

Impact of Social Media Usage and Introversion on Fear of Missing Out

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ABSTRACT

Social media use has become increasingly prevalent among young adults, influencing their emotions, behaviours, and interpersonal relationships. One notable psychological outcome of excessive social media engagement is Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), characterized by anxiety arising from the perception that others are having rewarding experiences without oneself. The present study aims to examine the relationship between social media usage, introversion, and FOMO among young adults. A sample of 200 individuals aged 18–25 years from urban areas will be selected using convenience sampling. Data will be collected using standardized instruments: the Social Media Usage Scale (SMUS), the Fear of Missing Out Scale (FOMOS), and the Introversion Scale developed by McCroskey. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation will be employed to assess the relationships among the variables, while linear regression analysis will be used to determine the predictive influence of social media usage and introversion on FOMO. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to a better understanding of how personality traits and online behaviour interact to influence FOMO. Additionally, the study aims to inform mental health research by identifying potential risk factors associated with high social media use and introverted tendencies, thereby supporting the development of effective interventions to enhance psychological well-being among young adults.

Keywords: *Social Media Usage, Fear of Missing Out, Introversion, Young Adults*

The rapid expansion of social media has fundamentally transformed patterns of social interaction, particularly among young adults. Platforms such as Instagram, WhatsApp, and Facebook provide continuous access to social information, enabling users to maintain relationships, share experiences, and engage in social comparison. While these platforms offer opportunities for connection and self-expression, increasing evidence suggests that excessive or maladaptive social media engagement may be associated with negative psychological outcomes.

One construct that has received growing attention in this context is Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). FOMO is defined as a pervasive apprehension that others may be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent (Przybylski et al., 2013). It reflects a desire

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Impact of Social Media Usage and Introversion on Fear of Missing Out

to remain continually connected with what others are doing and is closely linked to social comparison processes (Festinger, 1954). Research has demonstrated that higher levels of FOMO are associated with increased social media engagement, problematic internet use, depressive symptoms, and reduced well-being (Baker et al., 2016; Blackwell et al., 2017; Elhai et al., 2020). However, findings regarding the direct relationship between social media usage frequency and FOMO remain inconsistent, suggesting that individual differences may influence how social media experiences are interpreted.

Personality traits represent one important dispositional factor that may shape individuals' emotional responses to social media content. Within personality frameworks, introversion is characterized by inward orientation, social reserve, preference for solitude, and heightened sensitivity to internal experiences (McCrae & John, 1992). Introverted individuals may experience social situations differently compared to extraverted individuals, particularly in contexts involving evaluation, comparison, and perceived exclusion. Although introversion is not inherently maladaptive, research indicates that introverted individuals may be more susceptible to internalized social concerns and negative affect under certain conditions (DeMeo et al., 2022; Tuovinen et al., 2020).

Several studies have explored the association between personality traits and social media behavior. Blackwell et al. (2017) reported that personality dimensions, including neuroticism and attachment style, were significant predictors of social media addiction, with FOMO serving as a mediating factor. Similarly, research has suggested that dispositional factors may play a stronger role in predicting emotional outcomes than behavioral exposure alone (Steinberger & Kim, 2023). While many studies emphasize extraversion in digital contexts, comparatively fewer investigations have examined the role of introversion in shaping experiences of FOMO.

Recent empirical findings further illustrate the complexity of these relationships. Longitudinal research indicates that social media use may have both beneficial and detrimental effects depending on contextual and individual factors (Steinsbekk et al., 2024). Studies examining FOMO have linked it to social comparison tendencies, social anxiety, and problematic media use (Piko et al., 2025; Riordan et al., 2019). Moreover, systematic reviews highlight that psychological distress associated with social media cannot be fully explained by usage frequency alone, but rather by how individuals cognitively and emotionally process online interactions (Khalaf et al., 2023; Naslund et al., 2020).

Despite growing attention to FOMO and personality traits, limited research has simultaneously examined social media usage and introversion as predictors of FOMO within a unified framework. Most existing studies focus either on behavioral patterns (e.g., time spent online) or broad personality dimensions without isolating introversion specifically. Consequently, the interplay between social media usage, introversion, and FOMO remains insufficiently understood, particularly among young adults who represent the most active social media demographic.

Understanding whether FOMO is primarily driven by digital exposure or by dispositional tendencies has important theoretical and practical implications. If personality traits such as introversion significantly predict FOMO independent of usage frequency, interventions may need to target cognitive-emotional processes rather than merely reducing screen time.

Impact of Social Media Usage and Introversion on Fear of Missing Out

Therefore, the present study aims to examine the relationships among social media usage, introversion, and Fear of Missing Out among young adults, and to determine whether social media usage and introversion significantly predict FOMO.

METHODOLOGY

Aim

The study aimed to investigate the relationships among social media usage, introversion, and Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), and to examine whether social media usage and introversion significantly predict FOMO among young adults.

Objectives

- To assess the levels of social media usage, introversion, and Fear of Missing Out among young adults.
- To examine the relationships among social media usage, introversion, and FOMO.
- To determine whether social media usage and introversion significantly predict FOMO.

Hypotheses

- **H1:** Social media usage will be significantly associated with introversion.
- **H2:** Social media usage will be significantly associated with Fear of Missing Out.
- **H3:** Introversion will be significantly associated with Fear of Missing Out.
- **H4:** Social media usage will significantly predict Fear of Missing Out.
- **H5:** Introversion will significantly predict Fear of Missing Out.

Research Design

The present study adopted a quantitative, correlational research design to examine the relationships among social media usage, introversion, and Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). The study also employed multiple regression analysis to determine the predictive influence of social media usage and introversion on FOMO.

Participants

The sample consisted of 210 young adults aged between 18 and 25 years from urban areas. Participants were selected using a convenience sampling technique. All participants provided informed consent prior to participation.

Inclusion Criteria

- Individuals aged between 18 and 25 years
- Individuals who were willing to participate in the study
- Individuals who could read and understand English

Exclusion Criteria

- Individuals who reported having a diagnosed psychological illness
- Individuals from rural areas

Variables

Independent Variables:

- Social Media Usage
- Introversion

Dependent Variable:

- Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)

Impact of Social Media Usage and Introversion on Fear of Missing Out

Instruments

- **Social Media Use Scale (SMUS):** The Social Media Use Scale (SMUS), developed by Lin, Wang, and Chen (2016), was used to measure participants' social media usage. The scale consists of 22 items assessing five domains: social interaction, entertainment, information-seeking, convenience, and social comparison. Responses are rated on a 5-point Likert scale. Items 2, 8, 9, 11, 17, and 21 are reverse scored. The scale demonstrates good internal consistency, with a reported Cronbach's alpha of .86.
- **Fear of Missing Out Scale (FoMOS):** Fear of Missing Out was assessed using the 10-item FoMO Scale developed by Przybylski et al. (2013). Items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "Not at all true of me" to "Extremely true of me." Higher scores indicate greater levels of FOMO. The scale has demonstrated excellent reliability, with reported internal consistency values ranging from .87 to .90.
- **Introversion Scale:** Introversion was measured using the Introversion Scale developed by McCroskey. The scale consists of 18 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale. The instrument has demonstrated satisfactory reliability, with alpha coefficients above .80. Scores were computed according to the scoring guidelines provided by the author.

Procedure

Participants were briefed about the purpose of the study prior to data collection. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured. After obtaining informed consent, the instruments were administered through Google Forms. Participants completed the Social Media Use Scale, Introversion Scale, and Fear of Missing Out Scale. Data were collected and compiled for statistical analysis.

Scoring and Interpretation

For the Social Media Use Scale and Fear of Missing Out Scale, total scores were calculated by summing item responses, with higher scores indicating greater levels of social media usage and FOMO respectively. Reverse-scored items were recoded prior to analysis.

For the Introversion Scale, total scores were computed according to the prescribed scoring procedure. Higher scores indicated greater levels of introversion.

Statistical Analysis

Data were analyzed using JASP (Version 0.95.4). Descriptive statistics were computed to summarize participant characteristics and variable distributions. Pearson's product-moment correlation analysis was conducted to examine relationships among social media usage, introversion, and FOMO. Multiple linear regression analysis was performed to determine whether social media usage and introversion significantly predicted FOMO.

RESULTS

The present study examined the relationships among social media usage, introversion, and Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), and evaluated whether social media usage and introversion significantly predicted FOMO among young adults.

Impact of Social Media Usage and Introversion on Fear of Missing Out

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics by Gender

Variable	Gender	N	M	SD	Min	Max
Social Media Usage	Female	147	68.52	7.46	46	86
	Male	63	69.30	7.31	54	86
FOMO	Female	147	27.50	7.45	11	50
	Male	63	29.60	5.85	16	50
Introversion	Female	147	36.22	6.60	14	52
	Male	63	38.22	4.80	27	52

Note. $N = 210$. No missing data.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for social media usage, FOMO, and introversion by gender. Male participants reported slightly higher mean scores on social media usage ($M = 69.30$, $SD = 7.31$) compared to female participants ($M = 68.52$, $SD = 7.46$). Similarly, males scored higher on FOMO ($M = 29.60$, $SD = 5.85$) than females ($M = 27.50$, $SD = 7.45$). Introversion scores were also higher among males ($M = 38.22$, $SD = 4.80$) than females ($M = 36.22$, $SD = 6.60$).

Table 2 Pearson Correlations Among Study Variables

Variable	1	2	3
1. Social Media Usage	—		
2. FOMO	.04	—	
3. Introversion	.04	.34***	—

Note. $N = 210$. Values are Pearson's r . *** $p < .001$.

Correlation Analysis

Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficients are presented in Table 2. Social media usage was not significantly correlated with FOMO ($r = .04$, $p = .601$) or introversion ($r = .04$, $p = .582$).

However, introversion demonstrated a statistically significant moderate positive correlation with FOMO ($r = .34$, $p < .001$). This indicates that higher levels of introversion were associated with higher levels of Fear of Missing Out.

Table 3 Multiple Regression Predicting FOMO ($N = 210$)

Predictor	B	SE B	β	t	p
Intercept	12.50	5.04	—	2.48	.014
Introversion	0.38	0.08	.33	5.10	<.001
Social Media Usage	0.02	0.06	.02	0.36	.720

Model Summary:

$R = .34$, $R^2 = .11$, Adjusted $R^2 = .10$, $F(2, 207) = 13.17$, $p < .001$

Note. Unstandardized coefficients (B) are reported. β = standardized coefficient.

Multiple Regression Analysis

A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to determine whether social media usage and introversion significantly predicted FOMO. The overall regression model was statistically significant, $F(2, 207) = 13.17$, $p < .001$, explaining 11% of the variance in FOMO ($R^2 = .11$, Adjusted $R^2 = .10$). Introversion emerged as a significant positive predictor of FOMO ($\beta = .33$, $t = 5.10$, $p < .001$), indicating that higher introversion scores were associated with higher FOMO levels. In contrast, social media usage did not significantly predict FOMO ($\beta = .02$, $t = 0.36$, $p = .720$).

Summary of Findings

The findings indicate that introversion was significantly associated with and predictive of Fear of Missing Out, whereas social media usage was neither significantly correlated with nor predictive of FOMO. The results suggest that personality traits, particularly introversion, may play a more substantial role in explaining FOMO than the frequency of social media use alone.

DISCUSSION

The present study examined the relationships among social media usage, introversion, and Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) among young adults, with particular emphasis on the predictive roles of social media usage and introversion. The findings provide a nuanced understanding of the psychological mechanisms underlying FOMO and suggest that dispositional factors may play a more central role than behavioral exposure alone.

Consistent with expectations, introversion demonstrated a significant positive association with FOMO and emerged as a significant predictor in the regression model. Individuals with higher levels of introversion reported greater experiences of Fear of Missing Out. This finding suggests that introverted individuals may be more vulnerable to internal social comparison processes and perceived exclusion in digital environments. Given that introversion is characterized by inward orientation, social reserve, and heightened sensitivity to internal experiences (McCrae & John, 1992), it is plausible that introverted individuals may engage in more self-referential evaluation when exposed to curated online content. Such tendencies may intensify perceptions of social absence or missed opportunities, thereby increasing FOMO.

This result aligns with research indicating that personality traits significantly influence emotional responses to social media (Blackwell et al., 2017; Steinberger & Kim, 2023). It also supports broader theoretical perspectives emphasizing the role of individual differences in shaping digital experiences, rather than attributing psychological outcomes solely to media exposure. The moderate strength of the relationship further indicates that introversion represents a meaningful, though not exclusive, contributor to FOMO.

In contrast, social media usage did not demonstrate a significant relationship with FOMO, nor did it significantly predict FOMO in the regression analysis. This finding challenges the commonly held assumption that increased social media use directly leads to greater Fear of Missing Out. While prior studies have reported associations between FOMO and problematic social media engagement (Baker et al., 2016; Elhai et al., 2020), the present findings suggest that frequency of usage alone may not be sufficient to explain FOMO experiences. Instead, the way individuals cognitively and emotionally interpret online interactions may be more influential than the amount of time spent online.

The regression model explained 11% of the variance in FOMO, indicating that additional factors likely contribute to this phenomenon. Variables such as social anxiety, self-esteem, attachment style, loneliness, and patterns of social comparison may further clarify the complexity of FOMO experiences. Future research should explore these potential mediators and moderators to develop a more comprehensive explanatory model.

The findings have important practical implications. Interventions aimed at reducing FOMO often focus on limiting screen time or encouraging digital detox strategies. However, the present results suggest that such approaches may be insufficient if underlying personality

Impact of Social Media Usage and Introversion on Fear of Missing Out

characteristics are not addressed. Psychological interventions that enhance emotional regulation, adaptive social comparison, and self-concept clarity may be particularly beneficial, especially for individuals with higher introversion tendencies. Educational institutions and mental health professionals may consider incorporating personality-informed approaches when addressing technology-related distress among young adults.

Several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the use of a convenience sampling method limits the generalizability of the findings. Second, the cross-sectional design precludes causal inferences regarding the directionality of relationships. Third, reliance on self-report measures may introduce response bias. Future studies employing longitudinal designs, experimental approaches, and more diverse samples would strengthen the evidence base and provide deeper insight into the dynamic interplay between personality and digital behavior.

In summary, the present study contributes to the growing body of literature on social media and psychological well-being by demonstrating that introversion significantly predicts Fear of Missing Out, whereas social media usage frequency does not. These findings highlight the importance of integrating dispositional and cognitive perspectives into contemporary research on digital-age social experiences.

CONCLUSION

The present study examined the relationships among social media usage, introversion, and Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) among young adults. The findings revealed that introversion was significantly associated with and predictive of FOMO, whereas social media usage did not demonstrate a significant relationship or predictive effect. These results suggest that individual personality characteristics may play a more central role in explaining FOMO than the mere frequency of social media engagement.

Although the regression model was statistically significant, the proportion of variance explained was modest, indicating that additional psychological and contextual factors likely contribute to FOMO experiences. The findings contribute to the growing literature by emphasizing the importance of dispositional traits in understanding digital-age social anxiety.

From a practical perspective, interventions aimed at reducing FOMO should extend beyond simply limiting social media usage and instead focus on enhancing emotional regulation, adaptive social comparison, and resilience, particularly among individuals with introverted tendencies. Overall, the study underscores the need to integrate personality-based perspectives into research on social media and psychological well-being.

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Impact of Social Media Usage and Introversion on Fear of Missing Out

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Impact of Social Media Usage and Introversion on Fear of Missing Out

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Impact of Social Media Usage and Introversion on Fear of Missing Out

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Impact of Social Media Usage and Introversion on Fear of Missing Out

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Conflict of Interest

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