

Neuroticism and the Fear of Missing Out: Exploring Psychological Outcomes in Young Adults

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ABSTRACT

The rapid evolution of digital media has significantly shaped communication patterns and social interactions, particularly among young adults. This study explores the correlation between neuroticism and the Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) among students at Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana, with a focus on understanding how these elements impact psychological health and social behaviors. Utilizing a quantitative correlational design, the research investigates how the personality trait of neuroticism predicts the extent of FoMO, a condition exacerbated by intense social media engagement. The sample comprised 158 active university students who engage in over three hours of social media usage daily. Data were collected via the Fear of Missing Out Scale and the Neuroticism Scale from the NEO-PI, administered through Google Forms. The findings reveal a significant positive correlation between neuroticism and FoMO ($r = 0.704$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that students with higher levels of neuroticism are more likely to experience FoMO. These results suggest that neuroticism may enhance sensitivity to social media cues, thereby increasing feelings of anxiety and the fear of being left out of rewarding social experiences. The study highlights the need for targeted psychological interventions and educational programs to mitigate the impacts of FoMO and promote healthier social media habits. This research contributes to the broader discourse on the psychological effects of digital technologies, emphasizing the importance of addressing underlying personality traits that predispose individuals to digital vulnerabilities.

Keywords: neuroticism, fear of missing out, social media usage, young adults, digital well-being



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INTRODUCTION

The swift progression of technology and the evolving digital landscape have profoundly transformed the fabric of modern communication and interaction. This transformation is underpinned by an omnipresent reliance on the internet, which permeates virtually every facet of daily life, reshaping the ways in which we connect, share, and perceive information. The proliferation of social media platforms such as Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter has particularly revolutionized our social interactions, making these platforms central to our engagements and the dissemination of information. The ubiquitous nature of these platforms illustrates the convergence of technology and everyday life, making digital connectivity an indispensable part of societal functionality (Kemp, 2019).

According to the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (2018), the surge in internet usage in Indonesia is indicative of a broader global trend. In 2017, the number of internet users reached 143.26 million, representing 54.68% of the population, an increase from the previous year. This statistic underscores a growing digital engagement across various demographic segments, particularly among those aged 19-34 and 13-18 years, who represent the largest cohorts of internet users in the country (Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, 2018). The Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Internet Indonesia (APJII) corroborates

this data, highlighting a substantial rise in activities like social media usage, which soared to 89.15% in 2022, up from 87.13% in 2017, thus signaling an intensifying integration of digital media into daily routines (Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Internet Indonesia, 2022).

The ramifications of these statistics are significant, especially when considering the psychological and social impacts on emerging adults, typically defined as individuals transitioning from adolescence into adult responsibilities, spanning the ages of 18 to 25 (Arnett, 2000). This developmental stage is marked by profound exploration and identity formation, heavily influenced by digital media, which serves dual roles as both a connector and a potential source of isolation and anxiety. The influence of digital media extends beyond mere connectivity, embedding itself into the very mechanisms through which young adults construct their identities and social realities (Arnett, 2000). Emerging adulthood is further complicated by the intensification of digital interactions, where the constant connectivity facilitated by smartphones can lead to an over-reliance on social media. This dynamic exacerbates feelings of anxiety and inadequacy, particularly through phenomena such as the Fear of Missing Out (FoMO). Defined by Przybylski et al. (2013) as the pervasive apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent, FoMO is especially prevalent in the age group coinciding with emerging adulthood. It often manifests in constant social media checking and an unhealthy attachment to digital interactions, further complicating the social and emotional landscapes of young adults (Przybylski et al., 2013).

FoMO not only impacts individuals' social lives but also extends to their psychological well-being, influencing feelings of self-worth and belonging. This condition is intricately linked to psychological needs such as relatedness and self-competence, which, when unmet, propel individuals to engage in relentless social media usage to fill these voids. Such behaviors can initiate a cycle of comparison, decreased self-esteem, and heightened anxiety, ultimately leading to what can be termed an addiction to social media (Przybylski et al., 2013). The connection between personality traits, particularly neuroticism, and susceptibility to FoMO presents a critical area for exploration. Neuroticism, characterized by emotional instability, anxiety, and a propensity toward negative psychological states, has been robustly linked to the intensity of FoMO experiences. Individuals high in neuroticism are more likely to feel threatened by the possibility of missing out on rewarding experiences, thereby increasing their engagement with social media in an unhealthy manner (McCrae & Costa, 2003; Barlow et al., 2014).

This study aims to delve deeper into the relationship between neuroticism and FoMO among emerging adults at UKSW, exploring how this dynamic influences their psychological health and social interactions. By understanding the mechanisms through which personality traits like neuroticism exacerbate the effects of FoMO, this research hopes to contribute valuable insights into the psychological impacts of the digital age, offering potential pathways for intervention and support for those most at risk. Moreover, this research has practical implications for educators, psychologists, and policymakers who are tasked with addressing the challenges posed by the digital age. By identifying the characteristics that heighten susceptibility to FoMO, they can better design educational programs and interventions that promote healthier digital habits and foster a more resilient youth population. In summary, this research seeks to unravel the complex interplay between neuroticism and FoMO, aiming to

illuminate the broader implications of our increasingly digital existence on young adults' mental health and well-being. Through a detailed examination of these phenomena, the study will contribute to a deeper understanding of how emerging adults navigate the challenges of the digital age, with significant theoretical and practical implications for enhancing their life trajectories in an increasingly connected world.

METHOD

Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative correlational design to investigate the relationship between Neuroticism (independent variable) and Fear of Missing Out (dependent variable). Anchored in the positivist philosophy, this approach typifies quantitative research methodologies that target specific populations or samples, adhering to the scientific principles of being systematic, measurable, rational, objective, and concrete, as outlined by Sugiyono (2019).

Variables dan Operational Definitions

The research investigates two main variables: Neuroticism as the independent variable (X) and Fear of Missing Out as the dependent variable (Y). Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) is conceptualized as the anxiety and fear that individuals experience when they are not part of rewarding experiences that others are enjoying (Przybylski et al., 2013). To measure FoMO, this study employs the Fear of Missing Out Scale developed by Przybylski et al. (2013), which assesses two dimensions: unmet psychological needs for self and relatedness. Neuroticism is identified as a personality trait marked by emotional instability, anxiety, temperamental behavior, and a tendency to feel easily guilt-ridden. This study measures Neuroticism using the NEO-PI scale by McCrae & Costa (1992), which evaluates six facets: anxiety, angry hostility, depression, self-consciousness, impulsiveness, and vulnerability.

Population, Sample, and Sampling Technique

The population targeted in this study consists of active students at Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana who are frequent users of social media. The sample includes these students using a saturated sampling technique, which involves including the entire population that meets the sampling criteria without compromising representativeness. The sample selection criteria include: being an active student at Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana, aged between 18 to 25 years, and spending more than three hours daily on social media.

Data Collection Methods

Data for this study are collected using psychological scales formatted as questionnaires that align with the variables under investigation. These questionnaires are distributed online using Google Forms. The Fear of Missing Out Scale by Przybylski et al. (2013) uses a Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree," with scoring from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree). The Neuroticism Scale, originally developed by McCrae & Costa (1992) and modified by Putri (2020), is used to assess levels of neuroticism. Both scales have undergone extensive testing for reliability and discriminative power.

Table 1. Blueprint of Fear of Missing Out Scale

ASPECTS	ITEM NUMBER		Sum
	Favourable	Unfavourable	
Unmet psychological need for self	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9	-	7
Unmet psychological need for relatedness	6, 8, 10	-	3
Total	10	0	10

Table 2. Blue Print of Neurotisme Scale

ASPECTS	ITEM NUMBER		Sum
	Favourable	Unfavourable	
Anxiety	1, 13, 25	7, 19	5
Angry Hostility	2, 14	8, 20, 21	5
Depression	3, 15, 26	9, 22	5
Self-Consciousness	4, 16, 27, 28	10	5
Impulsiveness	5, 17, 29	11, 23	5
Vulnerability	6, 18, 30	12, 24	5
Sum	18	12	30

Instrument Testing

The Fear of Missing Out Scale underwent two rounds of item discrimination and reliability testing. The initial testing involved 158 subjects and achieved a Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.782. Items failing to meet the discrimination threshold of 0.3 (as per Azwar’s standards) were either revised or removed. The Neuroticism Scale was subjected to three rounds of testing, starting with 158 subjects and achieving an initial Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.906. Items were iteratively refined to meet discrimination and reliability criteria, culminating in a final Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.909 from 25 validated items, ensuring the scale’s robust reliability and validity.

Table 3. Reliability Results of the Fear of Missing Out Scale

Cronbach’s Alpha	Cornbach’s Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
0,787	0,785	8

Table 4. Neuroticism Scale Reliability Results

Cronbach’s Alpha	Cronbach’s Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
0,909	0,909	25

Data Analysis

The relationship between the variables is analyzed using Spearman’s Rho correlation analysis through SPSS version 24.0. Before conducting hypothesis tests, the study performs normality tests to confirm that the data are normally distributed, followed by linearity tests to ensure that the relationships between the variables are linear.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study, conducted at Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana between September 2023 and February 2024, aimed to explore the interplay between Neuroticism—a personality trait marked by emotional instability, anxiety, and a propensity for experiencing negative emotions—and Fear of Missing Out (FoMO). FoMO is defined as the pervasive apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent, a phenomenon that is increasingly exacerbated by social media use. Data collection was performed using Google Forms, chosen for its accessibility and ease of use, facilitating participation across a broad demographic of students. Despite initial challenges in recruitment, consistent efforts yielded a total of 158 valid responses by February 2024, highlighting the difficulties in engaging university students in academic research.

Participant Demographics

The participant group consisted of 158 active students, aged between 18 and 25, who reported using social media for over three hours daily. This demographic is particularly relevant to the study of FoMO due to their high engagement with digital platforms. The sample included 107 females (67.7%) and 51 males (32.3%), indicating a gender disparity that could influence the study's findings, as gender may affect social media engagement patterns and psychological impacts (Blackwell et al., 2017). The age distribution was relatively broad, with 30.4% aged between 18 and 20, 47.5% between 21 and 22, and 22.1% between 23 and 25, providing a representative sample of early to mid-young adulthood. Regarding social media usage, 44.9% of the participants used social media for more than 8 hours daily, highlighting the significance of investigating FoMO in this group.

Table 5. Total Data on Number of Respondents

Gender	Sum	Percentage
Woman	107	67,7%
Man	51	32,3%
Sum	158	100%

Table 6. Total Age Data of Respondents

Age	Sum	Percentage
18 – 20	48	30,4%
21 – 22	75	47,5%
23 - 25	35	22,2%
Sum	158	100%

Table 7. Total Respondent Duration Data

Duration	Sum	Percentage
4 – 5 jam	34	21,5%
6 – 8 jam	53	33,5%
>8 jams	71	44,9%
Sum	158	100%

Descriptive Statistics and Testing Assumptions

Statistical analysis revealed varying levels of FoMO and Neuroticism among participants. A majority exhibited medium to high levels of FoMO and predominantly high levels of Neuroticism. This pattern suggests a substantial psychological impact of social media on young adults and aligns with findings by Aldinger et al. (2014), linking high Neuroticism to negative emotional experiences.

Table 8. Categorization of the Fear of Missing Out Scale

Category	Interval	Sum	Percentage	Mean
Low	$x < 14$	5	3,2%	
Keep	$15 \leq x < 25$	120	75,9%	22,40
Tall	$26 \leq x < 34$	33	20,9%	
Total		158	100%	

Table 9. Categorization of the Neuroticism Scale

Category	Interval	Sum	Percentage	Mean
Low	$x < 30$	1	0,6%	
Keep	$31 \leq x < 60$	19	12%	
Tall	$61 \leq x < 100$	138	87,3%	72,17
Total		158	100%	

The non-normal distribution of data led to the choice of non-parametric tests for analysis. Spearman’s Rho was used for correlation analysis due to its appropriateness for ordinal data and non-normal distributions. A linearity test confirmed a linear relationship between the variables, validating the use of Spearman’s Rho for this analysis.

Table 10. Normality Test

		FoMO	Neuroticism
N		158	158
Normal Parameters ^{ab}	Mean	22,40	72,17
	Std. Deviation	4,138	11,084
Most extreme differences	Absolute	0,113	0,097
	Positive	0066	0,097
	Negative	-0,113	-0,053
Test statistic		0,113	0,097
Asymp. Sig. (2 – tailed)		0,000 ^c	0,001 ^c

Table 11. Linearity Test Results

			Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Neuroticism*FoMO	Between groups	Combined	10017,499	18	556,528	8,344	0,000
		Linearity	8250,699	1	8250,699	123,704	0,000
		Deviation from linearity	1766,800	17	103,929	1,558	0,084
	Within groups		9270,887	139	66,697		
	Total		19288,386	157			

Hypothesis Testing

Spearman’s Rho correlation analysis indicated a strong positive correlation between Neuroticism and FoMO, with a correlation coefficient of 0.704 and a significance level of $p < 0.01$. This finding supports the hypothesis that higher levels of Neuroticism are associated with greater FoMO, corroborating the existing literature that suggests individuals with high Neuroticism may experience greater anxiety about missing out (Costa & McCrae, 2003; Elhai et al., 2016).

Table 12. Test the hypothesis

			Neuroticism	FoMO
Spearman’s Rho	Neuroticism	Correlation Coefficient	1000	0,704**
		Sig. (2-tailed)		0,000
		N	158	158
	FoMO	Correlation Coefficient	0,704	1000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0,000	
		N	158	158

The results of this study provide substantial insights into the relationship between personality traits and psychological phenomena influenced by digital behavior. The significant levels of FoMO observed among students with high Neuroticism may lead to unhealthy social media consumption patterns, potentially impacting their psychological well-being significantly (Anggrainy et al., 2022). This research not only supports previous findings by Christina et al. (2019) but also deepens our understanding of how Neuroticism influences digital behaviors in emerging adults. The implications of these findings are profound, suggesting that interventions aimed at reducing social media dependency could be especially beneficial for individuals with high levels of Neuroticism, helping to mitigate the adverse effects of FoMO.

Implications for Counseling and Guidance

The findings of this study, which highlight a significant positive correlation between Neuroticism and Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) among students at Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana, have several important implications for counseling and guidance services. Firstly, counseling services should focus on addressing high levels of Neuroticism. Given the strong association between Neuroticism and FoMO, counselors should prioritize helping students manage and reduce their neurotic tendencies. This can be achieved through techniques such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), which can help students develop healthier thinking patterns and emotional regulation strategies. By reducing Neuroticism, counselors can indirectly decrease the students' susceptibility to FoMO. Secondly, interventions specifically targeting FoMO should be developed. Counselors can design programs that address the anxiety and stress related to FoMO, teaching students coping mechanisms to deal with the constant pressure of being up-to-date with social media. Mindfulness training and digital detox programs can be particularly effective in helping students reduce their reliance on social media and decrease the anxiety associated with missing out on social activities. Thirdly, promoting healthy social media usage is crucial. Given the high engagement of students with social media, educational workshops on responsible and mindful social media use can be beneficial. Counselors can provide guidance on setting boundaries for social media use, recognizing and managing the emotional triggers associated with FoMO, and understanding the impact of social media on mental health. These workshops can help students develop a balanced approach to social media consumption. Additionally, personalized counseling interventions should be tailored to the unique needs of students. Since the study found that females are more likely to experience higher levels of both Neuroticism and FoMO, gender-sensitive approaches might be necessary. Counselors should consider the different ways in which social media affects male and female students and provide gender-specific strategies to manage these impacts. Moreover, collaboration with academic and administrative staff can enhance the effectiveness of these interventions. Creating a supportive environment within the university where students feel comfortable seeking help for their mental health issues is essential. By working together, counselors, faculty, and staff can develop comprehensive support systems that address both academic and psychological needs, ensuring students have access to the necessary resources. Ongoing support and follow-up are also vital. Given the ongoing nature of Neuroticism and FoMO, continuous support is essential for long-term management. Regular counseling sessions and follow-up meetings can help monitor students' progress, address any new issues, and reinforce coping strategies. Longitudinal support can ensure that students maintain their mental well-being throughout their academic journey. Finally, raising awareness about the impact of personality traits on digital behavior is important. Educational campaigns that inform students about the relationship between personality traits like Neuroticism and behaviors such as FoMO can empower them to take proactive steps in managing their mental health. Awareness programs can help students understand the potential risks associated with excessive social media use and encourage them to seek help when needed. By implementing these strategies, counseling and guidance services can significantly improve the psychological well-being of students at Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana. These efforts will not only help students manage

their Neuroticism and reduce FoMO but also promote healthier social media habits and enhance overall mental health.

CONCLUSION

This study has thoroughly examined the relationship between neuroticism and the Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) among young adults, revealing that higher levels of neuroticism are significantly correlated with increased experiences of FoMO. The findings indicate that individuals with greater emotional instability are more susceptible to anxiety about missing out on social interactions, a condition exacerbated by intense social media usage. This correlation suggests a cyclical relationship where high neuroticism fuels FoMO, which in turn may lead to further psychological distress and unhealthy social media habits. These insights underscore the need for targeted interventions that address these personality traits to reduce social media dependency and promote healthier digital interactions, especially among young adults navigating key developmental stages. This research not only aligns with existing literature on digital behavior and psychological health but also offers a framework for developing practical strategies to support young adults in managing the complex dynamics of connectivity and mental well-being in the digital age.

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