

## Exploring the Drivers of Social Media Fatigue on Egyptian Youth

استكشاف دوافع إرهاق وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي لدى الشباب المصري

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### Abstract

Social media users are experiencing a wide range of adverse emotional reactions to activities on social networking sites, including fatigue, burnout, exhaustion, annoyance, and disinterest in communicating, which are collectively referred to as social media fatigue (SMF) due to the substantial amount of time they spend on social media platforms. The literature review showed various potential antecedents of social media fatigue. This paper investigates the potential influence of technostress (compulsive SNS use and information overload) and the psychosocial component (fear of missing out), as after conducting a pre-focus group to identify the critical variables, these were found of most relevance in Egypt.

The information was gathered via an online poll of 400 Egyptian college students using the quote sampling. Several standardized scales, such as the Social Media Fatigue Scale (SMFS), the Fear of Missing Out Scale (FOMO), the Compulsive Use Scale, and the Information Overload Scale, were used for the study participants. The results showed a strong correlation between social media fatigue and three stressors: compulsive media use, FOMO, information overload, and fear of missing out.

The results advance a more sophisticated theoretical comprehension of the emergence of social media fatigue. In conclusion, identifying elements contributing to weariness facilitates the proposal of intervention measures by health professionals and social media service providers to alleviate this issue.

**Keywords: Social media fatigue, social media intensity, fear of missing out, compulsive use, information overload.**

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## ملخص:

يواجه مستخدمو وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي مجموعة واسعة من التفاعلات العاطفية السلبية تجاه الأنشطة على مواقع التواصل الاجتماعي، بما في ذلك الإرهاق الذهني والجسدي، والاستنزاف العاطفي، والضيق، وقلّة الاهتمام بالتواصل، والتي تُشار إليها جماعياً باسم إرهاق وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي (SMF) نظراً للكمية الكبيرة من الوقت الذي يقضونه على منصات وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي. أظهرت مراجعة الأدب مختلف المؤشرات المحتملة لإرهاق وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي. تقوم هذه الورقة بدراسة التأثير المحتمل للتوتر التكنولوجي (استخدام الشبكات الاجتماعية الإكراهي وزيادة الحمل المعلوماتي) والمكون النفسي الاجتماعي (خوف من التفوق)، حيث تم العثور عليها أكثر أهمية في مصر بعد إجراء مجموعة تركيز مسبقاً لتحديد المتغيرات الحرجة.

تم جمع المعلومات من خلال استطلاع عبر الإنترنت لـ 400 طالب جامعي مصري باستخدام الاقتباس العشوائي. تم استخدام عدة مقاييس موحدة، مثل مقياس إرهاق وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي (SMFS)، ومقياس خوف من التفوق (FOMO)، ومقياس الاستخدام الإكراهي، ومقياس زيادة الحمل المعلوماتي، لمشاركي الدراسة. أظهرت النتائج وجود علاقة قوية بين إرهاق وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي وثلاثة مصادر للضغط: استخدام وسائل الإعلام الإكراهي، وخوف من التفوق، وزيادة الحمل المعلوماتي.

تقدم النتائج فهماً نظرياً أكثر تعقيداً لظهور إرهاق وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي. في الختام، فإن تحديد العناصر التي تسهم في الإرهاق يُسهل اقتراح التدابير التدخلية من قبل المهنيين الصحيين ومقدمي خدمات وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي للتخفيف من هذه المشكلة.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** إرهاق وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي؛ كثافة وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي؛ خوف من التفوق، استخدام الإكراه؛ زيادة الحمل المعلوماتي.

### **Social media fatigue (SMF)**

Due to the massive growth, social networking services (or sites (SNSs)) like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok have witnessed new features. These endless features provided by social media, which serve as powerful motivators, frequently lead users to remain continuously connected to the Internet without taking breaks. Consequently, this behavior gives rise to various subjective issues about their overall well-being. The time spent using social media platforms is becoming more prevalent among users, leading to a decline in their interest and enthusiasm for social media (Zhang et al., 2016). An increasing number of individuals assert that they are commencing to diminish and forsake their utilization of social media platforms. While the number of SNS users increased in earlier years, the number and frequency of active SNS users have declined (Zhang et al., 2019). Several scholars have defined such phenomenon as social media fatigue (SMF) (Malik et al., 2020; Dhir et al., 2019; Bright et al., 2015; Xie & Tsai, 2021; Fan et al., 2020).

SMF manifests when individuals experience a state of being overwhelmed by excessive information or stimulation, leading to uncomfortable emotions and an escalating inclination to withdraw from social media (SM) activities. "Social Networking Sites (SNS) fatigue" has been coined to describe this widespread reduction in SNS users (Pradhan, 2022).

The majority of the SMF research involved participants from developed economies such as the United States (Cramer et al., 2016), South Korea (Lee et al., 2016; Shin & Shin, 2016), Portugal (Pontes, 2017), and Finland (Salo et al., 2017). Besides, studies from growing economies such as China, India, and Pakistan have just begun to emerge (Zhang et al., 2016; Luqman et al., 2017; Dhir et al., 2018, 2019).

There is a significant disparity between consumers' emotional attitudes toward social media and their conduct when using it. In addition, employment, education, and image management are all directly correlated with social media use. As a result, teenagers (who use it the most) might always use social media, and many are reluctant to turn off certain services (Liu, 2022).

While "social media fatigue" is a mediatized popular culture reference that identifies users' displeasure with social media, it does not

mean that users will give up. Previous research has suggested the importance of disconnection in social media use, implying different fragmented methods users use to disconnect from numerous sites. (Bossio & Holton, 2018), individuals can temporarily or permanently disengage from social media platforms (SMPs) (Fan et al., 2020; Liu & He, 2021; Tandon et al. et al., 2021). In their study, Zhang et.al (2016) found that people experiencing social media fatigue tend to reduce the intensity of their use or completely give up on their SNS accounts. Han (2018) added that a greater attachment to social media can make users feel worried and sad, which may result in SMF. Ravindran and his colleagues observed that not all cases of social media tiredness result in a drop in users' social network activities (Ravindran et al., 2013). Nevertheless, they may transition to alternate platforms, as previous studies show (Zhang et al., 2020a; Fan et al., 2020; Xie & Tsai, 2021; Shokouhyar et al., 2018; Logan et al.,2018).

According to Dhir et al. (2018), SMF is a systematically provoked state of fatigue caused by social media use. It is when social media users experience mental exhaustion due to information overload and service overload due to their interactions with various online social media platforms. It is about the "social media users ' capacity to curtail their use of social media when they feel overburdened with too much content, too many friends and contacts, too many websites, and much time spent maintaining these contacts. (Bright et al., 2015).

When teenagers were asked why they were tired of using SNS, the respondents said that their main issues with social media were online privacy and FOMO. However, teenagers and people in their 20s were more likely to report increased social media usage. 37% of people in younger age groups and tech-savvy sectors claimed to use their preferred social media platform more frequently. The paradox that Millennials are experiencing and their worn-out feeling yet increased usage ( Goasduff & Pettey,2011).

### **Compulsive SNS Use (CU):**

Compulsive use behavior is a disorder in behavioral consumption control in which a person cannot logically manage daily activities (Hirschman, 1992).

According to (Zhang et al., 2020a; Zhang et al., 2020b), compulsive use is defined as an individual's abnormal conduct of being

unable to control or govern his regular performances logically. In new media adoption and network service studies, the word is more strongly associated with its causal links with online addiction problems. Compulsive use has become a significant concern, especially among young people, as social media platforms pervade various facets of our everyday lives while gradually improving their characteristics and functioning (Benson et al., 2019). Hirschman (1992) and Parylak et al. (2011) explored compulsive usage in unhealthy physiological behaviors such as drug abuse, gambling, and excessive food consumption. Besides that, Emotional exhaustion, interpersonal conflict, and deterioration of working performance have all been linked to compulsive use behavior (Beranuy et al., 2009; James et al., 2017; Lin et al., 2013; Quinones & Griffiths, 2017).

Compared to the extensive literature on compulsive behavior, scientists have recently begun investigating the antecedents and repercussions of obsessive usage of various types of digital media. Examples of recent studies on the addictive use of social media and other Internet-enabled platforms, including virtual gaming, include (Hsiao, 2017; James et al., 2017; Lin et al., 2013; Quinones & Griffiths, 2017; Yoa & Cao, 2017). However, despite this expanding body of research, only a few empirical studies have revealed weariness due to obsessive media consumption. As social media becomes more pervasive and practical, CU behavior among SNS users has steadily increased.

CU behavior of SNS users has been related to some emotional, psychological, and physical problems, including burnout, distress, social rejection, binge eating, and a deterioration in job performance (Ophir, 2017). Because of the topic's relevance and significance, social media's CU has recently attracted much focus (LaRose et al., 2014). Some research linked CU to SNF (Dhir et al., 2018).

Users who use social media excessively are more likely to experience fatigue, emotional instability, and weariness due to the platforms. As a result, they will either engage in behaviors that can reduce the stress they feel, such as discontinuing their use temporarily or permanently (to discontinue their use means to stop engaging in any previous behavior (Furneaux & Wade, 2011), or switching their use away from the platform that causes the most stress, or adapting to this fatigue using a variety of coping mechanisms, such as actively

choosing to control the fatigue by monitoring their use or continuing to use social media without any proactive measures or willingness to change the stressful situation even when they know it is causing them stress (Al-Jallad & Radwan, 2021).

### **Fear of Missing Out (FOMO):**

The fear of missing out is a widespread concern about losing out on knowledge, rewards, or pleasurable experiences that other members of one's network may have (Przybylski et al., 2013; Elhai et al., 2016). This personality trait is linked to the urge to interact with and follow others on various social networks. FOMO is a psychological concept made public by media debates at the start of this decade. It is described as a solid drive to stay connected with others' experiences when utilizing technology and FOMO other people's fulfilling experiences (Przybylski et al., 2013).

In other words, it is a psychological notion describing how users feel when they believe others have more fulfilling experiences than them (Chai et al., 2019). When these users see their friends or family members participating in activities they are not, they will feel overwhelmed and consider themselves socially excluded and isolated from the online social circle. Users who experience fear of missing out are more likely to be immersed in the psychological need to be constantly connected with others so that they do not miss out on what they perceive to be significant (Kaur et al., 2021; Tandon et al., 2021).

Previous research on FOMO has suggested that the desire to stay connected online indefinitely in order to monitor or communicate with others is likely to result in excessive use of mobile phones (Cao et al., 2018; Elhai et al., 2016); they could play online games (King et al., 2017).Przybylski et al. (2013), Beyens et al. (2016), and Dhir et al. (2019) or use the social media sites, mainly Facebook.FOMO on social media can be defined as an impulsive desire or impulse to interact with others on these platforms and engage in activities such as chatting, sharing, seeing updates, reading or responding to conversations/comments, or playing social games. FOMO is generally seen on social media platforms when a person wants to connect impulsively in inappropriate contexts, such as shortly after waking up, during lectures or meetings, or while driving (Przybylski et al., 2013; Hetz et al., 2015).

Users can access an ostensibly unlimited amount of information in their feeds but only a finite amount of time to absorb. Because of the paradox of social media use, some people may experience FOMO (fear of missing out) if they are not continually updated on new information from their network. FOMO is a pervasive concern that others may have pleasant experiences from which one is absent (Przybylski et al., 2013).

FOMO forces one to use SNS obsessively on specific social media posts or information shared by friends. There is some pressure to utilize social media since the stress of not knowing is too tremendous and damages the person's mental health. FOMO has also been linked favorably to problematic smartphone use (Elhai et al., 2016; Wolniewicz et al., 2018), compulsive SNS use (Oberst et al., 2017), and problematic Internet use (Kuss et al., 2013).

### **Information Overload:**

Information overload is when a person's cognitive capacity for information processing is exceeded by a significant volume of input data (Guo et al., 2020; Islam et al., 2020). Humans have limited information processing capacities, and when confronted with too much information, their decision-making quality diminishes (Teng et al., 2021). When a system's processing capacity is exceeded by the amount of data it receives, this is known as information overload (Whelan et al., 2020).

Information overload develops when a person is exposed to massive information and news circulated in a fast-paced, non-consecutive order (Dhir et al., 2019). It occurs when one cannot efficiently deal with information within the time available and exceeds one's capacity to comprehend it (Zhang et al., 2021). When consumers grow overwhelmed with too many sites, friends, and contacts and too much content and time spent keeping up with these connections, they stop using social media (Zhang et al., 2016). Essentially, users become fatigued when they cannot manage the vast amount of information and conversation they receive from others (Lee et al., 2016).

In addition, many people can use social media to build thousands of channels and pages that transmit irrelevant, false advertising material or repetitive content. Therefore, it can strain social media users since they must handle excessive data that exceeds their processing abilities (Nawaz et al., 2018). As a result, information overload occurs when an

individual's requirements are outweighed by an abundance of information, impairing their ability to recall critical information. As a result, it causes the user to be perplexed (Nawaz et al., 2018; Dhir et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2020a,b).

Researchers have expressed worry about the detrimental effects of information overload. Information overload has been studied extensively in recent years, including social media platforms, web-based health information searches, and mobile social apps (Fu et al., 2020; Ngien & Jiang, 2021; Whelan et al., 2020). Scholars stated that information overload affects people's ability to execute and make decisions (Li & Chan, 2022; Swar et al., 2017). In addition, information and interaction overloads, particularly technology, will result in weariness and tension due to SNS users' participation and conversation with various applicants (Fu et al., 2020). Furthermore, information overload has become the leading cause of social media weariness (Li & Chan, 2022; Liu et al., 2021). Wurman (1989) anticipated that people would have "information anxiety" due to being overloaded with information in the digital age. He added that it would result in tiredness, hopelessness, and fatigue. Bright et al. (2015). Lee et al. (2016) and Ravindran et al. (2014) found a positive correlation between SNS, IO, and SMF.

As in the social media context, prior studies implicate information overload as one of the significant antecedents of social media fatigue (Lee et al., 2016; Zhang et al., 2016; Whelan et al., 2020; Al-Jallad & Radwan, 2021).

### **Research Hypotheses:**

H1: FOMO among SNS users is positively related to social media fatigue.

H2: Compulsive social media use among SNS users is positively related to social media fatigue.

H3: Information overload among SNS users is positively related to social media fatigue.



## Materials and Methods

### Study participants and data collections.

The quantitative study will depend on the quote non-probability sample, as it was hard to get a list of the whole population and apply it to different social media users with different educational levels and types of usage to compare between them. Therefore, the Survey will be conducted on 400 units aged 15 to 24.

### Measurements:

The Survey started with general questions about their social media use and motives, followed by scales used to measure the Fear of Missing out (FOMO), Compulsive Use (CU), Information Overload, and Social Media Fatigue (SMF)

### General Results:

The general sample study characteristics, starting with the age, the majority were between 18-22 with a percentage of 89.5%, and the second group was between 23-25 with a percentage of 10.5%. Overuse of social media has been identified as a potential behavioral addiction with several adverse effects, particularly in young adults (18–24 years). According to U.S. research, 90% of young individuals between 18 and 29 already used social media platforms (De Doncker & McLean, 2022).

Regarding gender, the survey had a virtually equal representation of males and females, with 51.8% for men and 48.2% for women. At the same time, Twenge and Martin (2020) found that girls spend significantly more time on social media than boys.

For social media usage, 92% of the participants have accounts on Facebook and 90% on WhatsApp. However, 96% frequently check their WhatsApp, while 76% do so on Facebook. This could go back to the nature of the application, as WhatsApp is more accessible and dedicated to sending and receiving messages. At the same time, Facebook is more feature-rich and may steal more time unconsciously.

86.7% of the Participants check their accounts daily with varying hours, but the most significant number is for those who check it more than ten times daily (35.2%).

For the posting limit, time was limited to every few months, most likely to share their personal life and thoughts, preferring to react, comment, or watch what is on.

## Hypotheses Testing

**H<sub>1</sub>: FOMO among SNS users is positively related to social media fatigue.**

Tab No (31)

**The correlation between social media fatigue and the FOMO among SNS users**

Pearson Correlation	Sig.
0.415**	0.000
<b>** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level</b>	

As we have two interval variables, we used the Pearson coefficient to test H<sub>1</sub>; the result indicates that there is a significant correlation between social media fatigue and FOMO among SNS users, as  $r = 0.415$ , which is significant at the 0.01 level. The correlation is positive and moderate, indicating that the fear of missing out could drive social media fatigue.

Excessive FOMO could increase frequent social media usage, leading to weariness (Karapanos et al., 2016; Yoa & Cao, 2017; Zheng & Lee et al., 2016).

Previous empirical research (e.g., Milyavskaya et al., 2018) has shown a significant link between FOMO and SMF. For example, in advertising, Bright and Logan (2018) discovered that individuals subscribe to numerous brand-related commercials to avoid FOMO and that excessive subscribing causes weariness in these individuals. Consistent with this, Tandon et al. (2021) found that FOMO had a significant positive association with SMF depending on the mediating influence of the SMP activities, such as social media stalking users participated in. Moreover, according to the theory of compensatory Internet use (TCIU) (Kardefelt-Winther, 2014), social media platform (SMP) users rely heavily on SMPs to compensate for their negative emotions, resulting in poor utilization of these platforms and increasing weariness. Therefore, users with a high level of FoMo will be motivated to spend progressively more time engaging in information and communication exchanges on SMPs, resulting in SMF.

Dhir et al. (2018) examined through 2 studies whether FOMO leads to social media fatigue and whether this link is stable over time.

According to the study results, FOMO was a weak predictor in Study A but not a significant predictor in Study B. The findings confirm that obsessive social media use mediates weariness and fear of missing out. In other words, Fear of Missing Out causes social media weariness indirectly through compulsive social media use.

Hattingh, Dhir, Ractham, Ferraris, and Yahiaoui (2022) found that a high FOMO could lead to social media fatigue. However, FOMO was a poor but statistically significant predictor of social media tiredness.

Although earlier research on this correlation has primarily focused on only some platforms like Facebook, it is easy to anticipate that other social media users will exhibit a similar relationship between FOMO and SMF.

**H<sub>2</sub>: Compulsive social media use among SNS users is positively related to social media fatigue**

Tab No (31)

**The correlation between social media fatigue and Compulsive social media among SNS users**

Pearson Correlation	Sig.
0.422**	0.000
<b>** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level</b>	

As there are two interval variables, the Pearson coefficient was used to test H<sub>2</sub>. The result indicates that there is a significant correlation between social media fatigue and compulsive social media usage among SNS users, as  $r = 0.422$ , which is significant at the 0.01 level; the correlation is positive and moderate, indicating that compulsive social media usage may lead to social media fatigue.

Zhang et al's (2020a) results indicate that compulsive social media use substantially affects social media fatigue.

The compulsive use of social media is not necessarily related to the medium itself but to online activities and their anticipated benefits (van Deursen et al., 2015). A Malaysian university student research, for instance, found that the urge to utilize YouTube for enjoyment purposes led to its compulsive use (Klobas et al., 2018). In addition, extensive research has been conducted on the relationships between

compulsive use and negative behavioral aspects, such as interaction anxiety (Richter3 2018), and indicators of diminished mental health, such as mental disorders (Andreassen et al., 2017) and cognitive and emotional preoccupation (Cao et al., 2018).

Lin et al. (2012) found a correlation between obsessive social media use and emotional weariness. Oberst et al. (2017) found a high risk of psychological discomfort (e.g., anxiety or depression) among heavy social media users. Tarafdar et al. (2019) elaborated that social media platform (SMP) addiction (defined by compulsive social media use) is caused because of the need to alleviate stress. The underlying premise of the theory of compensatory Internet use (TCIU)) is excessive use of technology to compensate for destructive emotions can result in further negative results (Kardefelt-Winther, 2014). Given the emotional and physical strain associated with compulsive tendencies (Pontes, 2017), it is logical to hypothesize that compulsive social media use will exacerbate SMF through leveraging TCIU. Dhir et al. (2018) found a positive correlation between compulsive social media use and SMF. In addition, Hattingh et al. (2022) found that compulsive use is connected with social media weariness among Snapchat and Instagram users.

**H3: Information overload among SNS users is positively related to social media fatigue.**

**Tab No (32)**

**The correlation between social media fatigue and Information overload among SNS users**

<b>Pearson Correlation</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
<b>0.501**</b>	<b>0.000</b>
<b>** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level</b>	

To test H3, the Pearson coefficient was used as there are two interval variables; the result shows that there is a significant correlation between social media fatigue and Information overload among SNS users, as  $r = 0.501$ , which is significant at the level 0.01, the correlation is positive and moderate, suggesting that information overload may lead to social media fatigue.

Literature has indicated a positive relationship between information and SMF (Lee et al., 2016; Zhang et al., 2016). Islam et al. (2018) defined information and communication overloads as social media overload and found that both were positively associated with SMF. In addition, these findings also support that information and communication overload might be promoted to cause SMF in light of the limited-capacity model of motivated mediated message processing (LC4MP) (Lang, 2006)

Wang (2021) surveyed 525 respondents, indicating that information saturation significantly impacts social media weariness, directly leading to the intention to discontinue social media activity.

Similarly, Lee et al. (2016) investigated the causes of social media tiredness and found that information overload had the most significant impact on this phenomenon. When confronted with constant information from multiple social media platforms, users will likely feel overwhelmed by their efforts to assimilate information, leading to stress and weariness.

Hence, a direct association is established between information overload and social media tiredness.

### **Conclusion:**

This paper observed the relationships between some social media stressors (fear of missing out, compulsive use, and information overload) and social media fatigue. Nowadays, the widespread use of information and communication technologies and the advancement of media technology are to blame for the sharp increase in people's capacity for in-person and remote contact. People may now engage socially, share information, and instantly access the technological capabilities of communication channels, all thanks to the proliferation of social media platforms. However, social media users have experienced several overloads and pressures due to regular use.

Social media users who participate in and engage on multiple online platforms may experience social media fatigue, characterized as mental exhaustion brought on by various technological and psychosocial overloads. Because nowadays, young adults strive to fulfill unrealistic standards and keep up to date with every detail, whether it is essential or not, they are subjected to significant overloads that can harm their mental health and lead to SMF.

According to statistics, users between the ages of 18-22 are more likely to suffer from SMF. The findings of this study indicated a positive association between FOMO, CU, IO, and SMF, and it is more prevalent among young people.

These findings will benefit further academic research in social science and psychology. They will also help social media managers fine-tune their processes and overcome any problems that cause their users to drift away.

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