



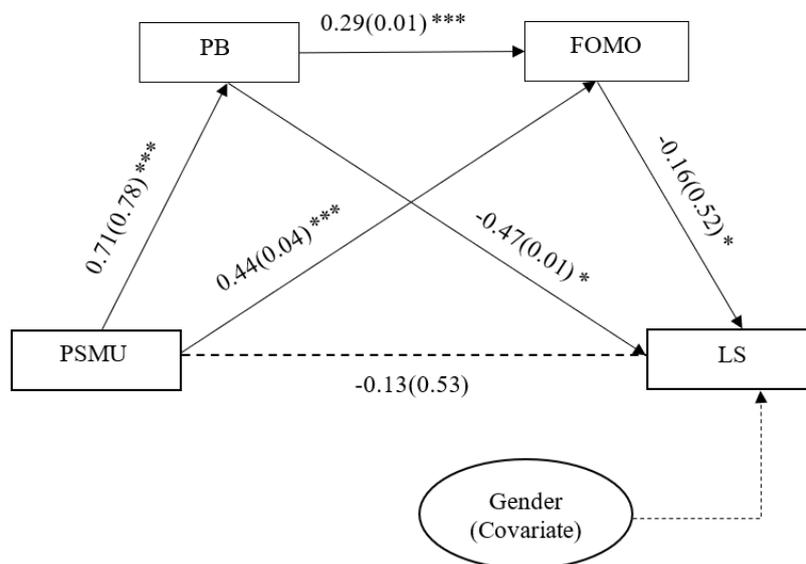
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College of Medicine and Health Sciences

Department of Clinical Psychology

**PHUBBING AND FEAR OF MISSING OUT AS MEDIATORS  
BETWEEN PROBLEMATIC SOCIAL MEDIA USE AND LIFE  
SATISFACTION AMONG YOUNG ADULTS**

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BETWEEN PROBLEMATIC SOCIAL MEDIA USE AND LIFE  
SATISFACTION AMONG YOUNG ADULTS

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This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Science in Clinical Psychology

Under the Supervision of Dr. Zahir Vally

November 2022

### Declaration of Original Work

I, Najeera Peer Meera Levai, the undersigned, a graduate student at the United Arab Emirates University (UAEU), and the author of this thesis entitled “*Phubbing and Fear of Missing Out as Mediators Between Problematic Social Media Use and Life Satisfaction Among Young Adults*”, hereby, solemnly declare that this is the original research work done by me under the supervision of Dr. Zahir Vally, in the College of Medicine and Health Sciences at UAEU. This work has not previously formed the basis for the award of any academic degree, diploma or a similar title at this or any other university. Any materials borrowed from other sources (whether published or unpublished) and relied upon or included in my thesis have been properly cited and acknowledged in accordance with appropriate academic conventions. I further declare that there is no potential conflict of interest with respect to the research, data collection, authorship, presentation and/or publication of this thesis.

Student's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "P. Najeera". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "P" and a long horizontal stroke at the end. The signature is placed over a horizontal line that is part of the signature line.

Date: 01/11/2022

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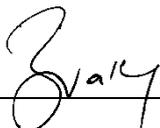
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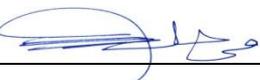
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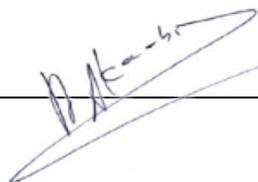
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## Abstract

Recent studies have shown certain risk indicators for young adults' decreased life satisfaction as a result of excessive social media use. However, few studies have looked at possible impact of problematic social media on life satisfaction, and less information is known about the mediating factors that contribute to this association. The purpose of the current study was to determine whether problematic social media use predicts life satisfaction among young adults. It also explored whether phubbing behaviour and fear of missing out might both serve as mediators in this relationship. A sample of 351 young adults (18–25,  $M_{\text{age}} = 19.74$  years,  $SD = 1.84$ ) from several countries filled the Social Media Use Questionnaire (SMUQ), Generic Scale of Phubbing (GSP), Fear of Missing Out (FoMOs), and Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS). The findings showed that (a) problematic social media use was associated with lower levels of life satisfaction, (b) phubbing behaviour and fear of missing out both mediated the relationship between problematic social media use and life satisfaction, and (c) phubbing behaviour and fear of missing out sequentially mediated the relationship between problematic social media use and life satisfaction. These findings have significant implications for prevention and intervention, in raising awareness about fear of missing out in connection to social media, and highlights consideration of the need to monitor and manage the act of snubbing others when using a mobile device.

**Keywords:** Problematic Social Media Use, Phubbing, Fear of Missing Out, Life Satisfaction, Serial Mediation Analysis.

## Title and Abstract (in Arabic)

### التجافن (التجاهل بالانشغال بالهاتف) والخوف من التغيب عن الوسطاء بين استخدام الوسائط الاجتماعية الإشكالية والرضا عن الحياة بين الشباب البالغين في البلدان الآسيوية الملخص

أظهرت الدراسات الحديثة مؤشرات خطر معينة لدى الشباب في انخفاض الرضا عن الحياة نتيجة لاستخدامهم المفرط لوسائل التواصل الاجتماعي. ومع ذلك، فقد بحثت دراسات قليلة في التأثير المحتمل للمشاكل الناتجة عن استخدام وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي على الرضا عن الحياة، ولا يُعرف الكثير عن العوامل الوسيطة التي تساهم في هذا الارتباط. كان الغرض من الدراسة الحالية هو تحديد ما إذا كان استخدام المفرط لوسائل التواصل الاجتماعي يتنبأ بمستوى الرضا عن الحياة بين الشباب في عدد من البلدان الآسيوية. كما بحثت في ما إذا كان سلوك التجافن (التجاهل بالانشغال بالهاتف) والخوف من أن يفوتنا شيء ممكن أن يكونوا وسطاء في هذه العلاقة.

أكملت عينة مكونة من ٣٥١ شاباً من عدة دول آسيوية (18–25, Mage = 19.74 years, SD = 1.84) استبيان استخدام وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي (SMUQ)، المقياس العام للتجافن (التجاهل بالانشغال بالهاتف) (GSP)، الخوف من فوات الشيء (FoMOs)، والرضا عن مقياس الحياة (SWLS). أظهرت النتائج أن (أ) الإفراط في استخدام وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي المثير كان مرتبطاً بمستويات أقل من الرضا عن الحياة، (ب) سلوك التجافن والخوف من فوات الشيء كلاهما توسط في العلاقة بين إفراط استخدام وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي والرضا عن الحياة، و (ج) سلوك التجافن (التجاهل بالانشغال بالهاتف) والخوف من فوات الشيء توسطوا بشكل متعاقب بين إفراط استخدام التواصل الاجتماعي والرضا عن الحياة.

هذه النتائج لها آثار كبيرة على جهود الوقاية والتدخل الموجهة نحو الاستخدام المفرط لوسائل الإعلام الاجتماعية. خصوصاً فيما يتعلق بلفت الانتباه إلى الأدوار المحورية للخوف من فوات الشيء فيما يتعلق باستخدام الشباب لمنصات التواصل الاجتماعي وفعل ازدراء الآخرين عند استخدام جهاز محمول.

**مفاهيم البحث الرئيسية:** فرط استخدام الوسائط الاجتماعية، التجافن (التجاهل بسبب استخدام الهاتف)، الخوف من فوات الشيء، الرضا عن الحياة، تحليل الوساطة التسلسلية.

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## **Dedication**

*To my beloved family and friends*

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## List of Abbreviations

FOMO	Fear of Missing out
LS	Life Satisfaction
PB	Phubbing Behaviour
PSMU	Problematic Social Media Use
PSU	Problematic Smartphone Use
SDT	Self-Determination Theory
SMS	Short Message Service
SNS	Social Networking Sites

## Chapter 1: Introduction

### 1.1 Overview

Problematic social media use has always been a topic of interest, with research on the subject being conducted for more than a decade. However, in recent years, usage of mobile phones and access to social media has especially increased among young adults. In a survey, it was reported that among the millennial generation to understand their internet usage behaviour and reported that young people have continued to be the age group most likely to use the internet all through the previous decade, despite a rise in internet users with clearly a higher increase in other age cohorts like older adults. It is estimated that approximately a quarter of 18- to 29-year-olds (28%) have logged into the internet using different devices, including an e-book reader, or gaming console whilst more than half have connected to the internet securely using a laptop (55%) or through a mobile phone (55%) (Lenhart et al., 2010).

Problematic Social Media Use (PSMU), phubbing and Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) has increased significantly among young adults. It is now simpler than ever to keep up with what one's friends, relatives, and colleagues are accomplishing, purchasing, and discussing, thanks to social media sites. Due to time constraints, individuals must, nevertheless, forgo a substantial portion of the potentially fulfilling experiences that social media use has brought to light (Przybylski et al., 2013). As a consequence of which, the term "FOMO" has been created. FOMO is a psychological reaction to potential risk to individual 's sense of identity (Zhang et al., 2020), with studies revealing that there is a strong link between FOMO and problematic social networking site use (Fioravanti et al., 2021).

Social and mental health problems including dependence on social networks and phubbing practices have become more widespread in recent years (li-Chiu et al., 2022). Phubbing happens when someone turns away from a real-world interaction/conversation in order to use their smartphone (Erzen et al., 2021). Studies show that phubbing has negative consequences on individuals in addition to changing the customs of human interaction (Al-Saggaf & O'Donnell, 2019). Research shows that the perception of communication quality and interpersonal relationships were negatively impacted by the feeling of phubbing in a supervised dyadic interaction. Therefore, there seems to be reason for concern regarding the detrimental effects of smartphone use during interactions between individuals (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2018).

Social networking sites use has increased dramatically to the point where it now involves almost a quarter of the global population (Hawi & Samaha, 2017) and excessive use of Social Networking Sites (SNS) is a significant factor in determining satisfaction with life (Sahin, 2017). Research suggests that people who are dependent on social media may have persistent problems in their life that are diminishing their satisfaction with life and fuelling their continuous or growing addictions to internet technology (Longstreet & Brooks, 2017). Phubbing is described as using the mobile while oblivious to others, and Life Satisfaction (LS), which can be described as an individual's perspective on life, usually appear as factors that have an impact on our psychological wellbeing, and they serve as key indicators of depressive symptoms (Parmaksiz, 2021). A decreased quality of life satisfaction is experienced by those who feel the need to follow what's happening in others life. This could happen as a result of the psychological and emotional strain that may be brought on by the person's urge to stay in touch with others and be constantly updated about their

activities. This increased dissatisfaction brought on by this unmet demand may be damaging to one's ability to enjoy life (Blachnio & Przepiórka, 2018), and could lead to reduced level of life satisfaction as it is marked as a trait of users of SNS with high FOMO (Uram & Skalski, 2022).

Individuals across numerous ethnicities appear to utilize SNS in various ways (Acar, 2014). Individuals from the United States, China, and India were compared, and the results indicated that Americans expressed the greatest worry for privacy, indicating a society that values freedom and autonomy (Wang et al., 2011). Individuals from individualistic nations often have bigger social media networks (Rosen et al., 2010) than individuals from collectivistic culture since they don't invest long hours as Americans on social media platforms (Jackson & Jin-liang, 2013), thus serving as a reliable indicator of life satisfaction in collectivist societies (Suh et al., 1998). Phubbing appears to be influenced by cultural influences, and studies reveal that cultural facets may impact how individuals perceive and react to phubbing (Ling et al., 2021). In addition, FOMO is an ongoing trend, and research reveals that FOMO is also impacted by a person's feeling of identity and the degree of collectivism vs individuality (Karimkhan & Chapa, 2021). With easy access to social media, young adults' everyday functioning might become increasingly more disrupted, which eventually affects their level of satisfaction in life. Given their association with the usage of SNS, understanding how FOMO and Phubbing Behaviour (PB) serve as a mediator between PSMU and life satisfaction may provide insight into their impact in maintaining this relationship.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Since the emergence of SNS, it has served a range of purposes, including bringing people together and keeping them informed of global events. SNS has, however, taken up such a significant portion of people's lives that it has started to alter how they interact with one another, particularly young adults. People frequently become so dependent on social media that they neglect their friends and family. Additionally, being updated with what is going on in other people's lives makes them feel excluded and increases their worry over missing out on experiences. Consequently, given these factors, SNS may have an impact on young adults' satisfaction with life.

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between problematic social media usage and life satisfaction among young adults, in addition to investigating whether phubbing and FOMO play a potentially sequential mediation role in this relationship. Young adults use social media as an escape from their hectic lives, and the current study may inform the development of interventional strategies to reduce excessive social media usage, which in turn will likely improve life satisfaction. Furthermore, the findings of this study will guide future research on the impact of PSMU on other facets of an individual's life, with phubbing and FOMO serving as mediating factors.

## **1.3 Relevant Literature**

### **1.3.1 Phubbing**

People frequently use their smartphones instead of paying attention to individuals they are physically dealing with, and phubbing appears to have established itself as the standard in daily conversation (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2016). The

term "phubbing" is a fusion of the phrases "phone" and "snubbing", and it refers to the practice of abandoning an individual in a public setting by focusing on one's mobile rather than engaging them explicitly in conversation (Roberts & David, 2016), with the term first used by the Macquarie Dictionary to represent the worldwide problem of mobile phone misuse in public settings (Pathak, 2013). The relationship between owning a smartphone and using it frequently is perfectly evident given that smartphones are quickly overtaking older generations of mobile phones (Karada et al., 2015). Phubbing shares significant similarities with online addictive activities as well as with cognitive and behavioural factors that influence impulsive internet activity (Guazzini et al., 2019). Considering this, it should be noted that phubbing might impair the capability to focus (Ugur & Koc, 2015), and it is preferable for people of all ages to refrain from using mobile devices when speaking with others (Ergün et al., 2020).

### **1.3.1.1 Theories Related to Phubbing**

Being a common phenomenon, phubbing calls for a thorough grasp of the psychological repercussions and the effects it has on interpersonal interactions (Knausenberger et al., 2022). Many theories, including the expectancy violation theory and the politeness theory, are put forth to explain the act of phubbing. Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory focuses on person's self-image threatening behaviours, including using a smartphone whilst interacting with their partner, and reacting to them (Miller-Ott & Kelly, 2017). A person who phubs has a restricted potential to uphold social standards of politeness (Tandon et al., 2022), and consequently, either of the interaction partner's usage of a cell phone reduced the other's perception of their attention, politeness, and communicative value (Rössler et al., 2020). As mobile phones become increasingly prevalent in public settings, people must decide whether it is appropriate to use smartphones in the company of others,

how individuals perceive about other people using cell phones, and how to react if they believe their interaction companions shouldn't be using a phone (Miller-Ott & Kelly, 2017).

The expectation violation theory was initially put forth by Burgoon (1978), who stated that in an effort to make sense of violation of expectations, people either assign it a positive or negative meaning (Miller-Ott & Kelly, 2015). Using a cell phone was perceived as a breach of communication standards, although this is only true when it results in the partner's interest being diverted and obstructs the flow of reciprocal conversation (Rössler et al., 2020). According to the young adults, phubbing is less common and socially acceptable among previous generation smartphone users (Winkelmann & Geber, 2022), which is consistent with the finding that elderly people consider young adults' mobile decorum unpleasant and intrusive (Kadylak et al., 2018).

### **1.3.1.2 Predictors of Phubbing**

Phubbing is a widespread phenomenon among young adults and has an influence on the effectiveness of interpersonal communication (Correa-Rojas et al., 2022). It is predicted by addictive behaviour, problematic smartphone usage, FOMO, depressed mood (García-Castro et al., 2022) and personality traits (Erzen et al., 2021) and from a wider viewpoint, it was identified that Internet addiction had the major impact on PB (T'ng et al., 2018). Smartphone addiction makes a person more inclined to neglect their surroundings and indulge in phubbing activity (Isrofin & Munawaroh, 2021), with parents' phubbing significantly raising the likelihood of mobile phone addiction in teenagers (Xie et al., 2019). Furthermore, it is crucial to look at the relationship between phubbing and the big five personality characteristics via the

perspective of personality traits because some people might be more susceptible to phubbing whereas others could be resistive to phubbing because they have a strong capacity to deal with challenges (Erzen et al., 2021).

In those who are narcissistically susceptible, a natural inclination for online communication might be a result of poor social self-efficacy and increased social anxiety which can lead to unrestrained, improper smartphone checking behaviour (Grieve et al., 2021), and thereby proving that problematic social networking sites and smartphone use are more prevalent in those with narcissistic tendencies (Al-Saggaf & O'Donnell, 2019). Conscientiousness, extraversion, and agreeableness, on the other hand, were not identified as important predictors of phubbing activity (T'ng et al., 2018).

### **1.3.1.3 Consequences of Phubbing**

Phubbing adversely affects social and relational well-being (Sanjeev et al., 2018), and could potentially lead to an individual feeling depressed and anxious. (Nagarajappa et al., 2020). Increased PB is associated with greater levels of anxiety (Guazzini et al., 2019), as socially nervous individuals may opt to use their cell phones rather than encounter unpleasant feelings by conversing with others in person (Sun & Samp, 2021).

Young adults who experienced significant levels of parental phubbing were more likely to experience high levels of depressed symptoms (Wang et al., 2020), and parent rejection aggravated the symptoms of depression (Xie & Xie, 2020). Phubbing also affects relationship satisfaction, and individuals who encounter partner phubbing reported significantly higher degree of mobile phone conflict (Roberts & David, 2016)

and more probable occurrences of romantic jealousy when they have anxious attachment styles (David & Roberts, 2021).

#### **1.3.1.4 Prevalence**

Women were more likely than males to engage in phubbing (Aygur et al., 2021), which was 49.3% of the population (Sanjeev et al., 2018), suggesting that gender differences play a part in this indicating that women are frequently conditioned to value relationships more than men do (Suwinyattichaiorn, 2019). Chi et al. (2022) in contrast to other research, discovered that men phub more often than their female equivalents. When analysing the reasons behind why men and women phub, it was clear that women who are addicted to their mobile phones, Short Message Service (SMS), and social media engage in phubbing most frequently. Men's internet and gaming addiction, conversely, had a greater significant impact on their PB than women (Karadağ et al., 2015).

#### **1.3.2 Problematic Social Media Use**

It appears that there is relatively little comprehension of what the phrase "Social Media" truly implies, despite attracting attention from a diverse group of individuals (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The term "social media" is defined as "internet-based channels that allow users to opportunistically interact and selectively self-present, either in real-time or asynchronously, with both broad and narrow audiences who derive value from user-generated content and the perception of interaction with others" (Carr & Hayes, 2015, p. 50).

Different terminologies have been used to define problematic social media usage (Huang, 2022), which has arisen as a behavioural addiction of social media use (Shensa et al., 2017). According to the biopsychosocial model (Griffiths, 2005),

problematic social media usage may be defined by a variety of addictive symptoms, such as mood modulation, withdrawal symptoms, tolerance, salience, relapse, and conflict (Bányai et al., 2017).

### **1.3.2.1 Compensatory Internet Use Theory**

The core idea of the compensatory internet usage hypothesis is that the individual's use of the internet as a coping mechanism for his or her unfavourable life circumstances is the source of the problem (Kardefelt-Winther, 2014), and will aid in better comprehending the driving forces behind internet addiction as well as other behavioural addictions (Liu et al., 2016).

Online videogame's ability to bring together gamers from diverse backgrounds in terms of location, ethnicity, and demographics can also draw some (forlorn) players in ways that even farther distance them from significant offline relationships and obligations (Deleuze et al., 2019). This could be explained by the theory of compensatory internet use, which holds that identifying the player's mode of participation can reveal as to if gaming is healthy or unhealthy (Snodgrass et al., 2018).

When the significance of the internet is acknowledged, prioritization of internet use occurs and young adults create a pattern of online need fulfilment, increasing their risk of developing pathological internet use (Liu et al., 2016), and those who use SNS to compensate for social communication become more depressed as they feel less and less socially competent (Zhou et al., 2020).

In line with the compensatory internet use theory, social media addiction and compensation are behavioural trends that are typical of people who have high levels of social anxiety, low levels of conscientiousness and agreeableness, high levels of neuroticism, and are also introverted (Bodroža & Jovanović, 2016). People who are

fairly neurotic are much more likely to worry about missing out and, as a result, have a tendency to use social media in a sense that interrupts with their everyday routine in order to fulfil their emotional needs for social engagement as well as other pleasant activities (Alt & Boniel-Nissim, 2018).

### **1.3.2.2 Consequences of Problematic Social Media Use**

PSMU is a cutting-edge entry to the field of psychological illnesses and ought to attract attention, especially when health care providers are investigating people who are at significant risk of developing psychological problems (Malaeb, 2021). People who felt less socially connected to their surroundings had higher levels of depression, which were linked to increased PSMU (Kircaburun, 2019), which suggests that the risk may lie in how we use social media rather than how much (Shensa et al., 2017).

A rise in PSMU minimises real-life support networks, which in turn is correlated with relatively high depression, anxiety, and social isolation (Meshi & Ellithorpe, 2021). If a person is already revealed to have PSMU, it might be of utmost priority to watch for evidence and clinical features of other comorbid mood disorders such as anxiety in order to treat and manage it in the initial stages and prevent additional harm (Dagher, 2021).

For the majority of young adults, social media serves as a purpose to communicate with their relatives and loved ones in a period during which physical and interpersonal interactions are considerably low (Catedrilla, 2020). However, if social media platforms are used to overcome boredom, it is closely linked to problematic style of SNS use attributed by trouble in detaching from these sites, fixation with these sites, and interruption with interpersonal relationships (Stockdale & Coyne, 2020).

### **1.3.2.3 Prevalence**

Lenhart et al. (2010) reported that young adults' use of SNS is becoming increasingly complicated; 52% of individuals who access these sites report having two or more separate accounts. Considering that both men and women are fairly probable to use these websites, the influence of the smart phone can be clearly observed in young adults. Nevertheless, young adults' use of SNS does differ by level of education. Men are far less likely than women to display social media addiction (Su et al., 2020), and this might be because of the fact that men and women seem to have distinct emotional grounds for compulsive Internet usage, such as various kinds of psychological suffering and coping mechanisms (Hetzel-Riggin & Pritchard, 2011).

### **1.3.3 Fear of Missing Out**

Most individuals who interact with social media find it hard to distinguish their personal lives from what they see or read, leading them to feel as though they are missing out (Abel et al., 2016). This feeling can be described as a widespread anxiety that other individuals might be enjoying rewarding experiences while one is absent, marked by the need to always be involved to what other people are doing (Przybylski et al., 2013).

Young adults are particularly drawn to SNS, although research has revealed that regular users of these platforms may have detrimental psychological effects (Oberst et al., 2017). FOMO is a phenomenon related to technology-enabled social media that also appears in physical or real-life situations (Tandon et al., 2021). Individuals could experience FOMO when using social media because they are curious about how much other individuals are intrigued by their SMS and posts (Alutaybi et al., 2019).

### **1.3.3.1 Self-Determination Theory**

Self-Determination Theory (SDT), distinguishes between motivation that is autonomous and controlled, is an experimentally derived explanation of human motivations and personalities in social circumstances (Deci & Ryan, 2012). It also discusses the social circumstances that support or undermine these core psychological demands for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, proposing and concluding that these factors have an impact on the type and intensity of motivation. SDT also looks at people's future goals or ambitions, demonstrating the differences between internal and external life objectives in terms of their effects on performance and psychological well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2008).

According to Lemay et al. (2019), an individual's needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness are highly possible to be direct predictive factors of feelings of emptiness or FOMO. SDT also validates that the necessity for relatedness (the desire to communicate with everyone) is a valid psychological requirement that affects mental wellbeing (Luca, 2020). FOMO could be affected by perceived social support due to its indirect role on basic psychological needs (Dou et al., 2021). Consequently, when people's demands for autonomy and competence are met, they might consider making use of their social support to lessen FOMO more successfully, and as a result, a better degree of meeting their basic psychological needs results in less FOMO (Xie et al., 2018).

### **1.3.3.2 Causes of Fear of Missing Out**

Evidence indicates that FOMO may be driven by increased SNS usage, PSMU, increased anxiety levels, depression, and psychological distress, as well as poor levels of satisfaction with life (Elhai et al., 2020). PSMU could be a coping mechanism for

those with social anxiety, and this association is explained by relatively high negative thinking and FOMO (Dempsey et al., 2019).

In Asian populations, FOMO was more important in describing the relationship between anxiety and the intensity of Problematic Smartphone Use (PSU), although in Individualistic societies, FOMO may not be as effective in describing the relationship between psychopathology (such as anxiety) and PSU, emphasizing the importance of social exchange norms (Elhai et al., 2020) was significantly predicted by personality traits and FOMO (Rozgonjuk et al., 2021). Social media could be used to regularly remain in contact with one another, which may cause those with high neuroticism to experience a great deal of worry about interpersonal interactions. However, extraverted people might use social media very frequently as they desire social connection and excessive use may result in dependency. Apart from personality traits, FOMO influenced social media usage and addiction (Blackwell et al., 2017).

### **1.3.3.3 Effects of Fear of Missing Out**

Use of SNS is fuelled by FOMO, which impairs interpersonal relationships and overall psychological wellbeing (Roberts & David, 2020). FOMO may initially manifest as delusional thoughts that stems from a fear of being excluded from a pleasurable experience, but it is also linked to a number of unpleasant life events and emotions, including sleep deprivation, diminished life skills, mental stress, detrimental effects on one's physical health, anxiety, and a lack of emotional control (Gupta & Sharma, 2021). The self-esteem and satisfaction with life of SNS users with high FOMO were relatively low compared to those of individuals with low FoMO (Uram & Skalski, 2022), which may be because young adults might avoid interpersonal relationships when they feel excluded from the activities planned by their online

friends (Deniz, 2021), suggesting that as FOMO levels rise, life satisfaction declines (Przybylski et al., 2013).

#### **1.3.3.4 Prevalence**

Studies revealed that 15% of young adults said they experienced FOMO once a week or more frequently, 35% said they did so one to three times per month, 36% said they had never experienced FOMO, and only 13% said they had never experienced it at all. This suggests that some individuals have a higher likelihood than others to experience FOMO (Milyavskaya et al., 2018). However, investigations on the association between FOMO, SNS usage, and smartphone addiction showed no gender differences that were statistically significant (Li et al., 2022), with studies indicating that FOMO is associated to young age and not gender (Rozgonjuk et al., 2021).

#### **1.3.4 Life Satisfaction**

The maintenance of good psychological well-being relies greatly on life satisfaction (Proctor et al., 2009), and is predicted by the cultural understanding of an individual (Bibi et al., 2015). Life satisfaction can be defined as the extent to which an individual favourably assesses the entire value of his or her life (Veenhoven, 1996). Seven different life satisfaction domains—including family, friends, community economics, personal, health, and career domains—were identified using data from a Mexican survey (Rojas, 2007).

Excessive use of social media remains a significant problem despite the ongoing rise in tablet and smartphone ownership, the development of new technologies, and the subsequent improvement of applications (Hawi & Samaha, 2017). Studies reveal that as users find more reasons to be joyful in their lives, their

levels of life satisfaction rise, and their corresponding levels of addiction decline (Longstreet & Brooks, 2017). According to Chotpitayasunondh et al. (2018), life satisfaction drastically declines when phubbing levels rise, as an individual might not be able to make the required improvements in social interactions (Özkan et al., 2019).

## **1.4 Current Study**

### **1.4.1 Aim**

Few studies have examined the relationship between social media use and reduced satisfaction with life particularly among young adults. The aim of the study is to understand how problematic social media use impacts life satisfaction, and whether phubbing behaviour and FOMO serve as sequential mediators of this hypothesized relationship.

### **1.4.2 Hypotheses**

Young adults use social media often, which may have an effect on how satisfied they are with their lives. Previous research has shown that people from collectivist and individualist cultures use social networking sites in very different ways. Given the strong relationship between phubbing and fear of missing out, the sequential mediation model is deemed to be the most appropriate.

This study proposes the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Problematic social media use will demonstrate a negative association with life satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2: Phubbing will mediate the relationship between problematic social media use and life satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3: Fear of missing out will mediate the relationship between problematic social media use and life satisfaction.

Hypothesis 4: Phubbing and fear of missing out will sequentially mediate the relationship between problematic social media use and life satisfaction.

## **Chapter 2: Methods**

### **2.1 Participants and Design**

The study recruited young adults both male and female between the ages of 18 years and 25 years; from various countries. An informed consent form was initially provided for the participants following which 351 young adults took part in the study. The participants were selected based on convenience Sampling because compared to other sampling methods, it is simple to put together the sample and is also helpful in demonstrating that a specific pattern or phenomena happens within a given sample.

A google form link of the survey was distributed via social networking sites, mobile social apps, e-mails, etc. Information about the purpose of the study, content of the study and participation in the study was provided at the beginning of the study. Following that, informed consent was obtained from the participants. The choice to withdraw from the study at any time was made clear to participants, who were also informed that participation was completely voluntary. Furthermore, the participants were informed that they might inquire about their involvement at any moment throughout the study.

Prior to data collection, approval for the study was obtained from Social Sciences Ethics committee Research of United Arab Emirates University (reference number: ERSC\_2022\_1347) (Appendix A).

### **2.2 Measures**

#### **2.2.1 Demographic Information Sheet**

Participants provided information about their age, gender, employment status, most frequently used social media platforms, and nationality (Appendix B).

### **2.2.2 Social Media Use Questionnaire**

Problematic social media use was assessed by the Social Media Use Questionnaire (SMUQ) (Xanidis & Brignell, 2016) (Appendix C). The SMUQ was designed to measure social network sites dependence. The scale is a self-report measure comprised of questions related to Withdrawal and Compulsion symptoms and contains 9 items (Xanidis & Brignell, 2016).

Participants rate each item (e.g., “I stay online longer than initially intended”) on a five-point Likert scale ranging from (0) “Never” to (4) “Always”. Responses to all items are averaged into one mean index, and possible scores range from 0 to 36, with higher scores indicating higher levels of problematic social media use.

With a Cronbach's alpha of 0.86, the SMUQ was found to have good psychometric properties in a study to determine whether problematic internet use was associated to psychological well-being (Fernandes et al., 2021). Süral et al. (2019) investigated the direct and indirect associations involving problematic social media usage and trait emotional intelligence and demonstrated a Cronbach's alpha of 0.84. In the present study, internal consistency was similarly good ( $\alpha = 0.901$ ).

### **2.2.3 Generic Phubbing Scale**

PB was assessed by the Generic Scale of Phubbing (GSP) (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2018) (Appendix D). The GSP was developed to reflect measurements of PB, irrespective of associated psychological factors. In contrast to the signs of smartphone addiction or other non-phubbing behaviours, the GSP accurately captures the aspects of actual phubbing behaviour (Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas, 2018).

Participants rate each item (e.g., “I feel anxious if my phone is not nearby”) on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (Never) to 7 (Always). The GSP consists of four factors: Nomophobia (items 1 to 4), Interpersonal Conflict (items 5 to 8), Self-Isolation

(items 9 to 12), and Problem Acknowledgment (items 13 to 15). Responses to all items are summed, with higher scores indicating higher levels of PB.

In a study that examined possible risk and protective variables of PB and mobile phone addiction among Chinese college students, GSP demonstrated good psychometric properties with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.86 (Lai et al., 2022). In their investigation of the relationship between phubbing and life satisfaction among adults in Turkey during the pandemic (Polat & Karasu, 2022), Cronbach's alpha of 0.91 was demonstrated. In the present study, internal consistency was similarly good ( $\alpha = 0.923$ ).

#### **2.2.4 Fear of Missing Out Scale**

FOMO was assessed by Fear of Missing Out Scale (FoMOs) (Przybylski et al., 2013) (Appendix E). As a novel psychometric tool, the FoMOs was designed to deal with individual variations in FOMO. The FoMOs is a quick and simple evaluation that accurately measures FOMO in people who exhibit low, moderate, and high levels of this construct (Przybylski et al., 2013).

Participants rate each item (e.g., "I get worried when I find out my friends are having fun without me") on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (Not at all true of me) to 5 (Extremely true of me). Responses to all items are averaged, with higher scores indicating higher levels of FOMO.

FoMOs showed strong psychometric qualities with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.81 when Coskun & Muslu (2019) studied excessive usage of smartphones and degree of FOMO on advancements in social networks among youths. In a study by Alt & Boniel-Nissim (2018) that investigated for associations between personality characteristics in adults and problematic usage of social media, a Cronbach's alpha of 0.80 was

demonstrated for FoMOs. In the present study, internal consistency was similarly good ( $\alpha = 0.843$ ).

### **2.2.5 Satisfaction with Life Scale**

Life satisfaction was assessed by Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS) (Diener et al., 1985) (Appendix F). The SWLS is specifically designed to measure overall life satisfaction among the numerous aspects of subjective well-being; it does not take into account related notions like positive emotions or loneliness (Diener et al., 1985).

Participants rate each item (e.g., “If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing”) on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree). Responses to all items are summed, with higher score indicating higher levels of life satisfaction.

In a study that examined the connections between social media addiction, self-esteem, and life satisfaction, SWLS showed strong psychometric qualities, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.85 (Hawi & Samaha, 2017). According to a study by Bachnio (2016), which investigated the relationship between Facebook use, self-esteem, and life satisfaction, SWLS demonstrated a Cronbach's alpha of 0.81. In the present study, internal consistency was similarly good ( $\alpha = 0.773$ ).

## **2.3 Data Analytic Plan**

First, data screening was conducted to identify potential outliers in the data. Second, descriptive statistics and Pearson correlations were computed among the research variables. Third, the separate mediating effects of phubbing behaviour and FOMO were examined using Model 4 of the PROCESS macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2013). Fourth, the PROCESS macro for SPSS (Model 6) was used to investigate the association between problematic social media use and life satisfaction with

the mediating effect of FOMO and phubbing behaviour (Hayes, 2013). Based on 5000 random samples, the bootstrap Confidence Intervals (CIs) assess the significance of the effects in Models 4 and 6. (Hayes, 2013). If the CIs exclude zero, an impact is considered significant. Prior to data analysis, all research variables were standardized in Models 4 and 6.

## Chapter 3: Results

### 3.1 Sample Descriptive Statistics

The age range of the participants varied from 18 to 25 years ( $M = 19.74$ ,  $SD = 1.84$ ). Of the 351 participants, 56.41% ( $n = 198$ ) were female, and 43.59% ( $n = 153$ ) were male. Table 1 shows the gender differences in terms of the means and standard deviations of problematic social media use, phubbing, fear of missing out and life satisfaction, indicating that male users engage in more problematic social media use and phubbing behaviour than female users. As for fear of missing out, both female and male users experience same level of fear of missing out whereas for life satisfaction, female users experience higher life satisfaction than male users.

Table 1: Gender Differences in Means and Standard Deviations of all the Four Variables

	PSMU		PB		FOMO		LS	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Female	1.67	0.86	3.32	1.23	3.01	0.78	4.28	1.16
Male	1.78	0.99	3.41	1.37	3.01	0.91	4.13	1.26
<i>t</i>	-1.05*		-0.57*		-0.03*		1.14*	

*Note.* PSMU = Problematic Social Media Use. PB = Phubbing Behaviour. FoMO = Fear of Missing Out. LS = Life Satisfaction. \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ .

Self-report of nationality indicated that the majority of participants, 89.5% ( $n = 314$ ), were Indian, 3.4% ( $n = 12$ ) were Emirati, 2.3% were Chinese ( $n = 8$ ), and the rest were from various nationalities. Table 2 shows the sociodemographic characteristics of participants the study. In terms of employment, more than half of the participants were students (89.7%,  $n = 315$ ), the rest of the participants were working

full time (6.8%,  $n = 24$ ), part time (1.1,  $n = 4$ ), and unemployed (2.3%,  $n = 8$ ). As for the most frequently used social media platforms, 85.7% of the participants used WhatsApp ( $n = 299$ ), 71.6% used Instagram ( $n = 250$ ), 64.5% used YouTube ( $n = 225$ ), 45% used Snapchat ( $n = 157$ ) and the rest used various SNS.

Table 2: Sociodemographic Characteristics of Participants

	n	%
Nationality		
Indian	314	89.5
Emirati	12	3.4
Chinese	8	2.3
Korean	6	1.7
Japanese	4	1.1
Pakistani	4	1.1
Philippine	2	0.6
Italian	1	0.3
Employment status		
Student	315	89.7
Full time	24	6.8
Unemployed	8	2.3
Part time	4	1.1
Frequently used SNS		
WhatsApp	299	85.7
Instagram	250	71.6
YouTube	225	64.5
Snapchat	157	45
Pinterest	63	18.1
Facebook	59	16.9
LinkedIn	40	11.5
Twitter	16	4.6
Quora	1	0.3
Wattpad	1	0.3

### 3.2 Descriptive Statistics and Testing Model Assumptions

Data screening revealed that there were no missing data. No potential outliers were identified in the study based on Mahalanobis Distance values and no influential

cases were biasing the model as Cook's Distance values were all under 1. Table 3 reports the means, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis. For skewness, values ranged from -0.17 to 0.51, and for kurtosis, values ranged from -0.61 to -0.11. The normal probability plot of standardised residuals (Appendix G), as well as the values for skewness and kurtosis indicated that all the variables were distributed normally, as Byrne (2016) suggested that multivariate normality of the data could be inferred if the skewness value is between -2 and +2, and the kurtosis value is between -7 and +7. Analysis of the collinearity statistics indicated that multicollinearity was not a concern, as all the VIFs were significantly smaller than 10 (PSMU, VIF = 2.43; PB, VIF = 2.25; FOMO, VIF = 1.85). The Durbin-Watson statistic showed that values of residuals are independent, as the observed value was close to 2 (Durbin-Watson value = 2.01). The variance of the residuals is constant as the scatterplot of standardised residuals predicted value vs standardised predicted value showed that the data met the assumptions of linearity and homoscedasticity (Appendix G).

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics among Variables of Interest

	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
PSMU	1.72	0.93	0.44	-0.61
PB	3.35	1.30	0.51	-0.49
FOMO	3.01	0.83	-0.16	-0.40
LS	4.20	1.22	-0.17	-0.11

*Note.* PSMU = Problematic Social Media Use. PB = Phubbing Behaviour. FoMO = Fear of Missing Out. LS = Life Satisfaction.

### 3.3 Correlation Analysis

Table 4 reports the Pearson correlations for the study variables. As expected, problematic social media use was positively correlated with phubbing

( $r = 0.722, p < 0.01$ ) and fear missing out ( $r = 0.649, p < 0.01$ ), and negatively correlated with life satisfaction ( $r = -0.0195, p < 0.01$ ). Phubbing was positively correlated with fear of missing out ( $r = 0.610, p < 0.01$ ) and negatively correlated with life satisfaction ( $r = -0.127, p < 0.05$ ). Fear of missing out was negatively correlated with life satisfaction ( $r = -0.210, p < 0.01$ ).

Table 4: Pearson Correlations Among Variables of Interest

	1	2	3	4
1. PSMU	1			
2. PB	0.71**	1		
3. FOMO	0.65**	0.61**	1	
4. LS	-0.02**	-0.13*	-0.21**	1

*Note.* PSMU = Problematic Social Media Use. PB = Phubbing Behaviour. FoMO = Fear of Missing Out. LS = Life Satisfaction. \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ .

### 3.4 The Mediating Role of Phubbing Behaviour

Model 4 of the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2013) was used to test the mediating role of phubbing on the relationship between problematic social media use and life satisfaction. After controlling for gender, problematic social media use was positively associated with phubbing behaviour ( $\beta = 0.71, t = 19.46, p < 0.001$ ), which in turn was negatively related to life satisfaction ( $\beta = -0.38, t = -1.97, p = 0.0071$ ). The negative direct association between problematic social media use and life satisfaction remain significant ( $\beta = -0.21, t = -2.82, p = 0.0049$ ), indicating that young adults' who engage in more problematic social media use and phubbing behaviour, are more likely of experience low levels of life satisfaction (Appendix G). Therefore, phubbing behaviour partially mediated the relationship between problematic social media use

and life satisfaction (indirect effect = -0.27,  $SE = 0.49$ , 95%CI [-0.02, -0.18]). Thus, hypotheses 1 and 2 are supported.

### 3.5 The Mediating Role of Fear of Missing Out

Similarly, the same tool was used to test the mediating effect of fear of missing out between problematic social media use and life satisfaction. After controlling for gender, problematic social media use was positively associated with fear of missing out ( $\beta = 0.65$ ,  $t = 15.93$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), which in turn was negatively associated to life satisfaction ( $\beta = -0.43$ ,  $t = -2.09$ ,  $p = 0.0368$ ), indicating that young adults' who have high levels of fear of missing out, are more likely to experience low levels of life satisfaction (Appendix G). The negative direct association between problematic social media use and life satisfaction became not significant ( $\beta = -0.10$ ,  $t = -1.48$ ,  $p = 0.14$ ). Therefore, fear of missing out mediated the relationship between problematic social media use and life satisfaction (indirect effect = -0.24,  $SE = 0.45$ , 95%CI [-0.11, -0.29]). Thus, hypothesis 3 was supported.

### 3.6 Examining the Multiple Mediation Model

In order to test the sequential mediating effect of phubbing behaviour and fear of missing out, model 6 of the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2013) was used. All pathways were significant after controlling for gender, as shown in Table 5 and Figure 6, except for the residual direct pathway of problematic social media use  $\rightarrow$  life satisfaction ( $\beta = -0.13$ ,  $p = 0.0778$ ). First, the pathway of “problematic social media use  $\rightarrow$  phubbing behaviour  $\rightarrow$  life satisfaction” was significant (indirect effect = -0.32, 95%CI [-0.0632, -0.14]). Second, the pathway of “problematic social media use  $\rightarrow$  fear of missing out  $\rightarrow$  life satisfaction” was significant (indirect effect = -0.07, 95%CI [-0.0024, -0.15]). Third, the sequential pathway of

“problematic social media use → phubbing behaviour → fear of missing out → life satisfaction” was significant (indirect effect = -0.03, 95%CI [-0.0012, -0.73]). Thus, high level of problematic social media use was serially associated with increased phubbing behaviour ( $\beta = 0.71, p < 0.001$ ), and a higher fear of missing out ( $\beta = 0.29, p < 0.001$ ), but lower levels of life satisfaction ( $\beta = -0.16, p = 0.0233$ ). This multiple mediation model accounted for a significant amount of variance in young adults’ life satisfaction ( $R^2 = 0.37$ ). Thus, hypothesis 4 was supported.

Table 5: Testing the Pathways of the Multiple Mediation Model

Effect	$\beta$	95% CI	
		LL	UL
Direct effects			
PSMU → PB	0.71**	13.67	16.74
PB → FOMO	0.29**	0.01	0.02
PSMU → FOMO	0.44**	0.28	0.48
PB → LS	-0.47*	-0.06	-0.11
FOMO → LS	-0.16*	-0.15	-2.21
PSMU → LS	-0.13	-0.11	1.99
Indirect effects			
PSMU → PB → LS	-0.32	-0.05	-0.14
PSMU → FOMO → LS	-0.07	-0.01	-0.15
PSMU → PB → FOMO → LS	-0.03	-0.01	-0.73

*Note.* PSMU = Problematic Social Media Use. PB = Phubbing Behaviour. FoMO = Fear of Missing Out. LS = Life Satisfaction. \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ .

## **Chapter 4: Discussion**

Due to the increasing use of social media, problematic social media use has developed into a significant concern. Despite the broad study focus given to the psychological and social effects of problematic social media use, certain important topics relating to mental health are not addressed (Huang, 2022). In addition, the mediation mechanisms behind the association between problematic social media use and life satisfaction have received very little attention in the literature. The current study looked at the association between problematic social media use and young adults' life satisfaction as well as the mediating effects of phubbing and FOMO. The findings indicated that problematic social media use might have a detrimental impact on young people' life satisfaction, and that phubbing behaviour and FOMO were sequential mediators of this relationship.

### **4.1 Problematic Social Media Use and Life Satisfaction**

The current study investigated the association between problematic social media use and young adults' life satisfaction. The findings indicated that inappropriate social media use might lower young adults' level of life satisfaction. Given that young adults tend to spend more time on smartphones and social media, this finding is especially significant for them. In particular, during the month of October 2022, 4.74 billion social media users in Asia were reported, with 17.5% of those users being between the ages of 16 and 24 (Kemp, 2022). Additionally, the results could help us better understand how young adults use social media in problematic ways and shed light on social media overuse interventions and preventions.

## 4.2 The Mediating Role of Phubbing Behaviour

In line with hypothesis 2, it was discovered that problematic social media use and young adults' life satisfaction were associated through phubbing behaviour. To be more explicit, inappropriate social media use would result in more phubbing behaviour during the initial stage of the mediation process. There are two potential justifications. First, Young adults are becoming more and more reliant on social networking sites to create their image in the growing digital world; rather than concentrating on creating and enhancing their personality in reality, instead of which they turn to doing so online (li-Chiu et al., 2022). Second, in accordance with the compensatory internet use theory, study indicates that having a bad experience in life prompts young adults to utilize the social media to lessen the bad emotions that result from the bad disappointing life experience (Meredith & James, 2021).

In the second phase of the mediation process, phubbing behaviour is negatively correlated with young adults' life satisfaction. This result is in line with earlier studies (Çikrikci et al., 2019). Young adults cut off from social interaction owing to problematic smartphone use, which raised tensions and reduced family and interpersonal relationship. This may have lowered young adults' life satisfaction. Young adults who are unhappy in their daily life look to the digital world for the happiness they cannot find in real-world settings (Polat & Karasu, 2022). When people are exposed to phubbing behaviour, it feeds their negative feelings, which has a bad impact on their mental health. Optimistic thinking and perceiving the benefits and advantages of phubbing behaviour can enhance life satisfaction. Therefore, if unhealthy behaviours like phubbing are controlled, mental health issues may be readily remedied. As a result, phubbing behaviour's negative impacts can be lessened (Parmaksiz, 2021). To the best of our knowledge, this study is the first to demonstrate

the mediating effect of phubbing behaviour on the association between problematic social media usage and life satisfaction in young adults. Thus, our findings close this knowledge gap on the impact of phubbing behaviour in escalating the negative impacts of problematic social media usage.

#### **4.3 The Mediating Role of Fear of Missing Out**

In accordance with hypothesis 3, research also revealed that fear of missing out is a major explanatory framework by which problematic social media use is associated with young adults' life satisfaction. That is, problematic social media use would raise the fear of missing out, which in turn would lower life satisfaction among young people. This might be best explained by the idea that those who tend to affirm their self-worth by pursuing intimate relationships effectively with other people might use social networking sites obsessively out of a strong fear about losing out on potentially gratifying social interactions (Boustead & Flack, 2021). Previous studies have identified psychological needs fulfilment as the primary indicator influencing the relationship between problematic social media use and FOMO. More precisely, a person's lack of psychological requirements may cause them to use social media unintentionally through FOMO (Reyes et al., 2018). Young adults may suffer the FOMO as a result of feeling isolated from the individuals around them. In other words, FOMO may be one of the signs of those who struggle with isolation and have an interdependent self. Additionally, studies revealed that individuals from India who have a prominent dependence on others experience more FOMO (Dogan, 2019).

For the second phase of the mediation process, Fear of missing out on anything might lower young people' level of life satisfaction. Research from the past lends support to this perspective (Bachnio & Przepiórka, 2018). The concern that

fellow individuals on social networking sites have more fulfilling life experiences may be the cause of this, as it is one of the indicators of FOMO. Because of the comparison processes that result from this belief—between "me" and "others"—people experience less life satisfaction (Uram & Skalski, 2022). It should be emphasized that when a person's reliance on digital worlds lessens as they satisfy their fundamental need for social connections, their degree of FOMO lowers, and their level of life satisfaction improves (Deniz, 2021). Finally, the current study is the first that have demonstrated how FOMO negatively affects young adults' life satisfaction by acting as a mediator for between problematic social media use and life satisfaction. This study goes well beyond past research by explaining why young people who use social media in problematic ways are more likely to be less satisfied with their lives.

#### **4.4 The Multiple Mediation Model**

Finally, the findings demonstrated that both phubbing behaviour and a fear of missing out mediated the relationship between problematic social media use and young adults' life satisfaction sequentially as well as parallelly. First, problematic social media use is highly linked to phubbing behaviour and FOMO, both of which have an effect on how satisfied young adults are with their lives. Additionally, phubbing behaviour and FOMO were found to be successively mediating the relationship between problematic social media use and life satisfaction. These results show that young adults who use social media more problematically are more likely to engage in phubbing behaviour, which in turn causes FOMO and ultimately lowers life satisfaction.

Taken together, the current study looked at the predictive effects of problematic social media use on young adults' life satisfaction as well as the mediating effects of

phubbing behaviour and FOMO on this association. The findings indicated that problematic social media use affects young adults' life satisfaction through phubbing behaviour and FOMO through a sequential mediation mechanism. This integrated sequential mediation model adds to the body of knowledge and gives a more thorough explanation of the relationship between problematic social media use and young adults' life satisfaction.

#### **4.5 Limitations**

Several limitations must be considered while assessing the results. First, despite cross-sectional mediation analysis offering more theoretical considerations, cross-sectional research cannot be used to draw general conclusions. Second, the current study collected data by having young adults self-report. Self-reports are prone to a number of biases, including the tendency for participants to describe important past events rather than current ones and to answer in a way that is more socially acceptable than the truth. Additionally, individuals from various nations could find it challenging to interpret the self-reports because they were presented in English, which could result in response bias. Third, young adults from several countries made up the sample for this study. However, as the majority of participants were Indian (89.5%) and female college students (56.41%). Thus, it is advisable to exercise caution when generalising the results to other communities or cultures.

#### **4.6 Suggestions for Future Research**

This study offers theoretical and real-world applications despite its limitations. Based on a theoretical point of view, the findings add to the body of knowledge in the social media field by providing some evidence of a relationship between problematic social media use and young adults' life satisfaction. Testing the various mediating

effects of phubbing behaviour and fear of missing out helps to establish an empirical framework as well. Future studies should explore this multiple mediation hypothesis using longitudinal approaches. In addition to which the specific data collection technique must be revised by researchers in the future. With the biopsychosocial model providing insights about phubbing related to addiction symptoms, future research could focus more on the relationship between internet addiction and phubbing behaviour. In order to draw valid conclusions from future studies, it is important to recruit an equal representation of men and women across nations.

In terms of applications, the findings can aid in developing effective precautionary measures and treatments meant to lessen young adults' usage of social media and phubbing. For instance, treatments aiming at reducing the likelihood of young adults' problematic social media use and phubbing behaviour should emphasize improving offline contacts. Phubbing acts as a potential risk factor and this study could help in developing interventions for reducing this behaviour. For instance, setting where young adults are involved like universities, organisations, etc., could implement a 'no mobile zone' to increase communication between people. In order to reduce fear of missing out in cyberspace, people should also concentrate more on programs designed to address ideas associated to fear of missing out and learn more about the detrimental consequences of fear of missing out. Programs like 'social media detox' could be organised for people experiencing FOMO, focusing more on other hobbies and interests of people.

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

It has taken decades to make significant progress in our knowledge of the psycho-social components that may contribute to the emergence of problematic social

media use (Silvia & Vanessa, 2020). Young adults with high levels of FOMO are more prone to use social media and cell phones excessively, which might cause them to stop interacting with their face - to - face partners (Roberts & David, 2016).

In summary, by using a multiple mediation approach, the current study adds to the body of literature by offering a comprehensive explanation of how problematic social media use might affect young adults' life satisfaction. The findings demonstrated a negative relationship between problematic social media use and young adults' satisfaction with their lives. Studies on the relationship between problematic social media use and young adults' life satisfaction revealed that phubbing behaviour and fear of missing out might both independently mediate this relationship. Moreover, the association between problematic social media use and young adults' life satisfaction might be sequentially mediated by phubbing behaviour and fear of missing out.

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**Appendix A (Ethical Approval Letter)****Social Sciences Ethics Committee - Research / Course****Ethical Approval Letter**

Date: 13/10/2022

This is to certify that application No: ERSC\_2022\_1347, titled: Phubbing and Fear of Missing Out as Mediators Between Problematic Social Media Use and Life Satisfaction among Young Adults in Asian Countries, submitted by Zahir Vally has been reviewed and approved by UAEU Social Sciences Ethics Committee - Research / Course on 06/10/2022.



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*Sincerely,*

**Chair of the UAEU Social Sciences Ethics Committee - Research / Course  
Research Ethics Sub-Committee**

**United Arab Emirates University**

**Appendix B (Demographics Questionnaire)**

1. Gender:
  - Female
  - Male
  - Other
2. Age (18-25): \_\_\_\_\_
3. Employment status:
  - Student
  - Full time
  - Part time
  - Unemployed
4. Nationality:
  - Indian
  - Emirati
  - Egyptian
  - Bangladeshi
  - Pakistani
  - Philippine
  - Japanese
  - Chinese
  - Korean
  - Other
5. Which of the following social media sites do you use frequently? (Select all that apply)
  - Facebook
  - YouTube
  - Snapchat
  - Instagram
  - WhatsApp
  - Twitter
  - Other

**Appendix C (Social Media Use Questionnaire)**

Answer the statements given below related to your social media use. Use the scale provided to indicate how true each statement is of your general experiences.

0= Never, 1= Rarely, 2= Sometimes, 3= Often, 4= Always

1. I struggle to stay in places, where I won't be able to access social network sites.
2. I feel angry, when I am not able to access my social network account.
3. My relatives and friends complain that I spend too much time using social network sites.
4. I lose track of time, when using social network sites.
5. I use social network sites, when I am in the company of friends.
6. I feel anxious, when I am not able to check my social network account.
7. I stay online longer than initially intended.
8. I spend a large proportion of my day using social network sites.
9. I feel guilty about the time that I spend on social network sites.

### Appendix D (Generic Phubbing Scale)

Participants respond to items on a seven-point scale, with a label associated with each point.

(1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Occasionally, 4 = Sometimes, 5 = Frequently, 6 = Usually, 7 = Always)

1. I feel anxious if my phone is not nearby
2. I cannot stand leaving my phone alone
3. I place my phone where I can see it
4. I worry that I will miss something important if I do not check my phone
5. I have conflicts with others because I am using my phone
6. People tell me that I interact with my phone too much
7. I get irritated if others ask me to get off my phone and talk to them
8. I use my phone even though I know it irritates others
9. I would rather pay attention to my phone than talk to others
10. I feel content when I am paying attention to my phone instead of others
11. I feel good when I stop focusing on others and pay attention to my phone instead
12. I get rid of stress by ignoring others and paying attention to my phone instead
13. I pay attention to my phone for longer than I intend to do so
14. I know that I must miss opportunities to talk to others because I am using my phone
15. I find myself thinking “just a few more minutes” when I am using my phone

**Appendix E** (Fear of Missing Out Scale)

Participants respond to items on a five-point scale, with a label associated with each point

(1 = Not at all true of me, 2 = Slightly true of me, 3 = Moderately true of me, 4 = Very true of me, 5 = Extremely true of me)

1. I fear others have more rewarding experiences than me.
2. I fear my friends have more rewarding experiences than me.
3. I get worried when I find out my friends are having fun without me.
4. I get anxious when I don't know what my friends are up to.
5. It is important that I understand my friends "in jokes."
6. Sometimes, I wonder if I spend too much time keeping up with what is going on.
7. It bothers me when I miss an opportunity to meet up with friends.
8. When I have a good time, it is important for me to share the details online (e.g. updating status).
9. When I miss out on a planned get-together it bothers me.
10. When I go on vacation, I continue to keep tabs on what my friends are doing.

**Appendix F** (Satisfaction with Life Scale)

Below are five statements that you may agree or disagree with. Indicate your agreement with each item by tapping the appropriate box,

(1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Slightly disagree, 4 = Neither agree nor disagree, 5 = Slightly agree, 6 = Agree, 7 = Strongly agree)

1. In most ways my life is close to my ideal.
2. The conditions of my life are excellent.
3. I am satisfied with my life.
4. So far, I have gotten the important things I want in life.
5. If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.

## Appendix G (Figures)

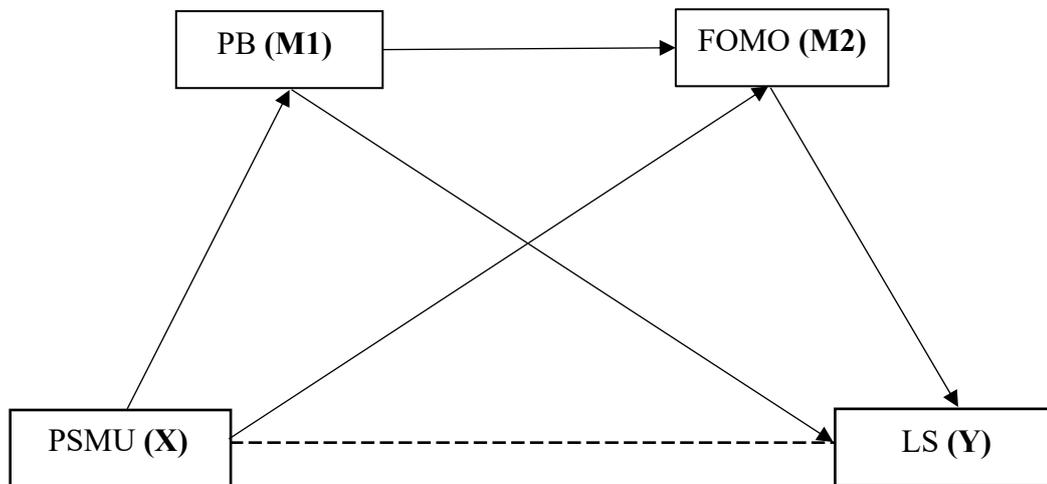


Figure 1: The Multiple Mediation Model. PSMU = Problematic Social Media Use. PB = Phubbing Behaviour. FoMO = Fear of Missing Out. LS = Life Satisfaction

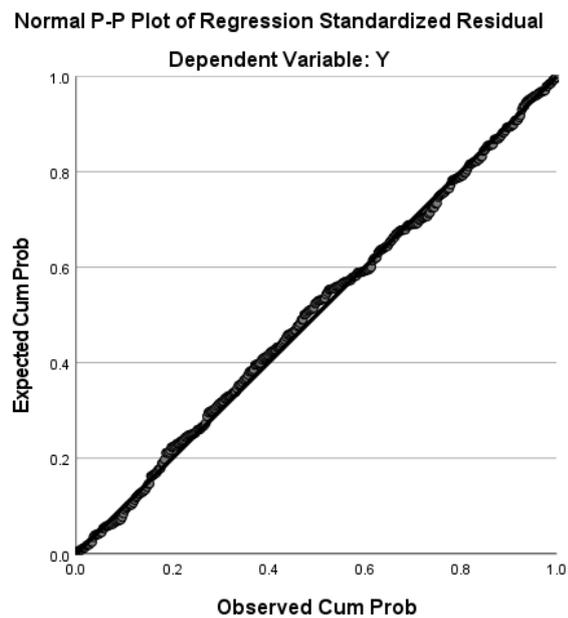


Figure 2: Normality of Residuals

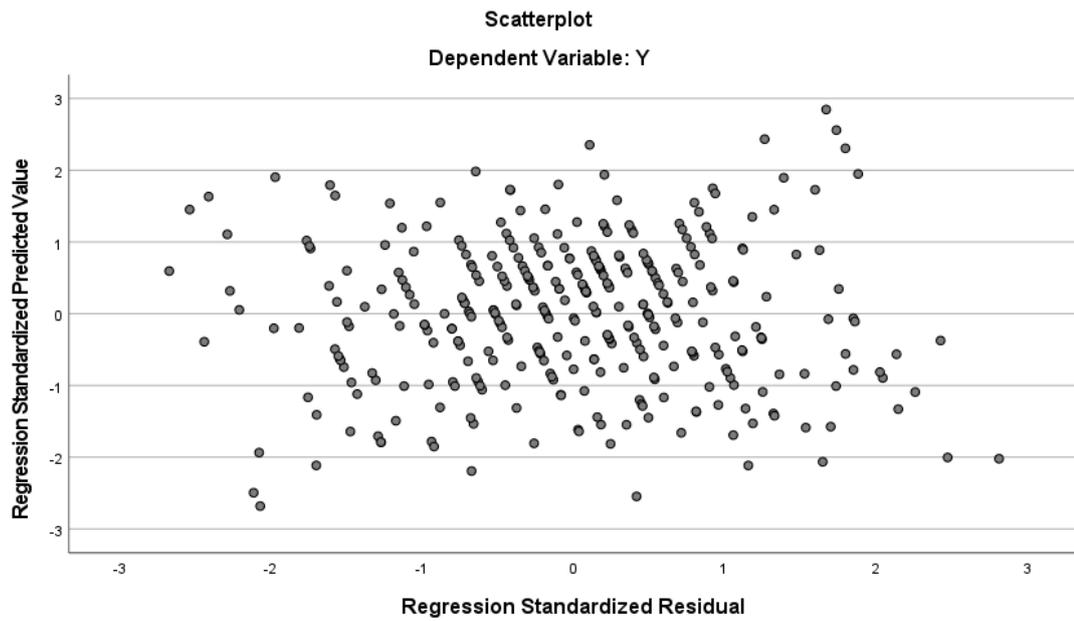


Figure 3: Homoscedasticity

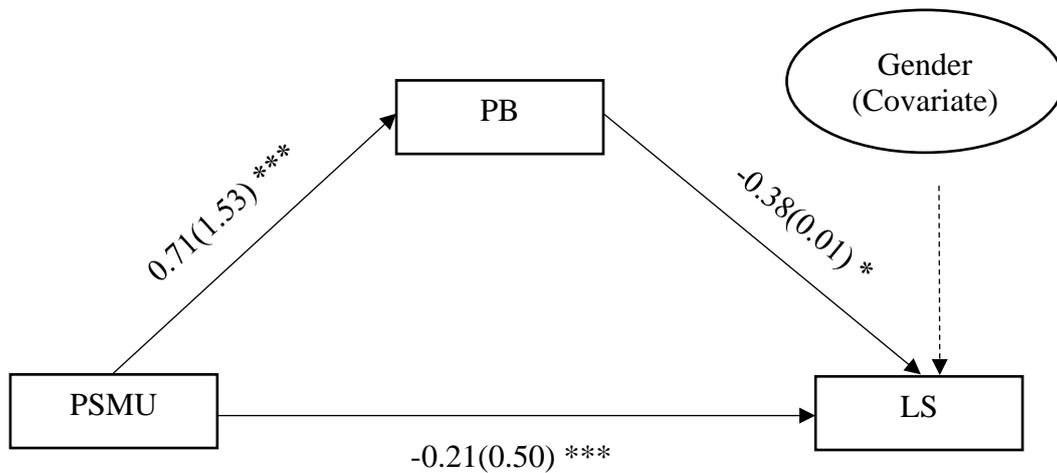


Figure 4: Relationship between problematic social media use and life satisfaction with the mediating role of phubbing behaviour. PSMU = Problematic Social Media Use. PB = Phubbing Behaviour. LS = Life Satisfaction. Path values are the path coefficients (standard errors). \* $p < 0.05$ . \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

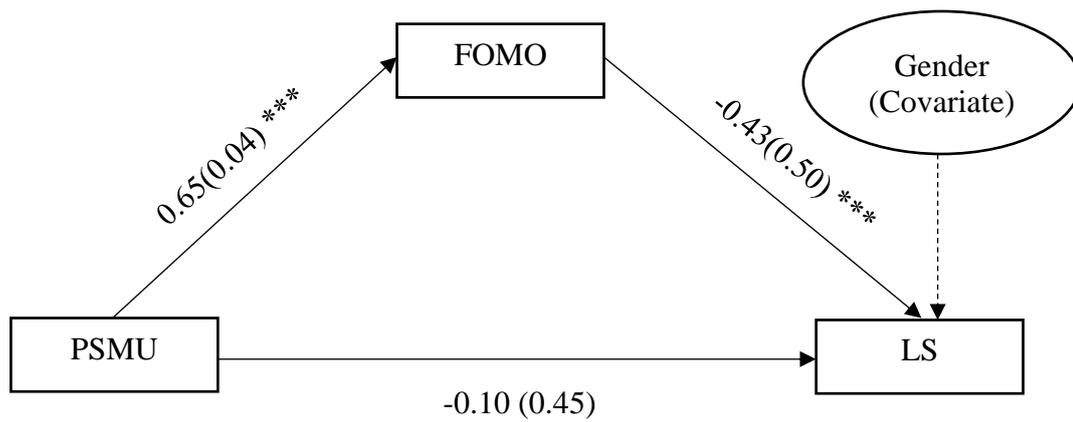


Figure 5: Relationship between problematic social media use and life satisfaction with the mediating role of fear of missing out. PSMU = Problematic Social Media Use. FoMO = Fear of Missing Out. LS = Life Satisfaction. Path values are the path coefficients (standard errors).  $*p < 0.05$ .  $***p < 0.001$

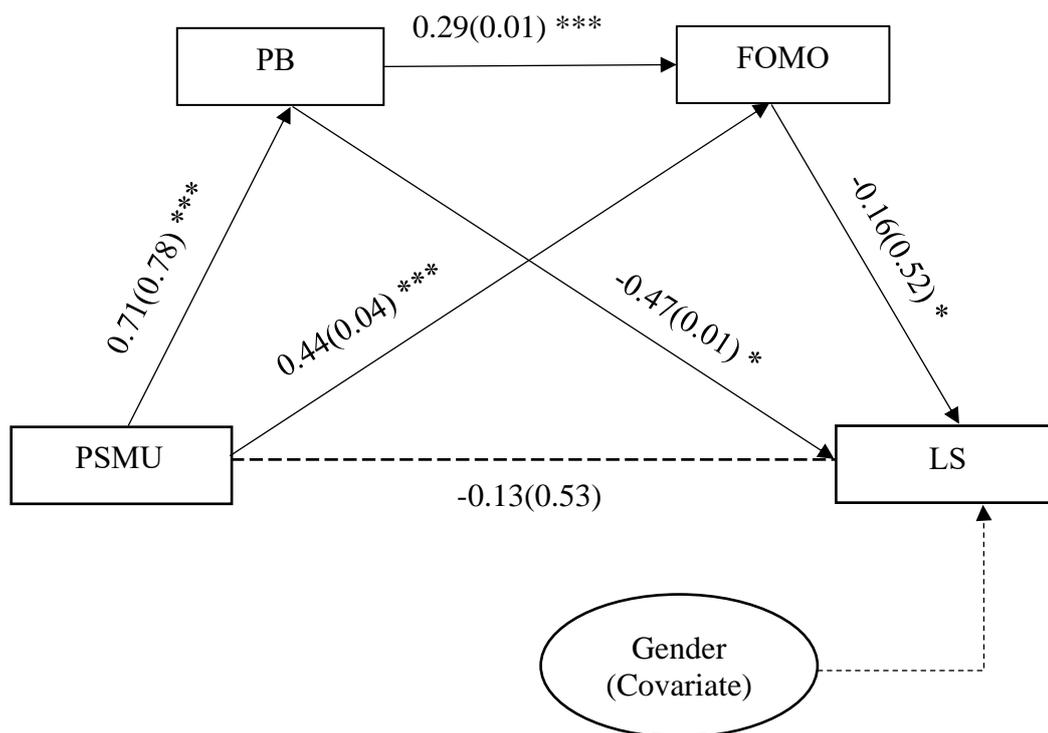


Figure 6: The Multiple Mediation Model. PSMU = Problematic Social Media Use. PB = Phubbing Behaviour. FoMO = Fear of Missing Out. LS = Life Satisfaction. The link between problematic social media use and life satisfaction is mediated by phubbing behaviour and fear of missing out. Path values are the path coefficients (standard errors).  $*p < 0.05$ .  $***p < 0.001$

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## UAE UNIVERSITY MASTER THESIS NO. 2022:76

The objective of the study was to examine the relationship between Problematic Social Media Use and young adults' Life Satisfaction. It also investigated whether Phubbing Behaviour and Fear of Missing Out might both act as mediating factors in this relationship.

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