

# Understanding Lurking Behavior through Intrinsic Motivation: A Behavioral Psychology Approach

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## KEYWORDS

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Online social anxiety,  
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Self-Determination  
Theory,  
Stressor-Strain-Outcome  
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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the factors contributing to social media fatigue and online social anxiety, resulting in users' lurking behavior. Using the Stressor-Strain-Outcome (SSO) model and Self-Determination Theory (SDT) as theoretical frameworks, the research identifies intrinsic motivation, including social comparison, privacy concern, self-efficacy, fear of missing out and compulsive use, as key determinants. The study employs a quantitative research method, gathering data from 490 respondents through surveys and analyzing them using SPSS 27.0 and AMOS. Results indicate that social media fatigue and online social anxiety significantly impact lurking behavior, with compulsive use and privacy concern having the strongest effects. The research contributes to understanding online behaviors and offers practical insights for platforms, brands, and users to design interventions that encourage active participation and foster community building in digital environments. The findings underscore the importance of addressing intrinsic motivations to help users, especially younger individuals, maintain a balanced lifestyle, reduce social media fatigue and online social anxiety, and promote more active engagement. By addressing these factors, platforms and brands can enhance user satisfaction and engagement, ultimately supporting the sustainable development of social media ecosystems.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Background of the study

In today's interconnected world, the demand for internet access, especially through social media, continues to grow at an unprecedented pace. By January 2024, Vietnam recorded 72.7 million internet users, representing 73.3% of its population. (Datareportal, 2024). This rapid digital expansion highlights the

dynamic and ever-evolving nature of Vietnam's social media landscape. Vietnamese social media culture is characterized by high engagement in entertainment, e-commerce, and community-driven discussions, with platforms like Facebook and TikTok playing dominant roles. Unlike Western users, who often engage in political discourse and activism, Vietnamese users tend to focus more on social interactions, lifestyle content, and online shopping, reflecting cultural preferences for practicality and collectivism. More than just a means of

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accessing information, the internet in Vietnam serves as a hub for social connection and participation. Digital, user-driven tools not only expand networks but also foster interaction, facilitate information sharing, and drive content creation, making social media an integral part of everyday life.

Despite the numerous benefits social media brings users, the explosion of network connections also has significant negative impacts on users' mental health and overall well-being. Over 80% of survey participants reported frequent exposure to social media, with 48.3% showing signs of depression, and 22.6% experiencing anxiety (Zubair et al., 2023). These mental health issues have led many individuals to avoid participating in social media interactions and engagements. This gradually shapes lurking behavior, a state of online inactivity where users rarely post, remain silent, and do not engage or contribute to online activities. Unlike casual browsing, where users occasionally interact with content, lurking behavior is marked by a persistent pattern of non-engagement, where individuals consciously choose to remain silent despite being active consumers of online content (Preece & Nonnecke, 2001). This distinguishes lurkers from other passive users, such as occasional commenters or silent observers who engage selectively but do not exhibit a long-term disengagement pattern. Williams et al. (2012) found that only 1% of social media users generate over 70% of total posts, while over 90% interact or post only occasionally, and the majority of social media users consider themselves more passive than active in posting and interacting. This indicates that lurking behavior is becoming increasingly common on social media platforms.

The sustainable development of social media platforms relies on consistent interaction and active content creation by users. Therefore, the presence of lurking behavior significantly impacts the sustainable growth of social media, as passive users rarely create valuable knowledge and may even hinder the effective dissemination of information. Moreover, lurking behavior can obstruct brands' efforts to build engaged communities. Brands often rely on metrics such as likes, shares, and comments to assess interaction levels and customer loyalty to develop solutions. However, lurking behavior may distort these metrics, making it difficult for brands to evaluate engagement and loyalty within their communities accurately (Liu et al., 2024).

Lurking behavior has gained significant attention as it directly impacts users' well-being and the sustainable development of the digital era. Most existing literature attributes lurking behavior to individual factors such as privacy concerns, FOMO... but lacks a comprehensive examination of the broader psychological motivations driving lurkers. To explore this phenomenon more thoroughly, this study employs the Stressor-Strain-Outcome (SSO) model and Self-Determination

Theory to identify the key intrinsic motivations behind social media users' lurking behavior. By adopting this approach, the research addresses existing gaps in the literature regarding the complex dynamics of social media. This study aims to provide actionable recommendations for enhancing the overall user experience in virtual spaces. Understanding the motivations underlying lurking behavior offers critical insights into designing strategies that foster user engagement and reduce passive online behaviors.

## 1.2. Research question and objectives

### 1.2.1. Research objectives

To fill this gap, the research aims to investigate factors contributing to social media fatigue and online social anxiety, which in turn leads to lurking behavior. There are several main objectives of the research:

- RO1: To systematize the theoretical framework related to social media fatigue and online social anxiety as well as lurking behavior.
- RO2: To develop a research model and hypotheses to test the relationship between the aforementioned factors.
- RO3: To identify the degree and direction of the impact of these factors on social media fatigue and online social anxiety, which lead to lurking behavior.
- RO4: To propose strategies for individuals to manage social media fatigue and anxiety, reducing lurking behavior.

### 1.2.2. Research Questions

To accomplish the above-mentioned goals. The following are some of the most important questions that will be answered:

- RQ1: What suitable theoretical framework can be used for research?
- RQ2: What factors contribute to social media fatigue and online social anxiety, and how can these be integrated into a research model?
- RQ3: What is the degree and direction of the impact of the identified factors on social media fatigue, online social anxiety, and lurking behavior?
- RQ4: How can individuals mitigate the impact of social media fatigue and online social anxiety to reduce lurking behavior?

## 2. Material and method

### 2.1. Theoretical framework

#### 2.1.1. The Stressor-Strain-Outcome (SSO)

The Stressor-Strain-Outcome (SSO) model explains how environmental stressors influence psychological

states and behaviors, with strain acting as a mediator between stressors and outcomes (Cheung & Cheung, 2013). In this study, the SSO model is applied as a comprehensive framework to examine how intrinsic psychological stressors contribute to social media fatigue and online social anxiety, ultimately leading to lurking behavior. Previous research has extensively utilized this model in the context of social media fatigue (Dhir et al., 2018) and other online psychological phenomena (Zhang et al., 2024), highlighting its relevance in understanding user experiences in digital environments.

Intrinsic stressors act as triggers that induce psychological strain among social media users (Sharma & Roshi, 2021). This strain manifests as negative emotional states, including social media fatigue and online social anxiety, which in turn discourage active participation and lead to increased lurking behavior (Liu et al., 2024). By conceptualizing this process, the SSO model provides a structured approach to linking stressors, psychological strain, and behavioral responses, offering deeper insights into the mechanisms underlying passive social media engagement. Therefore, this study systematically connects intrinsic stressors to behavioral outcomes, enabling a clearer understanding of how psychological pressures contribute to lurking behavior. This approach provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how these factors contribute to lurking behavior in social media contexts.

### 2.1.2. *Self-Determination Theory (SDT)*

The Self-Determination Theory (SDT), developed by Ryan and Deci (2000), provides an in-depth perspective on individual motivation, emotions, and personality traits, focusing on the fundamental reasons for individual behavior. This theory posits that motivations drive human behavior, influencing how individuals act and adapt across various life domains. SDT categorizes individual motivation into intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation, emphasizing the distinction between intrinsic motivation (engaging in an activity for the inherent satisfaction it provides) and extrinsic motivation (performing an activity to achieve an external reward or outcome).

Intrinsically motivated activities are defined as those that individuals find inherently enjoyable and pursue without the influence of external rewards. According to Ryan and Deci (2000), intrinsic motivation arises from the fundamental human need for competence and self-determination. In the context of social media, it drives users to explore content, acquire knowledge, and connect with others out of genuine interest and enjoyment (Zhang et al., 2021). Generally perceived as a positive force, intrinsic motivation fosters engagement and self-improvement. However, some

research demonstrated that under certain conditions, it can also be considered as negative, particularly in the digital environment where excessive use occurs (Qin et al., 2024; Liu et al., 2024).

This excessive engagement has been associated with psychological concerns such as “Facebook depression,” “fear of missing out” (FOMO), and “social comparison” (SC) (Kaye, 2021). Besides, the urge to stay informed and continuously engage with social media can gradually develop into compulsive use. Ryan & Deci (2000) suggests that individuals are naturally motivated to learn, explore, and improve themselves and social media serves as a platform for self-expression, connection, and interaction with successful individuals. As a result, they may unconsciously fall into patterns of social comparison without recognizing its effects. Furthermore, intrinsic motivation drives users to frequently update personal information, post content, and actively participate online. However, this behavior can also heighten concerns about privacy breaches and the potential misuse of personal data, making users hesitant about sharing their details online (Liu et al., 2024). Therefore, while intrinsic motivation originates from voluntary engagement and enthusiasm, it is not always entirely positive. When it becomes obsessive, uncontrolled, or influenced by external factors, it can lead to adverse psychological outcomes, emphasizing the need for mindful and balanced social media use.

This study employs Self-Determination Theory (SDT) to examine the adverse effects of intrinsic motivations and its impact on social media user behavior. While intrinsic motivation is typically associated with positive engagement, this research highlights the negative psychological outcomes, including social media fatigue and online social anxiety.

## 2.2. *Literature review and hypotheses*

### 2.2.1. *Lurking behavior*

Lurking behavior was first used to describe human behavior such as asking questions without providing answers, gathering information without sharing, or reading ongoing discussions without contributing. In the context of social media, lurking behavior is characterized by not posting and is considered a form of online inactivity. In other words, individuals who engage in passive lurking rarely post, tend to remain silent, and do not participate or contribute to online activities (Preece & Nonnecke, 2001). This behavior is considered detrimental and a hindrance to the development of the community. Rather than contributing to building a sense of community and creating a democratic environment, passive lurkers negatively impact active participation and contribution

within the community. As a result, we inherited the first definition of lurking behavior on social media from Preece and Nonnecke (2001) that lurking behavior is passive lurking seldom post, typically remain silent, and do not actively participate or contribute to online activities.

### 2.2.2. Online social anxiety

With the development of social media, online social anxiety emerges as prolonged anxiety triggered by challenging situations or perceived threats on online platforms (Dhir et al., 2018). Individuals with online social anxiety often adopt a passive approach to social media to avoid negative evaluations. As a result, individuals experiencing anxiety may adopt a passive stance or engage in lurking behavior to reduce the likelihood of mistakes and enhance their confidence in navigating social media platforms (Liu et al., 2024). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H1: Online social anxiety is positively associated with lurking behavior.*

### 2.2.3. Social media fatigue

Social media fatigue refers to the subjective, multidimensional experience encompassing feelings such as exhaustion, irritation, anger, frustration, vigilance, disinterest, or diminished need/motivation related to various social media usage and interaction (Ravindran et al., 2014). Excessive social media usage and interactions lead to fatigue, which impairs cognitive functions, including increased online social anxiety. This fatigue diminishes users' ability to regulate emotions, maintain focus, and manage stress effectively (Dhir et al., 2018). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H2: Social media fatigue is positively associated with online social anxiety.*

Users may avoid or disengage from unfavorable situations as a defensive coping mechanism (Fu et al., 2020). This behavior is expressed in various ways, including decreased social media activity, passive content consumption, or even the suspension of accounts and complete abandonment of social media platforms. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H3: Social media fatigue is positively associated with lurking behavior.*

### 2.2.4. Intrinsic motivation

#### 2.2.4.1. Social comparison

Social comparison is the tendency to use others as a source of information to assess our performance relative to theirs (ability comparison) or to guide our behavior,

thoughts, and feelings (opinion comparison). In the digital context, people often compare themselves with others in their community, which brings out a variety of emotional responses. These comparisons usually center around self-assessment as the key element of social comparison (Liu et al., 2024). Social media users may, either intentionally or unintentionally, compare themselves to those who have reached higher levels of success. This can result in feelings of inferiority and negative emotions, which in turn impact mental well-being (Nisar et al., 2019). The practice of social comparison can erode individuals' self-confidence in their knowledge, competencies, and other life domains, while simultaneously exacerbating anxiety. This process may diminish motivation to participate in activities, potentially contributing to increased levels of fatigue and burnout associated with social media engagement. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H4a: Social Comparison is positively associated with online social anxiety.*

*H4b: Social Comparison is positively associated with social media fatigue.*

#### 2.2.4.2. Privacy concern

Privacy concern refers to an individual's awareness and evaluation of the risks associated with privacy violations. Although social media users are aware of the need to protect their data, many personal data points remain vulnerable to unauthorized exposure on social media platforms without users' explicit consent, resulting in heightened privacy-related anxiety. Individuals who are concerned about privacy often harbor fears that their personal information may be exploited by the online community and its members, creating a significant sense of privacy risk that discourages them from sharing information openly within the community (Kim et al., 2021). Users with significant privacy concerns often prioritize safeguarding their personal data, ensuring it is not improperly collected, stored, or utilized by other users or social media platforms. As a result, such individuals may experience social media fatigue when social interactions begin to feel burdensome for everyone involved (Ravindran et al., 2014). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H5a: Privacy Concern is positively associated with online social anxiety.*

*H5b: Privacy Concern is positively associated with social media fatigue.*

#### 2.2.4.3. Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to organize and execute specific actions. In the context of social media use, self-efficacy

pertains to users' confidence in applying their skills to complete specific tasks (Liu & He, 2021). Self-efficacy reduces social media fatigue by enabling users to effectively manage online activities and handle social media situations (Liu & He, 2021; Qin et al., 2024). Additionally, self-efficacy enhances users' sense of control in social interactions, reducing stress and improving satisfaction through positive experiences. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H6a: Self-efficacy is negatively associated with online social anxiety.*

*H6b: Self-efficacy is negatively associated with social media fatigue.*

#### 2.2.4.4. Fear of missing out (FOMO)

Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) refers to the persistent and negative feelings individuals experience when they perceive others as leading more fulfilling lives. This leads to a sense of obligation and a strong desire to monitor the content shared by others on social media continuously. Research has shown that this phenomenon can negatively impact an individual's life, contributing to depression, reduced psychological well-being, heightened anxiety and stress, disruptions in daily functioning, and an increased likelihood of developing psychopathological conditions (Liu et al., 2024). As a result, when Fomo is excessive, it can lead to phobias and online social anxiety. Shen et al. (2022) identified that FoMO can contribute to feelings of fatigue in individuals. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

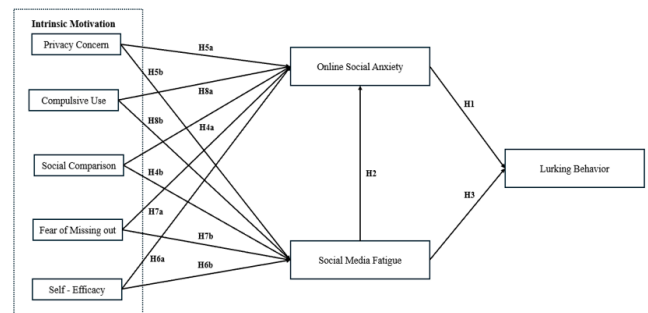
*H7a: Fear of missing out (FOMO) is positively associated with online social anxiety.*

*H7b: Fear of missing out (FOMO) is positively associated with social media fatigue.*

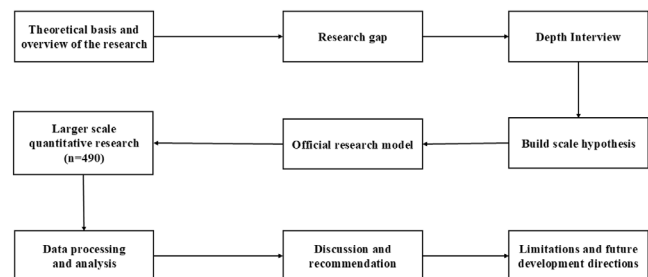
#### 2.2.4.5. Compulsive use

Compulsive use refers to repetitive actions driven by a strong desire to perform them, even when users recognize these actions conflict with their primary goals. This behavior often stems from a need to relieve stress, anxiety, or discomfort caused by intrusive thoughts. In social media, compulsive use often occurs as users struggle to resist these platforms, using them as a stress-relief mechanism (Dhir et al., 2018). Excessive use can lead to fatigue, anxiety, depression, and impaired focus, reducing daily productivity. Frequent users may experience increased stress when unable to access social media and feel compelled to stay connected to avoid missing out. This behavior acts as "negative reinforcement," offering temporary relief while increasing psychological risks (Liu et al., 2024). Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

*H8a: Compulsive use is positively associated with Online social anxiety.*



**Figure 1. Proposed Conceptual Model**



**Figure 2. Research Process**

### 2.3. Data collection and sample characteristics

This research is conducted in two phases: qualitative research to refine the measurement scale to suit respondents and context, followed by a quantitative study to collect primary data.

The qualitative research involves in-depth interviews with ten social media users, focusing on discussing factors in the conceptual model and refining the scale before conducting a large-scale survey.

In the quantitative research, 510 questionnaires were distributed, and after removing invalid responses, 490 valid survey results were obtained. The majority of respondents were female, accounting for 64.1%, while males made up 35.9%. The largest age group was 18-25 years old, comprising 64.5% of the total participants. This is reasonable, as individuals in this age range belong to the generation that frequently uses social media.

The survey results indicate that most participants spend 2 to 4 hours per day on social media (52.9%), followed by those who use it for 5 to 7 hours daily (26.1%), significantly exceeding the expert-recommended limit of 30 minutes to 2 hours per day. Most respondents use social media primarily for entertainment, social interaction, and information seeking, which together account for over 54% of usage purposes. The most popular platforms are Facebook (28.8%) and TikTok (21.4%), both well-known for effectively supporting these activities.

**2.4. Scales' measurement**

The questionnaire consists of 41 questions for 8 variables on a 5-point Likert scale. The measure of Compulsive use, Self efficacy and FOMO is inherited from Qin et al. (2024). The measure of the remaining factors is inherited based on research of Liu et al. (2024). As our respondents are Vietnamese, the original questionnaire was converted to the Vietnamese version by using a backward-translation method. A qualified notarization office is hired to translate the original questionnaire from English to Vietnamese, and then, the Vietnamese version will be given to academic scholars to translate back to English to ensure the main idea of the questionnaire is well preserved. All the items have been measured using a five-point Likert type scale with the following ranges and discriptions: 1 – highly disagree to 5 – highly agree.

**2.5. Data analysis**

The data gathered from the survey is cleaned using Excel, and the analysis is conducted using SPSS and AMOS. Initially, Cronbach's Alpha (CA) and Corrected Item-Total Correlation (CI-TC) are applied to assess the reliability of the measurement scales. This is followed by exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Lastly, a structural equation model (SEM) is utilized to test the proposed hypotheses.

**3. Results and discussion**

**3.1. Scale reliability and Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)**

The scale's reliability results indicate that most of the measurement scales meet the requirements of CA (> 0.7) and CI-TC (> 0.3) (Hair et al., 2010).

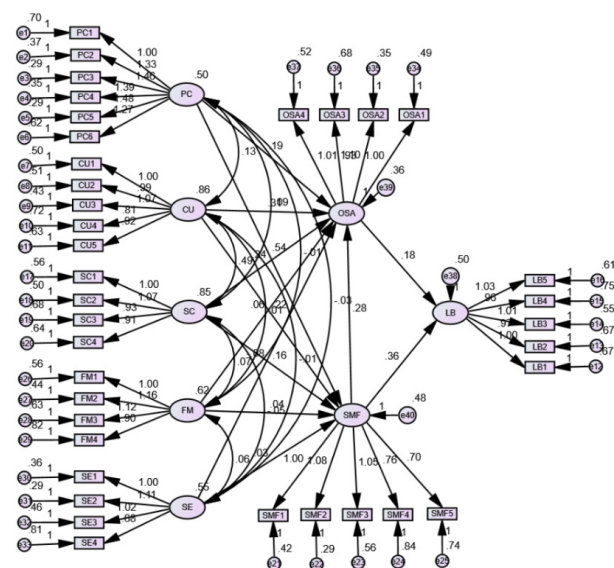
EFA was run to test the construct validity between the model's variables. The results show that 0.5 < KMO = 0.905 < 1; Bartlett's sig. = < 0.05; Total Variance Explained is 59.201% > 50% with an eigenvalue > 1, and Factor loading of all items is higher than 0.7, which indicates that they have a good statistical explanation

(Hair et al., 2010). However, SE5, SMF5, and SMF6 were removed as they did not meet the convergence and discriminant validity criteria.

**3.2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)**

The CFA results indicate that the model fit satisfied all requirements, reliability was confirmed again by CR, p-value (< 0.05), and standardized regression weight satisfies the minimum threshold of 0.5. Next, convergent and discriminant validity are tested using the Fornell and Larcker test. Results from the test showed that Composite Reliability (CR) ≥ 0.7 and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) ≥ 0.5 indicate that convergent validity is satisfactory. In addition, Maximum Shared Variance (MSV) < Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Square Root of AVE (SQRTAVE) > Inter-Construct Correlations in Fornell and Larcker's table indicate that discriminant validity is satisfactory.

**3.3. Hypothesis testing**



**Figure 3. The result of research model**

**Table 1. The discrimination of the variables**

	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR (H)	PC	CU	LB	SC	SMF	FM	SE	OSA
PC	0.921	0.664	0.243	0.935	0.815							
CU	0.876	0.587	0.369	0.885	0.193***	0.766						
LB	0.840	0.512	0.235	0.842	0.377***	0.273***	0.716					
SC	0.844	0.576	0.328	0.849	0.146***	0.573***	0.266***	0.759				
SMF	0.849	0.536	0.329	0.883	0.493***	0.411***	0.485***	0.363***	0.732			
FM	0.817	0.530	0.012	0.831	-0.011	0.012	0.035	0.092	0.054	0.728		
SE	0.809	0.523	0.012	0.844	-0.059	-0.016	-0.026	-0.076	-0.016	0.109*	0.723	
OSA	0.867	0.622	0.369	0.877	0.382***	0.607***	0.409***	0.564***	0.573***	0.086	-0.096	0.783

SEM analysis was conducted to test the proposed hypothesis. The results showed that with  $p$ -value  $< 0.05$ , H4b, H5b, and H8b are supported. Therefore, privacy concern has the strongest impact on social media fatigue ( $\beta = 0.536$ ), suggesting that heightened awareness of data privacy risks significantly contributes to users feeling overwhelmed or exhausted by social media usage. The second most influential factor is compulsive use ( $\beta = 0.220$ ), implying that excessive, uncontrollable engagement with social media platforms can lead to fatigue over time. Social comparison ( $\beta = 0.158$ ) also plays a role, albeit to a lesser extent, highlighting that constant evaluation of oneself against others may contribute to emotional exhaustion and disengagement. There are 3 variables that have a positive impact on online social anxiety ( $p$ -value  $< 0.05$ ), with the strongest impact being compulsive use ( $\beta = 0.313$ ), the second one is social comparison ( $\beta = 0.244$ ), and the final is privacy concern ( $\beta = 0.189$ ). Therefore, H4a, H5a, H8a are accepted. This observation is consistent with previous research (Liu et al., 2024), which emphasizes the significant influence of these aspects on users' experiences with social media. Privacy concerns also play a crucial role in shaping user behavior. Many users refrain from sharing personal information due to fears of data breaches or misuse. Accessing new features or services often requires disclosing sensitive details, such as location, contact information, identity credentials, or home addresses. Social comparison metrics suggest that when users evaluate themselves against others they perceive as more skilled or knowledgeable, it can negatively affect their self-image. This internal struggle to maintain a favorable self-perception within social media environments can exacerbate anxiety and contribute to feelings of fatigue. Dhir et al. (2018) explored the rise of social media usage and its consequences, including increased user fatigue. Based on data collected from Indian adolescents, the study demonstrated that compulsive use of social media was a key factor contributing to fatigue, which subsequently led to heightened anxiety and depression. These findings underscore that privacy concern, social comparison, and compulsive use, as intrinsic motivational factors, are significantly correlated with social media fatigue and online social anxiety. This suggests that interventions aimed at reducing social media fatigue should address not only usage patterns but also users' perceptions of privacy risks and the psychological impact of social comparison. Additionally, given the high engagement of young women aged 18-25 on social media, they may be more vulnerable to these effects, highlighting the need for targeted strategies to promote healthier digital habits and resilience against social media-induced stress.

By the way, the results showed that there is no statistical evidence showing that self-efficacy and fear

of missing out have impact on social media fatigue and online social anxiety ( $p$ -value  $> 0.05$ ). Thus, H6a, H6b, H7a and H7b are rejected. This outcome can be explained by the nuanced behaviors of different user groups. Individuals with high self-efficacy often manage their social media use effectively, avoiding over-engagement and thus not experiencing fatigue, while those with low self-efficacy may limit their social media use altogether, leading to minimal exposure to fatigue-inducing factors. Similarly, for FOMO, while it drives individuals to stay updated and connected, the satisfaction derived from fulfilling this desire might counteract the negative emotional and physical toll of fatigue. Additionally, previous research (Tandon et al., 2021) suggests that FOMO's impact on fatigue may be indirect, operating through intermediaries like compulsive use or information overload. Together, these dynamics likely neutralized direct relationships, explaining why neither self-efficacy nor FOMO showed a statistically significant effect on fatigue in this context.

With  $p$ -value  $< 0.05$ ,  $\beta = 0.283$ , and  $\beta = 0.363$  respectively, H2 and H3 indicated that higher levels of social media fatigue are associated with increased online social anxiety and a greater tendency for lurking behavior, aligning with the findings of Świątek et al. (2021). As users become more fatigued, they may feel more anxious in online interactions or withdraw from active participation and adopt lurking behavior instead. The results revealed that online social anxiety directly influences lurking behavior ( $\beta = 0.179$ ,  $p$ -value  $< 0.05$ ), providing empirical support for H1. The study's conclusions align with the findings of Liu et al. (2024) and Qin et al. (2024), both of which emphasize that prolonged exposure to negative emotional states compels users to adopt lurking behaviors as a coping mechanism. Prolonged negative emotional states often drive users toward lurking, a passive observation mode devoid of active engagement, as a coping mechanism to alleviate social media-induced stress. With their influence on lurking behavior, social media fatigue and online social anxiety have become problems that companies must pay close attention to when conducting promotional activities on online platforms. Companies are at high risk of incurring significant costs from pursuing expensive media promotion campaigns that may not yield commensurate results.

## 4. Conclusion

### 4.1. Discussion and Implications

This study highlights the significant impact of privacy concern, compulsive use, and social comparison on social media fatigue (SMF), online social anxiety (OSA), and lurking behavior. Privacy concern discourages open participation due to fears of

data misuse, while compulsive use fosters exhaustion through dependency. Social comparison intensifies feelings of inadequacy, exacerbating SMF and OSA, ultimately leading to passive lurking behavior.

The integration of the Stressor-Strain-Outcome (SSO) model and Self-Determination Theory (SDT) advances theoretical understanding by linking stressors and motivational factors to behavioral outcomes. In the age of big data and widespread social media usage, the prevalence of negative emotions and harmful usage patterns among users has become increasingly concerning. While previous research has largely focused on addictive or excessive usage behaviors, our study explores the less-examined realm of prolonged usage. It uncovers the underlying mechanisms driving social media fatigue and online social anxiety across cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions. Additionally, this study investigates how lurking behaviors are influenced by negative emotions, such as fatigue and anxiety, addressing a critical gap in existing literature that has predominantly emphasized active or excessive engagement while overlooking the impact of passive usage patterns. By offering a novel theoretical perspective, this research provides valuable insights for understanding and mitigating these complex phenomena. This study's findings enhance the credibility of social media platforms by providing deeper insights into users' lurking behavior, particularly among individuals aged 18–25, the most active demographic on social media. Understanding the motivations behind lurking can assist brands and platforms in implementing strategies to foster user engagement, improve content delivery, and enhance community interactions. As we research on all social media platforms, this research offers a general framework for brands and platforms to optimize user experiences and address challenges related to passive online behavior.

For social media users, developing self-regulation strategies is essential to mitigating privacy concerns, compulsive use, and social comparison. Users should actively manage privacy settings, limit data sharing, and be mindful of engaging with content that may trigger negative emotions. Setting screen time restrictions, using platform-provided well-being tools, and engaging in positive, supportive communities can help reduce social media fatigue and online social anxiety, fostering a healthier digital experience.

For social media platforms, prioritizing user trust and well-being is crucial in reducing social media fatigue and online social anxiety while encouraging active participation. Platforms should enhance privacy controls, provide clearer data management options and transparent privacy policies to alleviate user concerns. Implementing smart content moderation, AI-driven recommendations that prioritize mental well-being, and features that encourage mindful social media use -

such as screen time reminders and positive interaction prompts - can help reduce compulsive behavior and social comparison.

For brands, focusing on transparent and privacy-conscious advertising, avoiding intrusive data collection and ensuring users have control over their personal information. Marketing strategies should shift away from promoting unrealistic social comparison and instead highlight authenticity, self-confidence, and personal well-being. By developing content that is uplifting, informative, and community-oriented, brands can encourage users to engage more actively and positively with digital platforms, ultimately contributing to a more sustainable and mentally healthy social media environment.

#### 4.2. Limitation and future research

This study has several limitations that provide opportunities for improvement in future research. First, the sample primarily consisted of female with 64.1% and young social media users aged 18 to 35, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other gender and age groups. This narrow age range made it difficult to explore how social media fatigue (SMF) behaviors differ across generations, thereby restricting the scope and depth of the data. To address this limitation, future research should include a more balanced gender and diverse age range to gain a better understanding of how SMF affects individuals at various life stages. Another limitation is that this study did not thoroughly examine extrinsic motivation, which includes factors such as information overload, functional overload, and social overload. While intrinsic motivation was a focal point of this study, the exclusion of extrinsic factors limits the ability to fully understand the broader mechanisms contributing to behaviors like lurking, social media fatigue, and online social anxiety. Future research should consider both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations to offer a more comprehensive analysis of the interplay between these factors and their impact on user behavior.

Lastly, this study mainly examined the negative side of lurking behavior. However, lurking could also have positive aspects, therefore, future research could explore these benefits, offering a more balanced view of lurking and its role in social media engagement. By considering both the positive and negative sides of lurking, future studies can provide a fuller picture of how users interact with online platforms.

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