Social Media Effect on Loneliness, Rumination and Social Comparison

Sri Wahyuning Astuti
Faculty of Communication, Telkom University, Indonesia.
E-mail: sriwahyuning@telkomuniversity.ac.id

Yenny
Faculty of Psychology, Mercu Buana University, Indonesia.
E-mail: yenny.puc@mercubuana.ac.id

Yoyoh Hereyah
Faculty of Communication, Mercu Buana University, Indonesia.
E-mail: yoyoh.hereyah@mercubuna.ac.id

Nurhayani Saragih
Faculty of Communication, Mercu Buana University, Indonesia.
E-mail: nurhayani.saragih@mercubuana.ac.id

Indiwan Seto Wahjuwibowo
Faculty of Communication, Multimedia Nusantara University, Indonesia.
E-mail: indiwan@umn.ac.id

Received October 12, 2021; Accepted December 26, 2021
ISSN: 1735-188X

Abstract

The development of social media is increasingly massive, forcing increased interaction from its users. So far, studies on the effect of using social media only refer to one particular social media. This study aims to examine the effect of social media use on loneliness, brooding behavior and social comparison. The research method uses a quantitative approach with samples taken from social media users using google form. The results showed that from 82 respondents, most of them were social media users in the heavy user category. This research also found a positive relationship between the use of social media with loneliness, rumination and social comparison with an R Square value of 0.45 with sig. 0.001. The higher the use of social media, the more people feel lonely, which makes them reflect and make social comparisons.

Keywords

Social Media, Loneliness, Social Comparison, Rumination.
Introduction

Social media and modern society are two things that cannot be separated. Applications used to connect with others consistently have increased the number of users from year to year. Until 2020, social media penetration means that almost 90% of Indonesians who use the internet have social media. Of the 160 million social media users, the highest average is still held by Youtube as 88%, followed by 84%, Facebook 82%, and Instagram 79%. At the same time, Tik Tok is booming, its users only around the number 25% (Agustina, 2020).

UNESCO, in its release, concluded that 4 out of 10 Indonesians are active on social media, such as Facebook, which has 3.3 million users, then WhatsApp with 2.9 million, and third place there is Instagram. Previously, research results from Indonesia both mentioned, the percentage of social media use in rural areas (rural) amounted to 90.18%, while in urban areas (urban), 94.12%. Of these, the most are around the age of 20-29 years (millennial generation), with a gender percentage of 93.68% women and men 92.07% (Anggraeni, 2018).

The emergence of increasingly diverse social media makes social media developers continue to innovate from types and functions. The desire to consistently connect with others, establish relationships, and become a means of public communication, makes social media the primary need of digital media users. Indonesia is ranked the third country with the highest social media users globally, for 3 hours 26 minutes per day (Kemp, 2020). This condition shows that Indonesia’s social media use is far above the average use of social media globally, for 2 hours 24 minutes, or about 144 minutes per day (Miftahurrahmah, 2020).

The high time range in using social media certainly brings several impacts for its users. A report from the University of Pennsylvania, through research entitled No More FOMO: Limiting Social Media, Decreases loneliness, and depression explained that reducing the time of social media use can reduce loneliness and depression. The 143 students reported better moods and higher self-satisfaction when they reduced social media use. These findings confirm that seven indicators arise as a result of excessive use of social media, including fear of missing out, FOMO, anxiety (anxiety), depression (depression), and Loneliness (Loneliness). This repetitive social media checking behavior is based on the Fear of Missing Out, which is a concern if we miss information or thing shared by others (Dempsey et al., 2019).
Individuals become attached to mobile phones to avoid feeling alienated from others and not be left behind by the latest things on social media. To satisfy curiosity, they even raised the notification bell of every social media they have. Not all of their reforms are in the will. Updates or updates that appear lead them to be ostracized because of watching their social media friends do activities without inviting them. This feeling makes them feel excluded. This feeling of isolation and exclusion is commonly referred to as Loneliness (Yenny & Astuti, 2018).

According to the Perlman (1981) Loneliness is an unpleasant experience that is subjective and experienced by a person when their expectations about an interpersonal relationship are not comparable to what is experienced in the real world. The results of the study findings say that loneliness makes a person feel anxious about depression. Feelings of anxiety and depression are often equated with rumination or rumination behavior. Ruminations are discussing problems or thoughts repeated without a solution. People who are depressed are generally ruminations that are done is about unworthy and worthless. Feelings of unworthy, worthlessness, feeling unable to trigger the emergence of anxiety and make depression deepen (Parris et al., 2020).

Although there is not much evidence that a person's ruminations influence loneliness, many studies mention associations between rumination and depression, depression and Facebook use, and depression and loneliness. Ruminations will increase in line with the use of social media. Individuals who lack control over their impulses will tend to overuse social media (Savci & Aysan, 2016). Individuals who used social media for more than 120 minutes per day experienced twice as much social isolation as individuals who used social media for less than 60 minutes per day (Primack, 2017). Other research shows that in individuals who experience loneliness, the motivation to use social media such as Facebook will increase to meet their interaction needs (Guo, 2018). Several studies show a relationship between social media use and rumination (Majid et al., 2020).

The results of the study mentioned there is an influence between Loneliness and Internet addiction. In Indonesia, findings from Oktapiani (2019) mentioned that in students who were respondents to this study, the loneliness they experienced was moderate. Loneliness has a 21.1% influence on internet addiction (Hardika et al., 2019). There are several experts abroad who examine the relationship between social media addiction and loneliness. There is a correlation between Facebook use and loneliness. Shyness and low social support predict the rise of loneliness that encourages Facebook as compensation for their lack of social skills (Miftahunrahmah, 2020).
Not only loneliness but the continuous intensity in accessing social media also causes users to compare their condition with what they witness in cyberspace. Social comparison is the process by which we compare ourselves to others to judge how we are in a particular dimension. The upward comparison, when we compare with others better than ourselves, and the downward comparison, when we compare with others doing worse than ourselves, can be interpreted positively and negatively, resulting in positive and negative influences. Lateral comparison is where we compare with what we see at a similar rate (Putra, 2018).

According to Mussweiler (2011), social comparison or comparing yourself to others automatically appears when looking at the lives of others. Because it is automatic, this behaviour will appear when someone sees someone else's social media platform. Social media users must control their thinking and be wiser in utilizing social media not to become a severe problem (Mussweiler et al., 2011).

Comparing yourself, even though it appears automatically but causes a sense of regret for the perpetrators. Generally, those who compare their lives with others will blame themselves, even regret their fate. Self-comparison is generally very diverse, ranging from physical to social conditions. Social media users usually use self-comparison behaviour, namely, body shape, economic circumstances that can dull envy and the minder (lack of confidence).

Looking at the facts above, the continuous use of social media triggers acceptance of the rumination behaviour of its users and the tendency to compare themselves with other social media users. A number of these behaviours, if left unchecked, will have an impact on mental health. Individuals who grow up feeling lonely and envious will only increasingly withdraw from the social environment. The results of research from Astuti state that a number of psychological disorders arise from prolonged use of social media, ranging from physical to mental. Loneliness, depression to anxiety arise from continuous use of social media. (Astuti et al., 2021).

This study aims to know the use of social media and rumination behaviours and their effect on loneliness and social comparison behaviour. Based on the above theory, the hypotheses in this study are:

H1: Social media use, rumination, and social comparison have a relationship with Loneliness.
H2: Rumination Reflection and social comparison will moderate the relationship between social media use and loneliness.
Method

Study’s design used quantitative survey approaches to examine the relationship between social media use, rumination behavior, and social comparison with loneliness levels. Participants in this study were those who used social media with no age range restrictions. Participants in this study were taken randomly or using random sampling techniques, namely using the help of Google Form. The Intensity Scale of Social Media Use consisted of attention, perception, duration, and frequency to measure the research variables. Using Russell, Peplau, and Ferguson’s UCLA loneliness scale created in 1978 which was later developed and adapted by other researchers.

The scale consists of 20 items in negative statements (leading to feelings of loneliness). The social comparison measuring tool used in the study used the IOWA Scale with 11 items with four answer options from the Strongly Disagreeable to the Strongly Agreed range. As for measuring rumination using Rumination-Reflection, which consists of 20 questions divided into two dimensions.

The scale ranges from 0.865-0.897, which means the measuring instrument is reliable and measures. Research data testing uses normality, linearity, multiple regression tests for major hypotheses, Karl Pearson's product-moment correlation for minor hypotheses, and descriptive statistical tests to see each variable's effective categorization and contribution. Data analysis is done with the help of the SPSS series 26.0 computer program for windows.

Results and Discussions

Based on the results of statistical calculations, the demographic picture of the respondents is mostly of productive age, namely active social media users. The use of social media used is in the heavy user category, namely using social media more than 5 hours per day. an overview of the use of social media is described in table 1 below.

Table 1 below shows the Means and Standard Deviations for the study variables. A wide range of ages participated in the study. The average time spent on media social was just over an hour.

Table 2 below shows the bivariate correlations. Loneliness shows a significant association with rumination, depression, two social comparison variables (the tendency to compare socially and Upward comparison), and passive Facebook use.
Table 1 Means, Standard deviation and range

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1.021</td>
<td>16-45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time on social Media</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>10-300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensity of Social Media Use</td>
<td>64.3780</td>
<td>12.79529</td>
<td>21-97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loneliness</td>
<td>55.1341</td>
<td>10.599</td>
<td>34-77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rumination-Reflection</td>
<td>88.53</td>
<td>13.477</td>
<td>52-119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Comparison</td>
<td>34.3902</td>
<td>8.97</td>
<td>15-55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: statistical calculations by researchers

Table 2 Matrix Correlation Variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>ISMU</th>
<th>RR</th>
<th>SC</th>
<th>L</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intensity of Social Media Use</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.249</td>
<td>.588</td>
<td>-.230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rumination-Reflection</td>
<td>.249</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.124</td>
<td>.400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Comparison</td>
<td>.588</td>
<td>.124</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-.258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loneliness</td>
<td>-.230</td>
<td>-.400</td>
<td>1.258</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: statistical calculations by researchers

The correlation test results showed that the intensity of social media use was positively correlated with rumination reflection behaviour and social comparison but negatively correlated with loneliness.

Table 3 Regression for loneliness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>beta</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intensity of Social Media Use</td>
<td>-.016</td>
<td>.106</td>
<td>-.019</td>
<td>-.147</td>
<td>.883</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rumination-Reflection</td>
<td>-.291</td>
<td>.082</td>
<td>-.370</td>
<td>-3.551</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Comparison</td>
<td>-.238</td>
<td>.148</td>
<td>-.201</td>
<td>-1.610</td>
<td>.111</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: statistical calculations by researchers

Table 3 below presents regression results for loneliness. The latter model accounted for 45.2% of the variance and showed that social comparison and rumination had a significant association with Loneliness (F (6.681) 20.92, p <.000), in part supporting Hypothesis 1. However, the intensity of social media use was not significantly associated with loneliness. The intensity of social media use correlates with rumination behaviour and social comparison.

Table 4 Regression Variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>The intensity of Social Media Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loneliness</td>
<td>.230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Comparison</td>
<td>.588</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rumination-Reflection</td>
<td>.249</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Need to consistently connect with others without any restrictions on time, making social media an alternative solution. Amid the increasingly popular development of social media, almost all smartphone users use social media. The average person has more than four social media, with the frequency of opening social media as much as seven times per day. For one social media open, generally, respondents spend up to 15-30 minutes, which means that more than 3 hours active social media users with their accounts in a day.

The high intensity of using social media certainly has consequences for its users. Aside from time wasted, those with social media also experience behavioural changes. Physically, many complaints are reported, ranging from eyes that often hurt to hands that feel sore because they continue to use smartphones (Yenny. & Astuti, 2018)

The choice and reason people use social media in whatever form certainly has its consequences, namely the impact on the use of social media. Every social media has its usage effect characteristics. A survey released by the Royal Society for Public Health said that Youtube became the highest social media in providing nutritional content. The survey of 1479 teenagers also found Instagram to be the worst social media for mental (Laila Meiliyandrie Indah Wardina & Sri Wahyuning Astuti, 2019)

The mental health of Instagram users reportedly deteriorated because they were getting psychological pressure from their accounts (Astuti et al., 2021). The appearance of anxiety, reduced sleep time, depression to get the bullying become some of the symptoms that appear in addition to feelings of FOMO (phobia of missing the news on social networks). These physical and mental complaints increase depression, anxiety, and this condition is in line with the findings of this study that the use of social media in a long way affects loneliness and the social comparison of its users.

Despite being connected continuously online, social media users feel lonely in the course of their lives. Friends in the virtual world are only present at certain times and without physical attachment; as a result, despite having very close friends in social media, they still feel lonely. This condition is because the social relationships that occur are only virtual, without interaction and physical contact. This loneliness occurs because of a discrepancy between desired and received from a social relationship (Quinn, 2016).

The results show a link between media use and loneliness, in line with previous research by Perlman that said late teens spend most of their time alone and tend to feel lonely. Individuals who will enter into adulthood are faced with a new life, such as finding a new
environment at work and college and social mobilization to tend to experience Loneliness (Schuller & Batliner, 2013).

A loneliness that is continuously felt by individuals based on some experts' findings is considered the originator of depression. There is a close relationship between loneliness that arises with depression experienced by a person. Rumination or rumination is one of the similarities between anxiety and depression. Reflecting only repeatedly discusses a thought or problem without a solution. When people are depressed, the theme of rumination is usually about being unworthy or worthless. Repetition and feelings of being unable to increase anxiety and anxiety interfere with problem-solving, thus making depression deeper (Attrill, 2015).

The findings of this study explain that there is a relationship between the intensity of social media use and rumination. Generally, those who use social media in heavy categories tend to reflect on their condition. This behaviour arises because of what they see, watch and watch on social media that they use every day. Rumination generally appears and considers itself useless, unsuccessful, and unlike what is witnessed on social media. Those who tend to reflect only dwell on reflecting alone without thinking about getting a solution from their contemplation.

Rumination will increase in line with the use of social media. Individuals who lack control over their impulses will tend to overuse social media (Savci & Aysan, 2016). Individuals who used social media for more than 120 minutes per day experienced twice as much social isolation as individuals who used social media for less than 60 minutes per day (Primack, 2017). This feeling of isolation that makes them lonely is what finally triggers a person to reflect.

Rumination is usually done, usually reflecting or constantly remembering bitter memories. Social media is considered a Trigger or a trigger for someone to remember these bitter memories. According to Susan Nolen-Hoeksema, when someone is doing contemplation, there is a process of response style that is a maladaptive self-reflection because it produces a new view that increases or extends the duration of stress to one's depression. This process goes through three stages. First, rumination will make a person constantly think about the bitter past to trigger feelings of distress. Second, rumination hinders a person's ability to solve problems effectively. Instead, they often think pessimistically and fatalistically. Third, rumination will later interfere with a person's instrumental behaviour to a depressive stage.
The continuous rumination behaviour makes social media users also compare their condition with what they witness in cyberspace. Based on the findings above, daily activities that are almost more than 4 hours using social media make users equate with what is seen and witnessed on social media.

According to Mussweiler (2011), social comparison or comparing yourself to others automatically appears when looking at the lives of others. Because it is automatic, this behaviour will appear when someone sees someone else's social media platform. To not become a severe problem, social media users must control their thinking and be wiser in utilizing social media (Mussweiler et al., 2011).

Comparing yourself, even though it appears automatically but causes a sense of regret for the perpetrators. Generally, those who do their life compared with others will blame themselves, even regret their fate. Self-comparison is generally very diverse, ranging from physical to social conditions. Social media users usually use self-comparison behaviour, namely, body shape, economic circumstances that dull envy, and the minder (lack of confidence).

Loneliness, rumination, and social comparisons that arise from social media are logical consequences found in a digital society. The boundary between real and virtual space is getting thinner, making social media users almost unable to tell the two apart. What appears in social media becomes a reference material in the real world, but not necessarily what is seen in cyberspace is the objective reality. In addition, the anonymous nature of cyberspace makes the friendship that occurs pseudo-. It is indistinguishable which friendship is real or only pretend. The ease of changing accounts when feeling uncomfortable in a friendship, making social bonds between fellow users weak; this condition certainly causes the need for social relations that do not occur, thus causing loneliness (Astuti, 2020).

Loneliness, rumination, and social comparison are among the many negative impacts that arise from social media. However, an active audience that can choose social media can decide to access or not social media. One of the things that can be done to reduce the negative impact of social media use is to detox social media, namely only choosing social media that is needed and has a time limit on the use of social media (Astuti & Subandiah, 2020).

**Conclusion**

Social media use has a positive relationship with loneliness and social comparisons made by its users. This is because the intensity of use is relatively high, more than 3 hours a day.
The high time in using social media makes users make social comparisons with what is seen and witnessed on social media. The loneliness that arises because of friendships that occur in cyberspace is pseudo and has no real attachment.

Limitation and Study Forward

This study only discusses the use of social media with loneliness, rumination and social comparison. The main motive and quality of life of the subjects were not included in this study. Therefore, for further research, there is no harm in including the motives for using social media and the subject's quality of life.

Acknowledgements

This research paper would not have been appropriately completed without the support of all parties, especially Mercu Buana University.

References


http://indonesiabaik.id/infografis/pengguna-media-sosial-di-indonesia-19


Dempsey, A.E., O’Brien, K.D., Tiamiyu, M.F., & Elhai, J.D. (2019). Fear of missing out (FoMO) and rumination mediate relations between social anxiety and problematic Facebook use. Addictive Behaviors Reports, 9, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.abrep.2018.100150


