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Four Stressors and User Factors Influencing Social Media Discontinuous Intentions

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Abstract

Since the early 2000s, social media has transformed global communication, yet discontinuance intentions have emerged as a countertrend driven by accumulating psychological pressures. Previous studies often examined determinants such as information overload or social media fatigue in isolation, overlooking the interaction between external platform pressures and internal user factors. This study investigates how social-media-related factors (information overload, system features overload) and user-related factors (privacy invasion, cyberbullying) shape discontinuance intentions through sequential mediation of emotional exhaustion and social media fatigue. Adopting the Stimulus-Organism-Response framework, data were collected from 200 active social media users in Java, Indonesia, via structured online questionnaires and analyzed using PLS-SEM. Results confirm all direct effects but reveal that social media fatigue fully mediates the relationship emotional exhaustion alone does not drive withdrawal; it must crystallize into platform-specific fatigue before discontinuance consolidates as a behavioral response. These findings enrich SOR theory by demonstrating that the organism constitutes a hierarchical affective structure, wherein layered internal states sequentially transform external stressors into withdrawal behavior. Beyond its theoretical contribution, this study translates its empirical findings into actionable information system design principles each confirmed stressor corresponds to a designable platform property, urging IS developers to embed adaptive fatigue-detection mechanisms, interface minimalism, and privacy transparency infrastructures into platform architecture. Practically, these results call upon platform developers and policymakers to engineer humane digital ecosystems through feature simplification and robust user protection, so users need not choose between connectivity and psychological well-being.

Keywords: *Social media discontinuance intention, social media fatigue, emotional exhaustion, Information overload, Cyberbullying.*

INTRODUCTION

Since the early 2000s, social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, TikTok) has connected billions and by 2025, over 63.9% of the world will spend 2 hours 21 minutes daily on it, cementing its role as the primary communication medium [1]. Yet this growth has paradoxically produced its counter-movement: social media discontinuance intentions users' deliberate desire to reduce or permanently exit platforms amid accumulating digital fatigue, information overload, and psychological dissatisfaction. A systematic review of 28 academic articles confirms this decision converges across user-related, informational, and technological pressures, reflecting a structural behavioral shift within the era of hyperconnectivity [2].

Global research confirms that social media fatigue triggered by communication overload, technological demands, and information saturation leads to discontinuous behaviors like taking breaks or intermittent withdrawal. In Indonesia, this general pattern

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manifests specifically through accumulated psychological burden. Deductive reasoning follows: If eudaimonic values (the pursuit of meaningful life), perceived information overload, subjective norms, and self-efficacy drive digital detox intentions Pang et al. [3], then Indonesian users are not merely reacting to dissatisfaction. Instead, they are making deliberate, adaptive recalibrations. Consequently, discontinuance intentions in Indonesia represent not temporary reactions but a strategic shift: users consciously reduce platform engagement to protect mental health, enhance productivity, and restore meaningful social interactions [4].

Despite progress in understanding social media discontinuance, several gaps remain. Prior studies tend to examine factors in isolation focusing either on external pressures or internal conditions without integrating both perspectives into a unified framework. Moreover, most studies have treated social media fatigue solely as a direct antecedent of discontinuance intentions, overlooking its potential role as a downstream crystallization of emotional exhaustion. Furthermore, prior studies have predominantly assumed that all digital stressors uniformly amplify internal psychological states. This assumption warrants scrutiny: interpersonal online threats such as cyberbullying may trigger adaptive emotional responses including habituation and emotional blunting that attenuate rather than escalate exhaustion [4], [5]. Theorizing this boundary condition a priori represents a critical step toward a more nuanced SOR model.

Building on this gap, the study investigates the factors contributing to social media fatigue by distinguishing between two sources of pressure: platform-related pressures, represented by information overload and system feature overload, and user-related pressures, reflected in privacy invasion and cyberbullying. The study further examines how these pressures contribute to emotional exhaustion, develop into social media fatigue, and ultimately influence users' intentions to discontinue platform use. Based on the Stimulus-Organism-Response framework introduced by Mehrabian et al. [6], these four factors are conceptualized as stimuli arising from both the characteristics of the platform and users' direct negative experiences. Such stimuli trigger an internal psychological state in the form of emotional exhaustion, which subsequently contributes to social media fatigue and culminates in a behavioral outcome, namely the intention to discontinue using the platform.

METHOD

Population and Sample

This research was conducted in Indonesia, with participants consisting of active social media users located in the Java region, chosen through a purposive sampling technique in which eligibility was based on respondents' self-reported platform experience rather than a fixed usage threshold. The participants in this research were active Indonesian social media users, chosen through a purposive sampling technique in which eligibility was based on respondents' self-reported platform experience rather than a fixed usage threshold. The survey instrument was built using Google Forms and distributed online through digital channels such as messaging application, reaching a broad pool of prospective respondents [7], [8]. From 215 collected responses, 200 valid cases remained after excluding incomplete submissions and respondents who failed the active-user requirement. The questionnaire comprised 31 items measured on a five-point Likert scale,

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with each construct assessed through three to seven indicators to ensure adequate measurement while limiting respondent burden [9], [10].

Measurement

All constructs were measured on a five-point Likert scale, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The aspect measuring each construct were drawn from instruments validated in earlier research and adapted so that they would resonate with Indonesian social media users specifically. Four constructs an overload of information, an overload of system features, invasion of privacy, and cyberbullying functioned as the antecedent stressors, together capturing both platform-generated burdens and the negative experiences users go through directly. Two further constructs, emotional exhaustion and social media fatigue, served as sequential mediating variables: the former capturing the depletion of a user's emotional resources, and the latter capturing a growing weariness toward digital platforms that builds up over time. The dependent variable, discontinuance intention, was assessed through items reflecting users' inclination to cut back on or abandon social media use entirely. Altogether, the instrument spanned 31 items across six constructs, constructed to provide a reliable and valid measure of the psychological pathway running from digital stressors through to discontinuance.

Analysis Method

To examine how the seven constructs the four stressors, the two mediators, and discontinuance intention relate to one another, the data were processed through PLS-SEM using the SmartPLS software [11]. Assessment of the measurement model showed that convergent validity met accepted standards, with indicator loadings above 0.70 and AVE scores exceeding 0.50 for every construct. Reliability was likewise supported, since Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values for all constructs cleared the conventional 0.70 threshold, while discriminant validity was verified using HTMT ratios that stayed under the 0.90 cutoff [12], [13]. the hypothesized mode was then tested through a bootstrapping procedure using 5,000 resamples, which allowed the significance of each hypothesized path and the mediating effects implied by the sequential SOR mechanism to be assessed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Profile

The final sample consisted of 200 Indonesian respondents who were active social media users, of whom 57.5% identified as male and 42.5% as female. In terms of age, younger adults made up the bulk of the sample, with the 18–25 bracket accounting for 30.5% and the 26–35 bracket for 26.5%; the remaining respondents fell into the 36–45 bracket (23.0%), under-18 (11.0%), and 46-and-above (9.0%) groups. Educational attainment skewed fairly high, with 40.5% holding a bachelor's degree, 25.0% a diploma, 20.5% only a high-school qualification, and 3.5% a postgraduate (S2–S3) degree. Reported usage intensity was also high: 31.0% of respondents spent five to six hours a day on social media, 28.0% spent three to four hours, and only 11.0% used it for under an hour daily. This composition matters theoretically, since younger, more educated, heavy users are precisely the group most exposed to intensifying algorithmic content and

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an ever-expanding set of platform features which arguably makes them more susceptible to the overload-to-fatigue-to-withdrawal sequence this study models, lending additional ecological validity to the stressor constructs under investigation.

Outer Model Evaluation / Measurements Evaluation

Assessing the measurement model is an important preliminary step in PLS-SEM, since it verifies the survey measures genuinely tap into the latent constructs they are intended to represent; if this step is skipped or the instrument is weak, any results derived downstream become questionable [10]. Convergent validity is typically established by checking that outer loadings sit above 0.70 and that Average Variance Extracted values exceed 0.50, which together indicate that indicators adequately reflect their underlying constructs [14].]. Reliability, meanwhile, is gauged through Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability, both of which are expected to surpass 0.70 [11]. while multicollinearity among indicators is screened using the Variance Inflation Factor, with values below 5.0 taken as evidence that indicators are not excessively overlapping [15]. An instrument that clears these thresholds is considered sound enough for structural analysis.

Table 1. Outer Loading of the Measurements: Outer Loading,VIF, AVE, CR, CA

Dimension	Code	Outer Loading	VIF	AVE	CR	CA
				0.655	**0.884**	**0.825**
Information overload [16], [17]	IO 1	0.824	1.928			
	IO 2	0.822	1.696			
	IO 3	0.784	1.637			
	IO 4	0.807	1.757			
				0.681	**0.895**	**0.845**
System feature overload [18]	SFO 1	0.826	1.784			
	SFO 2	0.822	1.861			
	SFO 3	0.801	1.868			
	SFO 4	0.850	1.971			
				0.647	**0.880**	**0.819**
Privacy invasion [19]	PI 1	0.783	1.571			
	PI 2	0.828	1.858			
	PI 3	0.851	1.881			
	PI 4	0.753	1.628			
				0.706	**0.906**	**0.861**
Cyberbullying [20]	CB 1	0.851	2.180			
	CB 2	0.808	1.705			
	CB 3	0.855	2.181			
	CB 4	0.845	2.126			
				0.675	**0.912**	**0.879**
Emotional exhaustion [21]	EX 1	0.823	2.063			
	EX 2	0.812	2.006			
	EX 3	0.836	2.132			

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	EX 4	0.801	1.913			
	EX 5	0.834	2.109			
				0.697	**0.902**	**0.856**
Social Media Fatigue [22]	SMF 1	0.850	2.164			
	SMF 2	0.845	1.907			
	SMF 3	0.791	1.854			
	SMF 4	0.853	2.058			
				0.691	**0.918**	**0.888**
Discontinuous Intentions [16], [17]	DI 1	0.843	2.196			
	DI 2	0.801	1.979			
	DI 3	0.844	2.290			
	DI 4	0.850	2.222			
	DI 5	0.817	2.138			

(source: Author)

The figures reported in Table 1 indicate that the measurement model performs well on both validity and reliability across every construct. All outer loadings sat comfortably above the 0.70 benchmark, ranging between 0.753 and 0.855, which supports convergent validity, and this was reinforced by AVE values of between 0.647 and 0.706 each comfortably above the point at representing a construct is said to clarify the majority of the variance in its indicators. Reliability figures were equally sound: Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.819 to 0.888 and composite reliability from 0.880 to 0.918, both well clear of the 0.70 benchmark. VIF values, meanwhile, stayed within a 1.571–2.290 range, far below the 5.0 ceiling typically used to flag multicollinearity concerns. In sum, the measurement instrument employed in this study demonstrates strong validity, consistent reliability, and an absence of multicollinearity concerns, thereby establishing a sound foundation before proceeding to structural model evaluation.

Table 2. Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Ratio Values

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Cyberbullying							
2. Discontinuous Intentions	0.435						
3. Emotional Exhaustion	0.405	0.354					
4. Information overload	0.359	0.383	0.418				
5. Privacy invasion	0.382	0.350	0.408	0.401			
6. Social Media Fatigue	0.443	0.484	0.356	0.397	0.354		
7. System feature overload	0.421	0.423	0.366	0.324	0.358	0.381	

(source: Author)

Following the confirmation of convergent validity and construct reliability, discriminant validity was evaluated using the Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) ratio, applying the recommended threshold of 0.90 [11]. As reported in Table 3, the HTMT coefficients ranged from 0.324 to 0.484, with all values remaining substantially below

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the specified cutoff. These results indicate adequate discriminant validity, demonstrating that information overload, system features overload, privacy invasion, cyberbullying, emotional exhaustion, social media fatigue, and discontinuance intentions represent distinct empirical constructs. Accordingly, the measurement model provides sufficient evidence to distinguish among the constructs and supports the robustness of subsequent structural model analysis.

Structural Model Evaluation

The analysis then advanced to structural model testing, in which each of the six hypothesized paths was examined through its path coefficient, t-statistic, and p-value, all derived from a bootstrapping procedure involving 5,000 resamples. In line with the criteria set out by Hair et al. [11], a path is deemed statistically significant when its absolute t-value surpasses 1.96 alongside a p-value under 0.05, based on a two-tailed test at the 5% level. Paths satisfying both conditions were classified as supported, while those falling short, either with a t-statistic under 1.96 or a p-value exceeding 0.05 were classified as unsupported. This step functions as the empirical validation of the two-tier SOR model outlined earlier, examining whether the hypothesized pathway, from the four digital stressors, through emotional exhaustion and social media fatigue, and ultimately to discontinuance intention withstands formal statistical testing.

Table 3. Hypothesis Testing

	Original sample	Sample mean	Standard deviation	T statistics	P values
Cyberbullying -> Emotional Exhaustion	-0.183	-0.180	0.072	2.534	0.011
Emotional Exhaustion -> Social Media Fatigue	0.315	0.312	0.097	3.233	0.001
Information overload -> Emotional Exhaustion	0.203	0.207	0.066	3.050	0.002
Privacy invasion -> Emotional Exhaustion	0.182	0.185	0.068	2.684	0.007
Social Media Fatigue -> Discontinuous Intentions	0.429	0.429	0.092	4.653	0.000
System feature overload -> Emotional Exhaustion	0.146	0.149	0.068	2.146	0.032

(source: Author)

Form table 3 found Information overload significantly increases emotional exhaustion ($\beta = 0.203$; $t = 3.050$; $p = 0.002$). A similar positive relationship is observed for system features overload ($\beta = 0.146$; $t = 2.146$; $p = 0.032$), while privacy invasion also demonstrates a significant positive association with emotional exhaustion ($\beta = 0.182$; $t = 2.684$; $p = 0.007$). Collectively, these results suggest that greater exposure to excessive information, complicated or overwhelming system features, and perceived privacy violations is accompanied by higher levels of emotional exhaustion among users. Conversely, cyberbullying is found to have a significant negative relationship with emotional exhaustion ($\beta = -0.183$; $t = 2.534$; $p = 0.011$). This unexpected direction

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indicates that more frequent cyberbullying experiences are associated with lower reported emotional exhaustion, potentially reflecting a process of emotional desensitization or numbing that functions as a protective coping response.

Furthermore, emotional exhaustion is found to increase social media fatigue positively and significantly (β = 0.315; t = 3.233; p = 0.001), and social media fatigue in turn serves as the main driver of discontinuous intentions (β = 0.429; t = 4.653; p = 0.000). Thus, although all hypotheses are supported, the original sample coefficient values provide essential information about the direction and magnitude of effects most of which fall into small to moderate effects according to [23] criteria thereby going beyond mere statistical significance and serving as the primary basis for substantive interpretation within the Stimulus-Organism-Response framework.

Table 4. Mediating Effect

	Original sample	Sample mean	(STDEV)	T statistics	P values
Cyberbullying -> Discontinuous Intentions	-0.025	-0.026	0.018	1.386	0.166
Cyberbullying -> Social Media Fatigue	-0.058	-0.058	0.032	1.772	0.076
Emotional Exhaustion -> Discontinuous Intentions	0.135	0.139	0.063	2.155	0.031
Information overload -> Discontinuous Intentions	0.027	0.030	0.018	1.516	0.130
Information overload -> Social Media Fatigue	0.064	0.066	0.032	1.972	0.049
Privacy invasion -> Discontinuous Intentions	0.025	0.026	0.016	1.551	0.121
Privacy invasion -> Social Media Fatigue	0.057	0.058	0.029	1.971	0.049
System feature overload -> Discontinuous Intentions	0.020	0.022	0.015	1.325	0.185
System feature overload -> Social Media Fatigue	0.046	0.048	0.028	1.656	0.098

(source: Author)

To test the core theoretical proposition, mediating effects were tested using 5,000 bootstrap replications. Following Hair et al. (2017), an indirect effect is significant when t > 1.96 (p < 0.05). Based on the analysis in Table 4, it was found that out of the nine mediation paths tested, six were not significant and three were significant. All sequential mediation paths from the four stressors (cyberbullying, information overload, privacy invasion, and system feature overload) toward discontinuous intentions through emotional exhaustion and social media fatigue were non-significant (t = 1.325–1.551; p > 0.05). The significant paths include: emotional exhaustion → discontinuous intentions via social media fatigue (t = 2.155; p = 0.031), confirming social media fatigue as a full mediator; as well as information overload → social media fatigue (t = 1.972; p = 0.049) and privacy invasion → social media fatigue (t = 1.971; p = 0.049).

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The findings reveal a psychologically differentiated picture of social media discontinuance within the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) framework, with all six direct-effect hypotheses supported. Among positive stressors, information overload produces the strongest path to emotional exhaustion driven by its inescapable cognitive filtering demands followed by privacy invasion (chronic threat to personal autonomy), and system features overload (navigational friction) [24], [25]. Deductively, if cyberbullying generates a significant negative coefficient instead of depleting exhaustion, then sustained interpersonal aggression activates affective numbing a self-protective emotional desensitization that suppresses exhaustion escalation [26], [27]. This suppressive response may also reflect collectivist norms common in Indonesian online social life, where interpersonal harmony and face-saving expectations discourage overt emotional escalation even under sustained aggression, prompting withdrawal-oriented coping rather than acute exhaustion. Thus, S→O relationships are not invariably additive; interpersonal digital stressors engage suppressive organism pathways qualitatively distinct from the resource-depleting logic governing platform-level pressures [5].

The organism layer constitutes the theoretical core of this study, and the findings establish it as hierarchically structured. Emotional exhaustion significantly predicts social media fatigue, which in turn exerts the strongest influence on discontinuance intentions across the entire model. Deductively, if the dominance of the SMF→DI path empirically proves that behavioral response is gated not by generalized depletion but by platform-attributed fatigue, then SOR requires two tiers: emotional exhaustion as non-specific resource depletion and social media fatigue as the crystallization state where users explicitly blame the platform[2], [28]. Tis hierarchy directly addresses the gap identified by Luqman et al. [29] repositioning social media fatigue from a direct antecedent to a downstream outcome of emotional exhaustion, and transforming SOR from a simplified three-box model into a dynamic tiered system

The indirect effect analysis reinforces this architecture while revealing important stressor-specific heterogeneity, deductively confirming a multi-threshold system. All four sequential mediation paths from stressors through the full EX→SMF chain to discontinuance intentions are non-significant, meaning stressor effects are distributed and attenuated across organism nodes rather than mechanically transmitted to behavior [30]. However, information overload and privacy invasion attain marginal significance in the shorter stressor→SMF path deductively, because chronically inescapable and identity-relevant stressors can partially bypass the exhaustion tier to accelerate fatigue crystallization directly [31]. System features overload and cyberbullying fail even this shorter route, confirming that task-bounded navigational friction and suppressed interpersonal responses cannot generate platform-specific fatigue without first transiting through generalized exhaustion. The sole significant full indirect effect (emotional exhaustion → discontinuance intentions via social media fatigue) confirms that generalized exhaustion alone is insufficient; crystallization into platform-attributed fatigue is the decisive second-tier condition.

These results generate three interlocking theoretical contributions to SOR. First, the organism is hierarchically structured: emotional exhaustion and social media fatigue are causally ordered tiers, not interchangeable constructs, with only the second tier reliably activating the withdrawal response. Second, S→O relationships are heterogeneous, not uniformly amplifying: cyberbullying's suppressive pathway challenges the dominant

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assumption that all digital stimuli escalate internal states. Third, stressor-specific bypass pathways exist at the second organism tier: chronically inescapable stressors (information overload, privacy invasion) demonstrate partial affective directness toward fatigue that feature-level overload and interpersonal stressors do not, evidencing within-model pathway differentiation [18]. Deductively, if algorithmic content intensification, opaque privacy practices, and weak anti-cyberbullying enforcement are structural inputs into the SOR chain ending in user withdrawal, then feature simplification, transparent data governance, and proactive community enforcement are not merely ethical commitments but empirically grounded retention imperatives [32], [33]

CONCLUSION

The results indicate that different forms of platform and user-related pressure significantly affect users' emotional resources, with all hypothesized direct relationships receiving empirical support. Importantly, emotional exhaustion does not directly lead to discontinuance intention; instead, it contributes to social media fatigue, which subsequently drives discontinuance, highlighting fatigue as the key mediating mechanism. Cyberbullying differs from the other stressors by showing a negative effect, suggesting that interpersonal threats operate differently from platform-based pressures. These results underscore the need for adaptive fatigue-detection mechanisms, simpler platform features, greater transparency in data practices, and stronger anti-cyberbullying measures. However, the cross-sectional and self-reported design limits causal inference and may introduce common method and social desirability biases. The Java-based sample, dominated by younger, more educated, and heavier users, also restricts generalizability, while Indonesia's mobile-cost environment and collectivist online norms may influence the findings, particularly the negative relationship between cyberbullying and emotional exhaustion. The non-significant sequential mediating effects further suggest that the proposed mediation model may not fully explain these relationships. Future studies should therefore employ broader and more diverse samples and alternative research designs.

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