

# Supportive social media: Features design that enables young adults to seek out emotional support from strangers beyond social media



## ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates feature design solutions to develop supportive social media that enables young adults to seek out emotional support from strangers beyond social media. Introducing the core idea of “single-serving friends,” this feature design solution is intended to encourage users to speak out freely with their one-time friends. Users will converse with strangers who share similar interests; They will be free to pour out their negative emotions and ask for advice from others. In this case, users will support others while seeking support from them and fulfilling their social relatedness.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND RESULT

### LITERATURE REVIEW (with 60+ references)

- **Social relatedness and self-determination theory** - to understand how relatedness needs induce the desire for emotional support from social media.
- **Emotional support and wellbeing** - to investigate whether negative affectivity is valuable in assessing PSU and mental well-being while studying social media user behaviour.
- **Social engagement with FoMO and social comparison** - to explore how FoMO and social comparison play as mediators driving exceeding social media engagement.
- **Intervention in previous research** - to learn and analyze previous studies introducing treatments and interventions for excessive social media use and its potential addiction.
- **The effects of gender roles on the emotional support process** - to validate whether males have a lower likelihood of seeking emotional support than females do.

**INTERVIEW** - 7 interviews, including one with a psychologist, were conducted online and offline. Aside from questions regarding their social media presence and ways of seeking support, they were asked for insights on “dating” media.

- Low self-esteem and isolation were frequently reported as self-reported mental health issues.
- 5/7 participants had the experience of talking to strangers for support and received positive feedback.
- 7/7 participants are likely to support others while seeking support from them.
- 1 of 7 participants mentioned, “she doesn’t want to talk with strangers because she is ashamed of her voice.”
- 3/7 participants questioned, “what if they cannot get an appropriate response from a stranger because they know nothing about each other?”
- The psychologist suggested further studying gender differences in the process of seeking emotional support.

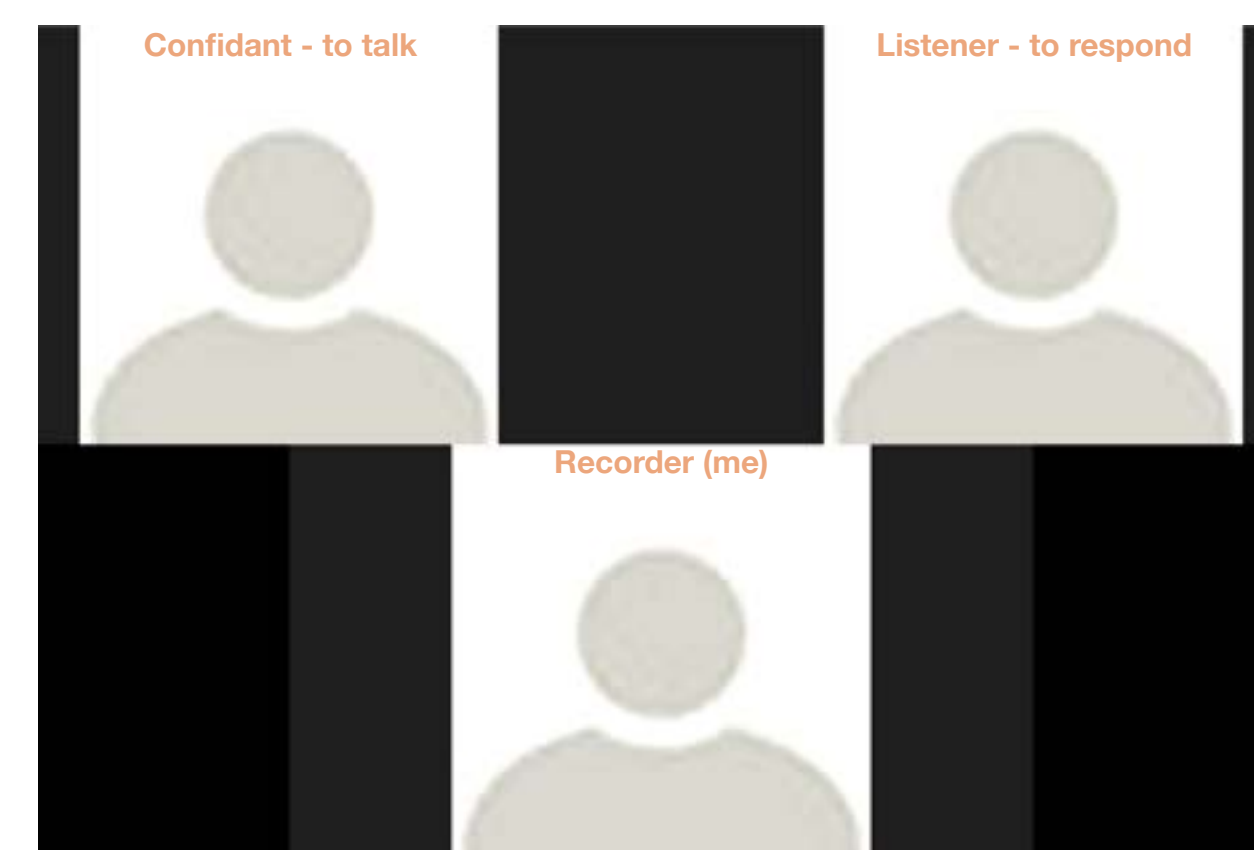
**CARD SORTING** - A card sorting experiment was conducted with ten participants to investigate user preferences for both face-to-face and virtual conversations.

- The **topic** is the most important consideration in a virtual conversation, followed by **voice, comprehension, and empathy**, while appearance is the least important.

**ROLEPLAY** - Two roleplay groups with four participants were carried out under pre-established scenarios.

**The purpose** is to investigate patterns of behavior of how people react when providing/seeking support from strangers, as well as their understanding of one-time friendships in which virtual conversations are undertaken.

- A listener plays an important role while the roleplay were properly carried out with an attentive listener.
- A listeners who is not interested in the talks’ topics is unlikely to respond actively.
- Gender should be taken into account as females are more patient when it comes to listening and supporting.

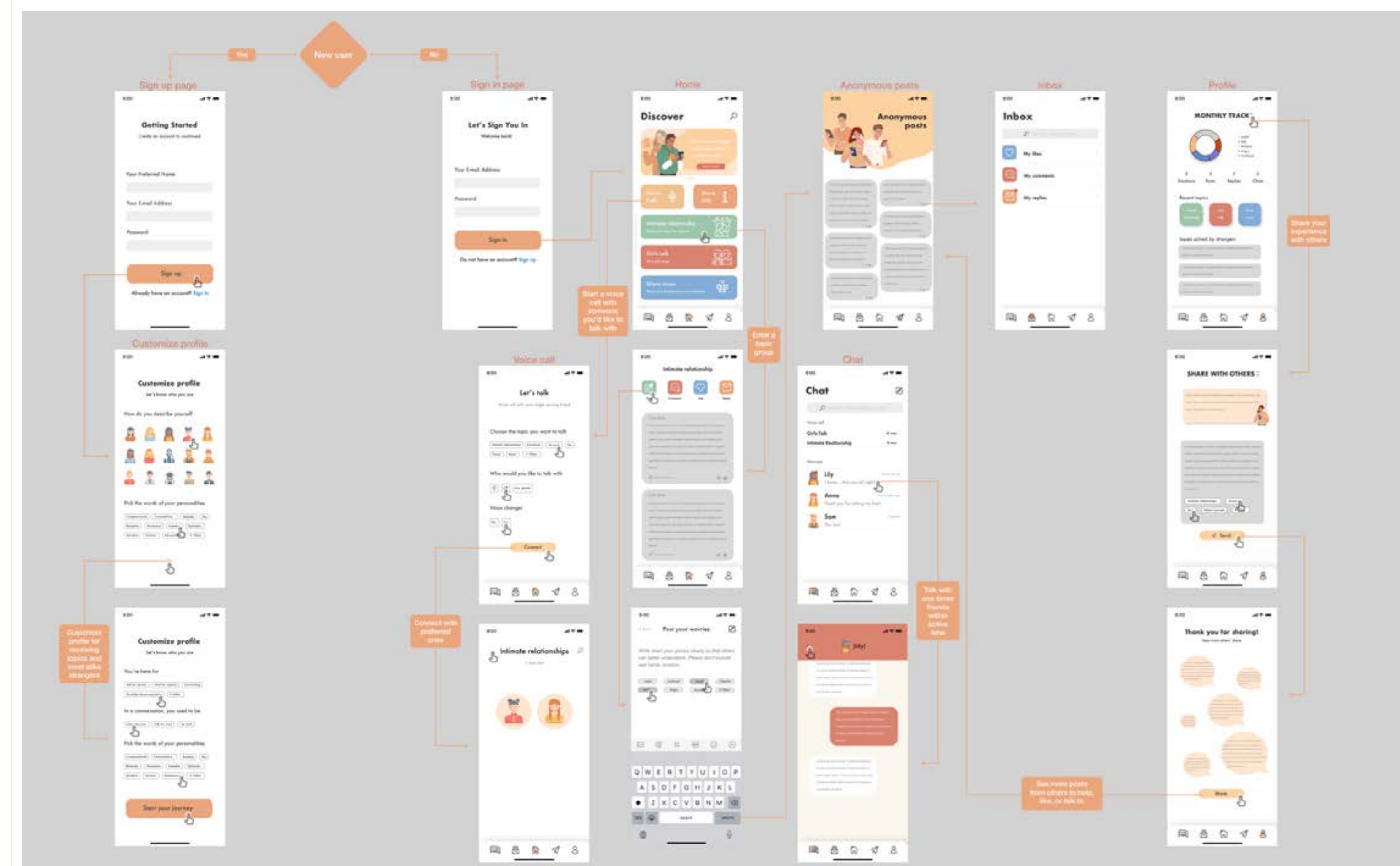


## BACKGROUND

**Research question:** “Is there a way to encourage people to support others while they gain support from them?”

Research has demonstrated that for ones who fear missing out, they are more likely attracted by social media (Przybylski et al., 2013). As more social needs individuals achieved from SNS, they may neglect social experiences in reality (Blackwell et al., 2017; Kandell, 1998). It can be argued that social media make social communication easier ever than before. However, the negative effects of exceeding social media engagement have gripped the attention of researchers. Many studies have elaborated on relationships between problematic social media use and variables of fear of missing out (e.g., Fang et al., 2020; Gupta & Sharma, 2021), while lack of emotional support from interpersonal relationships is considered to exacerbate negative emotions and is linked to social addiction (Fang et al., 2020).

## DESIGN AND USER EVALUATION



7 groups of concept testings have been finalized with the process of developing the features. There are two different voices from users for the “voice changer” feature, which may require more action in future studies.

- “For me, a voice changer is a good idea. I don’t want others to know how my real voice sounds.”
- “Using a voice changer to talk with a stranger makes me feel more distant and strange.”

## CONCLUSION & FUTURE STUDY

Despite the fact that much exploratory research facilitated design modifications and user testing has been completed, testing groups are comparatively small. Further user testing is needed to gather more insights and continue to improve the overall flow. During the concept testing, there are different voices from users to the voice changer feature; An alternative solution should be considered to improve the experience in further studies.