

Impact of Social Media Usage on Psychological Well-Being of State University Students in Sri Lanka

H.I Harshani¹ and T.U.S. Senarath^{2,*}

Department of Information Systems, Faculty of Management Studies,
Rajarata University of Sri Lanka, Mihintale, Sri Lanka^{1,2}

*Corresponding author: udesesh.senarat@mgt.rjt.ac.lk

Abstract

Social media has become an integral part of students' lives, significantly influencing their psychological well-being. This study examines the impact of social media usage on the psychological well-being of students in state universities in Sri Lanka. Despite global research, there is a lack of empirical evidence on how social media use impacts the psychological well-being of state university students in Sri Lanka, particularly since this group faces unique academic and cultural pressures. Addressing this gap, the current study uses a conceptual framework that focuses on four key variables: *highlight reel*, *social currency*, *fear of missing out (FOMO)*, and *addiction*. It further investigates whether *privacy* concerns can moderate the negative effects of these variables. The objective of this study is to identify the impact of social media usage on the psychological well-being of state university students in Sri Lanka. This study followed a deductive, explanatory, and quantitative research approach; data were collected from a sample of 384 students across 17 state universities using stratified random sampling and a structured questionnaire. Data were analysed using SPSS. The findings reveal that highlight reel, social currency, FOMO, and addiction negatively affect psychological well-being. However, the moderation analysis shows that higher levels of privacy concern can alleviate the adverse effects of certain social media behaviours. The results indicate that the impact of social media on well-being is complex, offering both potential benefits and risks, depending on students' awareness and engagement levels. This study offers important insights for educators, policymakers, and mental health professionals seeking to design effective digital literacy initiatives and well-being support strategies for students in a hyper-connected world.

Keywords: addiction, fear of missing out, highlight reel, psychological well-being, social currency