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THE IMPACT OF FEAR OF MISSING OUT ON PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING: A DUAL- PATHWAY ANALYSIS THROUGH PROBLEMATIC SOCIAL MEDIA USE AND DIGITAL BURNOUT IN NURSING STUDENTS

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Abstract

Background:
Nursing students have experienced the influence of social media on communication and learning which has resulted in feelings of fear of missing out (FoMO), problematic social networking, and digital burn out. Now these factors are a matter of concern for the nursing education.The concerns of the nursing education are about the negative impact of these issues on student's psychological well-being, academic achievement and employment opportunities.

Objective:
This study seeks to investigate the association between problematic social media use and digital burnout among nursing students, their psychological well-being in terms of social media use and to measure the fear of missing out (FOMO) associated with social media use.

Methods:
A correlational cross-sectional study with a descriptive approach was conducted in a sample of
110 nursing students of Saida Waheed FMH College of Nursing, who were selected by convenience sampling technique. The information was gathered from a verified, self-conducted
questionnaire and then processed using IBM SPSS Statistics. Descriptive statistics and Chi-square tests were used, with $p<0.05$ considered statistically significant.

Results:
The results indicated that most of the sample experienced moderate FoMO, mostly linked to fear of being excluded. The PSMU was positively correlated with FoMO, and a significant correlation was established between PSMU with digital burnout ($r = 0.392$, $p < 0.001$). FoMO was positively related to PSMU, and PSMU was significantly related to digital burnout ($r = 0.392$, $p < 0.001$).

Conclusion:
FOMO, issues with social media and digital dilution can affect the psychological health of nursing students. Although problematic social media use and digital burnout are common among many nursing students, it is important to take steps to encourage healthy social media use, balanced social media activities, and

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mental health.

INTRODUCTION

This has led to a change in communication, interaction and maintenance between people towards the humanization of the media, including the use of digital devices and social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, X (Twitter), TikTok(Savitri, 2019). Although these social media networks are key to making connections and sharing information, there is growing evidence that social media has negative implications for mental health. Therefore, excessive usage of social networking sites could lead to higher anxiety, stress and lower life satisfaction(Tufan et al., 2026). The main factor that underlies this relationship is the constant fear of missing out (FoMO) that is the negative feeling that others are living out fun experiences without one's participation, and the high need to be part of others' activities. FoMO is the most common type of social media exposure amongst adolescents and young adults, and has grown in prevalence during COVID-19. Moderate to high degrees of FoMO have been reported in almost 60% to 70% of youth, highlighting its emerging influence on psychological functioning in the digital era(Akbari et al., 2021; Tanhan et al., 2022).

The study conducted by Erika Barretto, Pacarat Julianne Margarette, Asum Nuryawm and Liwagon Aljelyn in 2025 adopted a descriptive correlational design to explore the relationship between fear of missing out (FoMO) and the intensity of using Facebook. A total of 105 Mindanao State University-Iligan undergraduate students who were active Facebook users were used(Alfina et al., 2023). Based on Belongingness Hypothesis and Information Foraging Theory, the study examined the relationship between social connection needs and access to information and social media behavior. The findings were in line with the proposition that social belonging and information seeking motives lead to greater engagement with social networking platforms, as higher scores in FoMO were correlated with greater engagement with Facebook(Tresna et al., 2025).

Digital burnout is a feeling of emotional fatigue, cynicism, and decreased productivity that occurs as a result of excessive usage of digital technology. Contrary to the conventional burn out, this comes from being always connected, being overwhelmed with information and forced to present oneself online. Digital burnout has been rising since 2019, especially among students and remote workers, and is most prevalent among those who use social media(Chan et al., 2022; Morsi et al., 2025).

Problematic social media use involves using social media excessively, compulsively and in ways that interfere with life, which can cause emotional distress and problems with well-being. Recent studies have revealed that FoMO is significantly associated with problematic social media and smartphone use, and that social media and smartphone use can serve as a coping mechanism to alleviate feelings of anxiety and worry regarding social isolation(Jabeen et al., 2023). In the correlational study, Qudsyi and Fasya (2024) found that it was conducted on 423 final year undergraduate students in Indonesia. The correlation test (Pearson correlation) showed that there was a significant negative correlation between FoMO and psychological well-being ($r = -0.423$, $p < 0.001$), meaning that as FoMO increases, the level of psychological well-being decreases(Nesbit & Lole, 2026; Rifkin et al., 2025).

Methodology

A cross sectional correlational study was conducted at Saida Waheed FMH College of Nursing to explore the relationship between FoMO, social media challenges, digital burnout and psychological well-being of nursing students. The sample consisted of 110 students of first and second year aged 18 years and above who were selected from the actual respondents by using the convenience sampling technique. Data were collected by a validated, self-contained 5-point Likert scale survey. It secured ethical approval

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and informed consent and participants' confidentiality. Descriptive statistics were used and a Chi-square test was used to assess the relationships between variables in IBM SPSS Statistics. If the p-value was < 0.05 it was deemed to be statistically significant.

Results

Table 1 Problematic Social media use among nursing students

I have had difficulties controlling my social media activity.	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Strongly disagree	24	21.8%
Disagree	33	30.0%
Neutral	33	30.0%
Agree	17	15.5%
Strongly agree	3	2.7%
I have given increasing priority to social media use over other life interests and daily activities.		
Strongly disagree	5	4.5%
Disagree	29	20.9%
Neutral	22	20.0%
Agree	39	35.5%
Strongly agree	21	19.1%
I have continued social media use despite the occurrence of negative consequences.		
Strongly disagree	12	10.9%
Disagree	33	30.0%
Neutral	33	30.0%
Agree	26	23.6%
Strongly agree	6	5.5%
I have experienced significant problems in life (e.g., personal, family, social, education, occupational) due to the severity of my social media behavior.		
Strongly disagree	20	18.2%
Disagree	5	4.5%

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Neutral	29	26.4%
Agree	31	28.2%
Strongly agree	25	22.7%

The results of the study indicate that problematic social media use was prevalent among nursing students as presented in Table 1. Overall 30.0% reported problems controlling their social media use, 35.5% reported that social media had taken precedence over other activities, 30.0% stated that they were unable to stop even when the activities had a negative effect, and 28.2% reported that social media interfered with their daily activities.

Table 2 Digital Burnout among nursing Students

I feel emotionally exhausted because of excessive digital device use.		
Strongly disagree	14	12.7%
Disagree	24	21.8%
Neutral	25	22.7%
Agree	35	31.8%
Strongly agree	12	10.9%
I feel mentally tired after spending time on digital platforms.		
Strongly disagree	6	5.5%
Disagree	24	21.8%
Neutral	25	22.7%
Agree	39	35.5%
Strongly agree	16	14.5%
I feel drained when I use digital devices for long periods.		
Strongly disagree	9	8.2%
Disagree	18	16.4%
Neutral	27	24.5%
Agree	40	36.4%
Strongly agree	16	14.5%
I feel worn out due to continuous digital engagement		
Strongly disagree	11	10.0%

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Disagree	24	21.8%
Neutral	35	31.8%
Agree	29	26.4%
Strongly agree	11	10.0%
I feel overwhelmed by digital technologies.		
Strongly disagree	14	12.7%
Disagree	23	20.9%
Neutral	33	30.0%
Agree	32	29.1%
Strongly agree	8	7.3%
I feel worthless when I use digital devices excessively.		
Strongly disagree	26	23.6%
Disagree	20	18.2%
Neutral	31	28.2%
Agree	23	20.9%
Strongly agree	10	9.1%

As can be seen in Table 2: many nursing students suffered from digital burnout. Overall, 36.4% felt emotionally exhausted after extended digital device use; approximately 30% were neither emotionally exhausted nor emotionally recovered by using digital devices excessively. Overall, 36.4% felt emotionally exhausted after extended digital device use, and 30% felt neither emotionally exhausted nor recovered from using digital devices excessively.

Table 3 Mean Score of problematic social media use among nursing students

	N	Mean ± SD	Minimum	Maximum
PSMU mean Score	110	10.3455±2.80706	4	20

Table 4 Levels of Problematic social media use among nursing students

PSMU	Frequency	Percentage
Positive	78	70.9%
Negative	32	29.1%

As demonstrated in Table 4, most of the nursing students (70.9%) had problematic social media use, suggesting problematic social media behavior is prevalent among these students.

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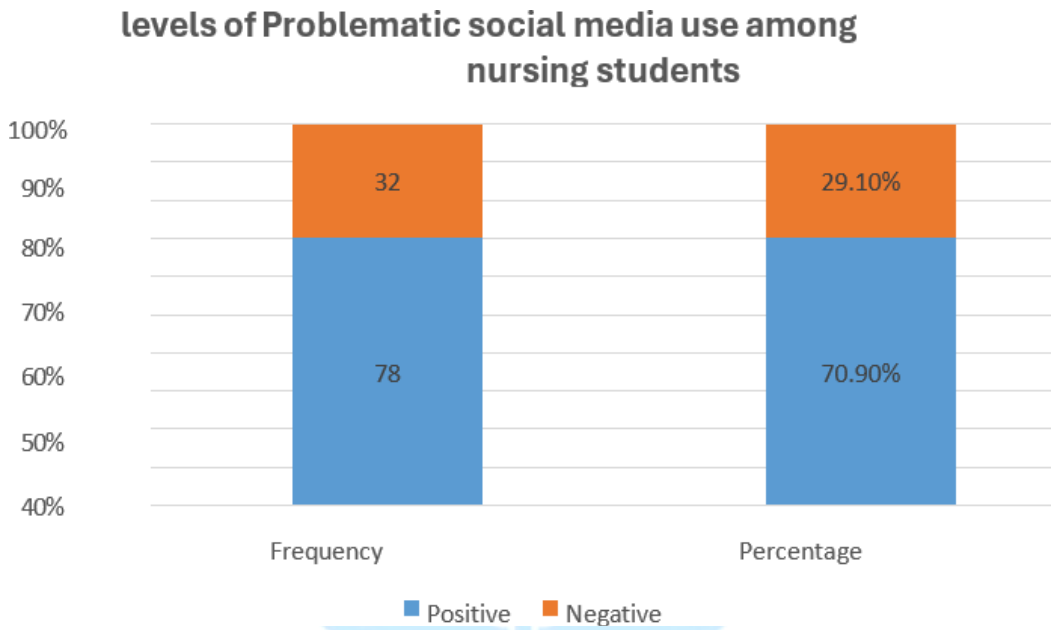


Figure 1 Bar chart showing levels of Problematic social media use among nursing students

Figure 1 shows percentage of problematic social media use among nursing students in which most nursing students 78 (70.9%,) showed positive problematic social media use, while 32 (29.1%) were negative. This indicates that more than 2/3 of the students are impacted, which is a major concern about students' social media use.

Table 5 Mean Score of digital burnouts among nursing students

	N	Mean ± SD	Minimum	Maximum
DBO mean score	110	18.4653±4.81526	6	30

Table 6 Levels of digital burnout among nursing students

DBO	Frequency	Percentage
High effect	84	76.4%

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Low effect	26	23.6%

In Table 6: the highest DBO was experienced by most of the participants (84, 76.4%) while the lowest was experienced by 26 (23.6%). This indicates that most nursing students are considerably affected by DBO.

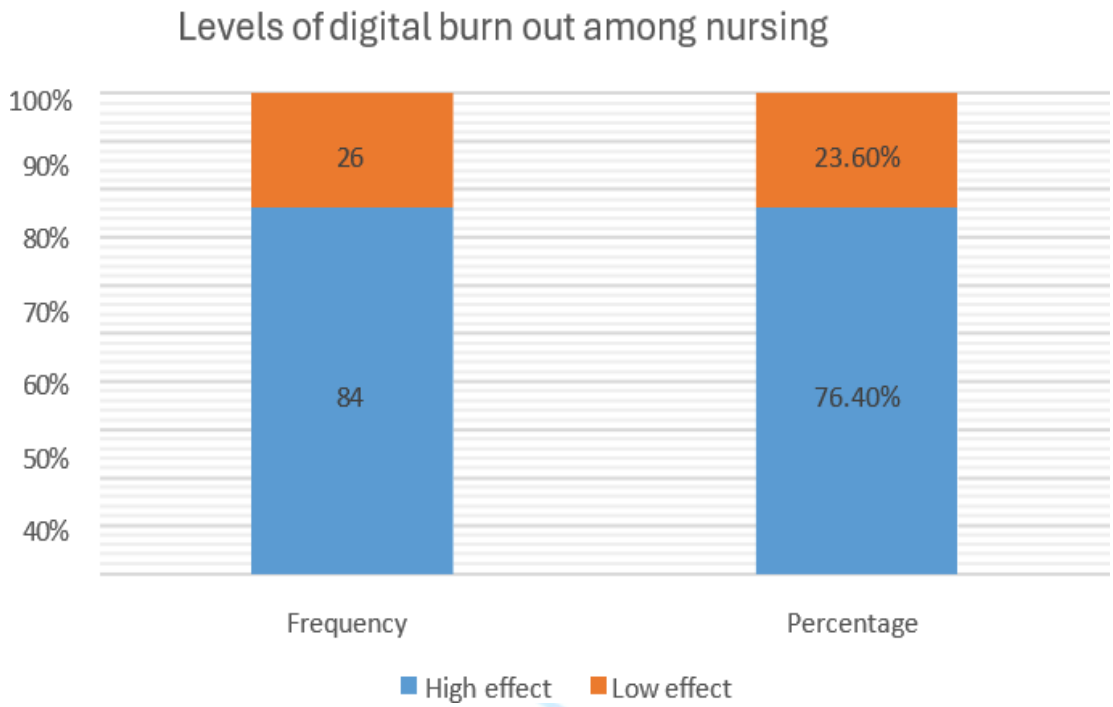


Figure 2 Bar chart showing level of digital burnout among nursing students

Figure 2 shows that digital burnout level of nursing students, most nursing students 84 (76.4%) had high digital burnout while only 16 (23.6%) had low digital burnout, this shows that digital burn out is high among nursing students.

Discussions

In this study, undergraduate nursing students were examined for issues with social media and digital burnout. The study indicated that a large number of the people were saying they were using problematic social media platforms (70.9%) and were also feeling digital burnout (76.4%), meaning they are likely to be investing too much in the digital world. The previous research indicated that the tendency to engage in unhealthy use of social media and digital exhaustion is increased in university students because of their. increased dependence on digital technologies for academic and social activities(Habib & Almamy, 2025). Results of the latest study indicated that

70.9 percent of the nursing students showed problematic social media use (PSMU) and the mean was found to be 10.35 (2.81) out of 20. This is in tandem with literature that indicates high rates

of PSMU in students. As an example, Phuyal et al. (2024) and Jing et al. (2025) have determined that overusing social media can result in adverse psychological consequences in terms of anxiety, depression, and poor academic performance. The current study showed the same trend with a considerable fraction of the nursing students affirming that the use of social media had begun to interfere with their daily lives, specifically as a priority over other activities.

To be more precise, 35.5% of them said that they

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had placed more and more emphasis on the use of social media over other aspects of life, and daily activities as found in in the literature(Brailovskaia et al., 2023). The current study found that there was a high level of Digital Burnout among 76.4% of the participants. The participants confirming a high level of burnout were on average: 18.47 ± 4.82/30. This is consistent with the previous research that revealed the link between digital stress and excess use of social media. Oliveira et al. (2024) correlated FoMO with experiences of digital burnout, and Tufan et al. (2025) found that FoMO negatively affected psychological well-being. Likewise, the current study showed a significant positive correlation between problematic social media use and digital burnout ($r = 0.392$, $p<0.001$). Despite the high levels of burnout, many students experienced positive psychological well-being, perhaps because of resilience and peer support.(Littman-Ovadia & Russo-Netzer, 2024)

Recommendations

Digital health education should be adopted by the nursing profession to educate students about the effective use of social media, stress management and time management. Future studies should take into account a specific social media platform to determine which platform is a greater source of FoMO and digital burnout, such as Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp, and X. Comparative studies involving students from other health care professions (e.g., medicine, pharmacy, allied health sciences) could establish if the reported relationships are exclusive to nursing students.

Limitations

Convenient sampling may lead to sampling bias and make it difficult to generalise results to the entire population of nursing students. • The study was only done in one college, and may not be representative of all nursing students. The study only mentions and includes social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, Whatsapp and twitter (X), however it does not provide an in-depth look into the effects of these platforms on FOMO and burnout.

Conclusion

Nursing students have significant problematic social media use and digital burnout, underscoring the detrimental effects of overuse of digital tools on psychological well-being. A digital wellness education, healthy social media use and mental health promotion should be integrated into nursing curricula, which can decrease FoMO-related behaviors and improve student academic outcomes and mental health.

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