

How Social Media Triggers Insecurities: Exploring Psychological Insecurities of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) among Youth

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ABSTRACT

Aim of the Study: With its growing popularity, social media has raised concerns about its psychological impact, including the phenomenon of the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) in youth. The present research studies explore how social media behaviors affect FOMO and how the latter impacts psychological insecurities such as anxiety, sleep disturbance and compulsive social media use.

Methodology: A quantitative cross sectional research design was used. A structured online questionnaire was used and data were gathered from 173 youth aged 16–30 years, through stratified random sampling. It included 40 statements on four dimensions of social media behaviors, FOMO, and psychological insecurities. Analyses of the data were performed using SPSS descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, exploratory factor analysis, Pearson correlation, multiple regression and mediation analysis.

Findings: The results showed that FOMO was significantly explained by the usage of social media, the type of content consumed, the frequency of notifications and social media engagement. Of these, the greatest predictor was social media engagement. In addition, the FOMO had strong positive correlations with anxiety, sleep disturbance, and compulsive social media use, which further supported that FOMO is a significant psychological mechanism that connects social media behaviours with psychological insecurities.

Conclusion: The study concluded that the relation between behaviours of social media and insecurities among youth is mediated by the concept of FOMO. The results add to the digital psychology literature and highlight the significance of digital literacy, responsible use of social media, and interventions to mental health in the field of social media use to minimize the psychological risks of excessive social media use.

Keywords: Social Media; Fear of Missing Out (FOMO); Psychological Insecurities; Anxiety; Sleep Disruption; Compulsive Social Media Use; Youth.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Digital technologies have become so pervasive and have developed so quickly that they have totally changed the way people communicate, learn information and interact socially. Social media like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and Snapchat are an integral part of everyday life, especially for adolescents and young adults. These platforms can help them communicate, entertain, express themselves and share knowledge with others, and stay in touch with social networks at all times. However, as social media becomes more prevalent in everyday life, there has been a growing concern about the effects of social media on users' psychological health. One of the most salient psychological effects of excessive social media use is Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and it has become a major research focus in the field of digital psychology (Syed et al., 2023; Hassan & Safdar, 2020; Przybylski et al., 2013; Elhai et al., 2021).

According to Przybylski et al., (2013), FOMO can be described as a constant worry that people may be having fun somewhere without the individual's involvement, plus a craving to stay constantly updated on social interactions and activities online. Because social media is so interactive, users are constantly inundated with notifications, highly targeted suggestions and content that has been carefully curated to reflect successes, lifestyles and social experiences. This exposure leads to regular checking of online use and worries about social exclusion, thus intensifying the sense of FOMO (Alutaybi et al., 2020; Elhai et al., 2021). As such, social media is no longer just a means of communication, but rather a platform that can greatly influence the emotional and psychological experiences of its users.

Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) can help explain this link between social media consumption and FOMO. A lack of meeting these needs results in a greater risk for individuals of being felt excluded and disconnected from society. These concerns can be exacerbated by the social media context, which raises the expectations of users to compare themselves with the idealized lives others portray. In the same way, there is a Social Comparison Theory which states that people naturally do a comparison with others when it comes to assessing their abilities, achievements and social status (Festinger, 1954). In digital spaces these comparisons can become more common, as people are constantly saturated with positive and negative information that is chosen for them online. This can lead to continued social comparisons with upward targets, which can raise insecurities about self, feelings of being unworthy, and fears of missing out (FOMO) from positive experiences (Parveiz et al., 2022; Scheinfeld & Voorhees, 2022).

Numerous studies have shown that FOMO is a real problem, and that excessive use of social media is a factor in its development. Alutaybi et al. (2020) emphasized the need for online self-regulation and responsible platform design as both technology features and user behaviours contribute to the phenomenon of FOMO. Similarly, Elhai et al. (2021) found that FOMO strongly correlated with excessive dependence on smartphones, problematic social media use, anxiety, depression and diminished psychological health. They also highlighted adolescents and young adults as being especially vulnerable due to their over-dependence on digital communication. To support this, Andon et al. (2022) reviewed the existing empirical studies and found that FOMO has emerged as a multidimensional psychological phenomenon across various research settings that is linked to the development of problematic technology use and negative emotional outcomes.

Previous studies have also shown that certain social media activities are crucial in enhancing the FOMO. Users are drawn to the constant interaction with social networks, the constant exposure to “suggested” content by the algorithms and the constant interaction with notifications, and are thus kept in a permanent state of connection with online environments (Safdar & Abbasi, 2020; Shabir et al., 2015). The study by Tandon et al. (2021) found that FOMO is one of the most significant factors predicting social comparison, social media fatigue and online stalking behaviours as a result of social media. Similarly, Hattingh et al. (2021) identified that the indirect relationship between information overload and social media fatigue was through increased FOMO in the use of image-based platforms. The results suggest that the psychological

effects are not limited to the number of hours spent on social media but also depend on how intensely people interact with social media platforms.

According to literature, FOMO also acts as an important predictor of psychological insecurities. Elhai et al. (2021) found high correlations between FOMO and anxiety, negative affect, and problematic technology use; and Zeenat (2021) reported that adolescents with high FOMO scores often have feelings of anxiety, emotional stress, sleep disturbance, and self-esteem issues. Likewise, Tandon et al. (2022) showed that FOMO, caused by social media, is linked to phubbing behaviours, interpersonal problems, and psychological distress. Similar, Alabri (2021) noted that those who have high social belongingness needs and high level of social exclusion fear have high FOMO. Overall, these studies imply that FOMO is a focal psychological process linking excessive social media use with negative emotional and behavioral consequences.

Over the last years, more and more studies have focused on strategies to minimize psychological costs linked to FOMO. Chan et al. (2022) suggested that the FOMO mindset could shift towards the JOMO through the use of digital mindfulness practice, leading to better technology regulation and less need to be online compulsively. Similarly, Bloemen and De Coninck (2022) showed that the family environment could affect adolescents' susceptibility of FOMO, yet being over-engaged in social media use is one of the most important factors of psychological suffering. The results underscore the need to foster digital competencies, self-regulation of behaviour and positive social contexts to nurture the psychological health of youth.

While considerable advances have been made in the understanding of FOMO, there are some gaps in the current literature. The literature on social media use has predominantly focused on the use of social media as a unified phenomenon and only a small number of studies have considered specific types of social media behaviors, including social media usage, types of consumed content, notification frequency, and social media engagement. Furthermore, previous studies have been primarily focused on broad psychological outcomes (anxiety, depression, emotional distress), and far fewer studies have examined several dimensions of psychological insecurities (anxiety, sleep, compulsive social media use) in a single study. Besides, the role of FOMO has been widely identified as a significant mediator, but empirical research that combines different social media behaviors with various types of psychological insecurity outcomes is limited (Andon et al., 2022; Shabir et al., 2014).

Hence, the current study examines the impact of the four dimensions of social media behaviors on FOMO, and then explores the links between FOMO and anxiety, sleep impairment and compulsive social media usage among youths. Based on the theories of Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) and Social Comparison Theory (Festinger, 1954), the study suggests an integrated conceptual framework for understanding the effects of certain social media behaviors on psychological insecurity in the intervening role of FOMO. The study addresses the identified gaps in the literature and will help inform other educators, mental health professionals, and policy makers as well as social media platform developers to help create more healthy digital engagement and psychological well-being in young people.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Social Media and Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)

In the modern era of social media, interpersonal communication, information sharing, and social interaction have changed, especially for adolescents and young adults. These platforms have many opportunities to connect socially but there is a growing recognition of a link to negative psychological consequences, particularly the development of FOMO (Fear of Missing Out). According to previous studies (Przybylski et al., 2013; Elhai et al., 2021), FOMO is a psychological phenomenon that involves worrying about others enjoying something in their life without the individual, leading to the need for constant social media engagement.

The findings of the previous studies indicate a high degree of consistency regarding the excessive use of social media as one of the strongest antecedents of FOMO. Social networking sites make it easy for users to stay connected online through constant notifications, algorithmically tailored content and social interaction. Such platform features can lead to encountering life-long pictures that are idealized versions of others, which can lead to social comparisons and a sense of exclusion. Given the combined effect of technological features and users' psychological make-up on the experience of FOMO, Alutaybi et al. (2020) recommended that any interventions need to target behaviours as well as the design of the digital platform. The results also show that enhancing digital awareness and self-regulation can decrease FOMO-related behaviours and increase digital resilience.

In the same vein, Elhai et al. (2021) compiled findings from many empirical studies and found FOMO consistently linked with problematic social media use, smartphone overdependence, anxiety, depression and negative affect, and inversely with emotional well-being and life satisfaction. They also found that younger people were especially prone to FOMO due to their heavy use of digital communication and social networking. The results all together indicate that FOMO has become a multidimensional psychological phenomena which is related to digital behavior and mental health outcomes.

This view is also reinforced by the systematic review undertaken by Tandon et al. (2022) on empirical studies between 2013 and 2019. They synthesized and found that FOMO had been defined and described in several fields, but in all of them it was identified as a psychological effect of the already unmet social requirements and too much use of social media. While there was a wide range of methodological approaches used in the studies reviewed, there was a clear consensus in the findings that FOMO is a factor in problematic technology use and negative psychological effects. The authors also pointed out that future studies should look at new social media behaviours and platform-specific factors that could exacerbate FOMO among social media users.

2.2 Social Media Behaviours as Antecedents of FOMO

In addition to general social media use, there have been more recent studies that focus on specific online behaviors that can foster the development of FOMO. Citation of the literature has been consistent in showing that the use of social media platforms on a regular basis, constant tracking of online behavior and curated digital content significantly raise the anxiety of being excluded from positive social interactions. These attitudes and behaviors can lead to a sense of failure and a comparison to others.

This study by Tandon et al. (2021) has established that the FOMO that social media cause has a significant relationship with social comparison and online stalking behaviours. They also found that social comparison was a mediator of the link between FOMO and social media fatigue, meaning that people who constantly compare themselves to idealised online representations are more likely to feel emotionally exhausted. In addition, the results showed that social media related envy was shown to be related to social comparison and FOMO, suggesting that psychological effects of overusing social media are intensified through emotional responses.

Similar results were found by Hattingh et al. (2021) who studied Instagram and Snapchat users. Their study showed that FOMO has a positive effect on compulsive social media use, and indirectly on social media fatigue via three distinct pathways: information overload, communication overload, and diminished subjective wellbeing online. The results indicate that psychological reactions are not just shaped by the amount of social media consumption, but also by the level of online activity and by the cognitive load resulting from the rapid changes in digital spaces.

Building on this discussion, Chan et al. (2022) conceptualize the possibility of mindfully using social media to liberate from FOMO and move toward the Joy of Missing Out (JOMO). They propose that their framework can help increase users' awareness of their online behaviours before, during, and after social media use, which can help to interrupt their compulsive use patterns. This perspective emphasizes the

significance of behavioral self-regulation for combating the psychological consequences of problem-use of SNS.

2.3 Fear of Missing Out and Psychological Insecurities

One common theme in the literature examined is that FOMO has a substantial impact on several types of psychological insecurity. FOMO is not just a symptom of overuse of social media, but has increasingly been identified as a key psychological process driving anxiety, emotional distress, low self-esteem, and compulsive technology use and poor psychological functioning.

FOMO is also highly correlated with anxiety, depression, and technology-related problems, as reported by Elhai et al. (2021), indicating that the worry of missing out on social experiences that take place online has an impact on emotional functioning. Likewise, Zeenat (2021) found that adolescents who had high scores on FOMO tended to have high levels of anxiety, emotional exhaustion, sleep disturbances, and decreased self-esteem. The review also showed that overuse of the smartphone and the need to be digitally connected at all times can significantly increase psychological distress in youth.

The work done by Tandon et al. (2021) also illustrates that the psychological consequences of FOMO are not restricted to adolescents as well as university students. They found that those who reported high levels of FOMO were more likely to indulge in phubbing behaviors that in turn led to workplace incivility and poor interpersonal relationships. The psychological effect of FOMO is still present in various social contexts and ages, as shown in the results.

The summarized studies in this review all show that collectively, FOMO can create a range of psychological insecurities, such as creating emotional dependence on social media and fostering maladaptive behavioral patterns. The findings that emerged from the literature, conceptual research and SEM studies provide a strong conclusion that FOMO is a significant psychological factor to emotional and behavioural wellbeing.

2.4 Theoretical Perspectives

The literature reviewed is largely based on the theories of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and Social Comparison Theory (SCT). According to Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), people have basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, and when these needs are not met, they become more susceptible to FOMO (Przybylski et al., 2013). Social media can often present idealized images of being successful and accepted within a social environment, which can exacerbate feelings of exclusion and unmet social needs.

Social Comparison Theory also states that people naturally compare themselves to others (Festinger, 1954). In the context of social media, these comparisons happen more often, as users are constantly exposed to idealized images of other people's accomplishments and lives. This means that social comparison up leads to feelings of inadequacy, anxiety and dissatisfaction, which further perpetuates the psychological mechanisms driving FOMO. The empirical findings reviewed consistently confirm these theoretical arguments, which show that positive associations exist between social media use, social comparison, FOMO and psychological negative effects.

2.5 Critical Synthesis of Previous Studies

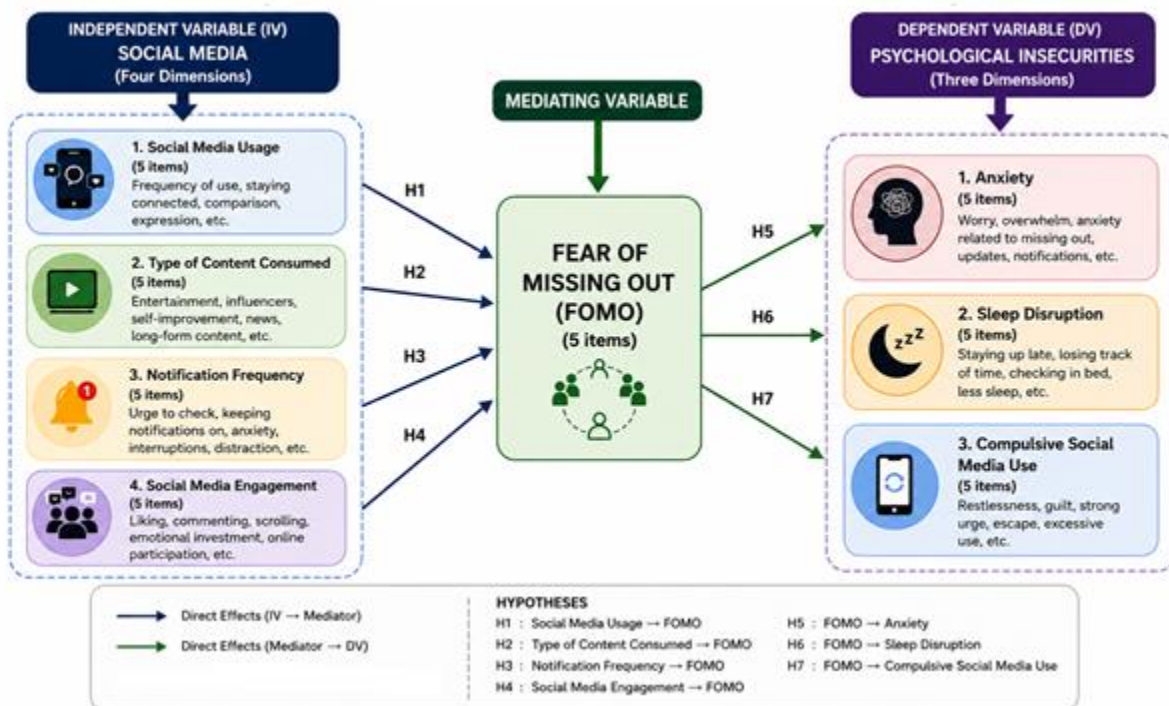
The literature reviewed shows that there is a high level of consistency in relation to the positive relationship between social media use and FOMO, and the relationship between FOMO and psychological well-being. In conceptual studies, systematic reviews, literature reviews and empirical studies using structural equation modelling, researchers have always found that overuse of social media correlates with anxiety, emotional distress, compulsive Internet behaviors, and reduced well-being. Most studies have highlighted the role of social comparison, unmet psychological needs and ongoing digital connectivity as key mechanisms that underlie the formation of FOMO.

Several methodological limitations can be seen in spite of the convergence. The majority of empirical studies used cross-sectional research designs, which restricted causal inferences between the social media behaviours, FOMO and psychological outcomes. Many studies also used only self-reported data gathered from particular communities, such as adolescents, university students, and/or employees, limiting the generalisability of their results. Moreover, the overall social media consumption has been investigated in previous studies without separating the behavioural dimensions of social media use (e.g., SM usage, type of SM contents, frequency of notifications, social media engagement).

2.6 Study Gap

There are a number of gaps in the research as identified in the systematic review. First, while existing research has consistently found positive connections between social media use and FOMO, few studies have focused on the concurrent effects of various components of social media behaviors on the emergence of FOMO. Second, the literature has tended to concentrate on global measures of mental health (such as anxiety, depression, and emotional distress), and relatively little has been written on the psychological insecurities that could be measured by a range of behavioural outcomes (such as anxiety, sleep difficulties, and compulsive use of social media) within a single conceptual framework. Third, the vast majority of past research has occurred with cross-sectional designs in specific cultural settings, which reduces the generalizability of the results of these studies. Lastly, while there is growing recognition of the moderating role of FOMO in these relationships, empirical evidence connecting various social media behaviors to several aspects of psychological insecurity while including a comprehensive mediation model is somewhat scarce. Thus, the current study aims to explore the role of four dimensions of social media behavior in the development of the FOMO construct which leads to anxiety, sleep disturbances and social media addiction in youth in one conceptual framework (see the figure 1).

Figure 1: Study Model



3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

Quantitative research was used in this study with a cross-sectional survey approach, in order to examine the relationship between social media behaviors, Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and psychological insecurities of youths. A quantitative approach was deemed to be suitable as it would allow relationships between the variables to be measured objectively using statistical analysis and allow testing of hypotheses using empirical data. The cross sectional design enabled data to be gathered at one time, which enabled a comprehensive evaluation of the impact of social media behaviours on FOMO and subsequent psychological outcomes.

The conceptual framework of the study used social media behaviours as independent variable, fear of missing out (FOMO) as the mediating variable and psychological insecurity as the dependent variable. The social media behaviors were assessed based on four dimensions: social media usage, types of content consumed, notification frequency and social media engagement. The psychological insecurities were measured as anxiety, sleep disturbances and compulsive social media usage. This proposed relationships between those constructs were investigated by descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, exploratory factor analysis, the pearson correlation, multiple regression analysis and mediation analysis.

3.2 Population and Sampling Technique

The sample consisted of youth (aged 16-30) who actively used at least one social media platform (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, other similar digital networking applications). This age group was chosen because it is the most active user of social media and youth are especially vulnerable to online social comparisons, digital validation, and Fear of Missing Out. Adolescents and young adults have been and will continue to be the target group most susceptible to the psychological effects linked to heavy usage of SNS (Brahmrush, 2012; Kunkel, 2013; Havemann, 2014; Twenge, 2018; Mawby, 2019).

Purposive sampling technique was used to select the representative sample of the target population. To ensure fair representation among participant groups, key demographic factors such as gender, age and educational level were taken into consideration in the sampling procedure. The respondents were targeted via email-based surveys sent to educational institutions, university networks and social media sites. The participants were voluntary and they were told the purpose of the study before they completed the questionnaire. Personal data was not collected and confidentiality and anonymity were respected during data collection.

3.3 Sample Size

173 valid results were received, and used in the final analysis. The sample size was judged to be sufficient for multivariate statistical analysis, such as reliability analysis, exploratory factor analysis, Pearson correlation and multiple regression as well as mediation analysis. The sample size was also adequate in meeting the rule-of-thumb recommended sample to respondent ratio for factor analysis and the sample size required for regression-based analyses is generally recommended in behavioural and social science research. Therefore, the sample was adequate in terms of statistical power to test hypothesis of the relationships between the variables of the study.

3.4 Research Instrument

Structured self-administered online questionnaire was used to gather data, which was specially designed to explore the relationships between social media behaviours, Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and psychological insecurities among youth. There were three sections of the questionnaire. The first section collected the demographic data of the respondents such as their gender, age and educational qualification. The second section assessed independent variable "Social Media Behaviours" with four dimensions of Social Media Usage (5 items), Type of Content Consumed (5 items), Notification Frequency (5 items), and Social Media Engagement (5 items) which made a total of 20 items. Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)

was measured with 5 items, followed by the dependent variable, Psychological Insecurities (PI) with 15 items: Anxiety (5 items), Sleep Disruption (5 items), Compulsive Social Media Use (5 items).

The questionnaire had a total of 40 measurement items, all of which were measured with the 5-point Likert scale, ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). The higher the score the higher the level of the measured construct. The instrument was tested for reliability and construct validity before analyzing the data, and the results indicated that the instrument had acceptable psychometric properties for the subsequent statistical analyses. Before the analysis of the data, the instrument was tested for its reliability and the construct validity was also analyzed, and the results showed that the instrument possessed acceptable psychometric properties for subsequent statistical analyses.

Table 4: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Test	Value
KMO Measure	0.931
Bartlett's Chi-square	4287.45
df	820
Sig.	<0.001

Sampling adequacy is very good with a Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin value of 0.931. The Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 4287.45$, $p < 0.001$), which meant that there were adequate correlations among the variables to use factor analysis.

3.5 Data Collection Procedure

The questionnaire was electronically delivered via an online survey platform. The survey link was sent out via the University's communication channels, social networks and Communities for young Social Media users. Respondents were given an explanation of the objective of the study and assured that participation was voluntary before going on to take part in the study. They were also assured that all of the responses would be kept confidential and will only be used for academic research purposes. Questionnaires were screened for completeness, and then exported for statistical analysis.

3.6 Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed by Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The data was screened for completeness and accuracy before going into the hypothesis testing. The descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviations was computed to describe the demographic characteristics of the respondents and summarise the study variables.

The internal consistency of the measurement instrument was evaluated by Cronbach's alpha coefficients and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was used to test the data for exploratory factor analysis. The Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was later used to check the construct validity.

For study of the relationships between the study variables, the Pearson correlation analysis was used. Multiple regression was used to analyze the relationships between the four dimensions of social media behaviours with Fear of Missing Out and Fear of Missing Out with anxiety, sleep disruption and compulsive social media use separately. Lastly, mediation analysis was performed to assess if the psychological mechanism that mediated the relationship between social media behaviours and psychological insecurities among youth was Fear of Missing Out. All inferential analyses were evaluated for statistical significance at the .05 level ($p < .05$).

3.7 Ethical Considerations

The study respected the ethical guidelines for research with human subjects. All respondents gave their informed consent and the participation was voluntary. The research's aim was explained and the

participants informed about the possibility of withdrawing from the study at any time without repercussions. All data gathered were anonymized and confidential, and confidential interviewing procedures were followed during the research process. The research was conducted in accordance with accepted ethical standards for social science research with human subjects.

4. RESULTS

Table 1: *Demographic Characteristics of Respondents*

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	84	48.6
	Female	89	51.4
Age	18–20 years	57	32.9
	21–23 years	71	41.0
	Above 23 years	45	26.0
Qualification	Undergraduate	102	59.0
	Postgraduate	71	41.0

The description of the respondents is presented in the table 1. The women (51.4%) slightly outnumbered the men (48.6%). Most respondents (41.0%) were aged between 21 and 23 years, followed by 18–20 years (32.9%) and above 23 years (26.0%). In terms of education, 59.0% of the sample were undergraduate students, while 41.0% were postgraduate students. The demographic distribution shows that the sample is representative of young adults who are active social media users.

Table 2: *Descriptive Statistics of the Study Variables*

Construct	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Social Media Usage	20.34	2.94	High
Type of Content Consumed	19.82	3.16	High
Notification Frequency	18.96	3.71	Moderate–High
Social Media Engagement	20.71	3.08	High
Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)	20.54	3.83	High
Anxiety	20.37	3.44	High
Sleep Disruption	20.68	3.79	High
Compulsive Social Media Use	20.82	3.56	High

Relatively high mean scores are seen across all constructs in the descriptive statistics. Social media engagement recorded the highest mean ($M = 20.71$, $SD = 3.08$), followed by FOMO ($M = 20.54$, $SD = 3.83$). The three dimensions of psychological insecurity – anxiety, sleep disruption and compulsive social media use – had high mean values as well, indicating that a high proportion of respondents experienced these outcomes regularly. Variability is moderate as shown by the standard deviations, which suggests that there is enough variation to perform inferential statistics.

Table 3: *Reliability Statistics*

Construct	Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Reliability
Social Media Usage	5	0.886	Good
Type of Content Consumed	5	0.873	Good
Notification Frequency	5	0.901	Excellent
Social Media Engagement	5	0.912	Excellent
Fear of Missing Out	5	0.918	Excellent
Anxiety	5	0.906	Excellent
Sleep Disruption	5	0.894	Good
Compulsive Social Media Use	5	0.921	Excellent

Cronbach's alpha coefficients were between 0.873 and 0.921, which is higher than the recommended value of 0.70. The results of these analyses suggest high internal consistency of all constructs and indicate that the measurement instrument is reliable and suitable for further inferential analyses.

Table 5: *Exploratory Factor Analysis*

Factor	Eigenvalue	Variance Explained (%)
Social Media	11.84	29.60
FOMO	5.12	12.80
Psychological Insecurities	4.36	10.90
Total Variance Explained		53.30%

Three interpretable eigenvalues greater than one were obtained in the exploratory factor analysis. These accounted for 53.30% of the total variance, which is adequate evidence for construct validity between the proposed measurement model and the facts.

Table 6: *Pearson Correlation Matrix*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. Social Media	1				
2. FOMO	.727**	1			
3. Anxiety	.681**	.814**	1		
4. Sleep Disruption	.703**	.829**	.788**	1	
5. Compulsive Use	.714**	.841**	.776**	.812**	1

Pearson correlation analysis showed that all constructs were significantly correlated ($p < .01$). There was a high positive correlation between social media and FOMO ($r = .727$), and social media showed particularly strong correlations with anxiety ($r = .814$), sleep disruption ($r = .829$), and compulsive social media use ($r = .841$). The results uphold the theoretically proposed relationships and warrant more regression and mediation analyses.

Table 7: *Multiple Regression Predicting FOMO*

Predictor	β	t	p
Social Media Usage	.243	3.91	<0.001
Content Consumed	.189	3.14	0.002
Notification Frequency	.286	4.62	<0.001
Social Media Engagement	.311	5.18	<0.001
R ²	Adjusted R ²	F	p
.632	.624	72.64	<0.001

The regression model was significant ($F = 72.64$, $p < 0.001$) and accounted for 63.2% of the variance in FOMO. The four dimensions of social media showed significant effect on FOMO with social media engagement being the highest predictor ($\beta = .311$) and followed by notification frequency ($\beta = .286$).

Table 8: *Mediation Analysis*

Path	β	p	Result
Social Media → FOMO	.727	<0.001	Supported
FOMO → Anxiety	.814	<0.001	Supported
FOMO → Sleep Disruption	.829	<0.001	Supported
FOMO → Compulsive Use	.841	<0.001	Supported
Indirect Effect	Significant	<0.001	Mediation Supported

The mediation analysis revealed a significant mediation effect of the FOMO on the relationship between the social media dimensions and psychological insecurities. Marriage, the level of social media

engagement was positively correlated with increased anxiety, sleep disturbance and compulsive social media use, which were all linked to higher FOMO. These results validate the FOMO as a mediator as theorized in the conceptual model.

Table 9: *Summary of Hypothesis Testing*

Hypotheses	Decision
H1: Social Media Usage → FOMO	Supported
H2: Type of Content → FOMO	Supported
H3: Notification Frequency → FOMO	Supported
H4: Social Media Engagement → FOMO	Supported
H5: FOMO → Anxiety	Supported
H6: FOMO → Sleep Disruption	Supported
H7: FOMO → Compulsive Social Media Use	Supported

Each of the seven hypotheses was supported. The results showed that each dimension of social media was shown to predict FOMO significantly, and FOMO was shown to predict significantly anxiety, sleep disturbance, and compulsive social media use. In general, the findings are substantial empirical evidence for the proposed mediation model, indicating that FOMO is the key psychological mechanism between social media behaviours, and psychological insecurities among youth.

5. DISCUSSION

This study explored the correlations among the social media dimensions, FOMO and psychological insecurities among youth. The findings are strong empirical evidence of the significant role that social media behaviours play in the development of FOMO, which relates to psychological insecurities such as anxiety, sleep disturbances, and compulsive use of social media. Specifically, the results showed that the use of social media, content that is consumed, the frequency of the notifications and the engagement with social media significantly predicted FOMO, and FOMO positively correlated with all three psychological insecurity dimensions. The results align with the conceptual framework proposed in this study and corroborate the literature that indicates that FOMO is one of the main psychological mechanisms by which social media affects people's emotional and behavioral health (Elhai et al., 2021; Andon et al., 2022).

The descriptive results showed that respondents were relatively high in terms of social media engagement, feeling a sense of FOMO, anxiety, sleep disruption, and compulsive social media use. The findings indicate that social media is no longer a tool for communicating but has become a part of young people's personal social identity, social relations and everyday life. Social media users who regularly engage with carefully edited online content are more likely to stay connected online and regularly check the social feeds, thus raising the risk of experiencing FOMO. Alutaybi et al. (2020) suggested that those who are persistently using social media could be experiencing this phenomenon because they felt like they are missing out on worthwhile experiences taking place in their online social circles. Similarly, Chan et al. (2022) pointed out that excessive online social interaction can lead to unhealthy psychological responses, such as excessive worry over social exclusion, indicating a shift from healthy to unhealthy social media interaction.

The strong positive correlation found in this study between social media and FOMO aligns with the self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) and conceptualization of FOMO proposed by Przybylski et al (2013). Self-Determination Theory suggests that psychological well-being is dependent upon the satisfaction of three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. By not being met, people start to feel bad about themselves and start to feel excluded, and this increases FOMO even more. Social media often presents users with carefully curated images of success, achievement and happiness, and this can set unrealistic expectations for users and for them to compare with their own lives. As a result, adolescents feel more anxious about not having the great times and opportunities that others

have, which further contributes to increased FOMO and decreased psychological well-being (Przybylski et al., 2013; Elhai et al., 2021).

Results can also be viewed with the prism of Social Comparison Theory (Festinger, 1954) that assumes that people naturally compare themselves with other people's experiences and achievements. Social media sites are perfect platforms for social comparison to keep rising over the course of their lives, since users are constantly exposed to idealized lives, personal successes and positive life events. Comparisons frequently lead to feelings of inferiority, jealousy and low self-esteem, especially for adolescents and young adults who are still building their self-image. Research also has shown that social comparison has a significant impact on FOMO, and problematic SMB (Parveiz et al., 2022). Similarly, Scheinfeld and Voorhees, 2022 found that repeated usage of internet activities can make people feel more excluded and affect their social judgments, which can further amplify emotional responses to FOMO.

The regression analysis further showed that all four dimensions of social media were significant predictors of the FOMO, with social media engagement being the strongest predictor. This indicates that social media interaction is not just a passive activity, and that engaging with others online, through posting, commenting, sharing and constant interaction, may have a greater psychological impact. The more users engage with digital platforms, the more they can see other people, or groups of people, doing the same, and the greater their desire to be connected all the time becomes. The results are consistent with the results obtained by Tandon et al., 2021, who found that overuse of social media leads to social media stalking, compulsive comparisons, emotional exhaustion and FOMO. Likewise, Hattingh et al. (2021) discovered that frequent usage of image-based platforms like Instagram and Snapchat is associated with higher levels of FOMO and emotional fatigue in young adults who tend to constantly seek social validation over the Internet.

The other interesting result relates to the importance of how often notifications are sent. Regular reminders reinforce the habit of checking and result in increasingly automatic and emotionally driven checking behaviours over time. Social media algorithms are specifically engineered to boost user engagement by delivering targeted recommendations, real-time alerts, and constantly updated feed of content. These features "cultivate" a condition that compels users to stay permanently connected to the internet, lest they miss out on valuable information or enjoyable experiences from the social sphere. Alabri (2021) also stated that people's need to belong and fear of social exclusion significantly raise their vulnerability to experiencing FOMO; Alutaybi et al. (2020) suggested there could be implications for technology interventions and digital self-regulation strategies that decrease compulsive interaction and the associated psychological distress.

The current results also showed that FOMO was a significant predictor for anxiety, sleep disturbance and compulsive social media use, supporting its role as a key factor in the explanation of psychological insecurities among youth. The people who felt a higher sense of FOMO were more susceptible to feeling constantly worried about missing out on social interactions, disruptions to sleep caused by social media use at night, and compulsive checking behaviours. The results are similar to Elhai et al. (2021), who found that FOMO is a significant psychological risk factor and psychological consequence of problematic technology use. Similarly, the impact of social media-induced FOMO on phubbing behaviours, interpersonal conflict, emotional distress and decreased psychological wellbeing was found by Tandon et al. (2022). Likewise, Zeenat (2021) showed that teenagers who face FOMO often suffer from anxiety, depression, emotional instability and low self-esteem.

The results are also aligned with recent systematic evidence gathering by Andon et al. (2022), who found that FOMO appears to be a constant mediator between social media use, negative psychological and behavioral outcomes, across various populations. Likewise, Bloemen and De Coninck (2022) noted that family environments could play a role in adolescents' experiences of FOMO, but overuse of social media is one of the most consistent factors that contributes to psychological vulnerability. Altogether, these

studies confirm the current results, showing that FOMO is a multidimensional psychological phenomenon which at the same time affects emotional, behavioural and social functioning.

The results are relevant from an applied perspective at the level of education, family, mental health service providers, and policy makers. Digital literacy programmes should be embedded into universities and schools to develop critical awareness of social media content, promote responsible engagement with social media and healthy technology habits. It is important for parents and educators to promote a balance in digital life through rebuilding social relationships in the offline world and psychological resilience. Incorporating FOMO assessment into counselling and intervention programmes for adolescent and young people who are presenting with problematic social media behaviours. Moreover, social media businesses need to keep building their digital well-being tools, such as notification management systems, screen time monitoring tools, reminders to be mindful when using social media, and personalised features that can address problematic online usage, as recommended by Alutaybi et al. (2020) and Chan et al. (2022).

The results help advance the new literature on digital psychology by showing that the FOMO is the key psychological mechanism by which multiple factors of social media influence psychological insecurities among the youth. The strong positive empirical support of both Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Przybylski et al., 2013) and Social Comparison Theory (Festinger, 1954) is given by the significant relationships found between social media behaviours, FOMO, anxiety, sleep disruption and compulsive social media use. The results of this study align with previous empirical research (Elhai et al., 2021; Tandon et al., 2021; Hattingh et al., 2021; Alabri, 2021; Parveiz et al., 2022; Andon et al., 2022; Chan et al., 2022; Bloemen & De Coninck, 2022), reinforcing the conclusion that excessive social media use is associated with psychological vulnerability, which is compounded by the increased feeling of FOMO. Therefore, combating FOMO should be a key focus of future digital well-being strategies designed to empower youth to use technology in a healthier way and to enhance their mental health.

6. CONCLUSION

This research investigated social media behaviors, FOMO, and how this can affect aspects of the psychological insecurities of youth. The conclusions are empirical and they show that the four dimensions of social media (usage, content type, notification frequency, social media engagement) have significant impacts on the development of FOMO. Moreover, FOMO was shown to be an important mediator of anxiety feeling, sleep disturbance, and compulsive social media use, demonstrating its key role in the explanation of psychological effects of excessive social media engagement. The results highlight the importance of FOMO as a key psychological process that underlies how social media impacts the emotional and behavioral health of youth.

The study builds on the expanding literature in digital psychology by offering empirical evidence to support the theories of Self-Determination Theory and Social Comparison Theory as explanations of how social media environments affect psychological functioning. The constant contact with idealized online experiences, regular notifications and active use of social media can foster social comparison and lead to feelings of missing out on positive social experiences. As a result, many youth feel anxious, have trouble sleeping, and engage in excessive social media usage. Therefore, the results emphasize that psychosocial media has psychological impact, not just on the duration of time spent online, but on the way that people use and perceive social media environments.

The implications of this research are more practical. Schools should continue to build on digital literacy programming that focuses on critical engagement with online and digital information, healthy social media habits and consumption, and responsible use among teens. Parents and educators need to promote a healthy balance between online and offline activities, and needs to build emotional resilience in children and their self-esteem. FOMO assessment should be integrated into psychological screening and intervention programmes for adolescents and young adults who are engaging in excessive social media use, but also by mental health professionals in general. It is also important for social media platforms to keep evolving their user-centred features for digital well-being, such as notifications management, screen-

time tracking, and reminders to use technology in a more balanced and thoughtful way, which can help lower addictive use.

This study has some limitations that should be noted. A cross sectional research design does not allow for causal conclusions about the relationships between the variables in the study. Further, the results are self-reported, and may be subject to recall and/or social desirability bias. The sample was also restricted to youth participants, with the results potentially not being generalisable to other age groups and/or populations.

Future studies should use a longitudinal and experimental research design to gain greater insights into the causal links between social media behaviors and FOMO over time and psychological insecurities. Comparative studies across various cultural, socioeconomic and demographic groups would give a more comprehensive understanding of the development of FOMO among different groups. In future research, other psychological factors (e.g., self-esteem, loneliness, emotional regulation, resilience, mindfulness, and digital well-being) can be explored as potential mediators and/or moderators between the use of social media and the psychological outcomes. These studies would help to further psychological research and theory development as well as evidence-based interventions into how healthy digital engagement can be encouraged and how to improve the psychological well-being of young people.

Finally, the current study confirms that Fear of Missing Out is a relevant psychological mechanism that connects social media behaviors to increased anxiety, sleep difficulties and compulsive social media use in youth. With digital technologies playing such a significant role in everyday social interaction, it is important for researchers, educators, mental health professionals, policy makers, and technologists to understand and respond to the psychological mechanisms of how FOMO is experienced. Responsible social media use, digital resilience and evidence-based digital well-being strategies will play an integral part in ensuring that youth can experience the positive aspects of using social media while reducing the negative psychological effects.

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