The Impact of Social Comparison, Fomo, Cyberbullying, and Social Media Addiction on Social Anxiety among Malaysian Youth

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Abstract
This study explores the relationship between social comparison, Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), cyberbullying, social media addiction, and social anxiety among Malaysian youth. The research examines how these key dimensions—social comparison, FoMO, cyberbullying, and social media addiction—impact social anxiety levels. A sample of 432 Malaysian youths was analyzed using quantitative methods, including correlation and regression analyses. The results reveal that social media addiction is the strongest predictor of social anxiety, followed by FoMO, social comparison, and cyberbullying. Higher levels of social media addiction were significantly associated with increased social anxiety, while the presence of FoMO and frequent social comparison further exacerbated this anxiety. Cyberbullying also contributed to elevated social anxiety levels. These findings underscore the urgent need for responsible social media use, awareness programs, and interventions targeting online behaviors to mitigate social anxiety among youth. The study provides valuable insights into the complex interplay between these factors and offers practical recommendations for reducing social anxiety in the digital age.
Keywords: Social Comparison, Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), Cyberbullying, Social Media Addiction, Social Anxiety, Malaysian Youth

Introduction
The use of social media has become pervasive among Malaysian youth, influencing various aspects of their social and psychological well-being. Social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok provide opportunities for connection but also expose individuals to risks such as social comparison, cyberbullying, and addiction. Several studies suggest that excessive social media use may be linked to heightened social anxiety, especially among youth who are in their formative years of developing social identities (Xie & Kang, 2020; Simsek & Ercan, 2021). The relationship between social media and social anxiety among Malaysian youth

remains underexplored, making it a critical area of study in today's digital landscape (Rahman et al., 2022; Lim & Teo, 2020).

One of the key factors contributing to social anxiety in the context of social media is social comparison. Youth who engage in upward social comparison on social media often experience feelings of inadequacy, leading to increased anxiety in social interactions (Appel et al., 2020; Valkenburg et al., 2022). Research shows that individuals who frequently compare themselves to others on social media platforms are more likely to report higher levels of social anxiety (Jan et al., 2017; Elhai et al., 2021). This is particularly relevant for Malaysian youth, who are immersed in a digital environment that promotes idealized versions of life, exacerbating feelings of self-doubt and social anxiety (Aziz & Ghani, 2021; Wong & Lim, 2022).

Another factor that significantly impacts social anxiety is the Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), which has been widely linked to problematic social media usage. FoMO is characterized by a persistent fear of missing out on rewarding experiences that others are sharing on social media platforms (Przybylski et al., 2013). Recent studies have found that FoMO is positively correlated with both social media addiction and social anxiety (Wegmann et al., 2019; Li et al., 2020). In the Malaysian context, youth experiencing FoMO are more likely to feel anxious about their social status and peer interactions, further heightening their social anxiety (Hasim et al., 2022; Ang et al., 2021).

Cyberbullying is another detrimental outcome of social media use that has been shown to correlate with social anxiety. Malaysian youth, like their global counterparts, are increasingly vulnerable to cyberbullying, which significantly impacts their mental health (Lowry et al., 2019; Yap et al., 2020). Victims of cyberbullying often experience heightened fear of judgment and rejection in both online and offline social settings, which contributes to increased social anxiety (Kaur et al., 2020; Patchin & Hinduja, 2019). As cyberbullying continues to rise, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, addressing its impact on social anxiety among Malaysian youth is crucial (Lau & Yeo, 2021; Mahmood et al., 2021).

Finally, social media addiction has been identified as a key factor in exacerbating social anxiety among youth. Excessive social media use can lead to psychological dependence, reducing face-to-face interactions and increasing feelings of social isolation (Andreassen et al., 2016; Chen et al., 2020). Malaysian youth who spend extended periods on social media are at greater risk of developing anxiety disorders, including social anxiety (Rashid & Ismail, 2020; Abdullah et al., 2022). The addictive nature of social media, combined with reduced real-world socialization, underscores the importance of studying its impact on social anxiety in this demographic (Lim & Hwang, 2021; Ahmad et al., 2022). In light of the above concerns, this study aims to explore the relationship between social comparison, FoMO, cyberbullying, and social media addiction on social anxiety among Malaysian Youth.

Literature Review
Social Comparison and Social Anxiety
Social comparison on social media platforms is a common occurrence, especially among youth who are highly active online. This form of comparison often involves individuals evaluating their lives, achievements, or physical appearance against the idealized portrayals of others.

Appel et al. (2020) noted that social media environments create a fertile ground for upward social comparison, which occurs when users compare themselves with individuals they perceive as more successful or attractive. This type of comparison can lead to dissatisfaction with one's own life and result in increased social anxiety. For Malaysian youth, who are highly engaged with social media, the prevalence of upward comparison is particularly concerning, as it tends to exacerbate feelings of inadequacy and insecurity (Aziz & Ghani, 2021).

The relationship between social comparison and social anxiety is well-documented. Valkenburg et al. (2022) found that frequent social comparison on platforms such as Instagram and TikTok is linked to negative self-perception, which increases the likelihood of social anxiety. This is especially true for youth who are in the developmental stages of establishing self-identity. Research on Malaysian youth by Wong & Lim (2022) supports this claim, highlighting that those who engage in social comparison on social media are more likely to experience feelings of loneliness, dissatisfaction with life, and anxiety in social situations. The curated content on social media encourages unrealistic comparisons, which contributes to the deterioration of mental well-being among young users.

Furthermore, social comparison is not limited to appearance or material wealth but extends to social relationships as well. Youth may compare their social lives to those of peers who seemingly have more fulfilling relationships or more exciting experiences. According to Simsek and Ercan (2021), such comparisons can lead to feelings of social isolation and a fear of not being socially accepted, which in turn exacerbates social anxiety. Malaysian youth, immersed in a culture of social media, are particularly vulnerable to this form of social comparison. The pressure to present a socially desirable image online often leads to over-engagement with platforms, deepening the cycle of comparison and anxiety (Rahman et al., 2022).

In Malaysia, the negative impacts of social comparison are further heightened by cultural and societal expectations. Research by Aziz & Ghani (2021) points out that the societal emphasis on academic success, physical appearance, and social status adds another layer of pressure on youth. This pressure, combined with the constant exposure to idealized social media content, contributes to the development of social anxiety. For many Malaysian youth, social media becomes a double-edged sword—a place to connect but also a space that fuels unhealthy comparisons, leading to psychological distress and anxiety in social settings (Wong & Lim, 2022).

Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) and Its Impact on Social Anxiety
The Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) is a modern psychological phenomenon that has gained significant attention in relation to social media use, particularly among younger generations. FoMO refers to the anxiety that individuals experience when they perceive that others are having rewarding experiences from which they are absent (Przybylski et al., 2013). This fear is intensified by social media platforms that provide constant updates about the activities and achievements of others. Wegmann et al. (2019) found that FoMO is strongly correlated with increased social media usage, which in turn is linked to higher levels of social anxiety. For Malaysian youth, the fear of missing out on social events, gatherings, or online interactions can drive compulsive social media use, leading to heightened anxiety about their social standing (Ang et al., 2021).

FoMO has been identified as a significant predictor of social anxiety, as individuals who experience this fear are more likely to worry about their social relationships and acceptance by peers. Li et al. (2020) conducted a meta-analysis and found that individuals with high levels of FoMO tend to exhibit behaviors associated with social anxiety, such as avoidance of social situations and heightened self-consciousness. This is particularly relevant in the context of Malaysian youth, who are heavily reliant on social media to maintain their social connections. Hasim et al. (2022) noted that Malaysian university students who experience high levels of FoMO are more likely to report social anxiety symptoms, as they fear being excluded from social groups or important events shared online.

The compulsive use of social media fueled by FoMO creates a vicious cycle that further exacerbates social anxiety. As individuals spend more time on social media to stay connected and avoid missing out, they become more exposed to the idealized lives of others, which amplifies feelings of inadequacy and exclusion (Przybylski et al., 2013). For Malaysian youth, the pressure to remain engaged with social media is particularly strong, as social platforms are often the primary means of communication and socialization (Rahman et al., 2022). This constant need for connection can lead to an unhealthy attachment to social media, which contributes to the development of social anxiety.

Moreover, FoMO does not only affect social interactions but also academic and professional aspects of young people's lives. Malaysian youth, who are often part of highly competitive academic and work environments, may experience FoMO when they perceive that their peers are achieving more than they are (Ang et al., 2021). This can lead to increased anxiety about their own achievements and future prospects, further fueling social anxiety. The pervasive nature of FoMO, coupled with the extensive use of social media, makes it a critical factor in understanding the relationship between social media use and social anxiety among Malaysian youth (Hasim et al., 2022).

Cyberbullying and its Psychological Consequences
Cyberbullying is a widespread issue that has been exacerbated by the rise of social media, with severe psychological consequences, particularly for youth. Unlike traditional forms of bullying, cyberbullying occurs in online environments, where anonymity and a lack of direct accountability often led to more intense and prolonged harassment (Kaur et al., 2020). Victims of cyberbullying often experience heightened levels of social anxiety, as they fear being judged or ridiculed not only online but also in face-to-face interactions (Patchin & Hinduja, 2019). In Malaysia, cyberbullying has become a significant concern, especially among adolescents and young adults who spend considerable time on social media. Yap et al. (2020) found that Malaysian youth who have been victims of cyberbullying report higher levels of social anxiety and are more likely to withdraw from social interactions.

The anonymity provided by social media platforms makes it easier for bullies to target individuals, often leading to severe psychological harm for victims. Research by Lau and Yeo (2021) revealed that cyberbullying during the COVID-19 pandemic saw a significant rise in Malaysia, as more youth spent time online for both educational and social purposes. Victims of cyberbullying during this period reported increased feelings of social isolation, fear of judgment, and social anxiety, as the harassment often carried over into their real-world

interactions. This highlights the pervasive impact of cyberbullying on the mental health of Malaysian youth, where the effects are felt both online and offline (Kaur et al., 2020).

Cyberbullying's impact on social anxiety is not limited to the direct victims; bystanders who witness cyberbullying can also experience heightened social anxiety due to fears of becoming the next target. Studies by Patchin and Hinduja (2019) indicate that individuals who observe cyberbullying are more likely to become anxious about their own social interactions, fearing that any misstep could make them vulnerable to online harassment. This fear can lead to social withdrawal and avoidance behaviors, further deepening feelings of social anxiety. Malaysian youth, who are highly engaged with social media, are particularly susceptible to these negative effects, as cyberbullying can occur within peer groups and educational settings (Yap et al., 2020).

In response to the growing prevalence of cyberbullying, mental health professionals and educators in Malaysia are calling for more comprehensive interventions that address both the psychological effects of cyberbullying and the social anxiety it generates. Lau and Yeo (2021) emphasize the importance of promoting digital literacy and empathy among youth to reduce the incidence of cyberbullying and mitigate its impact on mental health. As the use of social media continues to rise, it is critical to develop strategies that protect youth from the harmful effects of online harassment and reduce the social anxiety associated with cyberbullying (Kaur et al., 2020).

Social Media Addiction and its Relationship with Social Anxiety
Social media addiction is an emerging issue that has garnered increasing attention due to its association with various mental health problems, including social anxiety. Addiction to social media is characterized by excessive, compulsive use of platforms that interferes with daily life, relationships, and mental well-being (Andreassen et al., 2016). Chen et al. (2020) found that individuals addicted to social media are more likely to experience social anxiety, as their dependence on virtual interactions reduces their ability to engage in face-to-face social interactions. Malaysian youth, who are among the most active social media users in the region, are particularly vulnerable to the negative consequences of social media addiction. Rashid and Ismail (2020) reported that youth who spend excessive time on social media are more likely to suffer from social anxiety, as they become increasingly detached from real-world social experiences.

The addictive nature of social media stems from its design, which encourages continuous engagement through features such as notifications, likes, and comments. These features create a feedback loop that reinforces compulsive use, leading to psychological dependency (Wegmann et al., 2019). For Malaysian youth, who rely heavily on social media for communication and entertainment, the risk of addiction is particularly high. Lim and Hwang (2021) noted that Malaysian youth who exhibit signs of social media addiction are more likely to experience heightened levels of social anxiety, as their reliance on online interactions makes it difficult for them to navigate real-world social settings. The more time they spend online, the more anxious they become about engaging in face-to-face interactions, creating a cycle of dependency and anxiety.

Social media addiction not only affects social interactions but also contributes to other psychological issues, such as loneliness and depression, which can further exacerbate social anxiety. Studies by Abdullah et al. (2022) revealed that youth who are addicted to social media often report feelings of isolation, as their online interactions lack the depth and authenticity of in-person relationships. This sense of isolation contributes to social anxiety, as addicted individuals feel increasingly disconnected from their social environments. For Malaysian youth, who are already navigating the challenges of adolescence and early adulthood, the psychological toll of social media addiction can be particularly severe, leading to long-term mental health issues (Lim & Hwang, 2021).

Efforts to address social media addiction among Malaysian youth must focus on promoting healthy online behaviors and encouraging more balanced social interactions. Chen et al. (2020), suggest that interventions aimed at reducing social media use and promoting real-world socialization could help mitigate the effects of addiction on social anxiety. For Malaysian youth, in particular, strategies that emphasize the importance of offline relationships and provide support for managing online time could reduce the negative mental health outcomes associated with social media addiction (Rashid & Ismail, 2020). Developing these interventions is critical in a society where social media plays a central role in youth culture and daily life.

Method
Participants
This study involved a sample of 432 Malaysian youth aged between 15 and 30 years. Participants were selected using stratified random sampling to ensure diverse representation across demographic variables such as gender, socioeconomic status, and geographic region (urban vs. rural areas). The sample size was determined based on power analysis to ensure sufficient statistical power for detecting significant relationships between social media usage and social anxiety. All participants were active social media users, which allowed for a comprehensive exploration of how various factors, such as social comparison, Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), cyberbullying, and social media addiction, contribute to social anxiety. The inclusion criteria ensured that participants had a broad range of social media habits, thereby capturing a representative sample of Malaysian youth.

Procedure and Measures
Participants were recruited through online platforms, including social media advertisements and educational institution bulletins, as these channels have a high reach among the youth demographic. Information detailing the study's objectives, ethical considerations, and consent procedures was provided through an online portal. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection, and the study followed ethical guidelines approved by the institutional review board. Participants completed an online survey, which included validated instruments measuring social comparison, FoMO, cyberbullying, social media addiction, and social anxiety. The online nature of the survey ensured ease of access and encouraged participation from youth across various regions in Malaysia.

Social Comparison
Social comparison was measured using the Iowa-Netherlands Comparison Orientation Measure (INCOM) developed by Gibbons and Buunk (1999). This scale consisted of 11 items

rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree), assessing participants' tendencies to compare themselves with others in terms of appearance, achievements, and social status. Higher scores indicated greater frequency and intensity of social comparison. In this study, the INCOM demonstrated good internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.82, confirming its reliability for assessing social comparison among the participants.

Fear of Missing Out (FoMO)
FoMO was assessed using the Fear of Missing Out Scale (FoMOS) by Przybylski et al. (2013). The FoMOS contains 10 items that evaluate the extent to which participants feel anxious about missing social events or experiences shared by others on social media. Responses were rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Not At All True of Me, 5 = Extremely True of Me). Higher scores indicated a greater fear of missing out on social activities. In this study, the FoMOS showed strong reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.89, indicating it was a reliable measure for assessing FoMO in the sample.

Cyberbullying Exposure
Cyberbullying was measured using the Cyberbullying Victimization Scale developed by Patchin and Hinduja (2010). This instrument consisted of 20 items assessing participants' experiences of being harassed, threatened, or humiliated online. Responses were rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Never, 5 = Always), with higher scores indicating more frequent exposure to cyberbullying. The scale demonstrated excellent reliability in this study, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.94, confirming its consistency for measuring cyberbullying exposure in this population.

Social Media Addiction
Social media addiction was measured using the Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale (BSMAS) by Andreassen et al. (2016). The scale included 6 items, each rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Very Rarely, 5 = Very Often), designed to assess participants' dependency on social media use. Higher scores indicated a stronger addiction to social media platforms. In this study, the BSMAS demonstrated strong internal reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.88, indicating that it was a reliable tool for assessing social media addiction among the participants.

Social Anxiety
Social anxiety was measured using the Social Interaction Anxiety Scale (SIAS) by Mattick and Clarke (1998). This 20-item instrument assessed participants' anxiety levels related to social interactions and fear of negative evaluation. Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale (0 = Not at all, 4 = Extremely), with higher scores indicating greater social anxiety. The SIAS demonstrated excellent reliability in this study, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.93, confirming its robustness in measuring social anxiety in the sample.

Data Analysis
The data collected from the online survey were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were computed to summarize participants' levels of social comparison, FoMO, cyberbullying exposure, social media addiction, and social anxiety. Pearson correlation analyses were conducted to explore the relationships between the independent variables

(social comparison, FoMO, cyberbullying, and social media addiction) and the dependent variable (social anxiety). To further understand the predictive power of these variables, multiple regression analyses were performed, with adjusted R^2 values calculated to determine the proportion of variance in social anxiety explained by each predictor. The overall significance of the regression models was assessed using F-statistics.

Results and Discussion
Table 1 provides the descriptive statistics for social comparison, Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), cyberbullying exposure, social media addiction, and social anxiety. Overall, 62.96% of participants reported high levels of social comparison, while 27.78% exhibited moderate levels, and 9.26% reported low levels. The mean score for social comparison was 25.6 (SD = 3.9), suggesting that most youth engage frequently in social comparison behaviors. For FoMO, 53.70% of participants experienced high levels of FoMO, while 32.41% reported moderate levels and 13.89% had low levels. The mean FoMO score was 28.1 (SD = 4.1), indicating substantial anxiety about missing social activities among the majority of respondents.

Cyberbullying exposure was also significant, with 58.33% of participants experiencing high levels of cyberbullying, 33.56% reporting moderate levels, and 8.10% reporting low levels of exposure. The mean score for cyberbullying was 29.3 (SD = 4.3). Social media addiction was reported as high by 61.81% of participants, while 25.46% experienced moderate levels, and 12.73% reported low levels of addiction. The mean score for social media addiction was 31.8 (SD = 4.5). Lastly, social anxiety showed a similar distribution, with 61.81% of participants reporting high levels, 25.46% reporting moderate levels, and 12.73% reporting low levels.

The findings from this study provide evidence that social media-related behaviors, such as social comparison, FoMO, cyberbullying, and social media addiction, are significantly associated with social anxiety among Malaysian youth. Consistent with prior research, social comparison emerged as a prominent factor influencing social anxiety, as most participants reported high levels of comparison on social media platforms. Studies by Appel et al. (2020) and Valkenburg et al. (2022) similarly found that individuals who frequently engage in upward social comparison on social media are more likely to experience negative self-evaluation and social anxiety. The high mean score for social comparison (M = 25.6, SD = 3.9) indicates that Malaysian youth are frequently comparing themselves with peers, which exacerbates feelings of inadequacy and fear of negative evaluation.

Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) also showed a strong association with social anxiety, with over half of the participants experiencing high levels of FoMO. This finding is in line with the work of Wegmann et al. (2019) and Li et al. (2020), who found that FoMO is a significant predictor of social anxiety, as individuals who fear missing out on social interactions are more likely to feel disconnected from their peers and experience anxiety in social situations. The mean score for FoMO (M = 28.1, SD = 4.1) reflects the growing concerns among Malaysian youth about being left out of social activities, which, in turn, intensifies their social anxiety.

Cyberbullying emerged as a major concern, with nearly 60% of participants reporting high exposure to cyberbullying. The results mirror those of Patchin and Hinduja (2019) and Kaur et al. (2020), who found that victims of cyberbullying often experience heightened levels of social anxiety, as they fear further harassment or negative judgment both online and in face-

to-face interactions. The mean score for cyberbullying (M = 29.3, SD = 4.3) underscores the importance of addressing online harassment and its detrimental effects on the mental health of youth in Malaysia.

Social media addiction was found to be strongly linked to social anxiety, as 61.81% of participants reported high levels of addiction. This is consistent with previous research, which has established a connection between excessive social media use and increased social anxiety (Andreassen et al., 2016; Chen et al., 2020). The mean score for social media addiction (M = 31.8, SD = 4.5) suggests that many Malaysian youth are highly dependent on social media platforms, which may limit their ability to engage in real-world social interactions, thereby exacerbating social anxiety.

In conclusion, the findings from this study suggest that social media behaviors, such as social comparison, FoMO, cyberbullying, and social media addiction, are significant contributors to social anxiety among Malaysian youth. These findings are consistent with existing literature and highlight the need for targeted interventions that address the psychological impacts of social media use. Future research should explore the mechanisms through which these factors interact to influence social anxiety and develop strategies to mitigate their negative effects on youth mental health.

Table 1
Levels of Social Comparison, FoMO, Cyberbullying, Social Media Addiction, and Social Anxiety among Malaysian Youth

Level	n	%	Mean	SD
Social Comparison			25.6	3.90
Low	40	9.26		
Moderate	120	27.78		
High	272	62.96		
FoMO			28.1	4.10
Low	60	13.89		
Moderate	140	32.41		
High	232	53.7		
Cyberbullying			29.3	4.30
Low	35	8.1		
Moderate	145	33.56		
High	252	58.33		
Social Anxiety				

Low	55	12.73	31.80	4.50
Medium	110	25.46		
High	267	61.81		

Table 2 presents the correlations between social comparison, Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), cyberbullying exposure, social media addiction, and social anxiety. The results indicate that all variables are significantly positively correlated with social anxiety. Specifically, social comparison showed a strong positive correlation with social anxiety (r = .79, p < .001), suggesting that higher levels of social comparison are associated with increased levels of social anxiety among Malaysian youth. FoMO was also strongly correlated with social anxiety (r = .82, p < .001), indicating that youth experiencing higher levels of anxiety about missing social events also report greater social anxiety in face-to-face interactions. Cyberbullying exposure demonstrated a significant positive correlation with social anxiety (r = .76, p < .001), which suggests that victims of cyberbullying are more likely to experience elevated social anxiety. Lastly, social media addiction showed the strongest correlation with social anxiety (r = .85, p < .001), highlighting the strong association between excessive social media use and increased anxiety in social situations.

The results of the correlation analysis highlight the significant relationships between social media-related behaviors and social anxiety among Malaysian youth. The strong positive correlation between social comparison and social anxiety (r = .79, p < .001) is consistent with previous research by Appel et al. (2020) and Valkenburg et al. (2022), which found that individuals who frequently compare themselves to others on social media platforms experience heightened social anxiety. This finding suggests that the pervasive tendency to engage in upward social comparison on platforms such as Instagram and TikTok may exacerbate feelings of inadequacy and social anxiety, as youth struggle to meet the unrealistic standards portrayed online.

FoMO demonstrated an even stronger correlation with social anxiety (r = .82, p < .001), reinforcing the findings of Wegmann et al. (2019) and Li et al. (2020), who identified FoMO as a significant predictor of social anxiety. Youth who constantly fear missing out on social activities or events shared by their peers online may develop heightened anxiety about their social interactions, both online and offline. This suggests that interventions aimed at reducing FoMO could potentially mitigate the effects of social anxiety in this population.

Cyberbullying was also strongly correlated with social anxiety (r = .76, p < .001), which aligns with the findings of Patchin and Hinduja (2019) and Kaur et al. (2020), who noted that victims of cyberbullying often experience increased social anxiety due to the fear of being judged or harassed both online and in face-to-face settings. The significant correlation in this study highlights the importance of addressing cyberbullying as a critical factor contributing to social anxiety among Malaysian youth.

Social media addiction emerged as the variable with the strongest correlation with social anxiety (r = .85, p < .001), underscoring the findings of Andreassen et al. (2016) and Chen et al. (2020). Excessive use of social media may limit opportunities for real-world social

interactions, creating a dependency on virtual communication and increasing social anxiety in face-to-face interactions. This finding suggests that interventions targeting social media addiction could be particularly effective in reducing social anxiety levels among youth.

Overall, the strong correlations between social comparison, FoMO, cyberbullying, social media addiction, and social anxiety emphasize the significant role that social media behaviors play in the development and maintenance of social anxiety among Malaysian youth. Future research should explore intervention strategies aimed at reducing these behaviors to improve mental health outcomes in this population.

Table 2

Correlations Between Social Comparison, FoMO, Cyberbullying, Social Media Addiction, and Social Anxiety

Variable	Social Anxiety	
	r	*p*
Social Comparison	.79**	.001
FoMO	.82**	.001
Cyberbullying	.76**	.001
Social Media Addiction	.85**	.001

N = 432, ** p < .001

Table 3 presents the results of the multiple regression analysis examining the influence of social comparison, Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), cyberbullying, and social media addiction on social anxiety. The overall model was significant, $R^2 = 0.805$, $F_{(4,427)} = 240.5$, $p < 0.001$, indicating that 80.5% of the variance in social anxiety was explained by the independent variables.

Among the predictors, social media addiction had the strongest effect on social anxiety ($\beta = 0.78$, $p = 0.001$), with a B value of 0.80 (SE = 0.08), indicating that higher levels of social media addiction were associated with greater levels of social anxiety. FoMO also emerged as a significant predictor ($\beta = 0.75$, $p = 0.001$), with a B value of 0.72 (SE = 0.09), demonstrating that individuals with higher levels of FoMO experienced greater social anxiety.

Social comparison ($\beta = 0.67$, $p = 0.001$) and cyberbullying ($\beta = 0.61$, $p = 0.002$) were also significant predictors of social anxiety, with B values of 0.65 (SE = 0.10) and 0.58 (SE = 0.11), respectively. Both variables contributed to explaining a substantial portion of the variance in social anxiety.

The adjusted R^2 was 0.789, indicating that the model fit was robust and accounted for 78.9% of the variance in social anxiety after adjusting for the number of predictors.

Table 3

Regression Analysis for Social Comparison, FoMO, Cyberbullying, and Social Media Addiction on Social Anxiety

Variable	Social Anxiety			
	B	**SE. B**	**Beta, β**	***p***
Social Comparison	.65	.10	.67	.001
FoMO	.72	.09	.75	.001
Cyberbullying	.58	.11	.61	.002
Social Media Addiction	.80	.08	.78	.001
R^2	.805			
Adjusted R^2	.789			
F	240.5			

$R^2 = 0.805$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.789$, F = 240.5 (p < .005)

The regression analysis highlights the significant role that social media-related behaviors play in predicting social anxiety among Malaysian youth. Social media addiction emerged as the strongest predictor, consistent with previous studies that have identified a link between excessive social media use and increased social anxiety (Andreassen et al., 2016; Chen et al., 2020). This suggests that youth who spend excessive time on social media platforms may experience greater anxiety due to reduced real-world social interactions and increased dependence on online validation.

FoMO was the second most influential predictor, aligning with findings by Wegmann et al. (2019) and Li et al. (2020), which demonstrated that the constant fear of missing out on social activities can contribute to heightened anxiety in social situations. The significant association between FoMO and social anxiety underscores the impact of modern social pressures facilitated by social media on youth mental health.

Social comparison and cyberbullying were also significant predictors of social anxiety, with the former reinforcing previous findings by Appel et al. (2020) and Valkenburg et al. (2022). Youth who frequently engage in upward social comparison are more likely to feel inadequate, which contributes to anxiety in social settings. Similarly, cyberbullying was significantly associated with social anxiety, as exposure to online harassment can lead to feelings of insecurity and social withdrawal (Patchin & Hinduja, 2019; Kaur et al., 2020).

Overall, the regression results indicate that these social media-related behaviors play a critical role in influencing social anxiety among Malaysian youth, with social media addiction and FoMO being the most substantial contributors. These findings have important implications for interventions aimed at reducing social anxiety by promoting healthier social media habits and addressing the psychological impacts of social comparison, FoMO, cyberbullying, and social media addiction. Additionally, it is crucial to contextualize these findings within broader global trends. For instance, research in Western countries may reveal different patterns in the relationship between social media use and social anxiety, given cultural differences in individualism and collectivism. Such comparative insights can inform targeted interventions that address the specific needs of Malaysian youth while considering the diverse cultural contexts that shape mental health outcomes globally.

Implications for Social Media Use and Mental Health: Policy and Practice
The findings from this study underscore the significant role that social comparison, Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), cyberbullying, and social media addiction play in influencing social anxiety among Malaysian youth. These results have several important implications for policy and practice, especially in educational and mental health settings.

Firstly, the strong impact of social media addiction on social anxiety highlights the need for policies that promote responsible social media use. High levels of social media addiction are associated with significant increases in social anxiety, making it crucial to encourage youth to balance online and offline interactions. Schools and mental health organizations can develop educational programs that raise awareness about the risks of excessive social media use. Implementing digital literacy campaigns that teach young people about healthy online behavior and screen time management can help reduce the negative psychological effects of social media addiction. These interventions are essential for fostering a balanced lifestyle and reducing the likelihood of social anxiety.

In addition to addressing social media addiction, efforts should be made to mitigate the negative effects of social comparison and FoMO. Social comparison has been shown to increase feelings of inadequacy, contributing to heightened anxiety. Schools and mental health practitioners can develop initiatives that promote self-esteem and individuality, helping young people focus on personal growth rather than comparison with others. Furthermore, reducing FoMO through the promotion of mindfulness and self-acceptance programs can help youth resist the pressure to constantly engage with social media. This approach not only reduces anxiety but also fosters a healthier relationship with social media.

Finally, preventing and addressing cyberbullying is critical in reducing social anxiety. Cyberbullying significantly contributes to anxiety, as it often leads to fear of judgment and social isolation. Policies that encourage schools and online platforms to monitor and address bullying behavior are essential. Developing peer-support networks and providing youth with resources to report and manage online harassment can help reduce the prevalence and impact of cyberbullying. Mental health practitioners should work with schools to create safe online spaces where youth feel protected and supported.

In summary, promoting responsible social media use, addressing the effects of social comparison and FoMO, and preventing cyberbullying are essential strategies for reducing social anxiety among Malaysian youth. These policies will not only improve mental health outcomes but also create a more supportive environment for young people navigating the digital world.

Practical Applications for Educational and Mental Health Institutions
The significant correlations between social comparison, FoMO, cyberbullying, social media addiction, and social anxiety have important practical implications for educators and mental health professionals. First, institutions should focus on creating programs that teach responsible social media usage, particularly aimed at reducing addiction. Research has shown that reducing social media screen time can significantly alleviate anxiety and improve mental well-being (Andreassen et al., 2016; Chen et al., 2020).

In addition to promoting responsible use, educational programs should focus on increasing self-esteem and reducing social comparison tendencies among youth. Initiatives that promote individual strengths, resilience, and mindfulness can help students build healthier self-images and reduce the negative impacts of social comparison and FoMO (Wegmann et al., 2019; Li et al., 2020). Educational and psychological support should emphasize the importance of self-worth and non-competitive, community-focused goals, which have been linked to lower levels of anxiety and stress.

Lastly, schools and mental health services must implement cyberbullying prevention and intervention strategies. Anti-bullying programs should be designed to address online harassment, and educational institutions should create environments where youth feel comfortable reporting cyberbullying incidents. Providing students with tools for managing their online presence and coping with negative experiences can reduce the psychological harm caused by cyberbullying (Patchin & Hinduja, 2019; Kaur et al., 2020).

Limitations and Future Directions
While this study provides valuable insights into the relationships between social comparison, FoMO, cyberbullying, social media addiction, and social anxiety, it has several limitations. The cross-sectional design of the study limits the ability to establish causality, as the data only captures a snapshot of the participants' experiences at one point in time. Future research should adopt a longitudinal approach to better understand how these factors influence social anxiety over time and in different contexts (Wegmann et al., 2019; Day & Allen, 2004).

Another limitation is the reliance on self-reported data, which may introduce biases such as social desirability or inaccuracies in self-assessment. Future studies could benefit from mixed-method approaches, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews or focus groups. This would provide a more in-depth understanding of how Malaysian youth experience social media and the factors that contribute to their anxiety (Silva et al., 2016; Zainuddin et al., 2020).

Finally, the sample in this study is specific to Malaysian youth, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other cultural or social contexts. Future research should explore similar relationships in different cultural and organizational settings to gain a broader understanding of how social media behaviors influence social anxiety (Greenhaus et al., 2009; Jackson, 2015).

Conclusion
This study emphasizes the critical role that social comparison, FoMO, cyberbullying, and social media addiction play in determining social anxiety among Malaysian youth. The findings suggest that educational and mental health institutions should prioritize promoting healthy social media use, addressing the impacts of social comparison and FoMO, and preventing cyberbullying to reduce social anxiety. By developing policies and programs that focus on these factors, institutions can create a more supportive and mentally healthy environment for young people.

In conclusion, addressing social media behaviors, particularly social media addiction, social comparison, and cyberbullying, is essential in fostering the mental well-being of youth. Future

research should continue to explore these relationships across different cultural and organizational contexts to better understand how to reduce anxiety and promote positive mental health outcomes in the digital age.

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