



The Role of Emotional Intelligence and Social Intelligence in Mitigating Fear of Missing Out among College Students

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Abstract: The current study investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI), social intelligence (SI), and fear of missing out (FoMO) among college students, with a focus on their impact on digital stress. A quantitative cross-sectional design was employed, with data collected from 130 students aged 18–28 using standardized tools: the Fear of Missing Out Scale (FoMOs), Tromsø Social Intelligence Scale (TSIS), and Trait Meta-Mood Scale (TMMS). Results indicated a significant negative correlation between SI and FoMO ($r = -.29$, $p = .001$), suggesting that higher social intelligence reduces vulnerability to FoMO. Conversely, EI showed no significant association with FoMO ($r = .04$, $p = .652$) but was positively correlated with SI ($r = .27$, $p = .002$). Regression analysis identified social awareness as a key predictor of lower FoMO, while heightened attention to emotions was linked to higher FoMO. No gender differences were observed in FoMO, EI, or SI. These findings highlight the protective role of SI against FoMO and underscore the importance of interventions targeting social skills and mindfulness to mitigate digital stress. Limitations include the cross-sectional design and reliance on self-reported data, suggesting the need for future longitudinal and culturally diverse research.

Keywords: *Emotional intelligence, social intelligence, fear of missing out, college students, digital stress, social media*

1. Introduction

Smartphones and social media have become integral to social interactions, knowledge acquisition, and global connectivity, particularly among college students (Wang et al., 2021). However, excessive use has led to smartphone addiction, adversely affecting mental, social, and physical well-being. A prominent psychological consequence is fear of missing out (FoMO), characterized by anxiety-driven urges to stay connected due to fears of missing rewarding social experiences shared online (Przybylski et al., 2013). FoMO has been linked to negative emotional states, including anxiety, stress, and low self-esteem, particularly among heavy social media users (Baker et al., 2016).

The psychological impact of FoMO underscores the need to identify factors that can mitigate its effects. Emotional intelligence (EI), defined “as the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one’s own and others’ emotions” (Goleman, 1995), may help counteract distress caused by FoMO. Individuals with high EI tend to handle stress and emotional challenges more effectively, potentially reducing vulnerability to FoMO (Schutte et al., 2007). Similarly, social intelligence (SI), “the ability to comprehend social dynamics, show empathy, and foster relationships” (Thorndike, 1920), may alleviate social pressures exacerbated by FoMO. While EI aids in emotional regulation, SI enhances interpersonal competence, enabling individuals to navigate digital social environments more effectively.

Despite growing research on FoMO, limited attention has been paid to the roles of EI and SI in mitigating its effects among college students. Previous studies have primarily focused on behavioral and affective consequences, leaving a gap in understanding how these psychological competencies interact. This study addresses this gap by examining the relationships between EI, SI, and FoMO, offering insights into strategies for reducing digital stress.

2. Methodology

2.1 Participants

A convenience sample of 130 college students (aged 18–28) participated in the study. Participants were recruited through institutional notice boards and social media advertisements. Employed individuals were excluded to focus on full-time students.

2.2 Measures

Fear of Missing Out Scale (FoMOs; Przybylski et al., 2013): A 10-item scale assessing anxiety about missing social experiences ($\alpha = .82$).

Tromsø Social Intelligence Scale (TSIS; Silvera et al., 2001): A 21-item measure evaluating social information processing, social skills, and social awareness ($\alpha = .79-.86$).

Trait Meta-Mood Scale (TMMS; Salovey et al., 1995): A 24-item scale measuring attention to feelings, emotional clarity, and mood repair ($\alpha = .81-.86$).

2.3 Procedure

Data were collected via an online survey (Google Forms) over four weeks. Participants provided informed consent before completing the questionnaires. Ethical approval was obtained from the institutional review board.

3. Results

Descriptive statistics revealed moderate variability in FoMO ($M = 22.10$, $SD = 7.65$), EI ($M = 87.94$, $SD = 14.11$), and SI ($M = 97.83$, $SD = 13.06$) as shown in table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Emotional Intelligence, Social Intelligence, and Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) Variables

Variable	n	Minimum	Maximum	M	SD
Emotional Intelligence					
Attention	130	8	40	29.36	6.33
Clarity	130	8	40	29.01	6.02
Repair	130	8	40	29.57	6.24
Total EI	130	24	120	87.94	14.11
Social Intelligence					
SIP	130	19	49	37.45	6.09
SS	130	15	43	29.62	6.28
SA	130	7	45	30.75	7.49
Total SI	130	61	135	97.83	13.06
FoMO	130	11	50	22.10	7.65

Note. EI = Emotional Intelligence; SIP = Social Information Processing; SS = Social Skills; SA = Social Awareness; SI = Social Intelligence; FoMO = Fear of Missing Out. All scales were measured using Likert-type scales with varying ranges.

The correlation analyses, as presented in Tables 2, 3, and 4, revealed the following findings:

- a) A significant negative correlation between SI and FoMO ($r = -.29$, $p = .001$).
- b) No significant correlation between EI and FoMO ($r = .04$, $p = .652$).
- c) A positive correlation between EI and SI ($r = .27$, $p = .002$).

Table 2: *Bivariate Correlations Between Emotional Intelligence and Fear of Missing Out (FoMO)*

Variable	1	2
1. EI Total	—	.04
2. FoMO	.04	—

Note. EI = Emotional Intelligence; FoMO = Fear of Missing Out. $N = 130$. The correlation between EI and FoMO was not statistically significant ($p = .652$). All values represent Pearson correlation coefficients.

Table 3: *Correlations Between Social Intelligence and Fear of Missing Out (FoMO)*

Variable	1. FoMO	2. SI
1. FoMO	—	-.29**
2. SI	-.29**	—

Note. SI = Social Intelligence; FoMO = Fear of Missing Out. $N = 130$. ** $p < .01$ (2-tailed). Pearson correlation coefficients shown.

Table 4: *Correlations Between Emotional Intelligence and Social Intelligence*

Variable	1. EI	2. SI
1. EI	—	.27**
2. SI	.27**	—

Note. EI = Emotional Intelligence; SI = Social Intelligence. $N = 130$.

** $p < .01$ (2-tailed). Values represent Pearson correlation coefficients.

Regression analysis (see Table 5) revealed that Social Awareness significantly predicted lower FoMO ($\beta = -0.39$, $p < .001$), whereas greater Attention to emotions predicted higher FoMO ($\beta = 0.17$, $p = .033$). No significant gender differences were found.

Table 5: *Stepwise Regression Analysis Predicting Fear of Missing Out (FoMO)*

Step	Predictor	B	SE B	β	t	p	ΔR^2
1	Constant	34.40	2.63	—	13.08	< .001	—
	Social Awareness (SA)	-0.40	0.08	-0.39	-4.81	< .001	
2	Constant	28.31	3.83	—	7.39	< .001	.030*
	Social Awareness (SA)	-0.40	0.08	-0.39	-4.90	< .001	
	Attention	0.21	0.10	0.17	2.16	.033	

Note. Dependent variable: Fear of Missing Out (FoMO). B = unstandardized coefficient; SE B = standard error; β = standardized coefficient; R^2 = variance explained; ΔR^2 = change in variance explained. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Other variables, including Gender, Clarity, Repair, SIP, and Social Skills (SS), were excluded from the model as they did not contribute significantly ($p > .05$). Collinearity diagnostics indicated no multicollinearity concerns, with all Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values ≤ 1.00 and Tolerance values close to 1.00.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study contribute to the growing literature on Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) by highlighting the distinct roles of emotional intelligence (EI) and social intelligence (SI) in mitigating digital stress among college students. The significant negative correlation between SI and FoMO ($r = -0.29$, $p = .001$) supports previous research suggesting that individuals with stronger social competencies experience less anxiety about missing out (Anjani & Widyatama, 2023). This may be because socially intelligent students are better at interpreting online interactions and maintaining secure offline relationships, reducing their reliance on constant digital connection.

Contrary to expectations, EI was not significantly associated with FoMO ($r = .04$, $p = .652$). While EI helps regulate emotions, it may not directly counteract the social comparison

triggers of FoMO. This suggests that interventions targeting FoMO should focus more on enhancing social awareness rather than emotional regulation alone.

Regression analysis revealed that social awareness (SA) was the strongest predictor of lower FoMO ($\beta = -0.39$, $p < .001$), while heightened attention to emotions was linked to higher FoMO ($\beta = 0.17$, $p = .033$). This implies that students who are overly focused on their emotions may be more susceptible to social media-induced anxiety. The lack of gender differences aligns with recent studies indicating that FoMO affects all students similarly, regardless of gender (Przybylski et al., 2013).

5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that social intelligence, particularly social awareness, plays a crucial role in reducing FoMO among college students. While emotional intelligence did not directly mitigate FoMO, its positive correlation with SI ($r = .27$, $p = .002$) suggests that emotional and social competencies may work together to promote digital well-being.

These findings have practical implications for mental health interventions. Programs aimed at improving social skills—such as empathy training and mindful social media use—may be more effective in reducing FoMO than those focusing solely on emotional regulation. Future research should explore longitudinal and culturally diverse samples to further validate these results.

Overall, this study underscores the importance of fostering social intelligence to help students navigate digital environments with greater resilience and reduced anxiety.

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