Fear of Missing Out as a Predictor of Problematic Social Media Use and Phubbing Behavior among Flemish Adolescents

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## Sample

2663 high school pupils of 11 geographically dispersed high schools in Flanders, Belgium with a mean age of 14, 87 representative for the population in terms of gender, age and school track

# Abstract

Fear-of-missing-out (FOMO) refers to feelings of anxiety that arise from the realization that
you may be missing out on rewarding experiences that others are having. FOMO can be identified as
an intra-personal trait that drives people to stay up to date of what other people are doing, among
others on social media platforms. Drawing from the findings of a large-scale survey study among
2663 Flemish teenagers, this study explores the relationships between FOMO, social media use,
problematic social media use (PSMU) and phubbing behavior. In line with our expectations, FOMO
was a positive predictor of both how frequently teenagers use several social media platforms and of
how many platforms they actively use. FOMO was a stronger predictor of the use of social media
platforms that are more private (e.g., Facebook, Snapchat) than platforms that are more public in
nature (e.g., Twitter, Youtube). FOMO predicted phubbing behavior both directly and indirectly via
its relationship with PSMU. These findings support extant research that points towards FOMO as a
factor explaining teenagers’ social media use.

# Outcome

"Teenagers with a higher FOMO use social media more frequently as it was identified as a predictor for the frequency of use the four most used platforms: Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram and YouTube, but not all social media platforms examined. This finding also supports that FOMO has an intrapersonal characteristic that predicts the use of Facebook and Instagram. FOMO is a stronger predictor of more private social media platforms such as Facebook or Snapchat than of more public platforms such as YouTube and Twitter. This is unsurprising, given that FOMO itself has been conceptualized and operationalized in the current study as a fear to miss out on what friends are thinking and doing, and information about these friends can be found mostly on platforms that connect to people who are part of one’s offline network.
FOMO was also found to predict PSMU, thus associated with more problematic internet and smartphone use. Moreover, FOMO was also associated with phubbing behavior. Interestingly, our results showed that the relationship between FOMO and phubbing behavior was mediated by PMSU. FOMO is a positive predictor of smartphone addiction, and that smartphone addiction predicted smartphone behavior. Thus, adolescents who are high in their fear of missing out are more likely to overuse the social media and smartphones, which in turns leads them to phub their offline interaction partners. Yet, the more teens agreed to feel bothered when missing an opportunity to meet with friends (i.e., indicative of a greater fear-of-missing-out), the less they report phubbing their interaction partner during a face-to-face interaction. This finding indicates that some teenagers attach great importance to face-to-face interactions with friends, leading them to prioritize these interactions over smartphone interactions." (Franchina et al., 2018, pp. 11-14)