

Social Media Addiction Among Senior High School Students of Pasonanca National High School

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Publication history:

Received: August 20, 2026

Revised: September 17, 2026

Accepted: September 20, 2026

Published: September 21, 2026

International Journal of Sustainable and Integrated Studies, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 520–526, September 2026.

Abstract

This study examined the level of social media addiction indicators among senior high school students of Pasonanca National High School and determined whether measured scores differed according to sex, academic track, and age. Using a quantitative descriptive-comparative and cross-sectional survey design, data were collected from 104 students enrolled in ICT, HUMSS, EIM, and HE tracks during School Year 2024–2025 through a five-point questionnaire adapted from the Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS) framework, operationalized across four dimensions: occupation, mood modification, relapse, and conflict. Descriptive statistics, independent-samples *t* tests, and one-way analyses of variance were employed to analyze the data. Results showed an overall mean of 2.91, interpreted as Average, with mood modification obtaining the highest mean ($M = 3.25$), followed by occupation ($M = 3.16$), relapse ($M = 2.68$), and conflict ($M = 2.59$). A statistically significant difference was found by sex ($t = -2.397$, $p = .018$), with female respondents reporting higher scores ($M = 3.10$) than males ($M = 2.80$), while no significant differences emerged by academic track ($F = 1.295$, $p = .280$) or age ($F = 1.998$, $p = .101$). The findings indicate moderate levels of reported problematic social-media-use indicators, particularly those associated with mood modification and prolonged engagement, without establishing clinical diagnosis. The study contributes school-level evidence relevant to digital well-being and Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4: Quality Education). By providing localized data on students' digital engagement patterns, the research supports institutional and educational sustainability through informed digital-wellness initiatives, responsible technology-use education, and student-support programs that protect learning time, attention, sleep, and participation while recognizing social media's educational and social functions.

Keywords: Digital Well-Being; Problematic Social Media Use; Senior High School Students; Social Media Addiction; Sustainable Development Goal 4

1. Introduction

Social media provides adolescents with opportunities for communication, learning, entertainment, and social interaction. Despite these benefits, excessive or poorly regulated use may compete with students' time, attention, sleep, interpersonal relationships, and academic responsibilities. Psychometric research has therefore emphasized the need to examine specific indicators of problematic social media use rather than relying only on frequency of use (Brailovskaia & Margraf, 2022; Stănculescu, 2022; Zarate et al., 2022). The distinction between ordinary use and problematic use is particularly important because estimates of social-network addiction among school-going

adolescents differ according to instruments and definitions. Frequent engagement alone does not necessarily indicate clinical addiction (Ahmer et al., 2026). Relevant behavioral indicators include preoccupation, prolonged engagement, mood modification, relapse, and conflict.

The educational and social effects of social media may vary according to how, why, and how intensively it is used. Philippine studies have reported social media addiction among senior high school learners and have examined relationships between social media, study habits, academic achievement, reading attitudes, and learning experiences (Mindajao, 2021; Ayuban & Fernal, 2024; Gagalang, 2022; Mangacop & Guillena, 2024). These findings support the need for school-level investigations that account for the characteristics of specific student populations. In the present study, occupation refers to the terminology used in the source questionnaire and covers cognitive preoccupation and prolonged engagement with social media. Together with mood modification, relapse, and conflict, these dimensions provide the basis for describing students' reported social media-use indicators and comparing scores across sex, academic track, and age.

Related literature identifies several recurring themes in the study of problematic social media use. First, measurement and interpretation must be approached carefully. The BSMAS and related instruments provide structured ways to assess problematic use, but findings depend on the instrument's operational definitions, the population studied, and the cultural setting (Brailovskaia & Margraf, 2022; Stănculescu, 2022; Zarate et al., 2022). Second, problematic use involves more than frequent access. Cognitive preoccupation and prolonged engagement may indicate that social media occupies substantial time and attention. Mood modification reflects the use of social media to manage boredom, loneliness, personal problems, or other emotional experiences. Relapse concerns difficulty reducing or regulating use, while conflict refers to physical, interpersonal, sleep-related, or functional consequences.

Third, the educational effects of social media are not uniform. Social media may support communication, information exchange, and learning, but its effects may differ according to students' purposes, intensity of use, study habits, and learning environments (Ayuban & Fernal, 2024; Gagalang, 2022; Mangacop & Guillena, 2024). Thus, social media should not be viewed exclusively as harmful or beneficial. Finally, existing research supports the value of contextualized school-based evidence. Studies conducted in different populations may produce varying results, and findings from broader or external settings may not fully represent the experiences of students in Pasonanca National High School. Local assessment can help identify which behavioral indicators require attention while avoiding unsupported assumptions about clinical addiction.

Globally, social media has become deeply integrated into adolescent communication, entertainment, and learning. International research has examined problematic social media use using psychometrically tested tools, including the BSMAS, and has reported the importance of examining specific behavioral dimensions and contextual factors (Brailovskaia & Margraf, 2022; Stănculescu, 2022; Zarate et al., 2022). Global evidence also indicates that prevalence estimates vary because studies use different instruments and definitions (Ahmer et al., 2026). Within the Philippine context, social media is likewise part of students' academic and social environments. Philippine studies have examined social media addiction, reading attitudes, academic achievement, study habits, and learning experiences among learners (Mindajao, 2021; Ayuban & Fernal, 2024; Gagalang, 2022; Mangacop & Guillena, 2024). These studies suggest that the educational implications of social media depend on patterns and purposes of use. At the local level, Pasonanca National High School in Zamboanga City provides a specific setting for examining reported social media addiction indicators among senior high school learners. The students' experiences may be shaped by their school environment, academic tracks, age groups, and personal patterns of digital engagement. However, the available literature does not sufficiently describe the four dimensions examined in this school context or establish whether scores differ according to sex, academic track, and age.

The study is conceptually based on the examination of problematic social media use through behavioral indicators associated with addictive or poorly regulated engagement. The adapted questionnaire measures four dimensions: occupation, mood modification, relapse, and conflict. Occupation concerns cognitive preoccupation and prolonged engagement with social media. Mood modification refers to using social media in response to emotional or situational experiences, such as loneliness, boredom, or personal problems. Relapse refers to difficulty decreasing or regulating use after attempts to do so. Conflict involves physical discomfort, sleep disturbance, relationship problems, or interference with broader responsibilities. The BSMAS framework provides a relevant conceptual foundation for assessing problematic social media use, although the present study uses a four-dimension adaptation rather than the standard six-item structure. The standard BSMAS represents core components such as salience, tolerance, mood modification, relapse or loss of control, withdrawal, and conflict (Brailovskaia & Margraf, 2022; Zarate et al., 2022). Validation studies have supported the use of the BSMAS in different populations (Copez-Lonzoy et al., 2023; Stănculescu, 2022). Because the present instrument is an adaptation, the results are interpreted as scores on the study questionnaire and not as a clinical diagnosis. The conceptual framework guides the assessment of reported behavioral indicators and the comparison of scores across sex, academic track, and age.

Although problematic social media use has been examined in international and Philippine studies, several gaps remain. First, findings vary according to the instruments and operational definitions used, making contextualized research necessary (Ahmer et al., 2026). Second, existing Philippine studies have addressed different outcomes, including social media addiction, study habits, academic performance, reading attitudes, and learning experiences (Mindajao, 2021; Ayuban & Fernal, 2024; Gagalang, 2022; Mangacop & Guillena, 2024), but they do not

specifically provide evidence for the four dimensions examined in this study at Pasonanca National High School. Third, limited school-level evidence is available regarding whether reported social media addiction scores differ according to sex, academic track, and age. Identifying such differences may help clarify whether digital-wellness efforts should be broadly implemented or supplemented by attention to student groups. The study addresses these gaps by describing the level of occupation, mood modification, relapse, and conflict among senior high school students and by comparing scores according to selected demographic characteristics. Its findings may provide a basis for school-based digital-wellness initiatives, student-support programs, and future research while maintaining the distinction between problematic-use indicators and clinical diagnosis.

The study is most directly aligned with SDG 4 – Quality Education. SDG 4 promotes inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities. Target 4.1 emphasizes quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes, while Target 4.4 emphasizes relevant skills, including information and communications technology skills (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs [UNDESA], 2026). The study does not directly measure the achievement of SDG 4. Its contribution is indirect and educational: it provides school-level evidence concerning digital engagement that may inform initiatives supporting students’ attention, learning participation, self-regulation, and responsible technology use. These conditions may help students use digital platforms productively without allowing problematic patterns to interfere with education.

The study contributes primarily to educational, technological, public-health, and institutional sustainability. From an educational perspective, understanding students’ social media-use indicators can support efforts to protect learning time, attention, participation, and academic responsibilities. It may also help schools develop digital-wellness activities that complement digital-skills education. From a technological sustainability perspective, the study promotes responsible and purposeful engagement with digital platforms. It recognizes that technology can support communication and learning while also requiring self-regulation and appropriate guidance. The findings may therefore inform student-support programs that encourage balanced technology use rather than treating ordinary social media participation as inherently problematic.

From a public-health and well-being perspective, the study considers indicators related to mood modification, sleep disturbance, physical discomfort, interpersonal relationships, and difficulty regulating use. These concerns are relevant to students’ overall functioning, although the study does not establish causal relationships or clinical conditions. Finally, the study supports institutional sustainability by providing localized evidence that school administrators, teachers, guidance personnel, parents, and future researchers may use when planning digital-wellness and student-support initiatives. Its multidisciplinary importance lies in connecting education, digital behavior, student well-being, and school-based support while remaining grounded in the reported experiences of learners at Pasonanca National High School.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

The study employed a quantitative descriptive-comparative and cross-sectional survey design. The descriptive component summarized respondents reported social media addiction indicators, while the comparative component examined differences in mean scores according to sex, academic track, and age. The cross-sectional approach reflected the collection of questionnaire data during a single period of the study. No variables were manipulated and no intervention was introduced.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted at Pasonanca National High School in Zamboanga City, Philippines. The school served as the setting for examining reported social media-use indicators among senior high school students during School Year 2024–2025.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The respondents were 104 senior high school students enrolled in Information and Communications Technology (ICT), Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS), Electrical Installation and Maintenance (EIM), and Home Economics (HE) during School Year 2024–2025. The source manuscript reported respondents as 18 years old and above, with the oldest group presented as “22 and above.” The sample consisted of 63 male respondents (60.6%) and 41 female respondents (39.4%). By academic track, 19 were from ICT (18.3%), 21 from HUMSS (20.2%), 45 from EIM (43.3%), and 19 from HE (18.3%).

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The source manuscript stated that stratified random sampling was used to ensure representation across grade levels, sections, or academic tracks. The final sample comprised 104 respondents distributed across the reported tracks. The present manuscript retains this sampling description because it is the procedure documented in the original study.

2.5 Research Instrument

A structured questionnaire served as the primary data-gathering instrument. It included a demographic section covering name (optional), sex, age, and academic track, followed by items measuring social media addiction indicators. Responses were recorded using a five-point scale: 5 = Always, 4 = Often, 3 = Sometimes, 2 = Rarely, and 1 = Never. The source manuscript identified the social media measure as an adaptation of the Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS) framework and operationalized it through four dimensions: occupation, mood modification, relapse, and conflict. The standard BSMAS is a six-item, unidimensional measure representing core components of problematic social media use, including salience, tolerance, mood modification, relapse/loss of control, withdrawal, and conflict (Brailovskaia & Margraf, 2022; Zarate et al., 2022). Recent validation studies have supported the use of the BSMAS for assessing problematic social media use across different populations (Copez-Lonzoy et al., 2023; Stănculescu, 2022). Because the present study used a four-dimension adaptation rather than the standard six-item BSMAS scoring structure, the results are interpreted as scores on the adapted study instrument and not as a clinical diagnosis. The term occupation is retained because it is the terminology used in the source instrument; the items under this dimension concern cognitive preoccupation and prolonged engagement with social media.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

After permission was obtained, the researcher administered the questionnaire to the identified respondents and provided instructions for completing the instrument. The completed questionnaires were collected, organized according to sex, age, and academic track, encoded, and prepared for statistical analysis.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

Frequencies and percentages were used to describe the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Mean scores were used to summarize the level of reported social media addiction indicators for each dimension and for the overall measure. An independent-samples *t* test was used to compare mean scores according to sex, while one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to compare mean scores across academic tracks and age groups. Statistical significance was evaluated at $\alpha = .05$. The original manuscript also listed chi-square, regression, multiple regression, correlation, and factor analysis as possible statistical procedures; however, these analyses were not reflected in the reported results and were therefore not retained as statistical treatments in this manuscript.

2.8 Validity, Reliability, and Ethical Considerations

The source manuscript reported that the questionnaire was submitted to panel experts for validation before administration. Respondents were informed of the study purpose, potential risks and benefits, and their rights before participation. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the school principal, and confidentiality of responses was maintained. The source manuscript did not report a reliability coefficient for the adapted questionnaire; therefore, no reliability coefficient is introduced in this rewritten manuscript. Participation was voluntary, and responses were organized and encoded for statistical analysis. Identifying information was treated confidentially. The ethical procedures reported in the source manuscript were retained without adding unsupported details.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Level of Social Media Addiction Indicators

All four dimensions of social media addiction indicators fell within the Average range of 2.51–3.50. Mood modification obtained the highest mean ($M = 3.25$), followed by occupation ($M = 3.16$), relapse ($M = 2.68$), and conflict ($M = 2.59$). The overall mean was 2.91, also interpreted as Average.

3.1.1 Occupation

The occupation dimension obtained a grand mean of 3.16, interpreted as Average. The highest-rated item concerned allocating long periods to social-media-related activities such as games, chats, and viewing photographs ($M = 3.42$), followed by spending more time on social media than intended ($M = 3.30$). The lowest-rated item concerned being unable to give up social media for a long period ($M = 2.90$). The pattern indicates that prolonged engagement and spending more time than intended were reported more frequently than complete inability to stop using social media. This pattern is consistent with the conceptualization of problematic social media use as involving cognitive preoccupation and difficulty regulating engagement rather than simple frequency of use. Psychometric research on the BSMAS and related measures emphasizes the importance of examining specific behavioral indicators when interpreting problematic social media use (Brailovskaia & Margraf, 2022; Zarate et al., 2022).

3.1.2 Mood Modification

Mood modification obtained the highest dimension mean ($M = 3.25$, Average). The highest-rated item was “I spend time at social media at times when I feel alone” ($M = 3.52$), which falls within the High range according to the study’s response scale. Other relatively high responses concerned using social media to forget personal

problems ($M = 3.35$) and seeking relief from boredom ($M = 3.46$). The results indicate that emotional or situational states were relatively common contexts for social media engagement among the respondents. The finding is relevant to contemporary research on problematic social media use, which recognizes mood modification as one of the behavioral components associated with addictive or problematic patterns (Brailovskaia & Margraf, 2022; Copez-Lonzoy et al., 2023). However, the present study does not establish that social media caused loneliness, boredom, or negative thoughts. It only documents respondents' reported use of social media in connection with these experiences.

3.1.3 Relapse

Relapse obtained a grand mean of 2.68, interpreted as Average. The highest item concerned the desire to regulate social media use ($M = 2.79$), while the lowest concerned unsuccessful attempts to decrease time spent on social media ($M = 2.51$). The results suggest some difficulty in regulating social media use, although the overall dimension remained within the Average range. This is consistent with the broader BSMAS framework in which relapse or loss of control represents difficulty reducing or regulating problematic use (Stănculescu, 2022; Zarate et al., 2022).

3.1.4 Conflict

Conflict obtained the lowest dimension mean ($M = 2.59$), although it remained within the Average range. The highest-rated item concerned physical problems such as back, head, or eye aches associated with social media use ($M = 3.03$), followed by disturbances in sleep patterns and relationship-related problems (both $M = 2.84$). Several items fell within the Low range, including problems in respondents' broader lives ($M = 2.36$) and neglect of spouse or family members ($M = 2.39$). The lower overall conflict score indicates that consequences involving relationships and daily functioning were reported less frequently than mood-related use and prolonged engagement. The pattern suggests that, within this sample, severe functional or interpersonal consequences were less prominent than emotional use and prolonged engagement. The findings should be interpreted as descriptions of self-reported responses to the adapted instrument and not as evidence that respondents met a clinical diagnosis of social media addiction.

3.1.5 Overall Level

Overall, the respondents obtained a mean of 2.91, interpreted as Average. The results therefore indicate moderate levels of reported problematic social-media-use indicators within this sample. Mood modification and occupation received higher mean scores than relapse and conflict. This pattern suggests that emotional use and prolonged engagement were more prominent indicators than severe functional or interpersonal consequences. The finding should be interpreted as a description of self-reported responses to the adapted instrument and should not be treated as evidence that respondents met a clinical diagnosis of social media addiction. The overall Average level supports the view that, in this sample, problematic-use indicators were present but not extreme.

3.2 Differences in Social Media Addiction Scores According to Sex

Female respondents obtained a higher mean score ($M = 3.10$) than male respondents ($M = 2.80$). The difference was statistically significant, $t = -2.397$, $p = .018$, at the 0.05 level. The result indicates a statistically significant difference in measured social media addiction scores by sex within this sample. Female respondents reported a higher mean score than male respondents. Similar sex differences have been observed in some studies of problematic social media use, although findings vary according to population, instrument, and context (Stănculescu, 2022; Zarate et al., 2022). Accordingly, the present result should be understood as a sample-specific difference in measured scores rather than a general claim that one sex is inherently more susceptible to social media addiction.

3.3 Differences in Social Media Addiction Scores According to Academic Track

The mean scores were 3.12 for ICT, 2.87 for HUMSS, 2.81 for EIM, and 3.02 for HE. The analysis yielded $F = 1.295$ and $p = .280$, which is greater than .05. Thus, the study did not detect a statistically significant difference in measured social media addiction scores across the four academic tracks. The nonsignificant result means that the study did not find sufficient statistical evidence of differences among the four tracks at the 0.05 level. It does not establish that academic track is unrelated to social media use in all populations. Differences could be influenced by other characteristics of students, patterns of use, or sample size. Philippine research similarly suggests that the relationship between social media use and academic experiences can vary according to how students use social media and the characteristics of the learning context (Ayuban & Fernal, 2024; Mangacop & Guillena, 2024).

3.4 Differences in Social Media Addiction Scores According to Age

Mean scores were 2.95 for age 18, 2.76 for age 19, 2.43 for age 20, 3.20 for age 21, and 3.21 for the group aged 22 and above. The analysis yielded $F = 1.998$ and $p = .101$. Since $p > .05$, the study did not detect a statistically significant difference in measured social media addiction scores across the reported age groups. The absence of statistical significance means that the observed differences among age groups were not sufficiently large relative

to within-group variation to reject the null hypothesis at the 0.05 level. The higher descriptive means among respondents aged 21 and 22 and above should therefore not be interpreted as evidence of an age effect. The small number of respondents in some age groups also limits the precision of comparisons.

3.5 Implications for Sustainable Development Goal 4

The findings are relevant to SDG 4: Quality Education, particularly the goal of supporting inclusive and equitable quality education and effective learning outcomes. SDG 4 Target 4.1 emphasizes quality secondary education and effective learning outcomes, while Target 4.4 emphasizes relevant skills, including information and communications technology skills (UNDESA, 2026). In a digitally connected school environment, students need opportunities to use technology productively while developing self-regulation that protects learning time, sleep, attention, and participation. The study does not directly measure the achievement of SDG 4. Rather, its contribution is educational and institutional: the findings provide local evidence that may help schools consider digital-wellness activities, responsible technology-use education, guidance initiatives, and student-support programs. Such initiatives can encourage students to distinguish purposeful educational use from problematic patterns without treating ordinary social media participation as a clinical disorder.

3.6 Limitations

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the cross-sectional and self-report design does not permit causal conclusions. Second, the respondents came from one senior high school, limiting generalizability to other schools and populations. Third, the questionnaire used a four-dimension adaptation of the BSMAS framework rather than the standard six-item BSMAS structure. Fourth, the source manuscript did not report a reliability coefficient for the adapted questionnaire, so reliability of the present administration cannot be independently established from the available study documentation. Finally, the oldest age group was reported only as “22 and above,” which limits more detailed analysis of older respondents. These limitations suggest that the findings should be interpreted cautiously and primarily as descriptive, school-level evidence. They also highlight the need for future studies to use validated instruments, report reliability evidence, include multiple schools, and employ designs that allow stronger inferences about patterns of social media use over time.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study found an overall Average level of reported social media addiction indicators among the 104 senior high school respondents, with an overall mean of 2.91. Among the four dimensions, mood modification obtained the highest mean ($M = 3.25$), followed by occupation ($M = 3.16$), relapse ($M = 2.68$), and conflict ($M = 2.59$). A statistically significant difference was found according to sex, with female respondents obtaining a higher mean score than male respondents. No statistically significant differences were detected according to academic track or age. Overall, the findings indicate that emotional use and prolonged engagement were more prominent reported indicators than conflict-related consequences.

Schools may integrate digital-wellness activities into student-support programs, emphasizing purposeful technology use, self-regulation, time management, sleep hygiene, and healthy coping strategies. Teachers and guidance personnel may provide opportunities for students to reflect on how social media use relates to study routines, attention, sleep, and interpersonal relationships without equating ordinary social media use with a clinical disorder. Parents and caregivers may encourage open communication about students' online experiences and establish reasonable routines that protect study time, sleep, and offline activities. Future studies may include multiple schools and larger samples to improve generalizability and statistical power, and future researchers may use the standard BSMAS or a formally validated local adaptation and report appropriate validity and reliability evidence before making comparisons across groups. Longitudinal or mixed-methods research may examine changes in social media-use patterns over time and explore students' experiences of the benefits and difficulties associated with social media. Schools may align digital-wellness initiatives with SDG 4 by promoting digital skills and responsible technology use that support, rather than interfere with quality learning and effective educational participation.

5. Compliance with ethical standards

This study followed the ethical procedures documented in the source manuscript. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed about the study purpose, potential risks and benefits, and their rights before answering the questionnaire. Permission to conduct the study was secured from the school principal of Pasonanca National High School. Confidentiality of responses was maintained throughout data collection, organization, and analysis, with identifying information treated confidentially. The questionnaire was submitted to panel experts for validation before administration. No additional ethical approvals or procedures are claimed beyond those documented in the source manuscript.

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