

**SOCIAL MEDIA OVERUSE AS A POTENTIAL NIDANA FOR VATA PRAKOPA: AN
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ABSTRACT

Ayurveda describes health as a dynamic equilibrium among the three doshas—Vata, Pitta, and Kapha—which govern physiological and psychological functions. Vata, composed primarily of Akash (space) and Vayu (air), regulates body like breathing, circulation, sensory perception, neuro- muscular activity, neural regulation, excretion and mental functions(like-enthusiasm, creativity, alertness, quick thinking).All these actions are essential for healthy body functioning. When Vata becomes aggravated (Vata vriddhi or Vata prakopa), clinical features such as restlessness, insomnia, anxiety, irregular appetite, dryness, fatigue, and impaired concentration commonly emerge. Contemporary lifestyles are increasingly dominated by social media platforms that encourage continuous engagement, rapid information switching, and prolonged screen exposure. Modern research associates excessive digital media use with psychological stress, sleep disruption, attention fragmentation, irritability, and anxiety—symptoms that closely relate to Ayurvedic descriptions of Vata imbalance. This integrative review examines parallels between Ayurvedic Vata pathophysiology and modern psychobehavioral literature on social media use. By mapping shared symptoms, changing lifestyle and potential preventive strategies, the article proposes a cross-disciplinary framework for understanding digital overuse as a contributing factor to Vata-type lifestyle disorders.

KEYWORDS: Overuse of social media, vata prakopa, lifestyle disorders**INTRODUCTION**

Social media platforms and apps enable instantaneous sharing of text, images, reactions, and commentary, provides connectivity across geographic boundaries. Used moderately, these tools support education, professional networking, and social support.

However, epidemiological and psychological studies increasingly report that high-frequency and compulsive social media use correlates with anxiety, depression, loneliness, reduced sleep quality, diminished academic and occupational performance, and attention difficulties. The World Health Organization and multiple national health agencies now recognize problematic digital media behaviour as a growing public mental health concern.

Ayurveda, offers a holistic model linking mind, senses, daily routine (Dinacharya), diet, sleep, and

environmental stimuli to constitutional balance. Within this framework, excessive sensory stimulation, irregular routines, mental hyperactivity, and sleep deprivation are well-established aggravators of Vata.

Given the rapid, fragmented, and overstimulating nature of social media engagement, an integrative analysis is both clinically relevant and theoretically coherent.

This review aims to

Summarize Ayurvedic concepts of Vata and its aggravation. Review modern evidence on social media-related psychological and physiological effects.

Identify symptom overlap and mechanistic parallels. Discuss preventive and therapeutic implications from both paradigms.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This is an integrative narrative review synthesizing Classical Ayurvedic texts and commentarial traditions (Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita, Ashtanga Hridaya) Contemporary Ayurvedic clinical literature on Manasika Roga (mental disorders) and Vatavyadhi. Peer-reviewed studies on social media use, screen time, sleep, anxiety,

and attention (2010–2025) Reviews from psychiatry, psychology, and digital health research. Studies were selected based on relevance to symptom overlap and lifestyle etiology.

3. Ayurvedic Framework of Vata Dosha

3.1 Fundamental attributes

Vata is characterized by qualities (Gunas) such as

Guna (Quality)	-	Manifestation in body–mind
Ruksha (dry) detachment	-	Dry skin, constipation, emotional
Laghu (light) hyperactivity	-	Weight loss, insecurity,
Chala (mobile) thoughts	-	Restlessness, tremors, unstable
Sheeta (cold)	-	Cold intolerance, fatigue
Khara (rough)	-	Joint stiffness, irritability
Vishada (clear/subtle)	-	Heightened sensitivity, anxiety

These qualities govern all the movements of the body: respiration, circulation, nerve impulse conduction, speech, elimination, and cognitive processing.

3.2 Functions of balanced Vata Balanced Vata Supports

Enthusiasm (Utsaha) Creativity and quick comprehension Alertness and coordinated movement Normal sleep–wake rhythm Effective sensory perception

3.3 Symptoms of Vata aggravation

Classical texts describe Vata vriddhi features including Anidra or disturbed sleep (insomnia) Chala of Manas (mental restlessness) Shrama (fatigue) Bhrama (giddiness/confusion) Karshya (emaciation) Udavarta (abnormal movement of Vayu, e.g., bloating, anxiety) Irregular hunger (Vishamagni) Dryness of skin, mouth, and colon Fear, worry, and emotional instability Aggravation occurs through incompatible diet (Viruddha ahara), suppression of natural urges, excessive fasting, overexertion, grief, fear, and importantly irregular lifestyle and excessive sensory stimulation.

3.4 Manovaha strotas and mental health

Ayurveda describes Manovaha strotas (channels governing mind and consciousness) and Prana Vayu, Udana Vayu, and Vyana Vayu as subtypes critical for cognition, speech, memory, and emotional regulation.

Disturbance in these subtypes manifests as anxiety, insomnia, poor concentration, and emotional volatility—symptoms increasingly observed in high screen-use populations.

4. Social Media Use in Modern Literature

4.1 Prevalence and patterns of use

Global data indicate billions of active social media users, with adolescents and young adults showing the highest daily engagement.

Typical use patterns include

Frequent notification checking Multitasking across apps Late-night scrolling Comparison with curated online personas Rapid switching between content streams Such patterns increase screen time, reduce offline social interaction, and disrupt circadian rhythms.

4.2 Documented psychological effects

Modern studies associate excessive social media use with.

Modern construct	-	Common findings
Anxiety	-	Heightened social comparison, fear of missing out (FOMO)
Depression mood	-	Passive scrolling linked to low
Sleep disturbance onset	-	Blue light exposure, delayed sleep
Attention deficits work capacity	-	Fragmented focus, reduced deep
Irritability overstimulation	-	Fragmented focus, reduced deep
Irritability overstimulation	-	Interruption sensitivity, digital
Loneliness online connectivity	-	Paradoxical isolation despite

Problematic social media use (PSMU) shares features with behavioral addiction: craving, tolerance,

withdrawal-like discomfort when offline, and continued use despite harm.

4.3 Neurobehavioral mechanisms Contemporary models propose

Dopaminergic reward loops from likes, notifications, and unpredictable content
Hypervigilance from constant alertness to updates
Cognitive overload from information

saturation HPA axis activation under chronic stress
Melatonin suppression from evening screen exposure
These mechanisms align with physiological arousal, sleep loss, and mental agitation.

5. Integrative Correlation: Social Media as a Vata-Aggravating Factor

5.1 Symptom mapping

Ayurvedic Vata symptom	Modern social media-associated manifestation
Anidra (insomnia)	Delayed sleep phase, poor sleep quality
Chanchalata (restlessness)	Compulsive checking, inability to sit still
Bhaya / Chinta (fear/worry)	FOMO, cyberbullying anxiety, news overload
Vishamagni (irregular appetite)	Skipped meals while scrolling, stress eating
Shrama (fatigue)	Mental exhaustion, "brain fog"
Rukshata (dryness)	Reduced blinking, eye strain, dehydration from neglect
Avasada / mood instability	Mood swings after negative online interactions
Impaired Dhi–Dhrti–Smriti (intelligence, retention, memory)	Reduced attention span, poor memory

The overlap suggests that chronic social media overuse may function as a novel lifestyle Nidana aggravating

Vata through the mind–sense organs (Indriya and Manas).

5.2 Etiological parallels (Nidana)

Ayurvedic Vata-aggravating factors include.

Vegadharana (suppression of urges)	delaying sleep, food, or rest to stay online
Atichintana (excessive thinking)	rumination over posts, comments, metrics
Ati vyayama / Ati jagarana (excessive exertion/wakefulness)	late-night usage
Bhaya–shoka (fear and grief)	online harassment, negative news
Vishamashana and irregular routine	disrupted Dinacharya

5.3 Samprapti (Pathogenesis)

Exposure (Nidana)

Prolonged digital engagement, notification-driven interruptions, and irregular sleep–wake cycles.



Aggravation (Dosha prakopa)

Prana and Vyana Vayu become disturbed → sensory hyperarousal, rapid thought movement (Chala of Manas).



Manifestation (Vyakti)

Anxiety, insomnia, restlessness, fatigue, dryness, and impaired concentration.



Chronicity (Bheda)

If unaddressed: functional lifestyle disorders, chronic stress-related conditions, and reduced resilience (Ojas depletion in Ayurvedic terms).

5.4 Doshaj constitution and susceptibility

Individuals with Vata-prakriti or Vata–Pitta constitution may be more vulnerable to digital overstimulation due to inherent Chala and Teekshna tendencies.

voluntary, culturally normalized, and capable of producing widespread morbidity through disturbed sleep, stress, and behavior.

Unlike substance addictions with clear pharmacological targets, social media dependence is embedded in communication infrastructure, making abstinence impractical. Ayurveda's emphasis on moderation (Mitahara, Mitavyayama) and routine (Dinacharya) offers a culturally compatible harm-reduction model.

6. DISCUSSION

6.1 Social media as a lifestyle disorder

Ayurveda classifies many chronic conditions arising from improper diet and lifestyle-related diseases. Excessive social media use fits this category: it is

6.2 Sensory overload and Indriya atiyoga

Classical Ayurveda warns against excessive use of senses (Indriya atiyoga), which depletes mental strength and disturbs tridosha equilibrium. Social media intensely engages Chakshurindriya (sight) and Shrotraindriya (hearing) while overstimulating Manas. This provides a traditional explanatory model for modern “digital burnout.”

6.3 Sleep as a critical bridge

Both paradigms identify sleep disruption as a central mechanism. Ayurvedic Ratricharya (night regimen) and good sleep guidelines pattern on: Fixed sleep and wake times Avoiding screens before bed Calming evening practices Reduction of stimulating content at night Restoring sleep may be the most actionable intervention for reversing Vata-type.

6.4 Clinical and public health implications

Ayurvedic interventions potentially relevant: Snehana and Swedana for nervous system grounding Abhyanga (oil massage) for Vata dosha balance Meditation, Pranayama, and Yoga asana for Manas stability Vata-shamaka ahara: warm, unctuous, regular meals Rasayana therapy for resilience (under supervision) Dinacharya and Sadvritta (ethical routine and conduct)

Modern interventions

Digital detox periods App time limits Mindfulness-based programs School and workplace media literacy An integrative care plan may combine digital boundaries with Vata-pacifying lifestyle modification.

7. CONCLUSION

Social media has become an integral feature of modern social life, offering connectivity, information, and opportunity. However, excessive and compulsive use is associated in modern literature with anxiety, sleep disturbance, restlessness, irritability, and cognitive fragmentation. Ayurveda describes remarkably similar features under the framework of Vata aggravation, driven by irregular routine, sensory overstimulation, mental hyperactivity, and sleep loss.

Integrating these perspectives suggests that problematic social media engagement may be understood as a contemporary lifestyle factor provoking Vata prakopa, particularly affecting Manovaha srotas. Preventive strategies emphasizing routine, sensory moderation, sleep hygiene, nourishing diet, and mind-calming practices align strongly across both systems.

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