IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKING WITH CO-WORKERS: A STUDY ON THE MEDIATING ROLE OF SOCIAL REACTIONS AND COMPARISONS

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Abstract

Social media has become an important part of life. People of all age groups are using the various networks of social media. Social media keeps us connected with one another and gives us an opportunity to share our accomplishments with friends and family. Businesses also have been using its ever widening reach to promote their objectives and have used it to build supportive relations among co-workers. However, it was found to be consuming a great deal of time and energy of the users. This draining of two valuable resources has a serious impact on the behavioral and psychological well-being of people, which leads to burnout and ultimately shows in their performance at work. Social media also is seen as a cause of deteriorating interpersonal relations in the workplace, almost contrary to the purpose for which it was adopted. Previous studies indicated a mediating role of social comparisons and social reactions. This study explored the impact of social media networking with workplace colleagues. A hypothesized model was developed to examine the impact of various factors using path analysis. Data were collected from 287 full-time private sector employees located in the National Capital Region of India. The respondents comprised different age groups and all employment levels and experience.

Keywords: social media, workplace dynamics, social media use, social media addiction, social comparison, social reaction, burnout, workplace relations, work performance

1 INTRODUCTION

Social psychology studies have shown that people evaluate their own social situation by comparing it with those of others. The concept of social comparison was first given by psychologist Leon Festinger as early as 1954 (Festinger 1954). Subsequent studies confirmed that people continuously look at others to judge their own living conditions. This applies to lifestyle, popularity, accomplishments, possessions, health, family, and happiness. Everyone wants to be seen on a higher pedestal among their acquaintances. Social comparison motivates people to achieve more, but at the same time puts pressure on everyone. This psychology does not let people enjoy whatever they have or wherever they are (Zivnuska et al., 2019).

With omnipresent social media (SM) platforms, obtaining information about others has become easier than before. In addition to providing us an op-
opportunity to stay connected with our friends and family, social media in a way also promotes social comparison (Ding et al., 2018). As social media enters the workplace and as we become connected with our colleagues on these social media platforms, we obtain easy access to personal information about them, which previously was not possible (Schmidt et al., 2016).

However, this social comparison may interfere with life order and disrupt psychological balance as both the sender and viewers come under pressure. Senders struggle to post enviable content (pictures and text), and viewers constantly judge their own life on the basis of the posted content. Add to that the stress of garnering and adding reactions to each post, and social media emerges as a major stress-booster (Carlson et al., 2016). What started as an endeavor to bring colleagues closer by providing a means to understand their views and opinions soon gave way to evaluation, envy, disagreements, conflict, and separation. This in turn influences working and interpersonal relationships, leads to burnout, and affects performance at work. This also consumes a great deal of time and energy of the users, which could have been used to accomplish work goals and develop relationships (Schmidt et al., 2016).

Although social media has entered work life, there is limited research on its impact from the individual perspective. Most studies have focused on how organizations can use social media for greater employee engagement (Kaupins & Park, 2011; Landers & Goldberg, 2014) and HR processes, including marketing (Carr & Walther, 2014; Chiang & Suen, 2015) and hiring (Davison, Marist, & Bing, 2011; Kleumper, Rosen, & Mossholder, 2012; Van Idedekinge, Lanivich, Roth, & Junco, 2013). Some studies have explored the personal side, but that has been limited to the way people behave on social media platforms and the types of stories, photos, and comments they post (Weidner et al., 2012). Studies also have investigated the impact of comparison and reactions related to social media (Kende, 2016).

Therefore, the impact of social media networking in the workplace remains in need of thorough research, especially when studies have shown that 60% of employees (Weidner, Wynne, & O’Brien, 2012) had one or more colleagues as “Facebook friends.” The percentage of co-worker social media connections has a positive relationship with perceived organizational support and spontaneity (Schmidt, 2016), but there seems to be scope for studies to explore the effects of social media networking in the workplace on work behavior and relationships. For example, little research has examined whether a peek into the “beyond-work life” of a colleague impacts a person’s attitude, feelings, and behavior toward the colleague at work, or if the lifestyle of a colleague affects a person’s satisfaction with his or her own accomplishments—and if all of this can lead to job burnout.

This study used the theory of conservation of resources (COR) (Hobfoll, 2001) as a basis to understand how social media addiction can affect performance at work. The COR theory suggests that stress results when there is threatened or actual loss of valued resources. However, people have an innate tendency to conserve, uphold, and support these resources; it is this desire that motivates people in stressful situations. Furthermore, the loss is more significant than the gain, and this loss leads to more loss. This theory has received much empirical support, and helps in examining the relationship between stress and health, especially coping with long-term effects of occupational burnout.

There are two types of resources people want to conserve: contextual or external sources (physical things and social support) and personal resources that come from within, such as personality traits, beliefs, and energy (Hobfoll, 2001; Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). As one grows, both types of resources are accumulated, and can be re-invested to generate new resources. This is called a resource spiral (Hakanen, Peeters, & Perhoniemi, 2011). For example, a positive resource spiral may occur when job resources lead to work engagement, which causes personal satisfaction (Hakanen, Perhoniemi, & Toppinen-Tanner, 2008). The accumulated resources also mitigate any stressors on the way, but when this resource deployment is not adequate to manage stress triggers, it leads to resource loss. As stressors build up unrestricted, more resources are lost, leading to further stress (a downward spiral) (Hobfoll, 2001). The present research focuses on how social media addiction may deplete resources and affect relations and performance at work.
This study explored the impact of social media in the workplace. Due to the changed working environment in wake of the COVID pandemic, digital and remote working has become the new normal, and social media has emerged as a new tool to remain connected with co-workers. However, this has started to have a significant impact on the working behavior of people. Employees are struggling to cope up with the differences they find in the content posted by their colleagues and the persons they knew so far. The relationships are being tested as lines between work and personal lives become blurred. By examining the causes of negative behavior toward relationships and productivity at work, this study investigated whether employers can reorient this phenomenon for a profitable impact.

This study examined how social media networking at work affects employee relationships. The use of social media was projected as a means to strengthen bonding among employees, but recent studies have shown an opposite effect. In addition to the effects on interpersonal relationships at work, social media use is reported to have an adverse impact on the emotional well-being of a person, causing exhaustion, lack of interest in work, and depression (all of which are signs of burnout), resulting in lower job performance. This research answered the following questions:

1. Do social media connections at work impact employees’ interpersonal relations?
2. Do social media connections at work cause job burnout?
3. Does social media networking at work result in low performance?

This paper advances the literature of social media impact in the workplace by focusing on the mediating function of social media reactions and comparisons. It is proposed that there is a significant and positive relationship between the addictive use of these “connecting platforms” and employees’ work behavior.

This research examined the impact of personal connections with work colleagues on professional behavior. This understanding can be used to suggest possible solutions that employers can adopt to reduce burnout, improve interpersonal relationships and motivate employees to achieve work goals. This research assessed the elements of social media usage at the microlevel (in terms of time spend, social reactions, and social comparisons) that contribute to negative emotions, especially related to job performance and behavior in the workplace.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies have shown that any kind of addiction—excessive monitoring of social media, compulsive gambling, and even workaholism (De Carlo et al., 2014)—ultimately leads to emotional fatigue, strain, depression (Dieris-Hirche et al., 2017), a decrease in interests and lifestyle (Ferraro, Caci, D’Amico, & Blasi, 2007), and seclusion (Moody, 2001).

This study used the COR theory as a basis to understand these traits. It suggests that workers may turn to social media more when they face stress triggers. Initially, the stress seems to decline slightly, but soon grows rapidly. In fact, the more resources an employee puts into this addiction, the severer the effects become due to loss of more time and energy, and job performance suffers more. For example, when an employee spends time monitoring social media platforms in an effort to expand their network (Treem & Leonardi, 2013), the expected boost in relationships and motivation still remains elusive (Safioğlu & Greitemeyer, 2014), but the loss of time and energy proves to be all the more detrimental.

The interactive feature of social media makes it very stimulating; people are able to share their achievements, activities, pictures, possessions, feelings, and opinions—and obtain others’ appreciation, reactions, and feedback. This boosts their morale and confidence (Kende et al, 2016). Equally interesting is the freedom to visit other people’s posts and share one’s opinion (Moqbel, 2013). This helps to explore and reinforce bonds in the workplace (Junco, 2012). Probably for this reason, the popularity of various social media platforms is increasing throughout the world. In 2017, there were 2.86 billion social network users in the world; in 2021 this figure reached 3.78 billion, and it is expected to exceed 4.4 billion by 2025 (Statista Research Department, 2021).
Addiction level can be understood by the reported numbers—64% of adults check Facebook every day, and, on average, a smartphone user checks Facebook at least 14 times each day (Taylor, 2013). Addiction to social media has been equated with compulsive gambling (Meerkerk et al., 2009), mainly due to certain similar symptoms associated with use and mood modification, including withdrawal, lack of control and relapse, time loss, and conflict (Andreassen, Torsheim, Burnborg, & Pallesen, 2012).

As the urge to check social media posts turns into an addictive habit, it takes away the time and attention that otherwise could have been put to productive use at work or with family. Excessive use of social media further distances the user from work accomplishments, and with time, leads to lack of control and all the negative consequences associated with its use. This explains why social media use is considered to be a major reason for organization deviance (Carlson et al., 2016), solitude (Kross et al., 2013), melancholy (Safioglu & Greitemeyer, 2014), mental fatigue (Cambron, Acitelli, & Steinberg, 2010), and low self-esteem (Kuss & Griffiths, 2012).

When social media entered the workplace, employers found it very useful because it helped employees expand their professional reach, learn about industry updates, and even obtain suggestions and views from colleagues and managers (Carlson et al., 2016). Through social media, employees can get to know their workmates better, and learn their preferences and opinion on local issues, politics, environment, and culture, and also learn about their personal lives. This helped foster strong ties in the workplace because, as per the COR theory, people try to uphold, defend, and endorse their conditioned beliefs, opinions, and values (Hobfoll, 2011).

However, what started as an effort to build supportive relationships at work soon was held responsible for deteriorating interpersonal relationships (Nowland, Necka, & Cacioppo, 2018). In addition, it also is seen as a major cause of depression. Previous studies indicated that social comparisons and social reactions (Nabi & Prestin, 2013) play a mediating role in this.

When a user clicks Like (or any other response) or reacts to a post with a comment, it is called a social media reaction. The platform keeps a count of these, so reactions to a post are not only a measure of the reach of the post, but also indicate how many viewers paid attention to it. Over the years, this has become the main reason for posting content on social media. Positive reactions boost the confidence of the writer, whereas negative reactions (or the absence of any reaction at all) creates negative emotions about the viewers, friends, and followers on the social media; and when these reactions are associated with work colleagues, it influences their relationships at work as well.

Social media reactions also include the emotional response of viewers when they see the posted content. When users view and read other users’ posts, they also obtain feelings of happiness, envy, and other emotions in response to the latter’s achievements, lifestyle, and beliefs. (Nowland, Necka, & Cacioppo, 2018).

The main idea behind social media was to provide a platform to communicate with friends, family, colleagues, and like-minded people to strengthen bonds with them, feel happy, and be inspired (Carlson et al., 2016). However, social media users report negative effects (Carlson et al., 2016) when such sharing causes distress (Koerner, 2010), narcissism (Andreassen et al., 2017), and deviance (Carlson et al., 2016), and at times even anger, frustration, and burnout. This happens when users start comparing their lifestyle and achievements with the posted information.

Burnout is a state of mental, emotional, and physical fatigue. For long, it was considered to be caused by severe stress for a long period. A person feels emotionally drained, loses energy and will to work. However, the World Health Organization (WHO) recently updated this definition by describing burnout as an outcome of prolonged workplace stress that has not been managed successfully.

People with burnout generally show the following three symptoms: (1) emotional and physical exhaustion or feeling of energy depletion, (2) work alienation or a mental distance from one’s job or negative feelings towards one’s career, and (3) low self-fulfilment or reduced professional productivity.

When ignored for a long time, job burnout can lead to lack of sleep, increased sadness, anger and irritability, and depression and anxiety, and the per-
son may turn to alcohol or substance misuse. This not only affects people’s work performance, but personal interactions as well. Burnout also has been associated with certain physical conditions such as heart disease, high blood pressure, and Type 2 diabetes. Therefore, it is important to identify the signs of burnout at the earliest and work to reduce the causes before it becomes a threat.

Studies as early as 1982 (Maslach & Jackson) and 1997 (Maslach & Leiter) talked about burnout as an individual’s response to stress, marked by exhaustion, tiredness, cynicism, and low performance at work. Subsequent studies also defined burnout as depletion of energy and will to work (Bakker, Emmerik, & Euwema, 2006). This indicates that when a worker suffers burnout, the employer suffers resource loss.

3 HYPOTHESIS FORMULATION

To understand the impact of social media use, a relationship model was used. Hypotheses were formulated regarding the mediating role of social media comparisons and reactions on the development of burnout, which ultimately affects work performance. The performance also is impacted by the interpersonal relationships among colleagues, in which these mediators also play a significant role.

On the basis of the review of the available literature, the following concept model was prepared to show the impact of social media use on work performance (Figure 1). It takes into account the mediating role of social comparisons and reactions to determine how they influence interpersonal relationships with work colleagues and cause physical and mental burnout. All this ultimately affects performance at work.

3.1 Social Media Use and Social Comparison

Among the popular social network platforms, Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp handle around 60 billion messages every day. Facebook has 1.91 billion users globally (Facebook, 2021)—340 million of which are in India—and WhatsApp users have exceeded 1 billion (Statista, 2021). On these and other social media sites, people share many personal details, such as their relationships, vacations, recent purchases, achievements, activities, habits, and feelings and views on various events.

However, this sharing of personal information leads to social comparisons as people start comparing the lifestyles and achievements of others with their own. Some studies have indicated that people spend more time checking others’ pages than posting their own details. (Joinson, 2008). This easy access to others’ lives can either lead to motivation (positive effect) or may cause envy and depression (negative impact).

Figure 1: Model showing impact of social media use on work performance
It also has been revealed that social networking sites are used more by people who are interested in learning about others. Surprisingly, it is the same set of people who are affected negatively by the comparison. This frame of mind results in low evaluation of self (Vogel et al., 2015). There seems a direct relationship between the time spent on social networking and such negative emotions (Safiooglou & Greitemeyer, 2014). Sharing personal details on social media puts almost equal pressure on the senders as well, because they are aware that they will be evaluated for their choices, possessions, and success. (Xie & An, 2006). This formed the basis of the first hypothesis of this study:

**H1:** There is a positive relationship between social media use and social comparison.

### 3.2 Social Media Use and Social Reactions

Social media reactions can be described as emotional responses to social media posts. When co-workers are connected on social media, they see great deal lot of personal content posted by each other. This may generate varying degree of emotional responses. They may feel happy for a friend, or may experience envy, anger, bitterness, resentment, and even spite. The reactions depend upon the viewers’ situations, capabilities, availability of resources, needs, and aspirations. In addition, reactions affect the people who post the content as well—they want to project themselves in a particular way through their posts. The number of likes, comments, and shares that their posts receive boosts their confidence and morale. This makes them post more content. In addition, as mentioned previously, social networking sites are frequented more by those who want to know about others, so more posts mean more reactions as well (Zivnuska et al., 2019).

**H2:** There is a positive relationship between social media usage and social reactions.

### 3.3 Social Comparison and Interpersonal Relationships

Social comparison can have a positive or negative influence on interpersonal relations, depending upon the social standing of the viewer with respect to the source of the content. An upward comparison leads to a feeling of low self-esteem, and therefore, a negative impact. On the other hand, downward comparison boosts one’s confidence, and causes a positive impact. Therefore, the result of social media comparison is dependent on the user’s personality and social standing, and on the direction of the comparison (Gibbons & Buunk, 1999). Because personality traits can be a complete behavioral study, we limited the scope of this study to the user’s situation and the direction of the comparison.

**H3:** There is a negative relationship between social comparison and employees’ interpersonal relationships.

### 3.4 Social Comparison and Job Burnout

Studies of burnout have hinted that social comparison is one of its main causes. Comparison drains one emotionally because it makes one’s achievements seem less than those posted by others (Maslach et al., 2001). Michinov (2005) showed that people exhibit lower burnout when social media use is controlled. In addition, social comparison was found to having a mediating role between job satisfaction and job burnout (Kitchel et al., 2012). When a colleague is promoted, others at the same level become more jealous than those in a junior or senior position, especially if the promotion is at a higher position (Zhao et al., 2017). Based on these findings, the next hypothesis is proposed:

**H4:** There is a positive relationship between social comparison and job burnout.

### 3.5 Social Media Reactions and Burnout

Often, colleagues’ reactions to one’s social media posts have an intense emotional impact on the writer, and may lead to job burnout. Strong emotions (such as anger) affect one’s mood (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), and also are linked to certain somatic conditions, such as increased blood pressure (Dimsdale et al., 1986), heart rate, adrenaline (Brosschot & Thayer, 2003), and muscle tension (Brosschot & Thayer, 2003). The body in turn allocates resources to reducing these impacts. This means that the body spends energy first on the
emotions, and then on fighting the impact of emotions. This energy loss makes one exhausted and can cause job burnout. Looking at the opportunity loss, all this energy could have been used more productively and in better ways.

Harsh reactions and feedback generally leave people emotionally exhaustion or close to burnout. They also cause stress that makes one more vulnerable to emotional trauma (Fox & Moreland, 2015). This also is true in the case of social media reactions. Emotions control our mood (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), and according to the COR theory, when employees experience the stressful stimuli of strong and harsh social media reactions, the body allocates energy to mitigate the mental response. As energy stockpiles are used, employees experience mental fatigue, a major sign of job burnout.

**H5:** There is a positive relationship between social reactions and burnout.

### 3.6 Social Media Reactions and Employee Relations

According to the COR theory, social media reactions have a significant impact on emotional energy (Hobfoll, 2001; Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). When employees are connected on social media, it is difficult to separate personal and work relationships. On social sites, people post personal content, such as pictures of their cars, outings, hobbies, birthdays, children, and even political opinions. This way, co-workers obtain extensive information about each other, which is not possible otherwise. Social networking in the workplace was viewed as an effort to enhance interpersonal bonding and friendliness at work. Personal posts give employees a chance to expand their networks—for example, they can connect with colleagues who share their interest in exercise, reading, poetry, trekking, or photography. However, it was found to have an underlying impact as well—not everyone can be happy looking at a co-worker’s house, vacations, and other achievements; some people may show signs of jealousy, frustration, and anger, especially when a manager posts pictures of an out-of-city conference with industry seniors while his team is working.

These feelings of anger or jealousy in reaction to a colleague’s social media post are likely to make people lose interest in their work. As part of their reactions, they may start talking ill of them or even confront them, leading to direct or indirect conflicts and unfriendliness.

**H6:** There is a negative relationship between social reactions and employees’ interpersonal relations.

### 3.7 Burnout and Interpersonal Relationships

Job burnout and interpersonal relationships at work, two major outcomes of social media interactions, have a two-way linkage. Each leads to the other (Innstranda, Langballe, Espnes, Falkum, & Aasland, 2008). For example, one of the symptoms of burnout is emotional fatigue (Karatepe & Tekinkus, 2006), and when one is emotionally worn out, one cannot have happy relationships. Similarly, when due to the moderating impact of social comparison and social reactions, relationships between two individuals are affected, there is demotivation, and the result is job burnout. The opposite also is true. When colleagues are supportive, one feels happy, inspired, and confident in their company, which means that there is less chance of job burnout (Kanwar, Singh, & Kodwani, 2009). This also is supported by the COR theory, which says that resource depletion due to burnout may lead to the depletion of other resources.

**H7:** Job burnout and interpersonal relationships are negatively correlated.

### 3.8 Burnout and Work Performance

Employees who are emotionally stressed, distracted, or low on energy display low levels of performance. Job burnout depletes these resources that are important for high levels of performance (Maslach, 1993). COR theory suggests that when employees experience burnout, they exhibit continuous emotional and physical exhaustion (Wright & Cropanzano, 1998) and cannot perform at the same level as their colleagues. The higher the degree of burnout, the lower is the in-role output. When an employee is dissuaded with his or her work, the chances are remote that he or she would step up...
for extra-role assignments. This would keep him or her away from all opportunities for advancement in career, and would result in lower performance (Demerouti, Verbeke, & Bakker, 2005). This supports our next hypothesis that job burnout has a negative spiral impact on job performance.

H8: There is a negative relationship between burnout and performance at work.

3.9 Interpersonal Relationships and Work Performance

Personal relationships with colleagues and other employees in the workplace are a significant part of working. Employees often rate an organization based on what they learn about the people working there (Reich & Hirschovis, 2011). The bond employees have with one another often has been studied from a negative perspective, but for many, these bonds can be an encouraging factor because good relationships help people “fulfill the need to belong” (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). This forms the basis of our hypothesis that harmony and trust among co-workers lead to a healthy work environment, and ultimately help to enhance performance at work:

H9: There is a positive correlation between interpersonal relationships and performance at work.

4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Sample

The data were collected through an online survey of a working population sample in the National Capital Region (NCR) of Delhi, India, during September–October 2021. Convenience sampling was adopted; respondents were from various age groups, both genders, varying education levels, and different professional areas. A web link to the online questionnaire was shared through social networking sites. The snowballing method was used to expand the sample size. In all, responses were received from 287 participants. Details of descriptive statistics of the participants are presented in Table 1. All 287 respondents were actively using one or more social media sites.

4.2 Demographic Variables

The demographic variables (age, gender, and education) of the respondents are described in Table 1. Initially, it was expected that gender, age, and current working hours have an impact on job burnout. Therefore, these variables were used as background variables in the regression model. However, the results showed that occupation and education do not significantly affect job burnout. To maintain consistency of the measurement variable levels, these were not included in the final model.

4.3 Measurement Scales

A five-point Likert scale was used for all the questions (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Table 2 lists the measurement scales used for each variable. The complete set of questions for each value and factor is listed in the Appendix.

4.4 Statistical Analysis

Path analysis with structural equation modeling (SEM) was performed to investigate the proposed mediation pathways. In the covariance structure analysis, maximum likelihood of estimation was used. In SEM, the exogenous variables were control variables, and Instagram use, social comparison, self-esteem, and social anxiety were endogenous variables. Paths were drawn from exogenous variables to all endogenous variables. Paths also were drawn from social media use to social comparison, from social comparison to self-esteem and burnout, and, finally, to low output at work.

5 DATA INTERPRETATION, ANALYSIS, AND RESULTS

Correlation tests showed that social media use had a significant and positive correlation with social comparison, and with job burnout. However, no significant correlation was found between social comparison and job burnout. Those using social media for longer durations and more frequently had a higher degree of job burnout; they also were found to resort more to social comparison (Table 3). However, people who had a greater tendency for social comparison did not necessarily complain of job burnout.
A structural equation model analysis was used to check the suggested theoretical model. First, item-level covariances were used to test the measurement model. This is an important step for structural equations analysis because it matches the measures with theoretical constructs. It also helps to determine how the latent variables are associated with their measures, and to ensure that the measurement model fits before the structural model is interpreted (Weston & Gore, 2006). This was followed by examining the hypothesized model (Figure 2). To confirm that this was the best-fitting model, two alternative models were tested, and the two social media variables were examined to determine their impact on work performance. As the final step, the Process feature of SPSS (Preacher & Hayes, 2008) was used to determine the indirect effects. In both the cases, after estimating the path, a bootstrapping confidence interval was calculated.

<table>
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<th>Division</th>
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First, the means, standard deviations, and correlations among the variables in the study were obtained (Table 3). The measurement model comprising 33 indicators and 5 factors was tested—one for each scale in the study—and the items within each scale were correlated. Then the hypothesized model and relationships were examined (Figure 2). This model builds on the previously established measurement model incorporating nine hypothesized paths.

Seven of the hypothesized paths were found to be significant ($p < 0.05$).

A positive relationship was found between social media usage and social comparisons ($b = 0.62$, $SE = 0.04$, $p = 0.00$). Thus, Hypothesis 1 is supported. Hypothesis 2 predicted that social media addiction is positively related to social reactions ($b = 0.51$, $SE = 0.05$, $p = 0.00$); it also is supported. The negative path from social media comparisons to interpersonal relationships also is supported (Hypothesis 3) ($b = -0.18$, $SE = 0.05$, $p = 0.00$). Similarly, Hypothesis 4 is supported: burnout is positively related with social comparisons ($b = 0.40$, $SE = 0.07$, $p = 0.00$). Hypothesis 5, social reactions lead to burnout, also is supported ($b = 0.26$, $SE = 0.07$, $p = 0.00$). Hypothesis 6 also is supported, which predicted social media reactions are negatively correlated with interpersonal relationships at work ($b = -0.10$, $SE = 0.05$, $p = 0.05$). Hypothesis 7 suggested a negative correlation between interpersonal relationships and burnout; it also is supported ($b = -0.15$, $SE = 0.05$, $p = 0.01$). In fact, it showed a clear correlation, indicating that a higher degree of burnout leads to a deterioration of interpersonal relationships, and that better interpersonal relationships at work can minimize the possibility of job burnout. Furthermore, the positive relationship between interpersonal re-
relationships and performance at work (H8) is supported ($b = 0.33$, SE = 0.05, $p = 0.01$), as is the negative relationship between job burnout and job performance (H9) ($b = -0.32$, SE = 0.04, $p = 0.01$). Thus, the indirect effect of social media addiction on performance is supported.

6 DISCUSSION

The study used the COR framework (Hobfoll, 2011) to investigate how social media use (including the mediating effect of social media reactions and comparison) is linked with interpersonal relationships and job burnout—both of which are significantly relevant to performance at work. Overall, the results supported the theory, demonstrating that social media reactions and comparisons affect job performance negatively. Specifically, it was found that job performance can be affected by social media in two ways: (1) addictive use causes exhaustion and loss of time that depletes focus on work, and (2) the tendency to compare one’s situation with the social media posts of others leads to emotional burnout that affects relationships with co-workers and job performance.

The physical implications of social media addiction were measured in terms of the time and energy spent on social media—time and energy that could have been spent on work. Social media addiction also depletes a good amount of emotional resources, which affects organization behavior. Respondents with tendency to measure feedback on their social media posts were more likely to report job burnout, mainly due to the pressure of posting likeable content and comparing it with co-workers’ posts. This comparison also is as a major cause of the decline in good relationships among co-workers. Envy, frustration, and anger over social media posts and reactions to them affect the way in which people deal with each other. Therefore, there are two types of responses to social media—physical exhaustion, and emotional fatigue. The latter is different from the behavioral path, which is more about the characteristic manner in which a person acts or conducts themself, especially toward others. Behavior is more of a permanent nature, whereas emotional reaction is a dynamic response to a situation.

Another focus area that this study explored was the implications of social media connections among co-workers. These connections initially were considered to be beneficial for improving communication among co-workers and promoting a feeling of camaraderie, of mutual trust and friendship. It helped employees get to know one another better by communicating on other-than-work grounds. How-
ever, over time, comparisons and reactions on social media posts led to feelings of frustration, envy, and even anger. This setback to interpersonal relationships was exactly the opposite of the planned objective.

Amid this physical and emotional exhaustion at work due to increased social media use and the urge to share all of one’s details (personal and professional), it was found that job burnout also has an impact on personal relationships, though this effect is not very strong. A possible reason could be that the loss of energy and drive in the case of a burnout also affects interest in and attention to other people.

This study has important practical contributions for both employees and managers. The path analysis of addictive social-media-use burnout, poor interpersonal relationships, and an ultimately negative impact on job performance suggests that the adverse effects of social media use can be managed to some extent by good time management. If there is a restriction on the time to use social media, employees will stop checking their social media accounts constantly throughout the day (and this may soon become a habit). If organizations restrict social media use to 2–3 times per day, employees can dedicate their time and energy to work and improve their efficiency. Further studies can be conducted to determine how interpersonal relationships can be improved by using social media networking with co-workers.

This study also highlights several possibilities for future research, for example, the impact of different types of social media. This study uses the term social media collectively for all the networking apps, such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter, but the differences between the use of Facebook (Tang, Chen, Yang, Chung, & Lee, 2016) WhatsApp, Twitter, and LinkedIn can be explored, and may provide more insight. Because most of the respondents admitted to overlapping use of multiple social media networks, this factor also can be considered. It would be very interesting to explore how employees differentiate between different platforms for attaining social and work goals. Exploring the reasons behind the growing use of social media, even to the extent of addiction, at the cost of work and among all age groups also is an interesting area of study. It is hoped that future studies will try to gain deeper insights into these influences of social media networking in the workplace to help organizations encourage employees to utilize social media connections productively.

7 Conclusion

Social media is an important tool to build up a business—and also the organization. Despite all the negative influences, its use is increasing mainly due to its role in the instant distribution of information in today’s digital world. Because most employees today are connected with co-workers on social media, it is important to understand the impact of such connections on individual performance at work and on the organization as whole. This study focused on the possible impact of social media connections with co-workers on interpersonal relationships and performance at work so that businesses can take measures to mitigate any negative effect. It was found that the addictive use of social media and connecting with work colleagues affects one’s performance and behavior at work—through the mediating variables of social media reactions and social media comparison. Because co-worker social media connections form a vital organizational construct, future research can build on these results to help create a positive work environment.
**EXTENDED SUMMARY/IZVLEČEK**


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**REFERENCES**


Appendix: Measurement Instruments

1. **Social Media Use and Addiction**

   *Social media addiction scale (Al-Menayes, 2015)*
   
   1. I often find myself using social media longer than intended.
   2. I get irritated when someone interrupts me when I’m using social media.
   3. Time passes by without me feeling it when I am using social media.
   4. My family complain frequently of my preoccupation with social media.
   5. I find myself thinking about what happened on social media when I am away from it.

2. **Social Media Reaction**

   *Developed from previous studies (Suzanne Z. et al., 2019; Schmidt, Lelchook & Martin, 2016)*
   
   1. Knowing things about colleagues through social media makes me feel awkward around them.
   2. Learning through social media what my colleagues are doing when I think they should be working makes me angry.
   3. Sometimes I get frustrated by the things I learn about my work colleagues through social media.
   4. It is hard not to let the information about my work colleagues I get from social media impact my feelings about them at work.
   5. Knowing things about colleagues through social media makes me feel like our relationships are fake.

3. **Social Media Comparison**

   *Iowa–Netherlands Comparison Orientation Measure (Gibbons & Buunk, 1999)*
   
   1. I often compare how my loved ones (boy/girlfriend, spouse, family) are doing with how others are doing.
   2. I often compare how I am doing socially (such as social skills, popularity) with other people.
   3. I often compare myself with others with respect to what I have accomplished in life.
   4. I often like to talk with others about mutual opinions and experiences.
   5. If I want to learn more about something, I try to find out what others think about it.

4. **Burnout**

   *Maslach Burnout Inventory–based questionnaire (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001)*
   
   1. I feel emotionally exhausted because of my work.
   2. I feel worn out at the end of a working day.
   3. I feel tired as soon as I get up in the morning and see a new working day stretched out in front of me.
   4. I get the feeling that I treat some clients or colleagues impersonally, as if they were objects.
   5. Working with people the whole day is stressful for me.
   6. I feel frustrated by my work.
   7. I get the feeling that I work too hard.
   8. Being in direct contact with people at work is too stressful.
   9. I have the feeling that my colleagues blame me for some of their problems.
   10. I feel I am not capable of investing emotionally in co-workers and customers.
5. **Work Performance**

*General job performance instrument developed by Liden, Wayne, and Stilwell (1993)*

1. I always perform better than an acceptable level.
2. I often perform better than what can be expected from me.
3. I often put in extra effort in my work.
4. I intentionally expend a great deal of effort in carrying out my job.
5. The quality of my work is top-notch.

6. **Interpersonal Relationships at Work**

*Scale to measure interpersonal relationships with co-workers (Carlson et al., 2009)*

1. I am always ready to communicate and discuss ideas with colleagues.
2. I do not put enough time into developing deep and trusting relationships.
3. I find it hard to approach people or start up a conversation.
4. Differences of opinion on matters of work and matters other than work puts me off.