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# FEAR OF MISSING OUT IN UNDERGRADUATE COLLEGE STUDENTS IN RELATIONSHIP TO EMOTIONAL STABILITY AND SOCIAL MEDIA USE

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## Introduction

With the purpose of sharing information and connecting with other online users, social media has found its way into many people's daily lives across the globe. With Facebook reporting 1.01 billion daily active users (Facebook 2014), we are more connected to each other than ever before. This constant connection can lead to an increase in time spent on social media outlets. Extensive use of social media has raised concerns about a new phenomenon called the Fear of Missing Out (FoMO; Przybylski, Murayamab, DeHaanc, and Gladwelld, 2013). FoMO is defined by an individual's anxiety or worry that other people are having more rewarding experiences than they are after seeing an online friend's social media post. FoMO is characterized by an increased desire to constantly stay connected with online friends on social media in order to know what others are experiencing. One of the areas of interest for the present study is determining whether or not there is a correlation between emotional stability and FoMO. Research has examined the relationship between social media use and emotional stability. Emotional stability, often used interchangeably with neuroticism, is one of the personality traits used in the Five Factor Model. Emotional stability or instability is a personality trait characterized by feelings of anxiety, worry, jealousy, and moodiness (Goldberg 1992). Research has found that neurotic users are more likely to write longer posts and use more negative words in their online text (Shen, Brdiczka, Liu, 2015).

Przybylskia et al. (2013) conducted studies in order to gather empirical evidence on the fear of missing out (FoMO) and how it affects an individual emotionally and behaviorally. Researchers created a 10-item FoMO scale. The scale measured participants FoMO rates using a Likert scale with statements like 'I get worried when I find out my friends are having fun without me'. The reliability coefficient for the FoMO scale was given a (n=) .51. This score indicates that the FoMO scale is sensitive and is capable of assessing a broad range of participants with different rates of FoMO (i.e., low, medium, and high) (Przybylskia et al). Two studies were conducted. The aim of the second study was to determine how FoMO related to demographics of individuals and social media engagement in a large sample population. The participant pool included 1040 men and 1039 women (n=2079) between the ages of 22 and 65. Participants were invited to complete an online survey over a two week period. The FoMO scale was included in the online survey and social media engagement was measured using a series of questions that asked about social media use in participants' daily lives. Findings suggested that age and FoMO were negatively correlated and that men were more likely to experience higher levels of FoMO than women. However, younger participants in the study reported higher levels of FoMO and young men in particular scored the higher on the FoMO scale than any other age group. In study three, researchers studied first year university student's FoMO levels and participant Facebook use in educational settings. Eighty-seven participants (ages 18-33) were used in the study. Researchers found that participant's FoMO scores were related to higher rates of Facebook usage and were more likely to use Facebook during class lectures.

## Hypotheses

1. Participants that use social media extensively will experience higher rates of FoMO.
2. Participants that have higher rates of FoMO will have higher rates of emotional instability.
3. Freshman year undergraduate college students are more likely to experience higher rates of FoMO than senior year undergraduate students.

## Method

### Participants

- \*108 participants ( 72 females and 30 males)
- \*Ranging in age from 19 to 66 with a mean age of 32 and a standard deviation of 15
- \*68% of participants identified themselves as Caucasian or White, 10% identified themselves as Asian or Pacific Islander, 10% identified themselves as Hispanic or Latino, 4% identified themselves as African American or Black, 1% identified themselves as Native American, and 7% identified as other
- \*99% of participants use Facebook, 64% use Instagram, 59% use Snapchat, 38% use Twitter, 17% use Google+, and 15% use Tumblr
- \*Participants were divided into four groups based on education level : Freshman – Sophomore group (Freshmen and Sophomores grouped together due to small numbers), Junior group, Senior group, and Earned Degree Group

### Materials/ Procedure

- \*Used SurveyMonkey to create and administer survey
- \*Participants were sent a link requesting their participation in the study. The survey contained three scales:
- \*The Fear of Missing Out Scale (Przybylskia et al. 2013) – A higher score on the FoMO scale means a participant is experiencing higher rates of FoMO
- \*The Emotional Stability sub scale from Goldberg's Five Factor Model (1992) – A higher score on the Emotional Stability scale means a participant is more emotionally stable
- \*A social media usage questionnaire created by the researcher

## Results

- (Figure 1) There was no significant mean difference in FoMO scores between Fro-So group and the Senior Group ,  $t(34) = -.72, p > .05$ .
- (Figure 2) A significant negative correlation was found between the total social media use score and participant age,  $r(93) = -.50, p < .05$ .
- (Figure 3) A significant negative correlation was revealed between age and FoMO scores,  $r(90) = -.27, p < .05$ .
- (Figure 4) A significant positive correlation was found between participant FoMO scores and the total social media use score ,  $r(103) = .27, p < .05$ .
- (Figure 5) A significant negative correlation was found between participant emotional stability scores and participant FoMO scores,  $r(95) = -.47, p < .05$ .
- Participants who scored lower on the emotional stability scale scored higher on the social media use scale,  $r(98) = -.25, p < .05$ .

## Conclusions

- Experiencing the Fear of Missing Out is not related to the education level attained by the individual.
- The younger the individual is the higher the likelihood of using social media extensively.
- The younger an individual is the more likely he or she will experience the Fear of Missing Out.
- Individuals experiencing the Fear of Missing out are more likely to use social media platforms at a higher rate.
- People who are more emotionally stable are less likely to experience the Fear of Missing Out.
- People who are less emotionally stable ( neurotic) are more likely to use social media extensively.

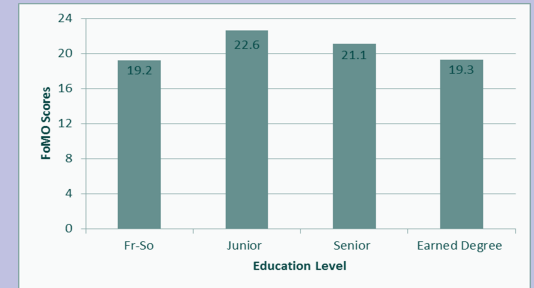


Figure 1: FoMO Scores as they relate to Education Level

Figure 2: Negative correlation between total social media use score and participant age

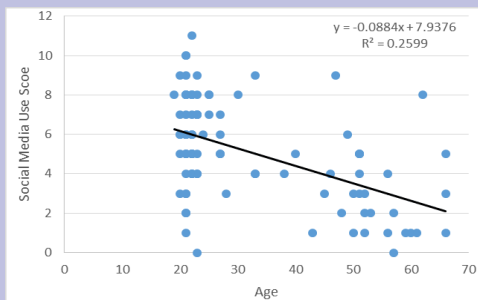


Figure 3: Negative correlation between FoMO score and participant age

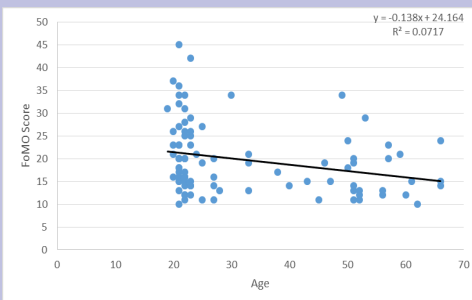


Figure 4: Positive correlation between FoMO score and total participant social media use score

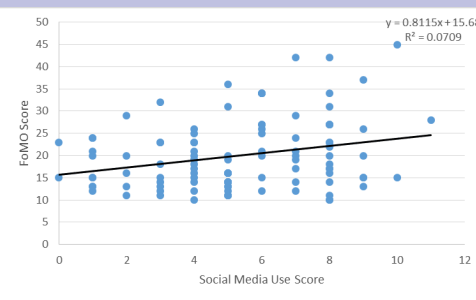


Figure 5: Negative correlation between FoMO score and emotional stability score

