RESEARCH ARTICLE

SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE AMONG YOUTH: EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

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Manuscript Info	*Abstract*
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	The expanding integration of social media into daily routines has intensified concerns regarding behavioural dependence and its implications for youth well-being. This study examines the relationship between social media addiction and work–life balance among young individuals. A descriptive and analytical research design was adopted, and primary data were collected from 100 respondents aged 16–27 years through a structured questionnaire. Statistical techniques included descriptive analysis, the Kruskal–Wallis test, multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), and regression analysis. The findings indicate that social media use among youth is routine and time-intensive, characterised by prolonged daily engagement and frequent checking behaviour. Multivariate results suggest that demographic characteristics such as gender, occupation, and years of social media use do not significantly influence internal and external addiction tendencies. However, regression analysis demonstrates that both internal and external addiction factors are significantly associated with reduced work-life balance, with internal psychological factors exerting a comparatively stronger influence. By distinguishing between internal and external dimensions of social media addiction, the study highlights the central role of psychological dependence and self-regulatory strain in shaping role balance among youth. These findings offer insights for promoting healthier digital engagement within educational and organisational contexts.

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Introduction: -
Over the past decade, digital technologies have gradually become embedded in everyday routines, influencing how people communicate, work, and manage daily activities. This shift is particularly noticeable among young individuals, whose social as well as professional interactions are closely linked with online environments. In this context, social media platforms have taken on an important role in communication, self-presentation, and the sharing of information. Commonly used applications such as Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook, Snapchat, and YouTube are

now part of regular daily use, providing convenience, connection, and entertainment. At the same time, researchers have raised concerns about excessive or poorly controlled patterns of use, which are often described in the literature as social media addiction (Griffiths, Kuss, & Demetrovics, 2014). Social media addiction is commonly understood as a pattern of repeated and difficult-to-control engagement with online platforms, where individuals continue using social media even when it begins to create negative consequences. Earlier research links such behaviour with reduced concentration, lower productivity, disturbed sleep, and symptoms of anxiety or depression (Hou et al., 2019; Sümen &Evgin, 2021). These concerns may be especially relevant during youth, a period associated with academic demands, early career decisions, and shifting social responsibilities. Continuous exposure to online interaction and the expectation of immediate response can make it challenging for young individuals to maintain clear boundaries between study or work commitments and their personal lives.

Work–life balance is generally understood as the ability of an individual to distribute time and psychological energy across work or academic responsibilities alongside personal, social, and leisure activities. Achieving this balance is widely recognized as a key determinant of well-being, job satisfaction, and long-term performance. However, in the contemporary digital environment, the distinction between work and non-work domains has become increasingly blurred. Social media platforms, designed to maximise user engagement through notifications, algorithm-driven content, and social validation mechanisms, frequently intrude into periods intended for rest or focused work. Empirical evidence suggests that persistent digital engagement contributes to time mismanagement, increased stress levels, and emotional exhaustion, thereby undermining work–life balance (Sharma & Sudhesh, 2018; Zivnuska et al., 2019).

Previous research has explored social media addiction in relation to mental health, academic outcomes, and workplace performance, while a separate stream of studies has examined work–life balance challenges emerging from technological connectivity. However, research directly linking social media addiction with work–life balance among youth remains comparatively limited, particularly in the Indian context. Much of the existing literature also treats students and employees as separate populations, providing only partial insight into young individuals who simultaneously negotiate academic demands, emerging careers, and personal life transitions (Byrne, 2018; Kocak et al., 2023).

In response to these gaps, the present study investigates the level of social media addiction among youth and its implications for work–life balance. The analysis focuses on patterns of social media use, the degree of behavioural dependence on digital platforms, and the ways such dependence shapes young people's capacity to manage academic, professional, and personal responsibilities. Attention is also given to digital detox practices adopted to moderate excessive use. By examining these dimensions together, the study seeks to generate insights that may inform educators, employers, and policymakers in encouraging healthier digital practices and supporting the broader well-being of youth.

Review of Literature: -
Social Media Addiction and Youth Behaviour: -
In recent years, the widespread use of social media among young people has become an important area of academic inquiry, especially because of growing concerns that routine engagement may gradually take on addictive characteristics. Social media addiction is generally understood as a behavioural pattern marked by persistent overuse, diminished control over online activity, and continued engagement despite experiencing negative personal or social consequences. Research consistently suggests that young individuals are more susceptible to such patterns due to developmental transitions, social pressures, and psychological needs related to identity formation, peer acceptance, and validation.

Evidence from earlier studies indicates that excessive social media involvement can influence both cognitive functioning and emotional well-being. Higher levels of use have been linked with reduced attention, difficulties in concentration, and declining academic or professional performance. For instance, Savci and Aysan (2017) observed that stronger tendencies toward social media addiction are associated with lower social connectedness in real-life contexts, implying that intensive online interaction may weaken offline relationships. In a similar vein, Hou et al. (2019) reported that problematic social media use among students adversely affects mental health and academic outcomes, with self-esteem acting as an important mediating factor.

Scholars have also emphasised the reinforcing psychological design of social media environments. Interactive features such as likes, comments, and continuously updated content function as reward-based stimuli that encourage repeated checking and sustained engagement. Hawi and Samaha (2017) demonstrated that greater dependence on social media is linked to lower self-esteem and diminished life satisfaction, highlighting the close connection between compulsive digital behaviour and emotional regulation. Together, these findings suggest that social media addiction extends beyond simple screen time and reflects deeper psychological processes influencing youth behaviour and well-being.

Social Media Addiction and Mental Health Outcomes: -
The connection between social media addiction and psychological well-being has been widely discussed in contemporary research. Patterns of excessive and poorly regulated use are frequently linked with symptoms such as anxiety, depression, heightened stress, and emotional fatigue. Griffiths, Kuss, and Demetrovics (2014) note that problematic engagement with social networking platforms shares core features with recognised behavioural addictions, including mood alteration, tolerance development, withdrawal experiences, and relapse tendencies.
Research findings further indicate that constant exposure to carefully curated digital content may intensify processes of social comparison, often resulting in diminished self-esteem and feelings of personal inadequacy. Haand and Shuwang (2020) reported a positive association between social media addiction and depressive symptoms among university students. In addition, disrupted sleep patterns have become an important concern, particularly where late-night usage and persistent notifications interfere with normal rest cycles (Sümen & Evgin, 2021). While social media environments can provide emotional support, access to information, and opportunities for connection, an emerging consensus in the literature suggests that uncontrolled or habitual use carries meaningful risks for mental health. These concerns highlight the importance of balanced engagement, improved digital awareness, and the development of healthier usage practices among young users.

Social Media Addiction and Work–Life Balance: -
Work–life balance has traditionally been examined in organisational contexts, but the spread of digital technologies has extended its relevance to students and early-career individuals. It broadly refers to the ability to manage academic or professional responsibilities alongside personal and social life without persistent role conflict. Increasingly, problematic social media use is recognised as a factor that weakens boundaries between structured work time and personal life. Empirical research indicates that frequent engagement with social media during study or work hours can reduce productivity and intensify role interference. Sharma and Sudhesh (2018) noted that continuous online interaction complicates the organisation of responsibilities, while Byrne (2018) linked habitual use with poorer work performance and imbalance among young employees. Drawing on conservation of resources theory, Zivnuska et al. (2019) argued that excessive social media involvement depletes emotional and cognitive resources, thereby increasing burnout and work–family conflict. Recent studies further highlight mediating mechanisms such as decisional procrastination and role conflict that connect addictive digital behaviour with everyday functioning (Kocak et al., 2023).

Evidence from earlier research links social media addiction with outcomes such as mental health concerns, academic difficulties, and workplace strain. Yet these studies usually examine students and employees separately, even though many young people must navigate education, emerging careers, and personal development at the same time. When these overlapping roles are considered, the connection between social media addiction and work–life balance appears less clearly understood, particularly in the Indian context where empirical work remains limited. A more integrated investigation is therefore necessary to understand how these dimensions interact in the lived experiences of youth.

Theoretical Framework: -
The growing concern surrounding excessive social media use among youth is closely connected to broader questions about how individuals manage their time, attention, and emotional energy across different areas of life. Earlier discussion in this study has shown that persistent engagement with digital platforms may influence concentration, well-being, and everyday functioning. To understand how such engagement translates into disturbances in work–life balance, it is useful to view these behavioural patterns through a broader explanatory perspective.

One helpful way of interpreting this relationship is offered by the conservation of resources (COR) perspective, which views individuals as striving to preserve important personal resources such as time, psychological energy, emotional stability, and attentional focus. When these limited resources are repeatedly drawn toward a single

activity, fewer resources remain available for other responsibilities and roles. In the context of social media use, continuous checking behaviour, emotional involvement in online interaction, and sustained cognitive attention may gradually reduce the energy required to manage academic, professional, and personal commitments in a balanced manner.

This perspective also indicates thatimbalances may arise more strongly when social media use involves persistent psychological engagement rather than simple exposure or duration of use. When individuals become emotionally or cognitively preoccupied with social media, the effects may continue even outside active usage, creating ongoing pressure on attention and self-regulation. Such processes can make it increasingly difficult to maintain clear boundaries between different life roles, thereby shaping perceptions of work–life balance among young users.

These considerations are particularly relevant during youth, a period often marked by simultaneous educational demands, emerging career responsibilities, and evolving social relationships. The gradual depletion of psychological and emotional resources in this phase may therefore carry meaningful implications for everyday balance and well-being. In this context, the relationship between social media addiction and work–life balance can be interpreted as a process of resource reallocation across competing life roles. When sustained digital engagement intensifies psychological strain or role-related pressures, individuals may experience increasing difficulty in maintaining boundaries between academic, professional, and personal responsibilities. This theoretical perspective provides a foundation for examining how different dimensions of social media addiction influence perceived work–life balance among youth.

Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses: -
Building on the preceding theoretical discussion, the present study conceptualises social media addiction through two dimensions: internal addiction factors and external addiction factors. Internal factors reflect psychological and behavioural consequences of excessive engagement, while external factors capture situational and functional pressures associated with digital connectivity. These dimensions are proposed to influence perceived work–life balance among youth. Accordingly, the conceptual model positions internal and external addiction factors as independent variables and work–life balance as the dependent variable.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework
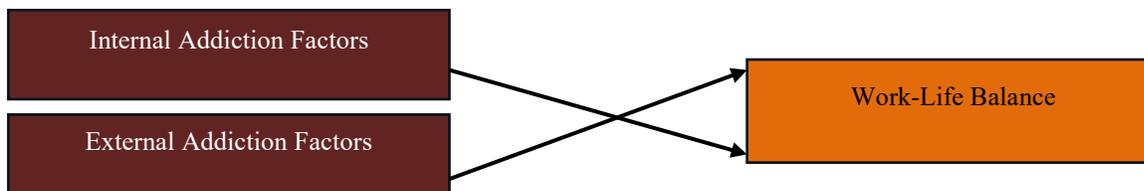
Based on the theoretical reasoning and prior empirical evidence, the following hypotheses are proposed:
H1: Internal addiction factors negatively influence work-lifebalance among youth.
H2: External addiction factors negatively influence work-life balance among youth.

Methodology: -
This study adopts a descriptive and analytical design to examine the relationship between social media addiction and work–life balance among youth. The analysis is based on primary data collected through a structured survey. The target population comprised individuals aged 16–27 years, a group characterised by intensive digital engagement while simultaneously managing academic and early career responsibilities. A total of 100 respondents were selected using convenience sampling, with representation from students, salaried employees, and working professionals. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire covering demographic characteristics, social media usage patterns, behavioural indicators of addiction, perceived work–life balance, and digital detox practices. Social media addiction was operationalised through two dimensions: internal addiction factors and external addiction factors. Internal factors capture psychological and behavioural consequences of excessive engagement, including burnout, reduced self-esteem, fatigue, and motivational strain. External factors represent situational and functional aspects such as work distraction, blurred role boundaries, networking exposure, and professional information access. Each construct was measured using five items rated on a five-point Likert scale, and composite scores were calculated by averaging the respective items. The measurement items were developed specifically for this study based on established theoretical perspectives on social media addiction and role balance. Content validity was ensured by

aligning the statements with behavioural and psychological dimensions identified in prior literature. Work–life balance was measured using a multi-item scale assessing respondents' perceived ability to manage academic or professional responsibilities alongside personal life domains.The work–life balance items were developed to reflect perceived coordination between academic, professional, and personal responsibilities within digitally mediated contexts.The internal consistency of the constructs was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, as presented in Table 1.The internal addiction factor demonstrated satisfactory reliability ($\alpha = 0.755$), while the external factor showed acceptable reliability for exploratory research ($\alpha = 0.619$).

Table 1: Reliability Statistics

Construct	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Internal Addiction Factors	5	0.755
External Addiction Factors	5	0.619

Following data collection, responses were coded and analysed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics summarised respondent characteristics and usage behaviour. The Kruskal–Wallis test examined occupational differences in platform preference, MANOVA assessed demographic influences on addiction indicators, and regression analysis evaluated the effect of addiction dimensions on work–life balance. Participation was voluntary and anonymous. While convenience sampling and self-reported responses may limit generalisability, the approach is appropriate for exploring behavioural patterns within the defined population.

Results and Discussion:-
Profile of the Respondents:-
Table 2 summarises the demographic profile of the respondents. The participants are fairly balanced in terms of gender and are primarily concentrated within the 19–27 age categories. A large majority remain unmarried and report either undergraduate or postgraduate educational attainment. In occupational terms, students form the largest segment of the sample, followed by working professionals and salaried employees. Taken together, these characteristics reflect a group of young individuals positioned within academic or early career stages, making them suitable for examining patterns of social media dependence and its possible influence on work–life balance.

Table 2: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Category	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	53
	Female	47
Age	16-18	15
	19-21	26
	22-24	33
	25-27	26
Marital Status	Married	10
	Unmarried	90
Education	Highersecondary	11
	Under Graduation	45
	Post-Graduationand Above	44
Occupation	Student	45
	SalariedEmployee	18
	WorkingProfessional	31
	Others	6
Monthly Income	Up to 10000	15
	10001-20000	10

21001-40000	25
Above 40000	18
None	32

Source: Primary data
Social Media Usage Intensity and Behavioural Patterns:-
Information presented in Table 3 highlights the extent and regularity of social media engagement among the respondents. A substantial proportion report long-term use, with nearly three-fourths having used social media for five years or more, and a comparable share spending at least three hours per day on these platforms. Frequent checking behaviour is also common, as most respondents indicate that they access social media several times throughout the day. Such patterns point to social media use becoming an integrated part of everyday life rather than a purely occasional or leisure-oriented activity. Earlier research has similarly linked prolonged daily exposure and repetitive checking behaviour with habitual and potentially addictive forms of engagement (Griffiths et al., 2014; Savci & Aysan, 2017). In this context, the observed trends offer a relevant empirical basis for further examining the relationship between social media dependence and its broader behavioral consequences.

Table 3: Social Media Usage Intensity among Youth

Usage Indicator	Category	Percentage (%)
Years of Social Media Use	Up to 1 year	4
	2–4 years	22
	5–7 years	43
	More than 7 years	31
Daily Time Spent on Social Media	Less than 1 hour	3
	1–2 hours	23
	3–4 hours	39
	More than 5 hours	35
Frequency of Checking Social Media	Once a day	4
	Twice a day	11
	Only during free time	18
	Several times a day	67

Source: Primary data

Occupation-wise Preference for Social Media Platforms: -
The Kruskal–Wallis analysis presented in Table 4 reveals that occupational background is associated with differences in the use of certain social media platforms. Facebook shows a statistically significant variation across groups (χ^2 = 13.539, $p < 0.05$), with students displaying higher mean ranks than salaried employees and working professionals, suggesting comparatively stronger engagement within the student category. A clearer distinction is visible in the case of WhatsApp (χ^2 = 26.954, $p < 0.01$), where working professionals record the highest mean ranks, consistent with the platform's role in routine and work-related communication. For Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, and YouTube, the observed differences across occupations do not reach statistical significance, implying relatively similar usage patterns irrespective of employment status. Taken together, these findings indicate that the influence of occupation on social media behaviour is selective rather than uniform, and appears to depend on the functional purpose associated with each platform.

Table 4: Occupation-wise Preference for Social Media Platforms

Platform	Students	Salaried Employees	Working Professionals	Others	χ²	p-value
Facebook	**61.90**	43.25	39.11	45.58	13.539	**0.004***
Instagram	54.46	49.44	49.00	31.75	3.695	0.296
Twitter	56.22	53.75	40.74	48.25	5.697	0.127
Snapchat	50.38	45.50	48.89	74.75	5.293	0.152
YouTube	45.09	52.75	56.18	55.00	3.168	0.366
WhatsApp	35.20	55.94	**68.63**	55.25	26.954	**0.000***
Others	45.36	50.78	59.42	42.17	5.410	0.144

Note: p < 0.05 indicates statistical significance.
Source: Primary data

Demographic Effects on Social Media Addiction:-
To examine whether demographic characteristics influence social media addiction dimensions, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted. Internal addiction factors and external addiction factors were treated as dependent variables, while gender, occupation, and years of social media use were included as fixed factors. Preliminary assessment using Levene's test confirmed that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was satisfied ($p > 0.05$).

Table 5: Multivariate Analysis of Demographic Effects on Internal and External Addiction Factors

Factor	Wilks' Lambda	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	p-value	Partial Eta Squared
Gender	0.956	2.097	2	91	0.129	0.044
Occupation	0.933	1.074	6	182	0.380	0.034
Years of Social Media Use	0.927	1.174	6	182	0.322	0.037

Note: Dependent variables: Internal addiction factors and External addiction factors.
Significance level set at p < 0.05.

The multivariate results reveal that none of the examined demographic variables exerted a statistically significant effect on internal and external addiction factors. Gender, occupation, and years of social media use did not demonstrate meaningful multivariate differences, as indicated by non-significant Wilks' Lambda statistics ($p > 0.05$). The associated effect sizes were small, suggesting limited practical impact.These findings suggest that internal and external addiction tendencies are relatively consistent across demographic categories within the sampled youth population.The absence of significant demographic differences suggests that social media addiction tendencies may be relatively uniform across youth groups, implying that digital well-being interventions should adopt a broad rather than narrowly targeted approach.

Impact of Social Media Addiction on Work–Life Balance:-
Table 6 presents the regression results examining the influence of internal and external addiction factors on work–life balance among youth. The model is statistically significant ($F = 22.817$, $p < 0.001$) and explains 32 per cent of the variance in work–life balance ($R^2 = 0.320$), indicating moderate explanatory power. Both internal and external addiction factors are significantly associated with lower levels of work–life balance. Internal factors exhibit a stronger influence ($\beta = 0.383$, $p = 0.001$) compared to external factors ($\beta = 0.241$, $p = 0.026$). This suggests that psychological and behavioural consequences of excessive social media engagement contribute more substantially to reductions in perceived work–life balance than situational or functional aspects of use. The findings support the proposed hypotheses and are consistent with theoretical expectations that sustained digital engagement reallocates cognitive and emotional resources, thereby intensifying role interference and weakening boundary management across life domains.

Table 6: Regression Analysis of Social Media Addiction and Work–Life Balance

Variable	β	t-value	p-value
Internal Factors	0.383	3.585	0.001*
External Factors	0.241	2.257	0.026*
Model Statistics			
R²		0.320	
Adjusted R²		0.306	
F-value		22.817	
Model Significance		0.000	

Note:p < 0.05 indicates statistical significance.
Source: Primary data.

Digital Detox Practices:-
 Despite a generally high level of awareness about digital detox practices, only a smaller proportion of respondents appear to translate this awareness into consistent behavioural change. Among those who reported adopting such practices, the primary motivations were related to reducing stress and improving sleep quality. Some variation was observed across gender in the use of particular detox strategies, whereas other practices showed broadly similar patterns of adoption. Taken together, these observations suggest that awareness by itself may not be sufficient to encourage meaningful behavioural regulation, highlighting the importance of structured guidance and targeted interventions to support healthier digital habits among youth.

Theoretical Contribution:-
This study contributes to the literature by distinguishing between internal and external dimensions of social media addiction in explaining reduced work–life balance among youth. The findings suggest that psychological and behavioural strain associated with excessive engagement plays a more substantial role than situational or functional aspects of use. By integrating social media addiction into discussions of work–life balance, the study extends resource-based and boundary-oriented perspectives to digitally mediated environments. The results underscore the importance of self-regulatory processes in maintaining role balance within increasingly connected contexts.

Conclusion and Implications:-
The growing presence of digital interaction in everyday life makes it increasingly important to understand how sustained engagement with social media influences the balance between personal responsibilities and professional or academic demands among young people. Evidence from the present analysis shows that social media use within this group is not occasional but routine, reflected in extended daily exposure and repeated checking behaviour throughout the day. Differences in platform preference across occupational categories further indicate that patterns of use are shaped by functional requirements rather than simple popularity.

A more substantive concern emerging from the findings is the measurable effect of addictive engagement on work-life balance. Both internal and external dimensions of social media addiction are associated with reduced work-life balance, although psychological attachment, reduced self-regulation, and compulsive interaction exert a comparatively stronger influence than situational usage pressures. This pattern highlights the importance of cognitive and emotional resource management in sustaining role balance within digitally connected environments.
The implications extend beyond theory into educational, organisational, and policy contexts. Encouraging reflective and disciplined technology use, integrating digital well-being awareness into learning and workplace environments, and promoting realistic disengagement practices may help mitigate the risks associated with excessive online involvement. At the same time, the interpretation of results should remain cautious because the analysis relies on cross-sectional and self-reported information, limiting causal explanation. Subsequent investigations could strengthen understanding through longitudinal observation, behavioural usage tracking, or examination of mediating psychological variables. Supporting healthier relationships with digital technology, rather than rejecting it entirely, appears central to sustaining balanced development and functioning among youth.

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