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**Use of social networks in motivation and physical activity levels among untrained
Filipino gen z young adults
Uso de las redes sociales en la motivación y los niveles de actividad física entre
jóvenes adultos filipinos de la Generación Z sin entrenamiento**

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Abstract

Usage of social media is not anymore, a luxury but a need to satisfy the holistic aspect of being an individual. With this, it can affect daily routine such as physical activity, and exercise. The study aims to investigate the predictive capability of social media addiction on physical activity and exercise motivation. The study utilized a quantitative research design with predictive analysis to examine the influence of social media addiction on physical activity levels and exercise motivation. A total of 165 students (female= 82; male= 83) enrolled in a Physical Activity Towards Health and Fitness 1 course at a state university in Region 3, Philippines, were selected through simple random sampling based on set inclusion and exclusion criteria. Data were collected via a Google Form tool containing three validated instruments: the Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS) to assess social media addiction, the International Physical Activity Questionnaire (IPAQ) to measure physical activity in MET units, and the Exercise Motivation Inventory-2 (EMI-2) to evaluate exercise motivation. Ethical clearance (control no. CSER-CRDU-2025-020) was secured prior to data gathering, and responses were analyzed using multiple linear regression in SPSS version 30. Males have descriptively higher levels of physical activity and exercise motivation. As for the females, social media addiction is higher. Also, it was analyzed that social media addiction was not a predictor of physical activity levels and exercise motivation and its subscales. The multiple regression analyses showed low R^2 values across all outcomes (ranging from .000 to .083), indicating that social media addiction explained very little variance in physical activity levels and exercise motivation. All p-values were non-significant ($p > .05$), suggesting that social media addiction did not significantly predict any of the examined variables. These findings suggest that social media may not significantly influence exercise behavior, and therefore, digital minimalism was not recommended in the context of physical activity. Future research should incorporate gender-based comparative and predictive analyses, use objective tools like fitness trackers, and examine platform-specific effects to better understand social media's role in exercise motivation across different groups.

Keywords: social media, exercise motivation, physical activity levels, generation z, young adults

Resumen

El estudio tiene como objetivo investigar la capacidad predictiva de la adicción a las redes sociales sobre la actividad física y la motivación para hacer ejercicio. Se utilizó un diseño de investigación cuantitativo con análisis predictivo para examinar la influencia de la adicción a las redes sociales en los niveles de actividad física y la motivación para ejercitarse. Un total de 165 estudiantes matriculados en el curso de Actividad Física para la Salud y el Fitness 1 en una universidad estatal de la Región 3, Filipinas, fueron seleccionados mediante muestreo aleatorio simple, basado en criterios de inclusión y exclusión previamente establecidos. Los datos se recopilaban a través de un formulario de Google que contenía tres instrumentos validados: la Escala de Adicción a las Redes Sociales de Bergen (BSMAS) para evaluar la adicción a las redes sociales, el Cuestionario Internacional de Actividad Física (IPAQ) para medir la actividad física en unidades MET, y el Inventario de Motivación para el Ejercicio-2 (EMI-2) para evaluar la motivación para

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hacer ejercicio. Se obtuvo la aprobación ética antes de la recopilación de datos, y las respuestas fueron analizadas mediante regresión lineal múltiple utilizando SPSS versión 30. Los resultados descriptivos muestran que los hombres presentan niveles más altos de actividad física y motivación para hacer ejercicio, mientras que las mujeres reportan una mayor adicción a las redes sociales. Además, se analizó que la adicción a las redes sociales no fue un predictor significativo de los niveles de actividad física ni de la motivación para hacer ejercicio y sus subescalas. Estos hallazgos sugieren que las redes sociales pueden no influir significativamente en el comportamiento relacionado con el ejercicio, por lo que no se recomienda el minimalismo digital en el contexto de la actividad física. Se recomienda que futuras investigaciones incorporen análisis predictivos y comparativos basados en el género, utilicen herramientas objetivas como rastreadores de actividad física, y examinen los efectos específicos de cada plataforma para comprender mejor el papel de las redes sociales en la motivación para el ejercicio entre distintos grupos.

Palabras clave: uso de redes sociales, motivación para el ejercicio, niveles de actividad física, generación Z, jóvenes adultos

Introduction

Social media is a broad digital phenomenon that comprises online platforms enabling users to create, share, and exchange content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Within communication studies, it expands traditional mass communication models by empowering individuals to both consume and produce content in interactive environments (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). From a sociological perspective, social media fosters community building, social capital, and cultural as well as political discourse (Putnam, 2000). Psychologically, it influences individual behavior, self-esteem, and social identity through interactive feedback mechanisms (Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012). Among university students, social media has become an integral part of daily life, shaping their academic, social, and physical behaviors, including exercise habits and motivation. In practical applications, businesses utilize social media for branding, customer engagement, and market analysis (Mangold & Faulds, 2009), while politically, it functions as a digital public sphere that facilitates activism, mobilization, and the dissemination of information (Tufekci, 2017). Technologically, it is characterized by networked applications based on Web 2.0 principles that integrate data analytics and personalized user experiences (O'Reilly, 2005). Within the university context, the pervasive use of social media influences students' physical activity patterns, either

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encouraging exercise participation through online fitness communities or contributing to sedentary behaviors due to excessive screen time. Social media plays a crucial role across different fields and industries, including fitness, where it significantly influences exercise motivation and physical activity among collegiate populations.

Motivation is broadly defined as an internal process that stimulates and directs behavior towards achieving a goal. It is derived from the word "motive," referring to needs, desires, or wants within an individual that influence actions (Gurjar, 2022). In psychology, motivation is described as a process that arouses and sustains interest in an activity to achieve a desired goal (Palaming, 2016). It is also seen as the driving force behind human behavior, guiding actions and persistence (Tohidi & Jabbari, 2012). In an organizational context, motivation is considered the willingness to take action based on the expectation of achieving a goal, often driven by intrinsic or extrinsic factors (Shani & Divyapriya, 2011). Furthermore, motivation is linked to biological and psychological needs, which regulate goal-oriented behavior through external and internal stimuli (Simpson & Balsam, 2016). Exercise motivation is multifaceted, as outlined by Kim & Cho (2023), who identified factors such as affiliation, appearance, challenge, competition, enjoyment, health pressures, ill-health avoidance, nimbleness, positive health, revitalization, social recognition, strength and endurance, stress management, and weight management.

Physical activity, defined as any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles requiring energy expenditure, includes walking, cycling, sports, and exercise, contributing to overall health (World Health Organization, 2020). In medicine, it is essential for disease prevention, reducing risks of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and obesity (Booth, Roberts, & Laye, 2012), while also maintaining musculoskeletal strength and metabolic function (Warburton & Bredin, 2017). Exercise science categorizes physical activity into light, moderate, and vigorous intensities (Caspersen, Powell, & Christenson, 1985), emphasizing fitness and athletic performance (American College of Sports Medicine, 2018). In the Philippines, physical activity levels among Filipinos have been a growing concern in recent years. According to the 2019 Expanded National Nutrition Survey by the Food and Nutrition Research Institute, 84.5% of Filipino

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adolescents aged 10–17 were found to be insufficiently active, engaging in less than 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity per day. This inactivity was more pronounced among females (88.8%) compared to males (80.5%), with minimal differences between rural (84.9%) and urban areas (84.3%) (Food and Nutrition Research Institute, 2019). Additionally, a 2023 survey revealed that approximately 50.65% of respondents perceived their lifestyle as balanced between healthy and unhealthy days, while 9.31% considered their health and fitness somewhat unhealthy (Statista, 2023). Furthermore, global data indicates that physical inactivity has risen from 26% to 31% between 2010 and 2022, equating to 1.8 billion people worldwide, with projections suggesting this figure could reach 35% by 2030, posing a significant health risk (PhilStar Life, 2023).

Social media plays a dual role in influencing exercise motivation and physical activity, serving both as a facilitator and a barrier. This paradox aligns with the double-edged sword perspective of this study, which examines the consequences of improper social media usage among untrained Filipino Gen Z young adults. Research indicates that problematic social media use can lead to exercise addiction, where individuals immersed in online fitness culture may develop compulsive exercise behaviors that negatively impact mental well-being (Akbari et al., 2022). Conversely, excessive social media consumption has also been linked to reduced exercise motivation and physical inactivity, as individuals often cite lack of time and motivation due to prolonged screen engagement (Best et al., 2024). Additionally, improper social media usage, such as excessive engagement in fitness-related content that promotes unrealistic body expectations or unhealthy fitness comparisons, has been found to discourage exercise participation due to anxiety and body dissatisfaction (Fardouly et al., 2018). Passive consumption—such as scrolling through fitness posts without actual engagement—does not always translate into increased participation in exercise (Baig et al., 2023). University students, in particular, show varying responses to social media's influence on exercise habits, with some utilizing it as a motivational tool, while others become more sedentary due to excessive engagement (Erbaş & Gümüş, 2020). However, structured participation in social media fitness communities has been found to foster accountability and motivation,

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suggesting that guided engagement in such spaces may help counteract the negative effects of improper social media use (Barnes et al., 2016).

This study aims to examine the influence of inappropriate social media use on exercise motivation and physical activity levels among untrained Generation Z Filipino young adults. The study tests the following hypotheses:

- **H1:** Social media addiction has a significant effect on physical activity levels.
- **H2:** Social media addiction has a significant effect on exercise motivation.

This study provided valuable insights into the dual effects of social media on exercise behaviors and contributed to developing evidence-based recommendations for responsible digital engagement. The findings helped fitness professionals, educators, and health policymakers design targeted interventions to mitigate the negative effects of excessive social media use while maximizing its potential to promote physical activity. Understanding the relationship between social media addiction, exercise motivation, and physical activity levels informed strategies to encourage a healthier balance between digital engagement and physical well-being among young Gen Z adults.

This study focuses on untrained Filipino Gen Z young adults aged 18–24 who actively use social media. It quantifies social media addiction using the BSMAS, measures exercise motivation through EMI-2 and assesses physical activity levels using IPAQ. However, self-reported data may introduce bias, as responses may be influenced by social desirability or recall limitations. Additionally, the study does not account for other external factors influencing physical activity, such as diet, socioeconomic status, environmental conditions, or mental health variables, which may also contribute to exercise behaviors. Despite these limitations, the research aims to provide foundational knowledge on the role of social media in shaping fitness behaviors among young adults.

Methodology

Research Design

The study utilized a quantitative research approach, as the variables were measured using validated and reliable instruments that generate numerical data.

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Additionally, a predictive analysis was conducted to thoroughly investigate the capability of social media addiction to influence both physical activity and exercise motivation.

Sampling and respondents

The study population was completed through the use of simple random sampling. With this, there were 165 students (female= 82; male= 83) selected from a state university in Region 3, Philippines, who were currently enrolled in Physical Activity Towards Health and Fitness 1 course at the time of the academic year 2024-2025, 2nd semester. To ensure the rigor of the sampling process, both inclusion and exclusion criteria were set. For the addition of respondents, a student should be a bona fide student of the state university at the time of the study and currently enrolled in the said course. Secondly, he or she should not have had any experience in formal athletic training. As for the aspect of omission, the students from the other satellite campuses of the state university were not included. Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the respondents. The female participants had a mean age of 19.60 ± 1.52 years, a mean height of 156.90 ± 7.40 cm, and a mean weight of 54.32 ± 13.16 kg. Their mean Body Mass Index (BMI) was 21.98 ± 4.50 . Meanwhile, the male participants had a mean age of 19.60 ± 1.25 years, a mean height of 170.35 ± 8.60 cm, and a mean weight of 63.70 ± 11.49 kg. Their mean BMI was 22.08 ± 4.67 . Considering all participants, the overall mean age was 19.60 ± 1.39 years, the mean height was 163.66 ± 10.47 cm, and the mean weight was 59.04 ± 13.21 kg. The overall mean BMI for the group was 22.03 ± 4.59 .

Table 1. Demographic profile of the respondents

Demographics	Female	Male	All
Age	19.60+1.52	19.60+1.25	19.60+1.39
Height	156.90+7.40	170.35+8.60	163.66+10.47
Weight	54.32+13.16	63.70+11.49	59.04+13.21
Body Mass Index	21.98+4.50	22.08+4.67	22.03+4.59

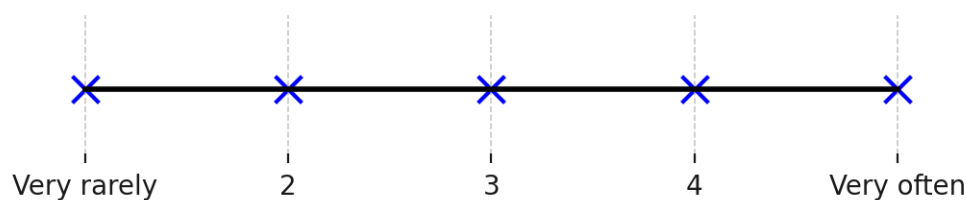
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Research Instrument

Social Media Addiction

The Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS) is a validated instrument developed to measure and assess problems arising from social media usage. It has six components, namely, salience, mood modification, tolerance, withdrawal, conflict, and relapse. The instrument has demonstrated high internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.80 to 0.90, confirming its reliability (Andreassen et al., 2017; Ma et al., 2025). Its construct validity is established by significant correlations with variables such as psychological distress, impulsivity, and other behavioral addictions (Bányai et al., 2017). Its cross-cultural variation has contributed to its psychometric robustness in various languages, such as Greek (Dadiotis et al., 2021), Turkish (Demirci, 2019), Spanish (Copez-Lonzoy et al., 2023), and Korean (Shin, 2022). Figure 1 presents the scoring of the instrument, which uses a 5-point Likert scale based on frequency.

Figure 1. 5-point Likert Scale of Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS)(Andreassen et al., 2017)



Physical Activity level

International Physical Activity Questionnaire (IPAQ)

The International Physical Activity Questionnaire (IPAQ) was used to measure the self-reported weekly physical activity levels of the respondents (Craig et al., 2003). The instrument has established good reliability, with test-retest reliability coefficients ranging from 0.66 to 0.88, displaying consistency in responses over different periods of

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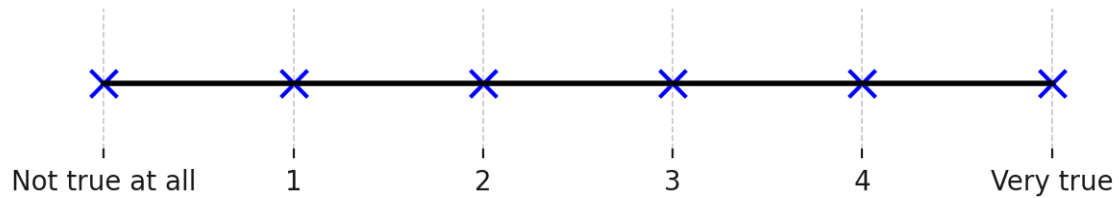
time (Booth, 2000; Craig et al., 2003). As for its validity, it was assessed through comparisons with wearables, such as accelerometer-based measures, showing significant moderate correlations ($r = 0.30\text{--}0.50$), which support its criterion validity (Ekelund et al., 2006). Additionally, it has shown strong construct validity, as it effectively discriminates between low, moderate, and high activity levels across different demographics (Helmerhorst et al., 2012). However, it has limitations, such as overmeasuring vigorous activity, yet it remains a widely recognized and usable tool for epidemiological research and public health monitoring. Metabolic Equivalent Task (MET) was used as the measuring unit in the study to express physical activity levels.

Exercise Motivation

The Exercise Motivation Inventory-2 (EMI-2) is a widely renowned instrument utilized for quantifying the motivation of individuals to engage in physical activity. The inventory consists of 51 items grouped into 14 motivational factors, including both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations for exercise, such as health-related goals, social interactions, weight management, and psychological well-being. In terms of its validity and reliability, it has been thoroughly evaluated, exhibiting strong internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.738 to 0.918, establishing its psychometric robustness (Markland & Ingledew, 1997; Guedes et al., 2012). It was adapted in different cultural contexts, including Brazil (Klain et al., 2015) and Malta (Spiteri et al., 2022). With this, its applicability was reinforced in diverse populations. With its strong psychometric properties, it earns its role as an essential tool for understanding the psychology behind exercise motives. Figure 2 illustrates the scoring system for the inventory, which is based on a Likert scale ranging from 0 to 5, where '0' indicates that the statement is not true at all, and '5' signifies that it is very true for the respondent. Participants are prompted to respond to statements beginning with "I exercise to/because..." in order to assess their underlying motivations for engaging in exercise.

Figure 2. 5-point Likert Scale of Exercise Motivation Inventory-2 (EMI-2)_(Kim and Cho, 2023)

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Data Gathering

The data gathering commenced with ethical clearance from the College of the said state university in Region 3, Philippines, with control number CSER-CRDU-2025-020. The respondents completed a Google Form, which was disseminated randomly. It included a Google Form version of the enumerated research instruments.

Data Analysis

Multiple linear regression analysis was used to explore whether social media addiction has a predictive capability over both physical activity levels and exercise motivation. Lastly, the data was processed with the help of SPSS version 30.

Results

Table 2 presents the physical activity levels of the respondents, categorized by sex. The total Metabolic Equivalent Task (MET) per week for females was 5238.95 ± 3659.63 , for males 6537.25 ± 4121.26 , and for all respondents 5892.04 ± 3952.35 . The total days of activity per week were reported as 9.37 ± 3.45 for females, 10.50 ± 3.62 for males, and 9.92 ± 3.58 for all respondents. Additionally, the self-reported total activity in minutes per week was 409.76 ± 281.08 for females, 493.01 ± 360.13 for males, and 451.64 ± 325.94 for all respondents.

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Table 2. Physical Activity Levels of the Respondents

	Female	Male	All
Total Metabolic Equivalent Task per week	5238.95±3659.63	6537.25±4121.26	5892.04±3952.35
Total Days of Activity	9.37±3.45	10.50±3.62	9.92±3.58
Self-reported Total Activity (min/week)	409.76±281.08	493.01±360.13	451.64±325.94

Table 3 presents the social media addiction levels of the respondents, categorized by gender. The statement "You spend a lot of time thinking about social media or planning how to use it" had a reported mean score of 3.18 ± 1.20 for females, 3.02 ± 1.09 for males, and 3.10 ± 1.15 for all respondents. The statement "You feel an urge to use social media more and more" had mean scores of 3.46 ± 1.12 for females, 3.02 ± 1.05 for males, and 3.24 ± 1.11 overall. The statement "You use social media in order to forget about personal problems" had reported scores of 3.59 ± 1.32 for females, 3.18 ± 1.27 for males, and 3.38 ± 1.31 for all respondents. For the statement "You have tried to cut down on the use of social media without success," the reported means were 2.91 ± 1.07 for females, 2.87 ± 0.95 for males, and 2.89 ± 1.02 for all respondents. The statement "You use social media so much that it has had a negative impact on your job/studies" had a reported mean of 2.73 ± 1.10 for females, 2.69 ± 1.10 for males, and 2.71 ± 1.10 overall. The total social media addiction score was 3.18 ± 1.16 for females, 2.96 ± 0.75 for males, and 3.07 ± 0.83 for all respondents.

Table 3. Social Media Addiction Level of the Respondents

	Female	Male	All
You spend a lot of time thinking about social media or planning how to use it.	3.18±1.20	3.02±1.09	3.10±1.15
You feel an urge to use social media more and more	3.46±1.12	3.02±1.05	3.24±1.11
You use social media in order to forget about personal problems.	3.59±1.32	3.18±1.27	3.38±1.31
You have tried to cut down on the use of social media without success	2.91±1.07	2.87±0.95	2.89±1.02
You use social media so much that it has had a negative impact on your job/studies.	2.73±1.10	2.69±1.10	2.71±1.10
Total Social Media Addiction	3.18±1.16	2.96±0.75	3.07±0.83

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Table 4 presents the exercise motivation levels of the respondents. The stress management motivation had a mean score of 3.37 ± 1.16 for females, 3.46 ± 1.11 for males, and 3.42 ± 1.14 overall. Revitalization was reported at 3.27 ± 1.25 for females, 3.41 ± 1.18 for males, and 3.34 ± 1.22 overall, while enjoyment had means of 3.31 ± 1.29 , 3.05 ± 1.02 , and 3.18 ± 1.17 , respectively. The challenge factor had mean scores of 3.16 ± 1.30 for females, 3.14 ± 1.18 for males, and 3.15 ± 1.24 overall. Social recognition showed mean scores of 2.25 ± 1.36 for females, 3.35 ± 1.07 for males, and 2.81 ± 1.34 overall, while affiliation had reported means of 2.79 ± 1.30 , 3.68 ± 1.16 , and 3.23 ± 1.31 , respectively. Competition had mean scores of 2.27 ± 1.45 for females, 3.13 ± 1.27 for males, and 2.70 ± 1.43 overall, whereas health pressures were rated at 2.36 ± 1.33 , 3.50 ± 1.20 , and 2.93 ± 1.39 , respectively. Positive health was reported at 4.00 ± 1.15 for females, 3.39 ± 1.26 for males, and 3.69 ± 1.24 overall. Weight management had means of 3.35 ± 1.33 for females, 3.85 ± 1.12 for males, and 3.60 ± 1.25 overall, while appearance was rated at 3.39 ± 1.26 , 3.18 ± 1.31 , and 3.29 ± 1.29 , respectively. The strength and endurance factor had mean scores of 3.74 ± 1.16 for females, 3.33 ± 1.23 for males, and 3.54 ± 1.21 overall, while nimbleness was reported at 3.36 ± 1.24 , 3.55 ± 1.19 , and 3.46 ± 1.22 , respectively. Ill-health avoidance had reported means of 3.87 ± 1.20 for females, 2.91 ± 1.43 for males, and 3.38 ± 1.40 overall. The total exercise motivation score was 3.18 ± 0.54 for females, 3.35 ± 0.24 for males, and 3.27 ± 0.28 overall.

Table 4. Exercise Motivation Level of the Respondents

	Female	Male	All
Stress management	3.37±1.16	3.46±1.11	3.42±1.14
Revitalization	3.27±1.25	3.41±1.18	3.34±1.22
Enjoyment	3.31±1.29	3.05±1.02	3.18±1.17
Challenge	3.16±1.30	3.14±1.18	3.15±1.24
Social recognition	2.25±1.36	3.35±1.07	2.81±1.34
Affiliation	2.79±1.30	3.68±1.16	3.23±1.31
Competition	2.27±1.45	3.13±1.27	2.70±1.43
Health pressures	2.36±1.33	3.50±1.20	2.93±1.39
Positive health	4.00±1.15	3.39±1.26	3.69±1.24
Weight management	3.35±1.33	3.85±1.12	3.60±1.25
Appearance	3.39±1.26	3.18±1.31	3.29±1.29
Strength and endurance	3.74±1.16	3.33±1.23	3.54±1.21
Nimbleness	3.36±1.24	3.55±1.19	3.46±1.22
Ill-health avoidance	3.87±1.20	2.91±1.43	3.38±1.40
Total Exercise Motivation	3.18±.54	3.35±.024	3.27±0.28

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Table 5 presents multiple linear regression analyses that were conducted to examine whether social media addiction predicts physical activity levels and exercise motivation among 165 respondents. The results indicated that social media addiction did not significantly predict total metabolic equivalent task (MET), $\beta = -143.06$, $F(1, 163) = 0.15$, $p = .701$, $R^2 = .030$; therefore, H_1 was rejected. Similarly, no significant predictive relationships were found for body-related motivation, $\beta = .118$, $F(1, 163) = 1.14$, $p = .288$, $R^2 = .083$; health-related motivation, $\beta = .108$, $F(1, 163) = 1.08$, $p = .300$, $R^2 = .007$; and interpersonal motivation, $\beta = -.012$, $F(1, 163) = 0.01$, $p = .922$, $R^2 = .000$ —thus, H_2 was rejected for these dimensions. Additionally, social media addiction did not significantly predict fitness-related motivation, $\beta = .123$, $F(1, 163) = 1.27$, $p = .262$, $R^2 = .008$; psychological motivation, $\beta = .125$, $F(1, 163) = 1.46$, $p = .229$, $R^2 = .009$; or total exercise motivation, $\beta = .093$, $F(1, 163) = 0.87$, $p = .354$, $R^2 = .005$. As a result, H_2 was also rejected for these remaining factors. These findings suggest that social media addiction is not a significant predictor of any of the examined components of physical activity or exercise motivation.

Table 5. Predictive Analysis of Social Media Addiction, Physical Activity Level, and Exercise Motivation

Hypothesis		Beta Coefficient	R^2	F	t-value	p-value	Decision
H_1	SMA→MET	-143.06	.030	.148	-.385	.701	Rejected
H_2	SMA→BODY	.118	.083	1.14	1.07	.288	Rejected
H_2	SMA→HEALTH	.108	.007	1.08	1.04	.300	Rejected
H_2	SMA→INTER	-.012	.000	.010	-.099	.922	Rejected
H_2	SMA→FIT	.123	.008	1.27	1.13	.262	Rejected
H_2	SMA→PSYCH	.125	.009	1.46	1.21	.229	Rejected
H_2	SMA→TEM	.093	.005	.865	.930	.354	Rejected

Note. SMA = Social Media Addiction; MET = Metabolic Equivalent Task; BODY = Body-related measures; HEALTH = Health-related; INTER = Interpersonal-related; FIT = Fitness-related; PSYCH = Psychological related; TEM = Total Exercise Motivation.

Discussion

As for the descriptive aspect of the study, it was found that males have higher physical activity levels as measured. This was supported by existing literature. Males are

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generally more likely to meet sufficient physical activity thresholds than females, with higher energy expenditure and greater engagement in physical activity (Todorovic et al., 2019; Durau et al., 2022). They are also more responsive to physical activity-related interactions on social media, which may enhance their activity levels (DeVitis et al., 2020). These differences are often linked to greater intrinsic motivation, higher self-efficacy, and lower susceptibility to body image concerns among males (Wood & Watson, 2023).

As for the level of social media addiction, a different pattern was observed. Females have a higher perceived social media addiction in comparison with their male counterparts. These gender differences are proved by existing literature. Females tend to exhibit higher rates of social media addiction than males, driven by greater emotional investment in online interactions and a stronger tendency to use social media for coping and social connection (Huang et al., 2024; Akbari et al., 2022). They are also more prone to fear of missing out (FoMO) and emotion-based usage, contributing to compulsive patterns (Wood & Watson, 2023). Additionally, females are more vulnerable to the psychological impacts of problematic use, including emotional dependence and avoidance coping, as reflected in the elevated scores observed in this study (Tong et al., 2023).

Lastly, for exercise motivation, males have higher exercise motivation in comparison with females. This was the same observation made by previous literature with a focus on gender discrepancy in exercise motivation. Males consistently show stronger motivation for exercise driven by fitness, competition, and social interaction, leading to more frequent and intense physical activity, while females are often motivated by appearance-related goals and engage less regularly (Espada et al., 2023). Males also score higher in intrinsic motivators like daily energy and physical performance, which support sustained activity (Kubaisy et al., 2015; Molanorouzi et al., 2015). This study confirmed that males had higher physical activity levels and motivation, aligning with literature linking this to greater self-efficacy and engagement (Todorovic et al., 2019; Durau et al., 2022; Kubaisy et al., 2015). Conversely, females reported higher social media addiction, reflecting a stronger emotional reliance on online interactions and coping behaviors

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(Huang et al., 2024; Akbari et al., 2022). These patterns highlight distinct gender-based behavioral tendencies, with males favoring physical activity and females leaning toward digital engagement.

This study found that males demonstrated higher physical activity levels and exercise motivation than females, supported by literature linking this to greater intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, and responsiveness to fitness-related social media content (Todorovic et al., 2019; Durau et al., 2022; DeVitis et al., 2020; Wood & Watson, 2023). In contrast, females showed higher levels of social media addiction, consistent with prior research attributing this to emotional reliance, coping behaviors, and a stronger fear of missing out (Huang et al., 2024; Akbari et al., 2022; Tong et al., 2023). These findings reflect distinct gender-based patterns, with males leaning toward physical activity and females toward digital engagement. It is important to note that scores were descriptively analyzed. With this, a comparative analysis between genders was not included.

Through the use of multiple linear regression, the influence of social media addiction was investigated on physical activity levels and exercise motivation. It was found that social media addiction does not influence subjective physical activity levels and exercise motivation and its categories of subscales such as body-related, health-related, interpersonal-related, fitness-related, and psychological-related exercise motivations. Social media addiction has been linked to reduced physical activity due to time displacement and increased sedentary behavior (Brailovskaia & Margraf, 2020; Sari et al., 2024). It also negatively influences motivational components such as self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation, which are essential for sustained exercise engagement (Lin et al., 2022). Problematic social media use has further been associated with emotional dysregulation and compulsive behaviors that impair body-related and psychological motivation for exercise (Akbari et al., 2022; Minutillo et al., 2024).

This absence of association can be explained by numerous literatures. No significant correlation was found between social media addiction scores and physical activity levels among adolescents, suggesting the two behaviors may operate independently due to varying personal and contextual factors (Wang et al., 2025). Similarly, no meaningful relationship was observed between social media addiction and

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participation in physical activity among university students, indicating that social media use—even when excessive—does not necessarily interfere with one's motivation or behavior toward physical activity (Erbaş & Gümüş, 2020). Indirectly, theories may shed light on this absence. The compensatory internet use theory suggests that individuals use digital platforms, including social media, to cope with offline dissatisfaction or stress, which may not always interfere with or displace other behaviors such as exercise, especially when these serve different psychological needs (Kardefelt-Winther, 2014). Furthermore, self-determination theory posits that intrinsic motivation for physical activity—driven by autonomy, competence, and relatedness—may buffer individuals from the negative behavioral impacts of external influences like excessive social media use (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Users with strong internal motivation may continue engaging in physical activity regardless of their online habits. Additionally, the phenomenon of media multitasking supports the idea that individuals can engage in high social media use while maintaining other lifestyle behaviors, as they do not necessarily compete for the same time or psychological resources.

Despite prior findings linking social media addiction to lower physical activity and motivation, this study found no significant influence, which may be explained by individual differences and theoretical perspectives. Prior research has also shown no consistent relationship (Wang et al., 2025; Erbaş & Gümüş, 2020), and theories such as compensatory internet use, self-determination, and media multitasking suggest that social media use and exercise may fulfill different needs or coexist without interference (Kardefelt-Winther, 2014; Deci & Ryan, 2000). The result of the study implies that social media usage cannot be linked to physical activity levels and exercise motivation of Generation Z college students. This may suggest that excessive social media usage is simply a normalized part of daily life for individuals from this generation, to the point that they view it as a routine that does not affect their physical activity or exercise motivation. Also, based on the study, it is not recommended to limit access to social media while exercising to increase the exercise experience, as it does not show any association with physical activity or motivation.

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Given the limitations identified in the current study, future research should address several areas to deepen understanding of the relationship between social media use, exercise motivation, and physical activity among young adults. To reduce bias from self-reported data, researchers are encouraged to incorporate objective measures of physical activity, such as wearable fitness trackers or mobile health applications. Comparative analyses between genders should also be conducted to determine whether the observed differences are statistically significant, recognizing that males and females may experience different patterns of influence. Additionally, future studies should account for external factors not considered in this study—such as diet, socioeconomic status, environmental conditions, and mental health variables—to provide a more holistic view of contributors to exercise behavior. Investigating the specific impact of different social media platforms, including Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook, would also offer valuable insights, as each platform may uniquely shape user motivation and physical activity patterns. Addressing these areas would strengthen future research and lead to a more comprehensive understanding of how social media influences health behaviors across diverse groups.

Conclusion

Males have descriptively higher levels of physical activity and exercise motivation. As for the females, social media addiction is higher. Also, it was analyzed that social media addiction was not a predictor of physical activity levels and exercise motivation. With this, it may imply that social media does not influence with regard to exercise. Digital minimalism on physical activity was not recommended. Future studies should include gender-based comparative and predictive analyses, utilize objective physical activity measures like fitness trackers, and explore platform-specific influence (e.g., Instagram, TikTok, Facebook) to gain a more specific understanding of how social media use relates to physical activity and exercise motivation across diverse groups.

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