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# THE MEDIATING EFFECT OF FOMO BETWEEN SOCIAL MEDIA ADDICTION, PARENTAL SUPPORT, AND SOCIAL MEDIA BURNOUT AMONG YOUTHS



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STEPHANIE ANN A/P A. VICTOR

SULTAN IDRIS EDUCATION UNIVERSITY

2023



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THE MEDIATING EFFECT OF FOMO BETWEEN SOCIAL MEDIA  
ADDICTION, PARENTAL SUPPORT, AND SOCIAL  
MEDIA BURNOUT AMONG YOUTHS

STEPHANIE ANN A/P A. VICTOR

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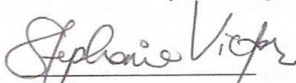
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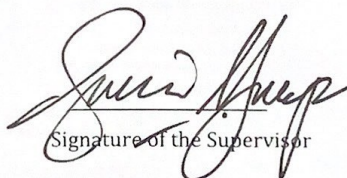
  
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## ABSTRACT

The perspective of this world has changed by growing technological advancements leading to a world through screens. The prevalence of social media usage among youths is imminent, as it has led to unwarranted progress in the area of mental health issues. Thus, the objectives of this study explore the relationships between social media addiction, parental support, social media burnout, and fear of missing out (FoMO) as the mediating effect and age factor as the moderating effect among the youths. A sample of 450 Malaysian youths aged between 15 to 30 years were randomly selected. Data were gathered through a questionnaire and analysed using SPSS and AMOS software. Two types of analysis were conducted; descriptive analysis to identify the levels of the variables and inferential analysis using structural equation modelling (SEM) to test the six hypotheses drawn. Firstly, the majority of respondents are experiencing a moderate level of social media burnout, a moderate level of FoMO, moderate social media addiction, and a high level of parental support received. Next, there is a significant relationship between social media addiction and social media burnout as well as parental support and social media burnout. Consequently, FoMO mediates fully the relationship between social media addiction and social media burnout. However, the same does not mediate parental support and social media burnout. Besides, the moderation test shows a significant difference between the age group of social media addiction and social media burnout and similarly parental support and social media burnout. Significantly, this study implies a unique framework postulating the Stressor-Strain-Outcome Theory and Media Dependency Theory along with a contribution to the literature. Along the line, this study recommends that this theoretical framework be explored to provide a better depth of knowledge in this field.





## KESAN PENGANTARAAN FOMO ANTARA KETAGIHAN MEDIA SOSIAL, SOKONGAN IBU BAPA DAN KELESUAN MEDIA SOSIAL DALAM KALANGAN BELIA MALAYSIA

### ABSTRAK

Perspektif dunia telah berubah dengan peningkatan kemajuan teknologi yang menuju kepada dunia melalui skrin. Penggunaan media sosial dalam kalangan belia semakin tidak terkawal, sehingga memberi kesan kepada isu kesihatan mental belia. Oleh itu, objektif kajian ini adalah untuk meneroka hubungan antara ketagihan media sosial, sokongan ibu bapa, kelesuan media sosial, dan “*fear of missing out*” (FoMO) sebagai kesan pengantara dan faktor umur sebagai kesan penyederhana dalam kalangan belia. Seramai 450 sampel belia Malaysia berumur antara 15 hingga 30 tahun telah dipilih secara rawak. Data dikumpul melalui borang soal selidik dan dianalisis menggunakan perisian SPSS dan AMOS. Dua jenis analisis telah dijalankan iaitu analisis deskriptif untuk mengenal pasti tahap pembolehubah dan analisis inferensi menggunakan SEM untuk menguji enam hipotesis kajian. Pertama, majoriti responden mengalami tahap kelesuan media sosial yang sederhana, tahap FoMO yang sederhana, ketagihan media sosial yang sederhana dan tahap sokongan ibu bapa yang tinggi. Seterusnya, terdapat hubungan yang signifikan antara ketagihan media sosial dan kelesuan media sosial serta sokongan ibu bapa dan kelesuan media sosial. Dapatan seterusnya menunjukkan, FoMO menjadi pengantara sepenuhnya hubungan antara ketagihan media sosial dan kelesuan media sosial. Sebaliknya, FoMO tidak menjadi pengantara hubungan antara sokongan ibu bapa dan kelesuan media sosial. Ujian kesederhanaan pula menunjukkan perbezaan yang ketara antara kumpulan umur ketagihan media sosial dan kelesuan media sosial dan begitu juga sokongan ibu bapa dan kelesuan media sosial. Secara dasarnya, kajian ini memfokuskan rangka kerja Teori *Stressor-Strain-Outcome* dan Teori Kebergantungan Media. Kajian ini turut mengesyorkan agar kerangka teori ini diterokai untuk memberikan lebih pengetahuan dan menyumbang kepada literatur dalam bidang kajian ini.



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATION

AVE	Average Variance Extracted
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
CR	Construct Reliability
EDA	Exploratory Data Analysis
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis
FoMO	Fear of Missing Out
SEM	Structural Equation Modelling



## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION



#### 1.1 Overview

This introductory chapter allows a better and more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between social media addiction, and parental support on social media burnout outcome, mediated by the fear of missing out and moderated by age group among Malaysian youths. Following that, the research questions as well as the research objectives that have been developed work to carry forward this research towards achieving the desired outcome. Moreover, this chapter also focuses on the theoretical perspective and the conceptual framework of this study to further deepen understanding of this study. Besides that, it is important to recognise the scope of this study in the very beginning to ensure the quality of the study is taken care of. This would lead to the significance of the study that would motivate this study in a better light and also the limitation of the study that should be considered for future researchers' references.





## 1.2 Background of Study

Social media, in the last few years, has evolved into becoming an integral part of human beings. It is almost impossible to find anyone without at least one social media platform. Due to its providence in terms of information and opportunities, it instantly becomes an abnormality when one is without social media. In addition to that, with the arrival of 5G in Malaysia in late 2021, the nation is now adapting the latest technological growth to all aspects of livelihood. With that, there has been constant growth in terms of technology and media. One thing that can be seen is the fact that internet usage among Malaysians is also seeing widespread exposure as well as rapid evolution and growth for multiple purposes. However, this has now become a threat to the state of mental health and multiple other negative outcomes due to its problematic usage (Medrano & Lopez-Rosales, 2018). Duke and Montag (2017) point out problematic social media usage is linked with low productivity. Yasin and Dzulkifli (2011) and Lepp et al (2014) reported low academic progress, poor peer friendship (Van Zalk et al., 2010), misuse of substances (Li & Lerner, 2011; Buckner et al., 2013), low-quality of communication in social settings (Abeele et al, 2018) and alarmingly suicide attempts (Nguyen et al., 2013) social media addiction. An issue that certainly is garnering attention is the accessibility and the pervasiveness of social media leading youths towards cyber aggression that is a form of threat to their future (Craig et al. 2020) leading to harmful changes in their mental health such as social media burnout (Dhir et al., 2018) that is currently overseeing a hike and in need of curbing mechanisms. More importantly, it is vital for social media burnout among Malaysian youths to be recognised as a form of mental illness due to problematic social media usage.



According to scholars of a recent study, by Liu and Ma (2020), increased time spent on social media results in exposure to information overload leading to social media fatigue and an existence of social media burnout, this seconds the outcome from the study of Zhang et al. (2016). The Covid-19 pandemic also has an impact on social media addiction and mental illness as an overload of information leads to developing a sense of loss of control over situations (Ting & Essau, 2021). About 42% of US Facebook users are seen to be taking a break from it for several weeks or more and another 26 percent remove the app from their mobile phones (Zhang et al., 2021). In addition to that, several more studies show that individuals using social media platforms consider temporary disconnection from Instagram (Hanley et al., 2014; Jorge, 2019), Facebook (Hanley et al., 2014; Hong & Oh, 2020), WeChat (Zhang et al., 2020), MySpace (Guo et al., 2020), WhatsApp (Malik et al., 2020), and Twitter (Tugtekin et

Recent literature shows multiple factors causing social media burnout among youths such as social media misuse (Błachnio et al., 2017), addiction (Saputri & Yumarni 2021), and loneliness (Marino et al., 2016). In addition to that, FoMO also affects the control level (Marino et al., 2016) and an individual's connectedness to their surroundings (Ndasauka et al., 2016; Pittman & Reich, 2016) also plays an important role that may be a factor of social media burnout conditions. Moreover, the recent pandemic has increased the dependency of people on computer-mediated communication due to the shift of work and education to online platforms. Consecutively, this has led to increased hours spent on social media (Gao et al., 2020).

Social media usage surged during the lockdown since it was the preferred way for people to contact the outside world, according to an Indian study. (Gupta & DSilva, 2020). Besides, a Spanish study showed a heightened level of social media usage, gaming addiction, and compulsive internet usage during the lockdown period (Fernandes et al., 2020). In addition to that, a Malaysian study showed the existence of addictive behaviour toward social media among university students in Malaysia during the Covid-19 pandemic (Ting & Essau, 2021). In another instance, Pa et al., (2021) found a majority of Generation Z experiencing addiction towards social media usage during the lockdown imposed by the Malaysian government. Therefore, this shows that the pandemic has become a catalyst for people to develop a higher dependence on social media thus leading to addiction.

As this study surrounds social media usage and outcome, the element of fear of missing out is deemed important, with that fear of missing out will be recognized as FoMO throughout the rest of this study. FoMO has been recognised as a mediator in multiple studies. Among them are between indicators of well-being and social media engagement (Przybylski et al., 2013), between motivational factors and social media engagement (Alt, 2015), and between psychopathological symptoms and negative social media usage consequences (Oberst et al., 2017). In addition to that, Przybylski et al (2013) found three-quarters of young adults are self-diagnosed with FoMO due to the contents shared on social media. Therefore, all these past studies illustrate the need to investigate the direct effect of social media addiction, parental support, and social media burnout among Malaysian youths and the inclusion of FoMO as the mediating effect between these relationships.

### 1.3 Statement of Research Problem

Social media burnout among Malaysian youths seeks the need for it to be recognised as the result of problematic social media usage that often leads to an escalating condition of addiction. As of January 2022, Statista (2022) recorded 30.25 million social media users among Malaysians. Statcounter (2022) highlights the social media stats in Malaysia as of February 2022. It records 85.04% of Facebook users, 4.84% of Instagram users, and 3.52% of Instagram users and it has been seeing steady growth since then. Moreover, Young (2017) did a series of interviews and surveys on students for one week, 24 hours each day which resulted in her finding out that over 83.3% of participants find social media an important platform and spend nearly 116 minutes on it on a daily rate causing adverse effects to their performance. Consequently, the shift from face-to-face classrooms to online classrooms has significantly increased the dependence of university students on social media and this group of youth is seen to be struggling with psychological distress (Victor et al., 2020) further demands attention to screen. A few studies also show an existing significant relationship between social media usage and depressive symptoms among children and adolescents (McCrae, Gettings, & Purssell, 2017) and misuse of Facebook and psychological distress among adolescents and young adults (Best et al., 2014; Hoare et al., 2016; Marino et al., 2018). Literature suggests social media addiction as an important factor leading to a depleting mental health condition making it vital to address this issue, especially about social media burnout while youths are being exposed to a large amount of time and exposure from social media.



Besides an intensive amount of time spent on social media, another factor leading to social media burnout among Malaysian youths would be the absence of parental support. The youth phase determines their educational and career paths. Therefore, parental support plays an important role as a source of encouragement for youngsters (Fisher & Padmawidjaja, 1999) and is crucial for a young person's positive development (Yap & Baharudin, 2016). However, the absence of parental support drives youths to derive attention and significant support from social media platforms instead. This eventually leads to information overload and towards a condition of stress-related field and fatigue found on social media platforms such as Facebook and many more (Cramer, Song, & Drent, 2016; Dhir et al., 2018; Liu & Ma, 2018; Han, 2018). The situation as such exposes users to face exhaustion and be overwhelmed resulting in social media burnout (Han, 2016). Thus, researchers need to recognise the level of parental support among Malaysian youths to avoid their dependency on social media platforms in the future. This is in line with a study by Brown et al., (2019) that emphasised that the condition of an undiagnosed and untreated mental disorder may produce negative impacts on the younger generation's development, social life, and consequently future. Moreover, Yap and Baharudin (2016) in their study found a significant relationship between parental involvement and social self-efficacy, thus an absence of that condition would greatly affect the child. Therefore, an understudied condition of social media burnout led by social media addiction and the absence of parental support would only pose a threat to society. Thus, this study is much needed to increase awareness and eventually lower the diagnostic threshold. This is because, mental disorders when left untreated and undiagnosed can hurt the development, social life, and the future of the young ones (Brown et al., 2019).



To address the identified gaps, the present study draws upon the theoretical framework with a combination of the Stressor-Strain-Outcome Theory and Media Dependency Theory. Taking the moderating effect of age into account, Hardy and Castonguay (2018) found that social media enhances anxiety for older ones but not for younger individuals due to the effect of higher enjoyment of multitasking among the younger ones. Those in their late teens and twenties often see themselves neither as adolescents nor as full-fledged adults and are likely to engage in risky behaviours (Reynolds, Magidson, Mayes, & Lejuez, 2010) that can result in emotional stress and psychological difficulties (Burris, Brechting, Salsman, & Carlson, 2009; Goldstein, Flett, Wekerle, & Wall, 2009). Therefore, it is important to recognise age as a moderating factor for the relationship between social media addiction, parental support, and social media burnout moreover, a condition of social deficit may impose negative mental health outcomes (House 2001; Elhai et al. 2017).

This study would like to test the mediating effect of FoMO as prior study suggests social media addiction is positively associated with FoMO (Yin et al., 2021), compulsive social media usage resulting in fatigue mediated by FoMO (Dhir et al., 2018). FoMO was also seen to mediate support from online platforms and addictions (Liu & Ma, 2020). Moreover, this study would fill the gap in the theory that is expected to fit this study and the context of social media burnout concerning Malaysian youths. On the whole, the purpose of this study is two-fold. Firstly, it is responsible to investigate the relationship between social media addiction, parental support, and social media burnout and to determine the mediating effect of FoMO and the moderating effect of age on the relationships.



## 1.4 Research Question

Following the background established for this study along with the statement of this study's problem focusing on the presence of social media burnout caused by several factors, this research delves into the following line of research questions to be answered are as follows:

1. What is the level of social media addiction among Malaysian youths?
2. What is the level of parental support received by Malaysian youths?
3. What is the level of social media burnout among Malaysian youths?
4. What is the level of fear of missing out among Malaysian youths?
5. What is the relationship between social media addiction and social media burnout among Malaysian youths?
6. What is the relationship between parental support and social media burnout among Malaysian youths?
7. Does fear of missing out mediate the relationship between social media addiction and social media burnout among Malaysian youths?
8. Does fear of missing out mediate the relationship between parental support and social media burnout among Malaysian youths?
9. Does the age factor moderate the relationship between social media addiction and social media burnout among Malaysian youths?
10. Does the age factor moderate the relationship between parental support and social media burnout among Malaysian youths?

## 1.5 Research Objective

The general research objective of this study would be to explore social media addiction, parental support, social media burnout, and fear of missing out as the mediating effect, and age factor as the moderating effect among Malaysian youths. Specifically, the research objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To identify the level of social media addiction among Malaysian youths.
2. To identify the level of parental support received by Malaysian youths.
3. To identify the level of social media burnout among Malaysian youths.
4. To identify the level of fear of missing out among Malaysian youths.
5. To determine the relationship between social media addiction and social media burnout among Malaysian youths.
6. To determine the relationship between parental support and social media burnout among Malaysian youths.
7. To examine the mediating effect of fear of missing out towards social media addiction and social media burnout among Malaysian youths.
8. To examine the mediating effect of fear of missing out towards parental support and social media burnout among Malaysian youths.
9. To examine the moderating effect of age factor towards social media addiction and social media burnout among Malaysian youths.
10. To examine the moderating effect of age factor towards parental support and social media burnout among Malaysian youths.



## 1.6 Study Hypotheses

Based on the variables identified; social media addiction (independent variable), parental support (independent variable), social media burnout (dependent variable), FoMO (mediating variable), and age group (moderating variable), six hypotheses were developed and formulated. H1 and H2 would test the direct relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable while H3 and H4 would test the mediating variable between the independent variable and the dependent variable accordingly. Meanwhile, H5 and H6 will be testing the moderating variable between the independent variable and the dependent variable.

H1: There is a significant relationship between social media addiction and social media burnout among Malaysian youths.

H2: There is a significant relationship between parental support and social media burnout among Malaysian youths.

H3: Fear of missing out mediates social media addiction and social media burnout among Malaysian youths.

H4: Fear of missing out plays mediates parental support and social media burnout among Malaysian youths.

H5: There is a significant difference between the age group of social media addiction and social media burnout among Malaysian youths.

H6: There is a significant difference between the age group of parental support and social media burnout among Malaysian youths.



## 1.7 Theoretical Perspectives

This study on social media addiction, parental support and social media burnout mediated by FoMO and moderated by age group touches on multiple theoretical perspectives that have yet to be tested. Theoretical perspectives allow a greater understanding of the subject of study. The theory works to illuminate the research for a better understanding and clearer overview. Therefore, this section will highlight relevant theories associated with this study while pulling together all the chains of ideas from the previous section and have it related to the theory applied.

### 1.7.1 Stressor-Strain-Outcome Theory

Since the last few decades, the burnout phenomenon has been studied using the stressor-strain-outcome model framework by Koeske and Koeske (1993) which describes the layer of stress, strain, and outcome in an individual's life. This model considers stressors as a stimulus from an individual's environment to be perceived as a negatively impacting element as described by Berg et al, (2010) as "adverse feelings, such as anxiety, fear, irritation, pressure, and sadness caused by an imbalance between the individual's motivations and abilities and the environment's requirements and supports". Thus, the result of high demand, perceived overload, and low control condition is often a psychophysiological reaction that is classified as strain (Weiss 1983; Spreitzer et al. 1997) depicting a psychological reaction to stressful situations (de Croon et al. 2004). Therefore, the outcome of this model is portrayed as the consequences of the strain in the form of psychological behavioural intention or attitudes (Koeske and Koeske 1993).

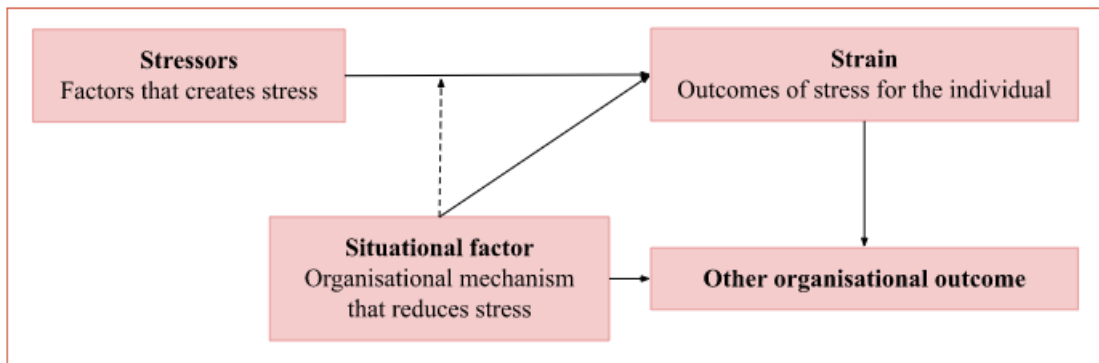


Figure 1.1. Model of Stressor-Strain-Outcome

Several scholars have identified extreme social media usage among young people (Benson et al., 2019; Aygul and Akbay, 2019). Following that, an uncontrollable state of social media usage impacts an individual's mental health of emotional disturbance, social isolation, and low academic achievement (Baker and Algorta, 2016; Algul & Akbay, 2019). Recent studies by several scholars such as Dhir et al. (2018), Islam et al. (2020), and Mamun et al. (2021) portray a positive association with social media fatigue due to compulsive social media usage conditions. Essentially, social media burnout or social media fatigue is a phenomenon derived from social media users experiencing an adverse emotional experience that includes tiredness, disappointment, boredom, burnout, loss of interest, and a decreased level of motivation (Teng et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2016) leading users to loosen their grip towards social media usage (Whelan et al., 2020).

Within this framework of stress-strain-outcome, the stressors that refer to an environmental stimulus are perceived as social media addiction for this study. Koeske and Koeske (1993) found social support as an important element for this framework



and consecutively compulsive social media usage as a perceived stressor in previous studies too (Li and Chan, 2021). Following that, the strain that impacts the relationship of this model is recognised as FoMO for this study and consecutively the inevitable outcome that exhibits negative conditions due to prolonged stress and strain is recognised as social media burnout for this study.

A study found compulsive social media usage as a key stressor of the condition leading to social media fatigue (Zhang et al., 2020). With the abundance of social media platforms nationwide and instantly accessible information, information overload has become a side impact of the digital era (Liu et al., 2021; Pang, 2018). The condition of information overload has been defined as a situation where individuals experience a large amount of input information exceeding an individual's cognitive capacity for information processing abilities that channels confrontation of too much content leading to a sufferable condition of decision-making (Teng et al., 2021; Yang et al., 2018). The outcome of this condition leads to a sense of overwhelming feelings affecting emotional states and has become a primary source of psychological stress impacting social media burnout (Li and Chan, 2021; Liu et al., 2021). Moreover, social support is seen to postulate an effect on the stress-outcome relationship earlier in the model (Koeske and Koeske, 1993). Therefore, the relevance of social support is apparent as this study encapsulated parental support as deduced by past literature.

Moreover, the season of Covid-19 pandemic has caused youths to feel social media burnout due to the effect of information overload making them feel cognitive strain and stress (Soroya et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2016). The Covid-19 pandemic saw an increased amount of information, pictures, and video transmission on social media





platforms. However, the individual capability to comprehend this information is limited (Liu et al., 2021). Thus, the condition of an individual's inability to handle information could not keep up with the information dissemination that was continuously promoted (Islam et al., 2020; Li and Chan, 2021) resulting in an unhealthy mental condition, namely social media burnout.

Besides compulsive usage of social media, emotional stress has been recognised as an important stressor during the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak (Li and Chan, 2021; Primack et al., 2017). This is due to the absence of human connections while curbing the spread of the virus. The stressor-strain outcome model has been utilised successfully concerning multiple stress-related studies (Cheung & Tang, 2010). Following that, it can be deduced that emotional stress is linked to psychological symptoms of social strains, depressive mood, and other mental illnesses (Baker and Algorta, 2016; Zhong et al., 2021; Fox and Moreland, 2015; Levy et al., 2009). Therefore, the outcome of individuals with social media burnout was likely to portray signs of diminished enthusiasm and motivation (Liu et al., 2021). Consequently, several scholars have suggested that social media addiction would result in fatigue leading to social media burnout and a declined cognitive ability rendering users an inclined management of emotion and attention control (Klobas et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2021).

### 1.7.2 Media Dependency Theory

Media dependency theory was first brought forth by Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976). This theory does not focus on the features of relationships amongst individuals, media, or culture but instead attributes the influence of media. This allows the identification of





the position and characters of the media system as the knowledge system is the basis of media dependency theory. The theory of media dependency focuses on ecological approaches such as “the relationships between small, medium, and large systems and their components” (DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1990). This theory discusses the different social structures (economic, political, religious, and educational systems) as the social framework contributing to the social information system.

According to scholars, society in the modern world relies on personal connections and networks to achieve their goals of understanding and acquiring knowledge as well as deciding on how to spend their free time (Oluseyi Adegbola & Gearhart, 2019). Social media has become essential for the youths in this nation. It has become difficult for individuals to live well without relying on media applications for knowledge. The concept of social media as a form of media with an information system places it in the heart of society. Individuals cannot obtain important information entirely from society alone without relying on the mass media system (Choi, Tan, Yasui, & Pekelnicky, 2014). Conditions of negative support from parents supposedly push the users to seek support from this source of media as suggested by the above scholars.

Moreover, many feel that there is a growing feeling of being left out in the absence of social media. The second core proposition of media dependency theory emphasises the interdependence of individuals and the media (Ball-Rokeach, 1998). The interdependence of individuals on social media usage has increased the value of social media addiction among young people.

Thirdly, the theory focuses on the growing complexity or confusion in society leading to a particular problem subsequently increasing the role of the media system in





society (Gwyn et al., 1987). Over time, the power of social media is likely to grow stronger when the ambiguity increases in social or individual circumstances. The reliance of youths on social media increases when they experience unlikely incidents and social matters (Nawi et al., 2020). Individuals have grown to become increasingly reliant as the media system provides essential and exclusive information for the community to have a sense of connectedness with the outside world. Following that, media dependency theory provides exposure to the direct and indirect influence on the behaviour of the people (Zhang & Hung, 2018).

The media affects a person through psychological and cognitive processes (Ross, Bickham, Shrier, & Rich, 2012). The cognitive process model provides a clear link between stimuli such as this study that focuses on social media addiction and social media burnout that is mediated by FoMO in the concept of “relationship” (Drok, Hermans, & Kats, 2018; Ross et al., 2012). Previous studies have shown media influence as a byproduct of media dependency function from a modification and progress of traditional media (Hao et al., 2014). Besides, a researcher explained that a certain form of media influences cognitive results, and emotional and behavioural “sharing” between the audience and media channel (Zaichkowsky, 1985). This is in line with this study focusing on social media usage while also considering the parental support received by Malaysian youth.

As stated by Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur, the three factors that work as the basics to determine media importance to individuals by understanding an individual’s social world (surveillance), meaningful and effective acts (social utility), and overwhelming information turning to high tension (fantasy-escape). The higher the media dependence,



the higher the number of individuals reacting to media and consequently a greater influence on individuals. The theory of media dependency states that the two factors influencing a particular situation would be the needs of an individual's social media, and thus dependence of people on media and consequently significant media effect on individuals. This theory predicts that individuals will rely on media content to fulfill their specific needs and achieve their goals.

Another cause of dependency is social stability. The changes in social and tension are in line with the developed values and traditions inciting individuals to make choices (Nawi et al., 2020). Reliance on social media grows over time, and culture and social circumstances shape youth's knowledge acquisition (Nawi et al., 2020). External factors exert constraints on the dependence of media. In this study, external exertion such as FoMO determines the volume of social media burnout level among Malaysian youths. Media Dependency Theory is relevant to guide the new media usage among the youth (Nawi et al., 2020).

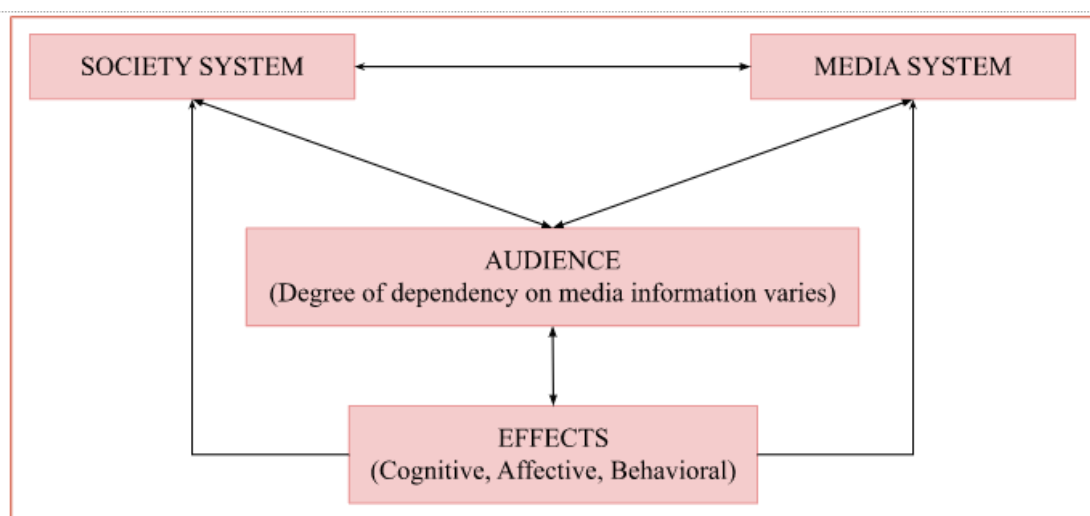


Figure 1.2. Model of Media Dependency Theory

As for the theoretical perspectives of this study, the focus is on social media addiction and parental support as stressors, FoMO as strain, and social media burnout as the outcome based on the stressor-strain model. The Media Dependency Theory sees social media addiction as a form of the media system and parental support as a form of societal system impacting audience and social media burnout as a behavioural effect.

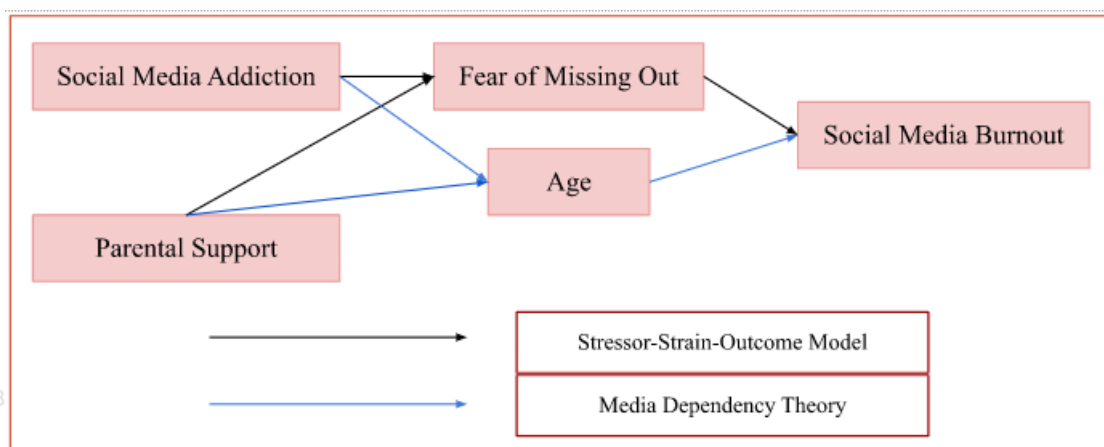


Figure 1.3. Theoretical Framework

## 1.8 Conceptual Framework

Based on the Stressor-Strain-Outcome Theory, Media Dependency Theory (MSD), and the reviewed literature, the variables of this study are identified as social media addiction and parental support as the independent variable, and social media burnout as the dependent variable, FoMO as a mediating variable and the age as the moderating factor between the independent and dependent variable.

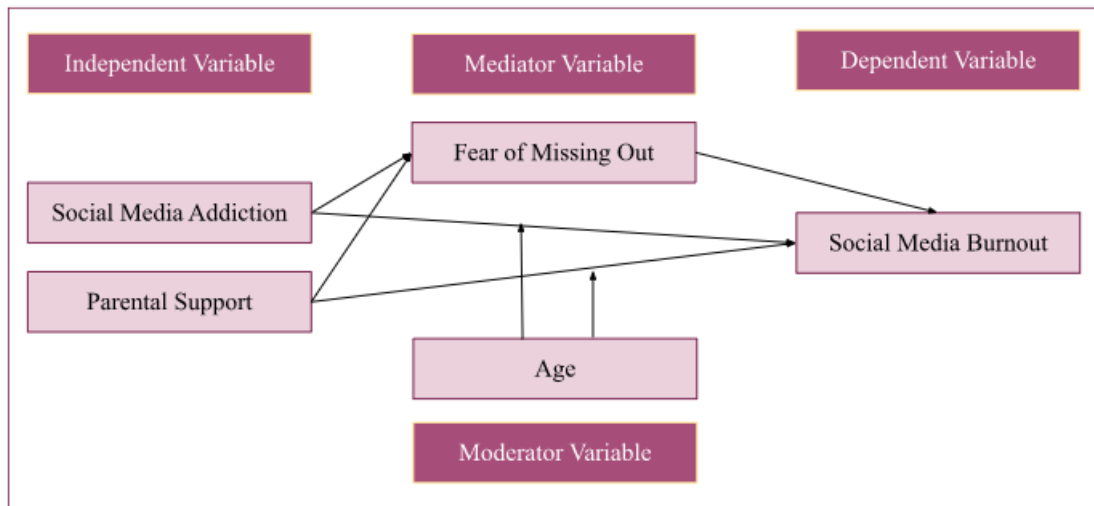


Figure 1.4. Research Framework of the Study

## 1.9 Scope of Study

The hike in the misuse and compulsive use of social media has been a primary reason leading towards addiction that consecutively leads to the emergence of negative mental health implications among the young generation (Azenal & Zaw, 2021). This works as a catalyst in allowing the current subject of interest to focus on these variables affecting Malaysian youths. Not only that, the recent Covid-19 pandemic has pushed Malaysian youths to spend an increased amount of time on social media. Moreover, the absence of parental support for their child in their youthful days pushes the latter group to seek dependence on social media thus leading to a tendency of social media burnout due to excessive consumption (Dhir et al., 2018). In addition to that, FoMO among youths thickens by the day driving their social media usage higher and consecutively making them experience social media burnout has inspired this research to study FoMO as the mediating factor (Przybylski et al., 2013). Furthermore, it is also important to study the groups of ages as the moderating factor to classify and understand the depth of social



media usage, parental support, FoMO, and social media burnout among two different age groups in the youth category comprising the older youth group and the younger youth group. This study would focus on the existence of a relationship between the five variables distinctively; social media addiction, parental support as the independent variables, and social media burnout as the dependent variable and FoMO as the mediating factor and age group as the moderating factor of this study.

Following that, this study would also be restricted to Malaysians aged below 15 years and above 30 years of any gender, race, and religion as this study focuses on the group of Malaysian youths identified as most prone to social media. The focused age of 15 to 30 years is according to the definition set in the Malaysian parliament, as the amendments tabled in the parliament were redefined recently by then Youth and Sports Minister, Syed Saddiq Syed Abdul Rahman in the recent year. This is in line with several studies that suggest youth groups as the most vulnerable group of people that are prone to exhibiting symptoms of mental illness (Hicks & Heastie, 2008). Therefore, the respondents of this study would be those utilising social media platforms for socialising or as an informational hub, or for entertainment purposes. The social media platforms that may be used by Malaysian youths are predicted to be Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and many more. Participants with social media accounts and usage but not of the youth age group are not to be included in this study to ensure the quality of the study is not affected. Besides that, the scope of this study would also compromise samples to be collected from the four main states in Malaysia. Among these states are Selangor, Penang, Johor, and Sabah which would meaningfully represent the entire Malaysian population for the need of this study efficiently.





### 1.10 Definition of Key Terms

This section defines the key terms that are to be used throughout this study.

**Social Media** - Social media collectively describes the means of communication and engagement with people. It is evolutionary, in helping people connect with each other in ways that are genuine, authentic and natural (Holloman, 2011).

**Social Media Addiction** - Social media addiction can be referred to as one form of Internet addiction, in the condition where individuals are seen to be exhibiting a compulsion to use social media excessively (Griffiths, 2000).



**Parental Support** - Parental Support has been indexed through the measures of closeness and confiding in the parent-child relationship or of adolescents' perceived support from parents for helping them to deal with problems (Wills & Cleary, 1996).

**Mental Health** – Mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community (WHO, 2001).

**Mental Illness** - A mental disorder is characterized by a clinically significant disturbance in an individual's cognition, emotional regulation, or behaviour. It is usually associated with distress or impairment in important areas of functioning. There are many different types of mental disorders (WHO, 2022).



**Social Media Burnout** - As a relatively new term in the field of mental health, Bo Han (2016) defines social media burnout as the degree to which the social media user is feeling exhausted when using social media.

**Fear of Missing Out (FoMO)** - Fear of missing out as defined by Przybylski et al (2013) would mean as the persistent nerve when assuming others are experiencing a rewarding experience in which one is absent.

**Malaysian Youths** - Malaysian youths are defined to be between 15 to 30 of age (Yunus & Landau, 2019), according to the amendment tabled in the Malaysian Parliament to the Youth Societies and Youth Development Act (Amendment) 2019 (Act 668) by the Youth and Sports Minister in 2019, Syed Saddiq Syed Abdul Rahman.

### 1.11 Limitation of Study

One of the biggest limitations this study has faced is the dependent variable which is social media burnout, which is a relatively new term that was introduced in 2016 and Malaysia has very limited resources and literature correlating to that variable especially among the youths as of the time this study has taken place. Therefore, the current instrument and conceptualisation used to investigate this variable would be adopted from different countries that may have cultural, preferential, or language barriers when utilised for the Malaysian context. Therefore, this calls for a need for this very own country to develop its instruments to suit the values of Malaysian youths for a better data outcome to identify this aspect of mental illness. Moreover, the possibility of other



variables as the mediating and moderating effect of social media addiction, and parental support on social media burnout are to be considered rather than solely FoMO and the age groups in this study. Other mediators and moderators also may have a prominent impact on social media addiction and parental support relating to mental illness in the form of social media burnout. Therefore, the need for multiple other studies to test out other mediating factors and moderating on social media addiction, parental support and social media burnout are pertinent.

Besides, respondents of this study were randomly collected from four states (Selangor, Penang, Johor, and Sabah) out of the 14 states in Malaysia. This condition results in data output not being generally or fairly represented according to the Malaysian population. This may be due to the level of social media addiction, parental support, social media burnout, and FoMO differing according to the states considerably.

Hence, a recommendation for a diverse and amplified sample is to be considered in terms of demographic profile, in terms of states would be good for future studies. However, future studies should try to bridge the gap by enabling a proportional number of respondents for all categories of demographic values to allow a fairer outcome. To top it all off, Paulhus (1991) highlighted that respondents may develop a tendency to present themselves in a positive light to researchers leading to misinterprets that lower data outcomes between the proposed variables (Vigil-Colet, 2016). Therefore, several constructs with addiction content may lead participants to under-report that may not reflect themselves, especially in the condition of a quantitative survey that is to be answered by themselves.





### 1.12 Significance of Study

The findings of the study are expected to provide significant outcomes to the government, policy-makers, youths, educators, employers, health practitioners, and law and order departments. In addition to that, this study would be able to fill the existing gap in the field of communication as this study attempts to contribute towards acknowledging the existence of social media burnout conditions among Malaysian youths as an effort to ensure they have better mental health conditions. This study would highlight discussions and recommendations parallel to the potential needs and ranges of concern. Being among the earliest studies on social media burnout, this allows contributions to point towards key areas of influence and valuable data for the Communication Ministry, Women, Family and Community Development Ministry, and Health Ministry respectively that would enable the communication, community, and health sector to better educate the youths on proper utilisation of social media as well as parents on becoming an important source of support for proper development of Malaysian youths. In addition to having increased social media usage due to the pandemic, it is vital for an accentuated effort to be carried out to avoid a depleting mental state among the youths. Previous studies show intervention efforts to be effective in reducing social media addiction and providing consequently improved mental health (Young, 1999).

Moreover, a questionable state of mental health would lead to suicidal or negative behaviours toward online usage such as internet scams or cyberbullying. Thus, finding out the level of social media burnout would eventually help future researchers to mitigate intervention plans to improve the condition as well as the government to





formulate new initiatives to overcome the issue of social media addiction while understanding the mediating effect between the two. Furthermore, the methodology of this study would be able to contribute with its appropriate and effective cross-sectional study. The usage of the quantitative approach is comprehensive to acknowledge the descriptive outcome of this study taking into consideration a group of youths that would be more comfortable via anonymous survey. Subsequently, this approach would be more practical and effective for the target population of this study which would be helpful for Malaysian youths to ensure more efforts are taken to curb social media misuse among them. It is also important to note the broader implications this study would bring. It is undeniable that online and offline activities cross paths with people's daily living environment (Musetti & Corsano, 2018). Therefore, this study on online activities would allow responsible parties to understand technological and social media's impact on the lives of the nation's youth. Consequently, this would allow them to improve the quality of internet coverage and social media to utilise the availability of these platforms for the better good.

Importantly, a study on social media burnout in Malaysian youths is fairly at a preliminary stage. Therefore, this would be one of the earliest studies in the Malaysian youth context that examines social media burnout together with the occurrence of social media addiction, parental support, and FoMO as a mediator between the first two variables. Consequently, the findings of this study would be able to provide new information for researchers, and policymakers to seek an understanding of the rising state of negative mental health and especially social media burnout in detail among Malaysian youths. This is important as social media has an image of being an impactful technology in the communication field with the tendency towards transformation



behaviour in all features of life (Lee & Lim, 2015). Thus, it is a natural occurrence that technology along with internet usage and social media has become a phenomenon among the younger generation (Lenhart et al., 2015). Therefore, it is important to recognise the impacts that social media has especially on youths to avoid negative outcomes and at the same time would assist to recognise the depth of this condition among Malaysian youths.

### 1.13 Chapter Summary

This chapter has introduced the background of this research in terms of recognising the situation of unhealthy usage of social media among Malaysian youths. Moreover, it is noted that the pandemic has become a catalyst for the current severe condition of social media dependency. The same pandemic has also shown the presence and absence of family support impacting Malaysian youths' social media usage leading to social media burnout. Following that, social media burnout has been recognised as a form of mental illness and the dependent variable of this study. Moreover, a relationship between social media addiction, parental support, and social media burnout has been drawn with FoMO as the mediating factor and age as the moderating factor. Furthermore, this chapter described the problem statement of this study which eventually helps to recognise the research question and research objectives as well. Moreover, this chapter also highlights the scope of this study, its significance as well as limitations of this study. Last but not least, this study also ties the theoretical perspective for the study and adds the details of the definitions of the terms that would be focused on throughout this whole study to improve the explanation and understanding of this study.