

Life Skills in the Era of Intelligent Feeds: Assessing the Impact of AI-Driven SNS Addictive Behaviour among Students

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Abstract: *Artificial Intelligence has transformed social media from a passive communication space into an AI-driven engagement ecosystem. On platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube, algorithms no longer merely curate user-generated content; they personalise feeds, stimulate continuous interaction, and intensify user engagement through predictive and adaptive mechanisms. In this context, the present study examines the relationship between Life Skills and Social Networking Sites (SNS) Addiction among secondary school students in India, where social media usage among adolescents has expanded rapidly in recent years. The study was conducted on a sample of 350 secondary school students. Pearson product-moment correlation was employed to analyse the relationship between the variables. The findings revealed a significant negative correlation between Life Skills and SNS Addiction ($r = -.541, p < .001$), indicating that students possessing stronger psychosocial competencies are less likely to exhibit addictive social media behaviours. The results suggest that deficiencies in life skills may increase adolescents' vulnerability to excessive and problematic SNS usage in the AI-mediated digital environment. The study highlights the growing importance of integrating life skills education into school curricula as a preventive strategy for promoting digital well-being among adolescents. The findings further emphasise the need to redesign life skills programmes in alignment with the challenges emerging from AI-powered social media environments.*

Keywords: Life Skills, Social Networking Sites Addiction, AI-Mediated Environment, School Students, Artificial Intelligence, Digital Well-Being

1. Introduction

Adolescents now inhabit a very different social media world from the one that existed even a few years ago. Platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and Snapchat are no longer built only around human interaction. Artificial intelligence (AI) increasingly shapes what users see, hear, and respond to. Feeds are curated through predictive systems; captions are generated automatically; filters alter facial appearance in real time; synthetic voices imitate human speech; even trending audio can be algorithmically produced before users consciously engage with it. Social media has become less human-directed and far more machine-steered. As adolescence remains one of the most sensitive periods for the development of life skills. The World Health Organization (World Health Organization, 1994) defines life skills as psychosocial abilities that help individuals manage everyday demands and challenges effectively. These include self-awareness, interpersonal communication, critical and creative thinking, decision-making, problem-solving, emotional regulation, and stress management. Without these capacities, healthy social adjustment and academic functioning become considerably more difficult.

Problematic social media use and social networking site (SNS) addiction (Andreassen et al., 2017; Kuss & Griffiths, 2011) characterises SNS addiction through features such as salience, withdrawal, mood modification, conflict, relapse, and tolerance. Cases of compulsive social media engagement among adolescents have risen sharply across countries- and schools are increasingly dealing with the consequences. India offers a particularly relevant setting for examining this issue. Data released by the Union Ministry of

Electronics and Information Technology estimated that the country had more than 750 million social media users in 2023, with adolescents forming a rapidly expanding user group. For many Indian secondary school students, AI-curated feeds now occupy a substantial portion of daily life. Schools therefore confront two interconnected responsibilities: developing psychosocial competencies among learners while also preparing them to navigate persuasive digital systems designed to maximise engagement. Several mechanisms help explain why AI-mediated environments may intensify vulnerability to SNS addiction during adolescence. One concerns the architecture of recommendation systems themselves. These systems are intentionally designed to exploit developmental tendencies common among adolescents fear of missing out (FOMO), reward-seeking behaviour, identity experimentation, and sensitivity to peer comparison (Anderson et al., 2024; Twenge & Campbell, 2019) Another issue lies in the realism of AI-generated content. When manipulated or synthetic material becomes difficult to distinguish from authentic communication, students' critical thinking and information-evaluation abilities may weaken. Then there is algorithmic personalisation. Over time, personalised feeds can narrow exposure to differing perspectives, creating informational echo chambers that restrict empathy, interpersonal understanding, and communication competencies. The present study addresses this gap through empirical data collected from 350 secondary school students.

2. Review of Literature

The WHO's 1994 framework has remained the conceptual anchor for life skills research in education. Three functional domains organise the construct: social or interpersonal skills,

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cognitive skills, and emotional or coping skills. The five-dimension model used here Self-Awareness (SA), Interpersonal Communication Skills (ICS), Creative and Critical Thinking (CCT), Decision Making and Problem Solving (DMPS), and Emotional and Stress Management (ESM) maps onto this tri-domain structure and reflects the operational guidance issued by UNICEF and UNESCO for school-based programmes. Among Indian adolescents, life skills proficiency has been consistently associated with positive educational outcomes including academic achievement, social behaviour, and resilience (Agarwal et al., 2020). SNS addiction sits within the theoretical architecture of behavioural addictions (Griffiths, 2005; Brand et al., 2019). The three-dimensional model applied here captures (a) SNS Impulsivity-the compulsive, uncontrolled urge to check and post on social networks; (b) SNS Virtual Tolerance- the escalating need for more time online to achieve the same experiential reward; and (c) SNS Negative Consequences-the academic, psychological, and interpersonal harms that follow from excessive use. Longitudinal and cross-sectional work has identified low self-esteem, high neuroticism, poor emotional regulation, and weak social skills as significant predictors of SNS addiction (Andreassen et al., 2017; Dempsey et al., 2019). These risk factors converge precisely on the competencies that life skills education targets. Generative AI is large language models, diffusion-based image generators, AI video synthesis tools has introduced something qualitatively new into social media. Earlier algorithmic curation selected from existing human-generated content; generative AI creates novel content at scale. We're talking about synthetic influencer profiles, AI-composed trending audio, automated comment sections, fabricated news summaries, and personalised narrative feeds tailored to individual psychological profiles. The implications for adolescent users are substantial. Research in cognitive neuroscience establishes that adolescent brains are disproportionately responsive to novelty, social reward, and unexpected positive stimuli (Casey et al., 2019; Somerville, 2013). AI content generation systems, trained on engagement optimisation objectives, effectively learn to produce the content types that maximise dopaminergic responses in high-value user segments and adolescents are disproportionately targeted. The psychological mechanism of social comparison (Festinger, 1954), long linked to depression and anxiety in social media research, intensifies further when comparison targets are AI-generated idealised personas rather than genuine peers (Sherlock & Wagstaff, 2019; Vogel et al., 2014). Add to this the deliberate engineering of FOMO through real-time AI personalisation, and the result is a chronic state of incomplete social participation one that drives adolescents back to the platform compulsively.

3. Objectives and Hypotheses-

Objectives

- To assess Life Skills and SNS addiction levels among secondary school students in an AI-mediated social media context
- To investigate the relationship between Life Skills and SNS Addiction.

Hypothesis-

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between Life Skills and SNS Addiction among school students.

4. Methodology

Research Design

The present study adopts a descriptive and correlational research design to examine the relationship between Social Networking Site (SNS) addiction and life skills among secondary school students. The study aims to explore the association between SNS addiction and life skills among students.

Sampling Technique

The study employed a simple random sampling technique for the selection of participants from selected educational institutions. Students were approached during institutional visits, and only those actively using social networking sites were included in the study. The final sample consisted of 350 secondary school students selected from different educational institutions.

Tools Used for the Study

- 1) Social Networking Addiction Scale developed by Md. Ghazi Shahnawaz and Nivedita Ganguly, this scale was used to assess the level of social networking site addiction among secondary school students.
- 2) Life Skills Scale developed by Chandra Kumari and Ayushi Tripathi, this scale was used to measure the life skills of secondary school students across different dimensions related to their personal and social development.

Statistical Techniques-

The collected data were analysed using appropriate statistical technique Pearson's Correlation. This statistical measure were used to examine the relationship between SNS addiction and life skills among secondary school students

5. Analysis and interpretation-

Descriptive Statistics: Life Skills

The total Life Skills mean score was 164.56 (SD = 14.92, N = 350). Emotional and Stress Management contributed the highest subscale mean (M = 46.79, SD = 5.71), followed by Interpersonal Communication Skills (M = 32.60, SD = 4.07) and Creative and Critical Thinking (M = 32.56, SD = 4.35). Decision Making and Problem Solving (M = 27.40, SD = 4.27) and Self-Awareness (M = 25.21, SD = 3.73) scored comparatively lower. The pattern points to moderate-to-adequate overall competency, with emotional and interpersonal skills more developed than decision-making and self-reflective capacities.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics – Life Skills Scale

Dimension	N	Mean	SD
Self-Awareness (SA)	350	25.21	3.73
Interpersonal Comm. Skills (ICS)	350	32.60	4.07
Creative & Critical Thinking (CCT)	350	32.56	4.35
Decision Making & Problem Solving (DMPS)	350	27.40	4.27
Emotional & Stress Management (ESM)	350	46.79	5.71
Total Life Skills	350	164.56	14.92

Descriptive Statistics: SNS Addiction

Total SNS Addiction mean was 122.49 (SD = 15.20, N = 350). SNS Impulsivity dominated the picture (M = 69.59, SD = 9.70), reflecting that compulsive, uncontrolled platform-checking is the most prominent addiction dimension in this sample. SNS Virtual Tolerance (M = 34.44, SD = 6.18) and SNS Negative Consequences (M = 18.46, SD = 3.90) followed. The high Impulsivity mean is particularly telling in an AI-mediated context: variable-ratio reinforcement schedules and push-notification architectures are precisely calibrated to exploit impulsive checking behaviour.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics – SNS Addiction Scale

Dimension	N	Mean	SD
SNS Impulsivity	350	69.59	9.70
SNS Virtual Tolerance	350	34.44	6.18
SNS Negative Consequences	350	18.46	3.90
Total SNS Addiction	350	122.49	15.20

Relationship between Life Skills and SNS Addiction (H₀₅)

The total Life Skills score was significantly and negatively correlated with Total SNS Addiction ($r = -.541, p < .001$) — a moderate-to-strong inverse relationship. Students with higher overall life skills competency exhibit substantially lower SNS addictive behaviour. Every individual Life Skills dimension was significantly and negatively correlated with every SNS Addiction dimension. The strongest associations were with SNS Impulsivity ($r = -.481, p < .001$) and SNS Virtual Tolerance ($r = -.410, p < .001$); the relationship with SNS Negative Consequences was weaker ($r = -.237, p < .001$). Across Life Skills dimensions, Emotional and Stress Management showed the strongest negative associations with addiction (r values from $-.209$ to $-.396$), followed by Interpersonal Communication Skills. Self-Awareness, Creative and Critical Thinking, and Decision Making and Problem Solving showed comparatively more modest associations. H₀₁ is rejected.

Table 3: Pearson Correlation – Life Skills Dimensions and SNS Addiction Dimensions

Life Skill Dimension	r with SNS Impulsivity	r with SNS Virtual	r with SNS Negative	r with Total SNS
Self-Awareness (SA)	-.331**	-.211**	-.148**	-.335**
Interpersonal Comm. (ICS)	-.338**	-.331**	-.179**	-.396**
Creative & Critical Thinking (CCT)	-.294**	-.251**	-.141**	-.326**
Decision Making & PS (DMPS)	-.304**	-.286**	-.105*	-.337**
Emotional & Stress Mgmt. (ESM)	-.350**	-.294**	-.209**	-.396**
Total Life Skills	-.481**	-.410**	-.237**	-.541**

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed). N = 350 for all correlations.

6. Discussion

A correlation of $r = -.541$ is not a modest association. Accounting for approximately 29% of shared variance, the relationship between Life Skills and SNS Addiction is educationally substantial and it suggests that life skills development is not merely coincidentally associated with addiction risk, but may represent a genuine mechanism through which that risk is amplified or attenuated. This result extends and corroborates the self-regulation literature (Baumeister & Tierney, 2011) and research linking emotion regulation deficits to internet addiction more broadly (Hormes et al., 2014; Tang et al., 2016). The differential magnitude of correlations across Life Skills dimensions is where the AI-mediated context becomes analytically important. Emotional and Stress Management showed the strongest negative relationship with SNS Addiction ($r = -.396$ with Total SNS). This makes sense: AI content generation systems are optimised to produce emotional arousal content engineered to trigger anxiety, envy, excitement, or longing for social belonging. Students who can recognise and constructively manage those AI-induced emotional states are better positioned to resist further platform engagement as emotional relief. The affective dimension of life skills is the most direct countervailing force against algorithmic compulsion.

Interpersonal Communication Skills ($r = -.396$) showed an equally strong association. Students with well-developed face-to-face communication competencies may have less need to seek social validation through AI-mediated platforms their offline social needs are more adequately met. The practical implication is direct: enriching genuine interpersonal communication opportunities in school (debate societies, collaborative projects, and peer counselling groups) may reduce the pull of AI-manufactured social gratification. The weaker correlation for Creative and Critical Thinking (CCT: $r = -.326$) is a finding that policymaker should take seriously.

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