

Examining the Relationship Between Social Media Addiction, Fear of Missing Out, Loneliness, and Life Satisfaction Among Youth: A Cross-Sectional Study*

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Abstract

This cross-sectional study examines the relationships among social media addiction, fear of missing out (FoMO), loneliness, and life satisfaction among young adults. Data were collected from 700 participants aged 18–29 years via an online survey administered between May and June 2024. Validated scales were used to assess key variables: the Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale, the Fear of Missing Out Scale, the UCLA Loneliness Scale, and the Satisfaction with Life Scale. Structural Equation Modeling revealed that life satisfaction was positively associated with loneliness. Social media addiction was strongly associated with FoMO, while FoMO had an indirect negative effect on life satisfaction through social media addiction. These findings shed light on the underlying mechanisms between social media addiction, FoMO, loneliness, and life satisfaction. Such insights can provide significant implications for developing interventions (e.g., digital well-being programs) to help young adults manage their social media use more effectively. Promoting mindful and balanced social media engagement may contribute to enhancing life satisfaction and overall mental well-being.

Keywords: social media addiction, fear of missing out, FoMO, loneliness, life satisfaction, young adults

Highlights:

- Social media addiction negatively impacted life satisfaction, confirming its detrimental effects on well-being.
- FoMO strongly predicted increased social media addiction and was negatively associated with life satisfaction.
- Loneliness showed no significant association with social media addiction but was positively related to life satisfaction.

Introduction

In recent years, concerns about the excessive and potentially addictive use of the internet have grown significantly (Montag et al., 2021; Wolniewicz et al., 2018). Both the American Psychiatric Association (APA, 2013) and the World Health Organization (WHO) have recognised digital overuse as a public health concern (WHO, 2015).

Social media use is highly prevalent among young adults, who are among the most active users of these platforms due to their rapid adaptation to the digital world. The most preferred platforms include Instagram, YouTube, and X, each catering to different usage purposes (Dixon, 2022). For instance, Instagram facilitates self-expression through visual content and short videos, while YouTube provides opportunities for acquiring information across various domains such as education, entertainment, and news through long-form content. X, on the other hand, serves as a key platform for real-time news updates, idea-sharing, and participation in social discussions. Young users engage in various activities on social media, with the most common forms of interaction including scrolling through content feeds to view recent posts, sharing their own content, interacting with friends and followers, keeping up with trends, and consuming news or entertainment content (Montag et al., 2021; Gundogdu et al., 2021).

While social media facilitates communication, expands social networks, and provides access to information, it also transforms social interactions by shifting them to virtual environments (Badenes-Ribera et al., 2019; Nesi, 2020; Van Driel et al., 2021). This shift has contributed to the emergence of problematic social media use or *social media addiction*, a behavioural pattern characterized by excessive and compulsive social media use, which can interfere with daily life and well-being (Balcerowska et al., 2020; Montag et al., 2021).

Social media addiction, problematic, and compulsive social media use are terms often used interchangeably to describe maladaptive social media usage (Klobas et al., 2018). Among these, social media addiction is the most used concept, referring to a psychological dependence on social media platforms that exhibits symptoms of behavioural addiction (Cao et al., 2020). However, some experts argue that the term "addiction" is closely associated with substance use disorders, making it premature to classify social media use as a pathological disorder. Instead, they propose that the term "problematic use" is more appropriate (Carbonell & Panova, 2017). Despite these discussions, there is no consensus in the literature regarding the definition and assessment of problematic social media use. Consequently, social media addiction can be

characterized by excessive time and energy spent on social media, obsessive preoccupation with social media activities, a strong compulsion to engage with these platforms, and the deterioration of an individual's social interactions, interpersonal relationships, professional and academic life, health, and overall well-being (Andreassen & Pallesen, 2014). One of the most significant risk factors associated with social media addiction is a 'fear of missing out' (FoMO) (Blackwell et al., 2017; Casale & Fioravanti, 2020). The widespread use of the FoMO concept dates to 2004, coinciding with the launch of Facebook. FoMO has been defined as "a pervasive anxiety that others may have rewarding experiences that one does not have" (Przybylski et al., 2013, p. 1841).

FoMO, which has become increasingly prevalent with the advent of social media, is characterized both as an anxiety-triggering perception of missing out and as a behaviour involving constant checking social media to maintain social connections. In essence, while offering numerous opportunities, social media communication also fosters feelings of FoMO, leading to incessant scrolling to avoid missing out on significant life events (Przybylski et al., 2013; Dempsey et al., 2019; Wegmann et al., 2017). However, this intense and rapid flow of information is a primary reason for questioning one's own life and consequently experiencing FoMO (Dempsey et al., 2019). As a result of FoMO driven by social media influence, individuals may experience negative emotions by viewing themselves through the lens of others (Przybylski et al., 2013). Additionally, FoMO can compel people to constantly follow social media channels to stay updated on news, trends, and insights (Casale & Fioravanti, 2020).

Individuals experiencing high levels of FoMO, who constantly compare themselves to others and worry about being left out of events, often report lower life satisfaction (Ellison et al., 2007; Wortham, 2011; Oberst et al., 2017; Wegmann et al., 2017). Additionally, extended periods of social media use can reduce face-to-face social interactions in offline settings, increase feelings of loneliness (Primack et al., 2017), and potentially negatively impact young adults' life satisfaction (Cacioppo & Cacioppo, 2018).

This study aims to fill a gap in literature by systematically analyzing the relationships between social media addiction, FoMO, loneliness, and life satisfaction. While these variables have often been examined separately in previous research, studies that explore their mutual interactions within a comprehensive framework remain limited. Given the increasing prevalence of social media use, particularly among young adults, a deeper investigation of these dynamics is of great significance. Therefore, the primary aim of this study is to examine the direct and indirect relationships between these variables. To the best of our knowledge, this is

the first study to explore the relationships between social media addiction, FoMO, loneliness, and life satisfaction among Turkish youth.

The following research hypotheses were proposed:

H1: There is a positive relationship between loneliness and social media addiction.

H2: There is a negative relationship between loneliness and life satisfaction

H3: There is a positive relationship between FoMO and social media addiction.

H4: There is a negative relationship between FoMO and life satisfaction.

H5: There is a negative relationship between social media addiction and life satisfaction.

Methods

Study Design and Population.

This cross-sectional research was conducted between June and July 2024. The participation in the study was completely anonymous and voluntary. To be eligible, individuals had to actively use at least one social media platform within the past six months. Participants who had not used social media or had used it only rarely during this period were excluded. The data were collected using an online survey administered by Google Forms, with each survey taking approximately 15-20 minutes to complete.

The target population of the survey comprised Turkish-speaking adults aged 18-29 years who actively engaged with social media. Individuals with severe psychological or neurological disorders, as well as those who had not used social media or had used it very rarely over the past six months, were excluded from the study. Thus, 52 individuals were excluded from the dataset, resulting in the final sample size of 700 participants.

At the end of the study, a post hoc power analysis was conducted to assess whether the sample size was adequate. The post hoc power analysis was calculated using the *G*Power* software (Version 3.1.9.7; Faul et al., 2009). The effect size of the study was determined to be 0.35, and with $\alpha = 0.05$, the post hoc power analysis indicated that the statistical power of the study was 100%. Therefore, the sample size of 700 participants was deemed sufficient for this study.

Ethics Statement

This research received approval from the Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee at Istanbul Medeniyet University prior to data collection (Ethics Committee Approval No.: 2024/6). The research data were collected online via Google Forms. Participants were informed

about confidentiality, voluntariness, and ethical responsibilities through an Informed Consent Form before participating in the study and provided their consent.

Questionnaires

The survey included a demographic questionnaire, the Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS), FoMO, UCLA Loneliness Scale (ULS-8), and a visual scale of life satisfaction.

Demographic Questionnaire

The authors prepared the demographic questionnaire to determine participants' characteristics, including gender, age, marital status, and education. Additionally, participants were asked how often they checked social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, e-mail, YouTube, and WhatsApp during the day. They also queried about their purposes for using social media and the duration of using these platforms.

Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS)

Developed by Andreassen et al. (2016) and adapted to Turkish by Demirci (2019), the BSMAS measures social media addiction based on six core addiction criteria: mood modification, tolerance, withdrawal symptoms, conflict, relapse, and salience. The scale consists of six items rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = *very rarely*, 5 = *very often*), with total scores ranging from 6 to 30. Higher scores indicate a higher risk of problematic social media use. Cronbach α coefficient in this study was .756.

Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) Scale

In this study, FoMO was assessed using the Fear of Missing Out Scale, originally developed by Przybylski et al. (2013) and later adapted and validated for Turkish use by Gökler et al. (2016). The scale consists of 10 items, each designed to measure individual differences in FoMO levels and the extent to which people feel compelled to stay engaged with social experiences. Participants responded to each item on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from: 1 (*Not at all true*) to 5 (*Extremely true*). Total scores range from 10 to 50, with higher scores indicating greater levels of FoMO. The Turkish adaptation demonstrated strong internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.81, confirming its reliability for assessing FoMO in Turkish populations. Cronbach α coefficient in this study was .806.

The FoMO Scale has been widely used in research to explore its impact on mental health, social behaviors, and digital technology use. Higher FoMO scores have been linked to increased social media engagement, problematic internet use, and emotional distress.

UCLA Loneliness Scale (ULS-8)

The UCLA Loneliness Scale (ULS-8) is the short form of the original UCLA Loneliness Scale, developed by Hays and DiMatteo (1987) to assess individuals' perceived loneliness and social connectedness. The abbreviated version was designed to provide a concise yet psychometrically robust measure of loneliness while maintaining strong validity and reliability. The ULS-8 consists of eight items, evaluating the frequency of feelings related to loneliness, social isolation, and dissatisfaction with social interactions. Responses are recorded on a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 4 (*always*). Total scores range from 8 to 32, with higher scores indicating greater levels of loneliness. The Turkish adaptation, validation, and reliability analysis of the ULS-8 were conducted by Doğan et al. (2011). The Turkish version demonstrated adequate internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.72, supporting its reliability for assessing loneliness in Turkish populations. Cronbach α coefficient in this study was .70.

Life Satisfaction

In this study, life satisfaction was measured using the Cantril Ladder method (Cantril, 1965), a widely recognized visual analog scale designed to assess subjective well-being. Participants were presented with an illustration of a ladder numbered from 0 to 10, where: 0 represents the *worst possible life (complete dissatisfaction)*, and 10 represents the *best possible life (complete satisfaction)*. Participants were asked to mark the number that best reflected their current perceived level of life satisfaction. For analytical purposes, responses were categorized into three groups: Not satisfied (0–5): Individuals reporting low levels of life satisfaction. Moderate satisfaction (6–8): Individuals experiencing an average level of well-being. High satisfaction (9–10): Individuals with a strong sense of life satisfaction.

The Cantril Ladder is frequently used in psychological and sociological research due to its simplicity, ease of administration, and ability to capture subjective life evaluations effectively. Studies have shown that life satisfaction, as measured by this method, correlates with mental health outcomes, socioeconomic status, and overall well-being, making it a valuable tool for assessing quality of life across diverse populations (Işık, 2021, 2023).

Data Analysis

Data collected were analysed using SPSS (v. 2.0; IBM, New York, USA) and JAMOVI (The Jamovi Project, 2022 (v. 2.3) for Windows). The distribution of continuous variables was evaluated using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. Descriptive parameters were provided as absolute numbers and frequencies for categorical data and as mean (M), standard deviation (SD), minimum (Min), and maximum (Max) for continuous data. Pearson correlation analysis was applied to evaluate the relationships among variables. A statistical significance threshold of $p < 0.05$ was accepted. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used to assess the relationships among loneliness, social media usage, FoMO, and life satisfaction.

The statistical fit of the model was evaluated using several commonly accepted indices. A non-significant chi-square value ($p > 0.05$) indicates a good model fit. Goodness-of-fit was further assessed using the Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), Normed Fit Index (NFI), Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI), and Comparative Fit Index (CFI), with values above 0.95 considered indicative of excellent fit. Additionally, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) values below 0.08 were interpreted as evidence of acceptable model fit. The statistical stability of the model was further assessed by examining the significance of total, direct, and indirect effects through 5,000 bootstrap resamples with a 95% confidence interval. The significance of these paths was confirmed when the bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals did not include zero.

Results

The average age of the study participants was 23.78 ± 4.03 years, with a female predominance ($n = 477$, 68%). Among the young adults, 318 (45.4%) reported using social media for more than 7 years, and 264 (37.7%) reported spending an average of 2-4 hours per day on social media for non-work and personal purposes. Most participants preferred WhatsApp ($n = 654$, 93.4%), Instagram ($n = 617$, 88.1%), and YouTube ($n = 600$, 85.7%) for social activities (Table 1).

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N = 700)

Variable	<i>N</i>	%
Gender		
Male	223	32.0
Female	477	68.0
Age		
18–20	311	44.4
21–23	224	32.1
24–26	92	13.1
27–29	73	10.4
Marital Status		
Single	556	79.4
Married	61	8.7
In a romantic relationship	83	11.8
Education		
Middle school diploma	34	4.8
High school diploma	156	22.2
University degree	389	55.5
Post-graduate	121	17.2
How long have you been using social media?		
Less than 1 year	26	3.7
1–3 years	133	9.1
4–6 years	223	31.8
More than 7 years	318	45.4
On average, how many hours per day have you spent on social media for non-work and personal purposes over the past year?		
15–28 hours weekly (2–4 hours per day)	264	37.7
29–42 hours weekly (4–6 hours per day)	161	23.1
More than 42 hours per week (more than 6 hours per day)	49	7.0
Less than 7 hours per week (less than 1 hour per day)	57	8.1
7–14 hours weekly (1–2 hours per day)	169	24.1
Purpose of social media use		
Academic purpose	248	35.4
Non-academic purpose	452	64.6
Type of social media used		
WhatsApp	654	93.4
Instagram	617	88.1
YouTube	600	85.7
Twitter	351	50.1
Facebook	138	19.7
LinkedIn	93	13.2
Google+	289	41.2
TikTok	117	16.7
Snapchat	54	7.7
Reddit	69	9.8

Variable	<i>N</i>	%
Other (Telegram, Flickr)	23	3.2

Note. Participants could select multiple answers for social media types.

Gender-based comparisons indicated no statistically significant differences in social media addiction, fear of missing out (FoMO), loneliness, or life satisfaction between male and female participants (Table 2).

Table 2
Gender Differences in Social Media Addiction, FoMO, Loneliness, and Life Satisfaction Scores

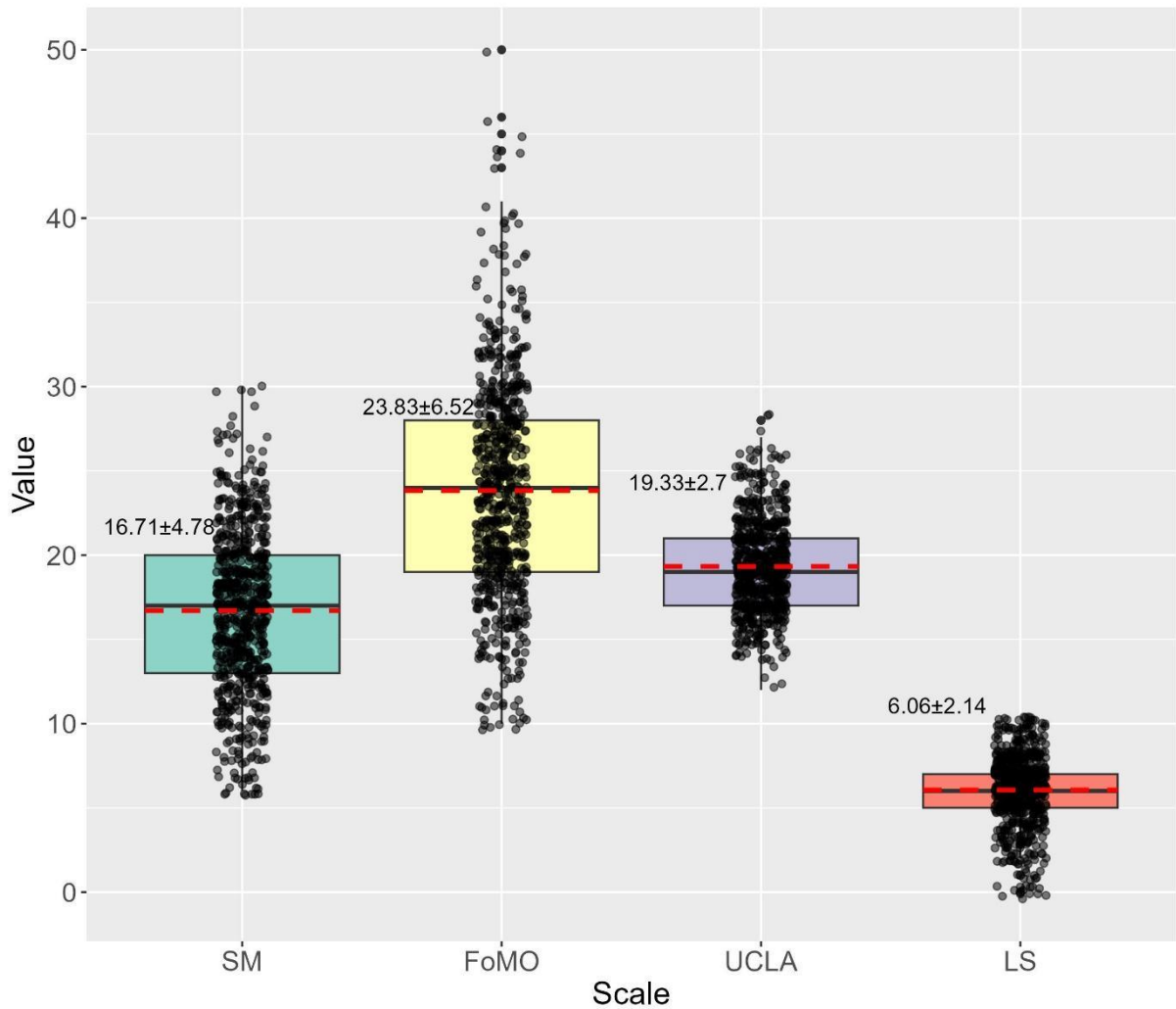
Variable	Male (N = 223) <i>M (SD)</i>	Female (N = 477) <i>M (SD)</i>	<i>p</i>
SM	15.55 (4.45)	17.25 (4.84)	.087
FoMO	23.21 (6.29)	24.13 (6.62)	.065
UCLA	19.78 (2.57)	19.12 (2.74)	.999
LS	6.10 (2.36)	6.04 (2.03)	.777

Note. Mann–Whitney U test was used. No statistically significant differences were found ($p > .05$). SM = social media addiction, FoMO = fear of missing out, UCLA = loneliness, LS = life satisfaction.

Table 3 shows that women reported slightly higher social media addiction and FoMO scores than men; however, these differences were not statistically significant ($p > .05$). Similarly, no significant gender differences were found in loneliness or life satisfaction ($p > .05$), suggesting that gender did not have a significant effect on these variables in this sample.

Figure 1

Distribution of Survey Responses: a Boxplot with Individual Data Points Representing the Total Scores on Each Scale

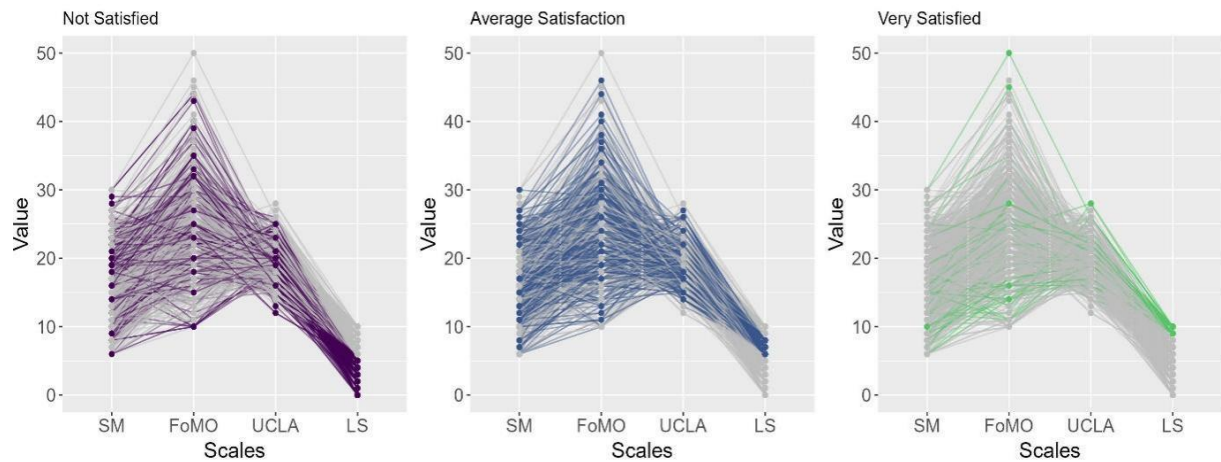


Note. The dashed red line indicates the mean value, while the box shows the median and interquartile range. SM - social media addiction, FoMO - fear of missing out, UCLA – loneliness, LS - life satisfaction.

Fig. 1 displays the distribution of the total scores obtained on each scale, along with the mean and SD values. Our findings indicated that participants generally exhibited moderate levels of social media addiction, FoMO, and loneliness, while their life satisfaction was relatively low.

Figure 2

Individual Participant Responses Across Multiple Scales Related to Life Satisfaction.

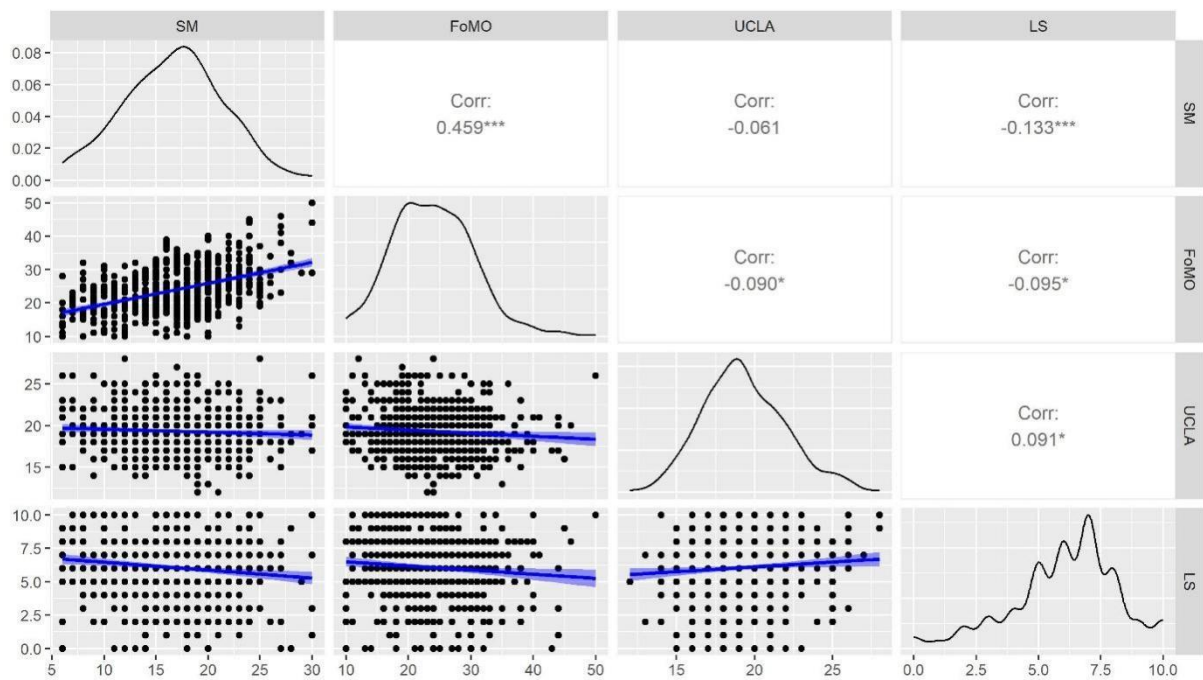


Note. SM - social media addiction, FoMO - fear of missing out, UCLA – loneliness, LS - life satisfaction.

Visual assessment of individual responses revealed no prominent patterns (Fig. 2), except for participants with higher levels of life satisfaction, who generally exhibited lower levels of social media addiction. Respondents with average and low levels of life satisfaction showed a wide distribution of values across scales, with significant overlaps in scores, which made it challenging to identify distinct patterns. Correlation analysis revealed moderate relationships between social media addiction and FoMO. Other pairs of investigated variables exhibited weak associations (Fig. 3).

Figure 3

Correlation Analysis of the Social Media Addiction (SM), Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), Loneliness (UCLA), and Life Satisfaction (LS) Scales



Note. * $p < .05$, *** $p < .001$.

SEM analysis revealed that life satisfaction had a weak positive relationship with loneliness ($\beta = .081$), but weak negative relationships with FoMO and social media addiction ($\beta = -.087$ and $\beta = -.111$) (Table 3, Fig 4). Additionally, FoMO and social media addiction exhibited a moderate positive association ($\beta = .457$, $p < .001$).

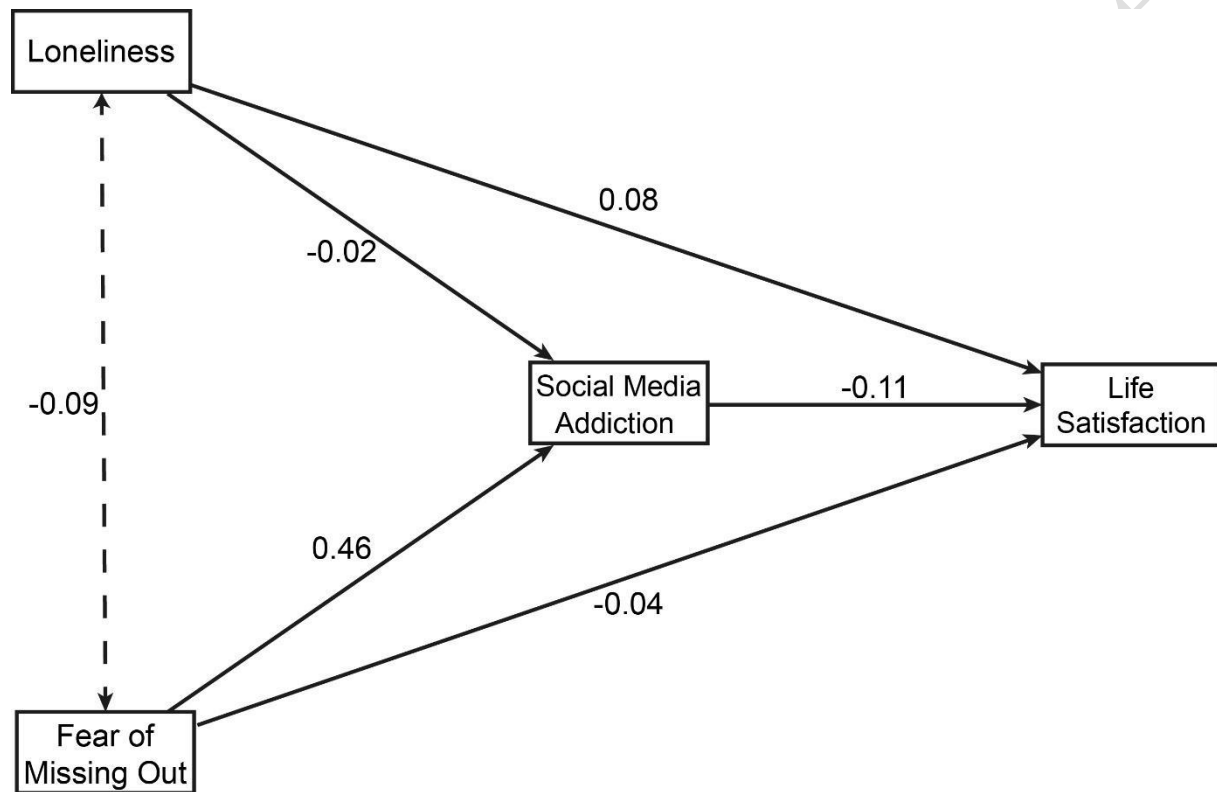
Table 4 shows the results of the multiple mediation test examining the indirect relationships among loneliness, FoMO, social media use, and life satisfaction using the bootstrap method. The findings indicate that the indirect effect of FoMO on life satisfaction through social media use is significant, as the confidence interval does not include zero ($\beta = -0.050$, $p = .010$). This result confirms that social media mediates the relationship between FoMO and life satisfaction.

However, the indirect effect of loneliness on life satisfaction through social media is not significant ($\beta = .002$, $p = .587$), as the confidence interval includes zero. Similarly, the indirect effect of FoMO on loneliness via social media use is also nonsignificant ($\beta = -.011$, $p = .554$). These findings suggest that while social media plays a mediating role in the negative impact of FoMO on life satisfaction, it does not mediate the relationships between loneliness and life satisfaction or between FoMO and loneliness.

The resulting multiple mediation model demonstrated an excellent fit to the data: $\chi^2 = 5.22$ ($p = .074$), CFI = .983, TLI = .948, BIC = -7.89, RMSEA = .0478, SRMR = .0209.

Figure 4

Proposed Research Model and Pathways Among the Study Variables.



Note. FoMO = Fear of Missing Out; LS - Life Satisfaction.

Table 3

Results of the Structural Equation Model Analysis

Hypothesis	Path	β	z	p	Result
H ₁	Loneliness → Social Media	-0.019	-0.592	.554	Not Supported
H ₂	Loneliness → Life Satisfaction	0.081	2.093	.036	Not Supported
H ₃	FoMO → Social Media	0.457	13.631	< .001	Supported
H ₄	FoMO → Life Satisfaction	-0.087	-1.995	.046	Supported
H ₅	Social Media Addiction → Life Satisfaction	-0.111	-2.578	.010	Supported

Note. FoMO = Fear of Missing Out.

Table 4
Indirect Effects and Bootstrapping Results

Pathway	β	SE	95% CI (Lower)	95% CI (Upper)	<i>p</i>
Loneliness \Rightarrow Social Media \Rightarrow Life Satisfaction	0.002	0.003	-0.003	0.009	.587
FoMO \Rightarrow Social Media \Rightarrow Life Satisfaction	-0.050	0.006	-0.029	-0.004	.010
FoMO \Rightarrow Social Media \Rightarrow Loneliness	-0.011	0.008	-0.021	0.011	.554

Note. Bootstrap sample size = 5000. FoMO = Fear of Missing Out.

Discussion

This study investigated both direct and indirect associations among loneliness, social media use, FoMO, and life satisfaction. The assessment revealed a model capturing the complex and multifaceted relationships among these variables.

The non-significant relationship between loneliness and social media addiction in our study led to the rejection of hypothesis H1. This finding contrasts with existing literature, which generally suggests a link between loneliness and problematic social media use (O’Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson, 2011; Bányai et al., 2017). One possible explanation for this discrepancy may lie in sample characteristics, such as age distribution, cultural differences, or varying levels of social media engagement among participants. Additionally, methodological differences, including how loneliness and social media addiction were measured, could have contributed to the divergence in findings.

Recent research provides conflicting perspectives on the relationship between loneliness and social media addiction. Some studies suggest that loneliness increases social media use (Smith, 2022; Antoci et al., 2012; O’Day & Heimberg, 2021), while others argue that excessive social media use exacerbates loneliness (Chen et al., 2022; Meshi et al., 2020). A third perspective proposes a bidirectional relationship, where loneliness and problematic social media use reinforce each other (Jiao, 2016). However, our study does not support these claims, suggesting that the relationship may not be universal and could depend on contextual factors such as social support systems, internet usage habits, or psychological resilience.

Given the absence of a significant association in our findings, future research should explore potential moderating variables that might influence the loneliness-social media addiction relationship. Examining factors such as personality traits, offline social support, or

the specific nature of social media use (e.g., passive scrolling vs. active interaction) could provide deeper insight into the conditions under which this relationship manifests.

Hypothesis 2 was not supported either. However, our findings indicate a positive association between FoMO and social media use, which aligns with previous research (Pontes et al., 2018; Bloemen & De Coninck, 2020; Kacker & Saurav, 2020; Pratiwi & Fazriani, 2020). This association indicates that individuals with higher levels of FoMO tend to spend more time on social media. FoMO increases individuals' desire to stay constantly connected with their social environment and to avoid missing out on social activities. These individuals place greater importance on the number of likes and comments on the content they share, which leads to more frequent posting and increased engagement with others' posts (Przybylski et al., 2013; Blackwell et al., 2017). Social media surfing triggers dopamine release, creating a reward mechanism. Thus, to continuously experience this feeling, individuals facing FoMO may spend more time on social media (Tamir & Mitchell, 2012).

Our study found that feelings of loneliness positively affect life satisfaction; this finding contradicts the existing literature suggesting that loneliness negatively affects life satisfaction (Heinrich and Gullone, 2006; Lasgaard et al., 2016; Qualter et al., 2015).

However, theoretical perspectives suggest that loneliness may yield certain positive outcomes for individuals. Self-Determination Theory (SDT) posits that solitude can provide individuals with opportunities to explore their intrinsic motivation, enhance self-awareness, and develop psychological autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This process may contribute to increased life satisfaction by fostering meaning-seeking and personal growth. Similarly, the eudaimonic well-being perspective suggests that time spent alone allows individuals to reflect on their values and life purpose, potentially enhancing life satisfaction (Ryff, 1989). Additionally, cultural differences may shape the direction of this relationship. In particular, Eastern cultures often perceive solitude as an opportunity for self-reflection and mental clarity, which can lead to positive psychological outcomes (Nisbett, 2003). Furthermore, individual differences, such as personality traits—especially introversion—may influence the likelihood of experiencing the positive effects of loneliness (Coplan & Bowker, 2013). However, it is important to acknowledge that the effects of loneliness on life satisfaction are contingent upon contextual factors and individual differences. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted with caution, and future research should further explore the mechanisms underlying this relationship in greater depth.

Our third hypothesis was supported, indicating a positive association between FoMO and social media use, which aligns with previous research (Pontes et al., 2018; Bloemen & De

Coninck, 2020; Kacker & Saurav, 2020; Pratiwi & Fazriani, 2020). This association indicates that individuals with higher levels of FoMO tend to spend more time on social media. FoMO increases individuals' desire to stay constantly connected with their social environment and to avoid missing out on social activities. These individuals place greater importance on the number of likes and comments on the content they share, which leads to more frequent posting and increased engagement with others' posts (Przybylski et al., 2013; Blackwell et al., 2017). Social media surfing triggers dopamine release, creating a reward mechanism. Thus, to continuously experience this feeling, individuals facing FoMO may spend more time on social media (Tamir & Mitchell, 2012).

Our findings also supported Hypothesis 4, indicating a negative association between FoMO and life satisfaction. In other words, individuals who experience higher levels of FoMO tend to report lower life satisfaction. This result suggests that FoMO can significantly impact on individuals' overall quality of life (Przybylski et al., 2013). Individuals with increased FoMO tend to focus more on others' activities, which results in lower satisfaction with their own lives. This can lead to social comparison, causing individuals to perceive their own lives as inadequate.

Additionally, this finding is consistent with previous research. For example, Przybylski et al. (2013) found that individuals with high levels of FoMO experienced lower life satisfaction, which was linked to social media use. Similarly, Baker et al. (2016) showed that FoMO negatively affected psychological well-being. Milyavskaya et al. (2018) enhanced the understanding of FoMO by examining its prevalence, dynamics, and outcomes in detail.

Our results highlighted the crucial role of FoMO in individuals' emotional and psychological well-being and emphasized the need for further research in this area. Therefore, developing interventions and strategies to reduce individuals' levels of FoMO through more mindful and self-regulated social media use could effectively increase overall life satisfaction.

Our findings also supported Hypothesis 5, indicating a negative association between social media addiction and life satisfaction. In other words, as individuals' degree of social media addiction increases, their life satisfaction decreases.

Social media addiction has multifaceted negative effects, reducing individuals' overall quality of life, and has been shown to negatively impact health by disrupting sleep patterns and decreasing physical activity levels (Wolniczak et al., 2013; Ayran et al., 2019). Additionally, it can adversely impact academic and work performance, as individuals continuously direct their attention to social media, thereby reducing their productivity (Junco, 2012). Our findings align with existing literature, which indicates that social media addiction negatively impacts

individuals' daily lives, emotional states, and overall well-being (Kırcaburun & Baştug, 2016; Dhir et al., 2018; Bányai et al., 2017). Implementing specific daily or weekly limits on social media usage, engaging in physical activities and hobbies, increasing real-life social relationships and face-to-face interactions, completely or partially stopping social media use for a certain period, and practicing mindfulness meditation can help individuals consciously manage their social media use. This approach can be crucial for improving individuals' overall quality of life. In conclusion, the findings of this study evidence the negative impact of social media addiction on life satisfaction and underscore the importance of regulating and making social media use more conscious.

Indirect Effects

Loneliness → social media → Life Satisfaction

Our findings indicate that loneliness does not significantly influence life satisfaction through social media use. This result is consistent with some studies in the literature. For instance, Nowland et al. (2018) found that social media played a complex role in the relationship between loneliness and life satisfaction, not always producing the expected positive or negative effects. Similarly, Baker & Algorta (2016) suggested that social media use could both reduce and increase loneliness, depending on individual experiences and usage patterns. Primack et al. (2017) found that while social media use could directly affect life satisfaction, this effect may not occur indirectly through variables such as loneliness.

Our findings suggest the need for further research to explore the relationships among loneliness, social media use, and life satisfaction in greater detail. Additionally, it would be beneficial to investigate other potential mediating mechanisms and factors that might influence the effect of loneliness on life satisfaction.

FoMO → Social Media Addiction → Life Satisfaction

Our research findings show that FoMO decreases life satisfaction by increasing social media use. The literature frequently reports that FoMO leads to spending more time on social media, which is associated with lower life satisfaction. For example, Przybylski et al. (2013) found that FoMO was directly related to social media use and negatively impacted overall life

satisfaction. Similarly, Blackwell et al. (2017) suggested that social media addiction could reduce life satisfaction.

Social media promotes unfavorable social comparisons by exposing individuals to others' achievements and social activities, which can lead to decreased life satisfaction. Hence, our research adds valuable insights to literature by elucidating the relationships among FoMO, social media use, and life satisfaction. Understanding how FoMO affects individuals' digital lives and its consequent impact on life satisfaction is crucial for minimizing the adverse effects of the digital world.

FoMO → Social Media → Loneliness

Our findings indicate that FoMO does not significantly influence loneliness through social media use. Barry and Wong (2020) examined the impact of FoMO on social media use and loneliness and found that, while FoMO was not directly related to loneliness, certain types of social media use (e.g., passive use) might increase feelings of loneliness. Beyens et al. (2016) found that FoMO was related to the frequency of social media use but had limited direct effects on loneliness. These researchers emphasized that the impact of FoMO on loneliness depended on the type of social media use and individual differences.

The literature generally highlights the importance of the indirect effects of FoMO and the type of social media use (Beyens et al., 2016; Blackwell et al., 2017). Our study revealed no significant effect of FoMO on loneliness mediated through social media use. This discrepancy illustrates the complexity of the relationship between FoMO and loneliness, and how various factors may influence this relationship. Additionally, it underscores the need for further research to understand the relationship between FoMO and loneliness.

Limitations and Future Research

While the findings of this study are significant and thought-provoking, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional design of the study restricts the ability to determine causal relationships between variables. Future research should employ longitudinal designs to better establish causal links and track changes over time. Another limitation concerns the reliance on self-reported data. Participants' responses regarding their social media use, loneliness, fear of missing out (FoMO), and life satisfaction are subjective and may be subject to bias or misreporting. There is no guarantee that participants fully and

accurately represented their behaviours and experiences. To mitigate this limitation, future studies should incorporate objective measures, such as behavioural tracking or third-party assessments, to complement self-reported data. Moreover, cultural and social factors may influence the effects of social media use and FoMO. Because this study was conducted within a specific cultural context, its findings may not be universally applicable. Variations in social norms, technological access, and cultural attitudes toward social media can shape individuals' experiences in different ways. Therefore, conducting similar studies across diverse cultural and demographic groups will enhance the generalizability of the findings.

Additionally, this study focused on the relationships among loneliness, FoMO, social media use, and life satisfaction but did not account for other potentially influential factors. Variables such as personality traits, the distinction between active and passive social media use, levels of social support, and environmental influences may also play a crucial role in shaping these relationships. Future research should consider these factors to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms underlying social media's psychological and emotional effects.

Finally, the long-term effects of social media use and FoMO remain uncertain. Given the cross-sectional nature of this study, it does not provide insights into how these factors evolve over time. The psychological impact of social media and FoMO may shift as individuals age, technology advances, and social norms change. Future research should focus on longitudinal studies to assess temporal changes and long-term consequences more accurately.

To address these limitations, future studies should adopt longitudinal designs, utilize more diverse samples, and incorporate both subjective and objective measurement tools. Furthermore, a more detailed examination of social media use, including distinctions between different types of engagement, will contribute to a deeper understanding of how these digital behaviours interact with psychological well-being. By addressing these research gaps, scholars can develop a more nuanced and evidence-based perspective on the complex relationships between loneliness, social media use, FoMO, and life satisfaction.

Conclusion

Our findings showed a positive relationship between loneliness and life satisfaction. Although loneliness is usually associated with negative well-being outcomes, this result suggests that under certain conditions loneliness may increase life satisfaction of Turkish youth. Young people in Turkey generally grow up in a society with strong social ties and collectivist

values. However, individualisation tendencies and processes of focusing on academic/vocational goals may, at times, make loneliness a conscious choice. Loneliness can allow young people to get to know themselves better, develop intrinsic motivation and focus on their personal goals. Moreover, temporarily moving away from intense social expectations and social pressures may increase individuals' self-efficacy and support their inner peace. In this context, loneliness may contribute to Turkish youth to construct a more meaningful and fulfilling life. However, further research is needed to examine the mechanisms of this relationship in more detail in a cultural context.

Our research has sought to explain the complex relationships between social media addiction, FoMO, loneliness and life satisfaction among young adults. In particular, our findings highlight that FoMO plays a critical mediating role in the negative impact of social media addiction on life satisfaction, suggesting that it acts as a psychological bridge between problematic social media use and reduced well-being.

Accordingly, it is crucial for young people to manage their use of social media in a more conscious and balanced way in order to increase life satisfaction and protect their mental health. Therefore, educators, policy makers and health professionals should develop supportive policies and programmes to guide young people's digital behaviour. Digital literacy training, psychological support mechanisms, and initiatives that promote responsible use of social media can help young people build a healthier relationship with the digital world.

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Ispitivanje relacija između zavisnosti od društvenih mreža, straha od propuštanja, usamljenosti i zadovoljstva životom kod mladih: transverzalna studija

Cilj ove transverzalne studije bio je da ispita odnose između zavisnosti od društvenih mreža, straha od propuštanja (engl. *Fear of Missing Out*; FoMO), usamljenosti i zadovoljstva životom kod mlađih odraslih osoba. Uzorak se sastojao od 700 ispitanika, starosti od 19 do 29 godina, koji su popunili anketu putem interneta, u periodu od maja do juna 2024. godine. Korišćeni su sledeći validirani instrumenti: Bergenska skala zavisnosti od društvenih mreža, Skala straha od propuštanja, UCLA skala usamljenosti i Skala zadovoljstva životom. Modelovanje strukturalnim jednačinama pokazalo je da je zadovoljstvo životom pozitivno povezano sa usamljenošću. Zavisnost od društvenih mreža ostvarila je snažnu povezanost sa strahom od propuštanja, dok je strah od propuštanja imao indirektan negativan efekat na zadovoljstvo životom, putem zavisnosti od društvenih mreža. Ovi nalazi pružaju detaljniji uvid u mehanizme koji povezuju zavisnost od društvenih mreža, strah od propuštanja, usamljenost i zadovoljstvo životom. Praktične implikacije ovih rezultata ogledaju se u razvoju intervencija (npr. programa digitalnog blagostanja) koje bi pomogle mladim osobama da efikasnije organizuju svoje aktivnosti na društvenim mrežama. Promovisanje svesne i balansirane upotrebe društvenih mreža može povećati zadovoljstvo životom i mentalno blagostanje uopšte.

Ključne reči: zavisnost od društvenih medija, strah od propuštanja, FoMO, usamljenost, zadovoljstvo životom, mlađe odraslo doba.

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