



Compensatory Use of Social Media and Its Relationship to "FOMO" Syndrome, A Survey Study on a Sample of Algerian Users.



Dr. Chebbat Saber

University Of El-Oued, Algeria.

chebbat-saber@univ-eloued.dz

Dr. Dehamna Bochra

8 May 1945 University – Guelma, Algeria.

dehamnaboehra@gmail.com

Received: 01/04/2026

Accepted: 02/08/2026

Published: 04/10/2026

Abstract

This study examines the relationship between compensatory use of social networking sites and the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) among Algerian users. A survey was conducted using a questionnaire distributed to a sample of 715 social media users to measure patterns, motives, and gratifications of compensatory use and the level of FOMO. The results showed that FOMO among users was moderate and tending toward high. The findings also revealed a statistically significant positive correlation between compensatory social media use and FOMO. No significant differences were found according to age and marital status, while the strength of the relationship varies depending on users' motives and gratifications.

Keywords: Compensatory Use, Social Media, Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), Algerian Users.

1. The Problem Statement

Since their emergence and subsequent proliferation over the past two decades, social media platforms have stood as a prominent manifestation of the digital revolution and the opening up of media and communication. They have offered vast, limitless possibilities for communication and social interaction, while satisfying ever-growing and constantly renewing human needs. This is particularly true as these platforms have evolved into an alternative space where many can compensate for feelings of inadequacy—stemming from unmet psychological and social needs in the real world—through what is known as the "compensatory use" of the Internet. However, these advantages have been accompanied by negative repercussions and phenomena with multifaceted dimensions. These have directly impacted—and continue to affect—the social lives, behaviors, and mental and psychological health of users. Such impacts have manifested as serious health disorders and conditions, including digital addiction, heightened frustration, anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, alienation, escapism, and maladjustment. Also included is the "Fear of Missing Out" (FOMO)—defined as a persistent or near-constant sense of anxiety and apprehension about missing significant moments, news, events, or experiences that others are enjoying. This creates a perpetual need to stay informed, driving users toward continuous engagement and deep immersion in these platforms, ultimately leading to excessive interaction and addiction. In this context, numerous recent studies indicate that FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) is a primary driver of social media addiction, particularly among young people. For this demographic, these platforms have become an integral part of daily life and activities—

serving as a central space for communication, information, entertainment, and self-presentation. They offer a means to temporarily or virtually satisfy psychological and social needs that may be unmet in the physical world, such as the need for psychosocial adjustment, a sense of belonging, and social status.

Regarding the situation in Algeria, the total number of social media users—according to estimates from early this year—reached 25.6 million. This represents 54.3% of the country's total population, which is estimated at 47.1 million (Kemp, 2025). Meanwhile, recent studies have demonstrated rising levels of excessive social media use and addiction among Algerian youth and adolescents. This trend is linked to various behaviors and health issues—spanning psychological, social, mental, and behavioral dimensions—that primarily affect an individual's psychosocial adjustment within their social environment; examples include feelings of alienation, depression, and other usage-related disorders. Accordingly, this study attempts to build upon these premises to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. It seeks to determine whether FOMO syndrome—and the subsequent patterns and habits of compensatory social media use—influences users' levels of psychological adjustment. This is achieved by measuring and identifying the nature of the correlation between FOMO and the various dimensions of psychological adjustment (psychological, behavioral, mental, physical, and social), as well as by uncovering the associated psychosocial factors. The study employs a field-based approach using a survey method with a sample of social media users. Consequently, the research problem can be formulated through the following questions:

2. Study Questions

1.2. Main Question:

☐ What is the nature of the relationship between compensatory social media use and FOMO syndrome among Algerian users?

2.2. Sub-questions:

☐ What is the extent of the patterns, motives, and gratifications associated with compensatory social media use in Algeria?

☐ What is the level of FOMO syndrome experienced by Algerian users?

☐ Are there significant differences in patterns of compensatory use attributable to demographic variables?

☐ Is there a correlation between patterns and habits of compensatory use and FOMO syndrome among Algerian users?

☐ Is there a correlation between the motives and gratifications of compensatory use and FOMO syndrome among Algerian users?

3. Study Hypotheses

Given the exploratory nature of the first two research questions (1 and 2), we deemed it unnecessary to formulate hypotheses for them; consequently, our study comprises four (04) main hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1:

☐ There are statistically significant differences in social media usage patterns and habits in Algeria attributable to the age variable.

Hypothesis 2:

☐ There are statistically significant differences in social media usage patterns and habits in Algeria attributable to the age variable.

Hypothesis 3:

- There is a statistically significant positive correlation between patterns and habits of compensatory social media use and the level of FOMO.

Hypothesis 4:

- There is a statistically significant positive correlation between the motives and gratifications of compensatory use and the degree of FOMO syndrome.

4. Significance of the Study:

The theoretical and practical significance of the study stems from the importance of the topic itself. It is characterized by its novelty and academic originality, as well as its sensitivity in the field—within both global and Algerian social contexts—at a time when social media usage is widespread among the youth. Accordingly, the study's significance can be outlined as follows:

1.4. Theoretical Significance: This can be highlighted as follows:

- The study contributes to enriching the body of knowledge in media and communication sciences, broadening the field's scope and its interconnections with other disciplines. It achieves this by addressing a modern concept—the "FOMO" syndrome—and linking it to certain negative effects and health disorders associated with social media usage.

- It offers deep insight into the communication behaviors of Algerian youth within the digital environment, analyzing the psychological and social drivers that govern patterns and motivations for the compensatory use of these platforms.

- It opens up new research avenues for scholars and those interested in the psychological and social impacts of social media, particularly given the scarcity of Arab and local studies addressing the relationship between FOMO and usage disorders.

2.4. Practical Significance: This can be defined as follows:

- The study's findings help identify indicators of addiction and usage disorders regarding social media among Algerian youth. This enables educational institutions, family counseling services, and mental health organizations to develop effective awareness and guidance programs.
- The research findings can be utilized to formulate media and educational strategies aimed at promoting the positive and balanced use of social media, while curbing excessive or addictive usage patterns.

- The study serves as a scientific tool for understanding the interplay between psychological, social, and behavioral variables among user groups, thereby contributing to the development of social and communication policies that are better aligned with the contemporary digital landscape.

5. Study Objectives:

This study primarily aims to uncover the nature of the relationship between FOMO syndrome and the level of psychological adjustment among users (within the Algerian context)—encompassing psychological, social, health, and behavioral dimensions—and to analyze this relationship both quantitatively and qualitatively through the following:

- Measuring the prevalence of FOMO syndrome among social media users in Algeria.
- Identifying and scientifically measuring the patterns and motives behind the compensatory use of social media.
- Determining and measuring the key psychological, behavioral, and physical effects of social media usage in the context of FOMO syndrome.
- Analyzing differences in the level of FOMO based on variables such as gender, age, usage patterns, and daily hours of interaction.

□ Examining the correlational relationship between FOMO syndrome and the dimensions of compensatory social media use.

□ Offering scientific proposals and practical recommendations to mitigate the negative effects of excessive social media use and to promote conscious, responsible usage. 6. Study Concepts:

1.6. Compensatory Use

a. Conceptual Definition: Before addressing the concept of "compensatory use," it is necessary to touch upon the concept of "uses." This term first appeared in French dictionaries during the 17th century, denoting a social activity—characterized by its frequency—that involves utilizing something to achieve a specific purpose or to satisfy a particular need. With the evolution of studies on "uses," the term has come to refer to practices, as well as habits, behaviors, and attitudes (Daif, 2020, p. 195). In media studies, the concept of the "user" has long been linked to information and communication technologies—and, in the digital environment, to phones, computers, the Internet, and social media networks. The French researcher Jacques Perriault is considered a key figure in exploring the concept of "uses"; in his book published in the early 1980s, **La logique d'usage** (The Logic of Use) (Al-Qariwi, 2020), he became the first to distinguish between the logic of the medium or technology's designer and the logic of its user. This implies that a user's engagement with a medium is driven by their own predispositions, purposes, goals, and specific needs, rather than necessarily aligning with the purposes or services for which the medium or technology was originally designed.

Many researchers link the concept of use to the amount of time a user spends visiting these sites (Al-Sawafi, 2014–2015, p. 19)—with other factors subsequently serving to foster, hinder, or limit such usage. In contrast, the French researcher Yves-François Le Coadic links the concept to repetition and integration; he describes use as a social activity that evolves into a routine societal practice through repetition and the passage of time. He argues that an activity qualifies as "use" only when it is characterized by repetition and becomes integrated into the practices and habits of individuals (Bougaren, 2012).

In the same context, Ph. Breton and S. Proulx distinguish... A distinction is drawn between "usage" (**usage**) and "utilization" (**utilisation**): the former refers to the psychological and social bonds connecting the user to the technical device, whereas the latter refers to the act of employing the device without regard for other considerations (Dahlas, 2009–2010, p. 45).

Within this framework, the concept of "compensatory internet use" subsequently emerged. It was further developed in 2014 by German researcher Alexander Kardefelt-Winther, who noted that individuals excessively use the internet to alleviate psychological and social problems (Kardefelt, 2014). In other words, their excessive use does not necessarily stem from addiction; rather, they seek to mitigate or compensate for real-life frustrations—such as stress, social isolation, or low self-esteem. When gripped by negative emotions or feelings of failure and inadequacy, they immerse themselves in websites seeking psychological comfort and substituting the virtual for the real. Consequently, according to Kardefelt, excessive internet use is not a pathological, compulsive behavior; instead, it may serve as a psychological "coping strategy" aimed at alleviating negative emotions or escaping difficult life situations.

B. Operationally: Within the scope of this study, compensatory use can be defined as those multidimensional virtual activities—manifesting in the patterns and habits of social media users—that are driven by compensatory motives and expectations of gratification, emotional

release, and the alleviation of life's frustrations. Regarding realism and compensatory use, the phenomenon is amenable to observation and quantitative measurement based on the degree of patterns, motives, and gratifications achieved.

2.6. FOMO Syndrome (Fear of Missing Out):

a. Definition: "FOMO" is an acronym for "Fear of Missing Out." It is one of the contemporary concepts most closely linked to the heavy use of social media, referring to a persistent fear or anxiety about missing out on something—whether on social networks or within online social relationships (Dervaux, 2018, p. 106).

Dan Herman, an American strategic marketing researcher, was the first to observe this phenomenon in 1996 while listening to and discussing products with consumers; he noted their fear of missing the chance to buy a new product and the joy they felt upon seizing such opportunities. In 2004, American businessman Patrick J. McGinnis coined the term "FOMO" in an article published in **The Harbus**, the Harvard Business School student newspaper (Barqad, 2020).

The term gained widespread currency alongside massive technological advancements and the proliferation of social media platforms. These sites became primary sources for the latest updates, events, local and global news, and happenings from around the world. Consequently, "FOMO" was officially added to the Oxford Dictionary in 2006 (Barqad, 2020). Operationally, within the scope of this study, FOMO syndrome can be defined by the score recorded on a scale measuring the motives, desires, and excessive expectations that generate an urgent need to use social media. This state persists constantly or for extended periods, driving a continuous search for gratification to compensate for a chronic sense of deficiency and the fear of missing out on opportunities, news, and current events.

7. Theoretical Approach: The "Compensatory Internet Use Theory (CIUT) Model":

This model is an extension of Uses and Gratifications Theory, developed by German researcher Alexander Kardefelt-Winther in 2014. Through it, he sought to theorize the premise that individuals resort to excessive Internet use to alleviate psychological and social problems (Kardefelt, 2014). In other words, individuals do not use the Internet excessively because they are necessarily addicted, but rather because they seek to compensate for real-life deficits or stressors—such as tension, social isolation, or low self-esteem. When gripped by negative emotions or a sense of failure in their real lives, they immerse themselves in websites seeking psychological comfort and substituting the virtual for the real. Consequently, according to Kardefelt's hypothesis, excessive Internet use is not always a pathological, compulsive behavior; it may instead serve as a psychological "coping strategy" aimed at mitigating negative emotions or escaping difficult life situations. Thus, the main hypotheses of the compensatory internet use model are (Mansour & Al-Naghi, 2024, p. 1710):

□ The core issue lies in the individual's reaction to a negative life situation and their attempt to compensate for it via the internet; this leads to excessive use of social media, resulting in both negative and positive effects. Positive effects manifest as a sense of improvement in the individual's state, while negative effects include a lack of desire to form new friendships in the real world.

□ There is a relationship between psychological and social motives and excessive internet use. Key motives include escaping real-life problems—where the individual feels they have not

achieved a sufficient level of success—and seeking compensation for this through online platforms.

□ The desire for achievement and the wish to reclaim lost opportunities are among the primary drivers of excessive internet use.

□ There are individual differences in the level of compensatory internet use based on levels of anxiety and stress.

8. Previous Studies:

The topic of FOMO has not yet received significant research attention in Arab or Algerian contexts; despite its theoretical and practical importance, we found only a few studies and limited media coverage. This stands in contrast to foreign studies, which have extensively examined the subject and its manifestations—covering conceptualization, measurement, and analysis. These studies include:

1.8. Study by Manal A. M. Mansour and Yasser M. Al-Naghi (2024) conducted a study titled "The Psychological Effects of FOMO Syndrome and Its Relationship to Excessive Use of Social Media Influencer Pages in Light of the Compensatory Internet Use Theory" (Mansour & Al-Naghi, 2024). The study addressed the relationship between the psychological effects of FOMO syndrome and levels of excessive use of social media influencer pages, measuring this through variables such as excessive use, addiction, and obsession. The researchers employed a survey method and a purposive sample of 400 individuals selected via the snowball sampling technique. Data collection instruments included a questionnaire, a scale for motives behind using influencer pages, a scale for levels of excessive use of influencer pages, a scale for FOMO syndrome among users of influencer pages, and a scale for the psychological effects of FOMO syndrome among users of influencer pages. The study yielded several significant results, most notably:

- The majority of respondents use social media excessively.
- There are varying levels of excessive use of social media influencer pages, ranging from mere excess to obsession and addiction.
- There is a statistically significant positive correlation between the impact level of FOMO syndrome and the level of excessive use of social media influencer pages.

2.8. Study by Mais Al-Nasa'h and Shadid. (Al-Nasa'h & Shadid, 2024) titled "Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) on Social Media Platforms and Its Relationship with Self-Esteem Among Adolescents in Jordan": The current study aimed to assess levels of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and self-esteem among 7th and 10th-grade students in private schools in Amman, Jordan. It also sought to explore the relationship between FOMO and self-esteem, as well as to examine differences in these levels based on gender and grade level. The study was conducted on a randomly selected sample of 590 male and female students from private schools in Amman during the 2022/2023 academic year. To achieve the study's objectives, the researchers translated the FOMO and self-esteem scales, verified the validity and reliability of the instruments, and administered them to the sample. A descriptive-correlational approach was adopted, as it was deemed most suitable for describing FOMO and self-esteem levels and identifying potential correlations between the two variables. The study yielded several significant findings, most notably:

- Low levels of FOMO regarding social media platforms among the surveyed students, with a mean score not exceeding 1.87.

- A low level of the need for belonging (mean score of 1.95); students experiencing a lack of fulfillment regarding their need for belonging may turn to social media as a means to interact and feel a sense of belonging to a social network. ...greater.
- There are no statistically significant differences attributable to gender regarding the respondents' level of self-esteem.
- There are statistically significant differences attributable to grade level regarding self-esteem, favoring tenth-grade students. This is attributed to their greater psychological maturity and the clarity of their goals and self-image; furthermore, they possess more social experiences, which contributes to enhancing their self-esteem.

3.8. Study by Zhang Yali et al. (2021) titled: "The Relationship Between Social Media Use and Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) Syndrome: A Meta-Analytic Study" (Yali, Sen, & Guoliang, 2021). The study addressed the relationship between social media use and FOMO syndrome among social media users in China through a meta-analysis of a sample of previous studies and research literature. It was grounded in three frameworks: the Social Cognitive Model of Mass Communication, which indicated a significant positive correlation between the two variables; the Digital Goldilocks Hypothesis, which suggested the possibility of a U-shaped (curvilinear) relationship rather than a significant linear one; and an empirical model, which found that the strength of the relationship (r) between the variables—as reported in existing literature—was inconsistent, with values ranging from 0 to 0.75.

Accordingly, this meta-analysis was conducted to explore the strength of the relationship and the moderating factors between social media use and FOMO syndrome by reviewing a sample of... The study sample comprised 65 research studies and publications that examined the correlational relationship between the two variables.

The results of the primary analysis indicated the following:

- A significant positive correlation exists between social media usage and FOMO ($r = 0.38$). Moderation analyses revealed that this relationship was influenced by the specific indicator of social media usage and the type of platform used.
- Social media addiction shows a stronger correlation with FOMO than usage frequency, duration, or intensity.
- Instagram remains more strongly associated with FOMO than Facebook or Snapchat.

Conversely, variables such as gender, age, FOMO measurement tools, and the cultural dimension of individualism did not play a moderating role in the relationship between the two variables.

- These findings support the Media Effect Model, which posits that social media usage—particularly addiction to it—may constitute a significant risk factor for developing FOMO.

Finally, the study recommends conducting future field research to explore the dynamic nature of the relationship between social media usage and FOMO.

9. Methodological Procedures

1.9. Study Methodology and Instruments

a. Study Methodology:

Given the nature of the study—which seeks to describe a newly emerging media phenomenon with psycho-sociological dimensions in its current state, without direct researcher intervention or manipulation of variables (such as deletion, addition, alteration, or modification), but rather through measurement—... ..and to examine their correlational relationships—and subsequently

present scientific conclusions and interpretations regarding them—we found that the correlational survey method is the most suitable approach.

B. Study Instruments:

As the current study aims to survey a large population of social media users across various platforms—seeking to uncover the correlational relationship between FOMO syndrome and psychosocial adjustment within the context of compensatory usage patterns and motives—we determined that an online questionnaire was the most suitable instrument. This questionnaire comprises three scales: the FOMO scale; the Social Media Usage Patterns and Motives scale (developed based on the principles of the Compensatory Internet Use Theory and relevant prior Arab and international studies); and the Multidimensional Psychosocial Adjustment scale (covering psychological, social, physical, and behavioral dimensions), which we constructed based on the Mahmoud Al-Zayadi and Youngman scale for psychosocial adjustment.

C. Reliability of the Study Instrument:

To verify the reliability of the study instrument prior to administering it to the main sample, the researcher conducted a pilot study. The instrument was distributed to a preliminary sample of 30 individuals by randomly sharing the questionnaire link within Facebook and WhatsApp groups of which the researcher is a member.

Table 1: Reliability coefficients of the study instrument

Sample units	Overall reliability coefficient of the study instrument (Cronbach's Alpha)
30	0.87 a

As

shown in the table above, the reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) was 0.87. This is a favorable rate—exceeding the minimum threshold of 0.60—that clearly indicates the reliability and measurement validity of the study instrument, thereby confirming its suitability and readiness for distribution to the larger sample.

10. Research Population and Study Sample

1.10. Study Population

The study population consists of active social media users who participate in Algerian virtual groups and pages across various digital platforms—such as Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, WhatsApp, and others. These users are aged 20 or older (or under 20) and utilize these platforms on a daily basis.

"Active users participating in virtual groups and pages" refers to individuals who hold active membership in at least one group or page and engage with them through interaction, following, or regular content viewing and various forms of engagement.

2.10. Study Sample

Given the vast size of the research population and the impossibility of enumerating all its members—combined with the nature of the survey study, its reliance on an online questionnaire, and access limitations—a non-probability snowball sampling method was employed. The link to the online questionnaire was published across social media groups and pages, and participants were invited to share it with their acquaintances; this approach facilitated the expansion of the sample and enabled access to a larger number of users. The final

study sample size reached 715 subjects; this size is considered statistically highly appropriate for correlational studies aimed at uncovering the nature of the relationship between variables.

3.10. Characteristics of the study sample

Table 02: Shows the distribution of respondents' answers regarding demographic variables.

Ranking	%	Repetition	Options	Variables	N
2	52.17	373	Male	Gender	1
1	47.83	342	Female		
///	100.0	715	Total		
2	29.23	209	Under 20 years old	Age	2
3	25.31	181	20 to 30 years old		
1	29.51	211	30 to 40 years old		
4	15.94	114	Over 40 years old		
///	100.0	715	Total		
5	2.52	18	Primary	Educational Level	3
3	14.83	106	Intermediate		
2	24.20	173	Secondary		
1	54.13	387	University		
4	4.34	31	Postgraduate		
///	100.0	715	Total		
1	60.70	434	Single	marital status	4
2	33.71	241	Married		
3	5.60	40	Divorced/Widowed		
///	100.0	715	Total		

Based on the data in the table above regarding the demographic characteristics of the respondents, several features distinguish the study sample across the following variables:

a. Gender: The proportion of males (52.17%) slightly exceeds that of females (47.83%). This indicates a relative balance in gender representation within the sample, thereby enhancing the credibility of the results through the adequate representation of both groups.

b. Age: The results indicate that middle age groups constitute the majority; the 30–40 age group ranked first (29.51%), followed immediately by the "under 20" group (29.23%) and the 20–30 group (25.31%). Conversely, the "over 40" group represented the smallest proportion (15.94%). This distribution suggests that the sample is predominantly composed of young people and adults, which aligns with the nature of studies concerning internet and social media usage behaviors.

c. Educational Level: The results show that the majority of respondents hold a university-level education (54.13%), followed by those with secondary education (24.20%) and intermediate education (14.83%). Meanwhile, the postgraduate group accounted for a limited percentage (4.34%), as did the primary education group, which ranked last (2.52%).

d. Marital Status: The results reveal that the majority of respondents are single (60.70%), compared to 33.71% who are married, while the proportion of divorced and widowed individuals did not exceed 5.60%. This indicates a predominance of young people within the sample, consistent with the demographics and characteristics of the segments that use the internet most frequently.

Overall, these data indicate that the study sample is predominantly young and educated, making it highly suitable for examining topics such as FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) and compensatory internet use, given that these demographic groups are the most active in the virtual space. 11.

Statistical Methods Employed in the Study

Statistical methods are indispensable for any researcher conducting quantitative studies. Accordingly, this study utilized the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software to process, display, and organize quantitative data prior to analysis and discussion. The methods employed included:

- ☐ Frequencies and percentages.
- ☐ Arithmetic means and standard deviations.
- ☐ Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient.
- ☐ Shapiro-Wilk test for normality.
- ☐ Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient.
- ☐ Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).
- ☐ t-test for differences.

12. Field Study Results

1.12. Presentation and Analysis of Results for the Second Dimension: Patterns and Habits of Compensatory Social Media Use.

Regarding the section on social media usage patterns and habits, the weighted means of respondents' answers ranged from a minimum of 0.15 to a maximum of 2.38, indicating that respondent attitudes fell between "high neutrality" and "complete agreement." Furthermore, the overall mean of 3.02 suggests that the degree of compensatory usage patterns among respondents exceeded the average level and approached the high level.

In terms of quantitative ranking, the statement "I prefer using social media when I am alone" recorded the highest mean (2.38); more than half of the respondents (55.1%) selected the "Agree" option. This reflects a clear link between platform usage and feelings of loneliness, serving as a strong indicator of the prevalence of compensatory usage among the respondents. This was followed by the statement "I use social media even when I am not free," which also scored highly (2.36), with the majority of respondents (55.3%) selecting "Agree." This indicates a pattern of compulsive usage and a loss of the ability or resolve to regulate and control the time spent on these sites. Next in the ranking was statement No. 02. Next is Item (02), concerning "daily hours of usage," with a mean score of 2.35; results showed that 45.7% of respondents use these platforms for more than six hours daily, confirming a high level of digital immersion and serving as a strong indicator of compensatory usage and a heightened likelihood of "FOMO" syndrome. This is followed by Item (03)—"I use social media sites immediately after waking up"—with a score of 2.34; 44.0% of respondents selected the "Agree" option, indicating the formation of a prominent habit of excessive use—a precursor to digital addiction—that is difficult to break. Ranking fifth is Item (01), regarding the number of platforms used daily, with a mean of 2.31; 46.1% of respondents reported using more than five platforms, reflecting the multiplicity of digital channels and users' tendency to constantly switch between them—an additional indicator of intensive and excessive platform usage. Ranking sixth is Item (05)—"I use social media sites late into the night"—with a score of 2.31; 45.5% of the sample agreed with this statement, reflecting a tendency toward excessive nighttime usage and potential associated issues such as sleep disturbances or difficulties in time management, which in turn

signals habits linked to addiction and overuse. Ranking seventh is Item 09—"My social media activities are dominated by..."—with a score of 2.25. Usage patterns were distributed among relying primarily on emojis (45.2%), active following (40%), and passive viewing (15.8%). This indicates that the majority of respondents adopt an interactive or semi-interactive style, through which they present themselves and freely express their inclinations and interests; this allows them to alleviate frustrations and achieve the fulfillment they lack in real life, whereas a significant portion engages only in the passive consumption of content without notable active participation or contribution. Ranking eighth is Item 08—"I consistently post and share stories and content that reflect my inclinations and interests"—with a mean score of 2.21 and 40% of respondents selecting "Agree." This points to a clear presence of digital self-expression—albeit at levels lower than compulsive or compensatory usage—reflecting the respondents' desire to construct an active digital identity or seek social recognition and acceptance across these platforms. Item (07)—"I use social media sites even when I am in a group setting (with family members, colleagues, or friends)"—ranked ninth and last, with a mean score of 2.21 and an agreement rate of 35.3%. This indicates a moderate level of digital distraction and diminished actual social presence, although a significant portion of the respondents still approaches this behavior with caution or hesitation.

2.12. Presentation and analysis of the results for the third dimension: Motives and gratifications of compensatory usage.

Regarding the respondents' reactions to the items concerning the motives and gratifications of compensatory social media use, scores ranged from a minimum of 2.23 to a maximum of 2.46. This indicates high levels and a general tendency toward agreement—as evidenced by the overall mean score of 2.34—suggesting that the respondents' level of compensatory use ranges from moderate to high. In terms of quantitative and statistical ranking, Item 04 ("Social media sites give me a sense of belonging and appreciation from others") recorded the highest mean (2.46), with over half of the respondents (57.4%) agreeing with it; this demonstrates that digital platforms provide a sense of social acceptance and belonging, which is a primary motive for compensatory use. This was followed by Item 02 ("When I feel empty or bored, I immediately turn to browsing social media sites"), with a mean of 2.38 and an agreement rate of 52.7%, reflecting an attempt to alleviate boredom and psychological emptiness through digital immersion.

Next, ranking third, was the item "I feel I achieve self-fulfillment and assert my presence through what I post or receive on these platforms," with a mean of 2.36 and an agreement rate of 49.2%. This indicates that platform usage reflects the respondents' desire for self-actualization and the construction of a digital presence, serving as an indicator of the psychosocial gratification associated with digital interaction. Item (01)—"I use social media to escape the problems I face in my real life"—ranked fourth, with a mean of 2.34 and an agreement rate of 49.4%, indicating that escaping life's pressures is a significant motive for using these platforms. Meanwhile, Item (03)—"I find social media to be a way to vent my negative emotions"—ranked sixth, with a mean of 2.30 and an agreement rate of 52.2%; this suggests that venting negative emotions through digital interaction is a common practice among respondents, albeit one with less impact than motives related to social acceptance and self-validation. Item (07)—"I feel temporary relief when interacting on social media"—ranked fifth,

with a mean of 2.30, reflecting that digital interaction provides a form of temporary psychological relief.

Finally, Item (06)—"I use social media to compensate for a lack of real-life social relationships"—ranked seventh (last), with a mean of 2.23 and an agreement rate of 40.1%; this indicates that using platforms to compensate for social deficits is less pronounced among respondents compared to other motives, though it is still present to a moderate-to-high degree. Overall, the aggregate mean (2.34) and the moderate standard deviation (0.687) indicate a moderate-to-high level of consensus among respondents regarding the motives for compensatory usage. Predominant motives include social belonging, self-actualization, and escaping boredom and psychological stress—strong indicators of continuous and repetitive compensatory use of social media sites.

* By calculating the average of the aggregate scores for both the "patterns and habits" dimension and the "motives and gratifications" dimension, we obtain a quantitative measure of the level or degree of compensatory social media usage, based on the following formula: $2.32 = (2.34 + 2.30) / 2$. Thus, it can be stated that the degree of compensatory usage—encompassing patterns, motives, and gratifications—among Algerian users exceeds the average level and leans towards the high end of the spectrum.

3.12. Presentation and analysis of results for the fourth dimension: Measuring FOMO syndrome among users.

The results of the FOMO scale indicate that the arithmetic means for the scale's items ranged from a minimum of 2.02 to a maximum of 2.59, with an overall mean of 2.29 and a standard deviation of 0.697. This suggests that the respondents' level of FOMO exceeds the midpoint, showing a relative tendency toward agreement regarding certain behavioral and emotional dimensions associated with constant connectivity and continuous monitoring.

Regarding the statistical ranking, Item 3—"I feel uncomfortable when I lose my internet connection"—recorded the highest mean (2.59) with a relatively low standard deviation (0.604); 65.5% of respondents agreed with this statement. This indicates a clear psychological attachment to digital usage and activity, reflecting a strong emotional dimension of FOMO characterized by the anxiety and tension accompanying a loss of internet connectivity.

This is followed by Item 2—"I constantly check my phone for fear of missing something important"—with a mean of 2.53 and a high agreement rate (60.4%). This reflects the syndrome's distinct behavioral dimension, where the fear of missing out translates into actual behavior manifested by the frequent checking of one's phone and social media sites. Ranking third is Item (07)—"I find it difficult to stop browsing social media, even when it has become routine"—with a mean of 2.37 and an agreement rate of 53.1%. This indicates that browsing behavior is no longer tied solely to the expectation of new content; rather, it has evolved into a digital habit that is difficult to control—an indicator of digital immersion linked to FOMO.

As for the items reflecting a neutral stance, Item (06)—"I fear being less informed than my friends about current events"—ranked highest with a mean of 2.27. This was followed by Item (05)—"I check my accounts even while engaged in other activities"—with a mean of 2.26, and then Item (08)—"I feel I have missed out when I see others sharing beautiful moments I was not part of"—with a mean of 2.21. These items reflect moderate levels of social comparison and fear of missing out on information, though they do not reach a high level of agreement.

Conversely, Item (01)—"I feel anxious when I cannot keep up with what others are posting"—ranked second to last with a mean of 2.10, followed in last place by Item (04)—"I compare myself to what others share"—with a mean of 2.02. Both fell within the neutral range, indicating that the dimension of direct social comparison is less pronounced than the dimension of constant connectivity and continuous monitoring.

4.12. Hypothesis Testing Results

- First Hypothesis: "There are statistically significant differences in the level of compensatory usage among users attributable to the age variable."

Table 03: ANOVA test results for differences in compensatory usage based on the age variable.

The Ruling	Level of significance	F	Mean of squares	Degre	Total	Variance/Indicators
Non-indicative	0.001	0.10	1.636	3	4.908	Between groups
			15.061	711	10708.552	Within groups
			16.061	714	10713.460	Total

The results of the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) indicate no statistically significant differences in the compensatory use of social media sites attributable to the age variable; the F-value was 0.10 (at a significance level of 0.001), rendering it statistically non-significant. This demonstrates that the differences between the mean scores of compensatory use across the various age groups (under 20, 21–30, 31–40, and over 40 years) are negligible compared to the variance within each individual group. Consequently, it can be concluded that age is not a significant factor in determining patterns of compensatory use, and that individual variation within each age group outweighs the variation between groups—indicating similar compensatory usage behaviors across different age demographics. Thus, the null hypothesis—stating that there are statistically significant differences in the level of compensatory use attributable to age differences among respondents—is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis—stating that there are no statistically significant differences in the level of compensatory use attributable to age differences among respondents—is accepted.

- Second Hypothesis: There are statistically significant differences in the level of compensatory use attributable to differences in the respondents' marital status.

Table 04: ANOVA test results for compensatory use differences based on the marital status variable.

The Ruling	Level of significance	F	Mean of squares	Degre	Total	Variance/Indicators
Non-indicative	0.05	0.46	6.988	2	20.964	Between groups
			15.039	712	10707.768	Within groups
			16.061	714	10713.460	Total

The results of the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) indicate no statistically significant differences in the compensatory use of social media sites attributable to the marital status variable ($F = 0.46$; $p > 0.05$). This implies that the differences between the mean scores of compensatory use across the various marital status groups (single, married,

divorced/widowed) are negligible compared to the variance within each group. Consequently, marital status is not a significant factor in determining patterns of compensatory use; individual differences within each group outweigh differences between groups, suggesting similar compensatory usage behaviors across the respondents' different marital statuses. Thus, the null hypothesis—stating that there are statistically significant differences in the level of compensatory use attributable to the respondents' marital status—is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis—stating that there are no statistically significant differences in the level of compensatory use attributable to the respondents' marital status—is accepted.

- Third Hypothesis: "There is a positive correlation between usage patterns and the level of FOMO."

The Ruling	Level of significance	Spearman's correlation coefficient	The sample	Variables/Indicators
indicative	0.01	0.42	715	<i>Patterns of Compensatory Use</i>
				<i>FOMO Level</i>

Spearman correlation analysis indicates a statistically significant positive relationship between patterns of compensatory social media use and the level of FOMO among respondents ($\rho = 0.42$; $p < 0.01$). This statistically significant result suggests that individuals who engage in compensatory social media use tend to experience higher levels of FOMO, reflecting a clear impact of such usage behaviors on the anxiety individuals feel about missing out on social events and updates.

Consequently, this finding supports the (third) hypothesis positing a positive correlation between compensatory usage patterns and FOMO levels, and underscores the importance of measuring compensatory usage behaviors in understanding and interpreting manifestations of social anxiety related to missing out.

- Fourth Hypothesis: "There is a correlation between the motives for compensatory use and the level of FOMO."

The Ruling	Level of significance	Spearman's correlation coefficient	The sample	Variables/Indicators
indicative	0.01	0.56	715	<i>Patterns of Compensatory Use</i>
				<i>FOMO Level</i>

Correlation analysis using Spearman's coefficient reveals a statistically significant positive relationship between motives for the compensatory use of social media and the level of FOMO among respondents ($\rho = 0.56$; $p < 0.01$). This confirms that individuals with stronger motives for compensatory use tend to experience higher levels of FOMO, reflecting the significant impact of psychological motives on the anxiety individuals feel about missing out on social events and updates. Consequently, this result supports the (fourth) hypothesis positing a positive correlation between compensatory use motives and FOMO levels, thereby underscoring the importance of measuring and understanding these motives in identifying manifestations of social anxiety related to missing out.

5.12. Discussion of Study Results

The study results revealed a statistically significant positive correlation between the compensatory use of social media and the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) syndrome among

Algerian users. This indicates that individuals who turn to these platforms to satisfy unmet real-life psychological and social needs—such as the need for belonging, esteem, or escape from stress—may become more susceptible to the persistent anxiety associated with missing out on virtual interactions, news, and updates. This finding aligns with the study by Zhang et al. (2021), which demonstrated a positive correlation between social media usage and FOMO, and concurs with the results of Mansour and Al-Naghi (2024), which confirmed a positive relationship between excessive usage levels and heightened FOMO—particularly when usage evolves into a compulsive pattern, an excess, or addictive behavior. However, the current study moves beyond the quantitative perspective focused on usage intensity to highlight the functional and utilitarian dimensions of compensatory use as a variable explaining the nature of this relationship; this suggests that the issue lies not merely in the number of hours spent or the frequency of use, but in the nature of the underlying motives and the gratifications sought from such usage.

Furthermore, these results differ partially from the study by Al-Shadid and Nasa'h (2024), which found lower levels of FOMO among a sample of Jordanian adolescents—a discrepancy that can be attributed to differences in cultural context, age group, and the nature of the sample. Consequently, it can be stated that the findings support the theoretical framework of compensatory usage theory and the media effects model; compensatory reliance on digital platforms appears to constitute a psychological risk factor that fuels a continuous cycle of attachment and anxious monitoring, thereby reinforcing—rather than alleviating—the fear of missing out (FOMO).

6.12. General Study Findings

The study yielded several key findings, summarized as follows:

- Algerian users experience FOMO at a moderate level with an upward trend, reflecting the impact of the intensive digital environment and compensatory reliance on their daily lives.
- There are no statistically significant differences in compensatory usage patterns attributable to the age or marital status of Algerian users.
- There is a statistically significant positive correlation between patterns of compensatory social media usage and FOMO among Algerian users; this indicates that compensatory reliance on digital platforms exacerbates anxiety regarding missed interactions and events.
- There is a statistically significant positive correlation regarding the motives for compensatory usage; results show that users turn to social media in various ways to satisfy psychological and social needs—such as the need for belonging, social recognition, escaping stress, and filling a void—which explains the intensity of usage and its impact on FOMO. The strength of the relationship between compensatory usage and FOMO varies depending on usage patterns and motivations; individuals who use platforms compulsively or intensively are more prone to experiencing the fear of missing out.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, it can be stated that the compensatory use of social media is a significant factor contributing to elevated levels of the "Fear of Missing Out" (FOMO) syndrome among Algerian users. The study's findings indicate that individuals who turn to social media to satisfy psychological and social needs—such as the need for belonging, social recognition,

escapism from stress, and the building of virtual relationship networks—are more prone to experiencing anxiety related to missing out on opportunities, events, and virtual interactions. The results also indicated that the strength of the correlation between compensatory usage and FOMO varies according to usage patterns and motives. This confirms that the issue lies not merely in the intensity of usage but is linked to the nature of the motives and the gratifications—both expected and realized—derived from such usage. The study demonstrates that FOMO is not a superficial phenomenon but a complex, dynamic behavior resulting from the interplay of psychological and social variables with an individual's patterns and motives for using social media. This underscores the importance of understanding compensatory usage as a mechanism for explaining the digital environment's impact on the immediate and cumulative behaviors of Algerian users; while a strong correlation exists between the two variables, this does not definitively establish causality, as compensatory usage is not the sole factor influencing FOMO levels. Consequently, the subject requires further in-depth explanatory research to uncover other psychological and social factors associated with this phenomenon—a primary recommendation of this study. Additionally, there is a need to strengthen self-regulation mechanisms and digital literacy initiatives in schools, universities, and across various media and communication channels to raise awareness about the risks of excessive usage and to mitigate the impact of FOMO on the lives of adolescents and young adults.

References:

1. - Al-Nasa'h, M., & Shadid, Y. (2024). *Fear of Missing Out on Social Media Platforms and its relationship to Self-Esteem Adolescents in Jordan*. *Journal of Social Studies Education Research*, 1, pp. 119-148.
2. - Dervaux, A. (2018, November). *Fear Of Missing Out, un critère d'addiction à Internet?* *French Journal of Psychiatry*, 01, p. 106.
3. - Kardefelt, W. A. (2014, February). *Conceptual and Methodological critique of Internet Addiction Research: Towards a model of compensatory Internet use*. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 31, pp. 351-354.
4. - Kemp, S. (2025, March 3). *Digital 2024: Algeria*. Retrieved October 27, 2024, from [datareportal.com: https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-algeria](https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-algeria)
5. - Yali, Z., Sen, L., & Guoliang, Y. (2021). *The relationship between social media use and fear of missing out: A meta-analysis*. *Acta Psychologica Sinica*, 53(03), pp. 273-290.
6. - Asma Bouguern. (June 9, 2012). *asmacommunication: The Uses and Gratifications Approach and the Concept of Influence*. Retrieved August 14, 2022, from blogspot.com: www.asmaabouguernne.blogspot.com/2012/01/blog-post-
7. - Badr Abdullah Al-Suhaim. (February 5, 2021). *Psychological Disorders and Their Relationship to Personality Traits Among Students at the College of Computer Science, Qassim University: A Field Study*. **Academic Journal of Research and Scientific Publishing** (20), pp. 306-328.
8. - Bilal Belhamel & Amel Fassi. (December 2021). *The Most Prevalent Psychological Disorders Among Pupils in the Algerian School Environment from the Perspective of Primary School Teachers: A Field Study in Selected Primary Schools in Setif Province*. **Journal of Humanities, University of Oum El Bouaghi**, 08, pp. 839-861.

9. - Jennifer Dahlas. (2009-2010). *Adolescents and Mobile Phones: Perceptions and Uses—A Study on a Sample of Adolescents in Algiers Province*. Master's Thesis in Information and Communication Sciences, pp. 1-148. University of Algiers 3, Faculty of Political Science and Information.
10. - Hazem Dahi Shehadeh. (June 2014). *The Concept of Adaptation and Adjustment*. *Al-Manal Magazine*: www.almanalmagazine.com/. Retrieved October 27, 2025, from *Al-Manal Magazine*: <https://almanalmagazine.com/%D8%A8/>
11. - Reem Al-Qariwi. (July 14, 2020). *Contributions of the Sociology of Use: A Conceptual-Theoretical Reading*. *Al-Hikma Journal for Media and Communication Studies*, 07(04), pp. 165-185.
12. - Sayyid Muhammad Khairallah. (1990). *Psychological and Educational Research* (Vol. 1). Beirut: Dar Al-Nahda Al-Arabiya for Printing and Publishing.
13. - Abdul Hakim bin Abdullah bin Rashid Al-Sawafi. (2014–2015). *Social Media Usage Among Cycle 2 Basic Education Students in North Al-Sharqiyah Governorate, Sultanate of Oman, and Its Relationship to Certain Variables*. Oman: University of Nizwa, College of Arts and Sciences.
14. - Abdelkader Daif. (June 12, 2020). *Sociology of Uses: Towards a Socio-Technical Approach to Explaining the Diffusion, Use, and Appropriation of Information and Communication Technologies*. *Sociologia Journal* – Algeria, pp. 190–209.
15. - Abdelkader Daif. (June 12, 2020). *Sociology of Uses: Towards a Socio-Technical Approach to Explaining the Diffusion, Use, and Appropriation of Information and Communication Technologies*. *Sociologia Journal*, pp. 190–209.
16. - Manal Abdo Mohamed Mansour & Yasser Mahrous Al-Naghi. (June 2024). *Psychological Effects of FOMO Syndrome and Its Relationship to Excessive Use of Social Media Influencer Pages in Light of the Compensatory Internet Use Theory*. *Journal of Media Research*, Faculty of Mass Communication, 03(71), pp. 1691–1776.
17. - Nasliya Rabahi. (2019–2020). *Motives for Algerian Youth's Use of Social Media Sites: A Survey Study on a Sample of Facebook Users*. Thesis submitted for the Third-Cycle Doctorate degree in Information and Communication Sciences. University of Algiers 3: Faculty of Information and Communication Sciences, Algiers.
18. - Yacine Barkad. (June 4, 2020). "FOMO Syndrome"... A danger threatening social media users! Retrieved October 24, 2025, from Al Jazeera Net: <https://www.aljazeera.net/blogs/2020/6/4/fomo>.