

IMPACT OF PRIVACY CONCERN, INFORMATION OVERLOAD, AND SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION ON EMOTIONAL EXHAUSTION: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Social media's vast impact in today's world has completely changed how people interact, exchange information, and communicates with each other. The present study examines the impact of privacy concerns, information overload, and social media addiction on emotional exhaustion. Data was collected from university students in various parts of India using purposive and random sampling. A total of (n =393) responses have been analyzed with the aid of PLS-SEM. The results show that information overload and social media addiction are positively associated with emotional exhaustion. Moreover, the study discusses implications and future research agenda.

Keywords: Students, PLS-SEM, Social Media, Overload, Privacy.

INTRODUCTION

Digital technologies have revolutionized communication, information dissemination, and social interaction. However, this rapid digital transformation has brought about new challenges and concerns involving concerns related to privacy, information overload, and social media addiction. It has been increasingly recognized as a significant determinant of individuals' emotional well-being. Despite growing interest in these issues, a notable research gap exists in understanding the interconnected impact of privacy concerns, information overload, and social media addiction on emotional exhaustion (Sheng et. al., 2023). At the same time, prior studies have explored the effects of these factors on emotional well-being (Fu et. al., 2020). This research aims to address this gap by investigating how privacy concerns, information overload, and social media addiction affect emotional exhaustion, offering insights into the complex interplay between individuals' digital behaviors and their emotional states.

The significance of this research gap lies in its implications for both theoretical understanding and practical implications. In the context of existing literature, numerous studies have examined the adverse effects of privacy concerns, information overload, and social media addiction separately in different settings, and the interrelationships between these constructs remain unknown (Soriano.,2020). By elucidating the impact of privacy concerns, information overload, and social media addiction on emotional exhaustion, this study contributes to a more holistic understanding of individuals' digital experiences (Marsh et al., 2022). Moreover, given the pervasive nature of digital technologies in contemporary life, understanding the mechanisms underlying emotional exhaustion is crucial for informing targeted interventions and support systems aimed at promoting emotional health in the digital age.

In positioning our research within the field, it is essential to highlight its unique contribution to bridging the gap between disparate strands of literature. While existing studies have primarily focused on isolated aspects of individuals' digital experiences, such as privacy

concerns or social media addiction, our research adopts a comprehensive approach that integrates these factors to provide a more nuanced understanding of emotional exhaustion (Sheng et al., 2023; Fu et al., 2020). By examining the synergistic effects of privacy concerns, information overload, and social media addiction, we offer a novel perspective that captures the complexity of individuals' digital interactions and their emotional outcomes. This distinctive approach not only advances theoretical knowledge but also provides practical insights for policymakers, educators, wellness practitioners, and emotional health professionals seeking to address the multifaceted challenges posed by the digital age (Zhou and Xie, 2023).

In summary, this research aims to fill a significant gap in the literature by investigating the combined impact of privacy concerns, information overload, and social media addiction on emotional exhaustion. By elucidating the interconnected nature of these constructs, our study contributes to a deeper understanding of individuals' digital experiences and their implications.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Privacy Concern

Social media usage and the rise of privacy issues are absorbed and understood interchangeably. Over the past year, social media has experienced a significant increase in the number of people joining these platforms (Digital Report, 2024). Privacy is claimed as one's asset exercised in different situations (Skinner et al 2006). The aspects of digital secrecy described by Clarke (1988) are the privacy of a person, personal behavior privacy, personal communication privacy, and personal data privacy. Further, there have been studies where the researchers have exclaimed about personal communication and data privacy being amalgamated into one concept of information privacy. It is due to the digitalization of communication and information (Bélanger and Crossler., 2011). However, previous studies related to internet usage and privacy concerning information have often seen mixed results. The fear of privacy depletion in social media usage has become common (Dhir et al., 2018). A feeling of insecurity and mistrust may arise as users deal with the knowledge that their personal information is frequently being gathered and examined by external users. Further, they are affected by the fact that the information is being used by others without their consent, adding to emotional exhaustion (Smith, 2019). An individual gets uncomfortable when they notice superfluous access to their information without the users' consent (Debatin et al., 2009). The issue of privacy invasion is a significant concern for social media users (Zhu & Bao, 2018). Hence, in other words, privacy incursion is directly related to personal information access and depletion in the digital world (Pang, H., & Ruan, Y. 2023)

Information Overload

In the digital literate world and the era of social media usage overload has become persistent (Maier et al., 2015). It refers to the insights of various items that surpass an individual's ability to understand them (Zhang et al., 2016). The constant overflow of information has led individuals to multitask and has caused people to use corporeal filters and shortcuts to interpret and comprehend advanced information (Sheng et al., 2023). Information overload occurs when the amount of information people contact exceeds their capability to accept information. Many studies have proved that "overload" is usually divided into social overload and information overload, and both have a notable impact on the occurrence of emotional exhaustion (Chen et al., 2023). An information-overloaded digital landscape has derived due to the automated content selection, and flow of information on social media

platforms. According to Fernandes et al., (2024), privacy concerns are biased and may be different for each user. It is usually based on their past experiences (Quandt et al., 2023). In addition to all this, there are many characteristics like age, gender, nationality, and national culture which majorly have an impact on privacy concerns (Cho et al. (2009); Farid (2023) states that privacy concerns could be classified by three main factors— concern over the amount of information being collected, concerns over the entity in charge of private information, and the degree to which a user is concerned about its awareness of an organization's data privacy. Further, the control of personal information in the digital space is of utmost magnitude to the users. It has been widely researched and observed that college students were able to spend more time using Twitter when they sensed that they had full control of private information on the site (Yang et al. 2016).

Emotional Exhaustion

Research says that when a user understands information more than needed, emotional exhaustion occurs. At par with previous studies (Fu et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2016), advanced adjustments to social media may place users under strain, stress, and expense. It is said that exhaustion is created due to social overload (Weinert et al., 2015). The unpleasant experiences in social media use may cause emotional exhaustion, which gives rise to fatigue (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Further, it has been researched that college students who engage in high levels of social media use will experience increased emotional exhaustion compared to those who have lower levels of social media usage. Zou (2022) supports this in one of his studies that extreme media exposure may lead to excessive and incorrect information. This makes it difficult for the students to find reliable sources of information. Moreover, it is harmful to their physical and psychological health. This research seeks to delve into the intricate relationship between privacy concerns, information overload, and social media addiction and its influence on the emergence of emotional exhaustion (Wobeto, et al., 2023).

Social Media Addiction

Social media platforms provide a virtual environment where people may grow their friendships, exchange knowledge, and curate their identities (Holton et al., 2023). However, there have been challenges to this revolution in technology as concerns about the possible harmful effects of extensive social media utilization grow. Students' daily lives now depend on social media, which provides an outlet for interaction with others, communication, information upgradation, and content sharing (Asadullah et al.,2023). The increasing incidence of social media addiction and its complicated relationship to the rise of emotional exhaustion in pupils is of curiosity. Compulsive and exorbitant use of social media can be an indicator of social media addiction, which can have a variety of detrimental consequences on a person's emotional and academic well-being. However, there are worries about social media's possible effects on the emotional well-being of the individual as it has become common (Mahalingham et al., 2023).

Privacy Concern and Emotional Exhaustion

People may feel more anxious and emotionally exhausted when they become conscious of the extent to which their personal information is gathered, shared, and profited from without their express consent. Emotional exhaustion may result from the erosion of privacy, which has been proven by the improper use of user data and is likely to make people feel vulnerable and helpless (Flowerday, 2023). Thus, we anticipate that those who express more anxiety about their privacy on social media will also report feelings more emotionally.

In this study, we used quantitative research methodology, measuring participant degrees of emotional exhaustion and social media privacy concerns via survey instruments. Concerns about privacy violations are anticipated to grow as people become more conscious of how much their online behavior is tracked and profiting from, which will increase emotional strain and feed feelings of powerlessness and emotional exhaustion. Therefore, it is predicted that elements like privacy concerns may be optimistically linked with emotional exhaustion.

H₁: Privacy concern is positively related to emotional exhaustion.

Information Overload and Emotional Exhaustion

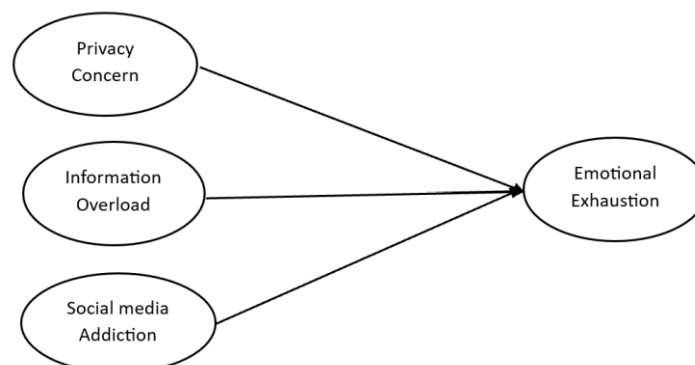
Information surplus is the feeling of being overloaded because of receiving too much information at once, which is more than one's brain can handle. In this context, emotional exhaustion refers to the feelings of burnout, fatigue, and emotional drain brought on by the constant use of social media (Wang, Y.,2023). Excessive social media usage will lead to information overload, which in turn will contribute to emotional exhaustion in college students (Zou,2022). Previous research has shown a negative correlation between social media use and emotional stability in individuals. Further, it highlights the finding that excessive media exposure can lead to difficulty in finding reliable information and increased levels of negative emotions such as fear, worry, tension, and anxiety (Matthes et al.,2020). Therefore, it is expected that college students who engage in high levels of social media use will experience increased emotional exhaustion compared to those who have lower levels of social media usage. Students who experience higher levels of information overload on social media platforms are more likely to experience emotional exhaustion.

H₂: Information Overload is positively related to emotional exhaustion

Social Media Addictions and Emotional Exhaustion

A compulsive and uncontrollable urge to use social media platforms is referred to as social media addiction. It frequently has detrimental effects on daily life. On the other hand, emotional exhaustion refers to sensations of emotional drain, burnout, and depletion (Wenkai, S.,2023). As college students use social media more frequently, worries about how this could affect their emotional health are becoming more and more prevalent (Onyeizu et al., 2022). Zou, (2022) in his studies he has mentioned that excessive media exposure may lead to a mix of too much correct and incorrect information, thus endangering their physical and psychological health Figures 1 & 2.

H₃: There is a positive relationship between social media addiction and emotional exhaustion



**FIGURE 1
CONCEPTUAL MODEL**

MATERIAL AND METHODS

A survey was employed to collect data from university students in India. The sampling frame for this survey comprised 500 students from educational institutions. Data were collected using an online survey in the English language. A total of 393 responses were used for analysis purposes. The respondents were 64.63% male, 45.29% aged between 18 Years- 20 Years and UG students were 74.04%. Privacy Concern was measured based on three-item scales from Dinev, T., & Hart, T. (2006). Information Overload was measured based on three-item scales from Zhang, S., Zhao, L., Lu, Y., & Yang, J.(2016). Social Media Addiction Overload was measured based on six-item scales from Development and Validation of the Chinese Social Media Addiction Scale (2018) Emotional Exhaustion was measured based on six-item scales from Maslach, C., & Jackson, S. E. (1981). The present study has used an instrument based on a 5-point Likert scale. It is a type of psychometric response scale based on five points.

Data Analysis

The reliability and validity of four key variables—Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Information Overload (IO), Perceived Control (PC), and Social Media Addiction (SMA)—were assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) metrics. All variables exceeded the commonly accepted threshold of 0.7 for Cronbach's Alpha, indicating high internal consistency among items measuring each construct. Composite Reliability values ranged from 0.855 to 0.934, further confirming the reliability of the measurement model. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) scores, ranging from 0.664 to 0.738, indicated that the constructs captured a significant proportion of variance in the data, with Information Overload exhibiting the highest AVE score. These findings underscore the reliability and validity of the measurement instruments, providing researchers and practitioners with confidence in utilizing them for future studies and organizational applications Table 1.

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
EE	0.915	0.934	0.702
IO	0.823	0.894	0.738
PC	0.796	0.878	0.707
SMA	0.751	0.855	0.664

	EE	IO	PC	SMA
EE	0.838			
IO	0.640	0.859		
PC	0.210	0.270	0.841	
SMA	0.559	0.544	0.186	0.815

In the evaluation of discriminant validity for Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Information Overload (IO), Perceived Control (PC), and Social Media Addiction (SMA), correlation coefficients were computed between each pair of variables. As shown in Table 2, correlations within each variable (along the diagonal) surpassed 0.7, exceeding the threshold for

satisfactory discriminant validity. Additionally, correlations between different constructs were generally lower than correlations within the same construct, indicating that the variables are distinct from each other. For instance, the correlation between EE and IO was 0.640, below the threshold, affirming their differentiation. These findings reinforce the independence of the constructs, allowing researchers to confidently utilize them in future studies while ensuring a robust understanding of the phenomena under scrutiny.

	EE	IO	PC	SMA
EE				
IO	0.731			
PC	0.242	0.329		
SMA	0.656	0.684	0.242	

In assessing the Heterotrait- Monotrait (HTMT) ratio for Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Information Overload (IO), Perceived Control (PC), and Social Media Addiction (SMA), the ratios between different constructs were computed. Table 3 displays these ratios, where values exceeding the threshold of 0.85 indicate potential issues with discriminant validity. Notably, the HTMT ratios between EE and IO (0.731), EE and SMA (0.656), and IO and SMA (0.684) are all below the threshold, suggesting acceptable discriminant validity between these constructs. However, the HTMT ratio between PC and IO (0.329) exceeds the threshold, warranting further examination of discriminant validity between these constructs. These findings underline the importance of scrutinizing construct distinctiveness to ensure the robustness of measurement instruments in research endeavors.

The path analysis results, as presented in Table 4, provide insights into the relationships between Perceived Control (PC), Information Overload (IO), Social Media Addiction (SMA), and Emotional Exhaustion (EE) as hypothesized in H1, H2, and H3. Hypothesis H1 posited a direct path from PC to EE. However, with a beta value of 0.030 and a non-significant p-value of 0.439, the path from PC to EE was not supported, indicating that perceived control does not significantly predict emotional exhaustion. Conversely, Hypotheses H2 and H3, which proposed direct paths from IO and SMA to EE, respectively, were strongly supported. The beta values of 0.473 for IO and 0.299 for SMA were both statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), suggesting that information overload and social media addiction have substantial positive associations with emotional exhaustion. These results underscore the detrimental impact of excessive information exposure and social media engagement on individuals' emotional well-being, highlighting the importance of managing information consumption and digital behaviors to mitigate emotional exhaustion.

Hypotheses	Path	Beta value	Standard Deviation	t statistics	p values
H1	PC -> EE	0.030	0.036	0.775	0.439
H2	IO -> EE	0.473	0.047	10.046	0.000
H3	SMA -> EE	0.299	0.048	6.241	0.000

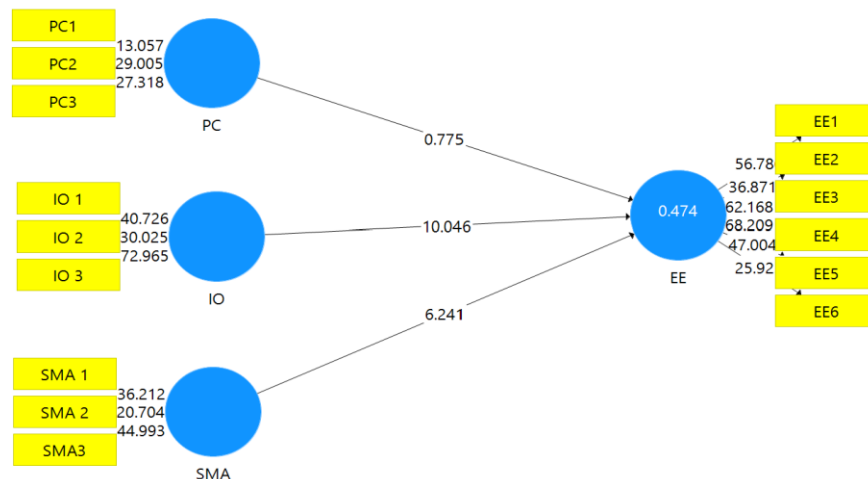


FIGURE 2
PATH ANALYSIS RESULTS

DISCUSSION

Due to the quick and steady advancement in digital technology, the use and access to information have changed for students. They have become so dependent on digital space for their day-to-day needs and requirements that they end up facing difficulties and challenges in using social media and digital space a many a time. The digital space is overloaded with information and people find it difficult to separate important information from the crowd of spams of information. Dhir et al. (2018) has researched this area of concern about information overload on social media platforms and prerogatives that further study gives the impression to be important in this area.

The growing risk to discretion is another grave issue brought on by more people appealing digitally. Students may involuntarily disclose serious personal information due to their common usage of cyberspace platforms and announcement tools. Beyond the monarchy of instantaneous concerns, privacy intrusions can have complications for individuals in both personal and intellectual contexts. It is vital to examine privacy concerns related to digital interactions and put policies in place to protect students' personal information as technology develops further.

A growing body of research has linked student cyber addiction to issues like information overload, privacy concerns, and addiction itself. Certain digital hobbies, like social media usage or online gaming, can be very addictive and impact mental health, general well-being, and academic achievement. Dhir et al. (2018) were aware of the serious problem of stress and the value of researching to learn more about the causes of technology addiction and to create practical preventative and therapeutic plans. In conclusion, extensive research is required to ensure that students can make use of technology's advantages while reducing any potential drawbacks due to the myriad issues brought about by the digital age.

Due to the possible effects on academic performance, the increasing incidence of emotional weariness and online fatigue among student populations is a development worth further examining. Factors including stress, information overload, and the demands of digital learning settings can all aggravate emotional exhaustion, which is characterized by feelings of depletion and fatigue (Pang, 2023). Simultaneously, as more people rely on virtual platforms for education, the phenomenon known as "*online fatigue*," which refers to the fatigue brought on by extended participation in online activities, has been increasingly prominent (Whelan et al., 2020). The confluence of emotional depletion and internet fatigue

presents a complex obstacle to students' holistic welfare and could considerably affect their capacity for scholastic achievement.

Educators, legislators, and mental health experts must comprehend how emotional tiredness and online fatigue affect academic achievement. The necessity for a thorough investigation into the complex relationships between these psychological states and students' capacity to satisfy academic goals is emphasized by Pang (2023). Understanding how emotional and mental health affects academic achievements is more crucial than ever because of the ongoing global move toward digital learning settings, which has been expedited by events like the COVID-19 epidemic. Online weariness has been shown to impair cognitive functioning, lower motivation, and limit concentration—all of which are critical for academic success—Whelan et al. (2020) emphasize.

Investigating practical tactics and interventions that lessen the negative effects of emotional tiredness and online weariness on academic performance is crucial to addressing these issues. According to Pang (2023), educational institutions had to think about putting supportive measures in place, such as stress management courses, mental health resources, and adjustments to online learning frameworks. By undertaking research in this arena, educators and policymakers can obtain insights into the specific elements contributing to emotional weariness and online fatigue, enabling the development of focused interventions that support students' well-being and academic success (Cilar et al., 2020).

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The study reveals the link between privacy concerns, information overload, and social media addiction, affecting students' emotional exhaustion in higher education institutes. The practical implications include incorporating digital literacy, promoting mindful online engagement, implementing breaks, fostering technology use, and stress management resources for educators. The study, like many other stories, has its implications. The theoretical implications, the theoretical implicational fears, and the concern regarding privacy concern while surfing the internet do not give rise to emotional exhaustion in individuals.

Institutions can also work with tech companies to design platforms that meet the needs of users first by providing tools for controlling screen time and notifications. Secondly, it has been researched that information overload and social media addiction give rise to emotional exhaustion in students. By putting these insights into practice, educational and technological frameworks hope to lessen the emotional toll associated with privacy concerns, information overload, and social media addiction while equipping students with the knowledge and tools necessary to navigate the digital world. In conclusion, gaining a thorough grasp of the difficulties presented by the digital environment requires theoretical and practical investigation of the connections between students' emotional exhaustion, social media addiction, information overload, and privacy concerns. The research aims to create a supportive and sustainable digital ecosystem for students by combining theoretical frameworks and practical strategies. It contributes to academic discourse on technology and mental health, offering actionable insights for educators, institutions, and policymakers (Bright et al., 2015; Dhir et al., 2019; Halbusi et al., 2023).

Limitations and Future Research Agenda

It is essential to acknowledge some inherent limitations in the study, even though the present research adds significantly to our understanding of the dynamics between social media usage and academic performance decrement. The study's sample population, which mostly consists of undergraduate and graduate students attending Indian universities, has a major restriction.

The limitations imposed by geography and demographics cast doubt on the findings' applicability in a more global setting. The degree to which social media affects students' academic experiences may vary depending on cultural and educational system variations, hence care should be taken when extrapolating these results to different student groups in other areas. An additional limitation involves the cross-sectional nature of empirical research. The investigation of causal linkages between variables cannot be conducted since the study is based on a snapshot of data that was gathered at a particular moment in time. Longitudinal research may offer a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between social media fatigue, emotional exhaustion, and depletion in academic performance across time. Furthermore, the research mostly uses self-report measures, which raises the possibility of response bias and restricts our ability to fully comprehend participants' experiences. Qualitative approaches or observational techniques could be used in future studies to complement the quantitative data and offer a more complete understanding of the complex relationships between social media use and academic outcomes.

CONCLUSION

We all are aware of the positive outcomes of using social media but at the same time, we cannot mitigate the challenges being faced due to its usage. The excessive usage of social media has led to the occurrence of emotional exhaustion. Previous studies by researchers claimed the potential negative impact of social media usage; this study aims to identify the factors related to social media (i.e., information overload and addiction caused due to social media usage) and the factors related to its usage (cyberbullying and privacy concerns) as critical reasons to the occurrence of emotional exhaustion. There have been implications towards the vastness in the usage of social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp) and hindering the privacy of the people still, we witness a massive increase in the usage of such platforms every year.

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