emotions and behaviors as well.
2. Mood Modification - It is a subjective experience reported as changing the mood such as feelings of escape or upset as a consequence of engaging in the social networking and can be seen as a coping strategy.
3. Tolerance - The ability or willingness to tolerate with the amount of time spent daily on social networking in order to accomplish the previous mood modification effect.
4. Withdrawal Symptoms - The existence of unpleasant feeling such as negative emotions and frustration when people unsuccessful to withdraw the usage of social network for a particular reason.
5. Conflict - Conflict also can be triggered when people overspend their time on social network. The conflicts can be interpersonal conflict; social conflicts; personal conflicts; or conflicts from within the individual him or herself.
6. Relapse - In this context, relapse defined as return to a state of earlier patterns of disproportionate social networking after a period of remission.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Data Collection

Considering this is a preliminary data collection, an online survey was developed by the researcher. Next, the link was distributed among parents in urban areas. After 3 weeks of data collection, sixty teenagers responded to the survey. 70% female and 30% male have answered the questions. The data then was analysed using the SPSS software.

### 3.2 Measures

The questionnaire consisted of three sections which contains demographic information of the teenagers, evaluate the use of SNS and evaluate the habit and addiction behavior of SNS usage.

**Table 1. Construct measurement**

Construct	Items
SNS HABIT	SH1: Using this SNS has become automatic to me.

(SH)	SH2: Using this SNS is natural habit to me. SH3: When I want to interact with friends and relatives, using SNS is an obvious choice for me.
SNS Addiction (SA)	SA1: I spend a lot of time thinking about social networking sites or planning to use it. ( <i>Salience</i> ) SA2: I urge to use social networking sites more and more. (Urge means strong desire to use social networking sites.) ( <i>Tolerance</i> ) SA3: I use social networking sites in order to forget about personal problem. ( <i>Mood modification</i> ) SA4: I tried to cut down on the use of social networking sites without success. ( <i>Relapse</i> ) SA5: I become restless or troubled if I have been prohibited from using social networking sites. ( <i>Withdrawal</i> ) SA6: I used social networking sites so much that it has had a negative impact on my studies. ( <i>Conflict</i> )

The survey was design based on two separate studies which was taken from Andreassen, Torsheim, Brunborg and Pallesen [22] and Limayem and Hirt [23]. The Cronbach's alpha of this scale was 0.61 for addiction scale and 0.74 for habit. Table 1 shows the construct measurement for SNS habit and SNS addiction. This survey was design to capture initial data on the habit, and addiction of SNS platform that they use most.

## 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Demographic Profiles

The age of the respondents ranged from 10 to 19 years. 58% of the total respondents fell in the age group of 18-19 years. 32% for 19 years and another 10% is below than 18 years. 70% respondents are females and 30% are males. 93% of the respondents claimed to use SNS more than 3 years.

Based on Table 2 88% use SNS on daily basis and 39% of them used SNS more than 2 hours. The most used SNS or perhaps the most popular platform among the teenagers is Instagram (30%), followed by Facebook (21%) and Twitter (15%). This is in line with the most popular online platform among teenagers in United States as in *Pew Research Center Report 2018*, where Instagram and Facebook is among the top four of SNS platforms in 2018 [24].

**Table 2. The usage of SNS**

Variables	N Respondents (N=60)	Percentages (%)
<i>Access &amp; View</i>		
Daily	53	88
Weekly	6	10
Monthly	1	2
<i>Average Time Spend per day</i>		
< 30 minutes	17	28
1 to 2 hour	20	33

> 2 hours	23	39
<i>The Most Used SNS</i>		
Instagram		30
Facebook		21
Twitter		15
Snapchat		10

### 4.2 SNS Habit and Gender

This section will emphasize on the comparison between genders based on the selected SNS habit behavior. The scale measurement for SNS habit is 1=Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4= Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree. Overall mean for SNS habit behavior (SH1, SH2 and SH3) is 3.46, median is 4.00 and mod is 4.00.

**Table 3. Cross tabulation between gender and automatic use**

SH1 (Automatic Use)							
Gender		1	2	3	4	5	Total
Female	<i>f</i>	0	5	5	19	13	42
	%	0.0	11.9	11.9	45.2	31.0	100.0
Male	<i>f</i>	2	4	6	3	3	18
	%	11.1	22.2	33.3	16.7	16.7	100.0
	Total <i>f</i>	2	9	11	22	16	60
	Total %	3.3	15.0	18.3	36.7	26.7	100.0

\**f* = frequency

**Table 4. Cross tabulation between gender and natural habit**

SH2 (Natural Habit)							
Gender		1	2	3	4	5	Total
Female	<i>f</i>	2	6	10	15	9	42
	%	4.8	14.3	23.8	35.7	21.4	100.0
Male	<i>f</i>	1	7	3	6	1	18
	%	5.6	38.9	16.7	33.3	5.6	100.0
	Total <i>f</i>	3	13	13	21	10	60
	Total %	5.0	21.7	21.7	35.0	16.7	100.0

\**f* = frequency

Table 3 shows a contrast result between females and males. According to the percentage of Automatic Use, the results show that females strongly agree (31.0%) or agree (45.2%) that using SNS is automatic to them. Automatic here means something is done or occurring spontaneously, without thinking. Example given in the survey is "Once I reach home after school, automatically I will access my social networking sites". However, for the males, they disagree that using SNS is automatic to them.

As for usage of SNS is a natural habit or vice versa, the result in Table 4 shows that females mostly agree (57.1%) that using SNS is natural for them. As for the males, 44.5% disagree and 39.2% agree that using SNS is natural habit for them.

### 4.3 SNS ADDICTION AND GENDER

This section will elaborate the comparison between females and males on the SNS addiction. The scale measurement for SNS

addiction is 1=Very rarely, 2= Rarely 3 = Sometimes, 4= Often, 5 = Very Often. Overall mean for SNS addiction behavior (SA1, SA2, SA3, SA4, SA5, SA6) is 2.78, median is 3.00 and mod is 3.00.

"I spend a lot of time thinking about social networking sites or planning to use it" is the question that measures salience, one of the SNS addiction behaviors. Table 5 shows that both females and males have an even spread of frequency between rarely, sometimes and often. This probably indicates that both genders actually sometimes and often take the effort and spend their time on thinking and planning to use the SNS.

**Table 5. Cross tabulation between gender and salience**

SA1 (Salience)							
Gender		1	2	3	4	5	Total
Female	<i>f</i>	4	10	13	11	4	42
	%	9.5	23.8	31.0	26.2	9.5	100.0
Male	<i>f</i>	2	2	9	4	1	18
	%	11.1	11.1	50.0	22.2	5.6	100.0
	Total <i>f</i>	6	12	22	15	5	60
	Total %	10.0	20.0	36.7	25.0	8.3	100.0

\**f* = frequency

The same patterns were seen for Tolerance (refer Table 6) where females and males have an event spread of between rarely, sometimes and often. Overall, tolerance behaviour which have the ability to tolerate in spending amount of time using the SNS seems to be randomly affected depending on the individual regardless type of gender.

**Table 6. Cross tabulation between gender and tolerance**

SA2 (Tolerance)							
Gender		1	2	3	4	5	Total
Female	<i>f</i>	2	11	17	8	4	42
	%	4.8	26.2	40.5	19.0	9.5	100.0
Male	<i>f</i>	0	5	7	5	1	18
	%	0.0	27.8	38.9	27.8	5.6	100.0
	Total <i>f</i>	2	16	24	13	5	60
	Total %	3.3	26.7	40.0	21.7	8.3	100.0

\**f* = frequency

A contrast results were seen in mood modification behavior as can be seen in Table 7. Females have a fair distribution of frequency for all scales while males were more to sometimes (38.9%) and rarely (55.5%). It means that males seldom use SNS in order to forget their personal problems contrasting to females which is 35.7% of them were seen to be often used SNS to forget their problems.

**Table 7. Cross tabulation between gender and mood modification**

SA3 (Mood Modification)							
Gender		1	2	3	4	5	Total
Female	<i>f</i>	9	5	13	9	6	42
	%	21.4	11.9	31.0	21.4	14.3	100.0
Male	<i>f</i>	4	6	7	1	0	18
	%	22.2	33.3	38.9	5.6	0.0	100.0
	Total <i>f</i>	13	11	20	10	6	60
	Total %	21.7	18.3	33.3	16.7	10.0	100.0

\**f* = frequency

Table 8 shows the results of Relapse, an addiction behavior that react upon unsuccessful attempt to stop using the SNS. Based on the table below, females have higher percentage of trying to discontinue using SNS compared to males.

**Table 8. Cross tabulation between gender and relapse**

SA4 (Relapse)							
Gender		1	2	3	4	5	Total
Female	<i>f</i>	3	7	19	9	4	42
	%	7.1	16.7	45.2	21.4	9.5	100.0
Male	<i>f</i>	2	4	8	2	2	18
	%	11.1	22.2	44.4	11.1	11.1	100.0
	Total <i>f</i>	5	11	27	11	6	60
	Total %	8.3	18.3	45.0	18.3	10.0	100.0

\**f* = frequency

As for withdrawal and conflict, the results shows that majority both females and males choose rarely for both types of behavior. The teenagers claimed that they rarely become restless or troubled if prohibited from using the SNS. They also claimed that using SNS does not affect their studies

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study concentrates on the SNS usage behavioral focuses on habit and addiction among urban area teenagers in Malaysia. Based on the results, it can be concluded that there are some differences on SNS usage behavioural mostly in habit between genders. Females were found to be more prone on choosing strongly agree in most of the habit behavior compared to males. However, most of SNS addiction behaviors showed some even spread across the scales regardless the gender. To conclude, females were seen to be more influenced by the behaviors either habit or addiction compared to males. This finding is hoped to attract attention of the scholar in the niche area with bigger sample and advanced statistical analysis

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