



On the Dual Side of Personality Traits: How They Predict Social Media Disorder and Social Well-Being on Social Media

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Abstract

With the increasing global adoption of social media, its impact on individuals has become multifaceted. On one hand, social media can enhance users' sense of connection, support, and belonging, referred to as Social Well-Being on Social Media (SWB-SM). On the other hand, excessive or compulsive use can interfere with daily functioning, referred to in a non-clinical sense as Social Media Disorder (SMD). Moreover, individuals differ in how they engage with social media; personality traits may shape these engagement patterns, potentially leading to beneficial or detrimental outcomes. This engagement pattern may also vary across cultural contexts that differ in social values and norms. To evaluate this, this study examined whether SWB-SM and SMD can be predicted by the same personality trait across two cultural groups. Data was collected through an online cross-sectional survey from 309 Arab participants (Age: $M=34.10$, $SD=7.82$, Females=54.69%) and 259 UK participants (Age: $M=38.72$, $SD=11.23$, Females=57.53%). Multivariate multiple linear regression analyses were conducted, for both Arab and UK samples separately, to examine how Big Five personality traits predict both SWB-SM and SMD. Neuroticism, in the Arab sample, and conscientiousness, in the UK sample, predicted both outcomes. These findings highlight that the same personality trait can shape both positive and negative behaviors on social media, and this pattern differs across cultural contexts. This highlights the need for personalized and culturally sensitive digital well-being interventions that mitigate problematic use while fostering positive social media experiences.

Keywords Social well-being · Social media disorder · Personality traits · Social media

1 Introduction

As of 2024, social media has attracted 5.17 billion users worldwide, solidifying its role as an integral part of daily life (Stacy Jo Dixon, 2025). Over the past decade, it has transformed into a space for individuals to connect privately with family and friends while also engaging publicly with broader audiences, such as acquaintances and colleagues (Bayer et al., 2020; Waterloo et al., 2018). This evolution has given rise to interactive digital platforms that

Extended author information available on the last page of the article

facilitate the creation, sharing, and discussion of user-generated content, enabling seamless communication and collaboration across diverse networks (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). For example, these platforms empower users to establish their identity, explore others' availability, share and consume content, communicate, and build relationships (Ruggiero, 2000). By supporting such interactions, social media encourages participation in diverse social and interactive activities, promoting collaboration in both personal and professional context. As a result, social media can serve as an enabler of social well-being for both individuals and society.

Social media offers many benefits for its users, such as fostering social connection and providing social support that can enhance an individual's overall social well-being. According to Uses and Gratifications Theory (Ruggiero, 2000), individuals actively engage with social media to satisfy needs for connection, entertainment, and emotional fulfillment. Active participation on social media, such as posting content or sending messages, can increase well-being through the gratification, social support and positive feedback users receive from others (Valkenburg, 2022). From the perspective of Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2012), such interactions can fulfil psychological needs for relatedness and autonomy, as users experience a sense of belonging and personal agency through authentic self-expression. When these intrinsic needs are met, social media use can promote greater satisfaction, motivation, and overall well-being (Sheldon & Titova, 2023). However, excessive or passive use of social media could also have a negative impact on an individual's well-being. Passive participation may pose risk for rumination or depressive symptoms, due to envy and social comparison (Verduyn et al., 2017). Social comparison can arise from watching idealized versions of others' lives on social media making individuals feel they are behind or inadequate, thereby lowering well-being. Furthermore, users experiencing difficulties in real-life could turn to social media to escape from negative emotions, such as stress, loneliness and dissatisfaction. This concept is explained by the Compensatory Internet Use Theory (Kardefelt-Winther, 2014), which posits that individuals may turn to the internet to compensate for their unmet real-life needs, psychological problems or to escape negative emotions. Such behavior, although serving as a temporary relief, may reinforce maladaptive coping mechanisms, risking the development of potential problematic use (Wegmann et al., 2023). These findings highlight the dual nature of social media, which can have both beneficial and harmful effects on a person's wellbeing.

Personality traits play a crucial role in shaping how individuals engage with social media, influencing usage motivations and behaviors (Lin et al., 2017). Personality refers to a specific pattern of thinking, feeling, or behaving that remains consistent over time and across relevant situations (Holzman, 2025). It is characterized as a unique manner a person responds to social contexts and adapts to the social dynamics of their surroundings ("Personality" & American Psychological Association., 2025). Accordingly, individual differences in personality traits may give rise to distinct patterns of behaviors, shaping how people engage on social media. For example, more extraverted individuals are more frequent social media users (Correa et al., 2010), likely driven by their active engagement to maintain and expand their social networks (Ross et al., 2009). Whereas those high in neuroticism may tend to engage excessively on social media to seek attention and social support that may be missing from their offline lives (Ross et al., 2009). On the other hand, individuals high in conscientiousness may use social media to stay informed, maintain social connections, and provide support to others, reflecting their goal-oriented and prosocial motivations for social

media engagement (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2017). Additionally, individuals who are more open to new experiences may spend more time using social media exploring new ideas and opportunities for connection (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2017). Those with more agreeableness may use social media to communicate, maintain relationships and provide support to others rather than for seeking attention (Seidman, 2013). Consequently, personality traits may inadvertently influence both the positive and negative outcomes of social media use.

Differences in personality can explain why some individuals experience greater benefits from social media use than others, perhaps due to the way they perceive, experience and respond to online social interactions. For instance, research highlights that individuals high in extraversion, conscientiousness and agreeableness traits tend to report higher levels of subjective well-being on social media (Stead & Bibby, 2017), as their sociability, self-discipline, and positive social orientation may promote more meaningful online interactions. On the other hand, those high in neuroticism may experience lower subjective well-being due to heightened emotional reactivity and sensitivity to negative online experiences (Diener et al., 2003). Subjective well-being reflects an individual's personal evaluation of their own life satisfaction and happiness (Diener, 1984). While subjective well-being captures important aspects of personal happiness, it does not fully account for how individuals perceive their functioning within a broader social context. This is captured by social well-being, which reflects an individual's appraisal of their circumstances and functioning in society, encompassing dimensions such as social integration, acceptance, coherence, contribution, and actualization (Keyes, 1998). Although prior studies have identified associations between personality traits and social well-being (Hill et al., 2012; Joshanloo et al., 2012; Yu et al., 2021), limited research has examined these relationships within the context of social media use. As humans are social beings, their attitudes, beliefs, values and behavior are influenced by their social environment, including media and community (Dhiman, 2023). Therefore, examining social well-being within social media context is important, as these platforms have become a central space for connection and communication, a key gap this research aims to address.

Personality traits may also influence the development of problematic social media use. This type of problematic engagement is often described using the concept of Social Media Disorder (SMD), which refers to a set of maladaptive symptoms, such as preoccupation with social media, withdrawal-like experiences, interpersonal conflict, escapism (Eijnden et al., 2016). Although SMD is not an officially recognized clinical diagnosis in classification systems (e.g., DSM-5), it incorporates features that resemble those observed in behavioral addiction frameworks (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Consistent with the cognitive-behavioral model of problematic internet use (Davis, 2001), researchers propose that maladaptive cognitions, potentially linked to low self-esteem, anxiety, or social isolation, may contribute to excessive social media use as a way of regulating emotions or coping with everyday difficulties (Vaghefi & Ahmed, 2021). Building on this theoretical perspective, empirical research has examined the association of personality traits with social media disorder. For example, studies found that high openness and conscientiousness were negatively associated with social media disorder, suggesting that these traits may serve as protective factors against the development of social media addiction (Ahmed et al., 2022; Andreassen et al., 2013; Lee, 2019). Furthermore, researchers suggest that individuals high in neuroticism tend to engage more frequently with social media as a strategy to cope with or regulate negative emotions they experience (Andreassen et al., 2012). Moreover, individuals with

low agreeableness tend to use social media problematically (Meynadier et al., 2024), possibly because they have difficulty forming friendships in real life and may turn to social media as a way to compensate for this lack of offline connection (Ross et al., 2009). These findings are in line with the Interaction of Person-Affect-Cognition-Execution (I-PACE) model which suggests that social media disorder emerges from the dynamic interplay of individual characteristics, motivations, situational factors, and cognitive and affective elements (Brand et al., 2016, 2019).

Findings on the associations between social well-being and social media disorder with personality traits vary significantly across cultural contexts. This may arise due to the influence of cultural traditions on personality traits and behaviors, referred to as enculturation (Hofstede & McCrae, 2004). Enculturation is the acquisition of cultural characteristics and group norms by an individual and assimilates to the acquired practices and values (Shimahara, 1970). In particular, differences between individualistic and collectivist cultures may influence how personality traits relate to online behaviors. Individualistic cultures emphasize autonomy, self-reliance, and personal achievement, whereas collectivist cultures prioritize relational harmony, group belonging, and interdependence (Hofstede, 2011; Hofstede & McCrae, 2004). Previous research demonstrates that people from individualistic societies tend to show more personally oriented personality traits, whereas those from collectivist societies tend to display more socially oriented personality traits (Yang et al., 2006). One possible explanation is that in individualistic cultures, individuals are typically responsible for their own traits and tend to behave according to their own attitudes rather than group norms. In contrast, in collectivist cultures, behavior is primarily guided by in-group norms and the focus on maintaining harmonious relationships, and therefore, tend to exert greater self-control to inhibit personal desires and regulate emotional expression (Seeley & Gardner, 2003). Hence, culture introduces variations in the degree an individual restricts or expresses the manifestation of their personality traits.

Research shows that individuals from collectivist societies tend to show higher affective empathy. As emotions are contagious, this may translate into more emotionally expressive and empathetic spaces on social media (Errasti et al., 2018). This suggests that collectivist contexts may foster greater accommodation of other people's emotions and traits, whereas individualistic contexts may place higher importance on personal responsibility, where individuals are expected to manage and regulate their own traits. Consequently, individuals with the same personality traits may engage with social media in different ways depending on their cultural environment, as also evidenced in previous research (Atabek, 2019). As a result, these differences in engagement may lead to variations in the perceived benefits for social media, as well as the motivations shaping these engagements, ultimately influencing social well-being and susceptibility to problematic social media use. For this reason, examining these associations in both individualistic and collectivist samples is important not only for identifying possible cultural differences, but also for determining whether the observed associations are consistent across cultural contexts or specific to one setting. This is relevant in the case of social well-being on social media and social media disorder, as both are closely tied to socially and culturally shaped norms regarding interaction, belonging, and appropriate online engagement.

Methodological differences across studies may also help interpret why findings on the associations between personality traits, social well-being, and social media disorder have not always been fully comparable. Differences in the measures used for personality traits or

the social well-being and social media disorder can account for these differences. In addition, the inclusion of different control variables such as age or gender, as well as different analytical models can contribute to these differences. Moreover, the sampling strategies and timing can also influence the research outcomes. Therefore, to determine whether any observed differences in these associations are attributable to cultural context and not methodological variation, it is important to examine them using the same measures, comparable sampling strategies, timing, and the same analytical model across distinct cultural groups.

The present study aims to investigate this association across two distinct cultural contexts: Arabs representing collectivist cultural orientation and UK representing individualistic cultural orientation (Hofstede, 2011). Each sample is examined separately using the same research design, measures and analytical procedures to explore whether the same personality traits predicts both outcomes within each cultural context. This research is novel in several ways. First, it examines the relationship between the personality traits, social well-being on social media, and social media disorder, focusing on whether the same personality traits predict both outcomes, using the same methodology in both cultures. Second, it examines the under-researched topic of social well-being on social media. Finally, this study provides insights into an under-explored cultural context by including Arab participants and comparing their results to those from a Western context, while using the same measure and sampling process. The study addresses the following research questions (RQ):

RQ1: Can same personality traits predict both social well-being on social media social media disorder?

RQ2: What are the associations of personality traits with social well-being on social media and social media disorder in each cultural context?

2 Methodology

2.1 Methodological Approach

This study was based on a cross-sectional survey, designed using a web-based survey platform, SurveyMonkey (<https://www.surveymonkey.com>). The data was collected from participants in the United Kingdom (UK) and Arab Gulf Council Cooperation (GCC) countries. The participants for the study were recruited through Prolific (<http://www.prolific.com>) for the UK and TGM Research (<https://tgmresearch.com>) for the Arab GCC. The questionnaire was designed in English and translated to Arabic using the back-translation method (Brislin, 1970). The data was collected between late October 2023 and mid-December 2023. The data for this study was collected as part of a larger study (see the Supplementary Material 1 for more details on the study design).

2.1.1 Ethical Approval

The study received ethics approval from the Ethics Committee of the first author's Institutional Review Board (IRB). Before starting to answer the questionnaire, participants were asked to read the participant information sheet and requested to give their informed consent. At this stage, participants were also informed of their right to opt out of the study at any time. The participants who met the inclusion criteria and had given their informed consent

were invited to complete the full survey by providing them with the questionnaire link. Participants were provided with monetary compensation for their participation in this study.

2.1.2 Sample Size

The sample size for this study was calculated using Green's (1991) formula for multiple regression analysis, which recommends a minimum sample size of $50 + 8 \times p$, where p represents the number of independent variables using (Green, 1991). Given that our regression models included five predictors, the minimum required sample size was 90 participants. To ensure sufficient statistical power and correlation stability, we aimed for a substantially larger sample size, targeting at least 250 participants per cultural group, consistent with previous methodological recommendations (Schönbrodt & Perugini, 2013).

2.1.3 Participants

A total of 568 participants were included in the analysis of this study, amongst which, 309 were from the Arab Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and 259 were from the United Kingdom (UK). Participants were recruited using TGM online platform, which is a multi-country online research company (<https://tgmresearch.com/>). The UK sample consisted of participants from England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, while the Arab sample consisted of participants from the GCC countries including Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Qatar. We decided to limit our Arab sample to the GCC countries because of their unique relationships, geographic proximity, similar political systems founded on Islamic beliefs, and shared objectives (Christie, 1987). In addition to that, the countries of the GCC region display similar digital penetration rates (Shankar, 2025) and financial levels (Qanas & Sawyer, 2024).

A pilot test was conducted with a small group of UK and Arab participants to ensure the clarity of the survey items. Based on their feedback, ambiguous or unclear terms were rephrased or replaced with other alternatives, ensuring that all items were clearly understood by both samples. For example, in the introductory statement preceding the survey items, the term social media was emphasized in bold and color to ensure participants clearly understood that the items referred to the social media context. The questionnaire included attention checks, and those participants who failed them were excluded from the analysis. In addition to that, participants who gave monotonous, inconsistent or incomplete responses were also excluded from the analysis, to ensure data quality.

Participants who completed the survey too quickly were also removed from the analysis to ensure data quality. A response was classified as rapid if its completion time was 50% or less of the median duration to complete the survey. We use the 50% criterion based on previous work that highlighted the association between lower response quality in web surveys with shorter completion times (Cornesse & Blom, 2023; Greszki et al., 2014). To obtain a reliable estimate of the median, responses completed using extremely long completion times were excluded from this calculation. These extremely

long completion times could reflect interruptions when completing the survey or completing the survey across multiple sessions. Specifically, responses exceeding twice the expected survey duration were not considered when computing the median. For example, if the median completion time was 20 min, the exclusion threshold would be 10 min, and those participants who completed the survey in 10 min or less will be excluded. The original sample contained 919 participants ($n=425$ from the UK sample, $n=494$ from the Arab sample), out of which 48 participants ($n=33$ from the UK sample, $n=15$ from the Arab sample) were removed due to completing the survey in a hasty manner. The rest of the 303 participants ($n=133$ from the UK sample, $n=170$ from the Arab sample) were removed due to failing attention checks, providing inconsistent or incomplete answers and not meeting the eligibility criteria of the study.

The eligibility criteria for participation in this study included that the participant had to be 18 years or older, active user of social media platforms as well as messaging services and self-identify as British or Arab. The age range of the participants is from 18 to 60 years. We decided to limit the age to 60 years to address the challenge of recruiting Arab participants of this age. The mean age range in the Arab group was 34.10 ($SD=7.82$) and 38.72 ($SD=11.23$) in the UK group. Additionally, in the Arab sample, 169 (54.69%) were females participants, and in the UK sample, 149 (57.53%) were female participants.

2.2 Measures

2.2.1 Big 5 Inventory-10 (BFI-10)

The Big 5 Inventory-10 (BFI-10) scale measures the Big Five personality traits developed by Rammstedt and John (2007). The Big Five (McCrae & John, 1992) framework presents a set of personality traits that have been used extensively in research to explain personality differences among people. These five traits are *agreeableness* (individuals who are kind, cooperative, empathetic, trusting, modest and friendly), *extraversion* (individuals who are outgoing, energetic, sociable, assertive, and enjoy positive emotions), *conscientiousness* (individuals who are organized, self-disciplined, reliable, goal-oriented, and adhere to rules), *openness* (individuals who are imaginative, curious, adventurous, open to new experiences), and *neuroticism* (individuals who are self-conscious, emotionally unstable, underconfident, prone to stress and anxious). This scale has 10 questions and are answered by using a five-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree). The score for each personality trait is calculated by using two questions where one is a reverse score. Additionally, previous studies have shown that BFI-10 scale has acceptable internal consistency (Costa Mastrascusa, et al., 2023; Lovik et al., 2017).

The statement “I have a few artistic interests,” which measures openness in the original scale was reworded to “I have limited or no artistic interest” for improved clarity and translatability. This is because the statement in the original scale proved to be confusing to the participants in both Arabic and English languages, during the pilot testing.

2.2.2 Social Media Disorder

Social media disorder (SMD) was measured using the scale developed by Van der Eijden et al. (2016). This scale consists of nine items which corresponds to nine diagnostic criteria: *preoccupation* (constant thinking about social media), *tolerance* (needing increasing use to achieve the same satisfaction), *withdrawal* (feeling uneasy when unable to use it), *persistence* (unsuccessful attempts to cut down), *escape* (using social media to relieve negative feelings), *problems* (use causing academic, social, or daily functioning issues), *deception* (lying about time spent online), *displacement* (neglecting other activities), and *conflict* (interpersonal disputes arising from use). Each of these items is assessed by one question for each which were answered by using a five-point Likert scale (1 = never to 5 = always). For example, preoccupation was assessed using the following question “During the past year, have you regularly found that you can’t think of anything else but the moment that you will be able to use social media again?” The total SMD score is calculated by summing all the nine dimensions, resulting in the range of total SMD to be from 9 to 45. Cronbach’s Alpha was used to assess the reliability of the SMD scale (Arab sample: $\alpha=0.792$, UK sample: $\alpha=0.875$), and the measurement showed a good reliability of the scale in both samples.

2.2.3 Social Well-Being on Social Media

The survey questions used in this research to assess Social Well-Being on social media (SWB-SM) were adapted from the Social Well-Being Scale developed by Keyes (1998). This scale described social well-being as a dimension of overall well-being, which reflects how an individual evaluates their status and function in the community and subdivided this into five dimensions: *social integration* (sense of belonging to a community and recognizing the importance of connection), *social acceptance* (a positive view of others based on trust and belief in the goodness of others), *social contribution* (belief that one adds values to the society and plays a meaningful role in its development), *social actualization* (a hopeful outlook on the potential and direction of society as well as belief in the importance of citizenship and social institutions) and *social coherence* (an understanding of the quality, organization and functioning of the social world). In the adapted version used in the current study, the wording of the scale was modified to fit the online context. Specifically, terms referring to offline or real-world social contexts were adjusted to reflect the social media environment (e.g., “community” was replaced with “online community”). Given the lack of validated measures designed to assess social well-being in online settings, this adaptation builds on prior research linking social media use and social well-being (Bekalu et al., 2019), extending the theoretical framework to capture perceptions of social functioning within digital spaces.

The survey consists of 15 questions, with 3 questions assessing each of the five dimensions of social well-being. These questions are answered on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree with 7 = strongly agree). The 3 questions are summed up for each question to get the total for each dimension. Therefore, each dimension of SWB-SM is ranged from 3 to 21. The survey questions used to assess Big Five personality

traits, Social Media Disorder and Social Well Being on Social Media are presented in Supplementary Material 2.

2.3 Data Analysis

The data was imported and analyzed using statistical software JASP (version 0.18.1.0) (JASP, 2024) and R (version 4.4.2) (R Core Team, 2024). Descriptive statistics were computed to summarize the mean and standard deviation of the study variables. The kurtosis and skewness of the variables were between ± 2 which means that the data exhibits a normal distribution (Curran et al., 1996).

As the dataset contains five dimensions for social well-being on social media measurement: integration, acceptance, contribution, actualization and coherence, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted, to explore whether these dimensions can be represented as a single variable. Different fit indices are reported to evaluate the model fit in CFA analysis. Firstly, chi-square test is reported, however this is very sensitive to sample sizes (Hox & Bechger, 1998) and with a large sample size, this test can be significant (Hox & Bechger, 1998; Iacobucci, 2010). Standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) is also reported for CFA analysis, which indicates to what extent the model does not fit the data, and this value is more robust towards normality assumption violations. SRMR values less than 0.08 indicate an acceptable model fit, with 0.05 being a conservative threshold (Hooper et al., 2008; Hu & Bentler, 1999). The internal consistency of the model is also reported, which is a measure of whether the different variables in the factor are 'pulling in the same direction' (Stensen & Lydersen, 2022). McDonald's Omega is reported, with values above 0.70 considered indicative of acceptable internal consistency (Stensen & Lydersen, 2022).

After the CFA analysis, multivariate multiple linear regression analysis, was used to examine whether the single factor representing social well-being on social media (SWB-SM) and social media disorder (SMD) could be predicted by the Big 5 personality traits. The analysis also explored whether the same personality traits could predict both SWB-SM and SMD in the Arab and UK samples. The assumption of homoscedasticity was assessed by plotting the residuals against predicted values, and assumption of homoscedasticity was met. Additionally, the normality and linearity assumptions were not violated. Moreover, all VIF values were below 2, indicating no multicollinearity between the variables. The outliers which are standardized residuals of more than ± 3 standard deviations of the prediction line were removed prior to the final analysis.

3 Results

3.1 Participant Characteristics

The participant demographics for the 309 Arab and 259 UK participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Participant demographics

	Arab Total (n = 309)	UK Total (n = 259)
Age		
Mean, <i>SD</i>	34.10 (7.82)	38.72 (11.23)
Range	18 – 60	18 – 60
Gender (n, %)		
Female	169 (54.69)	149 (57.53)
Male	140 (45.31)	110 (42.47)
Education level (n, %)		
Primary education (elementary)	2 (0.65)	2 (0.77)
Secondary education (high school)	39 (12.62)	75 (28.96)
Pursuing or completed vocational or technical education	17 (5.50)	45 (17.38)
Pursuing or completed undergraduate degree (bachelor's)	217 (70.23)	97 (37.45)
Pursuing or completed postgraduate degree (master's, Ph.D., etc.)	34 (11.00)	40 (15.44)
Employment status (n, %)		
Full-time employment	5 (1.62)	3 (1.16)
Part-time employment	19 (6.15)	18 (6.95)
Run my own business	3 (0.97)	8 (3.09)
Unemployed	9 (2.91)	9 (3.48)
Student	24 (7.77)	20 (7.72)
Retired	22 (7.12)	10 (3.86)
Homemaker	38 (12.30)	40 (15.44)
Other	189 (61.17)	151 (58.30)

The summary statistics (mean and standard deviation) for the variables in this study are presented in Table 2.

3.2 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Confirmatory Factor Analysis was performed on the 5 dimensions of Social Well-Being on Social Media scale to assess whether all the 5 dimensions can be represented by a single factor, referred to as 'SWB-SM'.

In the Arab sample, Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy had an overall value of 0.834 and Bartlett's test of sphericity was $\chi^2(10)=423.073$, $p<.001$. These findings confirm that factor analysis is suitable for this sample. The CFA yielded the following fit indices, $\chi^2(5)=4.960$ ($p=0.421$) and SRMR=0.016. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was 0.464, and the scale demonstrated good reliability with a Coefficient Omega (ω) of 0.807. These fit indices indicate that the model is a good fit, and we can use a single factor to represent 5 dimensions of the Social Well-Being scale.

In the UK sample, KMO measure of sampling adequacy had an overall value of 0.780 and Bartlett's test of sphericity was $\chi^2(10)=397.828$, $p<.001$. These findings confirm that factor analysis is suitable for this sample. The CFA yielded the following fit indices, $\chi^2(5)=30.679$ ($p=<.001$) and SRMR=0.041. The AVE in this sample was slightly higher

Table 2 Descriptive statistics of the study variables

Variables	Arab			UK			Culture differences
	Total (n=309)	Females (n=169)	Males (n=140)	Total (n=259)	Females (n=149)	Males (n=110)	
Personality traits							
Extraversion	5.92 (1.31)	5.99 (1.29)	5.83 (1.33)	5.88 (1.94)	5.85 (2.03)	5.92 (1.82)	$t(566)=-0.311$, $p=0.756$, $d=-0.026$
Agreeableness	7.85 (1.55)	7.78 (1.57)	7.94 (1.52)	7.11 (1.84)	7.01 (1.93)	7.25 (1.73)	$t(566)=-5.194$, $p<.001$, $d=-0.438$
Conscientiousness	8.19 (1.56)	8.02 (1.57)	8.39 (1.52)	7.81 (1.67)	7.84 (1.62)	7.77 (1.74)	$t(566)=-2.779$, $p=0.006$, $d=-0.234$
Neuroticism	5.14 (1.98)	5.47 (1.95)	4.74 (1.94)	6.09 (2.27)	6.50 (2.29)	5.53 (2.12)	$t(566)=5.294$, $p<.001$, $d=0.446$
Openness	7.23 (1.53)	7.18 (1.60)	7.28 (1.45)	7.30 (1.92)	7.20 (1.98)	7.44 (1.85)	$t(566)=0.514$, $p=0.607$, $d=0.043$
Social well-being on social media dimensions							
Integration	13.15 (4.14)	13.19 (4.18)	13.11 (4.11)	12.20 (4.49)	11.64 (4.46)	12.96 (4.44)	$t(566)=-2.624$, $p=0.009$, $d=-0.221$
Acceptance	12.39 (2.98)	12.30 (2.99)	12.50 (2.98)	12.31 (3.19)	12.44 (3.12)	12.14 (3.29)	$t(566)=-0.306$, $p=0.759$, $d=-0.026$
Contribution	13.88 (3.83)	13.80 (3.72)	13.99 (3.98)	12.68 (4.31)	12.05 (4.34)	13.55 (4.13)	$t(566)=-3.512$, $p<.001$, $d=-0.296$
Actualization	14.55 (3.52)	14.53 (3.44)	14.58 (3.62)	12.21 (3.91)	11.91 (3.48)	12.61 (4.40)	$t(566)=-7.526$, $p<.001$, $d=-0.634$
Coherence	14.52 (3.07)	14.58 (3.18)	14.44 (2.94)	13.05 (3.26)	12.52 (3.09)	13.78 (3.36)	$t(566)=-5.500$, $p<.001$, $d=-0.463$
Social well-being on social media (SWB-SM)	13.70 (2.63)	13.68 (2.63)	13.73 (2.64)	12.49 (2.89)	12.11 (2.86)	13.01 (2.87)	$t(566)=-1.959$, $p=0.051$, $d=-0.166$
Social media disorder (SMD)	23.21 (6.46)	22.89 (6.49)	23.59 (6.44)	16.56 (6.47)	16.35 (5.96)	16.85 (7.12)	$t(566)=-12.205$, $p<.001$, $d=-1.028$

at 0.487, and the reliability was also strong with Coefficient Omega (ω)=0.816. Although the chi-squared test is significant in the UK sample, which could have been affected by the sample size, these fit indices indicate that the model is a good fit, and we can use a single factor to represent 5 dimensions of the Social Well-Being scale (Table 3).

Table 3 Confirmatory factor analysis for social media well-being measurements

Arab					UK				
χ^2	<i>df</i>	SRMR	AVE	Reliability (ω)	χ^2	<i>df</i>	SRMR	AVE	Reliability (ω)
4.960	5	0.016	0.464	0.807	30.679***	5	0.041	0.487	0.816
Items					Items				
Social actualization					Social contribution				
Social contribution					Social integration				
Social integration					Social actualization				
Social coherence					Social acceptance				
Social acceptance					Social coherence				

3.3 Regression Analysis

A multivariate multiple linear regression analysis was used to examine the relationship between personality traits and the dependent variables: social well-being on social media (SWB-SM) and social media disorder (SMD).

In the Arab sample, the overall model for the SWB-SM was significant, ($F(5, 302) = 18.32$, $p < .001$). Extraversion and agreeableness positively predicted, while neuroticism negatively predicted SWB-SM. The overall model for the SMD was also significant, ($F(5, 302) = 5.81$, $p < .001$). Conscientiousness negatively predicted, while neuroticism positively predicted SMD (Table 4).

Table 4 Multivariate multiple linear regression for social well-being and social media disorder for the Arab sample

Predictors	Social wellbeing (SWB-SM)				Social media disorder (SMD)			
	R^2	Adjusted R^2	$F(df)$	p	R^2	Adjusted R^2	$F(df)$	p
	0.233	0.220	18.32(5)	<.001	0.088	0.073	5.81 (5)	<.001
	B	β	t	p	B	β	t	p
Extraversion	1.71	0.17	3.27	0.001	0.26	0.05	0.95	0.344
Agreeableness	1.78	0.21	4.01	<.001	0.04	0.01	0.17	0.864
Conscientiousness	0.90	0.11	1.88	0.062	-0.55	-0.13	-2.16	0.032
Neuroticism	-1.50	-0.23	-3.96	<.001	0.53	0.16	2.61	0.009
Openness	0.45	0.05	1.00	0.320	-0.47	-0.12	-1.95	0.052

Table 5 Multivariate multiple linear regression for social well-being and social media disorder for the UK sample

Predictors	Social wellbeing (SWB-SM)				Social media disorder (SMD)			
	R^2	Adjusted R^2	$F(df)$	p	R^2	Adjusted R^2	$F(df)$	p
	0.220	0.205	14.07 (5)	<.001	0.055	0.026	2.37 (5)	0.040
	B	β	t	p	B	β	t	p
Extraversion	0.82	0.11	1.76	0.080	0.07	0.02	0.29	0.769
Agreeableness	1.24	0.16	2.73	0.007	0.31	0.09	1.40	0.162
Conscientiousness	1.20	0.14	2.38	0.018	-0.59	-1.16	-2.41	0.017
Neuroticism	-1.14	-0.19	-2.83	0.005	0.17	0.06	0.85	0.398
Openness	1.22	0.17	2.95	0.004	0.37	0.12	1.84	0.067

In the UK sample, the overall model for the SWB-SM was significant, ($F(5, 249) = 14.07$, $p < .001$). Agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness positively predicted, and neuroticism negatively predicted SWB-SM. The overall model for the SMD was also significant, ($F(5, 249) = 2.37$, $p = 0.040$). Conscientiousness negatively predicted SMD (Table 5).

4 Discussion

The aim of the present study was to investigate the associations of personality traits with social well-being on social media and social media disorder, and to determine whether the same personality traits can predict both outcomes across two cultural contexts, the Arab and UK samples.

4.1 Neuroticism Predicted Both SWB-SM and SMD in the Arab Sample

Individuals high in neuroticism are characterized by heightened tendency to experience negative emotions, such as anxiety, irritability, and emotional instability (McCrae & John, 1992). This pattern may be reinforced by cultural norms emphasizing interdependence and group harmony over self needs, which is associated with higher level of neuroticism (McCrae & Terracciano, 2005). Within collectivist cultural contexts, such as those commonly observed in Arab cultural contexts, individuals may feel a heightened obligation to conform to group expectations and maintain social harmony, often prioritizing others' needs over own personal desires. This can lead to emotional suppression to avoid social rejection, particularly when they want to engage in behaviors that conflict with group norms (Schaafsma & Huwaë, 2018). Over time, this may result in unmet emotional needs and psychological strain, particularly for those individuals who are more prone to experiencing negative emotions. This strain may contribute to two responses. First, individuals may turn to social media as a compensatory coping mechanism to manage unmet emotional needs. Second, they may increase their online engagement to maintain real-life relationships. Both responses are driven by desire to seek social approval and avoid social exclusion, however, it may contribute to problematic social media use and reduced social well-being.

Focusing on the first pathway, in line with the Compensatory Internet Use Theory (Kardefelt-Winther, 2014), individuals may turn to social media to compensate for the negative experiences or unmet social needs in their real-life by finding an alternative outlet to express themselves or seeking validation in ways that may not be possible in their offline lives. They may find it safer or easier to express themselves online than offline in order to avoid upsetting others or disrupting social harmony. This tendency may be especially pronounced among individuals high in neuroticism, who are more sensitive to social rejection and are more likely to seek social approval (Denissen & Penke, 2008). Unlike real-life interactions, where they may suppress themselves, online platforms may provide a sense of safety and opportunity for self-presentation. Although this may provide temporary relief, compensatory use of these platforms can reinforce patterns of problematic social media use and maladaptive coping mechanisms (Yildirim Demirdöğen, et al., 2024).

Turning to the second pathway, the importance of maintaining social ties in collectivist cultures may extend to online spaces as well, where online interaction may become an additional means of sustaining real-life relationships. As a result, individuals may feel com-

pelled to engage online to adhere to their group norms. This pressure may be pronounced among individuals with high neuroticism due to their heightened sensitivity to social rejection (Barlow et al., 2014). Such individuals may perceive online engagement as necessary to maintain social approval and group ties, increasing the time they spend on social media and using it excessively. Due to this pressure, they may experience reduced social well-being from their online interactions, as they may be doing it as a compulsion or necessity without interest of their own.

4.2 Conscientiousness Predicted Both SWB-SM and SMD in the UK Sample

Conscientiousness is a personality trait characterized by being responsible, organized, disciplined and goal-oriented (McCrae et al., 2010). Consequently, these individuals are more likely to use social media in a more purposeful and regulated manner, engaging in activities that enhances their social well-being whilst reducing the risk of developing problematic use tendencies (Meynadier et al., 2024). Such activities could include maintaining relationships, sharing information or professional networking, rather than using social media as a tool for short-term gratification. In line with Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2012), individuals high in this trait may use these platforms to satisfy intrinsic psychological needs, including autonomy, relatedness and competency by using this tool to achieve personal goals, connect with others and maintain a sense of self-efficacy (Kozan et al., 2019).

These effects may be further amplified within individualistic cultural contexts, commonly observed in the UK, where independence, personal goals and self-reliance are emphasized over the needs of others (Hofstede & McCrae, 2004). For highly conscientious individuals, this environment may not only strengthen their sense of autonomy and personal responsibility, but also their self-efficacy, defined as the belief in one's ability to achieve certain goals and tasks (Bandura, 1997). Higher self-efficacy, commonly observed in individualistic societies (Yeo et al., 2025), may enable individuals to exert greater control over their motivation and behavior on social media, allowing them to use it more intentionally to meet personal goals (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2017). This sense of control may motivate them to use social media more productively rather than in ways that negatively influence well-being, promoting healthy engagement patterns and lowering the risk of SMD. Empirical research also points out that highly conscientious individuals demonstrate a decreased likelihood of engaging in excessive social media usage (Meynadier et al., 2024), and that individuals belonging from individualistic cultures tend to exhibit higher levels of conscientiousness compared to collectivist cultures (Burton et al., 2021). In this way, the individualistic orientation not only supports the development of conscientious online behaviors but also increases the benefits of social media use, leading to improved social well-being and lower susceptibility to problematic use patterns.

4.3 Practical Implications

Our findings highlight the importance of developing intervention programs aimed at mitigating the adverse effects of social media use while enhancing its potential benefits. Such programs should be personality-targeted and culturally sensitive, as our analysis shows that personality traits play a role in predicting SMD and SWB-SM.

For individuals high in neuroticism, interventions could focus on promoting healthier coping strategies and reducing reliance on social media for emotional regulation. Research suggests that individuals high in neuroticism tend to use social media as a means of escaping reality and relieving their stress, which may contribute to problematic social media use (Sindermann et al., 2020). Encouraging engagement in offline activities, strengthening face-to-face interactions and promoting alternative stress-management strategies may help reduce this reliance on social media to handle stress or negative emotions experienced in daily lives. Furthermore, research highlights that enhancing self-esteem and social support can mediate the negative impacts of social media addiction (Hou et al., 2019). Therefore, interventions can focus on boosting self-esteem and social support to help individuals with neuroticism to healthier coping mechanisms and reduce problematic social media use.

For individuals low in conscientiousness, promoting more balanced and international social media use can enhance SWB-SM while reducing the risk of SMD. Conscientiousness is associated with goal-oriented and self-disciplined nature, traits that can support healthier social media habits. Therefore, intervention programs may encourage structured and mindful social media use through strategies such as digital detox practices, which includes taking regular breaks from social media and engaging in offline activities (Radtke et al., 2022). Additionally, digital well-being tools such as monitoring screen time, limiting app usage or using focus modes may help individuals regulate their social media use (Shetty, 2025). Promoting social media literacy may further support users in developing healthy online habits and reducing the risks associated with excessive social media use (Taibi et al., 2023). Adopting these strategies can allow individuals with high conscientiousness to be present-focused and discourage them from mindless scrolling on social media.

4.4 Limitations

Despite the novel perspective and implications for future work this study offers, there are some limitations of the present study. We relied on self-reported data, which could have been affected by biases and inaccurate self-perceptions. The inclusion of social media usage data or digital footprints could help us in deriving more robust findings. Moreover, social media consists of many different platforms and services, but we examined all of these under one umbrella. Future work can focus on specific social media platforms or features offered across multiple platforms to refine our understanding of which platform or feature is responsible for disordered social media behavior. Additionally, this study is cross-sectional which limits the ability to infer causal relationships between the personality traits and SWB-SM and SMD. Future work can focus on employing longitudinal research.

5 Conclusion

This research focused on exploring the dual relationship of personality traits and social media well-being and disorder. Social well-being on social media is measured using a scale developed by Keyes (1998) and social media disorder is measured using the scale developed by Eijnden et al., (2016). The social well-being on social media consists of 5 dimensions of well-being which are social actualization, social integration, social contribution, social coherence and social acceptance. Additionally, the social media disorder scale consists of

9 dimensions which are persistence, tolerance, withdrawal, preoccupation, escape, problems, deception, displacement and conflict. For both scales, an average for all the dimensions is calculated to obtain the total score for the social well-being on social media and social media disorder. These calculated variables are then predicted using personality traits using multivariate multiple linear regression analysis. Our findings resulted in neuroticism being a significant predictor of social media well-being and disorder for the Arab sample, which is a collectivist culture where there is a reliance on social networks for emotional and social support. This means the more neurotic an individual is, the lower their social media well-being, as well as greater likelihood of experiencing social media disorder. On the other hand, in the UK sample, conscientiousness was a significant predictor of social media well-being and disorder. Therefore, the more conscientious a person is, the higher their social media well-being and decreased likelihood of development of social media disorder which can be attributed to their self-disciplined and responsible characteristics. The intricate interactions between personality traits, cultural contexts, and their dual effects on social media disorder and well-being are highlighted in this study. These results thus emphasize the significance of context-specific therapies that are in line with cultural dynamics and individual personality traits. While encouraging media literacy and healthier online practices, techniques including digital detoxes and mindful social interaction might help lessen the negative impacts of excessive social media use. A more balanced digital environment that maximizes social media's positive effects while reducing its negative ones can be fostered by customizing these strategies.

Author Contribution SR: Conceptualization, Methodology, Statistical analysis, Writing – Original draft preparation. SA: Conceptualization, Supervision, Study Design, Data Curation, Statistical analysis design, Writing – Review & Editing. AY: Conceptualization, Methodology, Supervision, Statistical analysis design and verification, Writing – Review & Editing. DA: Conceptualization, Study design, Writing – Review & Editing. RA: Conceptualization, Study Design, Methodology, Data curation, Supervision, Fund Acquisition, Writing – Review & Editing.

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Data Availability The study design, the dataset, and other supplementary materials can be found on the Open Science Framework at the following link: <https://osf.io/2ctdq/>

Declarations

Competing Interests The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Ethical Approval The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Hamad Bin Khalifa University, Qatar, and all research was performed in accordance with the relevant guidelines and regulations.

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