

From Ideology to Reality

-- Social Media Addiction Intervention Activity based on DBT Theory

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the effects of teenage social media addiction and reasonably intervene. It includes accurate psychological data on 233 teenagers and identifies the Fear Of Missing Out (FOMO) and sense of loneliness in teenagers as influential factors of social media addiction. Based on the sample results, this study used Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) as a basis for addressing this addiction in the form of creative group activities, then setting up surveys to collect feedback on the activity and the method's effectiveness. Survey results show positive outcomes in improving experiment participants' mood, social skills and social media reliance after the group activities based on DBT. By organizing and exploring psychological intervention methods through group activities, this research opens a new path within the field of methods towards treating teenage social media addiction.

KEYWORDS

Teenager; Social Media Addition; Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT); Sense of Loneliness; Fear of Missing Out (FOMO).

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the phenomenon of addiction to social media has drawn widespread attention, especially among adolescents, where excessive use of social media has become a concerning social issue. Compared to other age groups, adolescents are more susceptible to the influence of social media. Studies have shown that among Chinese adolescents, 8.2% engage in excessive use of social media, while 6.7% are categorized as severely excessive users (Hou, 2017).

As a supplement to real-world social behaviors, moderate use of social media can enhance connections between individuals and improve well-being (Allen, 2014). With the development of the internet industry, online social channels have become increasingly diversified. An increasing number of users engage in social activities and information exchange through social media platforms, virtual online communities, and virtual gaming worlds. However, excessive use of social media can lead to significant negative psychological states (Kircaburun, 2019). Immersion in the virtual world may result in a range of issues such as social disorders, academic pressure, and diminished quality of life.

Adolescence is a unique period in life characterized by specific personality traits, mainly manifested in the eruption of self-awareness, weak self-control, the need for peer approval, and a strong desire

for social interaction. Past intervention methods such as forced abstinence and psychological counseling have been found to be costly and ineffective.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Social media addiction is a common name and lacks a specific concept in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) or The International Classification of Diseases (ICD). Thus, researchers have different definitions for the term “Social Media Addiction”. While some articles consider “Pathological Social Network Use” as the official name for social media addiction, this study states otherwise; even though teenagers may encounter problems of overusing social media, it doesn’t reach the level of disorders or diseases (Carbonell, 2017). Therefore, this study chose “Problematic social network use” as the definition of social media addiction.

According to the Incentive theory, the motive for acting upon desires is unfulfilled psychological needs. Thus, teenagers who lack mental support and self-constraint may turn to social media to seek the brace (Brailovskaia, 2019). Consequently, a clear correlation emerges between the long duration of social media usage, anxiety and physical health issues, and overall well-being. The causes of social media addiction are no acts of single force, but a mix of social media factors, the user’s values and environment influence (Bergman, 2023).

Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) is an influential anxiety stemming from the fear of missing an occasion where others are participating. It arises from the feeling of not knowing what others experienced, leading to feelings of anxiety and the “fear of missing out” (Przybylski, 2013). Researchers in China have expanded this understanding, stating that not only do people worry about experiences others gain from exciting events but also about the feedback and interactions from other people (Yongzhi jiang, 2020). Studies indicate a strong correlation between social media usage (both duration and frequency) and FOMO, meaning that as an individual spends more time on social media, the severity of FOMO increases (Scott, 2016).

A sense of loneliness is a type of psychological feeling that is unpleasant and torturing. When one senses they have been deprived of social relationships, they seek social interactions. However, if these social interactions fail to meet their expectations, it can exacerbate feelings of loneliness (Zizhen zhang, 2016). According to researchers from China, nation-wide teenagers have a sense of loneliness at a mediate level, yet the feeling for this sense becomes stronger, and males often have more varied changes than females. In general, once the pressure in life increases, so does the sense of loneliness; as a substitute for this emotional emptiness, people would increase their usage of social media.

3. METHOD OF STUDY

3.1. Controlled Group

The questionnaire involved 223 young adults, including 97 males and 126 females and employed three different types of sampling tools. The Social Media Use Scale (SMUS) required participants to self-report their frequency of using social media on a scale of 1 to 4, with higher scores representing stronger addiction to social media.

The Fear of Missing Out Scale (FoMOS) aimed to determine the participants’ level of fear of missing out regarding social media. According to APA psycNet, the FoMOS is defined as the constant desire to follow the exciting and glorious lives of others through the internet and accompanied by constant anxiety. It is important to understand the reasons as well as the consequences of this fear at this point (APA PsycNet, 2024). The higher the score our participants achieved, the stronger the “fear of missing out” phenomenon they experienced in daily life. The UCLA loneliness scale is used to rate

the loneliness of our participants, in order to find out the best activity to gather them and enhance their social skills.

Table 1. Comparison of the dependent variable (M±SD)

	Male (n=97)	Female (n=126)	t	P
SMUS	15.01±3.36	15.19±2.94	-0.239	0.812
FoMOS	51.90±9.19	52.04±5.13	-0.078	0.938
UCLA loneliness	24.72±7.02	23.39±6.21	0.778	0.440

Table 2 show a positive correlation between the frequency of social media use and loneliness($r=0.338$, $P<0.01$), as well as fear of missing out($r=0.274$, $P<0.01$).

Table 2. analysis of correlation

	M±SD	1	2	3
1.SMUS	15.12±3.07	1.000		
2. FoMOS	52.01±6.75	0.338**	1.000	
UCLA loneliness	23.85±6.48	0.274**	0.470**	1.000

Considering the FoMOS and UCLA loneliness survey as the independent variables and SMUS as the dependent variable, the regression analysis shows that the model can explain 13.1% of the score variation in the frequency of social media use.

Table 3. Multiple linear regression regarding SMUS as independent variable (n = 223)

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Partial regression coefficient				Standard deviation regression coefficient	R2	Radj2
		Co-efficient (β)	Stand-ard Error (SE)	t	P			
Model SMUS	UCLA Loneliness	0.122	0.062	1.971	0.053	0.269	0.131	0.102
	FoMOS	0.070	0.065	1.082	0.284			

3.2. Initial Planning of the Activity based on Results

Considering the moderate correlation between social media use and fear of missing out, as well as loneliness, our project aimed to organize activities to enhance adolescents' experience of socializing, integrating principles from Dialectical behavior therapy (DBT theory).

The DBT theory focuses more on helping people to accept the reality of their lives and seek a better living style.(Clinic, 2022) It aims to encourage people to understand their sophisticated feelings, and then unpack and accept the feelings. This process of accepting feelings gives people the courage to seek changes in their lives. (What Is Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT)?, 2023)

One study uses activities while DBT theory as a foundation to intervene the gambling addiction claimed that there is a significant change in participants' behaviors after the interference: 83% of the subjects became more restrained or reduced in spending, and their psychological distress was significantly improved, and There is an increase in alcohol and substance abuse, and high levels of satisfaction with treatment are reported (Christensen, 2013). Therefore, the study suggests that activities with the idea of DBT theory could help people seek a healthier lifestyle to some extent.

3.3. Activity Planning

The order of the event follows the following procedure: Ice breaking, number painting(main event), and discussion.

1) Ice breaking: The OH cards. The OH cards are a psychological projection tool claimed by psychologists. It consists of 88 cards and requires the participants to use their critical thinking and personal interpretation of the cards to reflect on their subliminal thoughts on certain themes. This activity is a good tool to gather a good vibe before the start of the main event and get people to familiarise themselves with one another. For our participants to share in a big group, our event uses the online “Oh card” an extended 176 card collection.

2) Main event: Number painting, known as paint by numbers is a good activity to get non-artists to participate in a painting by guidance. In the activity, each color and region in the picture has a corresponding number that matches.. The participants can easily match up the colour with the regions and paint an elegant picture, even without any prior experience in painting or visual arts. In the activity, the organisers advocate for participants to help eachother out, in order to achieve socialize with the relaxing activity.

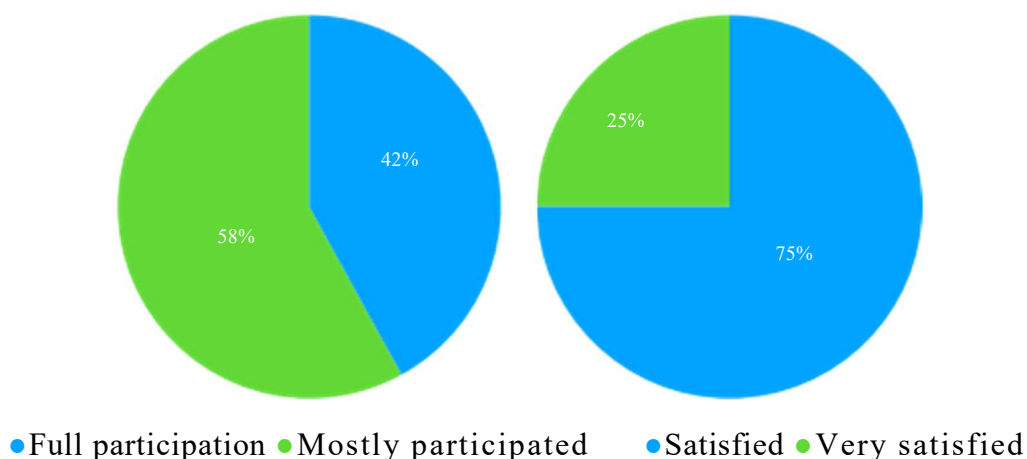
3) Discussion: Participants were asked to share their thoughts with the entire group after the activity(it doesn't require a completed painting).

4. RESULT ANALYSIS

4.1. Overall Evaluation of the Activity

The feedback from this psychological group was obtained through a feedback questionnaire (see Appendix 2 for the questionnaire details). From the overall evaluation of the activity, 58% of participants rated it as "very satisfied", 42% rated it as "satisfied", and there were no dissatisfied individuals; 75% of participants stated that they participated throughout the group activity, while 25% stated that they participated more.

The overall level of participation in the group was relatively high. 25% of the participants stated that the content, entertainment, and effectiveness of this group were in line with expectations, 58% of the participants stated that they met expectations, and another 17% stated that they were average. 58% of participants stated that they would definitely participate in other group activities organized in the future, while 42% of participants expressed a high likelihood of participating in future group activities, indicating that this group has received recognition from all participants (Figure 1).



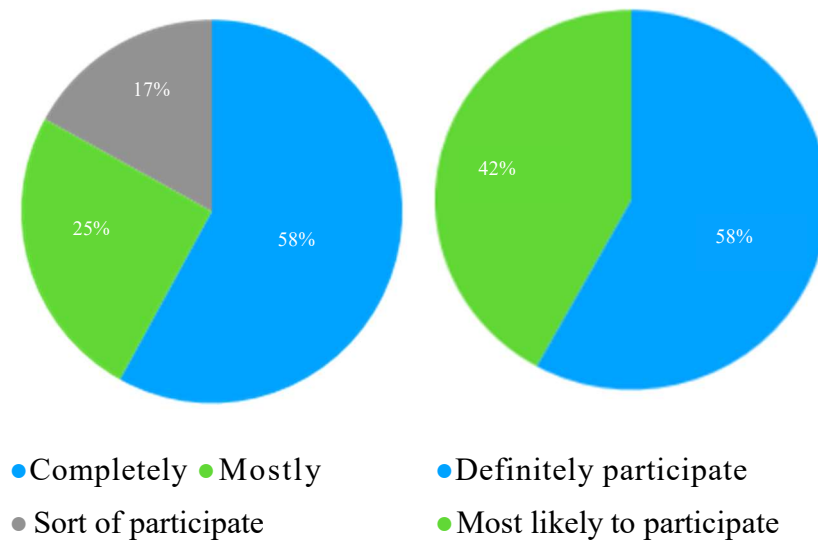


Figure 1. Distribution of Overall Evaluation of Activities

4.2. Activity Harvest Feedback

In this group activity, 67% of participants had no intention of retrieving their phones at all, and only 8% of participants had a strong desire to retrieve their phones (more than five times). According to the records of the group organizer, no participants used their phones during the group's progress. This group intervention achieved the goal of immersing participants in offline socializing and breaking away from social media control (Figure 2).

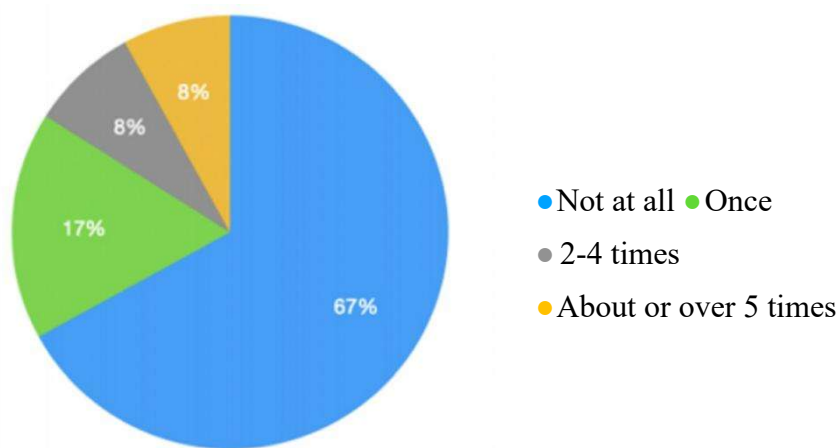


Figure 2. The idea of retrieving the phone

This group highly values the level of acceptance of participants within the group. According to feedback, 75% of participants stated that the group fully accepted them during the activity; 25% of participants indicated that they were mostly accepted by the group and the overall level of cooperation in the activity was high.

Compared to online activities and socializing, 67% of participants reported that offline psychological groups were very interesting, while 33% of participants reported that they were more interesting, indicating that teenagers participating in this psychological group felt that offline activities were more interesting.

It is worth noting that 58% of participants reported that their emotions became more positive after completing the group activity. Another 34% of participants indicated no change; 8% of participants reported slight negativity (Figure 3).

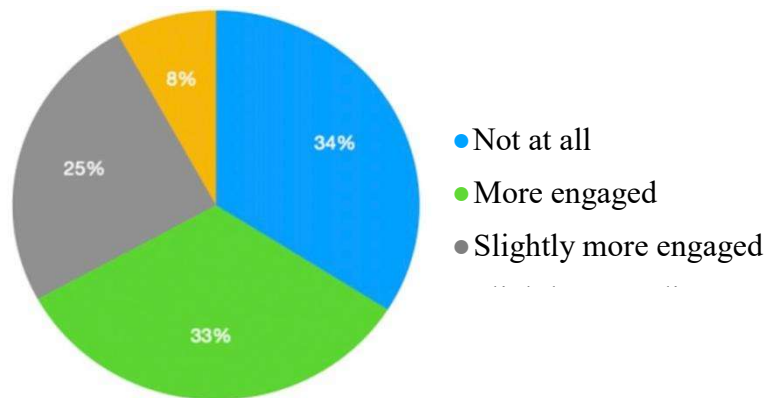


Figure 3. Emotional changes

4.3. Summary of Activity Methodology

This event was relatively successful, and all participants felt safe and accepted. In alternative behavior (digital drawing), all participants were able to restrain themselves and did not retrieve their phones. Ice-breaking activities have helped many participants quickly integrate into the group, so most painting groups spontaneously form groups of people from different backgrounds and age groups. The activity effectively helps participants establish meaningful and healthy interpersonal relationships, and helps them return to a healthy lifestyle.

5. CONCLUSION

This study focuses on social media addiction, using teenagers as a target; mediation strategies of creative group activity were used to address this addiction. Finally, this study found that the DBT social factors for group activities received positive feedback from participants' behavioral correction, social improvement and enhanced mood. This study sets a lead for future research in the area of psychological treatments for social media addiction.

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