Online social media fatigue and psychological wellbeing—A study of compulsive use, fear of missing out, fatigue, anxiety and depression

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ABSTRACT

The constant development of online social media features and related services has constantly attracted and increased the number of social media users. But, at the same time, a myriad of users have deviated themselves, temporarily or permanently, from social media use due to social media fatigue. Scholars have investigated different antecedents and consequences of social media fatigue. However, empirical relationships between psychosocial wellbeing and social media fatigue are currently not known. To bridge this gap, the current study utilises the stressor-strain-outcome framework (SSO) to examine whether psychosocial wellbeing measures, such as compulsive media use and fear of missing out, trigger fatigue and, furthermore, whether social media fatigue results in anxiety and depression. The study utilised repeated cross-sectional methodology whereby two waves of data (N = 1554, 1144) were collected to test the research model with adolescent social media users in India. The study findings suggest that compulsive media use significantly triggered social media fatigue, which later result in elevated anxiety and depression. Fear of missing out indirectly predicted social media fatigue through mediation of compulsive social media use. The theoretical and practical implications, limitations of the present study and agenda for future studies are presented and discussed.

1. Introduction

An increasing number of social media users are straying from their participation on social media because of encountering social media fatigue (Guest Post, 2017). Prior research has defined social media fatigue as a situation whereby social media users suffer from mental exhaustion after experiencing various technological, informative and communicative overloads through their participation and interactions on the different online social media platforms (Bright, Kleiser, & Grau, 2015; Lee, Son, & Kim, 2016; Ravindran, Kuan, Chua, & Hoe Lian, 2014; Zhang, Zhao, Lu, & Yang, 2016).

This phenomenon has recently motivated scholars from around the world to conduct empirical investigations to determine the antecedents and consequences of social media fatigue (Cramer, Song, & Drent, 2016; Luqman, Cao, Ali, Masood, & Yu, 2017; Sasaki, Kawai, & Kitamura, 2016; Yoa & Cao, 2017). The relative determinants of social media fatigue can be stemmed from psychological and behavioural stress-related conditions, such as information overload and connection overload

as well as social interactive activities (Bright et al., 2015; LaRose, Connololy, Lee, Li, & Hales, 2014; Lim, Park, Iijima, & Ahn, 2017; Walton, 2017; Zhang, Zhao, Lu, & Yang 2016). Due to this emotional suffering, social media users are likely to refrain, either temporarily or permanently, from participating in online social media interactions (Oghuma, Libaque-Saenz, Wong, & Chang, 2016; Swar, Hameed, & Reychav, 2017).

Scholars argue that social media fatigue has significant negative implications for both users as well as the businesses and service operators (Oghuma et al., 2016; Shin & Shin, 2016). On a user level, social media fatigue results in deterioration in both mental and physiological strengths whereby users are likely to develop unhealthy behaviours (Choi & Lim, 2016; Shin & Shin, 2016; Sun et al., 2017). Similarly, social media fatigue can be detrimental for businesses and service operators because fatigue results in withdrawal from service use, which translates into lower profits for companies and service operators. Despite these serious implications, research examining social media fatigue is still in its early stage wherein most existing studies have

Table 1
Literature Review.

Study	Context	Sample	Method & Analysis	Study variable
Chen & Lee (2013)	SNS	513 users in the US@	Questionnaire survey and structural equation modeling	Facebook interaction, communication overload, self-esteem, and psychological distress
Rainie, Smith, and Duggan (2013)	SNS	1006 users in the US@	Telephone interview	Reasons for Facebook breaks, frequency and time spent on Facebook use
Lee, Chou et al. (2014)	SNS	315 users in Taiwan with age ranging from under 15 to over 40 years old* (50% female)	Questionnaire survey and structural equation modeling	Personality traits (openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism) and social media fatigue, and fatigue behavior
Ravindran et al. (2014)	SNS	201 users in Singapore with age ranging from 18 to 55 years old (M = 40) and 60% female	In-depth interview and activity analysis	Social dynamics, content, Immersion, platform, and life cycle-related factors
Bright et al. (2015)	SNS	747 users in the US with age ranging from 18 to 49 years old (M = 32.52) and 52.5% female	Questionnaire survey and confirmatory regression analysis	Social media confidence, helpfulness, self-efficacy, privacy, and social media fatigue
Lin (2015)	SNS	236 users in Taiwan with age ranging from 20 to 25 years old* and 64% male	Questionnaire survey and item covariance matrix analysis	Low ease of use, privacy concern, advertising interference, rumour dissemination, fatigue, normative pressure, satisfaction, usage behavior, and continuance intention
Cramer et al. (2016)	SNS	267 users in the US with age ranging from 18 to 51 years old (M = 23.63) and 67% female	Questionnaire survey and regression analyses	Social comparison, motives for social comparison, Facebook fatigue, self-esteem, and positive affect
Lee, Lee et al. (2016)	MIM	267 users in Korea with age ranging from 20 to 50 years old* and 55.4% male	Field interviews, Questionnaire survey and structural equation modeling	Communication overload, social insecurity, compulsive usage, work overload, invasion of life, work-home conflict, strain, productivity, quality of life, and tie strength
Shin & Shin (2016)	MIM	334 users in Korea with age ranging from under 20 to over 50 years old* and 50.3% male	Questionnaire survey and structural equation modeling	Mobile messenger overload, mobile messenger fatigue, relational self-concept, mobile shunning behavior
Tromholt (2016)	SNS	1095 users in Denmark with average age at 34 years old@	Questionnaire survey, causal and partial causal analyses	Life satisfaction, emotions, intensity of Facebook use, Facebook envy, and active and passive Facebook use
Zhang et al. (2016)	SNS	525 users in China with age ranging from under 18 to over 35 years old* and 52.4% male	Questionnaire survey and regression analysis	System feature fatigue, information overload, social overload, social network fatigue, dissatisfaction, and discontinuous usage intention
Lee, Son et al. (2016)	SNS	201 users in Korea with age ranging from under 29 to over 40 years old* and 59.2% male	Questionnaire survey and Structural equation modeling	SNS fatigue, system feature overload, system pace of change, communication overload, information relevance, overload, equivocality, and system complexity
Luqman et al. (2017)	SNS	360 users in China with age ranging from 19 to 44 years old* and 62.8% female	Questionnaire survey, Structural equation modeling and regression analyses	Excessive social use, excessive hedonic use, excessive cognitive use, SNS exhaustion, technostress, and discontinuance intention
Lim et al. (2017)	SNS	210 users in Japan with age ranging from under 20 to more than 60 years old* and 58% male	Questionnaire survey and Structural equation modeling	Discontinuous usage intention, dissatisfaction, Facebook interaction, social overload, and threat to freedom usage

Note. * = average or mean age nor gender distribution provided, @ = neither mean age nor gender distribution provided, SNS = Social networking sites, MIM = Mobile instant messaging.