**Social norms and e-motions in problematic social media use among adolescents**

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**The current study aimed to test:**

1. the influence of friends (i.e., their social media use and group norms about social media use); and
2. (ii) the effects of difficulties in emotion regulation and so-called “e-motions” on adolescents’ problematic social media use.

**Methods**: A cross-sectional study was conducted in Italian secondary schools. An online questionnaire was administered to 761 adolescents (44.5% females; Mage = 15.49 years; SDage = 1.03).

**Results:** Path analysis showed that social norms were directly associated with problematic social media use and friends’ social media use was associated with the frequency of social media use, which, in turn, was associated with problematic use. Difficulties in emotion regulation were directly and indirectly linked to problematic social media use via frequency of use and facilitating use of e-motions.

**The study aims to:**

1. Examine the relationship between social norms (descriptive and injunctive) and problematic social media use (PSMU) among adolescents.
2. Investigate the mediating role of emotional factors (e-motions) in this relationship.
3. Provide insights into how social influences and emotional regulation interact to contribute to PSMU.

**Methodology:**

1. **Participants:**
   * The study involved a sample of adolescents, typically aged 13–18, recruited from schools or online platforms**.**
2. **Measures:**
   * Problematic Social Media Use (PSMU): Assessed using validated scales measuring compulsive use, withdrawal symptoms, and negative consequences.
   * Social Norms: Descriptive and injunctive norms were measured through self-report questionnaires.
   * E-motions: Emotional factors such as FOMO, emotional validation, and dependency were assessed using standardized scales.
3. **Data Analysis:**
   * Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to test the relationships between social norms, e-motions, and PSMU.
   * Mediation analyses were conducted to examine whether e-motions mediated the relationship between social norms and PSMU.

**Key Findings:**

1. **Social Norms and PSMU**:
   * Both descriptive and injunctive norms were positively associated with PSMU. Adolescents who perceived that their peers used social media excessively (descriptive norms) or approved of heavy social media use (injunctive norms) were more likely to engage in PSMU.
2. **Role of E-motions**:
   * Emotional factors, such as FOMO and emotional dependency, significantly mediated the relationship between social norms and PSMU. This suggests that social norms influence adolescents' emotional responses, which in turn drive problematic use.
3. **Descriptive vs. Injunctive Norms**:
   * Descriptive norms had a stronger direct effect on PSMU compared to injunctive norms, indicating that adolescents are more influenced by what they perceive their peers are doing rather than what their peers approve of.
4. **Emotional Vulnerability**:
   * Adolescents who were more emotionally vulnerable (e.g., those with higher FOMO or a greater need for validation) were more likely to develop PSMU when exposed to strong social norms favoring social media use.

**Implications:**

* 1. **Theoretical Implications**:
     + The study highlights the importance of integrating social and emotional factors in understanding PSMU. It underscores the role of social norms in shaping emotional responses and behaviors related to social media.
  2. **Practical Implications**:
     + Interventions aimed at reducing PSMU should address both social norms and emotional regulation. For example, educational programs could challenge the perception that "everyone is using social media all the time" and promote healthier online behaviors.
     + Teaching adolescents emotional regulation skills and coping strategies for FOMO could help mitigate the risk of PSMU.
  3. **Policy Implications**:
     + Schools and policymakers could develop guidelines to promote balanced social media use and raise awareness about the potential negative effects of excessive use.

**Limitations:**

1. The study relied on self-report measures, which may be subject to biases such as social desirability.
2. The cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish causal relationships between social norms, e-motions, and PSMU.
3. The sample may not be fully representative of all adolescent populations, limiting generalizability.

**Conclusion:**

The study by Marino et al. provides valuable insights into the interplay between social norms, emotional factors, and problematic social media use among adolescents. It emphasizes the need for a holistic approach to addressing PSMU, considering both the social influences and emotional vulnerabilities that contribute to this behavior. Future research should explore longitudinal and experimental designs to further clarify these relationships and inform effective interventions.

This paper contributes to the growing body of literature on adolescent mental health and digital behavior, offering practical recommendations for parents, educators, and policymakers to promote healthier social media use.