

# Youth and Social Media Comportment: A Conceptual Perspective

**Shathees Baskaran<sup>1\*</sup>, Ng Chun Howe<sup>2</sup>, Nomahaza Mahadi<sup>3</sup>, Salahuddin Ahmad Ayob<sup>4</sup>**

<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>International Business School, Level 10, Menara Razak, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Jalan Sultan Yahya Petra, 54100 Kuala Lumpur.

E-mail: shathees@ibs.utm.my, dr.shathees@gmail.com

DOI: 10.6007/IJARBSS/v7-i11/3563 URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v7-i11/3563>

## **Abstract**

The rise in social networking sites (SNS) has inevitably instilled addictive behaviors amongst its users causing social media addiction. Social media addiction has since been found to be a bigger problem to the current society as it causes certain users to develop disorders and compulsive behaviors which leads to negative effects. In view of this, social media addiction and social media disorders has since been the focus study amongst academicians and researchers. This conceptual paper will discuss about the relationship between social media addiction and social media disorders among Malaysian youths. To investigate this relationship, several dimensions for social media disorders are defined such as preoccupation, tolerance, withdrawal, persistence, escape, problems, deception, displacement and conflict. Furthermore, the mediating effect of loneliness will also be evaluated on the relationship between social media addiction and social media disorders. Eventually, this article will propose a conceptual framework which links social media addiction, social media disorders and loneliness. Literature content for all the variables are included in this study to provide context for better understanding and future roadmaps into empirical study of this paper would be provided towards the end of this article.

**Keywords:** Social Media Addiction, Social Media Disorder, Loneliness, Social Networking Sites

## **1. Introduction**

The phrase social media is a stranger to no one nowadays. For adolescents in particular, social media has transformed into a most preferred entertainment and leisure activity (Lenhart et al, 2015; Ahn, 2011; Lenhart et al, 2010). When someone is asked about social media, they tend to refer it to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or Snapchat and similar applications. Social media can be defined as a form of website where it allows the networking of various users to form an online community which shares ideas, information, videos and inter-messaging (Shahjahan and Chisty, 2014). Williamson and Parolin (2013) found that the social media sites are a form of Web 2.0 properties made from various web technologies that made it possible for users to create content and share it with whoever they wanted to. From the early 2000, Social Networking Sites (SNS) has seen its influence growing at an exponential level to the point

where it became a necessity to almost everyone to stay connected. This growth is mostly attributed to SNS being a new medium of communication between individuals while content could be distributed freely without much restrictions coupled by the ability to interact amongst one another easily (Shahjahan and Chisty, 2014). Social media has also brought about disruptive changes in the consumer to consumer, consumer to business and business to business communications which makes it easier, faster and cheaper compared to traditional methods (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy and Silvestre, 2011). It is clearly proven that the invention of social media changed and improved how we communicate with one another while providing many more benefits like a form of entertainment, knowledge sharing platform, co-op working space etc. (Baruah, 2012). There are some education institutes that uses social media or blogs as a teaching tool and by doing so, the classes are more creative where students could freely express their ideas, opinions and academic skills (Chawinga, 2017). Because of the sudden boom in social media users, advertising companies has since switched their main marketing channels to social media as well (Amedie, 2015). Recognizing the massive amount of audience and being able to deliver different types of advertisements to different users, social media has since become the preferred channel for any advertisers.

### **1.1 Problem Statement**

The rapid advancements of digital technologies have brought about massive changes and impacts on how individuals communicate as well as integrate these technologies into their daily lives. However, setting aside the vast amount of benefits, there are plethora of disadvantages to SNS as well. One of them is that users has since became overdependent or overuses social media in their everyday activities till the extent that it becomes a chronic addiction to accessing SNS regularly (Andreassen and Pallesen, 2014). Social media addiction in this case is characterized by “being overly concerned about online activities, driven by an uncontrollable motivation to perform the behavior, and devoting so much time and effort to it that it impairs other important life areas” (Andreassen and Pallesen, 2014, p. 4054). In a study in UK, it has found that the real-life interactions between person to person is negatively associated with the excessive usage of social medias like Facebook or Twitter while the result from such behavior is that a person will experience increased loneliness or social anxiety (Lim, Rodebaugh, Zyphur and Gleeson, 2016). It is also found that the addiction to Facebook has reached a point where through medical research, the brain activities of a social media addict mimics the one of a drug addict (Lee-Won, Roselyn, and Sung, 2015).

The addiction of SNS was also said to be complimented with a rise in social media disorders like deception, social withdrawal, conflicts, narcissism, anxiety and many more. Rosen et al (2013) in a research found that individuals that possess high levels of narcissism and high levels of SNS usage are associated with a lower level of depression. This could however be not considered a positive effect as American Psychiatric Association (2000) found that narcissism is closely related to a grandiose sense of self-importance, fantasizing of unlimited power, self-grooming and superficial relationships. Rosen et al (2013) posited that the younger generation of the population, or youths are more likely to check their messages and social media feeds on a

regularly basis (oftenest measured in hourly, once every 15 minutes, or most of the time). It is also found that youths became anxious or has a lower level of tolerance if they are not able to have access to the specific SNS. Kush and Griffiths (2017) indicated that a frequent, non-problematic habitual use and problematic and possibly addictive use of SNSs comes with a notable relationship. They further suggest that users that are addicted to SNSs may at the same time experience symptoms and side effects of disorders which are traditionally related to substance addiction. It is also found that the fear of missing out (FOMO) factor contributes significantly to SNS addiction (Kush and Griffiths, 2017). With the social media engagement levels rising at an exponential rate, there has yet to be a comprehensive research of the negative effects of social media addiction in relation with social media disorders. Although Regina, Lemmens and Valkenburg (2016) has indicated some social media disorders in view of social media use and addiction, Bányai (2017) argued that empirical studies did not provide consistent findings, hence theoretical constructs which can explain disorders arising due to internet use are still unclear. Therefore, this research will mainly focus on identifying the relationship between the problems stated which are social media addiction and social media disorders while analyzing whether loneliness could be a mediating factor in this relationship.

As inferred by Lim, Rodebaugh, Zyphur and Gleeson (2016), a general consensus in the study of social media and its addiction is that users of the social media tend to separate themselves from social interaction resulting at increased loneliness. In this context, loneliness is found to be an outcome of social media addiction. However, what is not clear is whether the direct positive relationship between social media addiction and increased loneliness remain relevant and holds true. This is because Lee et al. (2013) on a separate perspective found that social media could be a source of well-being improvement of lonely people due to emotional attachments and moods support. These two arguments are against the claim by the author that social media addiction when mediated by loneliness may result at social media disorders. Based on aforementioned claim, the authors envisaged that potentially, the loneliness of a user results at addiction of social media, hence the disorders, or the addiction of social media when mediated by loneliness results at social media disorders. Hence, this research is taking the unique privilege of revisiting these mixed claims as a possible theoretical gap in the study of social media networking. This gap is the main inspiration for the authors to not only provide additional conceptual understanding for the relationship between social media addiction and social media disorders but also to observe the influence of loneliness as a mediating variable between social media addiction and social media disorders in the youth and social media compartment perspective.

## **1.2 Research Objective**

The research investigates the relationship between social media addiction and social media disorder. Social media disorder according to van den Eijnden et al (2016) has nine dimensions namely preoccupation, tolerance, withdrawal, persistence, escape, problems, deception, displacement and conflict. Apart from that, loneliness is also incorporate in this conceptual research as mediator to evaluate its mediating effect on the relationship between social media

addiction and social media disorders. More specifically, this research aims to achieve the following objectives:

- a) Determine the relationship between social media addiction and social media disorder (and its nine dimensions).
- b) Determine the mediating effect of loneliness on the relationship between social media addiction and social media disorder.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Social Media Addiction**

Even with the plethora of benefits social media brings to the community as argued by Friedrichsen and Mühl-Benninghaus (2012) and La Sala et al (2013), it's important to note that social media presents a damaging effect to its user's well-being such as self-esteem and life satisfaction (Haug and Leung, 2009). However, researchers who investigate problematic social media use are unable to come to consensus in defining these acts (Wegmann et al., 2015). Ever since the first publicized literature reviews of empirical studies related to social media addiction in 2011, social media related research fields have seen an increase in pace and coverage (Kuss and Griffiths, 2011). Experts in psychology believe that identifying the source of emotional and mental attachment to social media is important in studying social media addiction. There are five distinct types of social media use currently which are meeting or communicating with people, seeking information, an instrument of distraction, an instrument in coping and email (Edwards, 2017). Edwards (2017), found that the initiating factor for social media addiction is when people use SNS as a medium to reinforce relationships. With social media especially, Facebook gaining influence among its users, it has become a significant medium for peer-related communication and self-presentation. Facebook has since become a social outlet for a person's social behavior as well as its activities being closely related to narcissism. In a psychologist's point of view, it's plausible to speak specifically of 'Facebook Addiction Disorder' ('SNS Addiction Disorder') as people who use SNS excessively are closely associated with addiction symptoms such as neglect of personal life, escapism, mental preoccupation, mood modifying instances, weak tolerance levels and a habit of concealing their addictive behavior (Center for Internet Addiction, 2009). Through carefully constructed sentences, social media users deploy multiple tactics to regulate their self-esteem on specific SNS by posting self-gratifying messages or posts which are crafted to yield a desired emotional outcome or response (Buss and Chiodo, 1991). The primary goal of the narcissist is to obtain admiration and commendation from their audience in the form of shares, likes, repins or thumbs up as this is a psychological need for reaffirmation which is common in a social media narcissist (DeWall, Buffardi, Bonser, and Campbell, 2011). There has also been research which suggests that a person's high engagement rate in social media is due to 'fear of missing out' (FOMO) (Oberst et al, 2017). FOMO can be defined as 'a pervasive uneasiness that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent' (Przybylski et al, 2013, p.1841). Przybylski et al (2013) also found that, higher level of FOMO is generally associated with higher levels of social media addiction and engagement which is followed by less general mood, life

satisfaction, wellbeing, mixed feelings and inappropriate use of SNS (e.g: when driving or during lectures). Furthermore, a research by Gil (2015) suggests that FOMO is the cause of social media addiction which is measured using the Internet Addiction Test (Young, 1998). This is further supported by a study which uses 5280 social media users from Spanish-speaking Latin-American countries as subjects and finds that FOMO predicts negative consequences of maladaptive SNS use (Oberst et al, 2017). Nomophobia, which is defined as 'no mobile phone phobia', is the fear of not having your mobile phone around. Nomophobia could lead to problems like regularly checking SNS on phones and feelings of anxiety when your mobile devices are not available (Bragazzi, 2014). The constant anxiety caused by nomophobia causes an increase in preference for online social interaction which is through social media which further strengthens the association between nomophobia and social media addiction (Caplan, 2003). In summary, SNS addiction contributes to the etiology of addictions which combines social, psychological and biological factors (Griffiths, 2005; Shaffer et al, 2004)

## **2.2 Social Media Disorder**

Social media disorder is defined as compulsive online behaviors which arises from excessive Internet or social media use or more commonly known as social media addiction (Griffiths & Szabo, 2013). As a result of this extensive use, several researchers (e.g. Wu et al, 2013; Ryan et al., 2014; Griffiths and Kuss, 2014; Steers et al, 2014; Muench et al, 2015; Hormes, 2016) cautioned that the users of social media are prone to detrimental effect resulting from its use which may affect their personal, social and/or professional lives. Several effects of social media which were previously found includes depression (Andreassen et al, 2016), self-esteem (Malik and Khan, 2015), and trouble with relationships (Lee, Cheung, and Thadani, 2012). In view of that, Regina, Lemmens and Valkenburg (2016) offered some clarity to these disorders and augured that there are several disorders associated with a social media: i) preoccupation, ii) tolerance, iii) withdrawal, iv) persistence, v) displacement, vi) problems, vii) deception, viii) escape and ix) conflict. Each of these dimensions are tested with three statements. Each of these SMD dimensions are discussed below.

### **2.2.1 Preoccupation**

Kuss and Griffiths (2011), argues that there is existing evidence which suggests that social media users could spend so much time on social media that they become addicted or overly preoccupied to SNS which comes at a cost to their real-time, in-person relationships. Even though social media addiction is currently not recognized as a disorder in medical terms, its behavior which includes extreme preoccupation with social media usage has been associated with being a compulsive desire and has been a popular subject for scholarly discussions (Carlson et al, 2016). In the same study, an experiment conducted over a week-long period where participant's desires in engaging in various behaviors like sleeping, relaxing, shopping, smoking, exercising and using social media was recorded in real-time through cell phones. Data related to counts of times the participant failed to resist these urges has been recorded and the findings were that the activity with the highest failure rate was participation in social media. These findings further suggest that social media usage could be the most addictive amongst the

other activities compared such as sleeping, smoking, and shopping (Kuss and Griffiths, 2011). It is also found that users who are overly preoccupied with social media are more likely driven by some degree of motivation which is inconsistent with the originally intended purposeful motivation for using social media. These individuals are argued to be less likely to benefit off the positive effects of social media usage (engagement in relationship building and task-oriented behaviors). Kuss and Griffiths (2011) also found that feelings of users being preoccupied with social media may be closely connected with disengagement, boredom, loneliness and lesser life satisfaction. Being overly preoccupied with social media may also create an opposite paradox effect instead which increases a person's feelings of loneliness and disconnection (Kross et al, 2013).

### **2.2.2 Tolerance**

Based on a biopsychosocial perspective, SNS addiction is known as a behavioral addiction (Griffiths, 2005). Consistent with this claim, several researchers (e.g. Ko, 2014; Kuss et al., 2014; Griffiths, 2005) described tolerance as an attempt of modifying the moods by increased behavioral engagement over time to attain favorable change in emotional state. In a research done by Caro and Schulz (2012), the issue of Latin American youth's (secondary school students) tolerance was discussed, and evidence related to a hypothesis proposed by (Allport, 1954) where prejudice could be reduced while positive attitudes could be fostered through interpersonal contact between the majority and minority group members was found. The outcomes of the interaction are dependent on the conditions of the contact where in this case, the presence of common goals and admission of higher authorities backing the contact. Furthermore, Wright, Aron, McLaughlin-Volpe, and Ropp (1997) further extends it and suggests that a simple knowledge of friends or contacts of a member of one's own group favors a positive attitude towards these group of other people. Direct contact through methods like friendship is said to be more potent in changing a person's attitude towards other groups (Feddes, Noack, and Rutland, 2009). According to Feddes et al (2009), a person's social status acts as a moderating factor in producing such effects whereas Thijs and Verkuyten (2014) stated that effects on attitude could be fairly different in relation to the prejudice of the individual and the group the individual belongs to. This is supported by Munniksma, Stark, Verkuyten, Flache, and Veenstra (2013), positing that students with unfavorable attitudes are more likely to inhibit a positive change in attitude towards other ethnic groups. Lastly, factors such as empathy and perceptions of a common identity are found to inhibit a mediating effect whether directly or indirectly on a contact (Dovidio, Johnson, Gaertner, Person, Saguy, and Ashburn-Nado, 2010).

### **2.2.3 Withdrawal**

Withdrawal is defined as an experience where there is an absence of contact with other people (Hawthorne, 2006) and is defined more intensively on a person who rejects contact with people who provide social support (Wenger and Burholt, 2004). Other than that, withdrawal or social isolation, can also be defined as the absence of a significant social relationship with a person (Russell, Campbell and Hughes, 2008). Even though social withdrawal and loneliness are



meticulously related concepts, the person who experiences social withdrawal may not make known of his loneliness to someone else even when they lack companionship (Gierveld and Havens, 2004; Havens, Hall, Sylvestre and Jivan, 2004). Notwithstanding, older adults are reported to experience higher rates of loneliness and social withdrawal (Jylhä, 2004; Yang and Victor, 2008). The reasons being is that there could be a death of a close person, relocation to different areas of communities and deterioration in mental and physical health. There's still not much known on whether the Internet or SNS causes an increase or decrease in social withdrawal as not much studies are done on this topic. However, there are a lot of studies conducted which shows that the use of Internet contributes in reducing social withdrawal and loneliness while other studies has found Internet to be of little to no benefit in aiding social withdrawal (Cotton, Anderson and McCullough, 2013).

#### **2.2.4 Persistence**

The literature lacks evidences in understanding persistence as a dimension of social media disorders. However, several studies were conducted in relation to resilience which can be useful in understanding the concept of persistence. McNeil, Reeder and Rich (2010) stated that persistence or resilience can be defined as an ability to endure tribulation without giving up easily or an ease in adapting to difficult situations. This trait has since been highlighted being a compelling protective factor for youths who are disadvantaged and vulnerable. Youths are bound to experience some form of risk throughout their lifetime but there are some who experiences risk immensely whether as an individual, within their families or communities. According to McNeil, Reeder and Rich (2010), resilience is an important factor in deciding a youth's exposure to repeated risks which is critical to being successful in life. Individual resilience such as self-esteem traits are found to be influential but when combined with other protective factors, the effects are much more dominant as per se (Turner, 2000). Turner (2000) concludes that youth based services should take a 'broad based' approach which focuses on multiple protective factors in an attempt to reduce risk. According to Bernard (1991), manifestations of resilience could be divided into four categories: social competence, autonomy, problem solving and a sense of purpose. These manifestations can also be categorized as 'strengths' which are associated with youth's healthy development and life success and has since been the attention of empirical studies since they were initially suggested in the early nineties. Furthermore, Goodman and Gregg (2010) suggested that an individual's social and emotional capabilities are related to positive outcomes where attitudes and behaviors being critical in measuring differences between children from rich and poor families. Youths are found to perform better in schools if they were to possess self-belief, self-efficacy and agency provided that risky behaviors could be avoided in relation with their own behavior and actions (Goodman and Gregg, 2010). However, studies involving human persistence in relation with social media addiction has been minimal in which this study paper would be addressing.

### **2.2.5 Escape**

The term escapism can be defined as an intent to withdraw from self-awareness (Heatherston and Baumeister, 1991). Escapism is also defined as a type of human behaviour which is driven and guided by motives (Vorderer, Klimmt and Ritterfeld, 2004). Examples of escapism can be seen where an individual indulges in activities such as watching television, Internet surfing, reading magazines and shopping with the sole purpose to avoiding the temporary undesirable truths of everyday life (Longeway, 1999). This can also be seen when people does not meet the standards, demands or expectations set upon them, they tempt to escape. In another term, individuals indulge in a cognitive alteration which is devised to eliminate irritating thoughts and feelings from awareness in order to escape from unpleasant thoughts and feelings. Dhaha and Igale (2013) found that motivation behind social escapism is an important deciding factor for any individuals in using SNS. The reason to why SNSs has been popular is because they provide a helpful environment in distracting the user's mental state from their daily troubling and anxiety causing routines (Orchard et al, 2014). For instance, one of the reasons college students spend more time on SNSs are because of escape motivation (Cha, 2010). According to Korgaonkar and Wolin (1999), a compelling relationship was found to exist between the amount of time a person spent on the Internet and their social escapism motivations. In the same study, people who uses the Internet more often are linked to higher levels of social escapism. Media sources is often the go-to source for entertainment seekers primarily to escape from the individual's real-life environment (Vorderer et al, 2004).

### **2.2.6 Problems**

There is no doubt that social media has given people and communities of the world a platform to stay 'connected' and share their interests. Aside from that, social media has also caused problematic use of the Internet where problems such as psychological disorders begin to arise all around the world. While it can be noted that research in the psychiatry field in the last decade of the 20th century being focused on Internet-related substances or Internet-addicts, it has currently shifted more to the problems pertaining to the use of SNS in the early 21st century (Meena, Mittal and Solanki, 2012). Nowadays, youths and teenagers are largely unaware of how much time they spent on SNSs and the negative effects it could bring to their social life. According to Thadani and Cheung (2011), there is relationship between a person's low self-esteem and a sense of social inadequacy and social media addiction. Problems which arises from social media addiction ranges from lack in real world interactions, academic procrastination, social impairment to a decrease in workplace productivity (Thadani and Cheung, 2011). The increasing trend in problems related to social media disorders could be further backed by industrial reports by agencies that oversee activities of Internet users. Such was that a report in 2009 which founds that an average social media user from around the world spends at least 5 ½ hours monthly on SNS (Casey, 2017). When compared with other online activities, SNS usage was three times more than other activities such as web surfing. Meanwhile in the U.S, figures on total minutes spent on Facebook has seen an astronomical increase from 1.7 billion minutes to 13.9 billion minutes from just a period between April 2008 to April 2009 (700 percent annual growth) (Nielson, 2009). Furthermore, research studies have



found that the excessive amount of time spent in interactions involving forums, blogs and online games is mainly attributed to the sociability of the Internet (Douglas et al, 2008).

### **2.2.7 Deception**

Deception in social media is defined as a calculated act with the purpose of misleading others into believing that such a false act is real, and the motive is to transfer the false belief to the person being deceived (Buller, Burgoon, Buslig and Roiger, 1996). In social media context, the act of deception becomes particularly relevant as the boundaries between protecting a user's privacy and deceiving others are not clearly defined and enforced (Tsikerdekis and Zeadally, 2014). According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), a social media service provider can be classified by its social presence and self-representation where social presence represents the closeness and urgency of the platform where the communication process takes place while self-representation determines the amount of control a user have in revealing their information to the public either willingly or unwillingly. Furthermore, most of the communications through social media platforms are either text-based and done asynchronously, meaning deceivers would have a greater advantage in altering content to their liking to deceive others (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Zahavi (1993) found that there are differences between assessment signals that are dependable and difficult to imitate and, conventional signals that are easier to imitate. A simple example would be if an elderly person wanted to look younger, they would simply dye their hair and dress stylishly to produce conventional signals. Assessment signals are however harder to fake, for example, faking an identity card. From a social media platforms perspective, most of them does not require assessment signals to be mandatory for signups. So, it is relatively easier for a person to achieve deception, for example by switching genders and name (Tsikerdekis and Zeadally, 2014).

### **2.2.8 Displacement**

The studies revolving around the displacement effects of emerging media are more concentrated in studies which involves both time and functional displacement. Such an example would be individuals that spends more time watching television would eventually spend less time on media related or non-media related activities (Robinson, 1981). According to a research by Kayany and Yelsma (2000), individuals who uses the Internet experiences the highest time displacement to their television viewing activity followed by telephone usage and newspaper reading. There have been multiple studies which suggests that a new type of media could displace the traditional media used. Due to the fact that the Internet experiences an exponential growth in its users, Interactive Advertising Bureau (2002) has found that 25 per cent of Internet users watch less television and 11 per cent read lesser newspapers and magazines. Furthermore, the Internet could be argued as a functional alternative to the television as both of them share many similar functionalities and it is found that a large portion of students used the Internet as a form of entertainment. The reasoning to this is because the Internet offers more possibilities and freedom in terms of entertainment and could be well in position to displace television viewing. One of the major concerns of the effects of Internet displacement is the dispersion of news and information. The characteristics of the Internet can

be described as reciprocal interactions, diversified information sources and imperative (Lee and Leung, 2008). Internet users have the ability to search and retrieve any information of their preference at their own pace (Lee and Leung, 2008). Nonetheless, there are studies that supports the theory that there could be other mediating factors which affects the Internet's displacement effects on news and information functions of traditional media. It is found that people who have deeper knowledge regarding politics are more likely to avoid information-deficit sources like television and instead prefer information-rich sources like newspapers (Neuman et al, 1992). A study conducted by Althaus and Tewksbury (2000) which puts the statement above to test found that the level of political awareness has a notable positive relationship with the use of media sources (e.g. Internet and newspapers) for scrutinizing purposes but not with television news. The findings from this study is that Internet supplements newspaper reading as a means for scrutinizing purposes instead of displacing it completely.

### **2.2.9 Conflict**

The role of social media in information conflict has since been widely discussed and SNS are considered to be applications of information warfare concepts in both military and civilian contexts (Niekerk and Maharaj, 2013). The term information warfare can be defined as “all actions taken to defend the military’s information-based processes, information systems and communications networks and to destroy, neutralize or exploit the enemy’s similar capabilities within the physical, information and cognitive domains” (Brazzoli, 2007, p. 219). Even though through definition, information warfare is originally termed as a military concept but according to Cronin and Crawford (1999) and Schwartz (1996), the paradigm of information warfare has expanded into social, corporate and personal spheres. The first major application of social media in an act of conflict was in Greece in December 2008 where SNS was used to coordinate mass demonstrations and a propaganda tool to gain support from the outside world following violent incidences of police shooting with the aim of raising economic awareness in Greece (WMD, 2009). Other conflicts involving social media can be seen in April 2009 where Moldova initiated the “Twitter Revolution” due to fraudulent claims during the national elections and the Iranian operation where authorities cracked down on conventional media platforms creating the information void where social media came in as a means of communication with the outside world (WMD, 2009). The largest scale of SNS-related conflict was the Arab Spring which happens in 2011 involving multiple Arab nations such as Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria. The spread of information through SNS causes an uprising to governments and eventually resulted in a change of government in Tunisia and Egypt (Niekerk and Maharaj, 2013). The aftermath from these incidents have caused Tunisian authorities to hack or delete Facebook accounts of suspected instigators (Madrigal, 2011) while Egyptian authorities enforced a full-scale Internet and mobile services blackout (Kessler, 2011; Kravets, 2011).

### **2.3 Loneliness**

Loneliness is defined as a surface trait (Asendorpf and Van Aken, 2003) which is characterized by feelings of social disconnection. It is also described as a feeling of emotional distress and are

quite common among young people (Goossens, 2006). Poulin and Chan (2010) emphasizes that having a decent peer relationship during a person's adolescence period is important but such a relationship is hard to obtain if the person were to experience feelings of loneliness (Bonetti et al., 2010; Greenwood, 2008). Loneliness normally occurs when a person's desires and achievement levels of satisfaction in social interaction are perceived differently than what they expected. Social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter have since become an essential means for relationship building among adolescents (Mesch, 2005; Valkenburg and Peter, 2007; Subrahmanyam et al., 2008) which opens up their social life to both online and offline platforms (Teppers et al., 2014). Even when there are multiple theories which suggests the effect of loneliness on Internet users, there are some which finds the use of SNS could improve the well-being of lonely people through proper self-disclosure, social network, emotional and modulated negative moods support (Lee et al., 2013). It is undeniable that Internet and social media helps people that lacks real world social skills in socializing (Baiocco et al., 2011) and could eventually solve a person's shyness and inhibition (Teppers et al., 2014). In contrary to this, Kim et al, (2009) claims that spending too much time on social media could effectively decrease time from important relationships like friends and family. This could negatively affect a person's well-being and at the same time increase loneliness and lessen social contacts. There has also been previous research which indicates loneliness having a positive correlation with time spent on social media (Facebook) (Erdoğan, 2008). Some researchers (e.g. Lim, Rodebaugh, Zyphur and Gleeson, 2016) claims that social media addiction results at loneliness and contrarily, a few other researchers (e.g. Lee et al., 2013) argued that social media addiction is beneficial to a person experiencing loneliness as it improves the user's well-being. This debate is continuing till date in understanding the impact of social media towards its users, especially in the perspective of youth and requires more in-depth research to provide some clarity into the issue.

Base on this discussion, the following propositions are formulated:

- Proposition 1: There is significant relationship between social media addiction and social media disorder.
- Proposition 1a: There is significant relationship between social media addiction and preoccupation.
- Proposition 1b: There is significant relationship between social media addiction and tolerance.
- Proposition 1c: There is significant relationship between social media addiction and withdrawal.
- Proposition 1d: There is significant relationship between social media addiction and persistence.
- Proposition 1e: There is significant relationship between social media addiction and escape.
- Proposition 1f: There is significant relationship between social media addiction and problems.

- Proposition 1g: There is significant relationship between social media addiction and deception.
- Proposition 1e: There is significant relationship between social media addiction and displacement.
- Proposition 1e: There is significant relationship between social media addiction and conflict.
- Proposition 2: There is mediating effect of loneliness on the relationship between social media addiction and social media disorder.

Drawing on this discussion, the following conceptual framework as illustrated in Figure 1 is proposed. It depicts a relationship between social media addiction and social media disorders (and its dimensions). The conceptual framework also posits the mediating effect of loneliness on social media addiction and social media disorder relationship.

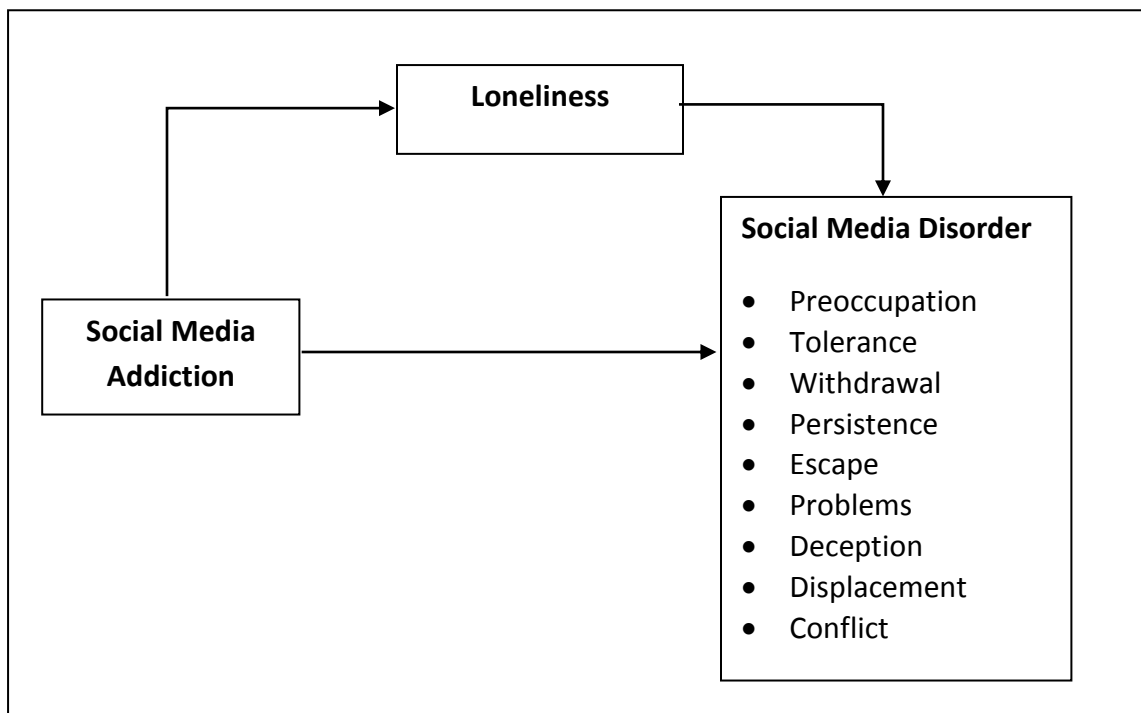


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

### 3. Conclusion

The social media world has witnessed an increasing user over the time (Shonin, Van Gordon, and Griffiths, 2014) and addiction towards the cyberspace is alarming especially among the young people (Al-Menayes, 2015). This has invited more research to understand the growing internet addiction (Wallace, 2014) as a consequence of significant time devoted on the cyberspace (Leung, 2004; Widyanto and McMurrin, 2004; Yang and Tung, 2007) at the expense

of other activities (Przybylski et al., 2013). Therefore, the proposed research framework indicate that it is important to understand the social media addiction and also social media disorders to provide more insights into this research field. Considering loneliness as a mediating variable is also expected to provide further empirical evidences into the relationship between social media addiction and social media disorders.

### **Corresponding Author**

Shathees Baskaran

International Business School, Level 10, Menara Razak, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Jalan Sultan Yahya Petra, 54100 Kuala Lumpur.

E-mail: shathees@ibs.utm.my, dr.shathees@gmail.com

### **References**

- Ahn, J. (2011). The effect of social network sites on adolescents' social and academic development: Current theories and controversies. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, Vol. 62(8), 1435-1445.
- Allport, G.W. (1954). *The Nature of Prejudice*. Cambridge, MA: Perseus Books.
- Al-Menayes, J.J. (2015). Dimensions of social media addiction among university students in Kuwait. *Psychology and Behavioral Sciences*, 4(1), 23-28.
- Amedie, J. (2015). The Impact of Social Media on Society. *Advanced Writing: Pop Culture Intersections*, 2, 3-13.
- American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.). Washington, DC.
- Andreassen, C.S., & Pallesen, S. (2014). Social network site addiction: An overview. *Current Pharmaceutical Design*, 20(25), 4053-4061.
- Andreassen, C.S., Billieux, J., Griffiths, M.D., Kuss, D.J., Demetrovics, Z., & Mazzoni, E. (2016). The relationship between addictive use of social media and video games and symptoms of psychiatric disorders: A large-scale cross-sectional study. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*, 30(2), 252–62.
- Asendorpf, J.B., & Van Aken, M.A. (2003). Personality–relationship transaction in adolescence: Core versus surface personality characteristics. *Journal of Personality*, 71(4), pp, 629-666.
- Baiocco, R., Laghi, F., Schneider, B.H., Dalessio, M., Amichai-Hamburger, Y., Coplan, R.J., & Flament, M. (2011). Daily patterns of communication and contact between Italian early adolescents and their friends. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior and Social Networking*, 14(7-8), 467-471.
- Bányai, F., Zsila, A., Király, O., Maraz, A., Elekes, Z., Griffiths, M.D., Andreassen, C.S., & Demetrovics, Z. (2017). Problematic Social Media Use: Results from a Large-Scale Nationally Representative Adolescent Sample. *PLoS ONE*, 12(1), e0169839.
- Baruah, T. (2012). Effectiveness of Social Media as a tool of communication and its potential for technology enabled connections: A micro-level study. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, 2(5), 1-10.

- Benard, B. (1991). *Fostering Resiliency in Kids: Protective Factors in the Family, School, and Community*. Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.
- Bragazzi, N., & Puente, G.D. (2014). A proposal for including nomophobia in the new DSM-V. *Psychology Research and Behavior Management*, 7, 155-160.
- Brazzoli, M.S. (2007). *Future prospects of information warfare and particularly psychological operations*. In L. le Roux (Ed.), *South African army vision 2020* (217–232). Pretoria, South Africa: Institute for Security Studies.
- Buller, D.B., Burgoon, J.K., Buslig, A., & Roiger, J. (1996). Testing Interpersonal Deception Theory: The Language of Interpersonal Deception. *Communication Theory*, 6(3), 268-289.
- Buss, D.M., & Chiodo, L.M. (1991). Narcissistic Acts in Everyday Life. *Journal of Personality*, 59(2), 179-215.
- Caplan, S.E. (2003). Preference for Online Social Interaction: A Theory of Problematic Internet Use and Psychosocial Well-Being. *Communication Research*, 30(6), 625-648.
- Caro, DH. & Schultz, W. (2012) Ten hypothesis about tolerance toward minorities among Latin American Adolescents. *Citizenship & Social Economics Education*, 11(3), 213-234.
- Casey, S. (2017). *The 2016 Nielsen Social Media Report*. Retrieved October 24, 2017, from <http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/reports/2017/2016-nielsen-social-media-report.html>
- Center for Internet Addiction (2009). *Education and Treatment*. Retrieved September 26, 2017, from [http://netaddiction.com/?option=com\\_blog&view=comments&pid=5&Itemid=0](http://netaddiction.com/?option=com_blog&view=comments&pid=5&Itemid=0)
- Chawinga, W.D. (2017). Taking social media to a university classroom: teaching and learning using Twitter and blogs. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*, 14(1), Retrieved on 12/10/2017 from <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1186/s41239-017-0041-6>.
- Cotten, S., Anderson, W., & McCullough, B. (2013). Impact of Internet Use on Loneliness and Contact with Others Among Older Adults: Cross-Sectional Analysis. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 15(2), e.39.
- Cronin, B., & Crawford, H. (1999). Information warfare: Its application in military and civilian contexts. *Information Society*, 15(4), 257–263.
- Dewall, C.N. Buffardi, L.E., Bonser, I. & Campbell, W.K. (2011). Narcissism and implicit attention seeking: Evidence from linguistic analyses of social networking and online presentation. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 51(1), 57-62.
- Dovidio, J. F., Johnson, J. D., Gaertner, S. L., Pearson, A. R., Saguy, T., & Ashburn-Nardo, L. (2010). *Empathy and intergroup relations*. In M. Mikulincer & P. Shaver (Eds.), *Prosocial motives, emotion, and behavior: The better angels of our nature*. Washington, DC: APA Press, 393-408
- Edwards, F. (2017). An Investigation of Attention-Seeking Behavior through Social Media Post Framing. *Athens Journal of Mass Media and Communications*, 3(1), 25-44.
- Erdoğan, Y. (2008). Exploring the relationships among Internet usage, Internet attitudes and loneliness of Turkish adolescents. *Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace*, 2(2), 11-20.



- Feddes, A.R., Noack, P., Rutland, A. (2009). Direct and extended friendship effects on minority and majority children's interethnic attitudes: a longitudinal study. *Child Development*, 80(2), 377- 390.
- Friedrichsen M., & Mühl-Benninghaus W. (2012). *The Social Media Management Chain, How Social Media Influences Traditional Media*. In: Friedrichsen M., Mühl-Benninghaus W. (eds) *Handbook of Social Media Management (3-6)*. Media Business and Innovation. Springer, Berlin, Heidelberg.
- Gierveld, J.D., & Havens, B. (2004). Cross-national Comparisons of Social Isolation and Loneliness: Introduction and Overview. *Canadian Journal on Aging*, 23(02), 109-113.
- Gil, F., Chamarro, A., & Oberst, U. (2015). Addiction to online social networks: A question of "Fear of Missing Out"? *Journal of Behavioral Addictions*, 33(2), 77-83.
- Goodman, A., Gregg, P.A., & Washbrook, E.V. (2011). Children's educational attainment and the aspirations, attitudes and behaviours of parents and children through childhood in the UK. *Longitudinal and Life Course Studies*, 2(1), 1-18.
- Goossens, L. (2006). *Affect, emotion and loneliness in adolescence*. In S. Jackson, & L. Goossens (Eds.), *Handbook of adolescent development (51-70)*. Hove, UK: Psychology Press.
- Greenwood, H.B. (2008). The Relationship Between the Qualities of Adolescents' Online Friendship and Experience of Loneliness. *Dissertation Abstracts International: Section B: The Sciences and Engineering*, 69(3-B), 19-53.
- Griffiths, M., & Szabo, A. (2013). Is excessive online usage a function of medium or activity? An empirical pilot study. *Journal of Behavioral Addictions*, 3(1), 74-77.
- Griffiths, M.D. (2005). A 'components' model of addiction within a biopsychosocial framework. *Journal of Substance Use*, 10(4), 191-197.
- Griffiths, M.D., Kuss, D.J., & Demetrovics, Z. (2014). *Social networking addiction: An overview of preliminary findings. Behavioral Addictions Criteria, Evidence, and Treatment*. New York: Elsevier; 119-41.
- Havens, B., Hall, M., Sylvestre, G., & Jivan, T. (2004). Social Isolation and Loneliness: Differences between Older Rural and Urban Manitobans. *Canadian Journal on Aging*, 23(02), 129-140.
- Hawthorne, G. (2006). Measuring Social Isolation in Older Adults: Development and Initial Validation of the Friendship Scale. *Social Indicators Research*, 77(3), 521-548.
- Hormes, J.M. (2016). Under the influence of Facebook? Excess use of social networking sites and drinking motives, consequences, and attitudes in college students. *Journal of Behavioral Addictions*, 5(1), 122-129.
- Huang, H., & Leung, L. (2009). Instant Messaging Addiction among Teenagers in China: Shyness, Alienation, and Academic Performance Decrement. *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, 12(6), 675-679.
- Jan H.K., Kristopher, H., Ian P.M., & Bruno S.S. (2011). Social media? Get serious! Understanding the functional building blocks of social media, *Business Horizons*, 54(3), 241-251.
- Jylhä, M. (2004). Old Age and Loneliness: Cross-sectional and Longitudinal Analyses in the Tampere Longitudinal Study on Aging. *Canadian Journal on Aging*, 23(02), 157-168.
- Kaplan, A.M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media. *Business Horizons*, 53(1), 59-68.

- Ko, C.H. (2014). Internet gaming disorder. *Current Addiction Reports*, 1, 177-185.
- Kuss, D., & Griffiths, M. (2017). Social Networking Sites and Addiction: Ten Lessons Learned. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 14(3), 311-311.
- La Sala, C.B., Galigao, R.P. & Boquecosa, J.F. (2013). Psychological impact of Social Networking Sites: A Psychological Theory. *University of the Visayas Journal of Research*, 7(1), 82-86.
- Lee, Z.W., Cheung, C.M., & Thadani, D.R. (2012). An Investigation into the Problematic Use of Facebook. *System Science (HICSS)*, 2012 45th Hawaii International Conference; 4-7 January; Maui, HI: IEEE.
- Lee-Won, R.J., Herzog, L., & Park, S.G. (2015). Hooked on Facebook: The Role of Social Anxiety and Need for Social Assurance in Problematic Use of Facebook. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 18(10), 567-574.
- Lenhart, A., Duggan, M., Perrin, A., Stepler, R., Rainie, H., & Parker, K. (2015). *Teens, social media and technology overview 2015. Smartphones facilitate shifts in communication landscape for teens*. Washington, DC: Pew Internet & American Life Project.
- Lenhart, A., Purcell, K., Smith, A., & Zickuhr, K. (2010). *Social Media & Mobile Internet Use among Teens and Young Adults*. Washington, DC: Pew Internet & American Life Project.
- Leung, L. (2004). Net-generation attributes and seductive properties of the Internet as predictors of online activities and Internet addiction. *Cyberpsychology and Behavior*, 7, 333-348.
- Lim, M.H., Rodebaugh, T.L., Zyphur, M.J., & Gleeson, J.F.M. (2016). Loneliness over time: The crucial role of social anxiety. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 125(5), 620-630.
- Malik, S., & Khan, M. (2015). Impact of Facebook addiction on narcissistic behavior and self-esteem among students. *Journal of Pakistan Medical Association*, 65(3), 260-263.
- McNeil, B., Reeder, N., & Rich, J. (2010). *A framework of outcomes for young people. The Young Foundation 2012*. Retrieved October 25, 2017, from <https://youngfoundation.org>.
- Mesch, G.S. (2005). A study of adolescents' online and offline social relationships. *Oxford Internet Institute, Research Report*, No. 8, 1-24.
- Muench, F., Hayes, M., Kuerbis, A., & Shao, S. (2015). The independent relationship between trouble controlling Facebook use, time spent on the site and distress. *Journal of Behavioral Addictions*, 4(3), 163-169.
- Munniksmas, A., Flache, A., Verkuyten, M., & Veenstra, R., 2012: Parental acceptance of children's intimate ethnic outgroup relations: The role of culture, status, and family reputation. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 36, 575-585.
- Niekerk, B., & Maharaj, M. (2013). Social Media and Information Conflict. *International Journal of Communication*, 7, 1162-1184.
- Oberst, U., Wegmann, E., Stodt, B., Brand, M., & Chamarro, A. (2017). Negative consequences from heavy social networking in adolescents: The mediating role of fear of missing out. *Journal of Adolescence*, 55, 51-60.
- Przybylski, A.K., Murayama, K., Dehaan, C.R., & Gladwell, V. (2013). Motivational, emotional, and behavioral correlates of fear of missing out. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 29(4), 1841-1848.

- Rosen, L.D., Whaling, K., Rab, S., Carrier, L.M., & Cheever, N.A. (2013). Is Facebook creating 'iDisorders'? The link between clinical symptoms of psychiatric disorders and technology use, attitudes and anxiety. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 29(3), 1243-1254.
- Russell, C., Campbell, A., & Hughes, I. (2008). Research: Ageing, social capital and the Internet: Findings from an exploratory study of Australian 'silver surfers'. *Australasian Journal on Ageing*, 27(2), 78-82.
- Ryan, T., Chester, A., Reece, J., & Xenos, S. (2014). The uses and abuses of Facebook: A review of Facebook addiction. *Journal of Behavioral Addictions*, 3(3), 133-148.
- Schwartz, W. (1996). *Information warfare: Chaos on the information superhighway* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Thunder's Mouth Press.
- Shaffer, H.J., LaPlante, D.A., LaBrie, R.A., Kidman, R.C., Donato, A.N. (2004). Toward a syndrome model of addiction: multiple expressions, common etiology. *Harvard Review of Psychiatry*, Vol 12(6), 367-374.
- Shahjahan, A.T.M., & Chisty, K.U. (2014). Social Media Research and Its Effect on Our Society. *International Journal of Social, Behavioral, Educational, Economic, Business and Industrial Engineering*, 8(6), 2009-2013.
- Shonin, E., Van Gordon, W., and Griffiths, M.D. (2014). Mindfulness and the Social Media. *Journal of Mass Communication & Journalism*, 4(5), doi: 10.4172/2165-7912.1000194.
- Sigelman, L., Sullivan, J.L., Piereson, J., & Marcus, G.E. (1983). Political Tolerance and American Democracy. *The Journal of Politics*, 45(2), 550-551.
- Steers, M-L.N., Wickham, R.E., & Acitelli, L.K. (2014). Seeing everyone else's highlight reels: How Facebook usage is linked to depressive symptoms. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 33(8), 701-731.
- Subrahmanyam, K., Reich, S.M., Waechter, N., & Espinoza, G. (2008). Online and offline social networks: Use of social networking sites by emerging adults. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 29(6), 420-433.
- Teppers, E., Luyckx, K., Klimstra, T.A., & Goossens, L. (2014). Loneliness and Facebook motives in adolescence: A longitudinal inquiry into directionality of effect. *Journal of Adolescence*, 37(5), 691-699.
- Thadani, D.R., & Cheung, C.M. (2011). Online Social Network Dependency: Theoretical Development and Testing of Competing Models. *2011 44th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences*. doi:10.1109/hicss.2011.331
- Thijs, J., & Verkuyten, M. (2014). School ethnic diversity and students' interethnic relations. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 84, 1-21.
- Tsikerdekis, M., & Zeadally, S. (2014). Online deception in social media. *Communications of the ACM*, 57(9), 72-80.
- Turner, M. (2000). *Good Kids in Bad Circumstances: A Longitudinal Analysis of Resilient Youth*. National Criminal Justice Reference Service. Retrieved October 25, 2017, from <https://www.ncjrs.gov/App/Publications/abstract.aspx?ID=188263>.
- Valkenburg, P.M., & Peter, J. (2007). Preadolescents' and adolescents' online communication and their closeness to friends. *Developmental Psychology*, 43(2), 267-277.

- Van den Eijnden, R.J.J.M., Lemmens, J.S., & Valkenburg P.M. (2016). The Social Media Disorder Scale. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 61, 478-487.
- Wallace, P. (2014). Internet addiction disorder and youth, *EMBO Reports*, 15(1), 12-16.
- Wegmann, E., Stodt, B., & Brand, M. (2015). Addictive use of social networking sites can be explained by the interaction of Internet use expectancies, Internet literacy, and psychopathological symptoms. *Journal of Behavioral Addictions*, 4(3), 155–62.
- Wenger, G.C., & Burholt, V. (2004). Changes in Levels of Social Isolation and Loneliness among Older People in a Rural Area: A Twenty–Year Longitudinal Study. *Canadian Journal on Aging*, 23(2), 115-127.
- Widyanto, L., & McMurrin, M. (2004). The psychometric properties of the Internet addiction test. *Cyberpsychology and Behavior*, 7, 443-450.
- Williamson, W., & Parolin, B. (2013). Web 2.0 and Social Media Growth in Planning Practice: A Longitudinal Study. *Planning Practice and Research*, 28(5), 544-562.
- World Movement for Democracy. (2009). *Twitter case study*. Retrieved from <http://www.wmd.org/resources/whats-being-done/information-and-communicationtechnologies/case-study-twitter>
- Wright, S.C., Aron, A., McLaughlin-Volpe, T., & Ropp, S. A. (1997). The extended contact effect: Knowledge of cross-group friendships and prejudice. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 73, 73-90.
- Wu, A.M., Cheung, V.I., Ku, L., & Hung, E.P. (2013). Psychological risk factors of addiction to social networking sites among Chinese smartphone users. *Journal of Behavioral Addictions*, 2(3), 160–166.
- Yang, K., & Victor, C.R. (2008). The prevalence of and risk factors for loneliness among older people in China. *Ageing and Society*, 28(3), 305-327.
- Yang, S., & Tung, C. (2007). Comparison of Internet addicts and non-addicts in Taiwanese high schools, *Computers in Human Behavior*, 23, 79-96.
- Zahavi, A. (1993). The Fallacy of Conventional Signaling. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*, 340(1292), 227-230.