



# Perceived health threat, social media use, networking motivations, and life satisfaction among emerging adults in the post-COVID-19 era

## A cross-sectional study

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### Abstract

The impact of frequent social media use on subjective well-being has become a global concern, particularly during and after health threats. This study aimed to investigate the mediating roles of social media use and social networking motivations in the relationship between life satisfaction and perceived health threat (PHT) among emerging adults. A total of 259 participants aged 18 to 29 completed a questionnaire assessing sociodemographic characteristics, social media use, social networking motives, life satisfaction, and perceived health threats. Participants who perceived a higher health threat reported lower life satisfaction. Excessive social media use was also linked to reduced life satisfaction. However, when social media use was motivated by genuine social connection, it was associated with higher life satisfaction. Both social media use and networking motives partially mediated the relationship between perceived health threat and life satisfaction. Emerging adults who felt more threatened by health issues tended to engage more frequently with social media, which in turn was generally associated with decreased life satisfaction. Nevertheless, when this engagement was motivated by genuine social connection, it could contribute positively to their well-being. These insights highlight the complex role of social media in shaping life satisfaction during global health threats.

**Abbreviations:** COVID-19 = coronavirus disease 2019, SMU = social media use, SNS = social networking sites, SWB = subjective well-being.

**Keywords:** life satisfaction, perceived health threat, social media use, social networking motivations

### 1. Introduction

Following the global health threat of the COVID-19 outbreak, researchers were interested in studying the relationship between perceived threats posed by the virus, participation in social media, and the general subjective well-being of young adults. In response to the outbreak, governments acted by implementing various measures, including border closures, travel restrictions, bans on gatherings, and the suspension of public events to prevent the virus's spread.<sup>[1]</sup> COVID-19 raised the likelihood of feeling threatened<sup>[2]</sup> and led to a tightening of social interactions, mobility, and daily routines.<sup>[3]</sup> The outbreak has not only caused significant health concerns but also triggered a substantial increase in social media use

as individuals sought information, connection, and a sense of normalcy.<sup>[4]</sup> The increased ambiguity created by the global threat of COVID-19 presented challenges for emerging adults' mental health and social skills. The research is driven by the significant impact of the global health threat COVID-19, particularly among young adults who are experiencing educational and social disruptions and heightened uncertainty. Additionally, considering the surge in social media use as a virtual space for social interactions during the pandemic, the study aims to investigate its impact on emerging adults' subjective well-being.

The burdensome effects of continuous quarantine, social isolation, loneliness, disruptions of daily routine, and the rapid spread of the pandemic made COVID-19 a significant global

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Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments.

The views expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official position of their affiliated institutions.

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health threat.<sup>[5,6]</sup> Researchers found that the pandemic had effects on people's mental health and well-being because people who thought they were at risk engaged in preventive behaviors, which were then associated with anxiety,<sup>[7]</sup> fear,<sup>[8]</sup> anger and depression,<sup>[1]</sup> worry,<sup>[9]</sup> stress,<sup>[10]</sup> suicidal thoughts,<sup>[11]</sup> general mental health,<sup>[6]</sup> and subjective well-being.<sup>[12]</sup> Following this, many individuals depend on social media platforms to maintain social connections and everyday routines.<sup>[13]</sup>

Subjective well-being refers to an individual's perception of overall life satisfaction, happiness, and a sense of purpose or meaning in life. It is a subjective evaluation of one's own experiences, including both cognitive and affective assessments of one's life circumstances.<sup>[14]</sup> The cognitive aspect refers to an individual's overall sense of contentment in life, which is mostly determined by their subjective happiness with their existence. The affective aspect refers to an individual's emotional reaction to their existence and the quantity of positive and negative feelings they experience.<sup>[15]</sup> Life satisfaction differs from positive or negative emotions since it entails a cognitive assessment of one's situation concerning a perceived standard rather than an emotional reaction.<sup>[16]</sup> Recent studies showed evidence that the risk of COVID-19 has a significant association with overall subjective well-being,<sup>[6,17,18]</sup> cognitive evaluation,<sup>[19]</sup> and affective evaluation<sup>[20]</sup> beyond sociodemographic variables.

Social media refers to a collection of internet-based apps that are developed based on ideological and technological principles and whose content is created and exchanged by members.<sup>[21]</sup> Implementations done during the global health threat of the COVID-19 outbreak led to a tremendous increase in social media usage, given that people interacted over social media in the face of social distancing and changed communication styles, which became a source of fear, panic, information, and disinformation about the COVID-19 outbreak.<sup>[22,23]</sup> The ease and speed of information about the pandemic disseminated on social media resulted in a flood of information that, in turn, had a substantial influence on people's mental health and subjective well-being.<sup>[24]</sup> Previous research showed that the impacts of social media usage on subjective well-being during the pandemic were inconclusive.<sup>[13,25,26]</sup> Recent studies have explored that frequent social media use harms mental health,<sup>[27]</sup> life satisfaction,<sup>[28]</sup> risk perceptions toward the pandemic,<sup>[29]</sup> and positive effects on anxiety and depression.<sup>[30]</sup> Despite these poor outcomes, some other studies documented a correlation between the advantages of using social media, such as subjective happiness and life satisfaction,<sup>[31]</sup> social well-being and positive mental health,<sup>[32]</sup> and provided a crucial means of receiving online social support from romantic partners, peers, and significant others that reinforced subjective well-being.<sup>[33]</sup> However, other research has reported negative effects and a potential decrease in subjective well-being due to using social media excessively.<sup>[34,35]</sup>

Social networking motivations refer to the fundamental rationales that drive people to spend time on social media platforms. The uses and gratifications theory suggests that social media usage is driven by motivation, as individuals engage with it to fulfill certain needs and desires.<sup>[36]</sup> Previous research showed individuals turned to social media not only for information on the coronavirus but also for communicating with close people, building and maintaining social relationships and support, and sharing and retrieving data during the pandemic.<sup>[24,37]</sup> These motivations have a substantial impact on the frequency and intensity of using social media. Problematic social media usage refers to excessive and regular use of social media platforms to the point where it becomes challenging to refrain from it.<sup>[38]</sup> Studies showed that using social media for information and news was associated with increased well-being<sup>[39]</sup> and highlighted the beneficial effect of actively using social media in fostering strong social capital, which resulted in better well-being among university students during COVID-19.<sup>[40]</sup>

Given the conflicting findings about the relationship between social media use and life satisfaction, social networking motives (SNM) may predict positive outcomes. Previous research found

that using social media platforms for good causes, such as gaining and sharing information and socializing with existing and new connections, brought positive outcomes.<sup>[26,41]</sup> During the peak time of the coronavirus health threat, social media provided users with the opportunity to interact with others, escape from boredom, share necessary information, and pass the time.<sup>[24,42]</sup> Scholars have confirmed that social media played a crucial role during the health crisis, spreading health advice, facilitating contact and information exchange, and obtaining health-related first aid information.<sup>[43]</sup> Studies indicated that social media served as a platform for providing both social support and health information during the governmental lockdown, which helped to lessen the coronavirus burden on mental health.<sup>[44]</sup> However, previous research showed a negative association between COVID-19-related information consumption and sharing and well-being.<sup>[45]</sup>

### 1.1. Current study

The accumulated research evidence highlighting how social media use and SNM are related to perceived health threat (PHT) and life satisfaction among emerging adults suggests that the relationship between social media use, perceived health threat, social networking motivations, and life satisfaction warrants further investigation. The main aim of this research was to determine if and how social media use and motives mediated the relationship between PHT and life satisfaction. We anticipate that the emerging findings will make a sizable contribution to the understanding of the relationship between the variables under study and will make it easier for mental health professionals to tailor and implement mental health interventions to reduce the prevalence of mental health disturbances in emerging adulthood. Building on previous literature, we aimed to test the following hypotheses:

H1a. PHTs would have a negative association with life satisfaction.

H1b. PHTs would have a negative association with social media use.

H2. Social media use would have a negative effect on life satisfaction.

H3. Social media use and SNM would serve as significant mediators in the association between PHTs and life satisfaction.

## 2. Methods

### 2.1. Participants

The participants in the study consisted of 259 emerging adults. The inclusion criteria were to be in the emerging adulthood period.<sup>[46]</sup> The age of participants ranged from 18 to 29 years old, with an average of 21.85 (SD = 2.17). We selected the participants from university students using a convenience sample method. The sample consisted predominantly of females (60.7%, n = 157). The number of participants who reported their socio-economic status as the low-income socio-economic class, middle-income, and high-income was 15.1% (39), 75.7% (196), and 9.3% (24), respectively. Instagram (43.2%) was the most frequently used social media platform, followed by WhatsApp (28.2%) and YouTube (11.1%). The average time spent using social media was 3.8 hours a day. The grade point average of students ranged from 1.12 to 4.00, with an average of 2.82.

### 2.2. Procedure

We administered a questionnaire package using a paper-and-pencil format. Written informed consent was obtained before participants were involved in the study. Participants were provided with information on the objectives of the study, the voluntariness of participation, possible risks and benefits, the

**Table 1**  
**Descriptive statistics and correlations for the study variables.**

Variables	Correlations							Descriptive statistics				
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Mean	SD	Skew.	Kurt.	$\alpha$
1.Life satisfaction	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	14.76	4.21	0.04	0.10	.77
2.Perceived health threat	–.197*	–	–	–	–	–	–	13.39	4.61	0.66	0.21	.86
3.Social media use	–.239*	–.208**	–	–	–	–	–	15.83	5.11	0.12	–0.43	.84
4.Passing time	.315*	–.144**	.193*	–	–	–	–	10.04	2.64	–0.46	0.31	.84
5.Socializing	.340*	–.129**	.063	.351*	–	–	–	9.37	2.79	–0.11	0.65	.76
6.Task management	.225*	–.155**	.096	.217*	.372*	–	–	9.05	2.97	–0.23	–0.44	.80
7.Sharing information	.260*	–.181*	.188*	.230*	.392*	.547*	–	9.70	2.92	–0.26	–0.46	.85

\* $P < .01$ .

\*\* $P < .05$ .

assurance of anonymity, and confidentiality of data. Participants did not receive any kind of remuneration for volunteering. The study obtained ethical approval from the University Institutional Review Board (#03.04.2020-70). The administration of the questionnaires took approximately 15 minutes.

### 2.3. Materials

A demographic information form was administered to collect demographic characteristics, including age, gender, and socio-economic status. This form and all the administered scales were completed based on the participants' self-reports.

*Satisfaction with life scale* assesses how individuals evaluate their lives in general with a 5-item scale.<sup>[47]</sup> Participants provided responses to questions using a 5-point Likert-type scale, where 1 represented “strongly disagree” and 5 “strongly agree.” A sample item is “I am satisfied with my life.” The average score was calculated. Higher scores refer to greater life satisfaction. The internal consistency for satisfaction with life scale was 0.77 in the present study.

*Bergen social media addiction scale* an adaptation of the Bergen Facebook Addiction Scale,<sup>[48]</sup> consists of 6 items representing core use elements including salience, mood modification, tolerance, withdrawal symptoms, conflict, and relapse.<sup>[38]</sup> Participants responded to questions using a 5-point Likert-type scale, where 1 represented “very rarely” and 5 “very often.” A sample of the item from this scale is, “You have tried to cut down on the use of social media without success.” Higher scores refer to higher social media use. The Cronbach alpha coefficient for Bergen social media addiction scale was 0.84 in the present study.

*PHT* was assessed with 6 items measuring how threatened or worried they were about global health threats.<sup>[49]</sup> Participants provided responses to questions using a 5-point Likert-type scale, where 1 represented “strongly disagree” and 5 “strongly agree.” A sample of the item on this scale is “Thinking about the health threat makes me feel threatened.” Higher scores refer to a higher PHT. The internal consistency for the PHT was 0.86.

*SNM* were assessed with 4 dimensions adapted from general motivations for the Facebook Usage Aims Scale<sup>[50]</sup> by including “I use social media sites...” at the beginning of each item to denote general as opposed to Facebook-specific use. A total of 12 items were designed to assess 4 motivation subscales of social networking on a 5-point Likert-type scale, where 1 represented “strongly disagree” and 5 “strongly agree.” The items were related to motives such as socializing (e.g., “I use social media sites to stay in touch with friends and family”), information sharing (e.g., “I use social media sites to access and share information”), passing time (e.g., “I use social media sites to pass time when I'm bored”), and task management (e.g., “I use social media sites to create an activity group”). Item responses for each subscale were summed, with higher scores representing

greater corresponding motivation. Internal reliability in the current study using Cronbach alpha ranged from  $\alpha = 0.76$  to 0.85.

### 2.4. Data analytic strategy

Descriptive statistics were computed for internal consistencies, means, standard deviations, and skewness. To assess the assumption of normality for the measures, we used kurtosis and skewness scores. According to Tabachnick and Fidell,<sup>[51]</sup> values within the range of  $\pm 1$  are considered acceptable for a normal distribution. Pearson correlation coefficients were used to estimate relationships among each pair of the study's variables. Descriptive statistics and correlational analyses were computed using IBM SPSS v25.0 (Chicago), presented in Table 1. Mediation analyses were conducted using Process Macro version 4.2 and Model 4.<sup>[52]</sup> The bootstrapping approach, using 5000 resamples, was then used to estimate the 95% confidence intervals and highlight the relevance of indirect effects (Fig. 1).

## 3. Results

Correlation analysis revealed that life satisfaction had a significant negative correlation with PHT ( $r = -.197, P < .005$ ) and social media use ( $r = -.239, P < .001$ ) and significant positive correlations with passing time ( $r = .315, P < .001$ ), socializing ( $r = .340, P < .001$ ), task management ( $r = .225, P < .001$ ), and information sharing ( $r = .260, P < .001$ ). PHT also had a significant negative correlation with social media use ( $r = -.208, P < .001$ ), and SNM such as passing time ( $r = -.144, P < .05$ ), socializing ( $r = -.129, P < .05$ ), task management ( $r = -.155, P < .05$ ), and information sharing ( $r = -.181, P < .005$ ). Social media use had a significant correlation with passing time ( $r = .193, P < .005$ ) and information sharing ( $r = .188, P < .005$ ). The results of the correlational analysis are presented in Table 1.

### 3.1. Testing the mediation model

Following correlation analysis, the mediating roles of social media use and social networking motivations in the relationship between PHTs and life satisfaction were examined. The results showed that the PHT was found to be a significant negative predictor of social media use (direct effect,  $\beta = -.210, t = -3.40, P < .001$ ), passing time (direct effect,  $\beta = -.144, t = -2.34, P < .05$ ), socializing (direct effect,  $\beta = -.129, t = -2.08, P < .05$ ), task management (direct effect,  $\beta = -.155, t = -2.52, P < .05$ ), and information sharing (direct effect,  $\beta = -.181, t = -2.95, P < .005$ ). Additionally, when computing the effects of social media use, SNM, and PHT on life satisfaction, the results showed that the PHT (direct effect,  $\beta = -.183, t = -3.38, P < .001$ ), and social media use (direct effect,  $\beta = -.369, t = -6.76, P < .001$ ) negatively predicted life satisfaction, while passing time (direct effect,

$\beta = .257, t = 4.51, P < .001$ ), socializing (direct effect,  $\beta = .185, t = 3.11, P < .005$ ), and information sharing (direct effect,  $\beta = .165, t = 2.84, P < .005$ ) positively predicted life satisfaction. The results are presented in Table 2 (standardized coefficients).

The results showed a significant positive effect of PHT on life satisfaction through social media use (indirect effect,  $\beta = .077, t = 2.74$ ) and a significant negative effect of PHT on life satisfaction through social networking motivations: passing time (indirect effect,  $\beta = -.037, t = -1.94$ ), and information sharing (indirect effect,  $\beta = -.024, t = -1.80$ ), but not through socializing and task management. Additionally, with the presence of all mediators in the model, the PHT remained a significant predictor of life satisfaction (direct effect,  $\beta = -.167, P < .001$ ). The confidence interval excludes zero; the fact that the confidence interval does not contain zero supports the model. Hence, social media use, passing time, and information sharing partially mediated the relationship between PHTs and life satisfaction. The mediation analysis summary is presented in Table 3 (standardized coefficients).

#### 4. Discussion

The study investigated whether there are significant relationships between life satisfaction and PHTs, social media use, and SNM, and the extent to which life satisfaction is predicted by

these variables. The overall correlation analysis revealed a significant association among the variables under investigation. Firstly, life satisfaction showed a significant negative correlation with PHTs and social media use. This result supports the hypothesis (H1a). The outcome aligns with previous studies,<sup>[6,28,33]</sup> which suggest that individuals who perceive a health threat tend to report lower levels of life satisfaction. This is likely due to the significant challenges, uncertainty, and stressors brought about by the health threat, including concerns about health, finances, and social isolation. Additionally, a negative correlation between life satisfaction and social media use indicated that excessive use of social media might be associated with decreased life satisfaction, confirming existing studies<sup>[26,34]</sup> and supporting hypothesis H1b. While social media emerged as a crucial instrument of communication, including facilitating interaction and the exchange of information, promoting the dissemination of health advice, and providing first aid-related information,<sup>[43]</sup> the proliferation of inaccurate data on social media contributes to an increase in anxiety and fear, leading to lower levels of life satisfaction.<sup>[53]</sup>

Life satisfaction showed positive correlations with social networking motivations such as passing time, socializing, task management, and information sharing over the Internet. These positive associations suggest that engaging in specific social

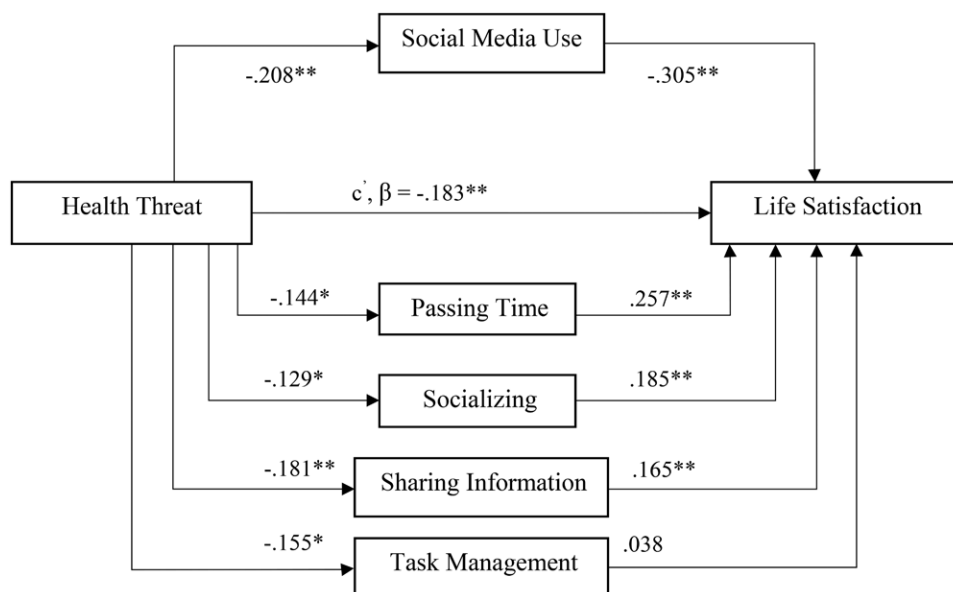


Figure 1. The result of parallel model indicating the association between variables.

**Table 2**  
Standardized structural path coefficients and 95% bootstrap confidence intervals.

Consequent	Antecedent	Coeff	SE	t	P
Social media use	Perceived health threat	-.208	.067	-3.40	<.001
Passing time	Perceived health threat	-.144	.035	-2.34	<.05
		$R^2 = 0.02. F(1, 257) = 5.46; P < .05$			
Socializing	Perceived health threat	-.129	.037	-2.08	<.05
Sharing information	Perceived health threat	-.181	.039	-2.95	<.005
		$R^2 = 0.03. F(1, 257) = 8.67; P < .005$			
Life satisfaction	X (perceived health threat)	-.183	.049	-3.38	<.001
	M (social media use)	-.370	.045	-6.76	<.001
	M (passing time)	.257	.091	4.51	<.001
	M (socializing)	.185	.090	3.11	<.005
	M (sharing information)	.165	.084	2.84	<.005
		$R^2 = 0.31. F(5, 253) = 22.85; P < .001$			

Coeff = standardized coefficient, M = mediator variables, SE = standard error, X = independent variable.

**Table 3**  
**Total, direct, and indirect effects of perceived health threat on life satisfaction.**

Total effect (PHT ==> LS)		Direct effect (PHT ==> LS)		Path	Indirect effect	95% Confidence interval		t
Coeff.	P-value	Coeff.	P-value			Coeff.	Lower bound	
-.180	.005	-.167	.001	PHT ==> SMU ==> LS	.077	.028	.137	2.73
				PHT ==> PT ==> LS	-.037	-.076	-.003	-1.95
				PHT ==> SOC ==> LS	-.023	-.062	.001	-1.42
				PHT ==> TM ==> LS	-.004	-.032	.019	-0.34
				PHT ==> IS ==> LS	-.028	-.062	-.002	-1.71

IS = information sharing (standardized coefficient), LF = life satisfaction, PHT = perceived health threat, PT = passing time, SMU = social media use, SOC = socializing, TM = task management.

media activities positively contributes to one's overall life satisfaction. This aligns with previous studies suggesting social media became a platform to create relationships, connect with significant others, and share stories and information during health crises as it fulfills specific needs.<sup>[33,37]</sup> These findings suggest that social media can offer enjoyable and engaging distractions, contributing to relaxation and reduction of stress, fostering social interactions, building and maintaining relationships, feeling a sense of belonging, organizing tasks, finding resources, collaborating, feelings of accomplishment and control, learning, and a sense of being informed, which boosts life satisfaction during challenging times. Further, it supports the principles of the uses and gratifications theory, highlighting how individuals actively choose and utilize social media forms to meet their diverse needs and ultimately enhance their overall satisfaction with life.<sup>[36]</sup> When these needs are met, it leads to gratification, which in turn can contribute to positive outcomes like better life satisfaction in this study.<sup>[39,40]</sup> The results supported the hypothesis of H2.

Furthermore, the results indicated that the PHT had significant effects on the use of social media and underlying the motivations for social networking, including passing time, socializing on social media, information sharing, and directly influencing life satisfaction of emerging adulthood. Previous studies showed that during heightened health threats, individuals tend to increase their consumption of social media to seek information and reassurance.<sup>[23,24]</sup> In this respect, the results suggest that frequent social media use and increased PHTs are associated with lower life satisfaction. Conversely, certain motivations for using social networking platforms, such as seeking or sharing information and engaging with connections, are associated with higher levels of life satisfaction. This implies that those who perceived a higher health threat were likely to engage in different social networking activities, perhaps as a protective mechanism, which aligns with prior study findings.<sup>[31,42,43,54]</sup>

The results of the mediation analysis showed that the association between PHT and life satisfaction was influenced to some extent by the usage of social media and social networking motivations. The PHT had an indirect influence on life satisfaction through social media use. This highlights how social media use might harm individuals' life satisfaction during times of crisis. In such challenging times, excessive social media use may lead to negative outcomes, such as social comparison or information overload,<sup>[55,56]</sup> which can diminish life satisfaction. Furthermore, the results showed that the indirect effect of PHT on life satisfaction through social networking motivations was varied, suggesting the reasons behind social media use might differ widely.<sup>[24,33]</sup> Partial mediation suggests that the usage of social media may have both advantages and disadvantages, depending on the specific motivations for using it. Social media use has a positive impact on life satisfaction as it helps individuals cope with health threats by providing them with updates, guidance, and support. It also allows them to stay connected with loved ones, share their anxieties and experiences, and take breaks from negative news. The results showed that the passage of time and sharing of information had significant indirect effects, but socializing and task management did not have a significant

mediating effect in the association. This suggests that the way individuals use social media might have different impacts on their overall life satisfaction.<sup>[37]</sup> While the use of social networks for constructive purposes such as passing time and sharing information increases individuals' life satisfaction, excessive or unconscious social media use may have the opposite effect. Social networking motivations can increase individuals' social capital by strengthening social ties, fostering a sense of belonging and purpose, and thus contribute to life satisfaction. The findings can be explained through the framework of the Uses and Gratifications Theory. The increased PHT likely created a need for information, reassurance, connection, and engagement in specific activities such as using social media to pass time and share information that could ultimately have a positive impact on life satisfaction during this challenging time. The results are consistent with previous studies,<sup>[26,27,39,40]</sup> hence confirming the study hypotheses. Purposeful, conscientious usage of social media, as well as balanced management, may be beneficial to preserving life satisfaction.

The results of the study have several practical implications for individuals, social media platforms, policymakers, and professionals. Individuals can increase their life satisfaction by balancing social media use with constructive purposes such as socializing, sharing information, or task management. Social media platforms can support this process by developing features that encourage positive interactions among users (e.g., community-oriented groups, educational content) and by taking measures against negative content that increases health threats. Policymakers can reduce PHTs by improving access to health services and organizing health information campaigns, thereby encouraging individuals to participate more actively in social and digital interactions. Professionals may consider offering helpful tools and guidance on using social media effectively as a coping method during health crises. Such efforts could include advocating for positive and healthy online conduct, fostering inclusive online communities, and enabling easy access to reliable information and mental health resources. The results underscore the importance of the Uses and Gratifications Theory in comprehending individuals' incentives for using social media during emergencies. Professionals may use this theoretical framework to create treatments and design interventions that align with users' diverse needs and preferences, ultimately enhancing their satisfaction with life. Considering the inverse association between using social media and life satisfaction, professionals may consider raising awareness and implementing strategies to restrict excessive social media consumption, particularly during times of heightened threat. Providing individuals with information regarding the potential adverse consequences of excessive social media usage on subjective well-being could be advantageous.

#### 4.1. Limitations

It is important to note several limitations of this study before interpreting the results. Initially, the data came from a cross-sectional design, which does not allow causal inferences to be

drawn regarding the relations examined in the path analysis. Further research is needed to establish causality and explore the specific mechanisms by which social media use might impact life satisfaction. Specifically, experimental or longitudinal designs are needed to provide insights into the causal relationships and the effectiveness of interventions aimed at improving life satisfaction during health crises. Moreover, future studies should utilize other data-gathering methodologies to investigate the factors, such as qualitative methods. Second, the specific features of the sample may limit the generalizability of the results. How global health issues impact subpopulations, including the elderly, adolescents, or people whose jobs have been disrupted, needs more investigation. Future studies on attitudes toward health threats and subjective well-being among different subpopulations will therefore benefit from recruiting culturally diverse samples.

A key limitation of our study is its generalizability across cultural contexts, as the sample of 259 emerging adults was recruited exclusively in Turkey. With a significant focus on family and community ties, especially in the post-COVID-19 era, Turkey offers a distinctive cultural setting that combines individualistic and collectivist values. In this context, social media use and networking motivations, such as socializing or sharing information, may be heavily influenced by cultural norms that prioritize emotional support within close-knit communities. Turkish emerging adults, for example, might use social media to keep up social and familial ties, which could increase the benefits of social support motivations in terms of life satisfaction. Furthermore, Turkey socio-economic context, including disparities in technology access and health threat perceptions shaped by the country's pandemic response, may limit the applicability of our findings to other settings. To increase the global applicability of our findings, future research should adopt cross-cultural designs to examine how these mechanisms function in other populations, such as in East Asian or Western contexts, where social media use patterns and reactions to health threats may differ.

## 5. Conclusions

The current study offers useful insights into the association between PHTs, social media use, SNM, and life satisfaction. The findings suggest that social media use and SNM played important roles in influencing life satisfaction during the pandemic. The study also underscores the importance of balancing the use of social media with other activities that promote well-being, such as spending time with loved ones and engaging in hobbies and interests. These results have practical implications for promoting subjective well-being during the global health crisis, including encouraging individuals to engage in positive activities on social media and promoting SNM that can enhance life satisfaction.

## Author contributions

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