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## CLASSIFICATION OF MEDIA ADDICTION

**Abstract:** Appearance of social networks opened new realms of life simulation, potentially boosting media addictions. Because of appearance and widespread use of new media, there is a need to explore potential hazards of such activities, one of them being media addiction. In that way it may be significant to examine relationship of media addiction and stressful situations. This general issue relates to quality of life. Research results show stressful situations coming from family, workplace, education and moral and ethical norms are strongly linked to media addiction. Also, family as liberating agent has been found to correlate with decrease in levels of media addiction.

**Keywords:** stressful situations, media addiction, psychological conditions, life simulation.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In order to establish standardized measure of media addiction, it is necessary to understand how addiction takes place. Causes of media addiction might be found in values of media users, stressful situations in their lives, repression of inner impulses, as consequences of these stressful situations, leading to depression & loneliness. Combined with nature of today's media, including their forms and contents with depression, addictive behaviors might arise.

Mood management theory predicts that people experiencing stress use television to block anxious thoughts and change their mood. Anderson, Collings, Schmitt & Jacobvitz [1] find that stress was associated with increased comedy and decreased news in the viewing diet. When looking into male population, they find a positive correlation of stress with amount of looking at the TV. McIlwraith [2] writes that addicts more often use TV to distract themselves from unpleasant thoughts, regulate moods, and fill time. Kubey & Csikszentmihalyi [3] write the addicts use TV to distract themselves from unpleasant thoughts and to fill time. Wood [4] concludes that the most likely reasons that people play video games excessively are due to either ineffective time management skills, or as a symptomatic response to other underlying problems that they are escaping from. Wood [4] indicates people will at times undertake all kinds of activities excessively if the activity has the capability to distract them from negative issues in their lives.

This is particularly true if the person concerned is having difficulty coping with other aspects of their everyday life such as stressful situations. In such situations some individuals would distract themselves from dealing with their problems by engaging in lengthy video game playing sessions. Grusser, Thalemann, Albrecht & Thalemann [5] find that those adolescents identified as "addicted" to video games played primarily as a means of coping with stress. Similarly, Wood [4] finds that high frequency video game players were far more likely than low frequency players to play games in order to escape from other problems from their lives. The use of games for relaxation and escape is not necessarily a problem in itself. Stressful situations that may be reasons for using media, but real addictive behavior would appear when they outcome with depression and loneliness. The point in using media as a distraction from everyday issues is in relaxation as a preparation to face problems from direct reality.

Leung [6] indicated that stress may be connected with low self-esteem, boredom, lack of social support and unsatisfactory personal relations of Net-geners. Those Net-geners addicted to the Internet are generally emotionally open and find the Internet a place easier for them to express their inner thoughts.

After personal attributes, stress causing, as Young & Rodgers [7] claim, low self-esteem, poor motivation, fear of rejection and the need for approval is the second step on the way leading towards media addiction.

When people become passionate, even

obsessed with an activity or person, claims Suler [8] it is because that activity or person addresses some important desire, often an unconscious one. Repression and substitution of inner impulses with fulfillment aided by media might be important reason for media addiction to arise within some population. However, both level of this repression, which may create depression, and nature of media contents are important in constituting media addiction. Like drugs use or pathological gambling, reason for attractiveness of media might be exciting unrealistic world that its users may get addicted to being unable to fulfill their impulses outside area of indirect communication.

Stress is identified as having strong connection with media addiction. Although non-addicted persons can use media to relax from stressful everyday situations, stress is one step on the way towards serious addiction. That is why it is important to find out where these stressful situation come from and how it is possible to prevent media addiction in one society by supporting certain aspect of it. So, this exploratory study seeks answers to following questions.

(3) Is number of those who feel repression from family, moral and ethical norms, education and workplace increases with levels of media addiction?

(4) Is number of those who feel freed by family decreases as level of media addiction increases?

## **2. METHODS**

Research questions are examined through nationally representative survey conducted in Serbia during the first half of 2011. Media addiction has been measured through time of use and seven other indicators. Persons who use media in top 40% by length are put in category of potential media addicts. They are filtered through seven indicators to get different levels of media addicts by number of indicators they fall into. These eight indicators in total correspond with seven factors from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders—Fourth Edition (American Psychiatric Association, 1995) including overconsumption, attempts to cut use, prolonged use, substitution, withdrawal, continued use and tolerance.

Question number 45 asks survey participants about their path to happiness. It gives potential answers including “there are lots of good examples either within circle of my family and friends or in books and mass media. If I find out how others achieve happiness I can do the same”, “If I think rationally, I can find happiness formula” and “I try to feel my inner impulse to achieve happiness.”

Question number 46 in the survey asks whether societal success or intimate wish is more important for survey participants. On a given scale, survey participants may answer on a range from 1 to 10 indicating that it is important to do what one wishes and he or she does not care for others or other extreme meaning that societal success is primary, so he or she makes decisions based on outside trends.

Question number 43 asks survey participants what institutions they feel repress them. Survey participant may check one or more boxes when answering this question. Potential answers include family, mass media, laws, moral and ethical norms, state, corporations - commercial sector, religion, education, science, my work (relations at work, productivity norms), none and other.

Question number 44 asks survey participants what institutions they feel liberate them. Question can be answered by checking one or more boxes. Potential answers include family, mass media, laws, moral and ethical norms, state, corporations - commercial sector, religion, education, science, my work (relations at work, productivity norms), none and other.

Question number 42 asks survey participants how often they feel to repress their inner impulses such as intuition and instinct. Answers are offered through scale from 1 meaning that they do not repress their impulses at all and 10 meaning they repress their impulses all of the time.

Question number 47 asks survey participants if they are made happy by shopping. On the given scale they can provide answer to this question from 1 meaning shopping does not make them happy at any time to 10 meaning that shopping makes them happy all of the time.

Then there are other survey questions answered by 10 degree scales. Correlations have been calculated by using software IBM SPSS Statistics, version 19.

The research was done on multistage

random sample of 2208 participants. This sample is representative for Serbian population older than 15 years of age. Research participants have been interviewed from January to May of 2011.

### 3. RESULTS

When looking at connection of stress source and media addiction, match has been found in four cases. An increase has been noted both in level of media addiction and number of people who feel repression from family, moral and ethical norms, education and workplace, which could be seen on Figure 1.

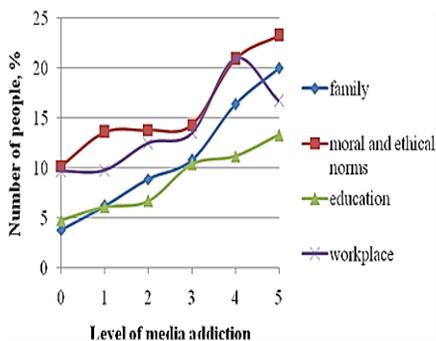


Figure. 1 Levels of media addiction and feeling of repression from family, moral and ethical norms, education and workplace.

On the other hand, liberating factors have been examined. Amongst all of them, family has been found to correlate with the level of media addiction in decreasing manner. This means that for those individuals who find “strong psychological base” in family, with good relations to other family members and feelings of belonging and happiness coming from it, there is less chance they would become media addicts. Figure 2. demonstrated decrease in number of people who consider family their liberating agent when looked through the prism of media addiction. There is clear decreasing tendency in terms of family as source of freedom and happiness when compared to levels of media addiction.

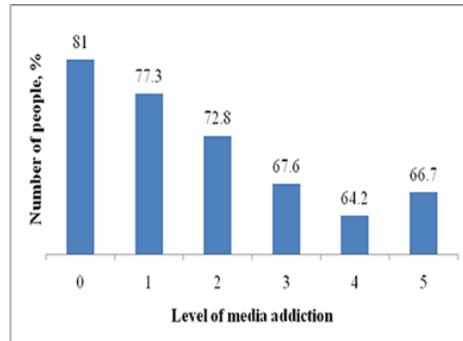


Figure. 2 Levels of media addiction for those who feel freed by family.

Strong connection of stress has been found with media addiction. Second step relates to stressful situations experienced mostly within family, working environment, education or they relate to some moral or ethical standards. This is confirmed by study results as media addiction levels increase with number of people who consider these repressing factors for them. As liberating factor which relate to decrease in media addiction family shows this kind of tendency which may be important for civil society or regulators in promoting family values to achieve decrease of media addiction within some society.

These results may be used in forming strategy of measures to decrease media addiction. Also, result indicating that strong family is the only real agent in combating media addiction may be of use for prevention policies. Further inquiries may establish universal methodologies and system to measure and follow media addiction levels in different countries around the globe when taking into account the importance media and especially new ones have in daily lives of average global citizens.

### 5. DISCUSSION

Causes of media addiction examined in previous paragraphs require discussion of social theory. Putnam [10] writes about the degradation of sport, the commoditization of education and its focus on life adjustment, the flight from feeling embodied in a culture of promiscuity and the link between bureaucratic culture and narcissistic dependence on it. He writes that American society has become out of

touch with its past and future, and totally focused on the moment where everyone is seeking decadence and immediate self-gratification. Putnam stresses profit motive advocated by corporate elite. According to him combination of consumerism and individualism creates narcissism. Americans become more alienated and disconnected from families, neighbors, and their communities. Putnam writes years ago many people belonged to bowling leagues, while today they tend to bowl alone. Results of frequent surveys say Americans wish to live in a more civil, trustworthy, and collectively caring community. Putnam claims that as social groups decline, so do civic, religious, and work groups. He writes how participation in social activities grew steadily from the early part of the century until the 1960s and that this participation has steadily declined ever since. Americans spend far less time together than they did in the past. Americans don't talk by phone as much as they used to. They even do not go on picnics together as often as they did before. Putnam examines a large number of activities, including participation in organized activities as well as informal social activities such as dinner parties, socializing at work, card clubs, talking in neighborhood bars. He concludes that participation has declined significantly. Membership in organizations has dropped by 10-20 percent. Even in the formal organizations, members rarely meet each others. They simply pay dues, leaving the running of organizations to professionals.

Involvement in clubs and other associations has declined at a very high rate. Attendance at churches is down. Putnam calls relationship between people social capital. Social capital has the emotional and practical benefits of personal relationships attached to it. Social capital is correlated with trust, low crime rates and lack of stress. Social capital includes friends and acquaintances who can be relied upon when time are hard. Putnam distinguishes between bridging social capital as casual connections among people of different groups and bonding social capital as strong connections among those within groups. He notes that bridging social capital is more effective in causing positive effects. Bonding capital is connected to similar groups, while bridging capital exists beyond socioeconomic groups. Bonding helps people to get by. It can

be limited to family and friends. Bridging helps people develop socially, becoming involved in relationships with people different than themselves.

Putnam discusses changes in American society as possible causes of the decline in social capital. These changes are longer hours at work, urban sprawl and the negative consequences of media, particularly television. Putnam claims each generation since the pre-war generation has been less socially inclined. He implies that people haven't been changing but rather generations have been changing. According to Putnam, the main reason for this deterioration is television, which started to take more and more free time since 60s. Each generation watches more TV more often. Watching is frequently done alone Putnam writes and often just viewed at random. Less significant causes of social capital decline include the entry of women into the workforce. Reason for this is that women do more organization of social events than men. Urban sprawl is noted as one of the reasons for the decline, since it takes much more time and effort to attend social events. Putnam gives little importance to feminism and civil rights as relevant causes for the decline. The same goes for mobility and the associated urban sprawl.

Also, Putnam explains the negative consequences of the decline in social capital. Reduced sense of community, according to Putnam, degrades education, causes unsafe neighborhoods, reduces economic prosperity, affects personal health and happiness, and the even lowers the effectiveness of our democracy. High social capital shows correlates strongly with quality of education, not government spending. Higher social capital is correlated to safe neighborhoods, quality health, and happier communities. Putnam examines four factors that have resulted in a decline in social community. The first is generational change. People learn much about community involvement with others through their parents. The second factor is television and other media. Other factors include the rise of the two-career family and suburban sprawl.

Much of the isolation is the result of the long-term effects of materialism, with concentration on gaining more wealth.

Americans are entirely focused on getting ahead, writes Putnam. Anything interfering with this obsession for greater material security

is ignored. Reason for the decline in participation is that togetherness and unity are not appreciated values in modern society. On the other hand, selfishness, greed and materialism are in line with narcissist tendencies of modern societies. Entertainment revolution has destroyed the need for relationships. Modern society is based on mutual lust for material goods. Although modern citizens have significant number of hours each week for relaxation these are used to be spectators on the fantasy lives of celebrities. People decide to displace the potential richness of personal relationships for a false media reality displayed on their television screens. Life, more than anything else, is about personal relationships writes Putnam. The current society avoids these relationships.

While nominal membership in community organizations has not actually fallen much at all, active involvement has fallen a lot. Although the number of voluntary organizations has grown, many of these are lobbying operations, with professional staffs, few if any local chapters and no membership required. Although being formal members, most Americans no longer spend much time in community organizations. Ironically, these trends are measured despite rapid increases in education that have given the skills, the resources and the interests that once fostered civic engagement, writes Putnam. Informal gatherings have become less common too. In the late 70's, for instance, the average American entertained friends at home about 14 times a year. Now it's 8 times a year. Charitable giving nearly doubled between 1960 and 1995, Putnam writes, income and spending have increased too. As a share of total income, philanthropy has actually shrunk. Volunteering has increased but much of it is one on one tutoring. Support groups and the like are growing, but they foster self-involvement as much as they do community participation. Voter turnout and the trust of Americans in government are still down, writes Putnam. So is the same with church attendance. All these go in support of Putnam thesis that civic life is weaker now than in 1950's. For Putnam, every kind of social capital is good for society. The more people get together the more civically engaged we'll be.

As for effects of media, Putnam writes TV not only spends time of users but it also breeds

passivity. Other causes of the decline in civic participation recognized by Putnam, suburban sprawl and the time crunch for working women and their families, each account for at most 10 percent of the problem. According to Putnam, not only working women but men and nonworking women show decline in civic engagement. If the women who led community efforts in the past are busy elsewhere that reduces everyone else's opportunities to participate, claims Putnam.

Technology may have advanced on account of human emotions. Organic division of labor is consequence of technology advancement. Without this it would not be possible to build labor lines in factories. The same happens with media. Appearances of print, radio, TV and Internet are consequences of advances in technology. Failure to express at work and intrusion of family by media conveyed interests are main reasons to substitute unrealized goals with different meaningless activities. Dysfunctional citizenship may be explained by increases different types of light and heavy addictions, or meaningless activities, including materialism, consumption, drug, alcohol and media use, overeating and extremist behavior etc. These indications show people go for material if unhappy with emotional aspects of their lives.

Putnam writes scholars and activists have lamented the absence or obliteration of traditions of independent civic engagement and a widespread tendency toward passive reliance on the state. To those concerned with the weakness of civil societies in the developing or post communist world, the advanced Western democracies have been taken as models to be emulated despite the fact that the vibrancy of American civil society has notably declined over the past several decades.

Researchers found out, writes Putnam, that education, urban poverty, unemployment, the control of crime and drug abuse, and health are better off in civically engaged communities. Research on the varying economic attainments of different ethnic groups in the United States has demonstrated the importance of social bonds. These results are similar to the ones coming from the wide range of settings and they demonstrate importance of social networks. Other research showed, writes Putnam, that the quality of governance was determined by longstanding traditions of civic

engagement including voter turnout, newspaper readership, membership in choral societies and football clubs.

Civic engagement produces better schools, faster economic development, lower crime, and more effective government. Putnam writes the parallels across hundreds of empirical studies are striking. Standardization of social capital research could produce useful results for society at stake. Recognition that social capital is connected to different types of addictions and at the bottom point functional citizenship might be necessary to establish standardized research of social capital. Thus, this research might examine parameters such as personal relations, professional life, media, light and heavy addictions and citizenship.

Life is easier in a community blessed with stock of social capital. Networks of civic engagement encourage the emergence of social trust. Putnam writes that such networks facilitate coordination and communication and amplify reputations. Dense networks of social interaction reduce incentives for opportunism. Networks of interaction broaden the participant's sense of self, claims Putnam.

Circumstantial evidence, particularly the timing of the downturn in social connectedness, has suggested to some observers that an important cause of civic disengagement is big government and the growth of the welfare state, claims Putnam. By crowding out private initiative, Putnam argues that state intervention has subverted civil society. Insistence on this kind of argument goes in favor of big business. Government help may have appeared because social capital was already damaged at that time. Involvement of media in homes of society members and therefore presence of manipulative interests may point out to the businesses as those who plant seeds of separation. If welfare state no longer exists, this would create opportunity for more selfish actions. Therefore, profit interest would thrive in the case everything comes to the private hands.

Putnam writes civic organizations with long histories are being forced to close their doors because new members aren't coming in. The World War Two generation was highest in public involvement. Voting and faith in government peaked in the 1960s. The entire long-run decline in turnout is due to the gradual replacement of one generation of voters by the

generation that came later. Voters are more likely to be interested in politics, to give to charity, to volunteer, to serve on juries, to attend community school board meetings, to participate in public demonstrations, and to cooperate with their fellow citizens on community affairs, writes Putnam. He adds that the average college grad today knows little more about public affairs than did the average high school graduate in the 1940s. Newspaper readership and political participation are down while and political contributions are up.

As for financial capital Putnam writes it is replacing social capital. Attendance at public meetings fell from 34 to 18 percent among the well educated, but from 20 to 8 percent among those who only graduated high school and 7 to 3 percent amongst those who didn't, adds Putnam. He claims that there are three types of voluntary associations, community based, church based and work based. The number of voluntary associations is up, but they have fewer members. Many have no participants.

The same goes for professional groups. Between 1973 and 1994 the number of men and woman who took any leadership in any local organization was sliced by more than 50 percent, writes Putnam. He adds that religious attendance is the best predictor of how many people one will talk with each day. Also, 75-80 percent of church goers give to charity while only 55-60 percent of non-church members do that. As for volunteering, 50-60 percent of church members do it, while only 30-35 percent of non-church members do. The percentage of Americans who identify themselves as having no religion has risen steadily from 2 percent in 1967 to 11 percent in the 1990s, writes Putnam.

Putnam adds that church attendance rose from 1943 or so to 1957 or so, but it has dropped ever since. By 1997 church attendance had gone from about 47% to 37%. Involvement in religious activities has fallen by 25 to 50 percent. There are fewer moderates in religion, while most of the church goers are now divided between extremely and lightly devoted. This means extremism increased in religion. It is question of motive whether people are turning to church because they really want to or because they are escaping some problem. In other words, is their participation in some activity an addiction or not. If they are escaping something, it may be the case their participation in activities of the church may be extremist.

This may explain polarization in attachment to religion.

Decrease in participatory activities may be in connection with increased media use. In those terms, media addiction is not only consequence of increased media use but also of different social conditions, including increased

stressful situations in modern societies. Further research inquiries require involvement of psychologists in research process. Engagement of scientific community around the issue of media addiction may be of importance because of media expansion in 21st century.

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