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Exploring the Social Twist of Procrastination and Escapism on Social Media Usage amongst the Generation Z Population in India

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ABSTRACT
This research investigates the intricate interplay between escapism, procrastination, and social media engagement among the Generation Z population in India. The primary aim was to examine the potential mediating role of procrastination in the association between escapist tendencies and excessive social media consumption. A sample of 621 participants aged 18-25 completed self-report measures assessing these constructs. Mediation analysis revealed a significant full mediation effect, indicating that procrastination serves as a critical intermediary in the relationship between escapism and excessive social media usage. The Generation Z commonly known as the Gen Z population consists of people born after 1995 who are just entering the workforce. These findings therefore offer valuable implications for the next generation in the workforce specially from an organizational psychology and human resource management perspective, underscoring the potential consequences of escapist tendencies and procrastination on employee productivity and well-being in the workplace.

Keywords: Social networking, Online behaviour, Digital procrastination, Social media addiction, Escapism, Psychological impact, Mediation, Structural equation modelling

1. Introduction
The rapid growth of social media and its pervasiveness in all aspects of our lives is the hallmark of the 21st Century. Not only has it impacted the way we communicate with others, but also on other aspects of human behaviour. The tendency towards escapism through procrastination is one such behaviour whose study can have interesting inferences for the use of social media, especially in the workplace. Procrastination (Ariely & Wertenbroch, 2002; Haghbin et al., 2012; Klingsieck, 2013; Steel, 2007; Steel & Ferrari, 2012) refers to quintessence of self-regulatory failure (Rebetez et al., 2016) and voluntarily or habitually delaying unpleasant tasks for later (Unda-Lopez et al., 2022). According to Zhang et al. (2019), procrastination refers to voluntary and irrational delay of an intended course of action, Procrastination at work can be defined as putting off work related action by engaging in nonwork-related actions during work hours (Metin et al., 2016).

Social media, which began as a platform to connect with friends and family and share information, has snowballed and includes opportunities beyond one's imagination. According to Bhat and Gupta (2019), social media impacts most people's lives. Procrastination is recognised as the tendency to delay or put off work (Lay, 1986), which may lead to lower output in the workplace. Research exploring the link between social media usage and procrastinatory behaviour has shown positive linkages. Escapism may be defined as seeking escape from real-world problems. It has also been understood as shutting oneself out of self-awareness for a while (Baumeister, 1992). Exelmans et al. (2019) have tried to differentiate between escapism and procrastination, as their meaning is often understood as overlapping. They defined escapism "as a stress-coping response, likely to be influenced by current (life) stressors" (Exelmans et al., 2019, p.26). Conversely, procrastination was understood as a self-control failure (Meier et al.,

2018) that can also has an impact on the person's academic performance (Kim & Seo, 2015). Chauhan et al. (2020) observed that while procrastination can be dysfunctional, it can prove to be strategically valuable, recommending a holistic conceptualization of procrastination. Nguyen et al.'s (2013) study results strongly indicate jobs that require higher levels of motivational skills are less likely to retain procrastinators. However, there was some support that jobs can foster procrastination. Singh et al.'s (2021) study focuses on leadership styles and perceived procrastination in leaders. The results of Krause and Freund's (2014) study suggests that procrastination may be reduced by adopting an outcome focus thereby directing attention away from the means while highlighting the importance of goal achievement

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Procrastination and Social Media Usage

Riemer et al. (2010) investigated whether the advent of social media sites would decrease corporate productivity and found that social media at work may result in procrastinatory behaviour. Rozgonjuk (2018) aimed to explore how procrastination was related to problematic smartphone use and found that procrastination led to more social media use, which could further lead to more problematic smartphone usage. Meier et al. (2016) found that Facebook usage could account for 40% of procrastination related to social media usage among students and that impulsive media use due to task switching from offline academic tasks to online media viewing may delay essential tasks. In an intervention study, Hinsch and Sheldon (2013) found how decreased social media usage led to decreased procrastination. Sumer and Buttner (2022) and Alblwi et al. (2020) have examined the relationship between procrastination and social media usage. Dardara and Al-Makhalid (2022) observed that procrastination among college students relates to negative emotional symptoms and mental well-being. The results of Gökalp et al.'s (2023) study indicate that self-control is negatively correlated with both multi-screen addiction and procrastination, while multi-screen addiction positively correlates with procrastination, confirming its mediating effect. Geng et al. (2018) investigate the relationship between Internet addiction and procrastination among Chinese young adults and observed that Internet addiction was positively correlated with procrastination. Highlighting the importance of workplace setting in this context, the work of Xue et al. (2024) and El-Sayed et al. (2024) exploring the state of work procrastination among clinical nurses in China and Egypt respectively, reveal that smartphone addiction and departmental atmosphere significantly influence procrastination levels. Zhou et al. (2024) work investigates the relationship between mobile phone addiction (MPA) and procrastination in students, finding a significant positive correlation. A bibliometric analysis carried out by Yan and Zhang (2022) has identified, among other dimensions, social media self-control as an emerging area in procrastination research.

2.2 Procrastination and Escapism

Meier et al. (2016) studied both procrastination and escapism as drivers of the adverse effects of digital media use. The researchers found that there needs to be more clarity about conceptualising the two terms. Results of the study revealed that while escapism can be understood as a dysfunctional avoidance coping response to unfavourable life circumstances, procrastination can be thought of as a self-regulatory failure rooted in low self-control. Procrastination is related to task aversiveness (Blunt & Pychyl, 2000). According to Stenseng et al. (2023), escapism refers to a habitual diversion of the mind, when someone attempts to escape from reality or routine. The results of Jahanzeb et al. (2023) study identifies procrastination as a way by which workplace ostracism facilitates organizational deviance but highlights that the association between procrastination and deviant behavior is mitigated when employees can actively engage in psychological flexibility. According to Metin et al. (2018), having a good fit between employees and their job leads to higher work engagement, better performance, and less procrastination. This highlights the importance of promoting a good fit in the workplace to improve employee well-being and organizational goals. Hen et al.'s (2021) work suggested that

procrastination at work is somewhat related to the personality tendency to procrastinate, especially for decisional procrastination and for office employees. Zhao et al.'s (2019) study on Chinese college students observed that procrastination was negatively correlated with time management disposition and self-control.

2.3 Escapism and Social Media Usage

Kırcaburun and Griffiths (2019) studied the mediating role of the perceived presence and escapism between using different Instagram features and Problematic Instagram Usage. Results showed that a minority of individuals use Instagram problematically and that problematic Instagram use is associated with the frequency of watching live streams, liking and commenting on others' posts on Instagram, being able to feel a higher sense of presence using Instagram, and using Instagram as an escape from reality. Researchers have focussed on aspects of social media usage and stress (Wolfers & Utz, 2022; Brailovskaia et al., 2021; Alsunni & Latif, 2020). Kardefelt-Winther (2014) studied the proposed theory of compensatory internet use, suggesting that people who play online games excessively are motivated to do so because they need to cope with psychosocial problems. Their findings supported the theory suggesting that excessive online gaming may be a coping strategy and an escape from life problems.

Bossen and Kottasz (2020) studied the uses and gratifications sought by pre-adolescent and adolescent groups on TikTok and found that the need for escape was one of the main reasons for TikTok use among adolescents. Scherr and Wang (2021) did a similar study, where addiction to escapism emerged as one of the primary reasons for TikTok usage amongst the Chinese Population. The study carried out by Demirdöğen et al. (2024) have investigated the relationship between problematic internet use and factors such as social media addiction, escapism, and coping strategies among adolescents in Türkiye and have observed that problematic internet use is linked to increased social media usage, escapism, and negative coping strategies.

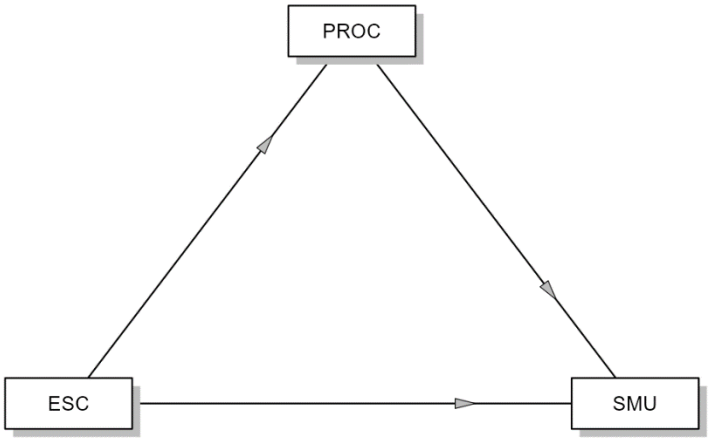
Gabbiadini et al. (2021) studied psychological determinants of problematic digital technology usage and the mechanisms related to the enjoyment of media content, including escapism, which were considered predictors of the tendency to binge-watch. Results indicated that higher feelings of loneliness were associated with higher levels of problematic digital technology usage. Additionally, direct and indirect effects showed that only escapism – out of the four dimensions measuring the problematic use of Internet-related technologies – predicted participants' more robust identification with media characters, promoting more significant binge-watching tendencies.

Since studies carried out on procrastination, escapism and social media usage have received limited acknowledgement in literature, a study addressing these variables would help better understand the issues at play. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed.

H1: There is a significant positive relationship between escapism and social media usage.
H2: There is a significant positive relationship between escapism and procrastination.
H3: There is a significant positive relationship between procrastination and social media usage.
H4: Procrastination significantly mediates the relationship between escapism and social media Usage.

Figure 1 illustrates the hypothesized relationships.

Figure 1: Hypothesized Model



3. Methods

3.1 Measures

The following latent constructs were adopted in the present study:

i) Social Media Usage: The Social Media Use Scale (SMUS) developed by Tuck and Thompson (2023) was adopted to measure the frequency and kind of social media used by the participants. This is a 17-item inventory on a 9-point Likert scale. The statements are presented in random order, with no reverse-scored items.

ii) Procrastination: Procrastination was measured by five items on a 5-point Likert scale from Mann et al. (1997) as was adapted from a study by Astakhova et al. (2022).

iii) Escapism: A six-item inventory measured on a 5-point Likert scale was used to measure escapism, developed by Astakhova et al. (2022).

All the above scales are standardised and have been used extensively by researchers.

3.2 Procedure, data collection and sample

The target population for the present study consisted of young adults, belonging to Generation Z, aged 18-25 years living in the Delhi-NCR region of India. This region comprises of the capital of India and the adjoining regions referred to as the National Capital Region (NCR). A pilot study was conducted to assess the feasibility and clarity of the research tools. The pilot study was conducted on 87 selected students using convenience sampling from the Delhi-NCR region of India.

The data collection exercise was carried out over a period of six months, from July 2023 to January 2024. The data were collected using convenience sampling methodology. The optimal sample size of 385 was determined based on power analysis to arrive at statistically significant results. Data were collected from 621 young adults who had either joined the workforce or were completing their higher education.

3.3 Reliability - Internal Consistency

The internal consistency of all the research tools were assessed using Cronbach's alpha, yielding coefficients exceeding 0.7. Reliability analysis indicated high internal consistency, affirming that all the tools could measure the intended constructs consistently.

3.4 Face & Content Validity

Face validity was established through expert reviews and pilot testing, ensuring the instrument appeared pertinent to participants.

3.5 Common Method Bias

Common method bias is committed when all variables used in a particular study are captured using the same response method (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Precautions were taken to mitigate common method bias, such as employing a counterbalancing design. Common method bias was assessed using recommended statistical techniques, and results indicated minimal impact on the study's findings. However, the potential influences of common method bias on the data were carefully considered throughout the study, and steps were taken to minimise its effects.

3.6 Statistical Techniques

Descriptive statistics, such as mean and standard deviation, were calculated to summarise the sample characteristics. Inferential statistical techniques, including regression, were employed to examine relationships and identify significant effects. Multivariate analyses (structural equation modelling) were utilised to explore the complex interplay among variables.

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the sample.

Table 1

Demographic characteristics of the sample

S. No.	Classification	Category	Frequency	%
1	Gender	Male	297	47.8
		Female	311	50.0
		Others	13	2.0
		Total	621	100
2	Age	18-21	153	24.5
		22-25	468	75.3
		Total	621	100

It may be observed from the Table above, 621 respondents participated in the study, with 297 being male and 311 being female. Therefore, there was an almost equal representation of both genders in the total sample. Regarding age demographics, the majority of respondents were in the 22-25 age category, making up 75.3% of the total sample. This age group also the one that have already entered the workforce while the 18-21 age group constituted 24.5%.

4. Results

Data for the present study was analysed using IBM SPSS AMOS Version 20.0 using the maximum likelihood model (Arbuckle, 2011). Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was carried out to test the model fit of the measurement model (Goretzko et al., 2023). Following this, the structural equation modelling approach was adopted to test the Hypothesized Model (Figure 1) following Gunzler et al. (2013).

The indirect effect was tested using a bootstrap estimation approach using 2000 samples and a 95% bias-corrected percentile method (Hayes & Scharkow, 2013). Other analyses, like correlation, were also run using IBM SPSS 20.0.

Table 2 presents the factor loadings, mean values and construct reliability indices.

Table 2: Factor Loadings, Mean Values and Construct Reliability Indices

Constructs	**Items**	**Factor Loadings**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Average Variance Extracted (AVE)**	**Composite Reliability**	**Cronbach Alpha**
Procrastination	1	0.615	3.18	1.078	0.56	0.86	0.844
	2	0.661	3.18	1.177			
	3	0.804	2.89	1.219			
	4	0.851	2.59	1.171			
	5	0.805	2.59	1.202			
Social Media Usage	1	0.569	1.86	0.909	0.5	0.94	0.877
	2	0.725	2.18	1.229			
	3	0.808	1.95	1.152			
	4	0.646	1.74	0.995			
	5	0.593	1.94	1.098			
	6	0.784	2.19	1.373			
	7	0.786	2.28	1.346			
	8	0.695	2.50	1.325			
	9	0.715	1.52	0.983			
	10	0.767	1.49	0.917			
	11	0.738	1.38	0.846			
	12	0.677	1.72	1.090			
	13	0.717	3.15	1.458			
	14	0.785	3.41	1.334			
	15	0.717	2.64	1.325			
	16	0.636	2.52	1.337			
	17	0.767	3.48	1.313			
Escapism	1	0.84	3.67	1.175	0.72	0.94	0.85
	2	0.855	3.70	1.159			
	3	0.837	3.62	1.154			
	4	0.88	3.93	1.068			
	5	0.862	3.80	1.103			
	6	0.848	3.84	1.094			

Finally, Structural equation modelling was used to test the proposed hypotheses through structural and measurement models (Hair et al., 2020).

4.1 Assessment of measurement model

The measurement model was tested using various criteria for evaluation, including model fit indices and convergent validity.

Convergent validity is established when there is internal consistency among indicators measuring the same construct (Bagozzi, 1981). To assess convergent validity, composite reliability and

average variance extracted (AVE) were used to confirm the internal consistency of the questionnaire.

Table 2 depicts the standardised factor loadings that range from 0.56 to 0.88 that are observed to lie above the threshold limits of 0.5, thus indicating convergent validity (Hair et al., 2020). Composite reliability was used to measure the internal consistency of the questionnaire. As can be seen in Table 2, composite reliability coefficient values range from 0.86 to 0.94 lying over the threshold value of 0.70 (Boomsma, 2013).

These results establish that all the constructs achieved satisfactory internal consistency reliability. Moreover, the average variance extracted (AVE) ranged from 0.50 to 0.72, which was above the threshold values of 0.50, establishing convergent validity.

4.2 Assessment of structural model

The purpose of the structural model of the current study is to investigate the underlying Hypothesized Model to answer the research question(s) in the present study. The structural model is tested when all the constructs in the measurement model have achieved satisfactory model fit and validity (Kline, 2023). This stage calculates the final estimates of the outer loadings and path coefficients.

Table 3 presents the assessment figures of the structural model.

Table 3: Assessment of the Structural Model

Hypothesized Path	Std. Beta	Std. Error	p-value	Confidence Intervals (BC) LL	UL	Decision
H1 SMU-ESC	0.07	0.12	0.142	-0.03	0.19	Not Supported
H2 SMU-PROC	0.32	0.08	0	0.25	0.4	Supported
H3 PROC-ESC	0.13	0.07	0.006	0.03	0.2	Supported
H4 SMU-PROC-ESC	0.04		0.03	0.01	0.07	Supported

SMU= Social Media Usage, PROC= Procrastination, ESC= Escapism

To address the research question, the ‘bootstrapping the indirect effect’ mediation method was employed (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). The 95% Boot CI Bias, corrected for the indirect effects, with lower and upper limits of 0.01 and 0.07, respectively, does not include zero, indicating mediation. Therefore, the mediation effect is deemed statistically significant. Given that the direct effect of Social Media Usage on Escapism is not significant, the inference may be drawn that procrastination fully mediates the relationship between Social Media Usage and Escapism.

4.4 Model Fit Indices

The findings from the structural equation modelling (SEM) offer compelling insights into the adequacy of the model fit. The model's Goodness-of-Fit is evidenced by indices such as the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Normed Fit Index (NFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). Table 4 presents the structural model fit indices.

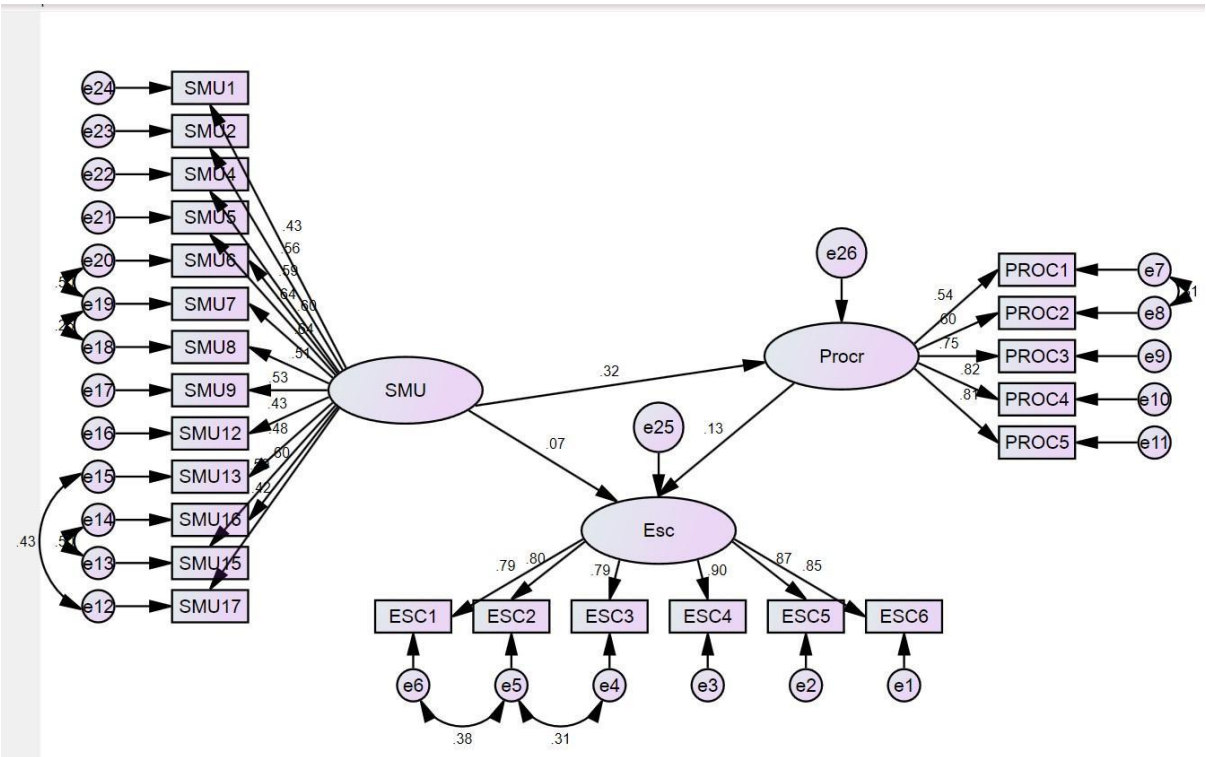
Table 4: Model Fit Indices

Fit Index	CMIN/Df	NFI	CFI	TLI	SRMR	RMSEA
Value	3.21	0.89	0.92	0.91	0.08	0.085

These indices collectively affirm a strong fit. Specifically, the SRMR values align with the acceptable standards outlined by Hu and Bentler (1999). With CFI and NFI scores at 0.92 and 0.89, respectively, the model is shown to accurately depict the interactions between the latent variables (Brandt et al., 2020). Furthermore, an RMSEA score of 0.085 is considered within favourable limits (Browne & Cudeck, 1992), indicating the model's effective representation of the population covariance matrix.

Figure 2 illustrates the structural model.

Figure 2: Structural Model



5. Discussion and Conclusions

The central aim of this paper is to investigate whether procrastination mediates the effect of escapism on social media usage for Generation Z population in India in order to clearly comprehend how escapism affects Social Media Usage among young adults in India, Procrastination was hypothesised to be an essential component chosen as a mediator.

The hypothesis proposing a direct relationship (H1) between Escapism and Social Media Usage was not supported, which was contrary to previous literature that had found a positive and significant relationship between escapist tendencies and increased usage of social media platforms (Demirdöğen et al., 2023; Ezeonwumelu et al., 2021; Kırcaburun et al., 2019).

The positive relationship between Social media Usage and Procrastination (H2) was consistent with previous research, which found a significant and positive relationship between procrastinatory behaviour and increased use of social media platforms. Przepiorka et al. (2016), in their study on predictors of social media usage (Facebook), found that procrastination was a significant predictor of increased Facebook usage, especially among young adult users. Similarly, Manap et al. (2023) found that procrastination had a significant positive effect on internet addiction among young adults. Similar results of a positive relationship between procrastination and social media usage have also been noted by Alblwi et al. (2021), Al Shaibani (2020) and Gürültü et al. (2017).

The literature has also supported the positive relationship between Procrastination and Escapism (H3) reported in the present study. In their study of video game behaviour on procrastination, Nordby, Løkken, and Pfuhl (2019) found that people who played video games to escape reality had more procrastination problems than those who played video games for entertainment. Steel (2007) has also reported similar results.

Finally, the sequential mediation model (H4) was supported, meaning that the hypothesised element of Procrastination fully mediated the relationship between Escapism and Social Media Usage. Although not many studies have explored the interplay between these three variables, these findings align with theoretical frameworks suggesting that excessive social media use may lead to procrastination behaviours, which, in turn, serve as a coping mechanism for individuals seeking temporary relief from stressors or negative emotions (Klingsieck, 2013; Sirois & Pychyl, 2013).
The present work probes into the critical aspects how social media usage, escapism and procrastination are related to one another. Based on their research, Metin et al. (2018) advised that by improving employee's work engagement, organizations might improve the likelihood that personnel respond favourably with organizational goals and reduce the chances of engaging in workplace procrastination. The results of a study carried out on a sample of 236 computer professionals in Israel (Goroshit & Hen, 2018) revealed that both a personality-based tendency to procrastinate and the tendency to delay decision making may affect online behaviour and that negative affect strengthens these tendencies. Job-family responsibilities are also observed to impact employee procrastination behaviour (Gu et al. 2022).

Procrastination in the work place also relates to multitasking (Vveinhardt & Sroka, 2022). Looking at the study implications in a larger organizational context, leadership has been observed to influence employee procrastination in the work place (Kose & Metin, 2018; Singh & Dhaliwal, 2015) apart from the observation that task procrastination in the work place - delaying job responsibilities – is influenced by unethical practices, contractual employment system, lack of interest and desire, low self-esteem and complex jobs (Khattak & Ilyas, 2017).

6. Study Implications and Scope for Future Research

The results of the present work have profound implications in managing workplace dynamics. Our study focuses on younger population who are either working in the corporate or any employment sector or would be workplace joiners within the next few years. Use of social media is very common among the generation considered in the present work – Generation Z - and this has an implication on the tendency to delay their work engagements, that is, to procrastinate, that might affect organizational commitments. Procrastination tendencies and their inclination to escape from reality are also related. Further, procrastination in work settings mediates the relationship between the use of social media and the urge to move away from realities of the business world by Generation Z workers, compounding the scenario currently being witnessed by organizations across the world, supported by research work reported.

While the present study has made some interesting revelations, there are a few limitations to report:

1. Since this study had a cross-sectional design, it limits our ability to establish definite causation. Longitudinal studies offer a better understanding of temporal constructs like the ones in the present study.

2. The reliance on self-reported measures may lead to response bias.

3. Since data were collected only from the Delhi-NCR region of India, additional data from other parts of the world could lead to better insights for generalizability.

4. Since the dimensions studied are important and critical for in the light of widespread social media usage, beyond Generation Z, the focus of the present research, further deep diving needs to be explored with focus on Millennials as well as on Generation X that comprise the majority of workforce across organizations.

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