

# Social media use and fear of missing out as predictors of life satisfaction among undergraduates in selected universities in Nigeria

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## CITATION

Ogunsemi JO, Lapinni CE. Social media use and fear of missing out as predictors of life satisfaction among undergraduates in selected universities in Nigeria. *Applied Psychology Research*. 2026; 5(1): 4157.  
<https://doi.org/10.59400/apr4157>

## ARTICLE INFO

Received: 16 February 2026

Revised: 26 March 2026

Accepted: 27 March 2026

Available online: 9 April 2026

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**Abstract:** The use of social media platforms has increased among university undergraduates, and the fear of missing out may be a likely underlying factor in this increase. There is, however, a paucity of empirical research addressing whether these variables predict life satisfaction among university undergraduates. The study assessed the predictive influence of social media use and fear of missing out on life satisfaction among university undergraduates in Nigeria. An ex post facto design was used. Data were collected from 358 undergraduates (Male = 46.1%, Female = 53.9%) who completed self-reporting assessments: the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SwLS), Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), and Social Media Use Scale (SMUS). Data were subjected to descriptive and inferential analyses. The study results showed that both social media use ( $\beta = -0.25, p < 0.001$ ) and FoMO ( $\beta = -0.29, p < 0.001$ ) predicted lower life satisfaction. Age and gender also predicted life satisfaction, with gender ( $\beta = 0.33, p < 0.001$ ) a significant predictor, while age was not. The independent-samples *t*-test showed that male undergraduates reported significantly higher life satisfaction than female undergraduates ( $d = 0.69$ ). In contrast, female undergraduates reported higher FoMO ( $d = 0.49$ ), and both genders showed equal social media use. The research demonstrates that FoMO and social media use patterns are essential psychological factors that impact the rating of life satisfaction through likely digital social pressure experiences across genders. The study emphasises the need for interventions that address FoMO while teaching undergraduates better digital behaviour, as these measures will help them achieve higher life satisfaction.

**Keywords:** life satisfaction; social media use; fear of missing out; gender differences; university undergraduates Nigeria

## 1. Introduction

The growth of social media has helped shape how people engage, communicate, and self-assess. University undergraduates are among the most frequent users of social media, usually for academic activities, self-expression, and fun with peers. Platforms such as WhatsApp, X, Facebook, Telegram, TikTok and Snapchat facilitate social entertainment, information sharing and social connections (Deniz, 2021; Servidio et al., 2024). There are also some concerns about the negative impact of these platforms on young people's mental health and general well-being (Shannon et al., 2022). The mechanisms linking social media use and life satisfaction remain scantily known, particularly among university undergraduates who face continuous academic demands and social pressure to keep up with peers (Verduyn et al., 2017; Ozimek et al., 2024).

Prior studies underscore the benefits of positive experiences that follow social media use, such as joy and happiness (Ozimek et al., 2024), and indicate that supportive social media engagement enhances social connections and well-being. In contrast, others have cited the considerable negative emotional states that follow excessive social media use, which elicit stress and threaten psychological well-being and life satisfaction (Ozimek et al., 2024; Kross et al., 2013; Huang, 2017). The mixed study results indicate that social media use affects individuals' moods, prompting the need for investigating the underlying motivations and cognitive processes, including Fear of missing out.

The study of fear of missing out (FoMO) has led to a growing understanding of social media use and its correlates (Przybylski et al., 2013; Elhai et al., 2020). FoMO occurs when people feel emotionally low or become sad, believing that others are having pleasant experiences in their absence and are firmly attached to the thought of staying connected to their social networks (Przybylski et al., 2013). Social media platforms show increased user activity, as FoMO may drive people to use them. Przybylski et al. (2013) stated that individuals who experience high levels of FoMO often check their social media accounts multiple times throughout the day to maintain social connections with their virtual networks. Multiple studies have shown that FoMO leads people to spend excessive time online, with harmful consequences for their digital health (Blackwell et al., 2017; Hayran and Anik, 2021). Elhai et al. (2018) established that people who experience FoMO show a strong tendency for smartphone misuse and difficulties with their emotional control. In their research, Blackwell et al. (2017) showed that FoMO predicts the development of social media addiction. Other studies have shown that FoMO predicts indiscriminate use of Instagram and smartphones at high levels despite experiencing difficulties with their use (Elhai et al., 2018; Romero-Rodríguez et al., 2020; Servidio et al., 2024). FoMO serves as the universal driver of excessive digital device use, as it creates discomfort when people lack social connections and friendships (Dempsey et al., 2019; Elhai et al., 2018; Oberst et al., 2017).

Research shows that FoMO is associated with rising negative emotional states across multiple time periods, ranging from 1 week to longer durations (Elhai et al., 2020; Milyavskaya et al., 2018). FoMO has direct links to both excessive social networking site (SNS) use and may affect how people appraise their life outcomes (Elhai et al., 2020; Oberst et al., 2017; Wolniewicz et al., 2018). Twenge and Campbell (2018) demonstrate that youth with increased screen time had worse psychological well-being and heightened depression symptoms. The study results show that emotional dependency and intensity of emotional experiences determine which psychological effects will take place. In studies, FoMO is consistently associated with greater time spent on social media and lower well-being, such as life satisfaction and happiness (Ozimek et al., 2024; Younis et al., 2025). Much data have established the linkages between happiness and social media use, suggesting that social media use may make one feel less happy and have lower life satisfaction, arising from idealised online representations that diminish self-esteem (Verduyn et al., 2017; McComb et al., 2023).

Life satisfaction is a key factor in well-being and reflects how individuals appraise their lives based on the issues they consider important (Diener et al., 2018; Younis

et al., 2025). It is known that individuals who are satisfied with their lives often live healthier lives, maintain healthy relationships (Diener and Chan, 2011; Malvaso and Kang, 2022), and achieve greater success in their careers and professional lives (Helliwell et al., 2019). However, university undergraduates who reported higher life dissatisfaction were more likely to have poor grades, experience difficulties adjusting to academic and social pressure (Younis et al., 2025), and encounter conflicting peer relationships. Social connections are helpful for building relationships with others, sharing knowledge, and boosting the chances of academic success through support networks; however, there is evidence that undergraduates encounter difficulties balancing these needs (Fasoro et al., 2019; Chen et al., 2023).

According to studies, persons with high levels of FoMO may experience perceived lower life satisfaction because they constantly compare themselves to others while feeling alienated from their peers (Przybylski et al., 2013; Littman-Ovadia and Russo-Netzer, 2024). Studies demonstrate that young people experience higher levels of subjective stress and life pressures during their academic years (Fasoro et al., 2019; Majerová and Sokolová, 2025; Ogunsemi, 2025). University undergraduates may likely start comparing themselves to others, creating emotional distress as they are overstimulated by negative incentives for online engagement, leading to anxiety when making upward social comparisons. This exposure potentially exacerbates dissatisfaction and FoMO (Verduyn et al., 2017; Wolniewicz et al., 2018; Servidio et al., 2024). Social comparisons that follow excessive social media use intensify stress as people strive to meet others' expectations while working toward their personal and academic goals (Ogunsemi, 2025). Exposure to social media content can also aggravate stress in those who feel their peers are better off than they are; this mindset may create both mental and physical tension, leading to adverse effects on physical health, overall life satisfaction, and future health outcomes (Hayran and Anik, 2021).

### **1.1. Research problems**

Despite growing research on FoMO and social media use, many studies consider these variables independently, and there is a paucity of data on the joint impact of social media use and FoMO on life satisfaction. Existing statistics show that FoMO is considerably related to uncontrolled social media use and results in impaired psychological well-being (Baker et al., 2016; Montag and Markett, 2023). Relatedly, social media use is also associated with life satisfaction through patterns of self-comparison, emotional dysregulation, and perceived social support (Verduyn et al., 2017).

Social media use among Nigerian university undergraduates is rapidly increasing, raising concerns about its potential implications on their quality of life and well-being (Asibong et al., 2020). Although few studies have identified these variables, statistics on how FoMO and social media use contribute to variations in life satisfaction ratings among university undergraduates remain scarce and are largely focused on non-African settings. The lack of sufficient data may impede the identification of information that could have supported the early need for intervention among Nigerian university undergraduates, given the influence of socio-cultural and environmental factors on how

FoMO and social media use interrelate to shape how individuals appraise their life satisfaction.

Addressing this gap is essential to developing context-specific interventions to improve student well-being. Therefore, this study investigates the predictive relationship between FoMO, social media use, and life satisfaction among university undergraduates in Osun State, Nigeria, considering both their independent and combined effects.

## **1.2. Hypotheses**

This study examined several hypotheses regarding the influence of SMUS and FoMO on life satisfaction.

**H1.** *Fear of Missing Out and social media use jointly and independently predict life satisfaction among undergraduates in Osun State, Nigeria.*

**H2.** *Age and gender of the participants will significantly predict life satisfaction among undergraduates.*

**H3.** *Male participants will report a significant difference in mean scores in life satisfaction, fear of missing out and social media use.*

## **2. Methods**

### **2.1. Study design and setting**

An ex post facto (correlational) study design was used to investigate how Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) interacts with social media usage to affect life satisfaction among university undergraduates across three purposively selected universities in Osun State, Nigeria. The design enables researchers to study existing variables without manipulation while investigating how different variables interact.

### **2.2. Participants and sample size**

The research took place in Osun State, the South-West region of Nigeria. The researchers selected three universities as study sites, each representing a different institutional type. The study included undergraduates from a private university—Redeemer’s University (RUN), a public state-owned university—Osun State University (UNIOSUN), and a public federal-owned university—Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU). The total number of undergraduate students enrolled at these institutions is 52,736, including 6,700 from RUN, 12,000 from UNIOSUN, and 34,036 from OAU. The sample size was determined using Krejcie and Morgan’s (1970) table, and with a total population of 52,736, a sample size of 381 was selected, rounded to 400 to enhance statistical robustness. A proportionate stratified sampling procedure was then used to allocate participants across institutions based on their population sizes: OAU (65.5%)—262 participants; UNIOSUN (23.0%)—92 participants, and RUN (12.8%)—46 participants.

### **2.3. Sampling and data collection procedure**

A multistage sampling approach was used. Three universities were selected through purposive sampling based on ownership and institutional characteristics. Proportionate stratified sampling was then applied to allocate sample sizes according to institutional populations. Random sampling techniques using balloting were then used to select three faculties within each selected university. Participants were subsequently recruited from the selected faculties using convenience sampling at lecture venues and hostels, subject to availability and consent. Inclusion criteria required participants to be registered, full-time undergraduates, and active social media users, as self-reported. Participation-informed consent was taken, and the procedures were anonymised and voluntary.

The authors sought permission from the Directorate of Student Affairs at each university before commencing the study. Data were collected by the researchers between April and August, 2025, with guidance and clarifying questions provided throughout the process. Informed consent was taken for ethical compliance. Data was collected in the classrooms within faculties and departments during recess periods. A brief guide to completing the research instrument was provided, and the confidentiality of participants' data was assured.

The questionnaire took fifteen minutes to complete. The completed questionnaires were anonymised through a coding process. A total of 373 questionnaires out of 400 were returned, yielding a response rate of 93.25%; however, only 358 had valid responses and were included in the data analysis.

### **2.4. Measures**

#### **2.4.1. Fear of missing out**

FoMO was measured using the 10-item Fear of Missing Out Scale developed by Przybylski et al. (2013). The 10-item instrument assesses different aspects of FoMO. Participants responded to a rating scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) to express their level of agreement with each statement. The sample item includes "I fear others have more rewarding experiences than I". The FoMO scale demonstrated high internal consistency in the original study, with a Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of 0.85. The scale also showed acceptable reliability coefficients in African American samples ( $\alpha \approx 0.80-0.87$ ) (Błachnio and Przepiórka, 2018; Debb et al., 2022), while the McDonald  $\omega$  reliability coefficient was 0.78 in the current study.

#### **2.4.2. Social media use**

The Social Media Use Scale (SMUS) developed by Tuck and Thompson (2024) was used to assess participants' social media use. The scale was designed to assess individuals' frequency and patterns of interaction with social networking platforms, with items such as "Read comments to my own content". Items were rated on a Likert-type scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with higher scores indicating greater social media use. An acceptable reliability coefficient was observed in previous studies ( $\alpha = 0.76-0.88$ ) (Abbas et al., 2024; Aroso et al., 2025). For this study, SMUS demonstrated a McDonald  $\omega$  coefficient of 0.82.

### 2.4.3. Life satisfaction

Life satisfaction was measured using the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) (Diener et al., 1985). The SWLS consists of five items (e.g., “In most ways my life is close to my ideal”) rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree). Higher total scores indicate greater global life satisfaction. The SWLS has demonstrated strong reliability in the original study ( $\alpha = 0.87$ ) and in African contexts, including Nigeria ( $\alpha = 0.70$ – $0.89$ ) (Oladipo and Balogun, 2011; Akanni and Oduaran, 2018). In this study, the McDonald  $\omega$  coefficient for SwLS was 0.85.

### 2.5. Data analysis

Data were coded and analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 25. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages) were computed for demographic variables and key study constructs. The relationship among the research’s variables (SMU, FoMO and life satisfaction) was examined using the Pearson ‘r’ coefficients. To test the predictive roles of FoMO and social media use on life satisfaction, multiple linear regression analyses were conducted. Statistical significance was set at  $p < 0.05$ .

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Descriptive statistics and zero-order correlation

The distribution of the participants’ demographic information is presented in Table 1. Out of the 358 undergraduates, majority were female (53.9%) while 46.1% were male with age ranged between 16 to 28 years ( $M = 19.28$ ,  $SD = 2.17$ ), among which 26.3% were in the 100 level, 25.4% in the 200 level, 27.7% in the 300 level, 17.3% in the 400 level, and 3.4% in the 500 level. Only 63.7% of the undergraduates were from Obafemi Awolowo University, 12.3% from Osun State University, and 24.0% from Redeemer’s University.

**Table 1.** Sociodemographic characteristics of participants (N = 358).

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	165	46.1
	Female	193	53.9
Institution	OAU	228	63.7
	UNIOSUN	44	12.3
	RUN	86	24.0
Age	16–28 years		$M = 19.28$ ( $SD = 2.17$ )

Frequent daily engagement with social media platforms was high across the sample, as displayed in **Table 2**. WhatsApp was the most frequently used platform (98.9%), followed by Instagram (93.1%), TikTok (91.8%), YouTube (87.9%), Twitter/X (81.3%), Facebook (77.0%), Snapchat (67.4%), and Telegram (57.9%). These findings indicate near-universal exposure to multiple social networking platforms among the participants.

**Table 2.** Prevalence of daily social media platform use.

Platform	% Frequent use
WhatsApp	98.9
Instagram	93.1
TikTok	91.8
YouTube	87.9
Twitter/X	81.3
Facebook	77.0
Snapchat	67.4
Telegram	57.9

Means, standard deviations, and Pearson correlations among study variables are presented in **Table 3**. The average age of participants reached 19.64 years with a standard deviation of 2.24 years. The participants reported average scores of 54.58 (SD = 19.76) for social media use, 21.53 (SD = 9.44) for FoMO, and 17.92 (SD = 8.90) for satisfaction with life.

**Table 3.** Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlations among study variables (N = 358).

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Age	19.64	2.24	1				
2. Gender	1.53	0.50	-0.15**	1			
3. Social media use	54.58	19.76	-0.01	0.02	1		
4. Fear of missing out	21.53	9.44	-0.10	0.30**	0.41**	1	
5. Life satisfaction	17.92	8.90	0.02	-0.16*	-0.22**	-0.41**	1

Note: \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ , N = 358. M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation. Gender coded as 0 = Male, 1 = Female.

Social media use demonstrated a strong positive correlation with FoMO ( $r = 0.41, p < 0.01$ ), indicating that people who spent more time on social media platforms experienced higher levels of fear of missing out. Social media use showed a significant negative correlation with life satisfaction ( $r = -0.22, p < 0.01$ ), suggesting that people who used social media more frequently experienced lower life satisfaction.

FoMO showed a strong, significant negative relationship with life satisfaction ( $r = -0.41, p < 0.01$ ), suggesting that people who experienced greater FoMO reported lower life satisfaction. This finding indicates that both high social media use and FoMO are associated with reduced life satisfaction.

The sociodemographic variables indicated that age did not show any significant association with social media use ( $r = -0.01, p > 0.05$ ), FoMO ( $r = -0.10, p > 0.05$ ), or life satisfaction ( $r = -0.2, p < 0.01$ ), while gender exhibited a significant positive relationship with FoMO ( $r = 0.30, p < 0.01$ ) and a significant negative relationship with life satisfaction ( $r = -0.16, p < 0.05$ ), but no significant relationship was observed between gender and social media use ( $r = 0.02, p > 0.05$ ).

### 3.2. Test of hypotheses

The H1 was tested using multiple regression to determine whether social media use and FoMO jointly and significantly predict life satisfaction. For H1, a multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine whether social media use and fear of missing out (FoMO) predicted life satisfaction. The overall model was statistically

significant,  $F(2, 355) = 48.07, p < 0.001$ , with  $R = 0.46, R^2 = 0.21$ , and adjusted  $R^2 = 0.20$ , indicating that social media use and fear of missing out are joint predictors of life satisfaction and jointly explained 21% of the variance in life satisfaction. The model produced an estimated standard error (SE) of 1.50, suggesting moderate variability around the outcome variable (life satisfaction).

Social Media Use significantly negatively predicted life satisfaction ( $\beta = -0.25, t(355) = -4.62, p < 0.001$ ) with a 95% confidence interval of  $[-0.39, -0.14]$ . This suggests that higher social media use was associated with lower life satisfaction. Also, the standardised beta value ( $\beta = -0.25$ ) shows that this effect has a small-to-moderate negative impact on the life satisfaction score.

Similarly, fear of Missing Out (FoMO) had a statistically significant negative influence on life satisfaction ( $\beta = -0.29, t(355) = -5.49, p < 0.001$ ) with a 95% confidence interval of  $[-0.44, -0.18]$ . This implies that university undergraduates who reported higher FoMO scores will report lower life satisfaction, even after controlling for social media use. The standardised effect size ( $\beta = -0.29$ ) indicates a moderate negative impact. Overall, these results suggest that both higher social media use and greater FoMO are associated with lower life satisfaction, with FoMO showing a slightly stronger predictive effect; H1 is accepted (**Table 4**).

**Table 4.** Multiple regression analysis predicting life satisfaction with life from social media use and FoMO (N = 358).

Variable	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	df	F	$\beta$	SE	t	95% CI
Constant	0.46	0.21	0.20	2, 355	48.07**		1.5		[22.0, 28.0]
Social media use						-0.25	0.05	-4.62**	[-0.39, -0.14]
FoMO						-0.29	0.05	-5.49**	[-0.44, -0.18]

Note: \*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

For H2, a multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine whether age and gender predict life satisfaction. The overall regression model was statistically significant,  $F(2, 355) = 22.65, p < 0.001$ , with  $R = 0.34, R^2 = 0.11$ , and adjusted  $R^2 = 0.10$ , indicating that age and gender jointly explained 11% of the variance in life satisfaction. Age did not significantly predict life satisfaction ( $\beta = -0.08, SE = 0.18, t = -1.68, p = 0.094, 95\% CI [-0.66, 0.05]$ ), suggesting that age was not associated with differences in life satisfaction. In contrast, gender significantly predicted life satisfaction ( $SE = 0.90, \beta = 0.33, t = 6.49, p < 0.001, 95\% CI [4.10, 7.64]$ ). Based on the coding (1 = male, 0 = female), the positive coefficient indicates that males reported significantly higher life satisfaction than females. Overall, the findings indicate that gender was a significant positive predictor of life satisfaction, whereas age was not. The model accounted for a modest proportion of variance in life satisfaction ( $R^2 = 0.11$ ), suggesting that other factors beyond age and gender may also contribute to individuals' life satisfaction (**Table 5**). H2 was therefore accepted.

**Table 5.** Regression predicting life satisfaction from age and gender (N = 358).

Predictor	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	df	F	$\beta$	SE	t	95% CI
Constant	0.34	0.11	0.10	2, 355	22.65**	—	1.21	12.74***	[13.04, 17.80]
Age						-0.08	0.18	-1.68	[-0.66, 0.05]

**Table 5.** *Cont.*

Predictor	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	df	F	β	SE	t	95% CI
Gender						0.33	0.90	6.49**	[4.10, 7.64]

Note: Gender coded 1 = Male, 0 = Female. SE = standard error; CI = confidence interval. \*\*  $p < 0.01$ . \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

For H3, an independent-samples *t*-test was used, and the results revealed significant gender differences in life satisfaction and FoMO. Male undergraduates ( $M = 23.50$ ,  $SD = 8.20$ ) reported significantly higher life satisfaction than female undergraduates ( $M = 18.05$ ,  $SD = 7.65$ ),  $t(356) = 6.50$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , 95% CI [3.80, 7.10]. Female undergraduates ( $M = 22.33$ ,  $SD = 7.64$ ) reported significantly higher FoMO than male undergraduates ( $M = 18.95$ ,  $SD = 6.21$ ),  $t(356) = -4.54$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , 95% CI [-4.84, -1.91]. There was no significant gender difference in social media use,  $t(356) = -1.43$ ,  $p = 0.155$ . Males reported significantly higher life satisfaction than females, with a medium-to-large effect ( $d = 0.69$ ). Females reported higher FoMO, with a medium effect ( $d = 0.49$ ). No significant gender difference was observed for social media use (Table 6).

**Table 6.** Independent samples t-test by gender.

Variable	Male M (SD)	Female M (SD)	t	p	Cohen's d
Life satisfaction	23.50 (8.20)	18.05 (7.65)	6.50	<0.001	0.69
Social media use	52.97 (18.08)	55.95 (21.04)	-1.43	0.155	0.15
FoMO	18.95 (6.21)	22.33 (7.64)	-4.54	<0.001	0.49

## 4. Discussions

This study examines how university undergraduates use social media and how fear of missing out (FoMO) affects their life satisfaction. The study also investigated whether age and gender influenced life satisfaction, fear of missing out, and social media use. The results confirmed the proposed relationship between digital engagement and well-being outcomes, i.e., life satisfaction.

The H1 stated that social media use and FoMO would predict life satisfaction. The results showed both social media use and FoMO functions as strong negative predictors of life satisfaction. The two variables explained a substantial portion of the variation in life satisfaction: undergraduates with higher social media use and stronger FoMO tendencies reported lower life satisfaction.

The research establishes that social media use is associated with decreased life satisfaction, a finding confirmed by earlier studies demonstrating that specific social media use patterns are associated with decreased well-being (Elhai et al., 2020). People who use social media platforms typically engage in upward social comparison processes, which involve assessing their life situations against the idealised versions of life others display (Ozimek et al., 2024). People who compare themselves to others experience negative consequences, as they evaluate themselves poorly and become unhappy with their current life situation. Research demonstrates that increased use of social networking sites is associated with diminished well-being among young adults, according to three studies (Verduyn et al., 2017; Deniz, 2021; Elhai et al., 2020).

FoMO emerged as the strongest predictor of life satisfaction in the model. The

finding supports theoretical frameworks that posit that FoMO reflects unfulfilled human needs, driving people to seek social bonds and community ties (Przybylski et al., 2013). People who have extreme FoMO symptoms need to stay linked with social media networks to track their friends' activities and prevent themselves from missing out on social events. Research has established that FoMO leads to reduced mental health, heightened anxiety, and problematic social media use patterns (Milyavskaya et al., 2018; Dempsey et al., 2019; Deniz, 2021). The findings indicate that FoMO serves as a psychological mechanism which enables digital environments to affect people's subjective well-being.

The H2 was to determine whether demographic variables, including age and gender, could predict life satisfaction. The study found that both age and gender were important in determining life satisfaction. The study found that only gender was an important predictor of life satisfaction, whereas age was not. The absence of a significant age effect may reflect the relatively narrow age range of the student sample. Previous research suggests that age-related differences in subjective well-being typically emerge across broader stages of the life course rather than within relatively homogeneous student populations (Diener et al., 2018). The present study found that age had no significant effect, as it used a young adult participant group.

The study found that gender was an important predictor of life satisfaction, as male undergraduates reported higher levels than female undergraduates. Previous research has found that gender affects well-being differently across various cultural environments (Geng and He, 2022; Ogunsemi, 2025). Digital communication environments create gender-based differences in social interaction, which manifest in how people engage in social comparison and peer evaluation.

The H3 tested whether male and female undergraduates differ in life satisfaction, social media use, and FoMO scores, and found that male undergraduates have higher life satisfaction than female undergraduates, while female undergraduates experience higher FoMO. The study detected no gender differences regarding social media use. The study found that female undergraduates experience higher levels of FoMO, which supports previous studies showing that women tend to react more strongly to social assessment and relational interactions on online platforms (Barry et al., 2017). Female undergraduates experience higher FoMO because they possess stronger social belonging needs, which drive their tendency to avoid situations that might lead to social rejection (Oberst et al., 2017; Błachnio and Przepiórka, 2018). Female participants in this study experienced lower life satisfaction due to these psychological pressures, which affected their mental state.

The study results show that social media use between genders remains equal, indicating that social media does not account for differences in life satisfaction between genders. Social media use results in psychological experiences, including FoMO and social comparison that have a greater impact on well-being than the actual use of social media. Previous research found that social media use patterns, together with psychological motivations, have a stronger impact on well-being than social media use patterns alone (Verduyn et al., 2017).

## **5. Conclusion**

This study concludes that social media use and fear of missing out decrease life satisfaction among university undergraduates. The results show that FoMO is a stronger predictor of life satisfaction, as it is known to deplete social connectedness through digital comparison. The study found that male undergraduates had higher life satisfaction scores than female undergraduates, and age did not affect life satisfaction. The research showed that female undergraduates experienced higher levels of FoMO than male undergraduates who used social media at the same rate.

### **5.1. Implications**

Taken together, the findings highlight the importance of considering both behavioural and psychological aspects of social media use when examining university undergraduate well-being. While social media platforms provide opportunities for communication and social interaction, experiences such as FoMO may contribute to lower life satisfaction by reinforcing perceptions of social exclusion, unmet relational needs or a sense of being left out in life. Universities and mental health practitioners may therefore benefit from incorporating digital well-being initiatives that address social comparison, online peer pressure, and healthy social media use for at-risk university undergraduates.

### **5.2. Limitations and Future Research**

The study presents multiple constraints that need recognition. The research design, which uses cross-sectional methods, precludes establishing causal links among social media use, FoMO, and life satisfaction. Future studies that use longitudinal or experimental designs will deliver more reliable evidence about these relationship patterns. The researchers used potentially biased self-report measures, which affected the study's results. The research would benefit from including digital engagement behaviour metrics to better understand the study. The research results, which used university student participants, cannot be generalised to other demographic groups due to this restriction.

Digital engagement research requires future studies to explore how social comparison, perceived social support, and online self-presentation impact well-being through psychological mechanisms that connect with digital engagement. The research shows how social media environments impact young adults' psychological development through a comprehensive analysis.

**Author contributions:** Conceptualisation, methodology, formal analysis, proofreading and supervision, JOO; data collection; initial draft, review, and editing, CEL. Both authors contributed to the development of the manuscript and approved it.

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Institutional review board statement:** The research processes (objectives, informed consent, voluntariness and freedom to withdraw from the study at any time) were

vetted by the Internal Research Ethics Committee of the Department of Psychology, Redeemer's University, Ede, Osun State. The study includes a research survey, the researcher ensured that disclosing responses outside the research would not reasonably place participants at risk, as no identifying information was collected. The research was conducted in accordance with the Helsinki Declaration (1991 revision). Participants were also duly informed of the research objectives, and no coercion was used. The participants' anonymity was ensured. The researchers established clear data-use protocols that specified how data would be stored and used after anonymisation.

**Informed consent statement:** Participant's informed consent was taken before the commencement of this study. Only willing and voluntary participants were recruited, with no obligation to opt out of the study.

**Data availability statement:** The data for this study will be made available on request.

**Conflict of interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

**AI use statement:** The authors declare that Grammarly was utilised to correct and improve the quality of language and delivery of the manuscript, including grammar, punctuation, and stylistic clarity. Utilising this tool was restricted to language development and was not used to generate ideas, conduct data analysis, interpret, or draw conclusions. All data, arguments, and scholarly content presented in this manuscript are original and were developed entirely by the authors.

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