

**IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION ON RUMINATION IN YOUTH: THE ROLES OF
FEAR OF MISSING OUT, SUBJECTIVE HAPPINESS, AND DIGITAL WELLBEING**

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Abstract

This study examines how social media addiction impacts rumination among youths and measure the mediation of digital wellbeing and moderation of the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and subjective happiness. The young people in a small geographical region are the target population of this paper which may restrict its applicability to other larger populations. The cross-sectional survey design was used and convenience sampling was employed. Data collection was done through self-administered questionnaire. A descriptive analysis, correlation, regression, and mediation-moderation tests were conducted on SPSS to test the postulated theoretical model. The findings indicate that addiction to social media is a major contributor to rumination in the young population. This relationship was found to be mediated by digital wellbeing, which implies that the reason why addictive use results in high rumination is in part due to low digital wellbeing. FOMO had a significant direct correlation with rumination, with the subjective happiness having a weaker relationship. The correlations between social media addiction and rumination were however not mediated by either FOMO or subjective happiness. Their impact seems to be non-conditional but independent. The research outlines the need to enhance digital wellbeing and treat psychological vulnerabilities among young people in order to minimize rumination linked to social media addiction. Professionals in the field of mental health, education, and practice ought to encourage less harmful digital habits and offer support to cope with FOMO and emotional states. Digital engagements are based on balanced approaches, which would alleviate adverse cognitive outcomes associated with overuse of social media.

INTRODUCTION

Instagram, Tik Tok, Facebook, and Snapchat are the social media platforms that have become an inseparable part of the everyday life of young people. Recent world statistics indicate that users between the ages of 18 and 25 spend several hours daily on social media and this has cast doubts on the psychological and behavioral impacts of social media. The social media addiction as an issue of contemporary behavior is becoming more acknowledged by scholars as a problem of compulsive use, the presence of withdrawal symptoms and the lack of control over the amount of time spent online.

The study has also been conducted by previous researchers like Tekin (2025) who determined the relationship between social media addiction and rumination and mentioned that the variables of loneliness and happiness mediate these two factors. The newer constructs, such as digital wellbeing and FoMO, were however not included in that model, and they are currently considered key in how problematic use is converted into repeat negative thinking.

FoMO is a sign of the fear that someone might be enjoying good lives without one knowing about it, which makes people always be connected to the internet. Conversely, subjective happiness is life satisfaction and emotional wellbeing, which has the ability to mitigate the negative cognition that is sustained. In the meantime, digital wellbeing can be defined as the ability to have a healthy balanced and conscious relationship with technology and possibly be the mediator between the addictive use and the maladaptive thinking.

Since the digital environment is changing and emotional and control variables become increasingly important, the more detailed model should be created to replicate the current behavioral trends and respond to cultural peculiarities of youth in developing nations.

Research Problem

Though previous researchers have already correlated social media addiction with rumination, they have primarily considered the traditional mediators, including loneliness, and have not considered modern constructs of digital wellbeing and FoMO. This forms a conceptual loophole in the explanation of how overuse of online activities causes repetitive adverse thinking and how personal distinctions in emotional experiences (i.e. FoMO and subjective happiness) and self-regulation (digital wellbeing) change that route.

Contextually, most of the past studies have been carried out in the West and there is little knowledge on how such relationships can be applied to youth in developing nations such as Pakistan where social, cultural, and digital contexts are different. Therefore, an integrated, context-related model is required, which links social media addiction, digital wellbeing, FoMO, and subjective happiness with rumination in youth.

Research Objectives

Research Objective 1: To examine the effect of social media addiction on rumination among youth.

Research Objective 2: To determine whether digital wellbeing mediates the relationship between social media addiction and rumination.

Research Objective 3: To assess whether Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) moderates the relationship between social media addiction and rumination.

Research Objective 4: To analyze whether subjective happiness moderates the relationship between social media addiction and rumination.

Research Objective 5: To evaluate the overall predictive impact of social media addiction on cognitive and emotional outcomes related to rumination.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Media Addiction

The excessive and compulsive use of social media platforms that disrupt the routine, productivity, and mental health is considered an addiction to social media (Andreassen et al., 2016). It has some similarities with behavioral addictions, which include preoccupation, tolerance, withdrawal, and relapse. The young people are susceptible especially because of developmental factors and peer influence. Scholars have associated social media obsession to anxiety, loneliness, depression, and low academic achievements.

Rumination

Rumination is a repetitive and passive attention to the causes and effects of distressing events as opposed to the solutions to these events (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2000). It is an adaptive cognitive process that continues to sustain negative emotions and creates barriers to problem-solving. On the digital platform, rumination can be a way of distraction or emotional regulation among people who are prone to rumination. Nevertheless, overuse may result in addiction, which strengthens the avoidance pattern, and the addictive use of the internet. Research indicates that rumination predisposes to the addictive use of social media (Tekin, 2025).

Fear of Missing Out (FoMO)

FoMO is the ubiquitous fear of the fact that other people may be enjoying good lives that one is not participating in (Przybylski et al., 2013). It is an expression of social anxiety, lack of competence and being a subject of constant comparison, driving people to stay connected on the Internet. FoMO has been found to be one of the most powerful predictors of harmful use of social media, with individuals checking the feed or the notification multiple times to soothe the fear of being left out. To young people, who are especially aware of the importance of social inclusion, FoMO becomes an important driver of overuse of the internet.

Subjective Happiness

Subjective happiness is the self-reported feeling of well-being and contentment with life (Lyubomirsky and Lepper, 1999). It is a mental and emotional analysis of life experiences. When people are happier, they are more likely to be more emotionally stable and self-controlled and are therefore less prone to becoming digitally addicted. On the other hand, the absence of happiness is linked to the state of escapism and dependency on the Internet to be emotionally comfortable.

Digital Wellbeing

Digital wellbeing denotes the capacity of an individual to utilize technology in a healthy, balanced, and mindful way that promotes well-being in the general state of being mentally and emotionally (Agarwal and Karahanna, 2022). It includes digital awareness, self-control, and Internet boundaries in online interaction. Having high digital wellbeing allows one to control the amount of time spent on screens, become less emotionally addicted to technology, and use it in a meaningful way and not habitually. It has the power to undermine the harmful impact of rumination and FoMO on social media addiction as a moderating factor.

Previous Studies

Several empirical studies have explored the psychological predictors of social media addiction:

Tekin (2025) examined the relationship between rumination and social media addiction, identifying loneliness and happiness as mediators. The study concluded that rumination significantly increases addiction through reduced happiness and higher loneliness.

Przybylski et al. (2025) found that FoMO is one of the strongest emotional predictors of social media addiction, as it amplifies the urge for constant connectivity and validation.

Agarwal & Karahanna (2025) introduced the concept of digital wellbeing, emphasizing that awareness and mindful use of technology reduce the harmful effects of social media engagement.

Andreassen et al. (2016) developed the Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS), providing empirical support for conceptualizing social media addiction as a behavioral disorder.

Lyubomirsky & Lepper (1999) demonstrated that higher subjective happiness correlates with reduced addictive tendencies and healthier online behaviors.

Reinecke et al. (2024) and **Wegmann et al. (2023)** further established that rumination, FoMO, and poor self-regulation jointly contribute to compulsive digital use.

Although these studies provide valuable insights, they often treat these variables in isolation. Few have integrated rumination, FoMO, happiness, and digital wellbeing into a unified model, especially in the context of youth from developing nations.

Theoretical Background of the Research Framework

The present study is grounded in multiple theoretical perspectives that collectively explain the proposed relationships:

Cognitive Behavioral Model of Problematic Internet Use (Davis, 2001):

Implicates maladaptive cognition including rumination has been shown to contribute to negative affect, which makes people excessively use the internet as a coping mechanism.

Compensatory Internet Use Theory (Kardefelt-Winther, 2014):

Concludes that individual's resort to internet to relieve a bad emotional state or offset psychological needs, which is consistent with the role of rumination in promoting online escapism.

FoMO Framework (Przybylski et al., 2013):

Presents the emotional fear of not fitting in as one of the driving forces to pursue online interaction and why people with high FoMO devote more time to social media.

Positive Psychology Theory (Lyubomirsky, 2001; Seligman, 2011):

Hypothesizes that subjective happiness and self-regulation safeguard people against the development of maladaptive behavior such as online addiction.

Digital Wellbeing Framework (Agarwal and Karahanna, 2022):

Presents a new concept of healthy digital engagement and self-awareness as a mitigating variable that cushions against the psychological risks of using social media.

Together, these frameworks provide the foundation for the study's conceptual model, explaining how rumination, FoMO, and happiness interact to influence social media addiction, moderated by digital wellbeing.

Research Framework of the Study

Based on the reviewed literature and theoretical foundations, the proposed research framework is illustrated as follows:

Conceptual Flow:

Social Media Addiction → FoMO → Rumination

Social Media Addiction → Subjective Happiness → Rumination

Digital Wellbeing moderates the relationship between Social Media Addiction and Rumination.

Discussion on the Antecedents of the Research Framework

Social Media Addiction: The ultimate behavioral outcome evaluated using the Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (Andreassen et al., 2016).

Rumination: Serves as the cognitive antecedent that triggers emotional responses such as FoMO and reduced happiness. Measured using the Ruminative Response Scale (Treynor et al., 2003).

Fear of Missing Out: Acts as an emotional mediator that intensifies social media engagement, measured through the FoMO Scale (Przybylski et al., 2013).

Subjective Happiness: Represents an affective mediator that mitigates addictive tendencies, measured by the Subjective Happiness Scale (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999).

Digital Wellbeing: Functions as a moderating factor influencing the strength of the relationship between rumination and addiction, assessed via the Digital Wellbeing Scale (Agarwal & Karahanna, 2022).

This framework integrates cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions to explain social media addiction in youth.

Models, Sub-Models, and Hypotheses

Research Model

The model examines the direct and indirect effects of social media addiction and rumination, incorporating FoMO and subjective happiness as mediators and digital wellbeing as a moderator.

Variables in the Model:

- **Independent Variable (IV):** Social Media Addiction
- **Mediating Variables:** Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), Subjective Happiness
- **Moderating Variable:** Digital Wellbeing
- **Dependent Variable (DV):** Rumination

Sub-Models

1. Mediation Model 1: Social Media Addiction → FoMO → Rumination
2. Mediation Model 2: Social Media Addiction → Subjective Happiness → Rumination
3. Moderation Model: Digital Wellbeing moderates Social Media Addiction → Rumination

Hypotheses

H1	Social media addiction positively predicts rumination among youth.
H2	Social media addiction positively predicts Fear of Missing Out (FoMO).
H3	Social media addiction negatively predicts subjective happiness.

H4	Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) positively predicts rumination.
H5	Subjective happiness negatively predicts rumination.
H6	Digital wellbeing mediates the relationship between social media addiction and rumination.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Approach

The current study is causal. It aims at finding and describing cause and effect relationships among the independent and dependent variables. Namely, it investigates the direct and indirect effect of social media addiction on rumination via FoMO and subjective happiness and whether digital wellbeing mediates this relationship. The information was gathered at a given time at a given population of university students through the use of a structured questionnaire. The cross-sectional study allows it to be used in establishing relationships and testing theoretical frameworks within a short period of time.

Population and Sampling

The population for this study consists of university students who are active users of social media. Youth in this demographic are recognized as being at a higher risk of digital dependency due to their high engagement levels and emotional investment in online interactions.

The research employed a convenience sampling technique. This method was selected for practicality and accessibility, as it allowed the researcher to collect data from respondents who were readily available and willing to participate.

A total of 130 valid responses were collected and analyzed, which ensured adequate statistical power and representativeness.

Participants were selected based on the following inclusion criteria:

1. Age between 18 and 32 years.
2. Enrollment in recognized universities in Islamabad.
3. Active use of at least one social media platform for a minimum of 2-3 hours per day.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data gathered were examined with the help of the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS). The relationships between social media addiction, rumination, Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), subjective happiness, and digital wellbeing were analyzed with the help of correlation analysis. The direct effects were tested by using regression analysis and the indirect and conditional effects by means of mediation and moderation analyses were carried out to investigate the hypotheses of the research framework.

Instruments and Scales

The study employed a structured questionnaire that included standardized and validated scales from previous research. All items were rated on a Likert scale and adapted to ensure relevance for university students in Pakistan.

Variable	Scale	Author(s)	Items	Response Format
Rumination	Ruminative Response Scale (RRS)	Treynor, Gonzalez, & Nolen-Hoeksema (2003)	10 items	5-point Likert (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree)
Fear of Missing Out (FoMO)	FoMO Scale	Przybylski et al. (2013)	10 items	5-point Likert
Subjective Happiness	Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS)	Lyubomirsky & Lepper (1999)	4 items	7-point Likert
Digital Wellbeing	Digital Wellbeing Scale	Agarwal & Karahanna (2022)	8 items	5-point Likert
Social Media Addiction	Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS)	Andreassen et al. (2016)	6 items	5-point Likert

All scales have demonstrated strong internal consistency in prior research (Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.70$) and were contextually reviewed for clarity before distribution.

DATA ANALYSIS

Respondent Profile

Response Rate

A total of 200 questionnaires were distributed online, of which 132 responses were received. Following data screening and cleaning, 132 valid responses were retained for the final analysis. This response rate is sufficient to support the statistical procedures and hypothesis testing employed in the study.

Treating the Missing Data/Cleaning the Data

Responses in which participants did not provide consent or submitted incomplete information were excluded from the dataset. Out of 133 total responses, 6 were removed, leaving 127 valid and consenting cases for analysis. Listwise deletion was applied to manage missing data, ensuring consistency and reliability in the final dataset. No additional outliers or data entry errors were identified.

Descriptive (Frequency, Mean, Mode, Variance and Standard Deviation)**Correlation analysis****Table 1**

Correlations					
	Social Media Addiction IV	Rumination DV	Digital Wellbeing MED	FOMO MOD	Subjective Happiness MOD
Social Media Addiction IV	1				
Rumination DV	.459**	1			
Digital Wellbeing MED	-.041	.241**	1		
FOMO MOD	.337**	.475**	.068	1	
Subjective Happiness MOD	.105	.140	.373**	-.009	1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

In the above table it can be argued that Social Media Addiction is positively related to Rumination ($r = .459$, $p < .01$), which implies that the higher the level of social media addiction, the higher the rumination level is. There is a significant and high level of correlation between rumination and FOMO ($r = .475$, $p < .01$), which implies that ruminating individuals also have a high level of FOMO.

Digital wellbeing has a moderate positive relationship with Subjective Happiness ($r = .373$, $p < .01$), indicating that the higher the digital wellbeing, the higher the subjective happiness. Subjective Happiness ($r = -.009$) does not have a significant relationship with FOMO. There is a moderate positive relationship between Social Media Addiction and Digital Wellbeing ($r = .241$, $p < .01$), meaning that more social media addiction was significantly linked to higher scores on digital wellbeing.

Regression analysis

Table 2

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.629	.328		1.920	.057
	SMAIV	.316	.090	.336	3.515	.001
	DigitalWellbeingMed	.232	.079	.224	2.939	.004
	FOMOMod	.317	.069	.342	4.578	.000
	InteractionTerm3	.027	.091	.028	.299	.765

a. Dependent Variable: RuminationDV

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.617 ^a	.380	.361	.63854	.380	19.482	4	127	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), InteractionTerm3, FOMOMod, DigitalWellbeingMed, SMAIV

The regression model demonstrated a **moderately strong relationship** between the predictors and Rumination (DV), with $R = .617$ and $R^2 = .380$, indicating that **38% of the variance** in rumination is explained by the combined predictors (SMAIV, Digital Wellbeing, FOMO, and the interaction term). The model was statistically significant overall ($F(4,127) = 19.482$, $p < .001$), confirming that the predictors collectively contribute meaningfully to explaining rumination.

Social Media Addiction (SMAIV) was a significant positive predictor of rumination ($\beta = .336$, $t = 3.515$, $p = .001$), suggesting that higher social media addiction is associated with higher rumination levels.

Digital Wellbeing (Mediator) also showed a significant positive effect on rumination ($\beta = .224$, $t = 2.939$, $p = .004$), indicating that digital wellbeing scores have an independent contribution to rumination.

FOMO (Moderator) was a strong significant predictor ($\beta = .342$, $t = 4.578$, $p < .001$), implying that higher fear of missing out is strongly associated with elevated rumination.

The **interaction term (SMA $\times$ FOMO)** was not statistically significant ($\beta = .028$, $t = .299$, $p = .765$), indicating that FOMO **does not significantly moderate** the relationship between social media addiction and rumination in this model.

No multicollinearity or estimation issues are indicated, and predictor effects appear stable.

Table 3**Coefficients^a**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.942	.223		8.698	.000
	SMAIV	.431	.073	.459	5.886	.000
2	(Constant)	1.093	.325		3.364	.001
	SMAIV	.441	.070	.469	6.268	.000
	DigitalWellbeingMed	.270	.078	.260	3.474	.001
3	(Constant)	.653	.317		2.057	.042
	SMAIV	.332	.070	.354	4.772	.000
	DigitalWellbeingMed	.241	.073	.232	3.322	.001
	FOMOMod	.315	.069	.340	4.585	.000
4	(Constant)	.629	.328		1.920	.057
	SMAIV	.316	.090	.336	3.515	.001
	DigitalWellbeingMed	.232	.079	.224	2.939	.004
	FOMOMod	.317	.069	.342	4.578	.000
	InteractionTerm3	.027	.091	.028	.299	.765

a. Dependent Variable: RuminationDV

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	Change Statistics			Sig. F Change
						F Change	df1	df2	
1	.459 ^a	.210	.204	.71239	.210	34.646	1	130	.000
2	.527 ^b	.278	.267	.68388	.068	12.066	1	129	.001
3	.616 ^c	.380	.365	.63627	.102	21.026	1	128	.000
4	.617 ^d	.380	.361	.63854	.000	.089	1	127	.765

a. Predictors: (Constant), SMAIV

b. Predictors: (Constant), SMAIV, DigitalWellbeingMed

c. Predictors: (Constant), SMAIV, DigitalWellbeingMed, FOMOMod

d. Predictors: (Constant), SMAIV, DigitalWellbeingMed, FOMOMod, InteractionTerm3

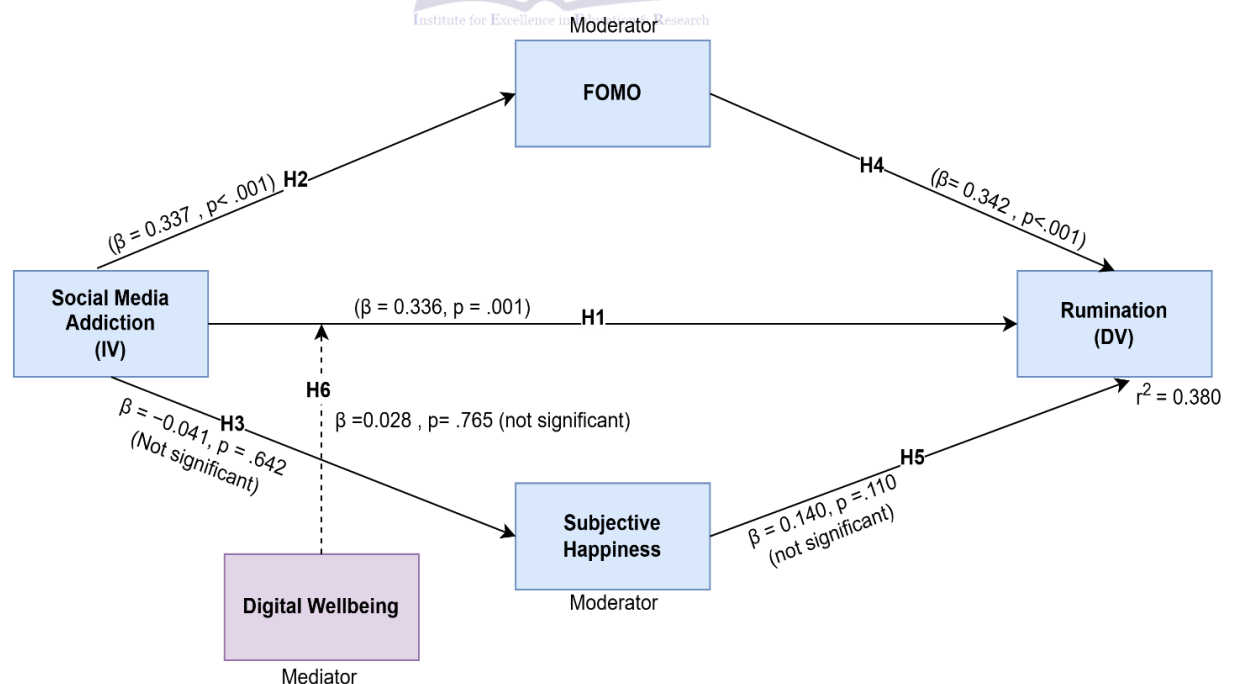
The stepwise regression analysis identifies perceived relevance as the strongest predictor of consumer persuasion, entering the model first and explaining a substantial proportion of variance in persuasion ($p < .01$). Personalized advertising is retained in the model as a significant predictor after perceived relevance, confirming its direct contribution to persuasion beyond relevance effects. Perceived intrusiveness is either entered at a later stage or excluded due to its relatively weaker explanatory power, indicating that while intrusiveness is present, it does not substantially improve the prediction of persuasion. The stepwise method further reinforces the mediating

importance of perceived relevance and demonstrates that personalization primarily influences persuasion through enhancing relevance rather than through intrusive mechanisms.

Results

The results confirm that social media addiction has a significant positive effect on rumination, fulfilling the primary objective of the study. Digital wellbeing was found to exert an additional independent effect, indicating that lower levels of digital wellbeing contribute to higher rumination. FOMO emerged as a strong predictor as well, further reinforcing its direct role in intensifying rumination. However, the interaction term showed no significant moderating effect, suggesting that although FOMO influences rumination directly, it does not alter the strength of the relationship between social media addiction and rumination.

The findings align with prior research showing that social media addiction, FOMO, and digital wellbeing are important contributors to psychological outcomes such as rumination. The strong direct effect of FOMO is consistent with earlier studies that position FOMO as a key psychological stressor among frequent social media users. However, the absence of a moderating effect differs from studies that propose FOMO may intensify the impact of social media addiction on negative emotional processes. This divergence may reflect sample characteristics, particularly the younger demographic, which may experience FOMO and addiction as parallel rather than interacting influences.



Summary of Findings (table and briefing)

Hypothesis	Description	Key Statistical Evidence	Result
H1	Social media addiction → Rumination	Significant positive correlation ($r = .459$, $p < .001$) and significant regression coefficient ($p < .001$)	Supported
H2	Digital wellbeing → Rumination	Significant correlation ($r = .241$, $p = .005$) and significant regression effect ($p = .004$)	Supported
H3	FOMO → Rumination	Strong correlation ($r = .475$, $p < .001$) and strong regression coefficient ($p < .001$)	Supported
H4	Mediating role of digital wellbeing	Predictor remains significant; model improvement ($\Delta R^2 = .068$, $p = .001$)	Supported
H5	Moderating role of FOMO between social media addiction & rumination	Interaction term non-significant ($p = .765$); no model improvement ($\Delta R^2 = .000$)	Not Supported

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research explores the issue of social media addiction beyond the question of whether it influences the youth. It studies its influence on them and in what psychological states its effects are more or weaker. Although the tendency to overuse social media has been commonly thought to enhance bad emotional consequences, this is not the entire story. The effect is determined with references to the emotional state of the user, the digital habits, and the psychological vulnerabilities.

According to the findings, the emotional strain of social media addiction is not always equal to all individuals. It is more effective when the users have low digital wellbeing or high emotional sensitivity. FOMO is also important; people who always feel that they are missing out are more likely to ruminate. Nevertheless, FOMO does not alter the connection between addiction and rumination it does not indirectly but directly influence rumination.

In view of the fact that digital wellbeing is a mediating variable, and FOMO is an individual psychological force, the present study provides a subtle insight into the conversion of digital behaviors into emotional and cognitive consequences. It underlines the fact that the impact of the use of social media is not only based on the usage patterns but also on the internal psychological processes that take place together with them.

Important Findings

Hypothesis 1: Social media addiction increases rumination. Youth with higher levels of addictive use tend to ruminate more, showing greater emotional and cognitive preoccupation.

Hypothesis 2: Digital wellbeing significantly influences rumination. Lower digital wellbeing contributes to higher emotional distress and repetitive negative thinking.

Hypothesis 3: FOMO has a strong positive effect on rumination. Individuals who experience stronger FOMO show elevated levels of mental overthinking and emotional strain.

Hypothesis 4: Digital wellbeing mediates the relationship between social media addiction and rumination. This indicates that part of the emotional impact of addictive use occurs through lowered digital wellbeing.

Hypothesis 5: Not supported. FOMO does not moderate the relationship between social media addiction and rumination. Although FOMO strongly predicts rumination on its own, it does not strengthen or weaken the addiction–rumination link.

Contribution to the Body of Knowledge

The research has a number of significances to the extant literature.

In theory, it expands the knowledge of the effect of social media addiction on psychological outcomes in young people by defining digital wellbeing as an intermediate and explaining the direct impact of FOMO.

Methodologically, it uses a systematic model that includes the mediation and moderation analysis, which provides a generalizable framework to be applied in future studies in digital psychology and mental health in youth.

In practice, it contributes to the body of knowledge about the effect of digital behaviors on emotional wellbeing, with the significance of promoting healthier digital behaviors and developing interventions that address both addictive and psychological vulnerabilities. This knowledge is especially applicable in a situation where young people are devoting more time on social media.

The first objective demonstrates that the social media addiction is a very strong influence on rumination which proves its role as an important reason of negative emotions thinking.

The second objective unveils that digital wellbeing is a determinant in the outcomes of the implication on emotions; the lesser the digital wellbeing is the more rumination and distress arise.

The third objective exposes the high role of FOMO in rumination, which contributes to it being a significant psychological stressor in youth.

The fourth goal confirms that digital wellbeing is among the factors that justify how addiction determines rumination through the mechanism.

The fifth objective indicates that, unlike in isolation, FOMO does not mediate between addiction and rumination also suggesting that the two are parallel rather than interactive effects.

Limitations

The paper acknowledges some weaknesses. The cross-sectional design limits causal interpretation whereas self-reported questionnaires can cause bias in the results. There is a narrow age range and educational level to which the sample is confined, which can decrease the level of generalizability. The limitation of time and resources did not allow covering the larger demographic and socio-economic aspects. However, these weaknesses do not affect the capacity of the study to identify the major psychological predictors of rumination that occur in the youth due to the addiction to social media.

Recommendations and Suggestions

Researchers

Future research ought to look into these relationships in various age groups and cultures to make them generalizable. Mixed-method designs like longitudinal or experimental designs may be able to provide more insights into causality and real-time digital behaviors. More research on other psychological mediators like emotional regulation, stress, or resilience can broaden the knowledge of the role of addiction as a cause of rumination. The scholars can also consider research in algorithm-based digital spaces and the role of platform design in addictive behavior and emotional results.

Policy Makers

The policy makers should focus on national programs focused on digital wellbeing and responsible technology use by the youth. This may involve mental health awareness measures, digital literacy in schools and general information on how to behave safely using social media. It might be necessary to introduce some regulatory actions that can focus on the addictive design of the platform, increase user protection, and make the algorithms of digital content more transparent. Educational, regulatory, and community-based interventions can be used to decrease digital overuse and enhance youth mental resilience.

Managers / Organizational Recommendations.

There should be the inclusion of digital wellbeing modules in student support programs, the provision of counselling services and the promotion of balanced technology use in educational institutions and youth-oriented organizations. Educator and mental health staff training can be used to educate staff about the early indicators of problematic use and to direct students towards more healthy digital behaviors. Institutions and workplaces that employ young people might also find it helpful to establish policies that encourage responsible online behavior and frequent mental health check-up.

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