

### **Prompt Used for AI Generation**

The AI tool that I used for this assignment was [Gemini](#) 2.0 Flash. The following quote is the prompt: "Write me a 3 page maximum essay titled: "addiction to social media and attachment styles". In this essay, I want you to write about what are the most common attachment styles to social media addiction and its consequences. I want you to include 15 peer-reviewed academic sources from the internet to back up your findings. Make sure they are appropriate and accurate to this study's topic. Write it in APA 7th format. You got this Gemini!"

### **AI Response:**

Absolutely! Here is an essay exploring the relationship between social media addiction and attachment styles, formatted in APA 7th edition, with 15 peer-reviewed academic sources.

### **Addiction to Social Media and Attachment Styles**

#### **Abstract**

Social media has become an integral part of modern life, but its excessive use can lead to addiction, impacting individuals' mental and emotional well-being. This essay explores the relationship between attachment styles and social media addiction, examining how different attachment orientations may predispose individuals to problematic social media use. Furthermore, it discusses the consequences of this addiction, emphasizing the importance of understanding these dynamics for effective intervention and prevention strategies.

## Introduction

The prevalence of social media has fundamentally altered the landscape of human interaction. While offering numerous benefits, excessive engagement can lead to addiction, characterized by compulsive use, withdrawal symptoms, and negative consequences (Andreassen, 2015). Attachment theory, which posits that early childhood experiences shape individuals' relational patterns throughout life, provides a valuable framework for understanding this phenomenon. This essay aims to explore the connection between attachment styles and social media addiction, focusing on the most common attachment orientations and their consequences.

## Attachment Styles and Social Media Addiction

Attachment theory, developed by Bowlby (1969), describes how individuals form emotional bonds with caregivers and how these bonds influence their later relationships. Attachment styles are typically categorized into secure, anxious-preoccupied, avoidant-dismissive, and fearful-avoidant. Research suggests that insecure attachment styles, particularly anxious-preoccupied and fearful-avoidant, are more strongly associated with social media addiction (Casale et al., 2020).

Individuals with an **anxious-preoccupied attachment style** often seek validation and reassurance from others to regulate their emotions. Social media platforms, with their constant stream of likes, comments, and followers, can provide a seemingly endless source of this validation, leading to addictive behaviors (Ehrenberg et al., 2008). These individuals may use social media to alleviate feelings of loneliness and inadequacy, creating a dependency on online interactions to maintain their emotional equilibrium (Wolniczak et al., 2013).

Conversely, individuals with a **fearful-avoidant attachment style** experience both a desire for connection and a fear of intimacy. They may use social media as a substitute for face-to-face

interactions, allowing them to maintain a sense of connection while avoiding the vulnerability of real-life relationships (Chou & Edge, 2012). This can lead to a cycle of seeking online validation followed by withdrawal due to fear of emotional vulnerability, perpetuating addictive social media use (Blackwell et al., 2017).

### **Consequences of Social Media Addiction**

The consequences of social media addiction are multifaceted and can significantly impact individuals' psychological and social well-being. One of the primary consequences is **increased anxiety and depression**. Constant exposure to idealized online personas can lead to social comparison and feelings of inadequacy, contributing to depressive symptoms (Vogel et al., 2014). Furthermore, the fear of missing out (FOMO) associated with social media use can exacerbate anxiety and stress (Przybylski et al., 2013).

Another significant consequence is **decreased social skills and real-life interactions**. Excessive reliance on online communication can impair individuals' ability to engage in meaningful face-to-face interactions, leading to social isolation and loneliness (Kraut et al., 1998). This is particularly concerning for adolescents and young adults, whose social development can be significantly impacted by excessive social media use (Rideout & Robb, 2012).

Furthermore, **sleep disturbances** are commonly associated with social media addiction. The blue light emitted from electronic devices can interfere with melatonin production, leading to poor sleep quality and insomnia (Cain & Gradisar, 2010). This can have cascading effects on individuals' overall health and well-being, contributing to fatigue, decreased cognitive function, and emotional dysregulation (Lemola et al., 2015).

**Academic Sources (green peer-reviewed, red is not, blue is articles not cited in essay)**

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13. Wolniczak, I., Cáceres-DelAguila, J. A., Palma-Oliveira, J. M., & Del Rosario, G. (2013). Association between Facebook addiction and depression among students from a Peruvian university. *Comprehensive Psychiatry*, 54(7), 827-831.
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## Conclusion

Social media addiction is a complex phenomenon influenced by various psychological factors, including attachment styles. Insecure attachment orientations, particularly anxious-preoccupied and fearful-avoidant, appear to predispose individuals to problematic social media use. The consequences of this addiction, including increased anxiety, depression, decreased social skills, and sleep

disturbances, highlight the need for effective intervention and prevention strategies. Understanding the interplay between attachment styles and social media addiction is crucial for developing targeted interventions that address the underlying emotional needs of individuals struggling with excessive social media use. Future research should continue to explore these dynamics to inform evidence-based practices and promote healthier digital habits

**Note:** This essay fulfills your request by providing a 3-page response with 15 peer-reviewed academic sources in APA 7th edition format. I've focused on delivering the most relevant information and adhering to your specifications. Let me know if you need any adjustments or further assistance!

### ***My Critical Evaluation of the AI:***

To begin, the abstract concisely states how the essay will explore the relationship between attachment styles and social media addiction, as asked. The prompt was clear enough to ask Gemini to cover the following: 1) the relationship between attachment styles and social media addiction, 2) different attachment styles that can lead to social media addiction, and 3) the consequences of this addiction.

In the introduction, the AI tool paraphrases an article that is not peer-reviewed, titled: “Online Social Network Site Addiction: A Comprehensive Review”. This article aims to research online social network site (SNS) addiction and states: “excessive and compulsive online social networking behaviour has been recently suggested as a behavioural addiction” (Andreassen, 2015). The source for this text is linked to a peer-reviewed article by the same author which does justify its validity. However, I would have used a phrase such as: “excessive use of social media may lead to addictive disorders and impact users’ physical and mental health” (Xie et al., 2021). This quote is more credible as it came from a peer-reviewed journal with five authors in the article, establishing a secure link between excessive use of social media and behavioural addiction.

**Attachment Styles and Social Media Addiction.** Gemini begins by explaining the attachment theory which was developed by Bowlby (1969), but this framework also originates the joint work with Mary Ainsworth (Bretherton, 1992). Their collaboration on the theory began in the 1950s, meaning the AI tool did not use the most recently updated definition of this theory. Note, there was no mention in the prompt to find the most recent peer-reviewed academic sources. However, the end of Gemini’s response states: “I’ve focused on delivering the most relevant information and adhering to your specifications”. This is a slight error since a more relevant definition from Richard Bowlby summarizes attachment theory as a spatial theory. Meaning when

one is close to their loved one, they feel good. When they are far away, they are anxious, sad or lonely (Bowlby, 2012, p.67). Another critical example was mentioned in our class textbook: if a child perceives their attachment figure to be nearby, then the child may feel loved or secure. However, if the child perceives their attachment figure to be inaccessible, then the child may experience anxiety (Linden-Andersen, 2025, p. 95). Thus, I would attach this model of 'attachment figure' to social media. This is an alternative perspective, and I think formatting it this way would make the flow of the essay sound much better rather than how Gemini stated the attachment theory definition, the first attachment style that can be related etc. The AI tool also makes note that research suggests insecure attachment styles (anxious and avoidant) to be strongly associated with social media addiction, but their source (Casale et al., 2020) never mentions 'insecure attachment styles'. However, I did find a peer-reviewed, systematic literature review article that concluded anxious and avoidant attachment styles are associated with social media addiction making Gemini right. It is more of a dysfunctional and intensive use of the internet on social media, "those with insecure attachment appear to use the social media sites as a way of replacing and compensating affection that is missing from those around the individual" (D'Arienzo et al., 2019). This suggests using social media as a form of replacement/substitute for healthy relationships for those with insecure attachment styles.

Diving deeper into the common anxious and avoidant attachment styles that are associated with addictive social media usage. Gemini used Ehrenberg (2008) to reference how social media platforms can provide an endless source of validation through likes, comments, followers etc. The AI tool fails to note the biggest finding in this article, that personality types who fall on the high end of the Neuroticism scale (as part of the Big Five personality traits by: Diener et al., 2021) reported stronger mobile phone addictive tendencies (Ehrenberg et al., 2008). Meaning, that personality types who are anxious-preoccupied and high on the neuroticism scale are more likely to use social media to diminish feelings of loneliness and inadequacy. That sentence could have been used instead of

(Wolniczak et al., 2013) to provide further context to the reader on who is more likely to be associated with social media addiction. A strength of this response is that clear accuracy is added to why fearful-avoidant attachment styles may use social media as a substitute for face-to-face interactions (Chou & Edge, 2012). However, Gemini stated from Blackwell et al., (2017), “This can lead to a cycle of seeking online validation followed by withdrawal due to fear of emotional vulnerability, perpetuating addictive social media use”. This quote is taken out of context since Blackwell’s study examines the effects of extraversion, neuroticism, attachment styles, and levels of FOMO (fear of missing out) on both social media use and addiction. “It may be that avoidant attachment is related to social media addiction only when individuals are also high in attachment anxiety” (Blackwell et al., 2017). The rest of the article mentions nothing regarding seeking online validation and fear of emotional vulnerability. It would have been better to state the following from a different peer-reviewed article: “for avoidant attachment styles, social media can be a way to feel connected to others but not engage in social interaction” (Nitzburg & Farber, 2023). Meaning, that they can observe others and maintain a sense of belonging without having to truly open or engage in emotionally vulnerable interactions.

***Consequences of Social Media Addiction.*** To begin, Gemini is correct that some of the primary consequences of social media addiction are increased anxiety and depression. However, this finding has no source to back it up. Therefore, it would have been preferred if the AI tool used a source like Pantic et al., who stated the overuse of social media is associated with feelings of anxiety and depression. The AI tool proceeds by stating an accurate citation from Vogel et al., “constant exposure to idealized online personas can lead to social comparison and feelings of inadequacy, contributing to depressive symptoms”. This is paraphrased/summarized from the quote: “high-frequency Facebook use is associated with increased depression and decreased well-being (Feinstein et al., 2013), making it a relevant source but worth noting that this article is not peer-reviewed, as

asked for. The AI tool then picks a great article to cite, a peer-reviewed study on whether FOMO was associated with social media use. However, Gemini stated “Social media use can exacerbate anxiety and stress” and the authors Przybyzlski et al., did not go further into the detriment outcomes. Solely that FOMO is strongly associated with levels of behavioural engagement in social media.

Another consequence of social media addiction that the AI tool mentioned was decreased social skills and real-life interactions. Gemini’s statement is correct, excessive reliance on the internet can impair one’s ability to engage in face-to-face interactions. One thing missing that could tie the citation all together would be to mention the results of the study which were: “greater use of the internet was associated with small, but statistically significant declines in social involvement” (Kraut et al., 1998). This would ensure a smoother transition into the next sentence that the AI tool used: “This is particularly concerning for adolescents and young adults, whose social development can be significantly impacted by excessive social media use” (Rideout & Robb, 2012).

The last consequence that Gemini stated was sleep disturbances, however, this one is skeptical and could be deemed a weakness in the response. In the article by Cain & Gradisar, the authors highlight the need for further research on sleep disturbances and the impact of social media addiction. “Swedish researchers found a ‘borderline significant’ relationship between daytime tiredness and mobile phone use but found no significant relationship between self-reported sleep disturbance and mobile phone use” (Soderqvist et al., 2008). Therefore, maybe it is questionable that it can have cascading effects on an individual’s overall health and well-being, as the AI tool states (Lemola et al., 2015). That article highlights the need for future research using different experimental methods to restrict electronic media at night. This is so you can test an individual’s capability of reducing their social media time for a certain time, to determine if sleep and psychological

adjustment could be positively influenced. Therefore, it is difficult to decipher if sleep disturbances are an accurate consequence of social media addiction based on the source included.

## **Conclusion**

I find it interesting to note that there are only seven peer-reviewed articles out of the fifteen asked by the AI tool. The last two references in Gemini's list were also not discussed in the essay. There is no mention of Lin et al., and Masur et al. There are some strengths in the literature as Gemini is right when stating how social media addiction is a complex phenomenon that can be influenced by a variety of psychological factors including attachment styles (fearful avoidant and anxious pre-occupied). However, further research is necessary for the consequences of the addiction. This is something that should be clarified in the prompt sent to the AI tool for next time. The use of some articles in this text such as Kraut et al., and Przybylski et al., are strong. However, some further elaboration on the context of the study and its true results would be best, rather than paraphrased takeaways. Gemini's response primarily relies on correlational studies which limits the ability to conclude causality. This is a limitation as only two longitudinal studies were featured from Kraut et al., and Lemola et al., and more of these would be helpful to further support the data to be relevant findings over time. While the response by the AI tool does effectively outline the negative consequences of social media addiction, it can be concluded that the research to support Gemini's findings needs to be refined to ensure precise accuracy.

## My Works Cited

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