

Mediating Role of Personality Traits and Moderating Influence of Gender in the Relationship between Social Media and Life Quality

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Abstract

The prevalence of social media within contemporary media landscapes requires an enhanced comprehension of the potential impact of social media exposure and engagement on an individual's overall life quality. The current study aims to investigate the impact of social media consumption on young individuals' personalities and life quality. A total sample of 287 individuals aged between 13 and 32 years and enrolled in higher educational institutions were recruited. Moreover, the frequency of social media exposure was assessed through participants' self-reported estimations. The study results demonstrated a positive correlation between social media consumption, extraversion, and life quality. Contrarily, an insignificant positive relationship existed between social media consumption and other dimensions of the Big Five personality traits. A notable gender disparity was also observed in the correlation between social media usage and overall life quality. Nevertheless, outcome generalisation should be conducted with discretion following the variations in personality and social media usage across different cultures and time zones.

Keywords: social media consumption, media exposure, life quality, Big Five personality traits, gender

1. Introduction

The recent proliferation of information and communication technologies (ICTs) has led to a significant social transformation, with a higher dependency on instant information (Abdullayev, 2020; Chang et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2022). Furthermore, ICT utilisation has significantly enhanced the accessibility of information and knowledge in terms of scale, scope, and speed (Miguel Cruz et al., 2023; Sharifjanovna, 2022). Individuals constantly seek to directly connect with peers, establish more social connections, and acquire rapid responses and access to information (Zhang et al., 2022). As a result, social media has emerged as a dominant platform for communication, interaction, collaboration, and content sharing, with usage continuing to grow steadily. Online activities have also garnered much popularity as key components of daily life. According to Grover et al. (2022), global social media users exceeded 2.65 billion individuals in 2018, with a projected growth of approximately 4.1 billion by 2023.

Social media platforms allow individuals to achieve a significant level of involvement, engagement, and cooperation. Various discussions were also initiated regarding the potential positive and negative outcomes associated with social media usage (Lim & Rasul, 2022). Malak et al. (2022a) discovered a significant correlation between social media and a decrease in academic performance among college students. Ngien and Jiang (2022) also demonstrated that excessive usage of social media was associated with dissatisfaction in interpersonal relationships due to perceived low quality. Moreover, frequent negative comparisons on social media platforms significantly contributed to negative identity formation (Shannon et al., 2022). Approximately 6% of the global population has been reported to exhibit symptoms of internet addiction (Zendle & Bowden-Jones, 2019). Nonetheless, certain research demonstrated that frequent exposure to social media stimuli could assist in fostering a positive perception towards a firm or brand to enhance brand recognition and elicit a more positive behavioural inclination.

The positive or negative consequences derived from social media utilisation could further result in heightened dependence and reliance on the platforms (Goldring & Azab, 2021). Social media utilisation could impact various dimensions of individuals' life quality, which encompass physical health, psychological well-being, social connections, and the surrounding environment. Therefore, this study aimed to examine the relationship between social, cognitive, and hedonic aspects of social media usage and their effects on personality traits and life quality. Previous studies

demonstrated a significant correlation between the five-factor model (Big Five) of personality and internet addiction (Arpaci et al., 2022). Additional psychological factors, such as contextual age groups and an individual's life satisfaction were also associated with the usage of social media platforms (Pang, 2022). Simultaneously, interpersonal contact and engagement in social activities were deemed relevant variables.

However, past research has primarily focused on either contextual age or social factors, often overlooking how different dimensions of social media usage impact personality holistically. The ubiquity of social media in contemporary society is a prevalent phenomenon and an integral component of individuals' daily routines. A considerable amount of studies examined the relationship between an individual's personality traits and relevant utilisation of social media platforms. Yet, few studies have comprehensively investigated how these traits relate to varied patterns of usage, particularly across different age groups. A dearth of comparative studies appraised the impact of social media usage across different age groups, despite substantial research evaluating the effects of social media utilisation on teenagers. Thus, this study aimed to conduct a comparative analysis of the aforementioned relationships.

Specifically, the present study examined how social, cognitive, and hedonic aspects of social media usage are associated with personality traits and overall life quality. Gender was also postulated to play a significant role in mitigating the association between social media consumption and overall life quality. Prior scholars (Krasnova et al., 2017) revealed that examining the potential moderating effect of gender on the association between social media consumption and life quality could provide valuable insights with significant societal implications. Specific elements of media exposure, namely the combination of exposure time and attention, were also considered to support the research framework on life quality, especially on several widely employed social networking sites (SNSs). A deeper understanding of these mechanisms could inform strategies for managing the increasing dependence on social media in everyday life.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Social Media

Social media platforms have become an essential component of contemporary society. Vogels et al. (2022) delineated that the fundamental principles underpinning social media include transparency, personalisation, bottom-up communication, collaboration, and the sharing of information and knowledge. Social media refers to online applications and interactive platforms, which enable users to generate, discuss, modify, and exchange content (Zolkepli & Kamarulzaman, 2015). Social media platforms facilitate an information-sharing environment, where individuals could engage in frequent communication, collaboration, and various social and interactive activities (Ortiz-Ospina & Roser, 2023). The platforms include business and SNSs, blogs, news delivery and collaboration sites, virtual worlds, podcasts, commerce and open-source software communities, and platforms for sharing creative works and educational materials (Saura et al., 2023). The integration of social media into individuals' personal and professional lives significantly transforms human connection and media consumption. Figure 1 illustrates global social media users from 2017 to projected estimates by 2025.

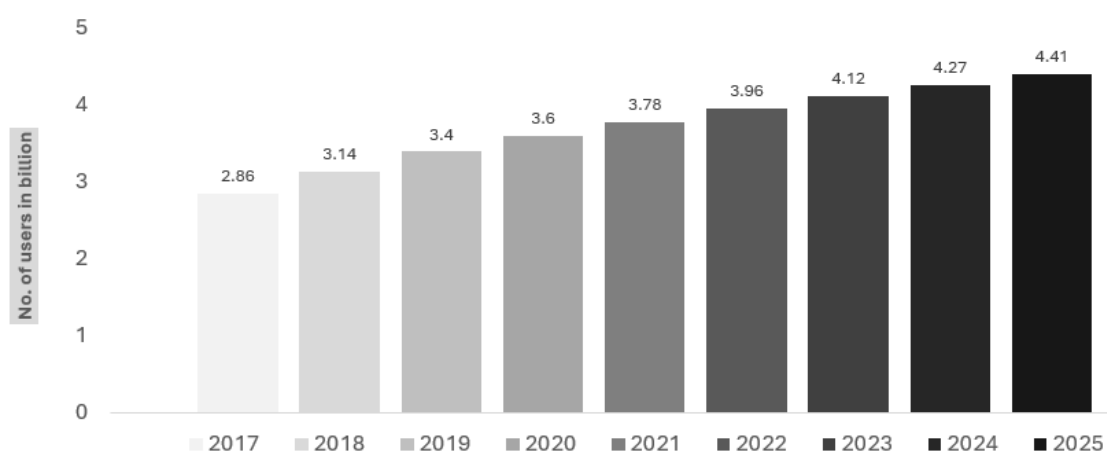


Figure 1. The Number of Social Media Users Worldwide 2017–2025 (Statista, 2021, p. 1)

2.2 Personality

Personality psychology is a field of study elucidating and examining the inclinations that contribute to behavioural variations, which are shaped by both biological and environmental factors. The term contains the Latin root 'persona', which originally describes the masks worn by actors in ancient Greek theatrical performances. Personality in

contemporary usage generally pertains to an individual's public image (Bleidorn et al., 2022). The majority of theories in this field revolve around motivation and psychological interactions with the environment. Nevertheless, a universally accepted definition of personality remains elusive (Stasielowicz, 2022). Related theories provide insights into the complex nature of the self, despite the potential confusion arising from multiple definitions and ideas. Rogers (1959) defined personality or self. The definition depicts a structured and enduring cognitive framework, in which an individual perceives and interprets personal attributes and interpersonal connections.

The Big Five model is a comprehensive framework for categorising personality traits through five primary factors, namely openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism (Rammstedt & John, 2007). Openness to experience refers to the extent and intricacy of an individual's cognitive and experiential dimensions, such as imagination, aesthetics, and intellect. Meanwhile, conscientiousness includes traits of dutifulness, responsibility, and achievement-striving (Topino et al., 2021).

Extraversion was also positively associated with social and innovative activities, wherein individuals demonstrating a lower extraversion level are perceived as introverted (Walker, 2020). Agreeableness is characterised by displaying friendliness, exhibiting considerate behaviour, and actively avoiding disputes. Agreeableness could be distinguished from an adversarial disposition towards other individuals (Hudson, 2023). The construct of neuroticism is associated with the propensity to experience negative emotions, particularly anxiety. Neuroticism includes various aspects linked to sentiments of worry, tension, and negative affect (Yang et al., 2020).

2.3 Media Exposure

This concept is characterised by the degree to which individuals are exposed to particular messages in media content (Melki et al., 2022). Notably, the concept and measurement of exposure present certain complications.

2.4 Social Media Consumption

Media consumption or media diet is the collective consumption of information and entertainment media by an individual or a group. Individuals must possess the necessary cognitive abilities to effectively engage with the media. Social media utilisation is beneficial to both social and commercial contexts. The proliferation of modern communication channels, such as smartphones, social media networks, and interactive television, has led to the recognition of social media consumption as a valuable means of engaging with customers.

Hence, the significant focus on social media consumption originates from the extensive interaction with users and content. The emphasis could result from constant connectivity among the millennial generation owing to the presence of multiple social media accounts and a strong preference for mobile devices. Additionally, millennials are predisposed to share personal information on SNSs, which contributes to the significance provided to social media consumption (Sun et al., 2022). Figure 2 portrays an increase of over 30 minutes from 2015 (Statista, 2021).

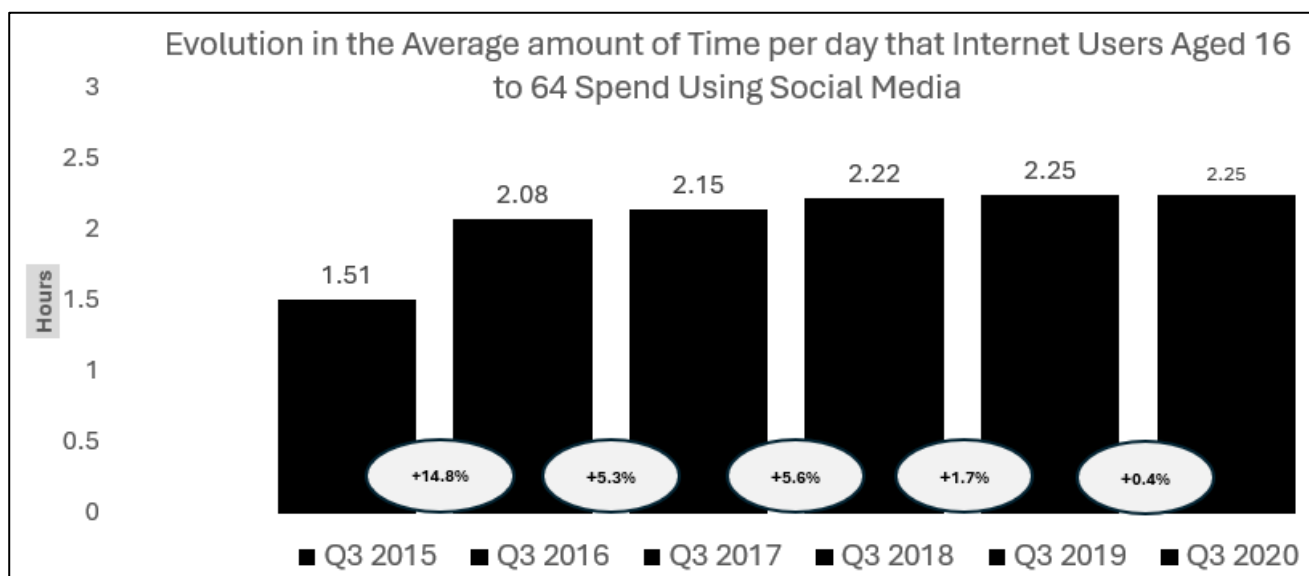


Figure 2. Daily Time Spent on Social Media (Hootsuite, 2021, p. 92)

2.5 Generation

While numerous studies assessed the biological factors associated with social media addiction and consumption, such as individual variations in genetic makeup and the neurobiological mechanisms of addiction (McDougall et al., 2023;

Potenza, 2014), more specific research investigating the biological factors contributing to social media addiction was required. The current study, which concentrated on the factor of age due to the intricate nature of assessing genetic composition, aimed to appraise the correlation between social media exposure and various generational cohorts or age groups, such as millennials and Generation Z. Existing research indicated a higher frequency of social media usage among younger individuals compared to older adults (Andreassen et al., 2016; Keum et al., 2023), especially individuals between 18 to 25 years old. Furthermore, a negative correlation existed between age and social media usage (Chen et al., 2023). The finding posited a decline in usage when individuals became older, although older adults maintained certain engagement with social media platforms. Therefore, further investigation is required to thoroughly comprehend the impact of social media on adults and explore the intricate dynamics between social media usage and age. Figure 3 depicts generational characteristics and distinctions.

	Baby Boomer 1940-59	Gen X 1960-79	Gen Y (Millennial) 1980-94	Gen Z 1995-2010
Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Postwar - Dictatorship and repression in Brazil 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Political transition - Capitalism and meritocracy dominate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Globalization - Economic stability - Emergence of internet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mobility and multiple realities - Social networks - Digital natives
Behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Idealism - Revolutionary - Collectivist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Materialistic - Competitive - Individualistic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Globalist - Questioning - Oriented to self 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Undefined ID - “Communaholic” - “Dialogue” - Realistic
Consumption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ideology - Vinyl and movies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Status - Brands and cars - Luxury articles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Experience - Festivals and travel - Flagships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Uniqueness - Unlimited - Ethical

McKinsey & Company

Figure 3. Generational Characteristics and Distinctions (Francis & Hoefel, 2018)

2.6 Life Quality

The concept of life quality is a cognitive evaluation involving performing judgements regarding an individual's overall life satisfaction based on personal criteria (Cotten et al., 2022). Imbulana Arachchi and Managi (2023) explicated that the assessment of individuals' satisfaction with current circumstances is influenced by personal standards without external factors. While income, health, employment, leisure, personal life, and reputation are generally perceived as desirable, the valuation varies among individuals. According to Babapour et al. (2022), happiness is defined as a state characterised by feelings of joy or pleasant emotions. Happiness also refers to the overall satisfaction experienced in an individual's overall life with different aspects, including work, leisure, and other components. Hence, the concept pertains to the assessment of overall life satisfaction as opposed to the aggregation of satisfaction levels in distinct areas of life. Researchers generally employ two conceptual frameworks to elucidate the factors influencing life satisfaction or overall life quality when examining the existing literature body. The frameworks are recognised as subjective and objective perspectives. The objective perspective posits that life quality is influenced by various environmental and situational aspects, such as familial relationships, employment status, recreational activities, residential surroundings, community engagement, and overall happiness with the current socioeconomic status. The subjective construct postulates that perceived life quality could be altered by personality or dispositional traits, such as agreeableness and neuroticism.

2.7 Hypothesis Development

2.7.1 Media Consumption and Personality Traits

The current research methodology comprises the integration of the Big Five personality traits. Empirical research examined the relationship between personality factors, excessive mobile phone usage, and the emergence of addictive behaviours (Daimer et al., 2022). Research investigated the association between extraversion and materialism as a potential predictor of compulsive behaviour (Laor & Galily, 2022). Accordingly, a relationship was hypothesised between individuals' social media usage and specific personality characteristics.

2.7.2 Social Media Consumption and Extraversion

Individuals who exhibit extraverted traits tend to display dominance in social interactions, enthusiasm, talkativeness, and a propensity for sociability. Weiß et al. (2022) elucidated that individuals who exhibit high levels of extraversion are more inclined to engage in virtual social services and possess more online social experiences. Mathur et al. (2023) also demonstrated a positive correlation between extraversion and communication via SNSs. Hjetland et al. (2022) provided empirical evidence of a strong correlation between extraversion and Facebook usage. According to Bowden-Green et al. (2020), individuals who exhibited extraverted traits consistently focused on and utilised personal smartphones in public settings. Thus, social media consumption via different social media applications could significantly influence the development of extraverted personalities. A relevant hypothesis was proposed:

H1: Social media consumption positively impacts extraversion personalities.

2.7.3 Social Media Consumption and Agreeableness

Individuals with a high agreeableness level tend to utilise social media platforms, such as Facebook, to satisfy inherent needs for belongingness. Engaging in social media could assist in attaining peer approval and establishing interpersonal connections (Kiive et al., 2023; Kim & Kim, 2018). Nevertheless, the limited empirical support and lack of guidance from the Big Five model pose a significant challenge to establishing a clear association between agreeableness and social media usage. Individuals exhibited varying degrees of agreeableness when utilising social media platforms, with individuals with higher agreeableness tending to employ SNSs for conveying amicable messages. Conversely, individuals with a lower agreeableness degree tend to utilise SNSs to communicate more antagonistic messages. The current study hypothesised that:

H2: Social media consumption is significantly correlated to agreeableness.

2.7.4 Social Media Consumption and Conscientiousness

Prior studies demonstrated inconsistent results. Several studies indicated a positive correlation between conscientiousness and social media usage (Choi et al., 2023; Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2017), which suggested that individuals with a high conscientiousness level are more inclined to utilise social media platforms for professional networking and engaging in work-related activities (Hollebeek et al., 2023). Contrarily, certain researchers discovered that individuals with high conscientiousness tend to refrain from employing social media platforms due to the potential to encourage procrastination and act as a diversion from more crucial obligations. Individuals with high conscientiousness also tend towards caution, thereby leading to refraining from sharing photographs and remarks on SNSs compared to the more impulsive counterparts (Hollebeek et al., 2023). Social media may serve as a valuable instrument for individuals characterised by conscientiousness and strategic thinking to enhance professional trajectories. Alternatively, social media could also serve as a source of pleasure and relaxation for individuals who exhibit lower levels of efficiency, goal orientation, self-discipline, and achievement striving (Giovannini et al., 2015; Mathur et al., 2023). A relevant hypothesis was developed:

H3: Conscientiousness is significantly correlated to social media usage.

2.7.5 Social Media Consumption and Neuroticism

Individuals exhibiting a significant predisposition towards neuroticism tend to engage in more regular SNS usage (Bowden-Green et al., 2021). Individuals with high neuroticism levels tend to utilise social media platforms to establish a sense of belongingness and engage in self-therapeutic practises and mitigate negative emotions (Marciano et al., 2020). Previous findings revealed that individuals with elevated neuroticism levels employed social media platforms as a means of alleviating stress and managing unpleasant emotions (Bowden-Green et al., 2021). A hypothesis was postulated:

H4: Neuroticism is positively correlated to social media usage.

2.7.6 Social Media Consumption and Openness to Experience

Past studies indicated a positive correlation between individuals with a higher inclination towards novelty-seeking behaviour and the increased usage of social media platforms (Kim & Kim, 2018). Individuals who possess a significant level of openness to experience are more predisposed to engage in a higher frequency of reporting and posting on other individuals' social media pages. Furthermore, individuals with high openness utilise social media platforms to acquire information on other individuals and organise offline activities (Beyens et al., 2020). The potential correlation between individuals' openness to experience and social media utilisation could also be attributed to traits, such as curiosity, unconventional perspectives, and a willingness to engage in novel settings. The current study postulated that:

H5: Openness to experience is positively correlated to social media usage.

2.7.7 Personality and Life Quality

Huang et al. (2017) revealed significant correlations between several personality traits, namely neuroticism, mastery, optimism, a sense of coherence, and psycho-social quality of life (QoL). The correlation between personality and QoL suggested that personality qualities could shape individuals' perspectives on life circumstances and subsequent outcomes, which would positively or negatively impact the overall QoL (Gonzales et al., 2022). Given's personality's impact on consistent behavioural patterns throughout several life domains postulates that a more efficacious method for assessing the beneficial effects would require analysing aggregated QoL indicators. Similarly, Gonzales et al. (2022) demonstrated a significant positive association between personality scores and QoL assessment. Hence, the present study propounded that:

H6: A significant relationship exists between personality and QoL.

2.7.8 The Moderating Effect of Gender

The role of gender is generally theorised to function as a moderator in sociological studies. The phenomenon is also common in the field of communication science as gender disparities may be present when engaging with social media platforms. The distinctive attributes of males and females, intended to be mutually beneficial, have contributed to the continuous gender inequality and subsequently resulted in disparate health outcomes and QoL conditions in the workplace (Gonzales et al., 2022). Gonzales et al. (2022) indicated that females experienced a more pronounced detrimental impact on subjective well-being owing to passive social media usage. A hypothesis was posited:

H7: Gender moderates the relationship between media consumption and QoL.

2.7.9 Conceptual Framework

Figure 4 illustrates the conceptual framework of this study.

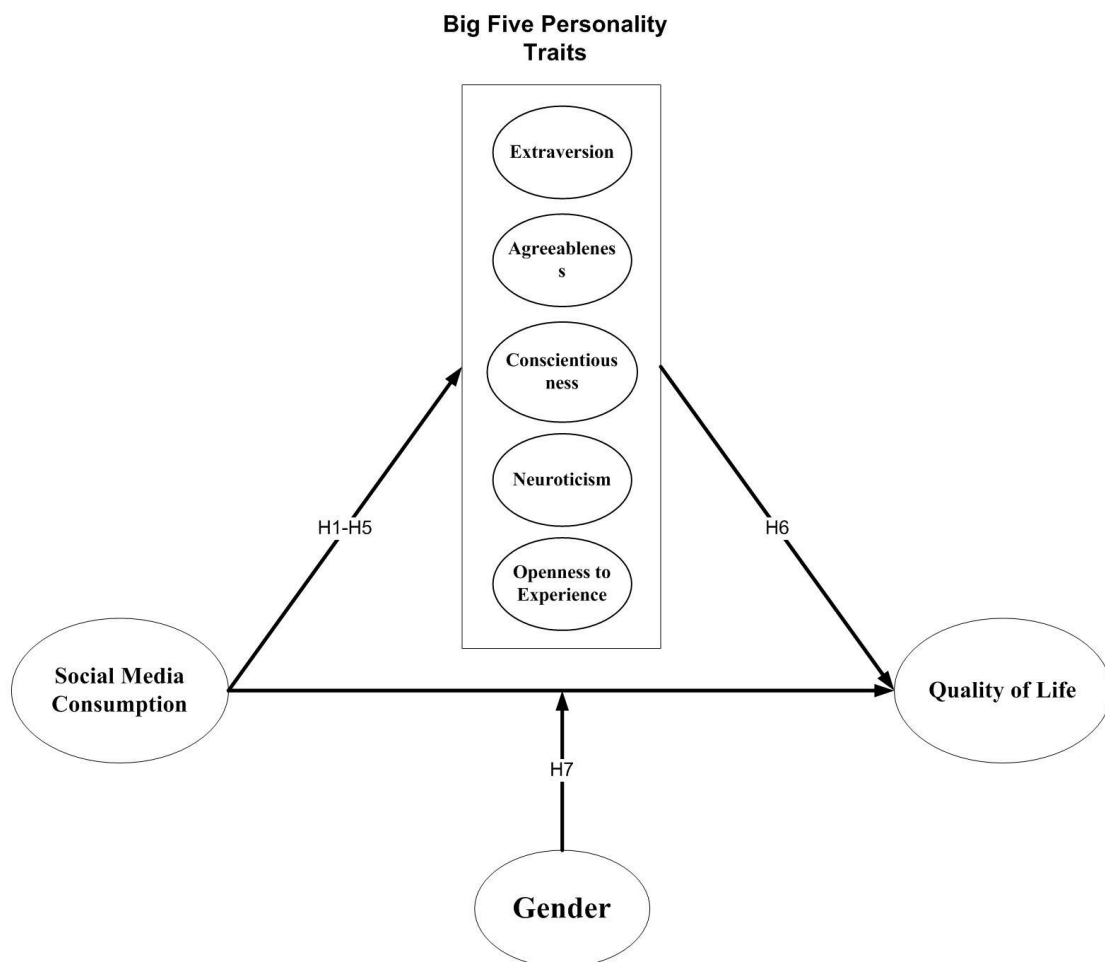


Figure 4. Conceptual Framework

3. Methodology

3.1 Study Design

The present study was conducted among higher educational institutions situated in three distinct regions of Malaysia, namely the north, south, and central regions, with a cross-sectional approach. The targeted demographic comprises individuals between 13 and 32 years old. Individuals within the targeted age range could be categorised into two distinct generational cohorts, namely millennials and Generation Z. The life experiences that individuals collectively undergo during the formative years serve as defining factors for each successive generation. Individuals in the borderline between two generations are occasionally referred to as cuspers. Tapscott (2009) discovered that millennials exhibited high adherence to eight established standards, including independence, customisation, scrutiny, integrity, collaboration, entertainment, speed, and innovation. Millennials are more inclined to become early adopters. Furthermore, millennials are more susceptible to the persuasive impact of advertising materials.

Generation Z is characterised by the propensity for mobility in the digital world compared to millennials. Cuspers also exhibit a combination of behaviours from both millennials and Generation. The usage of digital platforms differs throughout various generations, with each generational cohort possessing shared experiences that shape respective cognitive processes and behavioural patterns.

Empirical data were collected, and the withdrawal decision was based on ethical considerations. A survey questionnaire was administered to a group of 400 eligible young individuals, with 287 completing the survey at a response rate of 70%. Prior to participation, all participants were informed of the study's objectives and procedures. The written informed consent was obtained from the adult participants before the data collection, ensuring their voluntary participation. Participants were assured of their right to withdraw. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study, with all data used solely for research purposes. Nevertheless, we ensured that all ethical considerations were met and adhered to ethical guidelines. The Research Ethics Committee (REC) of Multimedia University, Malaysia, approved this research project under the ethics approval number EA0202024.

3.2 Demographic Analysis of Respondents

Descriptive analysis was conducted via the SPSS 28.0 software. The full respondent profile is shown in Table 1. The participants were recruited from a heterogeneous samples: 69.3% Malay, 24% Chinese, and 6.6% Indian. The proportion of male respondents was 45.5%, while the remaining 54.4% were females. The participants were diverse in terms of age, with 20.9% between 13 and 18 years old, 27.5% from 19 to 23 years old, 8.7% from 24 to 27 years old, and 42.9% from 28 to 32 years old. Notably, 14.6% of the participants possessed a high school degree, 59.6% successfully obtained diplomas in several fields, and 25.8% only completed the elementary school level. A total of 46% of the participants belonged to the millennial generation, while the remaining 54% represented Generation Z.

Table 1. Descriptive Analysis

Variables		Frequencies	Percentage
Gender	Male	131	45.6
	Female	156	54.4
Generations	Mill	132	46
	Gen Z	155	54
Nationality	Malaysians	287	100
	Others	-	-
Race	Malay	199	69.3
	Chinese	69	24
	Indian	19	6.6
	Others	-	-
Age	13Y – 18Y	2	0.6
	19Y – 23Y	179	57.6
	24Y – 27Y	91	29.3
	28Y – 32Y	30	9.6
Marital Status	Single	139	48.3
	Married	148	51.5
Education	High School	42	14.6
	Diploma	171	59.6
	Bachelor's degree	74	25.8

3.3 Instruments and Measurement Variables

3.3.1 Exposure Variable

The participants were requested to provide information on the specific social media platform used namely Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, TikTok, Twitter, Snapchat, Telegram, and YouTube. The duration of social media usage was assessed via a self-reported questionnaire. The frequency of engaging in updating activities on SNSs was also inquired. The available response options were less than once per day, 1-5 times per day, 6-10 times per day, 11-20 times per day, and more than 20 times per day. Additionally, the question encompassed global and local news, lifestyle-related content, health and well-being information, technical and technological updates, socio-economic matters, and sports and adventures. The attention level devoted to social media content was also asked. The recorded responses were categorised into five levels, namely no attention, little attention, some attention, a lot of attention, and full concentration.

3.3.2 Exposure Results to Social Media Platforms

The findings postulated that WhatsApp was one of the most popular platforms among the younger participants compared to Twitter. Individuals who identified as females exhibited a higher propensity for media exposure. Comparatively, only 2.4% of the participants indicated a complete lack of engagement with social media platforms. Approximately 35.9% of the individuals devoted complete attention to the content available on social media platforms. The researcher analysed the amount of time spent on social media platforms by considering demographic factors, such as gender, generation, ethnicity, and educational levels. The findings revealed that females exhibited a higher engagement level with social media platforms compared to males. Specifically, females spent 157.96 minutes daily on social media while males spent 140.38 minutes daily. Table 3 depicts the average duration of social media usage by gender.

Table 2. SM Platform

SM Platform Frequencies				
		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
SM_platform ^a	FB	71	9.5%	24.7%
	INSTA	180	24.0%	62.7%
	TWITTER	32	4.3%	11.1%
	TIKTOK	129	17.2%	44.9%
	SNAPCHAT	102	13.6%	35.5%
	WHATSAPP	236	31.5%	82.2%
Total		750	100.0%	261.3%

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

Table 3. Types of Content

Media Content Frequencies				
		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Media Content	ACT_INFO_CONT	71	5.4%	24.7%
	World Local News	180	13.8%	62.7%
	Entertainment	32	2.5%	11.1%
	Lifestyle Health Wellbeing	129	9.9%	44.9%
	Tech Info	102	7.8%	35.5%
	Socioeconomics	236	18.1%	82.2%
	Sports Adv	71	5.4%	24.7%
	Politics Public Affairs	180	13.8%	62.7%
	Fashion Trends	32	2.5%	11.1%
	Beauty Makeup	129	9.9%	44.9%
	Food Culinary	102	7.8%	35.5%
	Watch Read Listen	33	2.5%	11.5%
	Attention SM Content	7	0.5%	2.4%
	Total	1304	100.0%	454.4%

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

The findings demonstrated a statistically significant difference in social media usage across different age groups. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) examined the association between distinct generational cohorts and the time spent on social media. Generation Z allocated the highest amount of time to social media, followed by millennials.

Generation Z spent an average of 193.43 minutes per day on SNSs, whereas millennials spent an average of 155.11 minutes daily. Table 5 portrays the mean duration allocated to engage with social media platforms between millennials and Generation Z. Meanwhile, Malays spent the most time on social media, averaging 193.67 minutes daily. Indians averaged 171.03 minutes, while Chinese participants spent 152.84 minutes per day. High school graduates exhibited the highest social media usage at 167.67 minutes daily. Individuals with a Bachelor's degree averaged 165.94 minutes, while diploma holders spent 143.39 minutes daily (see Table 4).

Table 4. Attention to SM content

		Attention SM Content			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	no attention at all	7	2.4	2.4	2.4
	little attention	26	9.1	9.1	11.5
	some attention	110	38.3	38.3	49.8
	a lot of attention	103	35.9	35.9	85.7
	Full attention	41	14.3	14.3	100.0
	Total	287	100.0	100.0	

Table 5. Average time spent on Social Media demographics

Category	Mean (Minutes)
<i>Average time spent on Social Media Gender</i>	
Male	140.38
Female	157.96
<i>Average time spent on Social Media Generation</i>	
Millennial generation	155.11
Generation Z	193.43
<i>Average time spent on Social Media Ethnicity</i>	
Malay	193.67
Indian	171.03
Chinese	152.84
<i>Average time spent on Social Media level of education</i>	
High School	167.67
Diploma	143.39
Bachelor's degree	165.94

3.3.3 Measurements Variables

Social media consumption. The study employed the three dimensions (social, hedonic, and cognitive) of the media consumption questionnaire (Kamal & Wok, 2020) based on the Uses and Gratifications (U & G) theory.

Big Five personality. This study adopted the questionnaire from (Rammstedt et al., 2018) to measure the Big Five personality traits.

QoL. A four-dimensional scale, namely the World Health Organization Quality of Life Brief Version (WHOQOL-BREF), was developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2012 to assess QoL. The scale was measured on the five-point Likert scale, with 1 being the lowest score for each question and 5 being the highest. A higher score suggests a higher perceived QoL. Both the reliability and validity of WHOQOL-BREF were also verified.

3.4 Measurement Variable Results

3.4.1 Measurement Validity and Reliability

An exploratory factor analysis was performed, where each measure demonstrated an appropriate loading on the respective factors. A total of five items were excluded from the analysis owing to low factor loadings below 0.60. Subsequently, the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed. Composite measures were extracted to minimise model complexity for the higher-order variables of social media consumption (SMC) and QoL (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). The SMC operationalisation involved conceptualising a reflective second-order component, which was measured by three first-order indicators. The indicators encompassed a range of items, with each one consisting of three or four questions. The three SMC dimensions measured by the indicators were social, hedonic, and cognitive. Similarly, QoL was defined as a reflective first-order construct encompassing multiple dimensions, such as physical health (measured by seven questions), psychological health (measured by six questions), social interactions (measured by four questions), and environment (measured by nine questions).

The data analyses pertained to the composite versions, which were obtained by calculating the average of the appropriate sub-scales. The CFA was performed through the AMOS version 21 software. The analysis included seven

focus variables, namely the five dimensions of personality, SMC, and QoL. The nine-factor model produced a confirmatory fit index (CFI) of .95, Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) of .95, normed fit index (NFI) of .95, and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) of .05 ($\chi^2 = 922.21$, $df = 428$). The factor loading of each item on the respective construct exhibited a statistical significance at the .01 level, thus indicating a high confidence level. Additionally, the reliability of the measurements was adequate, as indicated by a coefficient exceeding .70. According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct should exceed .50, whereas the shared variance between all pairs of constructs should be smaller than the AVE for any individual construct. The results (Table 6) demonstrated sufficient validity and reliability of the core constructs in this study. Statistical measures were also used to mitigate the issues associated with common method bias.

Table 6. Squared Correlation of the Scales

Constructs	SMU	EXT	AGR	CONS	NEU	OP	QoL
SMU	0.819						
EXT	0.473***	0.822					
AGR	0.745***	0.505***	0.843				
CONS	0.204***	0.221***	0.148***	0.930			
NEU	0.257***	0.236***	0.317***	0.139***	0.880		
OP	0.502***	0.385***	0.563***	0.316***	0.336***	0.860	
QoL	0.507***	0.466***	0.514***	0.263***	0.247***	0.477***	0.880
Constructs	SMU	EXT	AGR	CONS	NEU	OP	QoL
SMU	0.819						
EXT	0.473***	0.822					
AGR	0.745***	0.505***	0.843				
CONS	0.204***	0.221***	0.148***	0.930			
NEU	0.257***	0.236***	0.317***	0.139***	0.880		
OP	0.502***	0.385***	0.563***	0.316***	0.336***	0.860	
QoL	0.507***	0.466***	0.514***	0.263***	0.247***	0.477***	0.880

3.4.2 Structural Model Assessment Results

The hypotheses were evaluated by applying structural equation modelling, which demonstrated a good fit (CFI = .95; TLI = .94; NFI = .91; RMSEA = .06; chi-square divided by degrees of freedom [χ^2/df] = 2.29). The standardised route coefficients presented in Table 7 supported two hypotheses related to SMC, namely H1 and H6. The findings indicated a significant positive impact of engaging with social media on extraversion and overall QoL ($p < .05$). The observed impact of engaging with social media on agreeableness, consciousness, and neuroticism was not statistically significant ($p > .1$), which did not support H2, H3, H4, and H5.

Table 7. Standardized Estimates (sample size = 287)

Hyp. #	Exo.	Path	End. Const.	β	SE	t	p	Results
			Const.					
H1	SMC	→	EXT	.13	.06	2.10	<.05	Significant
H2	SMC	→	AGR	-.12	.03	3.52	>.10	Insignificant
H3	SMC	→	CONS	.09	.05	1.63	>.10	Insignificant
H4	SMC	→	NEU	.08	.04	1.93	>.10	Insignificant
H5	SMC	→	OP	-.01	.03	0.62	>.10	Insignificant
H6	PERS	→	QoL	.16	.03	2.83	<.05	Significant

3.4.3 Moderating Effect Results

Multi-group structural equation modelling (SEM) study was conducted to examine the moderating effect of gender as posited in the conceptual framework. A comparison of parameter estimations for both subsample groups was also conducted (Hagger et al., 2022; Malär et al., 2012). An invariance test between the two subsample groups was required to ascertain that the scales effectively assessed identical features in both groups before conducting analyses of moderating effects. The assessment of invariance included several tests, such as configural invariance, error variance invariance, metric invariance, factor variance, and covariance invariance tests. The results provided support for the proposed model in both groups. The moderation analysis findings also indicated that gender significantly moderated the postulated relationships between social media consumption and QoL ($\Delta\chi^2 = 5.06^*$). The relationship between social media consumption and quality of life highlighted greater significance for female users ($\beta = 0.53^*$) than male users ($\beta = 0.20^*$).

4. Discussion

4.1 Theoretical Implications

The impact of personality qualities on individuals' daily lives and professional growth was significant. The utilisation of social media in terms of frequency and method also generated a significant impact. Nonetheless, certain personality qualities produced larger influences under specific circumstances. Specifically, a significant positive correlation existed between extraversion and social media usage, which supported H1. Individuals with high levels of extraversion tended to possess a larger social network and display more extroverted and sociable behaviours compared to individuals with low levels of extraversion (Costa & McCrae, 2009; Sharma & Behl, 2022). Nevertheless, the findings also suggested that social media platforms contributed to the amplification of social inequality. Individuals with extensive social networks were further benefited while the counterparts with limited networks were disadvantaged. The findings were in line with recent studies and supported the rich-get-richer model. Web designers could consider creating social media platforms that address the introverted tendencies of users according to the principles of the social compensation model and inclusive design.

The findings did not support H2, which posited a relationship between agreeableness and social media consumption. Individuals who exhibited high levels of agreeableness might experience contradictory desires in terms of belongingness and conflict avoidance, which manifest in divergent patterns of social media engagement (Barnes et al., 2017; Scherer et al., 2022). The current study also revealed a negative correlation between conscientiousness and social media usage, which did not support H3. Individuals with high levels of conscientiousness tend to refrain from engaging in social media platforms due to the perception that such activities detract from engagement in more personally significant endeavours. The utilisation of social media platforms transitions from a recreational activity to a more purposeful pursuit of information and establishment of professional connections (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2017). The findings did not support H4, revealing no significant correlation between neuroticism and social media use. This contrasts with prior studies and may be explained by cultural differences or the inclusion of age and gender controls, which moderated the expected anxiety-related effects.

The findings also did not support H5, as no significant correlation was found between openness to experience and social media use, suggesting the trait may not universally predict online engagement. While prior research linked openness to higher social media use through mechanisms such as emotional regulation and novelty-seeking, this study's results did not support H5. This discrepancy may reflect the influence of cultural or contextual factors in Malaysia, where emotional expression and novelty exploration may manifest differently online. Rather than confirming a universal pattern, our findings underscore the need to reassess the cultural assumptions embedded in these theoretical links and encourage a more nuanced, context-sensitive approach. Nonetheless, the current findings empirically supported H6, thereby confirming the significant association between social media usage and individuals' QoL. Abeza et al. (2015) postulated that employing social media was an effective marketing technique due to the extensive worldwide usage, facilitation of networking, and promotion of collaboration. Additionally, the findings indicated that the association between social media usage and QoL was influenced by the gender of the participants. Notably, the moderating impact was more pronounced among females compared to males, thus providing empirical support for the presence of a gender disparity (Correa et al., 2010; Stănculescu & Griffiths, 2022).

This study extends existing theories by highlighting how social media use reinforces for extroverted individuals, while simultaneously suggesting the need for inclusive design aligned with the social compensation model. It challenges prior assumptions about the universality of personality-social media linkages by revealing non-significant or contradictory findings for agreeableness, neuroticism, and openness, thus emphasizing the influence of cultural context and demographic controls. These nuanced findings call for more context-sensitive theoretical frameworks that accommodate divergent patterns of social media use across personality traits and populations.

4.2 Managerial Implications

Social media usage significantly influences an individual's personality and overall QoL. This study contributed implications regarding media governance and individual personality guidelines to policymakers. The mainstream media plays a crucial role in implementing the agenda-setting function. The mainstream media assumes the role of an authoritative information source by fulfilling the responsibility of environmental surveillance and social coordination within an integrated environment. The enforcement of the agenda-setting function within social media platforms could ensure that the disseminated information aligns with authoritative sources, which reduces the potential for social rumours and unrest. Consequently, individuals' personality traits would be enhanced. Additionally, the establishment of a logical public conversation platform is pivotal due to the presence of online interactivity and the ability to remain anonymous. The Internet has evolved into a public platform for discourse, with users given the freedom to access desired information, present personal images in a preferred manner, and engage with communities aligned with personal interests. Summarily, the establishment of a public conversation platform could effectively mitigate the proliferation of disorganised online opinions and the spread of negative emotional contagion.

5. Conclusion

Personality traits are a core aspect of individual identity, shaped continuously through life experiences, social interactions, and environmental influences. Personality traits are also influenced by life experiences, social interactions, and environmental factors. At the same time, social media has become deeply integrated into various spheres of life, enabling real-time communication, collaboration, and interaction. Comprehending the correlation between individual personality, QoL, and social media usage is imperative to fully harness the advantages of social media consumption. Therefore, understanding the significance of personality traits in the psychological processes underlying social media usage is vital. This study contributed to the growing body of knowledge by examining how different patterns of social media usage relate to individual personality traits and life quality. The study findings demonstrated a strong correlation between social media usage, engagement, and personality attributes. However, the lack of significant associations for certain traits suggests the need for more context-specific and demographically nuanced research.

The following limitations have been acknowledged to provide a clearer scope of the study's applicability. This study focused on a specific age group of individuals aged between 13 to 32, within the Malaysian context, which may limit the generalisability of the findings to other cultural settings and age demographics. Future research should consider employing cross-cultural comparative studies to examine how personality traits and social media usage interact across different societies and environments. Additionally, since this study used a cross-sectional design, longitudinal research would be beneficial to capture causal relationships and changes over time. Consequently, the results may not be generalisable to populations outside Malaysia or to older age groups. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported survey data may have introduced response bias, and the unequal representation of ethnic groups and education levels may have influenced the observed outcomes. Hence, future studies could benefit from more balanced representation in terms of ethnicity, education levels, and regions, as well as integrating qualitative approaches to gain deeper insights into the motivations behind social media behaviour among diverse personality types.

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Authors contributions

Dr. Kavitha conceptualized the study. Dr Kavitha and Dr Mokhtarrudin were responsible for study design. Dr Adamu planned and executed the methodology of the study. All authors were responsible for data collection. Dr Kavitha and Dr Adamu conducted formal analysis of the data. The data curation and resources were conducted by Dr Mokhtarrudin and Dr Alila. Dr Kavitha drafted the manuscript, and Dr Mokhtarrudin revised it. Dr Adamu and Dr Alila read, reviewed, edited and approved the final manuscript.

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Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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Obtained.

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The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

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