

# A Multidimensional Study of Social Media Fatigue and Its relationship with Emotional Well-Being Among Adolescents

1. *Dr. Meenakshi Jindal, Lecturer Physics, email: [meenu20nov@gmail.com](mailto:meenu20nov@gmail.com)*
2. *Rabani Kochhar, student, email: [rabanikochhar2000@icloud.com](mailto:rabanikochhar2000@icloud.com)*
3. *Kabir singh Kang, student, email: [Kabirkanguni@gmail.com](mailto:Kabirkanguni@gmail.com)*
4. *Avani Jindal, student, email: [avani.jindal28@gmail.com](mailto:avani.jindal28@gmail.com)*

## Abstract

The rapid integration of social media into adolescents' daily lives has transformed the way they communicate, express themselves, and seek social validation. While social media platforms offer opportunities for connection and self-expression, excessive and continuous engagement may lead to social media fatigue, which can adversely affect adolescents' emotional well-being. The present study aims to examine social media fatigue as a multidimensional construct and to explore its relationship with emotional well-being among adolescents. A sample of 79 adolescents from the tricity region of Chandigarh, India, was selected for the study. Data were collected using two self-constructed tools: a Social Media Fatigue Scale and an Emotional Well-Being Scale for adolescents. Descriptive statistics were employed to assess the levels and dimensions of social media fatigue, while Pearson's coefficient of correlation was used to examine the relationship between social media fatigue and emotional well-being. The findings revealed that adolescents experience social media fatigue across multiple dimensions, including cognitive, emotional, social, and behavioral aspects, indicating that fatigue is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon. Furthermore, the results showed a significant negative correlation between social media fatigue and emotional well-being ( $r = -0.280$ ,  $p < .05$ ), suggesting that higher levels of fatigue are associated with poorer emotional well-being. The study highlights the growing impact of excessive social media use on adolescents' emotional health and underscores the need for promoting balanced and mindful social media engagement. The findings have important implications for educators, parents, mental health professionals, and policymakers concerned with adolescents' digital well-being.

## Keywords:

Social media fatigue; Emotional well-being; Adolescents; Cognitive fatigue; Digital well-being; Social media use

## Introduction

Adolescence is a developmental stage marked by rapid emotional, cognitive, and social changes. It is a stage of transition from childhood to adulthood. This transition often brings shifts in their behaviour patterns, communication styles, self-expression, and daily engagements. As they navigate identity formation and social belonging, adolescents develop a heightened need to present themselves in particular ways and to seek validation from peers. In this context, the widespread availability of social media platforms has become a central space for

connection, creativity, and self-presentation. These platforms offer adolescents easy access to information, opportunities for social interaction, and avenues to express their thoughts, emotions, and individuality.

Despite these benefits, the increasing reliance on social media introduces several challenges. As social media use intensifies, the demands of the digital environment can become burdensome.

The overwhelming flow of content, messages, updates, and notifications often leads to information overload, (Ahmed, and Rasul, 2023).

Additionally, the social expectations embedded in online communication—such as the need to stay active, be visible, and respond promptly—create pressure to maintain continuous engagement. Adolescents may feel compelled to constantly check their devices, reply immediately, or keep up with ongoing conversations, contributing further to stress and psychological fatigue.

Furthermore, frequent exposure to idealized lifestyles, appearance and achievements of others on social media can trigger social comparison, lowering self-esteem and diminishing emotional well-being. The fear of missing out (FOMO) force them to use it more and more till it may become a compulsive habit and exhaust them further. Also using Social media is a time consuming activity which may interfere with the studies or daily work.

Over time, the combined effects of above factors may diminish the overall positive experiences adolescents initially seek through social media, leading to disengagement, emotional strain, and fatigue. It gives rise to the concept of social media fatigue and it refers to the feeling of tiredness, irritation, or overwhelm that arises from excessive or prolonged use of social media. Various researchers in their studies have defined and described social media fatigue.

Fatigue is indicated by behaviours such as complaining or withdrawing. It precipitates as irritability, inability to cope, loss of interest in most activities and decline in performance, (Ravindran, 2014).

Social media fatigue can be conceptualised as an emotional and cognitive feeling of being overwhelmed by over engagement in social media and it manifests either by quitting the social media or mindlessly browsing the content, (Świątek, et al.,2023).

Social media fatigue can be described as users' inclination to step back from social media when they feel overloaded by excessive content, numerous platforms, large networks of friends or contacts, and the continual effort required to stay updated, (Wang & Deng, 2022).

Social media fatigue refers to a host of negative emotional responses to activities on social media. These emotions may include burn out, irritation, exhaustion and frustration towards these activities, (Zheng and Ling, 2021).

Recent studies suggest that this fatigue is multidimensional, encompassing cognitive fatigue, emotional exhaustion, behavioural dependence, and even technological fatigue. These dimensions work together to create a cumulative sense of exhaustion and withdrawal from social media.

Cognitive fatigue stem from information overload which requires constant processing and filtering by the brain. This continuous mental effort lead to cognitive tiredness, reduced concentration and a desire to disconnect from social media. Social media fatigue is a concept used to refer to exhaustion due to over use of social media which is triggered by the plethora of information available on social media as soon as the user go online (Gotlib.et.al, 2022). Due to the limited ability of the brain to process information it can trigger fatigue. once cognitive fatigue

sets in, individual starts experiencing difficulty in maintaining concentration and attention even during routine tasks (Jindal, et al., 2025).

Emotional fatigue arises from the emotional efforts or involvement required in the online interactions like chatting, messaging and maintaining online identity. Also emotionally charged news, videos and other content further intensifies the psychological stress and the user may want to avoid social media. Moreover, experiences such as social comparison, fear of missing out, and the pressure to maintain an ideal online identity often generate negative emotions, including anxiety, frustration, and lowered self-esteem.

The complex nature of social media platforms, algorithm driven content and numerous available features require continuous adaptation and engagement which can be mentally very taxing and time consuming. It frustrates and refrains the user who then start taking breaks from online engagements. These experiences can gradually affect an individual's ability to cope effectively with daily challenges, heighten stress levels and contribute to a decline in overall emotional well-being among adolescents. Thus, social media fatigue creates a pathway through which excessive or demanding social media use can adversely impact the emotional wellbeing of the young users.

*Emotional well-being*, a core component of positive mental health includes happiness, life satisfaction, emotional stability, supportive relationships, self-confidence, and hopefulness about the future.

Emotional wellbeing is a multi-dimensional composite that encompasses how positive an individual feel generally about life overall. It includes both experiential (emotional quality of momentary and every day experiences) and reflective features (judgements about life satisfaction, sense of meaning and ability to pursue goals that can include and extend beyond the self), (Park, et al., 2022).

Adolescents who frequently feel drained, overwhelmed, or pressured online may experience reduced life satisfaction, lower mood, and diminished emotional resilience. When social media consumption becomes stressful rather than enjoyable, it can interfere with these aspects of well-being.

Understanding how different dimensions of social media fatigue interact with emotional well-being is therefore essential in a digital era where young people's daily lives are heavily intertwined with technology.

## Previous literature

Dhir, et al. (2018) studied the relation between psycho social wellbeing and social media fatigue. And also whether social media fatigue lead to anxiety and depression. Two waves of data (N=1554,1144) were collected from social media users in India. The study found that though social media is a popular informative and communicative platform, excessive use of it leads to fatigue and it negatively impacts the mental and behavioural conditions of the user.

Qin, et al. (2024) studied the determinants of social media fatigue and effect of these determinants on social anxiety and lurking. The research was conducted through a questionnaire responded by 659 individuals. Data about social media usage, social media helpfulness, social media self-efficacy and online subjective wellbeing was collected through the questionnaire. The results found negative impact of social media self-efficacy on social media fatigue but positive impact of compulsive media use, FOMO and information overload on social media fatigue. Social media cause social anxiety and stress also.

Yao, et al. (2025) explored the relation between FOMO and social media fatigue through a longitudinal studied design. Data was collected from 862 college students at two distinct times (T1 and T2) separated by 2 months. It used FOMO scale and social media fatigue scale to collect the data. Through the cross lagged panel design, the studies found bi- directional relation between FOMO and social media fatigue i.e. they mutually influence each other. As one leads to the other it forms a negative cycle.

Chen, et al. (2023) conducted a three-level meta-analysis of 121 empirical studies to examine the relationship between social media fatigue and various forms of social media use. Their analysis differentiated between discontinuous use, problematic use, and general social media use. The findings indicated a significant positive association between social media fatigue and both discontinuous use (i.e., taking breaks or reducing engagement) and problematic use (i.e., compulsive or uncontrolled usage patterns) but negligible relation with general use.

Rahman, et al. (2025) studied the relation between social media addiction (SMA), social media fatigue (SMF), fear of missing out (FOMO) and sleep quality (SQ) among 611 University students in Bangladesh. The results showed that most of the students who had sleep disruption were using social media for at least 1 to 2 hours daily. Also SMA, SMF and FOMO impact sleep quality significantly.

Üztemur, et al. (2025) studied problematic social media use (PSMU), social anxiety on social networks (SNSs), social media burnout (SMB) and their relation with discontinuous use of social media. The researchers used stress- strain model for the study. User social anxiety on social networks and (PSMU) were taken as stress. The response to these stresses as SMB was strain and the outcome of the strain was discontinuing social media use. The results showed that SNSs and SMB are positively correlated with discontinues social media use.

## Significance

Given the rising concerns about digital mental health, this study aims to conduct a multidimensional analysis of social media fatigue and its effect on emotional well-being among adolescents. By examining cognitive, emotional, social, and behavioral sources of fatigue, the research seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how the excessive social media exposure shape adolescents' emotional health. The findings will contribute to the growing body of literature on digital well-being and offer valuable insights for educators, parents, mental health professionals, and policymakers who aim to promote healthier social media habits among youth.

## Objectives

1. To study the social media fatigue among adolescents.
2. To study the relationship between social media fatigue and emotional well-being among adolescents.

## Hypothesis

- There is no significant the relationship between social media fatigue and emotional well-being among adolescents.

## Sample

A sample of 79 adolescents was taken from the population of adolescents residing in tricity of Chandigarh, India.

## Tools of the study

1. Social Media Fatigue Scale constructed by the investigators for the Adolescents,
2. Emotional Well-Being Scale constructed by the investigators for the Adolescents

## Procedure

The research was conducted to study the relationship between Social Media Fatigue, and Emotional Well-Being among Adolescents. A sample of 79 adolescents was taken to study the problem at hand. Social Media Fatigue, and Emotional Well-Being scales were constructed by the investigators. The scales were administered to the said sample to collect the data. Google forms were prepared for the said scales and administered to the sample. Further the data was tabulated and subjected to statistical analysis. The results and conclusions were drawn out from there.

## Statistical tools

Descriptive statistics was employed to study the Social Media Fatigue among adolescents and Pearsons coefficient of correlation technique was used to study the relationship between social media fatigue and emotional well-being.

## Analysis of the data

1. To study the social media fatigue among adolescents.

This objective was studied by taking the opinion of the participant sample using five point likert scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The percentage for each rating was calculated for each statement and complete description of the social media fatigue was done through table 1.

**Table 1: Description of social media fatigue among adolescents**

S.No.	Items	Components	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1.	I find it difficult to concentrate after using social media.	<b>Cognitive</b>	18.8	43.8	25	12.5	0
2.	I feel mentally drained after using social media.		18.8	23.8	30	26.3	1.2
3.	I find it hard to focus on my schoolwork after spending a lot of time on social media.		20	38.8	26.3	15	0

4.	I feel overwhelmed by the amount of information on social media.		16.3	26.3	28.7	25	3.7
	<b>Average</b>		18.48	33.18	27.50	19.70	1.23
5.	I feel emotionally exhausted when I cannot post or when I see others' posts.		13.8	8.8	18.7	33.8	25
6.	I feel worn out trying to maintain a certain image on social media.		10	16.3	16.3	36.3	21.3
7.	I feel tired of constantly keeping up with updates and trends on social media.	<b>Social</b>	10	16.3	27.5	31.3	15
8.	I feel pressured to respond quickly to messages, which leaves me drained.		7.5	15	25	28.7	23.8
	<b>Average</b>		10.32	21.87	32.52	21.27	14.1
9.	Positive feedback on social media makes me feel better.		26.3	46.3	23.7	2.5	1.2
10.	Doomscrolling often leaves me feeling emotionally exhausted.	<b>Emotional</b>	25	25	28.7	12.5	8.8
11.	I often seek validation through my social media presence.		15	12.5	26.3	33.8	12.5
	<b>Average</b>		22.1	27.93	26.23	16.26	7.5
12.	I feel pressured to appear perfect or happy	<b>Behavioral</b>	12.5	13.8	26.3	27.5	20

	when posting on social media.						
13.	I find it difficult to stop or take breaks from using social media.		15	40	18.8	18.8	7.5
14.	I usually feel energized and motivated after using social media.		7.5	13.8	46.3	27.5	5
	<b>Average</b>		8.75	16.9	22.85	18.45	8.12

*Cognitive component*

Table 1 gives the description of social media fatigue among adolescents in terms of cognitive, social, emotional and behavioral factors.

Around 52% students strongly agree/ agree that they feel cognitive fatigue while using social media whereas around 27% strongly disagree/ disagree for such kind of fatigue. 22.85% are indecisive. For the detailed description of cognitive fatigue, it is found that 62% students find it difficult to concentrate after using social media whereas 25% are indecisive. Close to 43% students feel mentally drained after using social media, 30% are indecisive and around 26% disagree to it. 58.8% students find it hard to focus on their schoolwork after spending a lot of time on social media, 26.3 are indecisive and 15% disagree to it. Around 43% students feel overwhelmed by the amount of information on social media, 28.7% are indecisive and again 28.7% strongly disagree/ disagree to it.

*Social component*

Social media fatigue is also due to some social factors. 32.19 strongly agree/ agree to have fatigue due to social factors whereas 35.37% disagree to it and 32.52% are neutral/ indecisive.

Going deep into this factor it is found that, 22.6% students feel emotionally exhausted when they cannot post or when they see others' posts on social media whereas around 59% disagree to it and 18.7% are indecisive. 26.3% feel worn out while trying to maintain a certain image on social media whereas 57.6% disagree to it and rest are indecisive. Again 26.3% feel tired of constantly keeping up with updates and trends on social media, 46.3% are against this belief and 27.5% are neutral or indecisive. 22.5% feel pressured to respond quickly to messages, which leaves them drained whereas around 53% disagree to it and 25% are neutral or indecisive.

*Emotional component*

Emotional factors also govern the social media fatigue. Around 50% students believe that their social media fatigue is due to emotional factors also. Around 24% disagree to it and 26.23% are neutral/ indecisive. Going in detail, around 73% believe that positive feedback on social media makes them feel better and 23.7% are indecisive

regarding this. 50% feels doom scrolling often leaves them feeling emotionally exhausted, 28.7% are neutral and around 21% disagree to it. Further 27.5% often seek validation through their social media presence whereas around 46% disagree to it and 26.3% remained indecisive.

*Behavioral component*

Around 34% students believe that behavioral factors also effect social media fatigue. Same number of students disagree to it and around equal number are indecisive. Further, around 26% feel pressured to appear perfect or happy when posting on social media, 47.5% disagree to it and 26.3% remained neutral. Moreover 55% agreed that it is difficult to stop or take breaks from using social media, 18.8% remained indecisive and 26.3% disagreed. Around 21.3% (7.5+13.8) responded that they feel energized and motivated after using social media whereas 32.5% disagreed.

- To study the relationship between social media fatigue and emotional well-being among adolescents.

This objective was studied by testing the hypothesis, “There is no significant the relationship between social media fatigue and emotional well-being among adolescents”. Table 2 shows the computation of coefficient of correlation value between the said variables.

**Table 2: Coefficient of correlation between social media fatigue and emotional well-being among adolescents**

Variable	N	M	SD	r	Level of significance
Social media fatigue	79	43.41	9.407	-.280	.05
Emotional wellbeing	79	24.23	5.366		

Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation values of social media fatigue and emotional wellbeing among adolescents. The mean values are 43.41 and 24.23, respectively, for social media fatigue and emotional wellbeing where whereas the standard deviation values are 9.407 and 5.366, respectively. The coefficient of correlation value is -.280, which is significant at the .05 level. Hence, the hypothesis, ‘ there is no significant correlation between social media fatigue and emotional well-being among adolescents,’ may not be accepted. The coefficient of correlation value is negative, so there is an inverse correlation between social media fatigue and emotional well-being among adolescents, which means that the more social media fatigue leads to poor emotional wellbeing.

**Results and discussion**

The descriptive analysis of social media fatigue reveals that adolescents experience fatigue across multiple dimensions—cognitive, social, emotional, and behavioral—indicating that social media fatigue is not a unidimensional phenomenon but a complex, multifaceted experience.

*Cognitive fatigue* was evident from the responses to items related to concentration, mental exhaustion, and difficulty focusing on academic tasks after social media use. A considerable proportion of adolescents either

strongly agreed or agreed that excessive engagement with social media negatively affected their attention span and mental clarity. This suggests that continuous exposure to information, notifications, and digital multitasking may overload adolescents' cognitive resources, leading to mental tiredness, reduced focus and fatigue.

The analysis of the *social dimension* reflects the growing social demand for availability and responsiveness in online spaces. There is a constant quest of connectivity, pressures of maintaining a particular online image and keeping up with trends. Promptly responding to the messages leave them drained. Although a segment of the sample disagreed with these statements, the overall pattern indicates that social expectations and constant connectivity can contribute to feelings of exhaustion and fatigue.

The *emotional dimension* presented mixed responses. While positive feedback on social media was reported to enhance mood for a large proportion of adolescents, behaviors such as doom scrolling and seeking validation were associated with emotional exhaustion. This duality highlights that social media can act both as a source of emotional gratification or emotional strain, depending on the nature and intensity of usage.

With regard to *behavioral fatigue*, findings indicate difficulty in disengaging from social media and pressure to present a perfect or happy image online. A notable number of adolescents found it hard to take breaks, suggesting habitual or compulsive patterns of use. Such behaviors may intensify fatigue over time, as constant engagement prevents psychological recovery.

Overall, the descriptive findings support the view that social media fatigue among adolescents is multidimensional and pervasive, affecting cognitive functioning, emotional regulation, social interactions, and behavioral control.

### **Relationship between Social Media Fatigue and Emotional Well-Being**

The second objective of the study was to examine the relationship between social media fatigue and emotional well-being among adolescents. The obtained Pearson's coefficient of correlation ( $r = -0.280$ ) indicates a significant negative relationship between the two variables at the 0.05 level. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship between social media fatigue and emotional well-being was rejected.

The negative correlation suggests that higher levels of social media fatigue are associated with lower levels of emotional well-being. Continuous cognitive overload, emotional stress and social pressure in digital environments may gradually diminish adolescents' emotional resilience and overall well-being. These findings are consistent with contemporary research suggesting that excessive or unmanaged social media use can adversely impact adolescents' mental and emotional health (Dhir et al., 2018; Khalaf, 2023; Qin et al., 2024). While social media offers opportunities for connection and self-expression, persistent fatigue may undermine these benefits, leading to emotional strain.

### **Conclusion**

The present study concludes that social media fatigue is a significant and multidimensional experience among adolescents, encompassing cognitive, social, emotional, and behavioral components.

Furthermore, the study establishes a significant negative relationship between social media fatigue and emotional well-being indicating that excessive and demanding social media engagement can adversely affect adolescents' emotional health.

These findings underscore the need for greater awareness among adolescents, parents, educators, and policymakers regarding healthy social media usage.

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