The power of a social media detox: the impact on concentration, motivation and mental well-being

Romy J. Sesink

Faculty of Behavioral Management and Social sciences (BMS), University of Twente

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Dr. E. van Laar

Dr. S. van der Graaf

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Abstract

Background: Social media plays a dominant role in daily life, raising concerns about its impact on mental well-being, concentration, and motivation. Research on the benefits of limiting social media use for well-being is growing, but the effect on cognitive functioning and motivation is underexplored. This study investigates the effects of a five-day social media detox among young adults aged 18-30, limiting usage of Instagram, Facebook, X, TikTok, Snapchat, YouTube, Pinterest and Reddit to 30 minutes per day. Furthermore, it explores whether mental well-being mediates the impact of the detox on concentration and motivation.

Method: A mixed-methods approach was used, incorporating pre- and post-detox surveys (n=46) and interviews (n=10) to measure changes in mental well-being, concentration, and motivation and to capture participants' experiences, challenges, and perceptions of the detox. Quantitative data were analyzed using t-tests, Wilcoxon signed-rank tests, and mediation analyses in R, while thematic analysis was applied to qualitative data.

Results: The findings show that a social media detox has a significant large effect on mental well-being and concentration, and a significant medium effect on motivation. Participants report fewer distractions, enhanced focus, and greater engagement in tasks. Additionally, mental well-being mediates the relationship between the detox and motivation. However, mental well-being does not mediate the effect of the detox on concentration, suggesting that the detox directly enhances focus. Qualitative insights support these results, with participants describing increased self-awareness, a regained sense of control, improved focus, mental rest and a shift in social interactions. However, boredom and a feeling of discomfort are also experienced.

Conclusion: The findings emphasize the importance of consciously managing digital consumption and social media habits to improve overall mental and cognitive functioning. The insights can inform interventions aimed at fostering healthier digital habits, helping individuals and organizations optimize focus and productivity in an increasingly connected world. Future research should examine long-term effects and individual differences.

*Keywords***:** Social media detox; mental well-being; concentration; motivation; young adults.

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1. Introduction

In a world dominated by the constant pull of social media, the impact of temporarily disconnecting is a fascinating topic of study. For young adults, who have grown up in the digital age, social media is an essential part of their daily lives. This group relies on social media not only to stay connected but also as a primary source of information and entertainment (Andreassen et al., 2017; Shannon et al., 2022). While social media offers many benefits, such as quick access to information (Ahmed et al., 2021), a heavy screen-based lifestyle also brings potential downsides, such as lower self-esteem, higher levels of depression and stress (Andreassen et al., 2017; Shannon et al., 2022). Young adults are the most intensive users of social media in the Netherlands, spending an average of 166 minutes a day online. At the same time, 23% of this generation report feeling less happy due to their social media use (Jonker et al., 2024).

There are increasing concerns about the impact of intensive social media use on concentration, motivation, and mental well-being. Research has shown that social media use can negatively affect concentration and motivation, especially among young people. It can lead to increased distractibility, decreased focus on tasks, a split in attention, reduced information retention, impaired reading concentration and in-depth reading (Ahmed et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2022; Loh & Kanai, 2016; Nwangwa et al., 2014). These issues are particularly concerning for young people in the phase of “emerging adulthood”, defined as ages 18 to 30 (Arnett, 2000). This phase is commonly viewed as a transitional phase towards adulthood, where individuals work on establishing a stable identity and achieving milestones such as completing education, starting a full-time job and developing independence (Arnett, 2000; Segrin et al., 2017). During this phase, concentration and motivation are crucial for achieving academic and professional goals (Barton et al., 2018; Posner & Rothbart, 2007). However, the heavy social media use characteristic of this group (Jonker et al., 2024) poses a potential barrier to their success. An intervention like a temporary social media detox may have benefits for their mental well-being, concentration and motivation by mitigating the negative effects of social media use (Arnett, 2000; Segrin et al., 2017; Jonker et al., 2024). This

research explores the benefits of a social media detox on concentration, motivation and mental well-being, focusing on young adults between the ages of 18 and 30.

Many existing studies examine the negative health consequences of excessive social media use, for example on self-esteem and well-being (Kross et al., 2021; Valkenburg, 2022). In contrast to the effects of using social media, research about positive health outcomes of reducing this use remain scarce. In addition, most studies on a social media detox intervention only focus on well-being, with limited exploration of the effects on concentration and motivation, although these factors are crucial to the functioning of young adults. This research aims to fill that gap by investigating the impact of a temporary social media detox on mental well-being, motivation and concentration of young adults aged 18-30, and the mediating role of wellbeing in the effect on concentration and motivation. Therefore, the first research question that will be investigated in this study is:

> *What is the effect of a temporary social media detox on mental well-being, concentration and motivation of young adults aged 18-30, and does mental well-being play a mediating role in the effects on concentration and motivation?*

Additionally, this study aims to gain in-depth insights into the personal experiences of participants during the detox. This qualitative perspective provides context and understanding of the detox experience. This leads to the second research questions of this study:

> *How do young adults aged 18-30 experience a temporary social media detox in relation to their mental well-being, concentration and motivation?*

This research highlights the value of a temporary social media detox for young adults, demonstrating its potential to improve mental well-being, concentration, and motivation. By shifting the focus from social media use to the effects of consciously limiting it, this study provides a foundation for interventions that help individuals, educators, and organizations reduce the negative impact of excessive social media consumption and promote healthier digital habits.

2. Theoretical framework

This chapter discusses the key theoretical concepts relevant to this research: social media detox, concentration, motivation and mental well-being. It explores how these concepts are related and how mental well-being can function as a mediator between these variables. This theoretical framework provides the foundation for understanding the potential benefits of a temporary social media detox for young adults.

2.1 Social media detox

Social media detox is a topic that has gained increasing attention in scientific research in recent years due to its potential impact. The lack of a universal definition has led to diverse approaches across studies. Research varies in terms of detox length, the extent of social media reduction, the apps included in the detox, and the tools used to measure its effects. Generally, a social media detox involves temporarily reducing or stopping social media use, with the aim of focusing on offline activities such as improving well-being, reducing stress, exercising, maintaining social relationships, household chores, homework, and relaxation (El-Khoury et al., 2021; Ofcom, 2016). During a social media detox, individuals may also choose to limit the use of specific applications or platforms (Radtke et al., 2021). This highlights the flexibility of the concept, but also complicates the comparability of studies on the effects of a social media detox.

Although interest in social media detox has grown among researchers, the evidence on its effectiveness remains mixed and inconclusive. The variability in research designs and outcomes underscores the complex nature of this concept. Several studies (Anrijs et al., 2018; Brown & Kuss, 2020; Coyne & Woodruff, 2023; El-Khoury et al., 2021; Nassen et al., 2023) show positive effects of a social media detox, such as improvements in well-being, stress, sleep, productivity, and social connection. However, the long-term effectiveness of a detox remains uncertain, as many participants return to their old patterns afterwards, driven in part by the fear of missing out (FOMO) (El-Khoury et al., 2021). In contrast, other studies present a more nuanced picture. A systematic review by Radtke

et al. (2021) reveals that the effects of a social media detox on variables such as health, self-control, and well-being are inconsistent. Some studies report positive outcomes like improved mental health, while others find no significant effects (Ramadhan et al., 2024). This inconsistency is attributed to differences in research design, sample populations, and intervention methods, highlighting the complexity of measuring the true impact of a detox. Given these mixed findings, further research is needed to explore whether a detox can yield measurable benefits.

Due to the indispensable role of smartphones in daily life, it is suggested that temporary limitation of social media use may be more effective than complete abstinence. This approach can improve health outcomes without disrupting daily routines (Coyne & Woodruff, 2023). In this research, social media detox is therefore conceptualized as a temporary limitation of social media use to 30 minutes per day. This restriction includes both active engagement, such as posting and commenting, and passive engagement, such as scrolling and browsing. Although the evidence for the effectiveness of a social media detox is not conclusive, the potential benefits highlight the relevance of exploring its effects on other cognitive and behavioral outcomes. One key cognitive function that may be particularly affected by social media use is concentration. Given the growing concerns about digital distractions, it is important to examine whether limiting social media use can mitigate these effects and enhance attentional control.

2.2 Concentration

The impact of social media on concentration is relevant in the context of frequent interruptions and multitasking, which can reduce focus and productivity. Social media has a significant impact on our concentration and our ability to perform tasks without distractions and with goal-oriented attention, essential skills for daily, academic, and professional performance (Posner & Rothbart, 2007). Several studies suggest that social media use increases our distractibility and hinders deep focus. Repeatedly checking notifications and multitasking between tasks and social media apps contribute to shorter attention spans and decreased concentration (Ahmed et al., 2021;

Nwangwa et al., 2014; Liu et al., 2022; Loh & Kanai, 2016; Chauhan et al., 2019). These findings highlight the need for further investigation into how reducing social media use could enhance concentration, and the underlying mechanisms involved.

Concentration is explained as the ability to focus attention on a particular task for an extended period without being distracted by external or internal stimuli (Cambridge University Press, 2024; Moran, 1996). However, this ability has its limits, because individuals are constantly influenced by environmental factors such as notifications, as well as internal stimuli such as thoughts and emotions (Van der Stigchel, 2019).

Several theoretical models explain how these stimuli put pressure on our concentration capacity and the potential consequences. Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller, 1988) describes how working memory has a limited capacity for information processing. When we are confronted with an overload of information or distractions, such as social media, cognitive load increases. As a result, it becomes harder to complete a task effectively. Each distraction causes a task-switch in the brain, leading to cognitive leakage (Tigchelaar & De Bos, 2019), where part of the cognitive energy remains focused on the previous task. This hinders performance and requires additional mental effort to repair focus. Additionally, Baumeister et al. (1998) suggest that cognitive control is a limited resource. This means that individuals only have a certain amount of mental energy to regulate their attention. Constant switching between social media and other tasks leads to mental exhaustion, which further reduces concentration capacity (Baumeister et al., 1998). Another relevant concept is the Attention Restoration Theory (Kaplan, 1995). This theory suggests that cognitive fatigue can be restored by taking breaks from cognitively demanding activities and exposing oneself to less stimulating environments. In this context, a social media detox can be seen as a way to restore mental resources by removing constant distractions, which should benefit individuals' concentration abilities.

The current literature on the impact of social media use on concentration provides compelling evidence. Research indicates the effect of frequent social media use, constant checking of

notifications, and multitasking between tasks and social media on increased distractibility, with shorter attention spans and reduced focus as a result (Ahmed et al., 2021; Alloway et al., 2012; Carrier et al., 2015; Chauhan et al., 2019; Nwangwa et al., 2014; Liu et al., 2022; Loh & Kanai, 2016; Siebers et al., 2021).

Research specifically focusing on the effects of a social media detox on concentration is limited, because most detox studies primarily focus on broader topics such as well-being, addiction, sleep, and stress (Radtke et al., 2021; Coyne & Woodruff, 2023). However, some studies offer valuable insights into the effect of a detox on concentration and productivity. Research shows that reducing or limiting social media use can have a positive impact on concentration and productivity. Participants in social media detox programs reported fewer cognitive errors, less distraction, fewer interruptions, better focus, longer focus duration, higher productivity, and improved performance (Mark et al., 2017; Marotta & Acquisti, 2018; Nassen et al., 2023; Van Wezel et al., 2021). On the other hand, intensive users experience negative emotions such as frustration and technological anxiety when completely blocking social media, rather than reducing use, due to fewer breaks and increased work pressure (Marotta & Acquisti, 2018; Nassen et al., 2023). This difference in experiences suggests that while a social media detox can enhance concentration and productivity, the effects may vary depending on the extent of the limitation and participants' usage habits. Although some intense users may experience negative emotions from complete blocking social media, most studies indicate that a social media detox generally has positive effects on concentration and productivity for the majority of participants.

Several theories and empirical findings indicate the potential of a social media detox to improve concentration, leading to the following hypothesis:

H1: Social media detox has a positive effect on concentration.

2.3 Motivation

Motivation is a complex driving force that includes both internal and external factors and plays a crucial role in achieving academic and professional success. In essence, motivation refers to a general drive that energizes individuals to take action and pursue their goals (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007), or the process that directs, sustains, and drives behavior (Pintrich, 2003). Motivation can be intrinsic, driven by personal desires and interests, or extrinsic, influenced by external rewards or pressures. This process drives individuals to exert effort, initiate activities, and persist in pursuing their goals, acting as an interplay between internal desires, external stimuli, and self-regulation (Heckhausen & Kuhl, 2021; Nguyen & Ikeda, 2015; Pintrich, 2003; Woolfolk, 2013).

Self-regulation plays a pivotal role in maintaining and enhancing motivation. It enables individuals to monitor and adjust their thoughts, emotions, and actions to align with their goals, thereby enhancing their motivation (Boekaerts, 2010; Baumeister & Vohs, 2007). Without self-regulation, motivation on its own may not be enough to overcome challenges or remain focused, especially in environments with constant distractions like social media. Effective self-regulation strategies, such as adjusting to setbacks and overcome difficulties, are crucial for sustaining motivation over time. The connection between self-regulation and motivation is deeply interdependent, because self-regulation reinforces and enhances motivation, while motivation encourages the use of self-regulation strategies to achieve goals (Boekaerts, 2010).

The intensity of motivation can vary depending on the context and goals, with social media usage acting as both a stimulant and a barrier (Barton et al., 2018). On the one hand, it can provide external stimuli that temporarily enhance motivation. On the other hand, it can undermine effort regulation, leading to decreased productivity and frustration (Barton et al., 2018; Legault et al., 2006; Jeamu et al., 2008). Understanding these dynamics is key to exploring how a social media detox may impact motivation and self-regulation.

A deeper understanding of motivation can be gained through the lens of prominent theories. The Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) offers a valuable perspective by emphasizing the

psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which can foster strong intrinsic motivation. A social media detox may positively affect these needs. By abstaining from social media, participants can repair autonomy and focus more effectively on personal and academic goals, which is essential for motivation. Additionally, the detox process may strengthen feelings of competence, as individuals concentrate on activities that foster a sense of capability, such as studying or working. Goal Setting Theory (Locke & Latham, 2002) also suggests that clear, challenging goals enhance motivation. However, social media can undermine this by creating distractions. A social media detox allows individuals to fully concentrate on their goals, potentially increasing both motivation and the likelihood of goal achievement.

Research suggests that frequent social media use can disrupt intrinsic motivation and self-regulation. For instance, young people may struggle with effort regulation, spending time on social media instead of productive tasks, which conflicts with personal goals (Karpinski et al., 2012; Richardson et al., 2012). Additionally, constant exposure to social comparisons and social approval can lead to a decrease in intrinsic motivation, making young people less motivated to achieve their goals (Vogel et al., 2014). A social media detox could reduce these disruptions, allowing people to strengthen both self-regulation and motivation. While evidence on the relationship between a social media detox and motivation is still limited, a systematic review by Nassen et al. (2023) highlights that successful digital detoxes often involve the development of lasting self-regulation strategies. These strategies can help young people manage their digital consumption more effectively, motivating them to adopt healthier habits. Additionally, a digital detox has been shown to increase perceived productivity and leisure time, which can motivate young people to engage in other activities that contribute to their personal development and well-being, further reinforcing self-regulation (Nassen et al., 2023).

In summary, self-regulation and motivation are deeply intertwined. Self-regulation provides the mechanisms needed to stay focused, resist distractions, and sustain effort, even during challenges (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007). This interplay supports and enhances motivation, allowing

individuals to effectively pursue and achieve their goals. Since social media can undermine self-regulation by creating distractions and encouraging passive consumption (Barton et al., 2018), a temporary social media detox may help individuals regain control over their goal-directed behavior. By reducing external stimuli and disruptions, a social media detox could strengthen self-regulation and motivation.

Based on the existing theories and the theoretical insights into self-regulation, motivation, and the disruptive effects of social media, the following hypothesis is proposed, suggesting that a social media detox positively impacts motivation:

H2: A social media detox has a positive effect on motivation.

2.4 Mental well-being

Well-being is a complex concept that plays a significant role in individuals' lives and can be influenced by social media. As social media becomes increasingly integrated into daily life and concerns rise about its potential negative effects, research on the relationship between social media and well-being has grown in recent years (Zhang et al., 2023).

Broadly, well-being is described as a favorable state of living that individuals aspire to achieve, encompassing various dimensions like mental, social, and physical aspects that contribute to overall well-being (Böhnke & Kohler, 2009; Kiefer, 2008). Examples include happiness, life satisfaction, self-acceptance, positivity, and relationships (Diener, 2009; Reinecke & Oliver, 2016; Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Singer, 1998). Mental well-being is a crucial aspect of overall well-being and refers to a state of positive mental health that includes both hedonic and eudaemonic aspects. Hedonic well-being relates to feelings of happiness, life satisfaction, and enjoyment, while eudaemonic well-being involves optimal psychological functioning, personal growth, and positive relationships with others (Weich et al., 2011). This highlights the multifaceted nature of wellbeing and the importance of mental wellbeing as a key factor in achieving a fulfilling and balanced life.

To understand the relationship between social media use and mental well-being, several theoretical frameworks are valuable. The PERMA model (Seligman, 2011) offers a useful perspective by suggesting that well-being not only arises from pleasure or happiness but also from positive feelings, engagement in life, relations, meaning and achievement. In this study, a social media detox could increase the frequency of meaningful offline interactions and enhance positive emotions which, according to the PERMA model, are beneficial for well-being. Social Comparison Theory (Festinger, 1954) suggests that individuals often compare themselves to others, which can lead to negative impacts on self-image and well-being. This theory is relevant to the present study because a temporary social media detox may buffer against these negative comparisons and thus contribute to an improved sense of well-being. Furthermore, according to West et al. (2024), deeper social interactions can strengthen connectedness with others and thus improve overall well-being.

The findings of studies on the effect of social media use on well-being are varied. On the one hand, research highlights that intensive social media use has negative effects on well-being, with factors like low self-esteem and negative thoughts identified as significant predictors (Kross et al., 2021; Prajwal et al., 2023; Valkenburg, 2022). These findings are supported by evidence that frequent social media users are more susceptible to repetitive negative thinking, which can contribute to decreased well-being (Faelens et al., 2021). This negative thinking, often amplified by passive scrolling and exposure to idealized images, leads to a downward spiral in well-being (Schmuck et al., 2019). Research suggests that the relationship is generally modest, and highlights the need for a more detailed investigation into specific usage patterns and motivations behind social media use to better understand the contexts in which it may negatively impact well-being (Kross et al., 2021; Schemer et al., 2021).

Studies on the effects of a detox on well-being also produce mixed results. Some studies indicate that a temporary social media detox may intensify the fear of missing out (FOMO), reduce social connectedness, and result in feelings of loneliness, boredom, and negative affect (Nassen et al., 2023; Przybylski et al., 2021; Radtke et al., 2021). Ramadhan et al. (2024) even found no

significant effects of a social media detox on well-being and life satisfaction, suggesting that the results may have been influenced by the relatively short duration of the detox. However, the majority of studies indicate that a temporary social media detox can properly lead to improved well-being, enhanced self-control, increased social connectedness, and reduced FOMO (Brown & Kuss, 2020; Nassen et al., 2023; Radtke et al., 2021). This suggests that a temporary social media detox can contribute to a better mood and overall life satisfaction.

The conflicting findings across previous studies highlight the need for further research into experiences, and consensus around key concepts related to this topic (Nassen et al., 2023). This study aims to address these gaps by investigating both the quantitative effects of a social media detox on mental well-being and the qualitative experiences of participants, focusing on changes in emotions, social interactions, and perceived life satisfaction

Based on the existing literature, it is expected that a temporary social media detox will have a positive effect on participants' mental well-being:

H3: Social media detox has a positive effect on mental well-being.

2.5 The mediating role of mental well-being

Well-being plays a crucial role in enhancing concentration and may act as a mediator explaining the effects of a social media detox on concentration. Individuals with higher levels of well-being tend to perform better on cognitive tasks that require focus (Huppert & Johnson, 2010; Keyes, 2007; Ryff & Singer, 1998). This can be explained because high well-being often correlates with a reduction in negative mental states, such as stress, that can disrupt concentration (Reddy et al., 2018). Moreover, individuals with greater well-being are better able to balance their daily lives, allowing them to direct their attention more effectively to important tasks (Keyes, 2007). Well-being also contributes to self-regulation and cognitive control, two critical components of concentration (Ryff, 1989).

Given that prior research suggests a social media detox can enhance well-being (Brown & Kuss, 2020; Nassen et al., 2023; Radkte et al., 2021), it is likely that the effect of a detox on concentration is not purely direct but also depends on the increase in mental well-being. Existing research concludes that social media use can negatively impact well-being, which in turn may impair concentration (Prajwal et al., 2023). Zhang et al. (2023) found that well-being mediates the relationship between social media use and academic performance. Their study found that better psychological well-being improved academic outcomes, highlighting that well-being is crucial for success in cognitively demanding tasks. These results align with a study on digital distractions (Segrin et al., 2017), which found that reducing digital distractions improved well-being, leading to better cognitive control and sustained attention.

While previous research has established links between social media use, well-being, and cognitive performance (Prajwal et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2023), the specific mediating role of mental well-being in the relationship between a social media detox and concentration remains underexplored. Since prior research indicates that a social media detox can enhance well-being and that well-being is crucial for concentration, it is suggested that mental well-being mediates the relationship between a social media detox and concentration, leading to the following hypothesis:

H4: The relationship between a social media detox and concentration is mediated by mental well-being.

Mental well-being may also serve as a mediator in the relationship between a social media detox and motivation. According to Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), the fulfillment of the basic needs autonomy, competence, and relatedness, is crucial for intrinsic motivation. Individuals who have these needs fulfilled generally experience higher well-being, enabling them to pursue goals more effectively. This elevated well-being provides the energy to select challenging, intrinsically motivated goals and to work persistently toward them (Grassinger et al., 2024; Sheldon & Elliot, 1999). This supports the direct influence of well-being on motivation. Furthermore,

increased well-being has been shown to positively impact self-regulation, a core aspect of motivation. Self-regulation functions most effectively in contexts where individuals experience a high level of well-being, as it allows them to pursue goals with less mental noise (Miller & Brown, 1991). A social media detox may support well-being by reducing distractions such as constant notifications and social comparisons that often distract people from personal goals. When these distractions are minimized, individuals can focus more easily on intrinsic goals and sustain motivation for personal and professional tasks (Fishbach & Labroo, 2007). The proposed role of mental well-being as a mediator stems from the ability of a social media detox to restore mental well-being, creating mental space and energy, that in turn supports and enhances motivation. While previous studies have examined the direct effects of a detox on well-being and motivation separately (Fishbach & Labroo, 2007; Grassinger et al., 2024), this study investigates whether improved mental well-being acts as the underlying mechanism linking a detox to enhanced motivation.

Building on insights from Self-Determination Theory and self-regulation research, this study aims to deepen the understanding of how digital consumption influences motivation through changes in mental well-being. This leads to the following hypothesis:

H5: The relationship between a social media detox and motivation is mediated by mental well-being.

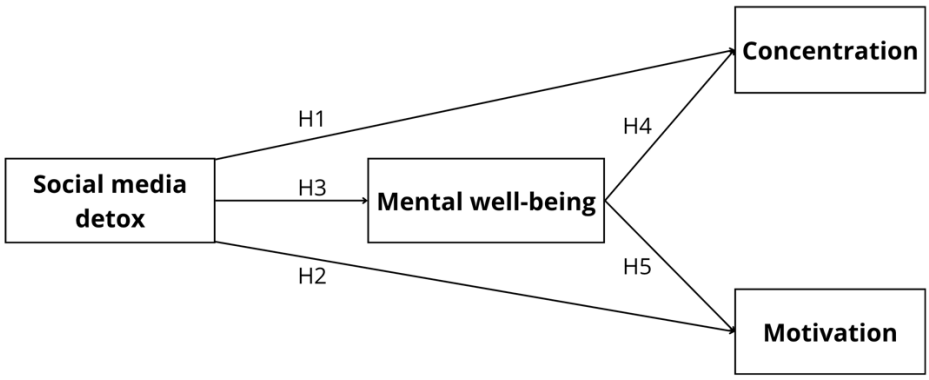
2.6 Conceptual framework

Figure 1 presents the research model, a visual representation of the expected relationships between a social media detox, mental well-being, concentration, and motivation. In this model, it is assumed that the social media detox directly influences participants' concentration, motivation and mental well-being. Mental well-being acts as a mediating variable, explaining the relationship between the detox and the outcomes of concentration and motivation.

While this framework guides the quantitative part of this study, qualitative interviews complement these findings by exploring how and why these relationships occur. The interviews provide deeper insights into participants' experiences, challenges, and perceptions during the detox, shedding light on underlying mechanisms that are not captured through survey measures. This mixed-method approach enhances the study's ability to explain both the effects and the subjective experiences of a social media detox.

Figure 1

Research model



3. Method

This chapter outlines the research methodology used to examine the impact of a temporary social media detox on mental well-being, concentration, and motivation. A mixed-methods approach was employed, integrating a pre- and post-detox survey and interviews to provide a comprehensive understanding of the effects. The chapter is divided into the quantitative methodology, which describes the survey-based data collection and statistical analyses, and the qualitative methodology, which details the interview process and thematic analysis. By combining these methods, the study aims to offer both statistical insights and in-depth personal experiences, ensuring a broad perspective on the impact of a social media detox.

3.1 Quantitative research methodology

3.1.1 Sample

The sample for the survey consisted of students and young professionals, reflecting the target demographic of young adults aged 18 to 30. To qualify for the study, participants had to meet the following criteria: (1) age between 18 and 30, (2) full-time or part-time studying, full-time or part-time working, or a combination of both, and (3) active users of social media platforms for at least 1 hour per day for the past six months. Participants were excluded from the study if they did not meet all inclusion criteria or if they had not completed participation by completing both surveys. Participants were recruited through convenience sampling, by asking young people within the personal network to participate. Additionally, snowball sampling and advertisements on social media platforms Instagram and LinkedIn were used. The surveys were accessible during the period from 16 December 2024 to 24 January 2025. To increase response rates, advertisements were placed on social media in the interim and reminders were sent to people who were considering participating.

To determine the required sample size, the software tool G*Power was used (Faul et al., 2009), which supports calculating sample size and power for different statistical methods (Kang, 2021). This method is widely applied in psychological and behavioral research for power analysis (Kang, 2021) and chosen due to its ability to provide accurate power calculations for paired sample t-tests, the

primary statistical approach in this study. A total of 47 participants needed to complete the social media detox and surveys to detect a medium effect size (d = 0.5) with a power of 0.95 and an alpha of 0.05 (Cohen, 1992). After data collection and filtering, 46 complete participations remained. Considering that this study involved an intensive intervention, requiring participants to significantly alter their social media habits for five days, the achieved sample size is appropriate for drawing conclusions about the effects of the detox. While the sample size limits broad generalizability, it is sufficient for identifying effects within the target group.

The demographic characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1. The ages revealed a normal distribution, ranging from 19 to 30 years old. The mean age of the participants was 24.4 years (*SD* = 2.3). To confirm normality, the Shapiro-Wilk test was conducted, resulting in a value of .086, supporting the assumption of normality. Prior to participation, the mean screentime of respondents was 201.8 minutes (*SD* = 84.2), ranging from 60 to 360 minutes, indicating substantial variation among participants.

Table 1

Demographic data

Characteristics	**N (%)**
Age categories	
19-21	4 (8.7%)
22-24	23 (50.0%)
25-27	15 (32.6%)
28-30	4 (8.7%)
Gender	
Male	17 (37.0%)
Female	29 (63.0%)
Activity (work/study)	
Fulltime working	29 (63.0%)
Fulltime studying	1 (2.2%
Combination of working and studying	16 (34.8%)
Education level	
Havo	3 (6.5%)
MBO	6 (13.0%)
HBO Bachelor	25 (54.3%)
WO Bachelor	1 (2.2%)
WO Master	11 (23.9%)

3.1.2 Procedure

Participants took part in a five-day social media detox, by avoiding social media during study or work hours and restricting usage outside these hours to a maximum of 30 minutes a day. Prior to the start of the study, participants received an information sheet outlining all the details and objectives of the experiment. During the detox, participants were asked to set a time limit of 30 minutes a day for all social media apps, turn off non-essential notifications, and turn on screen time tracking. The procedure involved filling in a pre-detox survey the day before the detox started, implementing the five-day social media detox, and completing the post-detox survey. Before starting the surveys, participants provided informed consent. For verification purposes, participants were asked to share screenshots of their screentime for each day at the end of the detox.

The social media detox included apps used primarily for social networking, passive engagement and content sharing. This includes Instagram, Facebook, X, TikTok, Snapchat, YouTube, Pinterest and Reddit (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2009). These platforms were selected based on their high usage rates, making them the most popular and time-consuming apps, especially among younger generations who have grown up in the digital age (Statista, 2022). In this study, the platforms WhatsApp, FaceTime and calling were excluded from the social media detox, because their primary function is direct communication rather than public content sharing and social networking, as seen with platforms like Instagram or Facebook (Church & de Oliveira, 2013; Karapanos et al., 2015). Additionally, many participants rely on these tools for essential communication related to personal relationships, study or work, and excluding them could limit participation in detox or lead to compliance issues (Verduyn et al., 2017). LinkedIn was also excluded from the social media detox, as its focus on professional networking and job applications makes abstaining unfeasible for participants (Zide et al., 2014).

Participants did not receive incentives, but they were encouraged to participate not only to contribute to the study, but also for the personal insights they might gain regarding their social

media use. This detox gave them a chance to see if reducing social media could positively affect their mental well-being, concentration and motivation.

3.1.3 Instrument

Qualtrics surveys were used to gather quantitative data before and after the social media detox. The pre-detox survey collected baseline data on participants' social media usage, mental well-being, concentration and motivation (Appendix A). The post-detox survey included the same questions, to assess changes in these variables (Appendix B). Both surveys consisted of 39 questions, of which 33 were statements. Social media usage was assessed in the survey through questions regarding usage time, frequency and platforms. To measure the key variables, validated instruments were used. Mental well-being was assessed using the Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (Tennant et al., 2007). This scale is concise and broad in scope, covering positive feelings, mental health and functioning, providing an efficient way to measure mental well-being. An example survey statement to measure mental well-being was '*I have been feeling relaxed*'. Motivation was measured using selected items of the Self-Regulation Questionnaire (Miller & Brown, 1991), a widely used and validated tool commonly applied in studies on behavioral change and motivation. This scale consists of 7 different categories, of which the category "implementing a plan" is selected. This category aligns closely with the research definition of motivation, which emphasizes the activation, guidance and maintenance of goal-directed behavior. The statements reflected the translation of motivation into action, which is crucial for sustaining progress toward a goal. An example survey statement to measure motivation was '*I can stick to a plan that's working well*'. Together, all statements included the core processes of converting intention into effective, goal-directed behavior. Concentration was measured using the short version of the Attention Control Scale (Derryberry & Reed, 2002), which assesses individuals' ability to focus and manage their attention. An example survey statement to measure concentration was *'After being interrupted or distracted, I can easily shift my attention back to what I was doing before'*. Responses were rated on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly

disagree" to "strongly agree". This scale allowed respondents to offer nuanced and differentiated responses and expanding the number of response categories led to increased reliability scores (Altuna & Arslan, 2016).

3.1.4 Reliability

To examine whether the statements in the survey measured the intended constructs and to identify which statements correlated, a factor analysis based on the pre-detox survey was conducted using R. Table 2 presents the factor loadings of the statements originally belonging to the constructs wellbeing (WB), motivation (M), and concentration (C). The statements that did not correlate with each other as intended according to the research design, were moved based on the factor loadings and the substantive meaning of the questions. Based on the factor analysis, statement WB6 (‘I’ve been dealing with problems well’), statement WB7 (‘I’ve been thinking clearly’) and statement WB11 (‘I’ve been able to make up my own mind about things’) were moved from mental well-being to motivation. These statements reflect how a person prepares mentally and emotionally and adapts to different situations, which is therefore more in line with motivation than with mental well-being, which is more focused on feelings and state of mind. Statement M15 (‘I get easily distracted from my plans’), statement M16 (‘I have so many plans that it's hard for me to focus on any one of them’) and statement M17 (‘I have trouble following through with things once I've made up my mind to do something’) were moved from motivation to concentration. These questions relate to distractibility and the ability to maintain focus, which has more to do with concentration than motivation. Motivation is about the desire or drive to do something, while concentration is about the ability to hold your attention. Additionally, statement C31 (‘I have a hard time coming up with new ideas quickly’) and statement C33 (‘It is easy for me to alternate between two different tasks’) were moved from concentration to motivation, because these questions deal with mental flexibility and task switching, which are directly related to motivation and the urge to adapt to new or changing

circumstances. Finally, statement M19 (‘have a lot of willpower’) and statement M21 (‘I have rules that I stick by no matter what’) were removed, due to low factor loadings.

Table 2

Factor Analysis

Statement	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
WB1	.664		
WB2	.630		
WB3	.586		
WB4	.762		
WB5	.470		
WB6		.759	
WB7		.670	
WB8	.500		
WB9	.898		
WB10	.422		
WB11		.576	
WB12	.537		
WB13	.501		
WB14	.592		
M15			.548
M16			.550
M17			.766
M18			.500
M19	.320		.308
M20		.512	
M21		.254	
M22		.377	
M23			.333
C24			.836
C25			.801
C26			.626
C27			.384
C28			.368
C29	.437		
C30			.533
C31		.454	
C32			.484
C33		.308	

Note. WB = Mental well-being, M = Motivation, C = Concentration.

The reliability of the surveys was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, which measures internal consistency. A score of at least .70 indicates reliability (Taber, 2017). After restructuring the statements, such as moving items between factors and removing questions with low factor loadings, the internal consistency of motivation and concentration improved. The final Cronbach's Alpha scores for the pre- and post-detox survey were respectively .90 and .87 for mental well-being (11 items), .76 and .77 for motivation (9 items) and .81 and .84 for concentration (11 items). While the reliability of mental well-being slightly decreased, it remained high. The improved reliability of motivation and concentration suggests that the adjustments strengthened the measurement consistency of these constructs.

3.1.5 Data analysis

The quantitative data analysis was conducted using R and consisted of comparing the results of the pre- and post-detox surveys. The first step in the data analysis was data cleaning, in which incomplete responses were removed, converting answers into a scale that could be analyzed, and for the reversed questions, responses were reversed to ensure consistency in the dataset. After data cleaning, a factor analysis was performed to check whether the items were correctly assigned to the intended scales and to identify which items correlated best with each other. The reliability of the scales was then checked with Cronbach's Alpha to assess internal consistency. Descriptive statistics were calculated for the analysis of the demographic data, and normality of the data was checked. Several statistical tests were conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of detox treatment, including t-tests to examine differences between pre- and post-detox measurements, the Wilcoxon signed rank test for non-normally distributed data, and median models to measure mediation effects. All these analyses were conducted to understand changes in mental well-being, motivation and concentration.

3.2 Qualitative research methodology

3.2.1 Sample

For the qualitative part of this study, ten interviews were conducted with a subset of participants after the detox period. This number is based on the principle of thematic saturation, which suggests that 8 to 12 interviews are generally sufficient to capture key themes and experiences (Guest et al., 2006). Participants were invited for an interview after confirming their participation in the detox, and a selection was made to ensure a balanced distribution of ages and baseline screen times. To be eligible, participants were required to have fully completed the social media detox and be available for an interview within five days of its completion, minimizing recall bias and ensuring accurate reflections on their experiences.

The interview sample consisted of participants aged between 22 and 29 years, with a mean age of 23.9 years (*SD* = 2.2). Interviewees included seven women and three men. Their average screen time prior to the detox was 213 minutes per day (*SD* = 69.9 minutes).

3.2.2 Instrument

To gain deeper insights into underlying mechanisms, experiences and perceptions during the social media detox, ten interviews were conducted. These interviews focused on the challenges faced, perceived benefits, and changes in mental well-being, concentration, and motivation during the detox period. This qualitative approach added depth to the study by identifying individual variations, unexpected effects and the broader psychological and behavioral impact of the detox.

All interviews followed a semi-structured interview guide to maintain reliability, ensuring that each participant received the same key questions (Appendix C). This approach ensured consistency in data collection and minimized variations caused by differences in wording or interviewer interpretation. This also provided flexibility, allowing for further questions on certain topics. The questions were based on existing literature on media use, concentration, motivation, and mental well-being. They were formulated in a semi-structured manner, allowing participants to share

their personal experiences and thoughts while ensuring that the key aspects of the study were consistently addressed (Bryman, 2016). The duration of each interview was on average twenty minutes.

Prior to the interview, informed consent was asked to record and process the interview. The conversation began with general questions to provide an overview of their experiences with the detox, for example: '*Did the detox make you more aware of the time you spend on social media and what has this meant for you?*' and '*What challenges did you experience during the social media detox?*'. Next, the three main themes concentration, motivation, and mental well-being were explored. The questions on concentration aimed to explore how the absence of social media notifications and interruptions influenced participants' attention and focus. Example interview questions include: '*Did you feel more able to manage your focus and attention during the detox?*' and '*How did you feel about the absence of notifications?*'. The questions on motivation were grounded in theories of self-regulation and behavior change (Deci & Ryan, 2000). These questions examined whether the detox influenced intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, for example: '*How did you feel about your ability to complete the detox successfully?*' and '*Did you find yourself more motivated to achieve your personal and work- or study-related goals?'.* The questions on mental well-being focused on the psychological and social effects of a social media detox, such as emotional mental well-being and perceived social connectedness. Example interview questions include: '*How did the detox influence your experience of positivity and engagement in activities?'* and '*Did you feel less need to keep track of what others were doing during the detox?'.* Finally, concluding questions addressed potential long-term changes in social media use to examine whether the detox had a lasting impact on participants, for example: '*Would you consider reducing your social media use permanently or trying another detox?*'.

3.2.3 Data analysis

To ensure accuracy, all interviews were recorded and transcribed, allowing for precise reference to participants' exact statements during the analysis. The transcriptions were systematically analyzed using Atlas TI. A thematic analysis was conducted to identify common themes and patterns related to the impact and experiences of the social media detox, following a combination of inductive and deductive thematic analysis.

First, an initial reading of the interview transcripts was conducted to identify recurring patterns and concepts, allowing for the development of preliminary codes. This inductive approach ensured that themes emerging directly from the data were captured. For instance, participants frequently mentioned changes in their time perception, how they dealt with boredom, and shifts in their relationship with social media. These recurring ideas were not predefined but emerged organically from the data. As the analysis progressed, the additional overarching themes *awareness* and *behavioral change* were identified based on frequently discussed topics in the interviews. At the same time, a deductive framework was applied by considering pre-defined areas of interest based on the research focus, namely *concentration*, *motivation*, and *mental well-being*. Within each main theme, specific codes were assigned to categorize participants' experiences in more detail. For instance, under the theme of concentration, codes such as *distraction, notifications, multitasking, fatigue, increased focus*, and *no change* were applied. Similarly, within the theme of awareness, relevant codes included *time perception, alternative time use, dealing with boredom, conscious use, unconscious use, curiosity,* and *relationship with social media*. These codes were systematically linked to relevant quotes from the interviews, summarizing the main findings. This dual approach improved the completeness and validity of the analysis by balancing exploratory openness with theoretical alignment.

4. Results

This section presents the key findings from both the quantitative and qualitative analyses conducted in this study. The results provide insights into participants' experiences with a temporary social media detox and its impact on concentration, motivation, mental well-being. In addition, this study also presents whether mental well-being mediates the relationship between the detox and concentration, as well as between the detox and motivation. The quantitative analysis, based on survey data, examines statistical effects and relationships between these variables, while the qualitative findings from interviews offer a deeper understanding of individual experiences and perceptions. These insights collectively show the impact of a social media detox on various aspects of daily functioning.

4.1 Quantitative results

To assess the normality of the data in both surveys, the Shapiro-Wilk test is conducted for the three variables mental well-being, motivation, and concentration. The *p*-values for concentration are $p = .325$ for the pre-detox survey and $p = .075$ for the post-detox survey, indicating normally distributed data in both surveys. Therefore, a paired samples t-test is used to test hypothesis 1. The results show a significant effect of the social media detox on concentration ($t(45) = -6.02$, $p < .001$). The mean concentration score is 4.12 ($SD = 0.89$) before the detox and 4.80 ($SD = 0.90$) after the detox. The negative mean difference ($M = -0.72$) suggests that concentration is reported to be, on average, .72 points higher after the social media detox, indicating a positive influence of the detox on concentration. The calculated effect size for concentration is Cohen's $d = 0.90$, which is considered a large effect size (Cohen, 1988). This suggests that the social media detox has a strong positive impact on participants' concentration. Therefore, hypothesis 1 is accepted.

To examine the effect of a social media detox on motivation, a Wilcoxon signed-rank test is conducted. The normality assumption is tested using the Shapiro-Wilk test, which indicates that the pre-detox motivation scores are normally distributed with a value of $p = .172$, while the post-detox scores show a deviation from normality with a value of $p = .042$. Since the post-detox data are not

normally distributed, a Wilcoxon signed-rank test is chosen. The results show a significant effect of the detox on motivation ($W = 275$, $p < .001$), with motivation scores increasing from Mdn = 5.11 before the detox to Mdn = 5.67 after the detox. This suggests that participants report an improvement in motivation after the detox. The effect size is calculated as $r = 0.29$, which is considered a medium effect according to Cohen's guidelines (1988), suggesting that the social media detox has a medium positive impact on participants' motivation. Therefore, hypothesis 2 is supported.

The normality test for mental well-being resulted in low p-values ($p < .001$) in both surveys, indicating that the data for mental well-being are not normally distributed. Therefore, a Wilcoxon signed-rank test is conducted to examine hypothesis 3. The results show a significant effect of the social media detox on mental well-being ($W = 295$, $p < .001$). The median mental well-being score increases from Mdn = 5.50 before the detox to Mdn = 5.86 after the detox, suggesting that participants report an improvement in mental well-being. This indicates a positive effect of the detox on mental well-being. The effect size is $r = 0.55$, which is a large effect according to Cohen (1988). This suggests the social media detox has a large positive impact on participants' mental well-being. Therefore, hypothesis 3 is accepted.

To investigate whether the effect of the social media detox on concentration is mediated by mental well-being, a mediation model is tested, using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) in R. A previous test reveals that the direct effect of a social media detox on concentration is significant. However, the results of the mediation model do not provide evidence for a significant mediation effect. The effect of mental well-being on concentration is positive ($\beta = 0.140$), but not significant ($p = .319$), suggesting that this relationship is not strong enough to serve as a significant explanation. The indirect effect of the social media detox on concentration via mental well-being is .059, with a p-value of $p = .341$, which is also not significant. In summary, the results indicate that mental well-being does not play a significant role in the relationship between social media detox and

concentration, and that the detox only directly increases concentration. Therefore, hypothesis 4 is rejected.

To test hypothesis 5, a mediation model is conducted to examine whether the relationship between a social media detox and motivation is mediated by mental well-being. The results show a significant mediation effect. As previously mentioned, the direct effects of the social media detox on both mental well-being and motivation are significant. Mental well-being has a positive and significant effect on motivation ($\beta = 0.516$, $p < .001$), suggesting that higher mental well-being is associated with higher motivation. The indirect effect of the social media detox on motivation via mental well-being is 0.218 and significant ($p < .001$), confirming that mental well-being plays a partial mediating role in this relationship. This indicates that the social media detox not only directly improves motivation, but part of this effect can be explained by the positive influence of the detox on mental well-being, which in turn contributes to higher motivation. Finally, hypothesis 5 is accepted. An overview of the hypothesis evaluation can be found in table 3.

Table 3

Overview hypothesis evaluation

	Hypothesis	Result
H1	Social media detox has a positive effect on concentration	Accepted
H2	Social media detox has a positive effect on motivation	Accepted
H3	Social media detox has a positive effect on mental well-being	Accepted
H4	The relationship between a social media detox and concentration is mediated by mental well-being	Rejected
H5	The relationship between a social media detox and motivation is mediated by mental well-being	Accepted

4.2 Qualitative results

This section discusses participants' experiences and perceptions during the detox, based on qualitative interviews. Main themes and topics emerged, including heightened awareness of social media habits, a sense of regained control, and improved focus and productivity. Many participants also reported mental rest due to reduced digital stimuli and noted shifts in social interactions, becoming more present in face-to-face conversations. in addition to the positive results, it also highlights the other side of an uncomfortable feeling and boredom. The following section elaborates on these insights.

4.2.1 Raising awareness of social media habits

A key theme emerging from the interviews is that the social media detox heightens participants' awareness of the role of social media use in daily life. The realization that participants often automatically use their smartphones without thinking about it is much discussed in the interviews. The detox forced them to face this automatic behavior, highlighting the habits people have developed and the need to break these reflexes to create a healthier relationship with social media. For some, this realization was confronting. One participant reflected on the experience:

> *"I became aware of how often I access social media without thinking, it almost feels programmed. When you have a moment to spare, you very often go to TikTok or Instagram. During the detox, I opened it very often and thought, but why am I actually on here?"* (Participant 7, women, age 23).

This awareness led participants not only to recognize their own habits, but also to examine the broader impact of social media on their daily lives. This encouraged participants to reevaluate the role of social media. Several described a shift in perspective, recognizing the consideration to reduce social media use. As one participant notes:

> *"I generally eat healthy, I live a healthy lifestyle, but my phone is actually a very unhealthy aspect of my life. So why not try to reduce that too?"* (Participant 10, women, age 23).

This shows that the detox served as a wake-up call, revealing a disconnect between broader goals and digital habits. Besides the unconscious nature of these habits, participants also pointed to the

ease with which they grab their phones. This easy access makes it difficult to break the habit. The phone is always within reach, turning moments of rest into opportunities to check social media. The constant presence of the phone reinforces habitual use, making it harder to resist the automatic urge to grab the phone, even when participants consciously try to disconnect. Many participants report spending less time on social media after the detox and view this as a positive change. Participants reported that the detox made them aware of the unnecessary use of social media during the day. One participant notes: *"The detox really made me realize that spending the entire day on Instagram is completely unnecessary"* (participant 1, women, age 23). This reflection shows how the detox enabled participants to critically rethink their digital habits. Moreover, all interviewees indicate that they continue certain aspects of the detox, such as disabling notifications or maintaining a time limit for social media use. This demonstrates that the detox was not merely a temporary change, but helps them consider lasting behavioral adjustments. As one participant describes it: "*The detox was definitely a push in the right direction*" (participant 8, women, age 22). This reflects the positive shift in daily routines and a growing sense of control over their digital consumption, suggesting that the detox may have a lasting effect.

Awareness that smartphones are often used unconsciously, and a willingness to acknowledge this behaviour, is an important step towards creating a healthier relationship with technology. Beyond simply recognizing their usage patterns, participants also became more mindful of how they spent their time. With limited access to social media, they were more conscious about their activities and focused on alternative activities such as reading, exercising, or face-to-face interactions. This shift highlights the potential to use time more effectively and with greater purpose. One participant, reflecting on this change, remarked: *"It is better to take a walk than to spend an hour scrolling on TikTok"* (Participant 3, man, age 26). The detox not only reduced screen time but also encouraged a more active and engaged approach to daily life. Ultimately, this increased awareness of their own behaviors serves as a foundation for broader improvements in mental well-being, concentration, and motivation.

4.2.2 The paradox of control and autonomy

Another key theme from the interviews is the sense of autonomy and control during the social media detox. All interviewees described feeling liberated from the constant stream of notifications and the pressure to respond immediately. Without these external cues, they felt more in charge of their own time and attention. As one participant notes: "*Now [during the detox] I decide myself when to respond to someone or open a message*" (participant 5, women, age 29). This sense of control highlights how digital notifications often determine behavior in ways that go unnoticed in daily life. However, this sense of autonomy evokes a contradiction. Individuals should always have control over their smartphone use, yet in practice, notifications and habits significantly influence their behavior. One participant reflected on this tension, stating:

> *"Well, I don't mind a single notification, but when I see eight notifications, I have this habit where I feel the need to clear them. It almost feels compulsive: 'I need to clear the notifications' or 'I have to respond'. You don't have to, but having notifications makes it feel that way. During the detox, that urge simply wasn't there*" (participant 7, women, age 22).

This illustrates how the presence of notifications reduces autonomy, making smartphone use feel less like a conscious choice. The detox experience allowed participants to take back control of their digital interactions, reinforcing the idea that constant connectivity is not always a conscious choice, but rather a conditioned response. Another participant remarks about the detox period: *"It feels like I have more control over when and how I use social media"* (participant 6, man, age 24). The fact that this autonomy became apparent during the social media detox suggests that many individuals are unaware of how social media and notifications shape their daily unconscious behaviors. This paradox highlights a crucial challenge. Although the detox temporarily restored participants' sense of control, the challenge lies in maintaining this autonomy outside of the detox. Some participants expressed a desire to continue with the detox, though many were uncertain about their ability to sustain the discipline required. As one participant explained:

> "*I would definitely do the detox again, and I would want to stick with it longer. I'm a bit doubtful about whether I can maintain the discipline. I think I can manage it during the week, but for example, if you have nothing to do on a Sunday afternoon, and the screen time limit is received, I'm the one who will ignore it*" (participant 7, women, age 22).

This feeling reveals the internal struggle between the desire to maintain autonomy and the temptation to fall back into old habits. Some participants report permanently disabling notifications from certain apps and setting time limits for themselves. Others mention that the detox helped them refocus on reducing distractions and dedicating more time to themselves. However, they also acknowledged that without the structure of the detox, their motivation might weaken over time. This suggests that while deliberate steps are being taken to maintain autonomy, sustaining new habits may be difficult without external motivation. It appears that finding a balance between autonomy and awareness of old habits will be crucial to maintain control in the long term.

4.2.3 Regaining focus and boosting productivity

A recurring theme is the improvement in concentration and productivity during the detox. Many participants reported feeling less distracted and more capable of focusing on a single task, particularly during work or study. The absence of notifications and social media interruptions played a crucial role in this shift, leading to fewer distractions and a greater ability to stay engaged in tasks. One participant describes how notifications normally disrupt a workflow and what this experience was like during the social media detox:

> *"I was not distracted by my notifications and normally I have to try my best to really dive back into the task after that. Now I just had the concentration, I was more productive"* (participant 9, women, age 23).

This experience highlights the impact of notifications and social media on concentration. Without constant interruptions, participants notice they were more productive and could also dive deeper into their work without having to switch between tasks. This shows how social media not only

creates distractions but also requires an extra mental effort to constantly regain focus. In addition, turning off notifications revealed the automatic tendency to check the phone, even without immediate cause. As one participant notes:

> *"I realized I am very triggered to check my notifications every time. Even if I do not open it right away, I still look to see who sent me something. And just like that, you're distracted again. There are so many notifications, so many stimuli all the time"* (participant 10, women, age 23).

This highlights how notifications often create a reflex urge to check the phone, even if the content is not immediately relevant. This curiosity often gave way to the insight that notifications are frequently unimportant and serve as distractions. Interestingly, participants noticed that the detox not only improved their focus during work or study hours but also in their leisure activities. Without the temptation of their phone, they were more engaged in other tasks, such as reading or watching TV, without multitasking. One participant reflects:

> *"I was much more focused on one thing, whereas normally I often, and I find this embarrassing to admit, watched TikTok while doing something else. That was not helpful at all"* (participant 8, women, age 22).

This underscores the negative impact of multitasking and the extent to which digital distractions have become a habitual part of daily routines. Additionally, participants report a decrease in fatigue, making them feel fresher and more rested, which positively influenced concentration. One participant notes: *"During that week, I felt much more mentally fit and noticed that I had a longer focus and could complete tasks much better"* (participant 4, women, age 22). These findings emphasize the importance of reducing digital distractions to enhance mental focus. Participants indicate they had more time and energy to focus on academic and professional tasks. One participant states:

> *"I completed my to-do list and usually I don't manage to do that. Usually I think, 'if I can't do it today, I'll do it tomorrow'. Now I definitely had the motivation to achieve my goal"* (participant 9, women, age 23).

This suggests a direct relationship between reducing social media distractions and the ability to complete tasks more effectively. Self-regulation played a crucial role in the success of the detox. Participants report being more able to control their phone use, which helps them to spend more time on their tasks. This sense of control contributed to their motivation to sustain the detox and focus on productive activities.

4.2.4 From digital exhaustion to mental rest

Another theme discussed in the interviews was the sense of mental rest that participants experienced during the detox. Many report feeling a sense of calm, feeling more energized, mentally clearer and experiencing a more positive mood. Participants' reflections suggest that the absence of constant digital stimulation may contribute to a calmer state of mind and a more balanced emotional state. One of the most notable consequences was the reduction in emotional fluctuations due to the absence of constant stimuli. Without continuous stimulation, participants noticed they felt more emotionally stable. As one participant explained:

> *"During the detox, you fluctuate less, you're just a bit more stable. Social media constantly gives you a kind of dopamine shot, causing fluctuations in your emotions. I do think it [reduced social media use] is better for you in the long term"* (participant 2, man, age 25).

Beyond emotional stability, the detox also brought a reduction in stress. Many participants felt a greater sense of calm without the constant flow of notifications and the pressure to respond immediately. One participant described how this shift became evident:

> *"Through this detox, I realized that I was unconsciously becoming very restless due to notifications. Now, I no longer felt the constant need to check what was being sent. That sense of calm was a great advantage. What I found remarkable was that I actually enjoyed it. It made me feel calm and I got more done"* (participant 9, women, age 23).

This indicates that the detox not only brought a sense of fulfilment and rest but also increased motivation. Overall, the detox provided participants with the opportunity to focus on their personal

goals and tasks without the constant distraction of social media. In addition to experiencing less stress and improved focus, several participants noted that the detox allowed them to engage in alternative activities that contributed to their sense of mental rest. They found themselves investing time in more mindful and enriching activities. One participant reflected on this change:

> *"One advantage was that I did have more peace in my mind. I was reading more and listening to podcasts instead of looking at TikTok, which made me feel much calmer"* (Participant 8, women, age 22).

This suggests that reducing social media not only reduced stress but also opened space for activities that fostered relaxation and mental clarity. Interestingly, rather than struggling with the detox, several participants found it to be a surprisingly positive experience. Reducing social media use helped to realize that little was missed without constant connection. The detox also exposed the contribution of social media on mental exhaustion. Several participants noted how endless scrolling drained their energy, making them feel tired and unmotivated. This exhaustion led participants to seek out alternative activities that provided them with more energy and satisfaction. As one participant put it:

> *"Normally, you get so many stimuli and you're just mindlessly scrolling, it actually takes a lot of energy. [During the detox] you end up doing more things instead, like working out or walking the dog, which definitely gives you more energy than just sitting on the couch staring at your phone all the time"* (participant 10, women, age 23).

This statement underscores how constant exposure to digital content can lead to cognitive fatigue, reducing overall motivation and energy levels. The improved energy levels are attributed to less overstimulation, energizing activities and improved sleep patterns, as participants went to bed earlier due to reduced phone use in the evening. Overall, the social media detox provided a break from digital overstimulation, allowing participants to experience mental rest and greater emotional balance.

4.2.5 More present in person, yet less connected on social media

One of the most striking changes was the shift in social interactions. Without the constant presence of their phone, participants became more aware of how social media influenced their daily connections. Some noticed they were more present in conversations, while others realized how much of their social life revolved around online interactions. For many, the detox created space for more meaningful engagement in real-life conversations. One participant describes the realization of habits during social interactions:

> "*Normally, during a conversation, when I haven't checked my phone in a while, I get curious, so I take a look and suddenly my attention shifts from the conversation to my phone. But now, since I wasn't using my phone much anyway, I wasn't tempted to do that. I realized it's actually kind of rude and it's a habit, seeking for stimuli*" (Participant 8, women, age 22).

This shows how social media can pull attention, even during conversations. Another result was the increased engagement in face-to-face interactions. Beyond individual awareness, the detox also influenced group dynamics. This shift was particularly noticeable in social settings where phone use had become habitual, such as school breaks. As one participant described: "*During breaks at school, instead of scrolling, I thought: well, how was your day*?" (participant 9, women, age 23). This seemingly simple shift had a profound impact, as participants realized how much of their free time was previously spent passively consuming content rather than engaging with those around them. A similar pattern emerged in work environments. Several participants found themselves actively seeking out real-life social contact instead of relying on their phone. Another participant explained how leaving their phone changed the way they interacted with colleagues: *"At work breaks, I just left my phone in the office, because what do I need it for? This made me more present*" (participant 7, women, age 22). This suggests that phone use during social moments is often more a habit than intentional. By breaking this habit, participants found that they naturally became more present and engaged with people around them. However, not all changes were positive. For some, the detox highlights the extent to which social media have become a key way to stay connected with others.

One participant notes that while they were more engaged in face-to-face conversations, digital interactions became less spontaneous:

> *"I don't think I actually had more time for others. Normally, when you send a quick Snapchat, you get an update on what someone is doing, or you react to something in a group chat. It's a fast way to stay in touch. In the beginning of the detox, I remember thinking: luckily my friends are still texting"* (participant 1, women, age 23).

This response highlights the paradox of social media: while it can be a distraction from in-person conversations, it also facilitates quick and easy connections. The detox made some participants aware of how much they relied on these small moments of interaction to maintain relationships. For some, this also led to frustration. One participant reflects on how digital habits shape social interactions in a way that feels unfulfilling:

> *"Often, you just sit next to each other on the couch all day, mindlessly scrolling through TikTok, and I think, come on, have a real conversation for once"* (Participant 10, women, age 23).

This realization underscores how social media can sometimes replace rather than enhance social interactions. While digital platforms offer convenience, they can also create a false sense of connection, where simply being in the same space does not equate to meaningful interaction. Overall, the social media detox reveals a dual reality. While reducing social media led to more presence, engagement and more meaningful in-person interactions, it also exposed the quality of digital communication. Participants became more intentional about their social habits, recognizing the importance of balance between online and offline connections.

4.2.6 Dealing with boredom and an uncomfortable feeling

Finally, the social media detox also had less positive results on participants. Several interviewees report struggling with boredom and the uncomfortable feeling that arose from reducing their social media use. Many participants had to get used to the idea and the rules of the detox, leading some to initially hesitate about participating in the experiment. One participant reflected on the length of the

detox period, expressing uncertainty about how to fill the time without access to their usual digital platforms:

> *"At first, I really thought, oh my god an entire week, five days, what am I going to do? I really thought this"* (Participant 9, women, age 23).

This statement highlights the strong attachment and dependence on social media that the participant experiences. It illustrates a sense of uncertainty and even anxiety about the period with reduced digital distractions, emphasizing the intensity of the challenge that the detox posed. It also underscores how deeply integrated social media is in the daily lives of young people. Another participant notes that the beginning of the detox created a feeling of restriction, demonstrating the difficulty of letting go of familiar habits and the constant flow of notifications:

> *"It felt a bit constricting when I set the time limit and turned off notifications, but eventually, I had no problems with it"* (Participant 2, man, age 25).

This quote reflects the initial discomfort the participant felt. The feeling of restriction suggests the tension that arises when habitual digital behaviors are interrupted. However, as the participant notes, this discomfort diminished over time, indicating an adjustment period that made the detox easier to endure. One of the most common challenges during the detox was dealing with boredom, especially at times when participants are used to reaching for their phones, such as during breaks or between activities. One participant describes the difficulty of finding alternative ways to spend time:

> *"I often thought: what else am I going to do? That's really bad. Do I have a book or something? But I actually don't. Now that I think about it, am I really on my phone that much if I have to actively come up with something else to do? Apparently, yes"* (Participant 10, women, age 23).

This statement emphasizes both the boredom experienced and the realization of how frequently the phone functions as an automatic source of distraction. The realization of dependency, without thinking about alternatives, is a feeling that was perceived as unpleasant by some participants. For some participants, the detox confronted them with the emptiness that was often filled with digital activity, making them aware of their reliance on social media for entertainment. Additionally, some

participants found it difficult to maintain new, non-digital activities over time. While the detox initially encouraged alternative activities, sustaining these habits proved challenging. One participant describes the struggle to maintain a new habit of reading:

> *"The first day, I could think of things to do instead, but I wasn't very good at sticking with them. Until the third day, I read a lot, but by the fourth and fifth day, that already started to fade. Then I began looking for another alternative, which was still on my phone, like a game"* (Participant 7, women, age 22).

This illustrates how the detox initially created space for other activities but also revealed how difficult it was to break the habit of digital distraction. Even with the intention of engaging in more productive activities, the temptation to return to phone use remained strong. Finally, one participant points out that missing out on inspiration from social media is a significant aspect of the detox. While social media often serves as a distraction, it can also be a valuable tool for finding new ideas and inspiration. One participant explained:

> *"Sometimes I wanted to look for inspiration, like for planning vacations, and then I wanted to check TikTok, but I couldn't. When I use it intentionally, I use it to look things up like that, and I did miss it a little. When I see fun things on social media, I feel inspired and positive because I get good ideas"* (Participant 8, women, age 22).

This highlights that social media is not only a negative influence, it also provides positive stimulation, such as inspiration and new ideas. The detox made the participant aware that social media can be a valuable source of creativity, which was missed during the detox period.

5. Discussion

Understanding the effects of social media reduction is relevant, as digital consumption continues to shape various aspects of daily life. By integrating both quantitative and qualitative insights, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of how a social media detox influences concentration, motivation and mental well-being. This chapter reflects on the key findings of this study, evaluating their significance in relation to existing theories and studies. It discusses the implications, both theoretically and practically, while also addressing the study's limitations and directions for future research. The chapter ends with a conclusion.

5.1 Main findings

This study demonstrates that a five-day social media detox improves concentration, motivation and mental well-being among young adults. Participants report feeling less distracted, being more capable of focusing on tasks, feeling more driven and engaged in their activities, experiencing greater mental clarity, emotional balance and reduced stress. The findings suggest that mental well-being plays a mediating role in the increase in motivation but does not explain the improvement in concentration. This indicates that the social media detox directly improves focus rather than through changes in mental well-being.

The interviews highlight increased awareness of social media habits, gaining a stronger sense of control over phone use due to the reduced urgency to open notifications. Many participants experience greater productivity due to less distractions and report feeling more mentally rested. However, the detox also posed challenges. While most participants enjoyed being more present in social interactions, some missed the convenience of social media for staying connected and finding inspiration. In addition, some participants initially struggled with boredom and discomfort, highlighting the strong attachment to digital distractions. Overall, a temporary social media detox appears to be a valuable way to enhance concentration, motivation and mental well-being, helping people feel more in control of their daily digital consumption.

5.2 Theoretical implications

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) by demonstrating how reducing social media use can enhance autonomy. Many participants report a heightened sense of control over their time and digital habits, allowing them to engage more effectively in meaningful activities which could explain the observed improvements in motivation. This suggests that autonomy enhances intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Existing research on detox interventions present mixed results regarding the impact on mental well-being. The findings of the current study align with those of several studies that indicate improvements in mental well-being, self-control, social connectedness and stress levels (Ansari et al., 2024; Brailovskaia et al., 2022; Brown & Kuss, 2020; Coyne & Woodruff, 2023; Nassen et al., 2023; Radtke et al., 2021). However, some studies suggest that a temporary detox leads to reduced social connectedness and an increase in feelings of loneliness, and boredom (Nassen et al., 2023; Przybylski et al., 2021; Radtke et al., 2021). In the current study, boredom was frequently mentioned as a key experience during the detox period, and some participants also reported decreased social connectedness, but feelings of loneliness are not mentioned. This study contributes to the PERMA Model (Seligman, 2011), as participants report increased positive emotions, social connection, mindfulness, and a greater sense of calm, key components of this model. While some studies found no significant effects of a social media detox on mental well-being (Ramadhan et al., 2024), others, including this study, support positive outcomes. This raises questions about the role of personal habits, adaptation periods, and psychological predispositions in determining the effectiveness of a social media detox. Future research should focus on these factors to better understand for whom and under what circumstances a detox is most beneficial.

A notable finding is the lack of support for the mediating role of mental well-being in cognitive performance. Previous research suggests that individuals with higher mental well-being tend to perform better on cognitive tasks due to reduced stress and negative mental states (Huppert & Johnson, 2010; Keyes, 2007; Ryff & Singer, 1998; Reddy et al., 2018). However, the findings of the

current study are inconsistent with this perspective. While participants mentioned reduced stress and increased positivity as noticeable effects, improved mental well-being did not translate into improved concentration. This suggests that the direct effects of a social media detox, such as reducing distractions and improving focus, are stronger than the indirect effects via wellbeing. A possible explanation for this is that improvements in mental well-being may only impact cognitive performance over the long term, while reduction of distractions has an immediate effect on focus and concentration. The short-term changes of mental well-being found, such as improved mood and reduced stress, may not be sufficient to produce measurable cognitive benefits.

The findings of this study do support the expected mediating role of mental well-being in the relationship between a detox from social media and motivation. This result is consistent with the Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), which states that higher mental well-being enhances intrinsic motivation by promoting autonomy and self-regulation. In this context, participants who experienced a boost in mental well-being, such as reduced stress and increased positivity, were more motivated to work on their tasks. This effect highlights the indirect pathways through which a detox from social media affects motivation. By reducing distractions and improving emotional regulation, a detox not only directly boosts motivation, but also indirectly improves motivation by supporting an individual's mental well-being. These findings build on the existing literature, which suggests that restoring mental well-being can create the mental clarity and energy needed for goal-directed behaviour (Grassinger et al., 2024; Sheldon & Elliot, 1999; Fishbach & Labroo, 2007). This confirms the crucial role that mental well-being plays in motivating individuals and suggests that a social media detox, can lead to sustained improvements in mental well-being and motivation.

This research contributes to the understanding of the relationships between social media, mental well-being, motivation, and concentration. Previous studies have mainly highlighted the negative consequences of excessive social media use, particularly on well-being. By demonstrating that even reduction in social media usage can have positive consequences on mental well-being,

concentration and motivation, this research lays the foundation for further investigations into the cognitive benefits of digital detox interventions for young adults.

5.3 Practical implications

The findings of this study offer practical insights into the benefits and challenges of a social media detox for young adults, in private and professional settings. For educational institutions and employers, these findings highlight the potential advantages of minimizing digital distractions in work and study environments. Implementing policies such as focus hours, social media detox challenges, or technology mindfulness programs could foster cognitive efficiency and motivation among students and employees. By encouraging structured breaks from social media, organizations may improve focus and overall performance. For policymakers and mental health practitioners, this study underscores the importance of digital literacy programs that promote balanced social media use. Instead of temporary detox interventions, long-term strategies, such as teaching young adults about healthy digital habits and cognitive self-regulation techniques, may lead to more sustainable improvements in mental well-being, motivation and concentration. Additionally, mobile app developers and social media platforms could integrate features that support mindful usage, such as automated time limits, scheduled breaks, or reward systems for reduced screen time. Designing tools that facilitate healthier social media engagement may help users maintain a balance between digital connectivity and mental well-being.

5.4 Limitations and future research

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that must be acknowledged. These limitations provide opportunities for future research to refine and extend the findings. First, the duration of the detox intervention may have been short to produce profound psychological changes. While cognitive benefits were observed, a longer detox period might provide more stable and lasting effects. Longitudinal studies should examine whether effects increase over a longer period of time

and whether the cognitive and emotional benefits of a social media detox can persist for a longer time or decrease once social media use is resumed. This would help determine whether behavioral changes resulting from a detox are temporary adjustments or indicate lasting habit formation. Second, it is important to acknowledge potential sampling limitations. The use of convenience sampling and snowball sampling may have introduced biases, as participants were primarily recruited through personal networks and social media. This could limit the representativeness of the sample and affect the generalizability of the findings. However, efforts were made to include participants from diverse educational and professional backgrounds to enhance variability within the sample. Third, the study relied on self-reported measures, which are susceptible to social desirability bias and subjective interpretation. Participants' reported improvements in concentration and motivation may have been influenced by their expectations of the effects. Future research could employ qualitative diary studies to capture real-time experiences throughout the detox, providing a more nuanced understanding and minimizing retrospective bias. Furthermore, individual differences in social media usage habits were not accounted for in the analysis. While participants were asked about their baseline social media use, these differences were not included as a moderating factor. Individuals with pre-existing mindful social media habits may have responded differently compared to heavy users. Future research should explore how baseline digital dependency, personality traits and cognitive load influence the effects of a digital detox. This would allow for a more personalized approach to digital detox interventions, tailoring strategies to different user profiles for greater effectiveness. Additionally, verification of compliance to the detox was a challenge. Participants had to share screenshots of their phone screen time, but no control over social media use on other devices is implemented in the surveys or interviews. Future studies could implement control over other devices to ensure higher compliance and provide more accurate assessments of the impact. In addition to these methodological considerations, this study raises an important theoretical question that needs further investigation. While the results suggest a mediating role of mental well-being in motivation improvements, no such mediation was found for concentration. This indicates that other

psychological mechanisms may play a more central role in explaining the relationship between social media use and concentration. Future research could explore these underlying mechanisms to clarify the effect on concentration.

Overall, this study provides evidence that a temporary social media detox can have benefits. However, the findings also reveal complexities, such as the short detox duration, individual differences in social media habits, the reliance on self-reported measures and the lack of control over other devices, that require further exploration to refine the understanding of how social media detox strategies can be optimized for long-term benefits.

5.5 Conclusion

This study provides evidence that a temporary social media detox leads to noticeable improvements in concentration, motivation, and mental well-being, while also encouraging a more conscious approach to social media use. By reducing social media use, individuals can regain control over digital habits, fostering autonomy and enhancing focus in daily life. While social media detox interventions may not address all challenges associated with social media use, this research highlights the importance of a balanced approach, not by complete avoidance but through mindful and regulated consumption. Future research should explore ways to sustain benefits over time and identify strategies for integrating mindful social media use into everyday life. In an age of constant connectivity, developing mindful digital habits is not only crucial for improving mental well-being, concentration and motivation but also for fostering a healthier, more balanced relationship with social media.

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7. Appendices

"During the preparation of this work the author used ChatGPT in order to assist in rewriting texts. After using this tool/service, the author reviewed and edited the content as needed and takes full responsibility for the content of the work."

Appendix A: Pre-detox survey

Introduction
Survey 1

Dear participant,

For my thesis within the Master of Communication Science, I am conducting research on the impact of a social media detox. As part of this research, you will complete a questionnaire both before and after the 5-day social media detox. The questionnaire contains statements and questions in four categories: social media use, mental well-being, motivation and concentration. You answer each statement or question on a 7-point scale (from 'completely disagree' to 'completely agree'). By taking part in this survey, you will not only help me tremendously in my graduation process, but you will also gain insight into your own social media use.

Participation in this survey is completely voluntary. Your answers will remain anonymous and will be processed confidentially.

The survey will take about 10 minutes of your time. Thank you in advance for your participation!

Consent
Consent form
By checking the checkbox below, you consent to participate in this study. You agree that your answers will be collected and processed anonymously for research purposes.

If you have any questions or would like more information about the study, please contact r.j.sesink@student.utwente.nl.

Demographics
- Age
- Gender
- In the past six months, have you spent an average of at least 1 hour a day on social media?
- Study or work situation
- Education level

Social media use
- Average number of hours per day spent on social media
- What social media platforms do you use daily?

Statements

Mental well-being - Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (Tennant et al., 2007)

- WB1: I've been feeling optimistic about the future
- WB2: I've been feeling useful
- WB3: I've been feeling relaxed
- WB4: I've been feeling interested in other people
- WB5: I've had energy to spare
- WB6: I've been dealing with problems well
- WB7: I've been thinking clearly
- WB8: I've been feeling good about myself
- WB9: I've been feeling close to other people
- WB10: I've been feeling confident
- WB11: I've been able to make up my own mind about things
- WB12: I've been feeling loved
- WB13: I've been interested in new things
- WB14: I've been feeling cheerful

Motivation - Self-Regulation Questionnaire (Miller & Brown, 1991)

- M15: I get easily distracted from my plans.
- M16: I have so many plans that it's hard for me to focus on any one of them.
- M17: I have trouble following through with things once I've made up my mind to do something.
- M18: I can stick to a plan that's working well.
- M19: I have a lot of willpower.
- M20: I am able to resist temptation.
- M21: I have rules that I stick by no matter what.
- M22: Little problems or distractions throw me off course.
- M23: I give up quickly.

Concentration - Attention Control Scale – short version (Derryberry & Reed, 2002)

- C24: When I am working hard on something, I still get distracted by events around me.
- C25: When trying to focus my attention on something, I have difficulty blocking out distracting thoughts.
- C26: I have a hard time concentrating when I'm excited about something.
- C27: I can quickly switch from one task to another.
- C28: It takes me a while to get really involved in a new task.
- C29: It is difficult for me to coordinate my attention between the listening and writing required when taking notes during lectures/meetings.
- C30: I can become interested in a new topic very quickly when I need to.
- C31: I have a hard time coming up with new ideas quickly.
- C32: After being interrupted or distracted, I can easily shift my attention back to what I was doing before.
- C33: It is easy for me to alternate between two different tasks.

Appendix B: Post-detox survey

Introduction
Survey 2
Dear participant,

Thank you for participating in the social media detox! Hopefully it went well and gave you valuable insights as well. Now that the detox period is over, I ask you to answer statements and questions again about the four categories of social media use, mental well-being, motivation and concentration. This time, answer the questions based on your experiences during the 5-day detox period. The answers you give will help me make a comparison between your situation before and during the detox.

This questionnaire is also completely anonymous and your answers will be processed confidentially. It will take about 10 minutes to complete.

Thanks again for your valuable contribution!

Consent
Consent form
By checking the checkbox below, you consent to participate in this study. You agree that your answers will be collected and processed anonymously for research purposes.

If you have any questions or would like more information about the study, please contact r.j.sesink@student.utwente.nl.

Demographics
- Age
- Gender
- Study or work situation
- Education level

Social media use
- On average, how many hours a day do you spend on social media outside the detox period?
- What social media platforms do you use daily?
- How much time did you spend daily on social media during the detox?

Statements
Give answers based on your experiences during the 5-day social media detox.

*Same statements as survey 1

Verification
Upload 5 screenshots of your screen time (1 for each detox day) to show that you have adhered to the set social media limit (see the example). This helps to verify your participation.
Example screenshot screen time

Go to Settings > Screen time > See all activity > make sure the view is set to Day > Scroll to Most used apps > Take a screenshot > Repeat for all 5 detox days > Upload the 5 screenshots below.

Appendix C: Interview questions

General

1. Did the detox make you more aware of the time you spend on social media? What has this awareness meant for you?
2. What challenges did you experience during the social media detox?
3. What benefits did you experience during the detox in terms of concentration, motivation, and mental well-being? Did you notice any other benefits?
4. How did you spend the time that you would normally spend on social media?

Concentration

5. How did you experience your concentration during the social media detox? Did notice you were less distracted?
6. How did you feel about the absence of notifications?
7. Did you feel more able to manage your focus and attention during the detox?
8. Did you notice feeling mentally sharper or less tired from using less social media?

Motivation

9. Did you find yourself more motivated during the detox to achieve your personal and work- or study-related goals?
10. How did it feel to have no choice over your social media use? Did this affect your motivation for achieving other goals?
11. How did you feel about your ability to complete the detox successfully? Was it easier or harder than you expected?
12. Did you notice any changes in your social interactions or connections during the detox?

Mental well-being

13. During the detox, did you notice any changes in your physical, mental, or social well-being? Can you give examples?
14. Did you feel less need to keep up with what others were doing (FoMO) during the detox? How did this affect your well-being?
15. Did the tendency to compare yourself to others on social media change during the detox?
16. How did the detox influence your experience of positivity and engagement in activities?

Conclusion

17. Do you notice any changes in your relationship with social media after the detox?
18. After this experience, would you consider reducing your social media use permanently or trying another detox? Why or why not?