

# Social Media Addiction: Causes and Consequences of Mindless Scrolling

## Outline

1 **Introduction:** Various factors are responsible for mindless scrolling on social media, including the need for dopamine hits, interdependence on social media for education and work, a sedentary lifestyle, and the easy nature of jobs. These factors lead to severe deteriorating consequences: such as a promotion of consumerism, shrinking of attention span, low self-esteem, and physical strain.

## 2 Causes of Mindless Scrolling:

- a) Need for dopamine hit
- i) Variable reward system
  - ii) Social validation

b) Interdependency on social media for work and education

c) Easy nature of jobs

- i) loss of physically demanding jobs
- ii) Idleness

d) Sedentary lifestyle

- i) loss of family gatherings
- ii) Individualistic lifestyle

e) Capitalist economic model

- i) Encourage scrolling
- ii) Digital economies sustain on user's data
- iii) Algorithmic manipulation

### 3 Consequences of Mindless Scrolling:

a) Shrinking attention span

- i) Difficulty in education and work
- ii) loss of interest

b) low self-esteem

- i) Undermining self worth
- ii) Problem in decision making
- iii) Herd mentality

c) ~~Is~~ Isolation and anxiety

- i) loss of face-to-face interactions

d) Consumerism culture

- i) Over spending on unnecessary liabilities
- ii) Fear of missing out (FOMO)

e) Physical strain and fatigue

- i) Strain on eye-sight
- ii) Brain fatigue
- iii) Disturbed sleep cycle

4 Remedies to Avoid Mindless Scrolling:

5 Conclusion:

"When you are mindlessly scrolling, you are in 'absence presence' - that is the zombie state. You are missing out opportunities for connections, experiences, and real-life engagement."  
- Dr. Grant

The phenomenon of mindless scrolling has significantly increased since 2010 due to the advancement in technology and proliferation of internet. According to a research, on average, a person scrolls 300 feet daily, which is more than the height of Statue of Liberty. Various factors are responsible for mindless scrolling on social media, including the need for a dopamine hit, interdependence on social media for education and work, a sedentary lifestyle, and the easy nature of jobs. These factors lead to severe, deteriorating consequences such as a shrinking attention span, low self-esteem, the promotion of consumerism, and physical strain. This essay comprehensively discusses the major

causes and consequences of mindless scrolling.

One of the significant cause of mindless scrolling of social media in youth is their need for dopamine hit. Dopamine is a neurotransmitter chemical that regulate the mood and is associated with 'happy feeling'. Usage of social media create a pattern in brain that associate the release of dopamine with social media scrolling. Moreover, social media applications are designed on the principle of variable reward system, similar to gambling. Individuals mindlessly scroll to explore variable content and information. This also lead to increased attachment to social media applications. Furthermore, social validation also play a crucial role in attracting users towards mindless scrolling. Individuals seek social validations in form of likes and comments, which impact directly on their mood and dopamine release.

Another significant reason of mindless scrolling is the increased interdependency on social media applications

for educational and work purposes. Every aspect of life is now attached to social media. Educational pages on social media applications such as Instagram and Facebook are using social media trends to educate people, which is a concerning aspect as it engages individual's mind on social media reels and increases the chances of distraction. For instance, mentors promoting their courses on social media using trending memes and sound tracks leads to erosion of educational values. Similarly, worklife is also heavily dependent on social media, businesses produce petty reels to grab attentions of the users and therefore they have to remain updated with current trends of social media. Furthermore, social media is not limited to a significant topic, it works on variable rewarding system and it increases the chances of distraction from education or work purposes.

Another factor that play a potential role in increasing the risk of mindless scrolling is rising

①

number of less physically demanding jobs. Since the inception of technology, work life is becoming more and more easy leading to surplus time for individuals. This surplus time is often occupied by the mindless scrolling. Furthermore, artificial intelligence is taking role of humans in work life and confining humans to just command giving sphere. This idleness exacerbate the mindless scrolling causing deteriorations of human capabilities.

Similarly, sedentary lifestyle also amplify the risk of mindless scrolling on social media. Since the industrial revolution and technological advancements, family structure is continuously decaying individualistic tendencies are heightening resulting in isolated lifestyle. Historically, family gatherings were the sole source of socialization for individuals but with the advent of social media, the trend of family gathering is declining drastically. People are becoming more socially connected on virtual apps than in real life. This isolation causes phenomenon of mindless scrolling.

in individuals. Moreover, people are becoming more interested in the lives of others than that of their immediate family members.

Last but not least, capitalist economic model is a major cause of mindless scrolling of social media. Capitalism focuses solely on profit-making ignoring the far-reaching consequences on humans or environment. Mindless scrolling is encouraged by big tech giants to sustain their digital economies, which rely on users' data. This data is sold to marketing companies and services providers to enhance their marketing tactics. The more the individuals scroll, the more data they generate for tech giants. Moreover, these companies manipulate users through curated algorithms that produce attractive notifications, attracting users towards social media aimlessly.

All these causes of mindless scrolling leads to precarious consequences on human mind and health. One of the most severe consequence of mindless scrolling is its impact on attention span.



According to a study, mindless scrolling reduces the attention span significantly. It is due to the fact that reels or social media posts are designed to grab attention for a brief moment and repeatedly changes topics and subjects. This phenomenon is reported to shrink the ability of individuals to hold their attention for a long time. Furthermore, it causes difficulty for individuals to focus on their education. Classrooms require attention over a topic for a longer time than social media reels and social media addicts find it tumultuous to focus on a subject for longer time. Similarly, it also significantly impact worklife, leading to loss of interest in daily life chores and activities.

Another perilous consequence of mindless scrolling is low self-esteem. Individuals who use excessive social media, compare their life with others on social media. This leads to low self confidence and self-esteem. Dr. Grant, on this phenomenon says, "Individuals compare and despair" It means

that they undermine their self-worth and idealize perfectly curated lifestyles on social media. Furthermore, this leads to difficulty in real life decision-making as individuals try to copy others' life styles, ignoring their own circumstances and abilities. This phenomenon is termed as herd mentality, it significantly reduces innovation and creativity and promote unnecessary rat race.

Moreover, mindless scrolling leads to anxiety and isolation. According to a ~~best~~ research, 89% of the college students feel anxious when they don't have their mobile phones. In this way social media addiction leads to amplified anxiety and stress. Furthermore, individuals who rely heavily on mindless scrolling tend to avoid real life engagements. It severely deteriorate their communication skills and exacerbate the chances of missing out opportunities necessary for career growth. It also lead to creation of negative impressions on others and results in social exclusions.

Another major consequence of mindless scrolling is the promotion of consumer culture. Individuals indulged in mindless scrolling fall prey to the marketing tactics of brands, increasing the chances of overspending on unnecessary liabilities. It also makes individuals brand-conscious further increasing social disparities and fear of missing out (FOMO). In their quest to remain socially valid, people try to follow every trend and buy every trending product they see on social media. Moreover, this also increases the risk of unethical consumption and negative impacts on environment. This is how mindless scrolling keeps the spirit of consumerism alive.

Last but not least, mindless scrolling has a precarious impact on human health. It impacts eyesight of the individuals resulting in blurry vision and other eye-related symptoms. It is due to the exposure of the eyes to the gamma rays emitted from the phone's screen. Furthermore, these rays cause brain fatigue and severe headache.

in individuals exposed to prolonged screen time. Moreover, it also results in disturbed sleep cycle. According to a research conducted by Newport Research Institute, 42 percent of individuals feel difficulty while falling asleep. It has been found from study conducted on 20,000 college going students that each one hour of reduced sleep causes increased distress, while extra sleep of an hour does not have any significant impact. This shows how much damage mindless scrolling cause to body.

However, avoidance of mindless scrolling mainly depends upon individuals' commitment and determination but certain remedies can also be utilized to catalyze the process. Firstly, people should engage in healthy physical activity such as sports, art or travelling to avoid social media. Secondly, individuals should adopt healthy habits such as book reading and following strict schedule for managing daily life chores. Thirdly, rely on computers and laptops for study purpose to avoid

social media distraction. According to Yuval Noah Harari, relying on computers is the best way to avoid distraction from mobile phones. Fourthly, individuals should value time with their families instead of watching other's life on social media.

In summary, mindless scrolling is caused by unending demand for dopamine boost, exacerbated by the capitalist economic model to sustain eliticism and maintain their businesses. Furthermore, it leads to profound impact on individual's life. It affect every sphere of life including education, work life, family, and causes precarious damage to individual's health, physically and psychologically.