



# Fear of Missing Out and Problematic Social Media Usage

Claudia Linczer, Bettina Villegas, Caroline Paige, Scott Lucitt, Katheryn Kelley, Daniel Lapsley, Emily LaPorte

University of Notre Dame



## BACKGROUND

Social media allows adolescents to stay connected with their peers, but it also allows them to see social activities that they were not invited to, causing feelings of jealousy and anxiety. Thus, social media has led to a greater increase in the experience known as fear of missing out (FoMO). FoMO can be defined as the “pervasive apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent...characterized by the desire to stay continually connected with what others are doing” (Przybylski et al., 2013). In addition, problematic social media usage (PSMU), which refers to repetitive, impulsive social media usage that has negative effects on the lives of users, has become more significant today (Villella et al., 2011). FoMO and PSMU are most prevalent in adolescence, but both have risen in the general population, which has driven the relevance of the presented research (Siciliano et al., 2015).

The current study aims to expand upon research on FoMO by focusing on its relationship to PSMU. We hypothesized that FoMO would be a significant predictor of PSMU. In addition, we believed social comparison orientation (SCO), dysfunctional individuation, and attachment insecurity would be positively correlated with this relationship. Contrastingly, we believed identity exploration and self-determination theory, specifically the relatedness subscale, would be negatively correlated with this relationship.

## METHODS

INDEPENDENT VARIABLE	DEPENDENT VARIABLE	OTHER MEASURES
Fear of Missing Out - FoMO scale (Przybylski et al., 2013)	Problematic Social Media Usage - PSMU scale (Franchina et al., 2018)	Social Comparison Orientation Scale (Schmieder et al., 2013), Dysfunctional Individuation Scale (Stey et al. 2014), Attachment Insecurity Scale (Collins et al., 1990), Identity Exploration Scale (Luyckx et al., 2008), Self-Determination Theory Scale (Johnston et al., 2010).

## METHODS (CONTINUED)

An emerging adult sample from a private midwestern university (N= 146) was given an online survey for class credit. 71% were female and the mean age of participants was 20 years old. 67.8% of the participants were Caucasian, 13.7% were Hispanic or Latino, 7.5% were Asian, 6.8% were multi-ethnic or biracial, 2.7% were Black or African American and < 1% were Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander or preferred not to say.

## RESULTS

- Regression analysis found that FoMO significantly predicted PSMU ( $R^2 = 0.19$ ).
- Multiple regression with FoMO, SCO, identity commitment and relational dysfunction found that identity commitment and FoMO were the two significant predictors of PSMU ( $R^2 = 0.28$ ).
- SCO and FoMO were strongly correlated, yet SCO did not moderate the relationship between FoMO and PSMU.
- A mediation analysis found evidence for partial mediation, but the model was not a good fit ( $\chi^2(3,145) = 548.88$ , CFI = 0, RMSA = 1.12).

## DISCUSSION

The current study found that FoMO significantly predicted PSMU ( $R^2 = 0.19$ ), supporting the hypothesis that increased FoMO may lead to increased PSMU. Furthermore, it was found that FoMO combined with identification with commitment (DIDSIwC Scale) was a much stronger predictor of PSMU ( $R^2 = 0.28$ ) compared to FoMO by itself. These results indicate that participants who strongly shape their identities around their commitments and who have low levels of FoMO are less likely to engage in PSMU. However, the relationships between these variables may be better explained by another model

## DISCUSSION CONT.

For example, it could be that higher levels of PSMU lead to increased FoMO which affects uncertainty in one's identity.

SCO was not found to be a significant predictor of PSMU in the multiple regression analysis potentially because the scale so strongly correlated with FoMO. Further research needs to be performed to explore another model which explains SCO's relationship with FoMO and PSMU.

A limiting factor was the lack of the age range of the sample. Future research needs to be performed with a larger sample size and wider age range in order to test how age may affect FoMO and PSMU

Understanding the underlying psychological causes of PSMU is crucial for creating solutions and preventative approaches to protect adolescents from mental illnesses, such as depression and anxiety, caused by constant social media usage.

Significant Correlations between PSMU and Other Measures									
	FoMO	SCO	PSMU	Dysfunctional individuation	Commitment making	Identification with commitment	Exploration in breadth	Exploration in depth	Ruminative exploration
FoMO	1								
SCO	0.52*	1							
PSMU	0.43*	0.29*	1						
Dysfunctional individuation	0.34*	0.18	0.22	1					
Commitment making	-0.14	-0.06	-0.29*	-0.27*	1				
Identification with commitment	-0.12	-0.05	-0.31*	-0.23*	0.81	1			
Exploration in breadth	0.14	0.24*	-0.16*	-0.02	0.29	0.36	1		
Exploration in depth	0.06	0.09	-0.17*	-0.14	0.58	0.66	0.62	1	
Ruminative exploration	0.36*	0.26	0.16*	0.29*	-0.51	-0.36	0.28	-0.01	1

\* indicates  $p < 0.05$