Impact of the Social Media Usage on the Psychological Violence of Social Media Users in Sri Lanka

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, the pervasive influence of social media on individuals' lives has sparked growing concern about its potential repercussions, particularly in the context of psychological violence. This research delves into the intricate impact of social media usage on the psychological violence experienced by social media users in Sri Lanka. The study identifies four key dimensions—Highlight Reel, Social Currency, Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), and Addiction—as independent variables that may significantly contribute to the manifestation of psychological violence. The concept of the Highlight Reel refers to the curated and idealized versions of individuals' lives often presented on social media platforms, fostering unrealistic expectations and a sense of inadequacy among users. Social Currency explores the psychological impact of the pursuit of validation and social approval through online interactions, potentially leading to feelings of exclusion and worthlessness. Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) is examined as a psychological state arising from the constant exposure to others' seemingly exciting experiences, potentially generating anxiety and distress among users who feel disconnected from these activities. Lastly, Addiction is investigated as a dimension encompassing the compulsive and excessive use of social media, exploring its association with heightened stress, anxiety, and aggression. The study employs a sample size of 384 participants from diverse demographics in Sri Lanka to capture a comprehensive understanding of the subject. The research aims to provide a nuanced exploration of the intricate interplay between social media usage and psychological violence. The findings of this study hold significant implications for both academic discourse and practical interventions, offering insights into the specific dimensions of social media usage

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that may contribute to psychological violence among users in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: Social media usage, psychological violence, highlight reel, social currency, fear of missing out, addiction

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the pervasive influence of social media on individuals' lives has sparked growing concern about its potential repercussions on psychological well-being, particularly in the context of psychological violence. This research delves into the intricate impact of social media usage on the psychological violence experienced by social media users in Sri Lanka. The study identifies four key dimensions—Highlight Reel, Social Currency, Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), and Addiction—as independent variables that may significantly contribute to the manifestation of psychological violence. Social media is an internet-based form of communication that billions of people around the world use to share their ideas, information, and foster connections. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn have become integral parts of daily life, with the number of users growing exponentially each year. As of January 2023, Sri Lanka had approximately 7.20 million social media users, accounting for 33.9 percent of the total population. This widespread usage highlights the significant role social media plays in modern communication and interaction. Social media platforms are often seen as multitasking tools that allow users to engage in various activities simultaneously. While these platforms enable efficient communication and content sharing, excessive multitasking on social media can lead to distraction, reduced attention span, and decreased productivity. The use of social media varies based on socio-cultural, demographic, and psychological factors, with users frequently engaging in activities that satisfy their need for social belonging. However, social media is not just a domain of freedom and self-expression; it is also a space where various forms of violence, including psychological violence, can emerge. Psychological violence encompasses non-physical acts or behaviors that cause emotional or mental harm, such as coercion, humiliation, gaslighting, manipulation, and restraint. In the context of social media, psychological violence can manifest as cyberbullying, online harassment, stalking, and the spread of harmful content. The primary concern of this study is the relationship between social media usage and psychological violence among users in Sri Lanka. Despite the numerous benefits associated with social media, the potential for it to contribute to psychological violence is a significant issue that warrants thorough investigation. This study seeks to address the following research questions: What is the impact of social media usage on psychological violence among social media users in Sri Lanka? How do specific dimensions of social media usage (Highlight Reel, Social Currency, Fear of Missing Out, and Addiction) influence psychological violence among these users? The primary objective of this research is to identify the impact of social media usage on psychological violence among social media users in Sri Lanka. The specific objectives include examining the

effect of the Highlight Reel on psychological violence, investigating the influence of Social Currency on psychological violence, assessing the impact of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) on psychological violence, and evaluating the role of Addiction in psychological violence. Based on the objectives, the study hypothesizes the following: There is a significant impact of the Highlight Reel on psychological violence among social media users in Sri Lanka, Social Currency significantly influences psychological violence among these users, Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) has a substantial impact on psychological violence, and Addiction to social media significantly contributes to psychological violence. Understanding the impact of social media usage on psychological violence is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, it provides insights into how modern communication tools affect mental health and social interactions. Secondly, the findings can inform policymakers, mental health professionals, and educators about the potential risks associated with social media usage, leading to better strategies for mitigating these risks. Lastly, this study contributes to the broader academic discourse on the relationship between technology and psychological well-being. The research employs a quantitative approach, utilizing surveys to collect data from a sample of 384 social media users in Sri Lanka. The study focuses on measuring the impact of the identified dimensions (Highlight Reel, Social Currency, FOMO, and Addiction) on psychological violence. Data analysis involves statistical techniques such as descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression analysis to determine the relationships between variables and validate the hypotheses.

2. LITERATURE

2.1 Social Media Usage

Social media is defined as “the relationships that exist between networks of people” (Chen & Xiao, 2022). It encompasses a diverse range of capabilities, including seamless communication, instant messaging, image sharing, audio and video functionalities, rapid content dissemination, global connectivity, and direct interconnectivity with individuals worldwide (Senarath & Ratnayake, 2021). The exponential rise of social media platforms has revolutionized the way people of diverse age groups connect, collaborate, communicate, express, exchange, acquire, and upload information. For people of all ages, social media offers the cheapest and fastest access to the globe, and its usage is growing rapidly worldwide (Safdar et al., 2014).

Social media platforms like Facebook, Skype, Twitter, YouTube, and MySpace have been promoted as tools that bridge racial, class, and ethnic differences. According to Shrestha Lucky (2013), social media is a way for people to communicate with one another and exchange ideas and information in online groups (Ayhan et al., 2005). This expansive reach and integration into daily life make social media a significant factor in shaping modern social interactions and behaviors (Wickramanayake, 2022).

2.2 Social Media Usage in Sri Lanka

As of January 2023, Sri Lanka had approximately 7.20 million social media users, accounting for 33.9 percent of the total population. The rapid increase in social media usage in Sri Lanka mirrors global trends, highlighting the significant role these platforms play in communication and information dissemination. The majority of young people are quickly transitioning from traditional media like television and radio to social media, which has a considerable influence on their behaviors and social interactions (Safdar et al., 2014).

2.2.1 Highlight Reel

The Highlight Reel refers to the tendency of social media users to post curated and idealized versions of their lives. This phenomenon can lead to unrealistic comparisons and feelings of inadequacy among viewers. Research indicates that exposure to these idealized portrayals can negatively impact self-esteem and contribute to psychological distress (Przybylski et al., 2013). The constant comparison to others' seemingly perfect lives can exacerbate feelings of loneliness, depression, and anxiety, ultimately contributing to psychological violence (Bailey Parnell, 2017).

2.2.2 Social Currency

Social Currency refers to the value that individuals derive from the attention and validation they receive on social media. Likes, comments, and shares serve as social validation, reinforcing users' behaviors and encouraging them to seek more engagement. The pursuit of social currency can lead to addictive behaviors, where individuals prioritize online validation over real-life interactions. This constant need for approval can result in stress, anxiety, and other forms of psychological violence (Kolhar et al., 2021).

2.2.3 Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)

FOMO is a psychological phenomenon where individuals experience anxiety over the possibility of missing out on rewarding experiences that others might be having. This fear is often exacerbated by social media, where users are constantly exposed to posts about events, activities, and experiences they are not part of. Research has shown that FOMO is associated with negative emotional states, such as anxiety and depression, which can contribute to psychological violence (Przybylski et al., 2013).

2.2.4 Addiction

Addiction to social media is characterized by excessive use and an inability to regulate usage despite negative consequences. Symptoms of social media addiction include functional impairment, reduced performance, poor academic success, and disruption of psychological functioning (Hawi & Samaha, 2017). Social media addiction can lead to isolation, restlessness, and a constant need for engagement, which can negatively impact mental health and contribute to psychological violence (Margolin, 2013).

2.3 Psychological Violence

Psychological violence encompasses non-physical acts or behaviors that cause emotional or mental harm, such as coercion, humiliation, gaslighting, manipulation, and restraint (Mengü & Mengü, 2015). In the

context of social media, psychological violence can manifest as cyberbullying, online harassment, stalking, and the spread of harmful content. The anonymous and pervasive nature of social media can amplify these behaviors, leading to significant psychological distress for the victims (Stephenson et al., 2018).

2.4 Empirical Evidence

Highlight Reel and Psychological Violence: Empirical studies have demonstrated that exposure to the Highlight Reel on social media can lead to increased feelings of inadequacy and lower self-esteem. This can result in negative mental health outcomes, including depression and anxiety, which are key components of psychological violence (Przybylski et al., 2013).

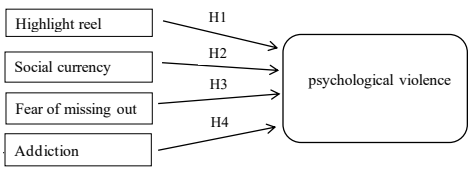
Social Currency and Psychological Violence: The pursuit of social currency has been linked to addictive behaviors and increased stress levels. Studies indicate that individuals who heavily invest in their social media presence for validation are more likely to experience psychological distress and exhibit signs of addiction, which can contribute to psychological violence (Kolhar et al., 2021).

FOMO and Psychological Violence: Research on FOMO has shown a strong correlation between high levels of FOMO and increased anxiety and depression. Individuals experiencing FOMO are more susceptible to feeling excluded and lonely, which can lead to heightened psychological distress and violence (Przybylski et al., 2013).

Addiction and Psychological Violence: Social media addiction has been extensively studied, with findings consistently indicating its negative impact on mental health. Addicted individuals often experience higher levels of anxiety, depression, and loneliness, which are significant factors in psychological violence (Hawi & Samaha, 2017).

3. METHODOLOGY

The research design for this study is primarily quantitative, employing survey research as the main method of data collection. Quantitative research is defined as a systematic investigation that primarily focuses on quantifying relationships, behaviors, and phenomena. This approach is chosen for its ability to generate numerical data that can be subjected to statistical analysis, thus providing objective and reliable results. The goal is to identify the impact of social media usage on the psychological violence experienced by social media users in Sri Lanka. This research adopts an explanatory design, also known as causal research, which seeks to understand the cause-and-effect relationships by exploring how different variables interact and influence each other. The study aims to explain the relationships between the independent variables (Highlight Reel, Social Currency, Fear of Missing Out, and Addiction) and the dependent variable (psychological violence)



among social media users in Sri Lanka (see Figure 1).

A survey research strategy was employed to gather data from the participants. Surveys are effective tools for collecting large amounts of data from a sizeable sample population, allowing for the collection of

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

standardized data that can be easily compared and analyzed statistically. The survey instrument was a structured questionnaire, designed to capture responses related to social media usage and experiences of psychological violence. A theoretical framework is a conceptual model of how one theorizes or makes logical sense of the relationships among the several factors that have been identified as important to the problem. It is crucial to comprehend what a variable means and what the various types of variables are because a theoretical framework provides the conceptual foundation for moving forward with the research and because a theoretical framework is nothing more than identifying the network of relationships among the variables considered important to the study of any given problem situation (Wells, n.d.). Based on previous research by Bailey Parnell (2017), Przybylski et al. (2013), Kolhar et al. (2021), and others, the conceptual framework of this study includes the Highlight Reel, Social Currency, Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), and Addiction as independent variables, with psychological violence as the dependent variable. The framework shows how social media usage influences psychological violence, providing a basis for developing hypotheses.

The population for this study consists of social media users in Sri Lanka. According to the Digital 2023 Sri Lanka data report, there were approximately 7.20 million social media users in Sri Lanka as of January 2023,

Formula 1. Sample size calculation

$$\text{Sample size} = \frac{\frac{z^2 \times p\,(1-p)}{e^2}}{1 + \left(\frac{z^2 \times p\,(1-p)}{e^2 N}\right)}$$

which accounts for 33.9% of the total population. Given the large size of this population, a representative sample was necessary to make the study manageable and the results generalizable. To determine the sample size, the researcher used a formula for calculating the required sample for a population, setting the confidence level at 95% and the margin of error at 5% (see formula 1).

This resulted in a sample size of 384 participants. The sampling technique used was snowball sampling, a non-probability sampling method often employed when it is difficult to access the target population directly. This technique involves initial participants recruiting further participants from among their acquaintances, which helps in reaching a larger and more diverse sample. Snowball sampling is particularly useful in studies dealing with sensitive issues, as it leverages personal networks to facilitate participation. Data was collected using a self-administered questionnaire, distributed to the selected participants. The questionnaire was designed based on relevant literature and previously validated

instruments to ensure reliability and validity. It consisted of three sections: demographic information (i.e. Part A), questions related to the independent variables (i.e. Part B), and questions related to the dependent variable (i.e. Part C). The questionnaire used a Likert scale for most questions, allowing respondents to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with various statements on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). This format is widely used in social sciences for its ease of use and effectiveness in capturing the intensity of respondents' feelings and attitudes. The collected data was analyzed using statistical techniques to identify patterns, correlations, and causal relationships between the variables. The following analytical methods were employed: Descriptive Analysis, Reliability Analysis, Validity Test, Correlation Analysis, and Regression Analysis. Descriptive Analysis involves summarizing the basic features of the data, providing simple summaries about the sample and the measures. Descriptive statistics include measures such as mean, median, mode, and standard deviation. Reliability Analysis assesses the consistency of the measurement instrument. Cronbach's alpha was used to evaluate the internal consistency of the questionnaire, ensuring that the items within each construct were reliably measuring the same underlying concept. Validity Test determines the extent to which the instrument measures what it is intended to measure. Construct validity was assessed through factor analysis, ensuring that the questions grouped together in a way that made theoretical sense. Correlation Analysis examines the strength and direction of relationships between pairs of variables. Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to identify significant relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable. Regression Analysis was used to determine the extent to which the independent variables predict the dependent variable. Multiple regression analysis helped in understanding the relative contribution of each independent variable to the occurrence of psychological violence among social media users. Data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), a widely used software for statistical analysis in social science research. This software facilitated the efficient handling of data, enabling complex statistical analyses to be performed accurately and efficiently. The research philosophy underlying this study is a combination of positivism and interpretivism. Positivism emphasizes the use of objective measurements and statistical methods to test hypotheses and theories. This approach is reflected in the quantitative nature of the study and the use of standardized instruments for data collection. Interpretivism, on the other hand, acknowledges the subjective nature of human experiences and the need to understand the context and meaning behind those experiences. By integrating these philosophies, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how social media usage impacts psychological violence, incorporating both numerical data and contextual insights.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study is to examine how social media use affects the psychological violence experienced by social media users in Sri Lanka. The results are derived from the responses gathered through a specially designed questionnaire and analyzed using SPSS software. The findings are categorized into demographic profile, reliability analysis, descriptive analysis, correlation analysis, and regression analysis.

The demographic profile of the sample reveals the gender and age distribution, as well as the number of social media platforms used by the respondents. Among the 387 respondents, 51.8% were female (205 respondents), and 48.2% were male (182 respondents) (see figure 2).

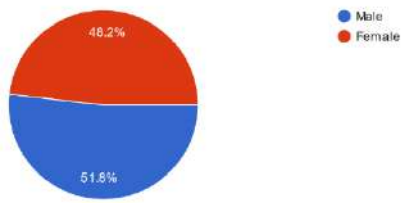


Figure 2. Gender Distribution of the Sample

The age distribution indicated that the largest group (42.4%) was between 25 and 31 years old, followed by those aged 19 to 24 years (31.8%) (see figure 3).

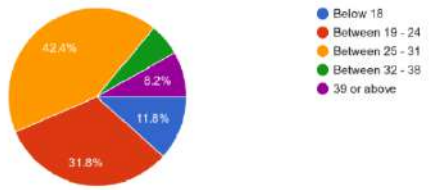


Figure 3. Age Distribution of the Sample

The majority of respondents used four or more social media platforms, with 47.1% using four platforms and 43.5% using five or more platforms.

Reliability analysis was conducted to examine the internal consistency of the constructs used to measure the key independent and dependent variables. Cronbach's alpha (α) values for all variables ranged from 0.688 to 0.913, indicating an acceptable level of reliability. The constructs measured included Highlight Reel, Social Currency, Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), Addiction, and Psychological Violence.

Descriptive analysis provides a clear understanding of the data and helps in data organization. The mean values of the variables ranged from 4.34 to 4.52, with Addiction having the highest mean value (4.52) and Highlight Reel the lowest (4.34). The standard deviation values ranged from 0.539 to 0.652, indicating the variability within the responses. The skewness values were negative, suggesting that the distribution of responses was skewed towards higher values on the Likert scale.

Correlation analysis was performed to examine the relationships between the independent variables (Highlight Reel, Social Currency, FOMO, and Addiction) and the dependent variable (Psychological Violence). The Pearson correlation coefficients indicated significant positive relationships between all independent variables and psychological violence. The correlation values were as follows: Highlight Reel (0.723), Social Currency (0.671), FOMO (0.732), and Addiction (0.735) (see table 1).

Table 1. Correlation Analysis

		HR	SC	FOMO	AD	Psy
Highlight reel (HR)	Personal correlation	1				

	Sig.(2-tailed)					
Social currency (SC)	Personal correlation	.772	1			
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.000				
Fear of missing out	Personal correlation	.690	.695	1		
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.000	.000			
Addiction (AD)	Personal correlation	.584	.518	.692	1	
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		
Psychological violence (Psy)	Personal correlation	.723	.671	.732	.735	1
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

These significant correlations suggest that higher levels of these social media usage dimensions are associated with increased psychological violence among users.

Regression analysis was used to explain the contributions of the independent variables to the dependent variable and to indicate the overall fit of the model. The R^2 value was 0.701, implying that 70.1% of the variance in psychological violence could be explained by the independent variables. The coefficient table showed that all independent variables had significant positive impacts on psychological violence. The unstandardized coefficients (B) and their significance levels were as follows: Highlight Reel ($B = 0.231$, $p < 0.000$), Social Currency ($B = 0.114$, $p < 0.004$), FOMO ($B = 0.167$, $p < 0.000$), and Addiction ($B = 0.369$, $p < 0.000$). These results support the hypotheses that Highlight Reel, Social Currency, FOMO, and Addiction significantly influence psychological violence among social media users in Sri Lanka.

In summary, the analysis indicates that the dimensions of social media usage examined in this study (Highlight Reel, Social Currency, FOMO, and Addiction) are significantly associated with psychological violence. The findings align with previous research suggesting that social media can have negative psychological effects, particularly when users engage in social comparison, seek social validation, experience fear of missing out, or develop addictive behaviors.

The implications of these findings are profound, highlighting the need for awareness and interventions to mitigate the negative impacts of social media on mental health. Policymakers, educators, and mental health professionals should consider these dimensions when developing strategies to promote healthier social media use. Moreover, social media platforms should implement features and policies that reduce the emphasis on social comparison and validation, provide tools to manage FOMO, and address addictive behaviors to protect users' psychological well-being.

Future research should continue to explore these relationships in different cultural contexts and with longitudinal designs to understand the long-term effects of social media use on psychological violence. Additionally, qualitative studies could provide deeper insights into the personal experiences of social media users and the specific mechanisms through which social media contributes to psychological violence.

5. CONCLUSION

The research on the impact of social media usage on the psychological violence of social media users in Sri Lanka has provided valuable insights into the complex

relationship between social media sites and the psychological well-being of individuals. The study aimed to investigate the psychological effects of extensive social media engagement in the context of Sri Lanka, shedding light on the various factors contributing to psychological violence among users.

The findings of this research emphasize the multifaceted nature of social media's influence on psychological violence. It is evident that the common use of social media platforms has negative consequences, particularly pronounced in terms of psychological violence. The exposure to cyberbullying, online harassment, and the rapid dissemination of harmful content significantly contribute to the deterioration of mental health among social media users. Highlight Reel, Social Currency, Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), and Addiction were identified as significant predictors of psychological violence. Each of these dimensions of social media use was found to positively correlate with increased psychological violence, highlighting the detrimental impact of curated online personas, the pursuit of social validation, anxiety over missing out, and addictive behaviors.

Understanding that social media platforms are powerful tools that can shape public opinion and influence behavior is essential. Thus, efforts to mitigate psychological violence on these platforms should involve collaboration between various stakeholders, including government bodies, social media companies, mental health professionals, and community organizations. Creating awareness, developing digital literacy, and fostering a culture of empathy and respect online are crucial components of any comprehensive strategy aimed at mitigating the negative psychological impact of social media use.

Although this study has made a substantial contribution to our comprehension of the complex relationship between psychological violence in Sri Lanka and social media use, it also creates new opportunities for investigation. Future research should focus on particular demographic groups, categories of social media material, and the changing dynamics of online communication to provide more detailed insights. Researchers can help in creating targeted interventions and policies prioritizing the mental health of social media users in Sri Lanka and elsewhere by conducting further research on this dynamic geography.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Educational Campaigns: Implement educational efforts to raise awareness about the potential psychological effects of social media use. These campaigns should emphasize appropriate and conscientious social media use to reduce psychological violence. Educational initiatives can be integrated into school curriculums, community programs, and workplace training sessions.

Digital Literacy Programs: Encourage the incorporation of digital literacy initiatives into educational institutions and community centers. Modules on recognizing and responding to psychological violence on social media platforms should be included in these programs. Digital literacy can

empower users to navigate social media more responsibly and recognize harmful behaviors early on.

Government Regulation and Policies: Propose the creation and implementation of regulations and procedures addressing online psychological violence. Government agencies should collaborate with social media platforms to develop guidelines and impose penalties for harmful online behavior. Such policies can help create a safer online environment and hold perpetrators accountable.

Crisis Intervention Services: Establish crisis intervention services for those facing psychological violence on social media. Collaborations with mental health organizations can provide affected individuals with support and counseling. Crisis helplines, online support groups, and counseling services should be made readily available to assist victims of online psychological violence.

Community Support Programs: Develop community support programs that help social media users feel a sense of connection and resilience. Emphasize the importance of offline community engagement to balance online interactions. These programs can include workshops, support groups, and community events that promote healthy social connections and mental well-being.

Research and Monitoring: Continue research on the changing environment of social media and its impact on psychological well-being. Establish monitoring mechanisms in Sri Lanka to track the frequency and trends of psychological violence on social media. Regular reports and studies can help policymakers and stakeholders stay informed and develop timely interventions.

Parental and Educator Involvement: Encourage parental and educator participation in guiding and educating children who use social media. Workshops and resources for parents and educators can help them support their children and students in navigating social media challenges. Active involvement from parents and teachers can mitigate the risks associated with social media use among young people.

Further Research Directions: Conduct longitudinal studies to observe changes in social media usage trends and psychological violence over an extended period. Comparing the impact of social media on psychological violence in different countries or regions can highlight environmental and cultural differences. Investigate the influence of demographic variables such as age, gender, socioeconomic status, and educational attainment on the relationship between social media usage and psychological violence. Explore specific types of posts or content that are most likely to encourage psychological violence and assess various intervention strategies aimed at reducing the detrimental impact of social media on mental health. Utilize qualitative research techniques, such as focus groups and interviews, to complement quantitative data and provide deeper insights into the real-life experiences of social media users.

By exploring these new research methods, stakeholders can develop more comprehensive strategies to address the complex relationship between social media use and psychological violence, ultimately

guiding preventative and intervention measures that prioritize the mental health and well-being of social media users.

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