



## Short Communication

# Extraversion, neuroticism, attachment style and fear of missing out as predictors of social media use and addiction



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## ABSTRACT

Social media use is prevalent in today's society and has contributed to problems with social media addiction. The goal of the study was to investigate whether extraversion, neuroticism, attachment style, and fear of missing out (FOMO) were predictors of social media use and addiction. Participants in the study ( $N = 207$ ) volunteered to complete a brief survey measuring levels of extraversion, neuroticism, attachment styles, and FOMO. In the final model of a hierarchical regression, younger age, neuroticism, and fear of missing out predicted social media use. Only fear of missing out predicted social media addiction. Attachment anxiety and avoidance predicted social media addiction, but this relationship was no longer significant after the addition of FOMO.

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Social media use may lead to social media addiction, which involves being unable to control one's social media use and using it to such an extent that it interferes with other life tasks (Ryan, Chester, Reece, & Xenos, 2014). This paper will examine predictors of social media use and addiction focusing on the personality traits of extraversion and neuroticism, attachment style, and the fear of missing out (FOMO).

Extraversion has been shown to be positively related to both social media use and addictive tendencies (Kuss & Griffiths, 2011; Ryan & Xenos, 2011; Wilson, Fornasier, & White, 2010). Extraverts appear to use social media in order to enhance their social connections (Kuss & Griffiths, 2011). Neuroticism has also been shown to be positively associated with social media use (Tang, Chen, Yang, Chung, & Lee, 2016) and internet addiction (Andreassen et al., 2013; Tsai et al., 2009). People high in neuroticism may be drawn to use social networking sites like Facebook because they hope to receive feedback and reassurance from others and because it is easier for them to communicate through a screen than it is for them to communicate face-to-face (Kandell, 1998).

Because social media is generally used to maintain and develop relationships, attachment style may affect its use. Anxiously attached people are insecure in relationships and often seek reassurance. They may use social media to maintain relationships and seek social feedback. Furthermore, communication through social media can help those who are anxious spend more time thinking about what they want to say and

avoid awkward pauses that may occur in real conversations (Kandell, 1998). Research has found that anxious attachment is related to using and seeking feedback on social media (Hart, Nailling, Bizer, & Collins, 2015; Oldmeadow, Quinn, & Kowert, 2013). The relationship between anxious attachment and addiction is less clear. While some research has found that insecure attachment is related to problematic internet use and internet addiction (Lin, Ko, & Wu, 2011; Schimmenti, Passanisi, Gervasi, Manzella, & Famà, 2014), another study found no differences in social media addiction between attachment styles (Baek, Cho, & Kim, 2014).

Those high in attachment avoidance consider themselves self-sufficient and avoid intimacy and closeness. One might assume that they may not wish to use social media as they may not be interested in developing and maintaining relationships. Nevertheless, social media may be used by those with avoidant attachment as a way to keep people in their lives, but at a distance (Nitzburg & Farber, 2013). In some research, avoidant attachment has been linked with less social media use (Hart et al., 2015). However, other research found that those who were both anxious and avoidant used social media more than those who were solely avoidant (Baek et al., 2014).

When people are anxious about relationships, they likely fear being socially excluded. Fear of missing out (FOMO) is a fear that other people are having fun without you (Przybylski, Murayama, DeHaan, & Gladwell, 2013). FOMO has been linked to increased social media use (Przybylski et al., 2013), as well as to problematic smartphone use (Elhai, Levine, Dvorak, & Hall, 2016). However, to our knowledge, no research has specifically examined the relationship between FOMO and social media addiction.

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In our study, we examined the effects of extraversion, neuroticism, attachment styles, and levels of FOMO on both social media use and addiction. We used hierarchical regression, first entering extraversion and neuroticism, then anxious and avoidant attachment, and lastly, FOMO. We hypothesized that each variable would be a significant predictor of both use and addiction at each step.

## 1. Method

### 1.1. Participants

We recruited 207 participants (50 men, 155 women, and two who indicated that their gender was “other”). The majority were recruited from a general psychology subject pool in the Southeastern U.S. ( $n = 118$ , 57%) and 89 (43%) were recruited online through Facebook or Reddit. Participants ranged in age from 17 to 49, ( $M = 22.15$ ,  $SD = 7.38$ ). Most identified as White/Caucasian (79.2%) and 82% were currently enrolled in college.

### 1.2. Procedure

We posted the link to the survey on Facebook and Reddit. The survey was also made available to general psychology students in order to receive partial credit for their course. We merged the data for both of the groups and differences between the groups were tested before our primary data analysis.

### 1.3. Materials

#### 1.3.1. Fear of Missing Out Scale

This scale (Przybylski et al., 2013) consisted of 10 items measured on a 5-point scale (1 = *not at all true* to 5 = *extremely true*). The Cronbach's alpha was 0.91.

#### 1.3.2. Revised version of the Experience in Close Relationship Scale

The Experience in Close Relationships Scale (Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998) was developed to assess attachment anxiety and avoidance. We utilized a revised version that has been used in research about social media use (Baek et al., 2014). It consists of 5 items measuring anxiety and 5 items measuring avoidance on a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*). The Cronbach's alphas were 0.81 for anxiety and 0.79 for avoidance.

#### 1.3.3. The Big Five Inventory

We used the Big Five Inventory (John & Srivastava, 1999) to measure extraversion (8-items) and neuroticism (8-items). It was rated on a 5-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). The Cronbach's alphas were 0.88 for extraversion and 0.84 for neuroticism.

#### 1.3.4. Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale

This 6-item scale included items measuring whether one was troubled when one could not use social media and whether it interfered

with one's job or studies (Andreassen, Torsheim, Brunborg, & Pallesen, 2012). It was rated on a 5-point scale (1 = *very rarely*, 5 = *very often*). The Cronbach's alpha was 0.88.

#### 1.3.5. Social Media Engagement Scale

This 5-item scale measured the extent to which an individual uses social media in their daily lives (Przybylski et al., 2013). It was rated on an 8-point Likert scale (1 = *not one day last week*, 8 = *every day last week*). The Cronbach's alpha was 0.85.

## 2. Results

Bivariate correlations between all variables can be seen in Table 1. In order to investigate whether the two subsamples differed, we ran a MANOVA with recruitment style (general psychology or online) as the independent variable and all other variables as the dependent variables. The results were significant,  $F(8,198) = 6.77$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . Univariate indicated that the subsamples differed significantly by age  $F(1,205) = 48.36$ ,  $p < 0.001$  and social media engagement  $F(1,205) = 4.74$ ,  $p = 0.031$ . Those recruited online were older ( $M = 25.85$ ,  $SD = 9.28$ ) than those recruited through the subject pool ( $M = 19.36$ ,  $SD = 3.59$ ), and were less engaged with social media (5.03 vs. 5.65). With age covaried, the MANCOVA was not significant  $F(7,198) = 0.86$ ,  $p = 0.54$  meaning age accounted for the differences between the subsamples. Thus, age was included as the first step to control for its effects in our regression analyses.

The hierarchical regressions for both social media use and addiction can be seen in Table 2. For social media use, we found that age was significant at the first step such that younger people used social media more. After adding extraversion and neuroticism, age remained a significant predictor and both extraversion and neuroticism were significant. At the third step, the addition of attachment avoidance and anxiety was not significant, only neuroticism and extraversion were significant predictors at this step. The addition of FOMO in the final step was significant. The final model accounted for 17.1% of the variance  $F(1,200) = 11.13$ ,  $p < 0.001$  in social media use. Age, neuroticism, and FOMO were significant in the final model.

For social media addiction, age was significant at the first step such that younger people were more likely to be addicted. After adding extraversion and neuroticism, a statistically significant increase, age did not remain a significant predictor but neuroticism was significant. The addition of attachment avoidance and anxiety at the third step resulted in a statistically significant increase. Extraversion, avoidance, and anxiety were all significant at this step. The addition of FOMO in the final model was significant. The final model accounted for 31.4% of the variance in social media addiction,  $F(1,200) = 52.01$ ,  $p < 0.000$ , and FOMO was the only significant predictor.

## 3. Discussion

The goal of our study was to examine whether extraversion, neuroticism, attachment style, and FOMO were significant predictors of social

**Table 1**  
Inter-correlations among study variables.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Age	–	–0.005	–0.136	–0.004	–0.253**	–0.174*	–0.163*	–0.220**
2. Extraversion		–	–0.239**	–0.370**	–0.075	0.010	0.062	0.130
3. Neuroticism			–	0.274**	0.587**	0.481**	0.274**	0.250**
4. Avoidance				–	0.186**	0.154*	0.160*	–0.078
5. Anxiety					–	0.643**	0.342**	0.262**
6. FOMO						–	0.560**	0.357**
7. Addiction							–	0.575**
8. Engagement								–

Note.  $n = 207$ .

\*  $p < 0.05$ .

\*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

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