

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Explaining Psychological Theories and Constructs Affecting Problematic Social Media Use in Turkish University Students from a Motivational Perspective

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Main Points

- According to the motivational approach, Self-Determination Theory and personal fear of missing out were found to be more important theories and constructs in explaining social media and problematic social media use.
- As time spent on social media sites increases, social media and problematic social media use also tend to increase.
- Another motivation for using social media sites is entertainment.

Abstract

One of the most prominent behaviors among online activities performed on smartphones is social media use. In this study, problematic social media use of Turkish university students was explained from a motivational perspective by utilizing self-determination theory, uses and gratifications theory, and belongingness theories. Data were collected from 349 Turkish university students aged 18 and over. WhatsApp, YouTube, and Instagram are very popular among Turkish university students, with more than 90% of students using these platforms in their daily lives. When the relationship between the main variables used in the study is examined, it is seen that the strongest connection of Social Media Addiction Scale is with personal fear of missing out ($r = 0.62, p < .01$). Time spent on social media is also moderately and significantly related with Social Media Addiction Scale ($r = 0.46, p < .01$). Another variable with a moderately significant relationship with the Social Media Addiction Scale is entertainment ($r = 0.41, p < .01$). Social media usage time, personal fear of missing out, and entertainment motivations together significantly explained 46% of the variance in the Social Media Addiction Scale, with personal fear of missing out making the largest contribution to this prediction ($\beta = .45, p < .001$).

Keywords: Addiction, health psychology, media psychology, motivation, social media use

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Introduction

One of the most prominent behaviors among online activities performed on smartphones is social media use. Since social media use is increasing in Türkiye and other countries, the possible reasons for this behavior have attracted the attention of psychologists more and more every day. However, the relationship between excessive use of social media and psychological problems also attracts the attention of researchers.

Excessive and uncontrolled use of social media can lead to a condition known as social media addiction (Kalınkara & Talan, 2025). It was claimed that excessive and uncontrolled use of social media has a similar mechanism to substance addiction and was sometimes associated with the concept of “addiction,” and sometimes it was characterized as problematic use and found to have negative psychological consequences (Smith, 2023).

Problematic use of social media can also be addressed outside the perspective of neurobiological

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Kıylođlu. Media and Motivation

addiction or disease. These perspectives include the dispositional difference perspective, motivational perspective, decision-making perspective, and learning perspective (Sun & Zhang, 2021). Identifying the underlying reasons that motivate social media use will significantly contribute to preventing excessive social media use. Therefore, it is necessary to determine the factors that motivate the excessive use of this type of media among Turkish university students.

In this study, Turkish university students' problematic social media usage motivations were investigated. The first aim of this study is to try to explain social media use and problematic use from a motivational perspective. Within the scope of this study, self-determination theory, uses and gratifications theory, and belongingness theory were utilized to explain social media use in the context of a motivational perspective. The second aim is to understand the risk of problematic social media use by determining which social media sites Turkish university students use and how long they use them in their daily lives. To the authors' knowledge, studies examining social media use and problematic social media use according to a motivational perspective only included certain constructs and theories. Such studies have only concerned a motivational perspective in a narrow context and were considered insufficient to explain the relationship between the motivational perspective and problematic social media use. This study brings together many constructs and theories from a motivational approach, making a unique contribution to the existing body of knowledge.

Social Media Addiction or Problematic Social Media Use

Social media sites are internet-connected applications that allow individuals to express their thoughts by sharing videos, photos, or messages with a specific person, group, or all internet users. Social media, which first started with the launch of Facebook in 2004, has rapidly become popular and constituted an important part of the interaction between individuals.

As a result of continuous access to the internet through smartphones, individuals have found the opportunity to carry the internet with them, and social media use has become easier. Although problematic use of social media has not been defined by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 2013) as an addiction, social media addiction tends to be defined or described in the literature in the context of the following 6 dimensions: psychological mood change, salience, tolerance, withdrawal symptoms, conflict, and relapse (Fabris et al., 2024).

Long-term use of social media has been considered an important variable in social media studies and is often associated with behavioral addiction or other problems (Bottaro & Faraci, 2022). In addition, increased exposure to visual content on social media may lead to greater social comparison and reinforcement of concerns about appearance (Boursier et al., 2020).

Problematic Social Media Use According to Motivational Approach

The motivational approach treats the individual as more active and claims that media use fulfills specific needs or that the individual using social media has clear goals (Sun & Zhang, 2021). In line with this view, some researchers have suggested that overuse

of social media sites results from a need-fulfilling mechanism (Montag et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2015). According to the motivational approach, there may be many reasons why individuals use social media. This approach argues that individuals can be motivated to use social media to meet their needs for self-presentation, information, entertainment, socialization, communication and interaction, online social support, flow, belonging, escape, independence, and competence (Sun & Zhang, 2021).

The following sub-sections introduce the theories and constructs from the motivational perspective that were considered in this study. This study draws upon three prominent theories to understand problematic use of social media sites. These theories can be stated as "uses and gratifications theory", "self-determination theory," and "belongingness theory." Within the scope of the uses and gratifications theory, the constructs of self-presentation, entertainment, communication, social gratification, and informational motives were addressed in this study. While the fear of missing out (FoMO) motive was handled within the framework of self-determination theory, the general belonging motive was examined using belongingness theory.

Belongingness Theory and Social Media Use

The need to belong is defined as "a pervasive drive to establish and maintain at least minimally lasting, positive and meaningful interpersonal relationships" (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). It has been reported that the need to belong is much more than a simple need for affiliation. Frequent contact with unsupportive, uncaring individuals will do little to meet the need for belonging, and relationships lacking regular contact will also fail to meet this need (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

Social media offers important opportunities for adolescents and young people's social functioning, allowing them to stay in touch with groups of friends more easily or to build new relationships on the Web (Fabris et al., 2024). Relationships built through social media can have an impact on an individual's overall sense of belonging. Likes, followers, and interactions through social media can give individuals the experience of belonging to a community. At a time when one is always online and connected, it has been reported that feeling ignored or excluded online can pose a serious threat to basic human needs such as belonging, self-esteem, control, and meaningful existence (Schneider et al., 2017). To give an example of the relationship between the sense of belonging and social media addiction, a significant and negative correlation was found between general belongingness and smartphone addiction among Northern Cyprus higher education students (Babayigit et al., 2023).

Self-Determination Theory and Social Media Use

According to self-determination theory, human behavior is driven by two main motivations, intrinsic and extrinsic, to satisfy some psychological needs. These needs are specified as competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000). It has been argued that self-determination theory, which attempts to explain human motivation, provides a useful perspective for understanding the empirical basis of FoMO (Przybylski et al., 2013). Fear of missing out is described as an individual's persistent clinging to what others have done out of fear that others may have more satisfying and rewarding experiences than themselves (Gezgin & Kurtca, 2023). Based on self-determination theory, Przybylski

et al. (2013) predicted that FoMO may play a role as a tool linking deficits in psychological needs to social media engagement.

It was emphasized that FoMO should be perceived as a multidimensional phenomenon, not as a general construct (Alt, 2015). Since the concept of self includes the private and public self, it has been suggested that FoMO has two dimensions: personal FoMO and social FoMO, and related academic studies supported this claim (Suarez-Perdomo et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2020). Personal FoMO has been reported to be people's anxiety about missing out on experiences they want for themselves, while social FoMO is people's anxiety about missing out on experiences others enjoy (Zhang et al., 2020). Many studies have highlighted the direct or indirect relationship between this psychological construct and problematic social media use. For example, a study by Throuvala et al. (2019) found that the control motive in the context of social media is reinforced by FoMO and can lead to problematic use of social media sites.

Uses and Gratification Theory and Social Media Use

This theory addresses five social factors that may lead to the emergence of media-related needs: reducing tension and conflict, information for solving problems, meeting needs not found in real life, reinforcing values, and providing information necessary to maintain group membership (Katz et al., 1973 – 1974). To illustrate the theory's explanation, users with a high need for appearance-related satisfaction may be more likely to prefer to use one or more image-oriented social media platforms such as Instagram (Van Oosten et al., 2023). In a study using this theory, technology gratification had the greatest impact on intention to continue using WeChat in China (Gang & Li, 2018). Uses and gratifications theory addresses in this study self-presentation, entertainment, communication, social satisfaction, and informational motives.

Self-presentation is one of the important psychological constructs within the scope of uses and gratifications theory. It has been reported that self-presentation refers to the process by which individuals strategically convey an image of themselves to others (Baumeister, 1982). Social media features enable individuals to realize their self-presentation by allowing them to express their interests, opinions, and beliefs about themselves (Torres, 2024). Social media also offers a variety of interaction and self-presentation features, accompanied by positive feedback from other users (Brailovskaia et al., 2023). According to the researchers, individuals with a strong need for approval reported higher levels of false self-presentation (Mun & Kim, 2021). A related study found that the majority of participants were not always honest about their personality, non-useful information, and emotional state on Facebook (Möller et al., 2022).

In this study, “uses and gratifications theory”, “self-determination theory,” “belongingness theories,” and psychological constructs related to these theories, which are evaluated within the scope of the motivation perspective and are considered to be closely related to social media overuse, were included. The reason for selecting these motivational theories is that these theories and related constructs have been reported to be closely related to social media use and overuse (Sun & Zhang, 2021). The research questions of this study are listed below.

RQ1: From a motivational perspective, what are the motivations behind university students' use of social media or problematic social media in Türkiye?

RQ2: Which social media sites do Turkish university students use in their daily lives and for how long?

Material and Methods

Participants

In line with the aims of the study and to answer the research questions, data were collected between February and March 2025 from university students over the age of 18 who declared that they had a social media account. Using a priori analysis with G*Power (version 3.1) software (Faul et al., 2009), it was determined that a minimum of 184 participants was needed. Parameters for the variables were set at a level of 0.05, 1- β of .95, and a medium effect size. Because larger samples would increase statistical power and reduce the risk of type 2 error, data collection from volunteer participants continued until the end of March 2025. Since the total sample size was 349 participants, the sample population was considered sufficiently representative. Three hundred forty-nine university students from various departments were informed about the purpose of the study, its scientific content, and the conditions for conducting the survey anonymously. After the voluntary participation form and informed consent of the participants, students were presented with an online self-report questionnaire consisting of a personal information form, Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale, Belongingness Scale, FoMO Scale, Social Media Self-Presentation Scale, and Social Media Use Purposes Scale.

Demographic characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1. Although the ages of the students who participated in the study ranged between 18 and 48, 87% of them were between the ages of 18 – 24. Overall, 311 of the participants claimed that they were currently studying in a social or humanities field, 14 students stated that they were studying in engineering or science, and 24 students reported that they were studying in health sciences.

Table 1.
Demographic Characteristics of Participants

	N	%
Gender	260	74.5
Female		
Male	89	25.5
Class		
1st grade	80	23
2nd grade	87	25
3rd grade	75	21.5
4th grade	107	30.5
	X ⁻	SD
Age, years	22.3	4.35

Note: X⁻ = Mean, SD = Standard deviation.

Measurement Instruments

Personal Information Form: It was created by the researcher to examine the demographic characteristics of the participants such as age and gender. Participants were also asked about their approximate usage of social media sites in the last 6 months. The average duration of use of social media sites was asked in the contexts of “less than 2 hours, 2 – 4 hours, 4 – 6 hours, and more than 6 hours of use” per day, respectively. Students were asked to indicate which of the social media sites WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube, Pinterest, Facebook, TikTok, X, Snapchat, LinkedIn, Telegram they use.

Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale: The Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale developed by Andreassen et al. (2016) consists of 6 items. The scale is answered according to a 5-point Likert-type scale. The internal consistency of the original scale was found to be 0.88. The Turkish validity study of the scale was conducted by Demirci (2019), and the exploratory factor analysis showed that the scale had a one-dimensional structure as in the original scale. The internal consistency reliability coefficient of the scale was found to be between .80 and .84 in different sample groups (Andreassen et al., 2016). In this study, the Cronbach’s alpha internal consistency coefficient is 0.83 for the scale.

Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) Scale: Zhang et al., (2020) associated FoMO with the self and emphasized that FoMO should be evaluated as two factors, personal and social, as in self-perception theory. Zhang et al. (2020), who developed the scale conducted four studies to test the validity and reliability of the FoMO scale consisting of nine items and reported that the scale has a two-factor structure and has sufficient validity and reliability values. The scale is answered according to a 7-point Likert-type scale. The adaptation of the scale to Turkish was carried out by Çelik and Özkara (2022), and according to the results of confirmatory factor analysis, the two-factor structure of the scale was confirmed. As a result of the analyses conducted with the data collected from the two samples, it was determined that the alpha internal consistency was between .85 and .90. Cronbach alpha was obtained as 0.93 for personal FoMO and 0.94 for social FoMO in this study.

Belongingness Scale: The Scale developed by Ersanlı and Koçyiğit (2013) is a three-dimensional scale including belonging to family, friends, and occupation. The scale consisting of 22 items is answered according to a 5-point Likert-type scale. As a result of the reliability analysis, Cronbach’s α values of .88, .89, and .88 were obtained for the family, friend group, and occupation factors, respectively, and .90 for the whole scale. The psychometric properties of the Belongingness Scale supported that it is a valid and reliable scale to be used in determining the belonging level of university students (Ersanlı & Koçyiğit, 2013). In this study, Cronbach’s α was found to be 0.87 for friendship and 0.91 for family and professional belonging.

Social Media Self-Presentation Scale: The scale was adapted into Turkish from a study conducted by Michikyan et al. (2015). The original scale is a 5-point Likert-type scale consisting of three main dimensions: the real self, the ideal self, and the false self. The validity and reliability studies were carried out by Avcı and Hazar (2024). In order to reveal the factor structure of the scale, exploratory factor analysis was applied and the scale was

reduced to 12 items and grouped into two sub-dimensions (False Self-Presentation and True Self-Presentation). The overall internal consistency of the scale was 0.76 and the overall test-retest reliability was 0.79. In this study, the Cronbach α was found to be 0.80 for false self-presentation and 0.69 for true self-presentation.

Social Media Use Purposes Scale: The scale developed by Aras and Peker (2021) to determine the social media usage purposes of university students is a 5-point Likert-type scale consisting of 17 items and 4 sub-dimensions. In the criterion-related validity study, positive relationships were found between the four sub-dimensions of the scale and the Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale. The Cronbach’s α for the whole scale was .88, while its sub-dimensions were .77 for communicating, .75 for social satisfaction, .86 for entertainment, and .81 for obtaining information. In this study, Cronbach’s α was found to be 0.82 for entertainment and communication, 0.83 for social satisfaction, and 0.84 for information motivation.

Process

This research is a cross-sectional study, and the participants were selected among university students on a voluntary basis and by convenience sampling method. Before starting the study, permission was obtained from the Zonguldak Bülent Ecevit University Ethics Committee with the date January 2, 2025 and protocol number 974. In the first stage, data were collected from 351 participants. Since the kurtosis value of the entertainment subscale was found to be above 2, two extreme values were excluded from the calculation, and then it was observed that the kurtosis value of the entertainment subscale decreased below the threshold level of 2. Descriptive, Pearson correlation, and multiple linear regression analyses were applied to the data of the remaining 349 participants using the SPSS-26 (IBM SPSS Corp.; Armonk, NY, USA) statistical package program.

Results

Below, frequently used social media sites and rates of usage (Figure 1), descriptive analysis of the main variables (Table 2), relationships between main variables, age, and usage time (Table 3), and the regression analysis showing the effects of main motivational variables and usage time on the problematic use of social media (Table 4) are analyzed respectively. Among the demographic questions, which social media sites students prefer and their average usage time were deemed important. Descriptive characteristics of the main variables and their sub-components are given in Table 2.

Descriptive analysis shows that WhatsApp, YouTube, and Instagram are very popular among Turkish university students, with more than 90% of students using these platforms in their daily lives. X, Pinterest, Snapchat, and TikTok are preferred by some students, while LinkedIn, Telegram, and Facebook are among the social media platforms preferred by very few students (Figure 1).

The average daily use of social media by university students can provide important information about their risk of problematic use or addiction. Researchers tend to consider the use of digital instruments above an average of 4 hours per day as a risk of addiction or problematic use (Sánchez-Fernández et al., 2023). The results showed that 49.3% ($N = 172$) of all participants in this

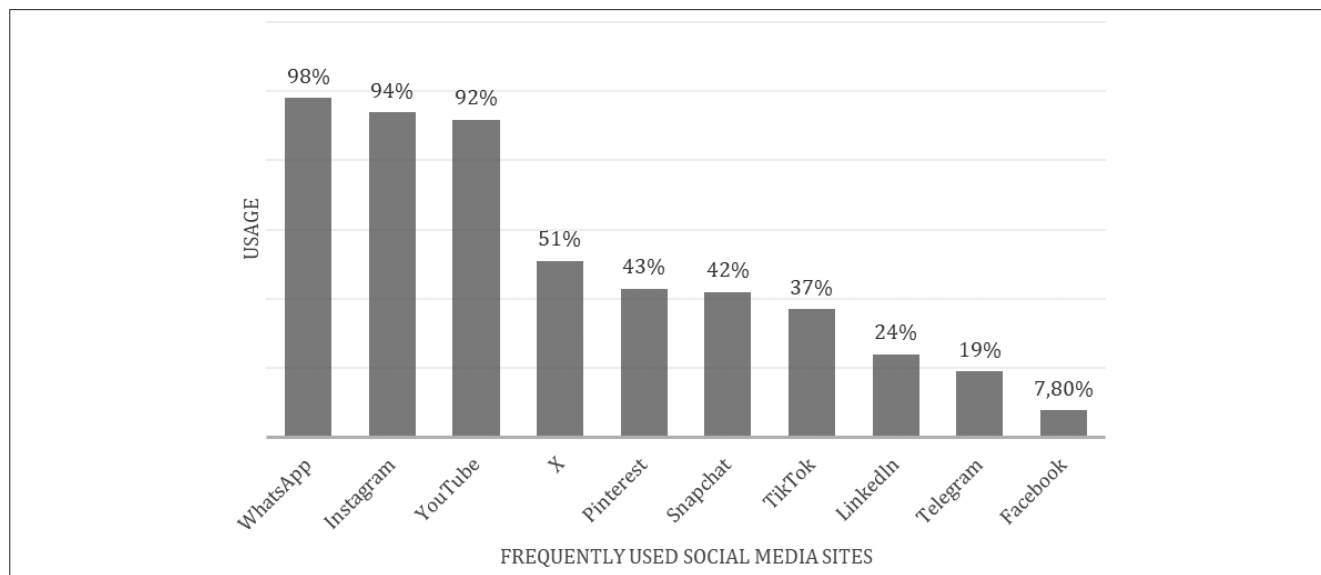


Figure 1. Frequently Used Social Media Sites and Rates of Usage.

study could be categorized as potential problematic social media users. This rate could indicate that about half of the respondents use social media problematically.

When the relationship between the main variables used in the study is examined (Table 3), it is seen that the strongest connection of Social Media Addiction Scale is with personal FoMO ($r = 0.62, p < .01$). It can be said that as participants' social media addiction or problematic use increases, their personal FoMO on social media development tends to increase. Personal FoMO on

social media updates will similarly increase participants' problematic use of social media. It is seen that the time spent on social media is also moderately and significantly related with Social Media Addiction Scale ($r = 0.46, p < .01$). Time spent on social media increases problematic social media use or problematic use increases time spent on social media. Another variable with a moderately significant relationship with the Social Media Addiction Scale is entertainment, one of the sub-components of the Social Media Usage Purposes Scale ($r = 0.41, p < .01$). People who need entertainment turn to social media and tend to satisfy these unsatisfied needs through social media as long as they use it.

Table 2.
Descriptive Characteristics of the Variables

Scale	X ⁻	SD	Average Values
Social media addiction	17.99	5.09	6 – 30
Social media self-presentation			
True self	17.68	3.35	5 – 25
False self	15.37	4.78	7 – 28
Belongingness			
Friends	27.85	4.82	7 – 35
Family	24.23	4.73	6 – 30
Occupation	34.65	7	9 – 45
FoMO			
Personal	14.3	7.56	5 – 35
Social	8.67	5.5	4 – 28
Social media uses and purposes			
Entertainment	16.67	3.49	5 – 25
Social satisfaction	14.25	3	5 – 25
Informational motives	15.43	2.78	4 – 20
Communication	10.26	2.65	3 – 15

X⁻ = Mean, FoMO = Fear of missing out; SD = Standard deviation.

Fear of missing out sub-components were also found to have significant associations with some other variables. Relationship between personal FoMO and the false self-presentation sub-component of the Social Media Self-Presentation Scale was found to be moderate and significant ($r = 0.46, p < .01$). Furthermore, personal FoMO was significantly and moderately related to the social satisfaction sub-component of the Social Media Uses and Purposes Scale ($r = 0.41, p < .01$). On the other hand, social FoMO was moderately and significantly correlated with the false self-presentation ($r = 0.45, p < .01$) and the Social Media Addiction Scale ($r = 0.36, p < .01$).

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Multiple linear regression analysis was applied to understand which basic motivational variables predicted social media

Table 3.
Relationships Between Main Variables, Age, and Usage Time

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Age	-													
2. Usage time	-.12	-												
3. Social media addiction	-.09	.46**	-											
4. True self-presentation	.09	.06	.08	-										
5. False self-presentation	-.01	.12*	.35**	.01	-									
6. Belonging to friends	.05	-.01	-.07	.15**	-.19**	-								
7. Belonging to family	.01	-.13*	-.17**	.09	-.19**	.59**	-							
8. Belonging to occupation	.07	-.19**	-.13*	.24**	-.17**	.41**	.36**	-						
9. Personal FoMO	-.06	.33**	-.06	.62**	.05	.46**	-.15**	-.20**	-.09	-				
10. Social FoMO	-.05	.16**	-.05	.36**	-.12*	.45**	-.26**	-.23**	-.20**	.62**	-			
11. Entertainment	-.06	.26**	-.06	.41**	.29**	.23**	-.02	-.12*	.01	.40**	.12*	-		
12. Social satisfaction	-.04	.14**	-.04	.31**	.23**	.31**	-.04	-.17**	-.03	.41**	.25**	.63**	-	
13. Information	.01	.25**	.01	.15**	.39**	-.01	.19**	.12*	.17**	.05	-.17**	.51**	.28**	-
14. Communication	-.12*	.08	-.12*	.14*	.29**	.12*	.09	-.04	.03	.04	-.03	.44**	.57**	.43**

FoMO = Fear of missing out.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

Table 4.
The Effect of Main Motivational Variables and Usage Time on Problematic Use of Social Media

Variables	B	β	SD	t	p
Constant	5.46		2.10	2.61	.009
UT	1.51	.25	.27	5.67	.000
FoMO_P	.30	.45	.04	7.50	.000
FoMO_S	.00	.00	.05	.03	.98
EM	.26	.18	.09	3.02	.003
SSM	-.10	-.08	.08	-1.25	.21
IM	-.05	-.03	.10	-.49	.62
CM	.11	.06	.10	1.08	.28
TSP	.00	.00	.07	-.00	.10
FSP	.09	.08	.05	1.77	.08
B_Frn	.05	.05	.05	.98	.33
B_Fam	-.05	-.04	.05	-.84	.40
B_Occ	-.02	-.03	.03	-.67	.50

Note: B_Fam = Belongingness to family; B_Frn = Belongingness to friends; B_Occ = Belongingness to occupation; CM = Communication motivation; EM = Entertainment motivation; FSP = False self-presentation; FoMO_P = Personal FoMO; IM = Information motivation; SD = Standard deviation; FoMO_S = Social FoMO; SSM = Social satisfaction motivation; TSP = True self-presentation; UT = Usage time.

addiction or problematic use of social media, and in this analysis, Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale was considered as the dependent variable (Table 4). The model was found significant, $F(12, 336) = 26.03, p < .001$. Social media usage time, personal FoMO, and EMs together significantly explained 46% of the variance in the Social Media Addiction Scale, with personal FoMO making the largest contribution to this prediction ($\beta = .45, p < .001$). A rise in personal FoMO leads to an increase in problematic social media use. Similarly, problematic social media use increases personal FoMO. The second most important variable in terms of predictive power was social media usage time, and it was determined that time spent on media positively predicted problematic social media use and this behavior increased problematic social media use ($\beta = .25, p < .001$). Third variable in terms of predictive power was entertainment, and this variable also predicted problematic social media use positively and significantly. It was determined that participants who wanted to meet their entertainment needs from social media were more motivated to use social media and this behavior ultimately led to problematic social media use ($\beta = .18, p < .001$). The other main variables and their sub-components did not significantly predict problematic social media use (Table 4).

Discussion

The findings provide insight into the key drivers of normative Turkish university students' social media behavior. Among self-presentation, belongingness, FoMO, and social media use purposes, FoMO is the strongest statistical predictor of excessive social media use outcomes. Personal FoMO strongly predicted problematic social media use in these participants. This study is important in terms of revealing that self-determination theory and personal FoMO are more important in explaining social media use from a motivational perspective. Another, though less important, variable that motivates problematic social media use is that students also use social media sites for entertainment purposes.

It has been noted that FoMO can be both a precursor and a consequence of excessive social media use (Çelik & Özkara, 2022). The university students who participated in this study may spend long periods of time on social media sites due to fear of missing updates on social media, or fear of missing updates on social media may occur in students who use social media problematically. Since Przybylski et al. (2013) predicted that individuals reporting high levels of FoMO would have lower levels of satisfaction with basic psychological needs, it can be said that participants who were not sufficiently satisfied with meeting their psychological needs turned to social media sites to meet these needs. The results revealed that participants were not afraid of missing out on experiences that other people enjoyed, but were afraid of missing out on experiences that they wanted only for themselves. Based on this finding, it can be said that respondents tend to follow updates on social media by acting with intrinsic motivation.

Numerous studies have been conducted on FoMO, some of which are summarized below. An experimental study conducted at a university in the USA found that FoMO increased social media use, while limiting social media use led to significant reductions in loneliness and depression (Hunt et al., 2018). A study conducted on adolescents in the Netherlands found that FoMO increased problematic social media use in mid-adolescence, concluding that FoMO could be considered a risk factor for problematic social media use (Li et al., 2024). In another study involving university students in Türkiye, it was found that FoMO was significantly related to social media addiction, and self-control and responsibility played a serial mediating role in this relationship (Kovan et al., 2024). Findings from studies conducted across countries support the idea that FoMO is an important psychological construct motivating social media and problematic social media use. However, other studies have not adequately addressed the personal and social components of FoMO. In other words, most research on this topic has measured FoMO as a general psychological construct rather than as a multidimensional construct. This measurement method applied to FoMO is a feature that distinguishes this study from others.

Among the demographic questions, time spent on social media also emerged as an important variable in predicting problematic social media use. This result is generally consistent with the psychology literature. The use of social media or other digital tools over long periods of time has been recognized as an important variable in social media studies and is often associated with behavioral addiction or other psychological problems (Bottaro & Faraci, 2022; Sánchez-Fernández et al., 2023). Approximately half of the students who participated in the study reported that they were on social media sites for 4 hours or more per day. This is an excessively long period of time in daily life and is one of the important signs of problematic social media use.

Another important finding is that entertainment from the "uses and gratification theory" was found to be an important variable in predicting problematic social media use. The following results were obtained in other countries and cultures on this topic. A study of social media motivations among high school and university students in Sweden found that the most common motivations for social media use were entertainment, social support, knowledge, and skills (Thorell et al., 2024). In another study conducted

Kıylođlu. Media and Motivation

on university students in China, entertainment gratification was found to be the most common motivation in using TikTok (Yang & Ha, 2021).

These results revealed that only some of the constructs and theories used in this study were significant in predicting problematic social media use. Belongingness theory was found to be insignificant in predicting problematic social media use behavior. In addition, self-presentation in social media was found to be insignificant in predicting the outcome variable.

It has been determined that WhatsApp, Instagram, and YouTube are the most preferred social media sites by Turkish university students. YouTube is mostly used by young people to watch TV shows and movies and to search for music videos or other interests instead of typical television viewing (Throuvala et al., 2019). Instagram embodies a unique culture of aesthetic and positively biased self-expression (De Vries et al., 2018). This popular social media site is seen as an idealistic image-sharing, slice-of-life app that provides inspiration for an individual's life activities and interests (Throuvala et al., 2019). WhatsApp is an application that is generally used for messaging. Students can follow the news about school and lessons on this channel, as well as share photos and videos, exchange messages with their friends, and talk to their friends. Based on the functions of these social media platforms, it can be said that university students are motivated to follow others' daily activities and interests, photos, videos, TV programs, movies, music, and school lessons for entertainment purposes and FoMO.

With smartphones becoming accessible to everyone, social media use has become a fundamental behavioral pattern among young people. Approximately 50% of university students in Türkiye spend 4 hours or more a day on social media. This is considered problematic and needs to be changed. Why do young people tend to meet their entertainment needs from the virtual world of social media? And why are young people so interested in the lives of others and so insistent on following their social media posts? These may be two principal questions that psychologists, educators, and politicians need to seek answers to. One answer to this question could be that economic problems in Türkiye limit real-world entertainment for the majority. Introducing individuals to face-to-face activities and hobbies from a younger age, facilitating their learning of literature, art, and exercise, and trying to implement education and training policies that aim to reveal the potential of individuals from an early age may be some of the ways that can replace problematic social media use in general, FoMO, and online entertainment in particular. Considering that young people mostly use Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp, what content they are particularly interested in on these social media platforms, what content creates a FoMO in young people, and what entertains young people on these sites may be among the topics that need to be investigated in future studies.

Data Availability Statement: The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

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Informed Consent: Written informed consent was obtained from the participants who agreed to take part in the study.

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