

## Social Media Addiction and Its Influence on Mental Health Among University Students In Cambodia: Beyond The Cultivation Theory

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**Abstract:** *This study was set out to determine social media addiction and its influence on mental health among university students in Cambodia. The research paper identified the most used social media platform, level of social media addiction, and the relationship between social media addiction and mental health, in particular, depression, anxiety, and loss of concentration. It goes beyond the cultivation theory. The study employed a quantitative research design using a network sampling survey method with a self-administered questionnaire as the research instrument. Two hundred and twenty-four respondents participated in the survey. The findings indicate that Facebook is the most popular social media platform, followed by YouTube and Instagram. The level of social media addiction is not that serious with only slight addiction detected. There is a significant positive correlation between social media addiction and mental health, specifically loss of concentration, depression, and anxiety, in that sequence. Overall the study suggests that to avoid mental health issues (depression, anxiety, and loss of concentration), students should limit their time on social media and lower their dependency habit on them.*

**Keywords:** social media addiction, mental health, depression, anxiety, loss of concentration

### 1. Introduction

Recently, following the emergence of social media with the associated impacts on society, several studies have been done to examine whether social media contribute positively or negatively to the world. Research on social media addiction and how it affects human mental health emerged after the so-called Internet addiction studies, which were popular during the mid-1990s and early 2000. Many studies have been conducted by researchers, especially on university students, following detection of social media addiction by university healthcare professionals (Wallace, 2014).

Social media addiction, social networks addiction, and Internet addiction have frequently been investigated by scholars in communication and psychology in recent years. This phenomenon received public attention after the problem became widespread across the globe without raising concerns among the public except for the specialists. There is much confusion between social networking sites and social media. To study social networks and social media in-depth, scholars have defined these two terms with almost similar meanings and attributes. Social networking sites are virtual communities in which users can create their individual public profile, interact with real-life friends, and meet other people based on shared interests, while social media is composed of entire web-based tools with users as the main focus which allows users to be created and developed with regard to both ideological and technological contents (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). In addition, social media addiction has been used to refer to a

person who spends too much time on social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, and other forms of social media which affect their lives.

The increasing number of social media usage is driven by a higher number of smartphone devices being used around the globe. The most commonly used social media platforms are Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, Telegram, and WhatsApp (Azizi, 2019). According to the European Commission report, there were about 2.7 billion social media users worldwide in 2019 compared to 2.62 billion in 2018 (Statista, 2018). The same report revealed that in the second quarter of 2019, the monthly active users of Facebook and Instagram were 2.41 billion and one billion, respectively.

A case study reported that a 24-year-old woman was dismissed from her job because she used Facebook excessively for at least 5 hours a day and continuously checked it instead of working during her working hours (Kuss, 2011). She used Facebook to the extent that her behaviour significantly interfered in her professional and private life that she had to be admitted to a psychiatric clinic. This kind of phenomenon has led to the research interest on social media addiction and mental health or addiction disorder.

Before the emergence of the social media addiction issue, many studies had been done on internet addiction, which has been described using different terminologies such as compulsive Internet use, problematic Internet use, Internet dependency, dysfunctional Internet use, and pathological Internet use (Kuss & Griffiths, 2012). In the framework of Internet addiction research, many other studies have been done on the problem of social network site and social media addiction.

Even though social media addiction has not been considered as a disorder by American Psychiatric, there is ample evidence of negative effects on young people especially on the academic performance of university students as they spend an increasing amount of time online (Al-Menayes, 2014). This addiction affects the physical and mental health of individuals due to the consequences resulting from lack of sleep, as an increasing amount of time is being spent on the Internet especially at night (Al-Menayes, 2015).

### **Problem Statement**

Pew Research Centre of Internet and America Life Project conducted a study on social media addiction in 2007 in which they found that 55% of teenagers used social networks and most of them used social media as a way of managing their existing friendships. Even then, it was revealed that 91% of teenagers used social sites to communicate with friends, and 72% used those sites to make plans with their friends (Lenhart & Madden, 2007). These claims indicate that the well-being of users is helped, harmed, or tied to remedies to mitigate possible problems arising from social media addiction.

Those who claim that the use of social media sites is helpful for them especially for connecting, use it to search for educational information and as a place which opens a world of opportunities. Meanwhile, those who claim that the digital world harms more than helps express the notion that the Internet world can cause digital addiction, a decline of trust, lack of face-to-face skills, as well as higher rates of stress, anxiety, depression, inactivity, and lack of sleep (Anderson & Jiang, 2018).



According to a report, the prevalence of Internet addiction among the US youth groups was 20% (Moreno, 2011). Similarly, China found that 34% of college students within the age group of 19 to 28 years old suffered from social network addiction (Wan, 2009).

In addition, the consequences of social media addiction have led to other issues such as poor academic performance, depression, and anxiety. A study conducted among university students in Myanmar indicated that the prevalence of social network addiction and anxiety was about 28% and 37%, respectively (Kyaw, 2017). The same study reported that 59% of the students who were addicted to SNS suffered from anxiety. The study by Akin (2011) on Internet addiction found that Internet addiction could contribute to 45% of depression, 40% of anxiety, and 40% of stress. The worst effects of Internet addiction are anxiety, stress, and depression.

In Cambodia, out of its total population of 16.48 million, mobile phone users are 120% of the total population while 96.1% are connected to the Internet (RFI, 2019). According to the statistics of Facebook users among Southeast Asian countries, the number of Facebook users is more than 8.3 million (Doan, 2019).

Research on social media addiction has been done in many countries including Malaysia, Kuwait, Iran, Turkey, the US, China, and Myanmar. However, research on social media addiction and its influence on mental health such as depression, anxiety, and loss of concentration has not been done in Cambodia particularly among university students and high school children.

### **Research Objectives**

1. To identify the most used social media platforms among university students in Cambodia;
2. To determine the level of social media addiction among university students in Cambodia; and
3. To find out the relationship between social media addiction and mental health among university students in Cambodia.

### **Significance of the Study**

More than 8.2 million people in Cambodia use social media, and most of them are youths. However, there are limited studies on social media usage among Cambodian youths especially regarding social media addiction and its impact on mental health such as depression, anxiety, and loss of concentration.

The current study is one of the first empirical studies conducted among university students in Cambodia to gain an understanding of the extent of their involvement on social media, level of social media addiction, and how its addiction affects their mental health, specifically concerning depression, anxiety, and loss of concentration.

In prior studies, researchers used different theories such as uses and gratification theory (U&G) by Katz, Khan, and Blumler (1973), theory of planned behaviour (TPB) by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), agenda setting theory by McCombs and Shaw (1968), and media dependency by Ball-Rokeach and Defleur (1976). In the current study, the researchers opted to use cultivation theory (Gerbner, 1967) to study why and how social media users become addicted. Additionally, the present researchers explored beyond the theory to understand the reasons for addiction and how it affects mental health.

This study is one of the key components that contribute to upcoming research in the field of communication and social media addiction in the region and also on a global scale. In addition, the study is expected to benefit policymakers especially the Cambodian government, university management, and parents in making informed decisions and formulating regulations regarding the safety of children in as far as social media usage is concerned.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **i. Cultivation Theory**

Cultivation theory was introduced by George Gerbner in 1967 and later expanded during the cultural indicators research study in 1969. Cultivation theory states that high frequency viewers of television are more susceptible to media messages and they believe that the messages are real and valid. Heavy viewers are exposed to more violence and therefore are affected by the Mean World Syndrome, which is the belief that the world is a far worse and dangerous place than it actually is (Gerbner 1967).

Cultivation theory suggests that repeated exposure to television over time subtly “cultivates” viewers’ perceptions of reality. The theory proposes that the effects of television lie in its ability to shape the viewpoints on particular issues, people’s moral values, and their beliefs of the world (Mosharafa, 2015). Hence, it is a socio-cultural theory regarding the role of television in shaping viewers’ perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, and values (Gerbner & Gross, 1976).

Cultivation theory is applied to social media, especially for heavy usage which leads to social media addiction and in turn, mental health issues.

### **ii. Mental Health Issues**

Mental health has been a global concern in recent years. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), mental health is defined as the state of well-being in which individuals realise their own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and are able to contribute to their community (WHO, 2004). The three most common issues in mental health are depression, stress, and anxiety. According to American Psychiatry Association, mental health issue is defined as the problem to function in the social aspect and it is related to the conditions involving changes in emotion, thinking, and/or behaviour of an individual. It is associated with depression, anxiety, and distress with problems functioning in social, work, or family activities. Mental health affects daily life such as productivity (working, studying), family relationship, and physical health. In a report by American Psychiatry Association, one in five (19%) of American adults experienced some form of mental health problem and one in twenty-four (4.1%) suffered from serious mental health issues (Ranna, 2018).

Mental health has been observed to be connected with the prevalence of social media addiction among young university students. Over the last couple of years, Internet addiction and social media addiction have become a global concern to the public and these can be classified as health issues. From a clinical psychologist’s perspective, the addiction to social media is a waste and poses a serious concern to its users’ health, especially young people. “Facebook Addiction Disorder” and “Social Network Site Addiction Disorder” happen because addiction criteria, such as neglect of personal life, mental preoccupation, escapism, mood modifying experiences, tolerance, and concealing the addictive behaviour appear to be present in some



people who use social networking sites excessively (Kuss & Griffiths, 2011), which lead to the prevalence of social media addiction.

### iii. Prevalence of Social Media Addiction

Many studies have been done on Internet and social network addiction. Recently, similar studies (e.g., Altin & Kivrak, 2018; Azizi, Soroush & Khatony, 2019; Win et al., 2017) have emerged on the topic of social media addiction. Social media is similar to social networking sites, which are considered as a subset of the Internet. Therefore, this study assumes that the factors impacting Internet addiction and social network addiction identified in prior studies can be applied to social media addiction.

In Myanmar, Win et al. (2017) found that 27.5% of university students were addicted to social networks. Azizi and Soroush (2019) indicated that the prevalence of addiction existed among social network users with most of the university students (70.6%) who used social networks had moderate addiction.

In Malaysia, a study by Jamaluddin, Jeyakumar, and Yi Ling (2012) found that 73% of university students in Malaysia could be considered as addicted to social networking sites. Similarly, the study by Ahmad et al. (2018) indicated that university students in Malaysia were considered as heavy social media users due to the average amount of time spent on social media of between 3 and 4 hours per day.

Social media addiction can lead to mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, emotional disorder, bipolar affective disorder, psychosis, and loss of concentration (Kapahi, Ling, Ramadass, & Abdullah, 2013). Since the focus of this study is on university students, three types of mental health issues are considered important. These issues are depression, anxiety, and loss of concentration.

### iv. Social Media Addiction and Depression

According to American Psychiatry Association, depression is defined as a common and serious medical illness that negatively affects the feelings of individuals and also the way they think and act. Depression leads to emotional and physical problems, and it also reduces a person's ability to function at work and at home. Depressed individuals become sad easily and lose interest in activities they used to enjoy (Ranna, 2017).

WHO (2017) reported an estimated 4.4% of the world population suffered from depression and this is equivalent to over 300 million people globally. The same report shows that depression is more commonly seen among females (5.1%) than males (3.6%). The total number of people estimated to be living with depression increased by 18.4% between 2005 and 2015.

Win et al. (2017) found that 34% of Chinese university students were classified as addicted. Moreover, loneliness was reported to be significantly and positively correlated with social networking site addiction. In Myanmar, Win et al. (2017) found that Internet addiction could contribute to 45% of depression among university students in Myanmar. In contrast, Rahman (2018) found a negative relationship between Facebook addiction and mental health.

### v. Social Media Addiction and Anxiety

According to American Psychiatry Association, anxiety refers to the anticipation of a future concern and is more associated with muscle tension and avoidance behaviour (Ranna, 2018). In

this study, anxiety is one of the consequences of excessive use of social media, meaning that social media addiction, in particular, causes the individuals who use social media excessively to become easily frustrated, experience fear, and escape or isolate from other people.

WHO (2017) reported that an estimated 3.6% of the global population had anxiety disorders in 2015 with a higher prevalence among females (4.6%) than males (2.6%). Prior studies (e.g., Kumar & Mondal, 2018; Nima et al., 2012; Win et al., 2017) identified that among the worst effects of Internet and social media addiction are anxiety, stress, and depression. The study conducted by Win et al. (2017) in Myanmar found that increased usage of the Internet resulted in anxiety with 36.5% of the respondents suffering from anxiety. Nima et al. (2012) revealed the existence of a positive and significant correlation between the level of anxiety and Internet addiction. Additionally, Razieh et al. (2012) found that Internet users had a higher level of anxiety compared to non-Internet users at 80.8% and 28.5%, respectively, while 59% of the social network addicted users suffered from anxiety.

#### vi. Social Media Addiction and Loss of Concentration

Internet and social media addiction can lead to many destructive consequences, with loss of concentration being one of them. Arkam (2017) found that Internet addiction had a significant impact on medical students' concentration. Those who use the Internet late at night may experience sleep deprivation, resulting in poor academic performance.

According to National Alliance on Mental Illness, loss of concentration is a common symptom of depression. Lack of focus makes it hard to keep up with relationships and perform well at work (Fried & Nesse, 2014). In a study by Kapahi et al. (2013), 59% of the participants were identified as having social networking addiction and this had a direct impact on concentration, which led to poor performance at school due to long surfing habits. In addition, the same study found that 48% of the respondents were facing difficulties to stay focused.

#### Conceptual Framework of the Study

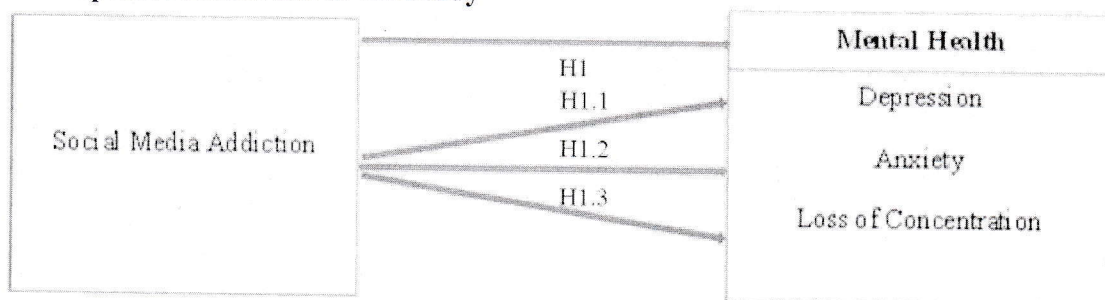


Figure 1 Relationship between social media addiction and mental health

#### Hypothesis

H1: There is a positive relationship between social media addiction and mental health among university students in Cambodia.

- H1.1: There is a positive relationship between social media addiction and depression.
- H1.2: There is a positive relationship between social media addiction and anxiety.
- H1.3: There is a positive relationship between social media addiction and loss of concentration.



### 3. Research Methodology

#### Research Method and Design

The study employed a quantitative research design using a network sampling survey procedure as the data collection method. A self-administered questionnaire was used as the instrument of the survey and distributed face-to-face and online, which helped in collecting a large number of data within a short period of time. Most of the responses were gathered online via social networking sites that include Facebook messenger and WhatsApp. The remaining responses were collected through physical contact with the respondents.

#### Population of the Study and Sampling Procedure

The target population of this study consisted of university students aged 19–34 years old in Phnom Penh city, Cambodia. The respondents comprised university students currently studying in three major universities in Phnom Penh city, which are Norton University (NU), Pannasastra University of Cambodia (PUC), and Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP). The students were chosen because they made up the majority of the Cambodian population who used social networking sites. The study managed to obtain a total of 224 respondents.

#### Instrument and Measurement

A survey questionnaire was used as the technique for data collection, which was conducted within a period of three weeks from December 15, 2019 until January 5, 2020. The questionnaire consisted of four sections, namely, demographic information, patterns of social media usage, social media (SM) addiction, and mental health. The study used the social media addiction scale (SMAS), which was based on Young's (1996) measurement of Internet addiction test (IAT). Thirty-four items were adapted and adopted from SMAS and IAT. Additionally, the Self-rating Anxiety Scale (SARS) developed by Hlaing and Kyaw (2017) was used to measure the anxiety level in this study. For their level of addiction, respondents were classified into four groups based on the scale obtained: 34 to 68 = no addiction, 69 to 102 = slightly addicted, 103 to 136 = moderately addicted, and 137 to 170 = highly addicted (Young, 1996).

All the items were based on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The overall scores of the variables were computed to form a mean score with a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 5. To calculate the overall percentage of an item, the mean for each item was multiplied by 20, which is based on the 5-point scale equating to 100%. Therefore, the percentage was acquired by multiplying the mean score by 100 divided by 5 (Wok & Hashim, 2014).

#### Validity and Reliability

A pilot study (N = 33) was done before carrying out the actual study to measure the flow and content of the questions as well as to find out if there were any problems faced by the respondents. The questionnaire was also reviewed and approved by an expert in the field after it was adapted and adopted from the scholars. Internal reliability test was conducted using Cronbach's alpha values. The data collected from the pilot study indicated that all the items of the variables were significant and exceeded the minimum Cronbach's alpha value of .70, indicating the reliability of the respective variables. Table 1 shows the results to confirm the internal cohesiveness and stability of the variables with Cronbach's alpha values of the respective variables, where the highest Cronbach's alpha is for anxiety ( $\alpha = 0.943$ ) and the lowest Cronbach's alpha is for SM Addiction ( $\alpha = 0.926$ ).

Table 1 Reliability test of all variables

Variables	No. of items	Cronbach's Alpha
SM Addiction	34	.933
Depression	10	.919
Anxiety	10	.907
Loss of Concentration	10	.914

5-point Likert scale, where 1 = strongly disagree (1 – 20%), 2 = disagree (21 – 40%), 3 = slightly agree (41 – 60%), 4 = agree (61 – 80%) and 5 = strongly agree (81 – 100%)

### Data Analysis

Data were checked for completeness, errors, and inconsistency using SPSS version 25. The background information and social media patterns and prevalence of social media addiction were presented in terms of the descriptive statistics, for instance, frequency and percentage. The relationship between social media addiction and mental health (depression, anxiety, and loss of concentration) were analysed using the correlations.

## 4. Findings

### Demographic Statistics of the Respondents

The total number of respondents is 224 students. The majority of the respondents are female (88.8%) and only 11.2% are male (Table 2). Seven in ten respondents (70.5%) belonged to the 19–22 years old group, followed by 23–26 years old (22.3%) and the rest (7.2%) were older. Almost all of the respondents were from the three major universities in Phnom Penh, namely Norton University (42%), followed by Pannasastra University of Cambodia (PUC) with 27.2% and Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP) with 23.2%. The remaining respondents were from other universities (7.6%). The majority of the students were pursuing a bachelor's degree (85.7%) with 40.6% of them obtaining a CGPA of 3.01–3.50 in their recent year of study.

Table 2 Demographic information of the respondents

Variables	Category	Frequency (N = 224)	Percentage
Gender	Male	25	11.2
	Female	199	88.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>100</b>
Age	19–22 years old	158	70.5
	23–26 years old	50	22.3
	27–30 years old	12	5.4
	31–34 years old	4	1.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>100</b>
University	Norton	94	42.0
	PUC	61	27.2
	RULE	52	23.2
	Others	17	7.6



	<b>Total</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>100</b>
Education Level	Associate Degree	19	8.5
	Bachelor's Degree	192	85.7
	Master's Degree/PhD	13	5.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>100</b>
CGPA	1.50–2.00	14	6.3
	2.01–2.50	23	10.3
	2.51–3.00	73	32.6
	3.01–3.50	91	40.6
	3.51–4.00	23	10.3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>100</b>

### Social Media Patterns

Table 3 shows that the four most used social media platforms are Facebook (95.5%), YouTube (81.3%), Instagram (74.1%), and WhatsApp (64.3 %). Almost one-third of the respondents (30.4%) said that they had 1000–2000 Facebook friends and 30.8% said that their Instagram followers were less than 1000.

Table 3 Social media pattern

Variables	Items	Frequency (N = 224)	Percentage
Social Media Account	Facebook	214	95.5
	YouTube	182	81.3
	Instagram	166	74.1
	WhatsApp	144	64.3
	Twitter	66	29.5
	Line	55	24.6
	WeChat	29	12.9
	Others	14	6.3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>100</b>

### Time Spent on Social Media

The time spent on social media is important in this study. In prior studies, the time spent on social media was found to be a factor influencing social media addiction.

Table 4 Time of social media usage

Variables	Items	Frequency (N = 224)	Percentage
Time spent on SM per visit	Less than 10 minutes	8	3.6
	10–30 minutes	63	28.1
	30 minutes to one hour	74	33.0
	1–2 hours	40	17.9
	2–3 hours	20	8.9
	3–4 hours	8	3.6

Time spent on SM per day	4–5 hours	5	2.2
	More than 5 hours	6	2.7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>100</b>
	Less than 1 hour	31	13.8
	1–2 hours	67	29.9
Time spent on SM per week	2–3 hours	49	21.9
	3–4 hours	39	17.4
	4–5 hours	21	9.4
	More than 5 hours	17	7.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>100</b>
Time spent on SM per week	1 day	5	2.2
	2 days	11	4.9
	3 days	12	5.4
	4 days	15	6.7
	5 days	15	6.7
	6 days	21	9.4
	7 days	145	64.7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4 shows that one-third of the respondents (33.0%) said that they spent from half an hour to one hour in surfing the social media per visit, followed by almost one-third of them (28.1%) spending less than half an hour per visit. Almost one-third of the respondents (29.9%) claimed that they used the social media for one to two hours per day, followed by one-fifth of them (21.9%) claiming that they spent 2 to 3 hours daily on the social media. Almost one-fifth of the respondents (17.4%) claimed that they spent three to four hours per day on the social media while 7.6% of the respondents said that they spent more than 5 hours daily on the social media.

Almost two-thirds of the respondents (64.7%) said that they used social media daily, followed by 9.4% of them claiming that they used social media six days per week.

### The Prevalence of Social Media Addiction

This study used the instrument derived from the SMAS scale developed by Young (1996). In addition, the Internet Addiction Test (IAT) was used to measure the level of social media addiction among the respondents. The sum of the measurement of SMAS was used to identify the level and prevalence of social media addiction.

The results in Table 5 show that almost two-thirds of the respondents (59.4%) were found to be slightly addicted to social media, and almost one-third of them (28.6%) were moderately addicted.

**Table 5 Prevalence of social media addiction**

	Level of Addictions	Scores	Frequency (N = 224)	Percentage
Addiction Categories	No addiction	34–68	19	8.5
	Slightly addicted	69–102	133	59.4
	Moderately addicted	103–136	64	28.6
	Highly addicted	137–170	8	3.6



### The Relationship between Social Media Addiction (SMA) and Mental Health

The findings show that there is statistically moderate positive significant correlation between social media addiction and depression ( $r = .423$ ,  $p = .000$ ), while the relationship between social media addiction and anxiety has a statistically weak positive significant correlation ( $r = .388$ ,  $p = .000$ ). In addition, the study found that the relationship between social media addiction and loss of concentration has a moderately positive significant correlation ( $r = .457$ ,  $p = .000$ ). In general, the relationship between social media addiction and mental health problem was found to have a moderately positive significant correlation ( $r = .458$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Overall, the relationship between social media addiction and mental health has a significant positive correlation.

Table 6. Pearson correlation

Variables ( $N = 224$ )	M	SD	SMA	Depression	Anxiety	Loss of Concentration
SMA	2.79	.611	1			
Depression	2.50	.856	$r = .423$ $p = .000$	1		
Anxiety	2.63	.792	$r = .388$ $p = .000$	$r = .829$ $p = .000$	1	
Loss of Concentration	2.67	.809	$r = .457$ $p = .000$	$r = .736$ $p = .000$	$r = .776$ $p = .000$	1
General Mental Health	2.60	.757	$r = .458$ $p = .000$	$r = .929$ $p = .000$	$r = .938$ $p = .000$	$r = .905$ $p = .000$

## 5. Conclusion

The study was conducted to examine the impact of social media addiction on mental health among university students in Cambodia in which this study is the first of its kind. The dependent variable was mental health which consisted of three main elements, namely depression, anxiety, and loss of concentration, while the independent variable was social media addiction. The researcher employed the cultivation theory to guide the study. However, the results go beyond the cultivation theory. Hence, the study has proven that social media addiction affects university students in Cambodia in terms of mental health in particular depression, anxiety, and loss of concentration.

### Limitations

There was a distance barrier between the main researcher and the respondents that prompted the study to employ network sampling procedure through the social networking sites to gather responses. This approach might have affected the respondents to some extent due to a lack of knowledge of some of the measurement aspects of the survey. This issue has limited the number of respondents for this study.

In addition, the main researcher faced a major challenge in accessing university students physically due to the strict regulations regarding students' participation in the survey. Additionally, as an outsider, the researcher faced a problem in obtaining data on the sample characteristics from the respective universities.

Another limitation of the study is the language barrier, as most of the respondents were Cambodian citizens who were not well-versed in English. Hence, the researcher had to translate the entire survey questionnaire to the Khmer language, which is familiar to the respondents to convey the real meaning of the questions.

There was also limited literature referred to in the same locality (Cambodia) before embarking on the social media addiction study. All the empirical literature reviewed was done in the West and other parts of the world but hardly any in Cambodia and very few in Asia at large.

### Recommendations

The current study recommends that the Cambodian government conduct awareness campaigns on the dangers of social media through media literacy and workshops as well as seminars in order to find a solution for social media addiction. In addition, the government should include courses that would equip young people with information regarding social media addiction through the national school curriculum.

Universities should implement measures to increase awareness of the dangers of social media addiction to mental health among students, especially during their studies.

This research was conducted within a short period of time. Therefore, the responses were few. Further studies should increase the scope and number of respondents as well as try to use a more accommodating sampling technique that would grant the researchers physical access to the respondents.

Additionally, this study focused on university students. Hence, further studies should include other types of respondents because social media addiction has penetrated all levels of society including the workplaces, which have made employees victims of the problem. This will help to bridge the gap to avoid destructive consequences to the young generation in our society.

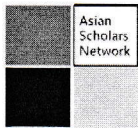
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