

Fear of Missing Out and Social Media Fatigue: The Moderating Roles of Neuroticism and Emotion Regulation Among Adolescents

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ABSTRACT

In the digital world, social media usage has proliferated among adolescents, shaping their identities, peer interactions, and becoming their mode of communication and entertainment. While increased engagement offers social connectivity, it has also been associated with psychological strain, including anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and difficulties regulating emotions. The present study hypothesized that neuroticism, defined as a fundamental personality dimension, moderated the relationship between fear of missing out (FOMO), social media fatigue, and emotional regulation strategies. A cross-sectional survey was conducted with 291 adolescents with age ranges of 13-19 years. The findings indicate that FOMO is positively associated with social media fatigue and its cognitive, behavioral, and emotional valences. In regression analysis, FOMO, neuroticism, and expressive suppression significantly predicted social media fatigue while cognitive reappraisal was not a significant predictor. Moreover, neuroticism significantly moderated the relationship between FOMO and social media fatigue while expressive suppression and cognitive reappraisal did not demonstrate a moderative effect. These findings suggest the importance of individual differences in personality and emotion regulation strategies in predicting social media fatigue among adolescents and emphasize the need for targeted intervention; addressing these psychological vulnerabilities to build healthy habits regarding social media usage.

Keywords: Fear of Missing Out, Social Media Fatigue, Neuroticism Personality Trait, Emotion Regulation, Cognitive Reappraisal, Expressive Suppression

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a transitional phase of development between childhood and adulthood and characterized by cognitive maturation and emotional fluctuation. During this stage, adolescents formulate social identities, actively seek peer acceptance, and become increasingly sensitive to social evaluation. In recent years, the rise of digital technology, especially social media, has dramatically reshaped the psychosocial landscape of adolescence. Social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, and WhatsApp

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have revolutionized the ways in which they communicate, seek validation, and form their self-concepts (1). While these social media platforms provide opportunities for social connection, self-expression, and entertainment, a growing body of research suggests that excessive or maladaptive use can lead to various psychological and emotional challenges such as anxiety, depression, and behavioral dysregulation, often arising from the pressure to remain socially visible and involved at all times (1, 2).

Within the digital environment, adolescents are frequently exposed to continuous updates about their peers' activities, social interactions, and shared experiences which may reinforce concerns that they are missing out on pleasurable experiences (3). This persistent concern of being excluded from pleasurable social experiences is commonly described as fear of missing out (FOMO) (2). FOMO has been often explained through self-determination theory, which suggests that successful self-regulation and psychological well-being are dependent on resourcefulness, competence, and connectedness (2, 4). Through this lens, FOMO emerges when basic needs for belongingness and connectedness are not satisfied. FOMO is typically experienced by adolescents due to their heightened sensitivity to social belonging, peer validation, and the developmental need for connectedness (2). This vulnerability makes them more susceptible to the negative emotional consequences of exclusion, inadequacy, and disconnection in the digital social sphere (4).

FOMO has been increasingly linked to patterns of excessive and compulsive social media engagement (5). Adolescents with high FOMO tend to desire constant updates on other activities which result in excessive engagement in social media. Although frequent monitoring of social media platforms temporarily reduces the feeling of exclusion, it can reinforce the cycle of continuous engagement with social media. As a result, it leads to information overload and emotional exhaustion, thereby increasing the likelihood of developing social media fatigue (5).

Social media fatigue is tiredness related to one's activity on social media platforms and encompasses the cognitive experience of being overwhelmed by copious amounts of information (5). Due to the emotional suffering, social media fatigue causes users to change their attitude towards social media; some users gradually become "lurkers" (watchers) and prefer not to share actively, while some users completely exit social media temporarily or permanently (8). Social media fatigue is self-regulated exclusion of individual experience after using social media platforms that encompass cognitive overload and emotional strain (9).

Although several studies have established a strong correlation between FOMO and social media fatigue, existing studies have primarily focused on adult and university populations (10, 11). A deeper exploration is needed to understand this phenomenon among adolescents, as their social identity is developing and their emotional sensitivity is still high. These developmental characteristics may intensify emotional consequences of FOMO and increase the likelihood of experiencing social media fatigue. Moreover, emerging research studies emphasize that individual differences may affect how adolescents experience and respond to FOMO related stressors (12, 13). However, limited empirical work has examined how individual differences, including personality traits like neuroticism and emotion regulation abilities, may influence how adolescents interpret social information and manage their emotional reactions to perceived social exclusion. Examining the moderating impact of these variables will help in understanding why

some adolescents are more vulnerable to the negative psychological consequences of social media engagement than others.

One proposed personality characteristic that may influence adolescents' vulnerability to social media related stress is neuroticism. Neuroticism is a fundamental personality dimension characterized by emotional instability and a propensity to experience adverse emotions, including anxiety, rage, and depression (14). Previous studies have indicated that individuals high in neuroticism are more sensitive to social evaluation and are more likely to interpret social situations in a negative or threatening manner. Such heightened emotional vulnerability may enhance sensitivity to social media cues. As a result, individuals are more likely to feel threatened by the possibility of missing out on rewarding experiences (14, 15). This apprehension encourages persistent monitoring of social media platforms in order to remain socially informed and connected, which may contribute to cognitive and emotional overload and emotional strain, ultimately leading to social media fatigue (8, 14 - 16). Although a few studies have evaluated that neuroticism is associated with FOMO and social media fatigue, there is still a gap in understanding how neuroticism moderates the relationship between FOMO and social media fatigue, especially among adolescents.

Another psychological factor that may moderate the psychological impact of FOMO on social media fatigue is emotional regulation. Emotional regulation is characterized by an individual's effort to influence the dynamics, duration, and intensity of their own emotional experience and emotional expression through the use of behavioral and cognitive strategies (17, 18). Individuals commonly regulate their emotions through the use of adaptive or maladaptive regulation strategies which could impact their stress reactivity and emotional and psychological well-being. Among these strategies, cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression are widely studied. Previous researchers have highlighted cognitive reappraisal as an adaptive emotional regulation strategy involving reframing an event in a different way to alter one's emotional response to the situation (18, 19). In contrast expressive suppression is framed as a maladaptive emotion regulation strategy, which involves inhibiting the emotional expression and is often associated with emotional strain (19).

FOMO triggers negative emotional experiences such as anxiety, depression, and reduced well-being due to increased sensitivity to social stressors like neglect or negative reactions online (7, 19). Emotional regulation plays a crucial role in mitigating these negative effects through the use of adaptive strategies such as cognitive reappraisal while maladaptive emotion regulation strategies such as expressive suppression may enhance the psychological strain (20, 21). However, despite a growing body of research examining FOMO and its negative impact on psychological well-being, few studies have examined the role of specific emotional regulation strategies in a social media context. A recent study indicated that cognitive reappraisal (an emotion regulation strategy) functions as a significant buffering factor for the psychological impact of FOMO (12). However, a significant research gap remained as this research focused on the general emotional well-being of adults, giving limited understanding how adaptive emotional regulation could moderate the relationship between FOMO and social media fatigue among adolescents.

Furthermore, personality traits also shape how individuals regulate their emotional experiences. Previous studies suggest that individuals high in neuroticism are less likely to employ adaptive emotional regulation strategies such as cognitive reappraisal and are more likely to experience heightened emotional reactivity in stressful situations (22). This pattern suggests that adolescents high in neuroticism may struggle to reframe negative experiences effectively and instead rely more on suppressing emotional expression.

The present study aimed to examine the association between fear of missing out (FOMO) and social media fatigue among adolescents while investigating whether neuroticism and emotion regulation strategies influenced this relationship. Based on the existing literature and theoretical framework, four hypotheses were proposed.

- Hypothesis 1. FOMO would be positively associated with social media fatigue among adolescents.
- Hypothesis 2. Neuroticism, cognitive reappraisal, and expressive suppression would explain additional variance in social media fatigue beyond demographic characteristics and social media usage patterns.
- Hypothesis 3. Based on evidence that individuals high in neuroticism exhibit greater emotional reactivity and heightened sensitivity to social evaluation, it was hypothesized that neuroticism would strengthen the positive association between FOMO and social media fatigue. Specifically, adolescents with higher levels of neuroticism were expected to demonstrate a stronger positive association between FOMO and social media fatigue than adolescents with lower levels of neuroticism.
- Hypothesis 4. Emotion regulation strategies were expected to moderate the association between FOMO and social media fatigue. Specifically, cognitive reappraisal was expected to weaken the positive association between FOMO and social media fatigue, whereas expressive suppression was expected to strengthen this association.

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework guiding the present study. FOMO was hypothesized to be positively associated with social media fatigue, while neuroticism, cognitive reappraisal, and expressive suppression were hypothesized to moderate this association.

METHODS

This study employed a cross-sectional correlational research design to investigate the relationship between FOMO (independent variable) and social media fatigue (dependent variable) while also examining the moderating role of personality traits such as neuroticism and emotion regulation among adolescents. This study focused on adolescents residing in the USA of ages 13 to 19 years as the target population because this developmental group shows higher social media engagement as well as

heightened vulnerability to FOMO-related negative emotional experiences (33, 34). Participants were recruited through convenient sampling. Inclusion criteria indicated that participants must be currently enrolled in secondary education and must be active social media users. Moreover, only those who reported spending at least 3 hours per day on social media were recruited. Adolescents who did not meet these criteria or were outside the specified age range were excluded.

To determine the minimum sample size, a priori power analysis was conducted using G*Power 3.1. Assuming an effect size of $f^2 = 0.05$, $\alpha = 0.05$, power $(1 - \beta) = .80$, and three predictors (including the interaction term in moderation), the minimum required sample size was approximately 263 participants.

Data was collected through Google Forms. The survey link was disseminated through popular social media platforms including Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram. Additionally, it circulated through educational forums, school communication networks, support groups and youth organizations to reach both parents and adolescents. Participants aged 18 and 19 provided independent consent, whereas participants under 18 participated in this research only after parental consent. For that purpose, parents were approached initially and their consent was obtained after explaining the purpose of the study, emphasizing the voluntary nature of participation, ensuring minimal risk associated with survey, and ensuring confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. Only after parental consent was provided, underage adolescents were permitted to proceed to the questionnaire. Adolescents then provided their informed assent, confirming that they understood the study purpose, their role, right to withdraw and agreed to participate voluntarily. The online survey was designed to be brief yet comprehensive, taking approximately 20 minutes to complete. The data collection process spanned 6 weeks to ensure sufficient time for participation and follow up to reduce attrition.

A total of 300 participants provided informed consent and submitted their responses. After the screening process, cases with significant missing data and those not following the inclusion criteria were excluded to maintain data quality. The final dataset contained 291 valid cases, with no missing data reported across the demographic variables and all composite scale variables.

Social Media Fatigue Scale: Social media fatigue (SFMS) was measured through the use of a scale consisting of 15 items, measuring three valences of exhaustion from social networking sites (27). The cognitive valence measured information overload; behavior manifested itself in the form of forgetting activities that were supposed to be performed; and emotional dimensions included the unpleasant emotions associated with logging into an account and receiving different notifications or invitations. Responses to each item were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. Higher scores indicated greater levels of social media fatigue. The values of the internal consistency obtained in the present study for the cognitive ($\alpha_{\text{cog}} = 0.78$), behavioral ($\alpha_{\text{beh}} = 0.75$), and emotional ($\alpha_{\text{emot}} = 0.80$) dimensions were considered satisfactory. The Cronbach's alpha for the 15-item SMFS total score was $\alpha_{\text{smfs}} = 0.82$.

Fear of Missing Out: Fear of Missing Out Scale (FOMOS) was used to measure fear of missing pleasurable experiences among adolescents in social media content (2). This scale consisted of 10 items and each question was rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Not at all true of me to

5 = Extremely true of me. The mean score of the scale was calculated across the 10 items for each participant. The Cronbach's alpha for this scale in the original study was 0.87 and in the present study was $\alpha = 0.87$ (2).

Neuroticism Personality Trait: Neuroticism personality trait was evaluated by using the Big Five Inventory (BFI) (35). This scale consisted of eight items and asked participants to rate to what degree specific characteristics apply to them. All items were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The average score of the scale was computed across the eight items for each participant. Reverse-scored items were recorded such that higher scores on this scale reflect higher levels of neuroticism. The Cronbach's alpha of this scale in the original study was 0.84 and in the present study was $\alpha = 0.86$ (35).

Emotion Regulation Questionnaire: Emotion regulation of adolescents was assessed using the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire. This questionnaire was based on the Gross process model and consisted of 10 items (8). All items were rated on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree), with higher scores indicating higher usage of that strategy. The ERQ has demonstrated acceptable internal consistency of 0.79 for reappraisal and 0.73 for suppression and test-retest reliability of 0.69 in previous studies (9). In the present study, cognitive reappraisal has alpha reliability of 0.85 and expressive suppression has alpha reliability of 0.78.

Demographic Questionnaire and Social Media Usage Pattern: The study survey also asked for general information about the participants, such as gender, age, residence, and education level. The pattern of social media usage was determined through a set of questions asking about the number of years of social media platforms usage, average daily time spent on social media, number of social media platforms used, most frequently used platform, purpose of social media usage, and frequency of checking social media accounts.

The collected data were initially screened and prepared for analysis using IBM SPSS Statistics 23.0 software. Descriptive statistics and Cronbach's alpha coefficients were computed to summarize participants' demographic characteristics and assess the internal consistency of each psychometric scale (Table 1, Table 2). Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to explore the bivariate associations between the main variables. Hierarchical regression was used to create social media fatigue prediction models. Hierarchical regression was used to create social media fatigue prediction models. For the hierarchical regression analysis, demographic characteristics and social media usage variables were entered in the first step as control variables, followed by the psychological predictors – FOMO, neuroticism, cognitive reappraisal, and expressive suppression – in the second step to examine their incremental contribution to explaining variance in social media fatigue. Moderation analyses were performed using PROCESS Macro Model 1. Continuous variables were entered in their original metric, and interaction terms were computed from the raw scores. Consequently, the lower-order regression coefficients represent the effect of each predictor when the moderator equals zero, and coefficient estimates therefore differ across moderation models. Moderation analyses were performed using PROCESS Macro Model 1. Continuous variables were entered in their original metric, and interaction

terms were computed from the raw scores. Consequently, the lower-order regression coefficients represent the effect of each predictor when the moderator equals zero, and coefficient estimates therefore differ across moderation models.

RESULTS

Preliminary Analyses

Prior to hypothesis testing, the data were screened to evaluate the assumptions required for parametric analyses. Skewness and kurtosis statistics were calculated for all composite variables, and normality was assessed using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov and Shapiro–Wilk tests. Although several Shapiro–Wilk tests were statistically significant ($p < .05$), this outcome was expected given the relatively large sample size. Visual inspection of stem-and-leaf plots indicated that all variables were approximately unimodal and showed no substantial departures from normality. Overall, the distributions were considered sufficiently normal to justify the use of parametric statistical procedures. Simple slope analyses indicated that FOMO significantly predicted social media fatigue at low ($B = 0.37, p < .001$) and moderate ($B = 0.23, p < .001$) levels of neuroticism but not at high levels ($B = 0.11, p = .138$) (Table 6). As illustrated in Figure 2, the association between FOMO and social media fatigue weakened progressively as neuroticism increased, consistent with the significant negative interaction term (Figure 2).

Demographic Characteristics and Social Media Usage Pattern

Nearly half of the participants (47.1%) reported that they had been using social media for more than 6 years, and most reported spending 3 to 6 hours per day on social media (68.4%). Adolescents reported diverse usage of platforms with 82.8% reporting frequent Instagram use, 83.5% frequent TikTok use, and 70.4% reported using YouTube and most participants using three or more platforms (82.8%). Social media platforms were primarily used for the purpose of entertainment (99.0%), communication (73.2%) and self-expression (46.0%). Moreover, the frequency of checking social media accounts was high, with 59.5% checking at least 6 times per day and 12.0% checking on every notification.

Correlations Among Study Variables

Pearson correlations were calculated to examine the associations between FOMO, social media fatigue, neuroticism, and emotion regulation strategies (Table 3). FOMO showed a significant positive correlation with social media fatigue (SMFS) total ($r = .29, p < .001$), indicating that adolescents reporting higher FOMO also tended to report higher social media fatigue (Table 3). FOMO demonstrated a moderately positive association with neuroticism ($r = .41, p < .001$), suggesting that adolescents higher in neuroticism were more likely to experience FOMO (Table 3). Neuroticism was also positively associated with SMFS total ($r = .23, p < .001$), Behavioral fatigue ($r = .23, p < .001$), and emotional fatigue ($r = .19, p = .001$) (Table 3). However, neuroticism was negatively correlated with cognitive reappraisal ($r = -.23, p < .001$) (Table 3). Expressive suppression showed significant positive correlations with SMFS total ($r = .24, p < .001$), Behavioral fatigue ($r = .18, p = .002$), emotional fatigue ($r = .24, p < .001$), and neuroticism ($r =$

.13, $p = .029$) while cognitive reappraisal was not significantly associated with FOMO or SMFS total (Table 3).

Hierarchical Linear Regression Predicting Social Media Fatigue

A hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine whether fear of missing out (FOMO), neuroticism, and emotion regulation strategies predicted social media fatigue after accounting for demographic characteristics and social media usage patterns. In Step 1, demographic and social media usage variables (gender, age, educational level, years of social media use, daily time spent on social media, number of platforms used, primary platform, frequency of checking social media, and purpose of social media use) were entered as covariates. This initial model explained approximately 3.0% of the variance in social media fatigue. The final model was statistically significant, $F(11, 279) = 6.31$, $p < .001$, explaining 19.9% of the variance in social media fatigue ($R^2 = .199$). Within the final model, FOMO ($\beta = .29$, $p < .001$), neuroticism ($\beta = .13$, $p = .047$), and expressive suppression ($\beta = .20$, $p = .001$) were significant positive predictors of social media fatigue, whereas cognitive reappraisal was not a significant predictor ($\beta = .07$, $p = .251$) (Table 4).

Moderation of the FOMO–Social Media Fatigue Relationship by Neuroticism

A moderation analysis (PROCESS Macro Model 1) was conducted to examine whether neuroticism moderated the relationship between FOMO and Social Media Fatigue (SMFS Total) (Table 5). The overall model was statistically significant, explaining 11.7% of the variance of the SMFS total score ($R^2 = .117$), $F(3, 287) = 12.67$, $p < .001$ (Table 5). Both FOMO ($B = 0.87$, $SE = 0.26$, $p = .001$) and neuroticism ($B = 0.66$, $SE = 0.21$, $p = .002$) were statistically significant predictors of social media fatigue (Table 5). Importantly, the interaction term between FOMO and neuroticism was statistically significant, $B = -0.19$, $SE = 0.07$, $t(287) = -2.55$, $p = .011$, indicating that neuroticism significantly moderated the association between FOMO and SMFS (Table 5). The interaction contributed an additional 2.0% variance to the model ($\Delta R^2 = .020$), $\Delta F(1, 287) = 6.50$, $p = .011$ (Table 5).

Simple slope analyses indicated that FOMO significantly predicted social media fatigue at low ($B = 0.37$, $p < .001$) and moderate ($B = 0.23$, $p < .001$) levels of neuroticism but not at high levels ($B = 0.11$, $p = .138$) (Table 6). Consistent with the significant negative interaction term ($B = -0.19$, $p = .011$), the association between FOMO and social media fatigue weakened rather than strengthened as neuroticism increased. Although neuroticism significantly moderated the relationship between FOMO and social media fatigue, the observed pattern was opposite to the hypothesized direction.

Moderation of the FOMO–Social Media Fatigue Relationship by Cognitive Reappraisal

A second moderation analysis (PROCESS Macro Model 1) was conducted to test whether Cognitive Reappraisal (ERQ-CR) moderated the relationship between FOMO and social media fatigue (SMFS total) (Table 7). The overall model was statistically significant, $F(3, 287) = 10.40$, $p < .001$, accounting for 9.8% of the variance of the SMFS total score ($R^2 = .098$) (Table 7). However, FOMO ($B = 0.22$, $SE = 0.22$, $p = .323$) and cognitive reappraisal ($B = 0.05$, $SE = 0.14$, $p = .734$) were not statistically significant

predictors of social media fatigue in the moderated model (Table 7). The interaction between FOMO and cognitive reappraisal was also not statistically significant ($B = 0.01$, $SE = 0.05$, $p = .760$), indicating that cognitive reappraisal did not moderate the relationship between FOMO and social media fatigue (Table 7).

Moderation of the FOMO – Social Media Fatigue Relationship by Expressive Suppression

A moderation analysis was conducted using PROCESS Macro Model 1 to examine whether expressive suppression (ERQ-ES) moderated the relationship between FOMO and social media fatigue (SMFS total) (Table 8). The overall model was statistically significant, $R^2 = .138$, $F(3, 287) = 15.26$, $p < .001$, indicating that FOMO, expressive suppression, and their interaction explained approximately 13.8% of the variance in social media fatigue (Table 8). However, the interaction term between FOMO and expressive suppression was not statistically significant, $B = -0.018$, $SE = 0.047$, $t(287) = -0.39$, $p = .699$, suggesting that expressive suppression did not moderate the association between FOMO and SMFS total (Table 8).

DISCUSSION

This study explored how FOMO is associated with social media fatigue with neuroticism and emotion regulation strategies as potential moderators. This study found that FOMO was positively associated with social media fatigue, indicating that adolescents reporting higher levels of FOMO also tended to report greater social media fatigue. This finding is consistent with previous research documenting an association between FOMO and greater social media engagement and fatigue (10, 11). Although the present cross-sectional design cannot establish the direction of this relationship, the observed association is consistent with theoretical accounts suggesting that concerns about missing rewarding social experiences are linked to greater psychological strain during social media use. Moreover, a longitudinal study reported a bidirectional relationship in which FOMO predicted subsequent social media fatigue and fatigue also predicted subsequent FOMO, suggesting a self-reinforcing (positive feedback) cycle between these constructs (5).

Neuroticism was positively associated with FOMO and social media fatigue and negatively associated with cognitive reappraisal. Contrary to the stated hypothesis, neuroticism did not strengthen the relationship between FOMO and social media fatigue. Instead, the positive association between FOMO and social media fatigue was strongest among adolescents with low and moderate levels of neuroticism and was no longer statistically significant among adolescents with high neuroticism. Thus, although neuroticism significantly moderated the relationship, the direction of the interaction differed from the vulnerability account that motivated the present study.

At the same time, higher neuroticism has been associated with lower tolerance of social information overload, interpersonal demands, and exposure to emotionally triggering content, all of which have been linked to greater social media fatigue (3, 6, 8). The negative association with cognitive reappraisal

suggests that adolescents higher in neuroticism may be less likely to rely on adaptive emotional regulation strategies when facing emotionally stressful situations, potentially being associated with greater vulnerability to digital strain and social media fatigue (24, 25).

One possible explanation is that adolescents with higher levels of neuroticism may experience relatively elevated social media fatigue regardless of their level of FOMO, reducing the additional predictive value of FOMO within this subgroup. However, because this possibility was not directly examined in the present study, it should be regarded as a tentative post hoc interpretation rather than a confirmed explanation. Alternative explanations are also possible; for example, highly neurotic adolescents may experience multiple sources of psychological distress beyond FOMO, including generalized anxiety, rumination, or broader emotional dysregulation, which may diminish the relative contribution of FOMO to their experience of social media fatigue. Future research should investigate these competing mechanisms using longitudinal designs and more comprehensive models of emotional vulnerability.

The positive association between FOMO and social media fatigue was statistically significant at low and moderate levels of neuroticism but not at high levels of neuroticism. One possible explanation is that fatigue may already be relatively elevated among adolescents with high neuroticism, reducing the additional contribution of FOMO. However, this possibility was not directly tested in the present study and therefore should be considered speculative. Previous studies support the role of neuroticism in increased usage of social networking sites, increased sensitivity to social cues, and experiences of emotional strain and fatigue in response to social media use (16, 26).

In contrast to one of the stated hypotheses, cognitive reappraisal did not moderate the association between FOMO and social media fatigue. Moreover, it was not found as a significant predictor of social media fatigue. These findings suggest that cognitive reappraisal was not associated with a buffering effect on the relationship between FOMO and social media fatigue in the present sample. One possible explanation is that cognitive reappraisal works effectively in regulating short-term emotional episodes, while social media fatigue represents a cumulative prolonged strain that is less responsive to momentary cognitive reframing (28). Furthermore, a recent study also indicated that cognitive reappraisal is more effective for emotional states than for moods, supporting that it may be less suited to alleviate cumulative chronic stress (29). Expressive suppression emerged as a significant predictor of social media fatigue in hierarchical multiple regression, but it did not moderate the relationship between FOMO and social media fatigue (Table 4). Previous studies indicate that adolescents who use maladaptive emotion regulation strategies may internalize stress from online comparison and social demands while maintaining high social media engagement to monitor peer activities, which can heighten emotional exhaustion and fatigue (30 - 32).

These findings indicate that psychological characteristics explained substantially more variance in social media fatigue than demographic characteristics and patterns of social media use. Specifically, the hierarchical regression analysis showed that psychological variables accounted for an additional 16.9% of the variance in social media fatigue beyond demographic and social media usage variables. Within the present sample, FOMO emerged as one of the strongest psychological correlates of social media fatigue.

Although the cross-sectional design does not permit conclusions regarding causal direction, the findings suggest that FOMO may represent an important target for future longitudinal and intervention research.

Furthermore, the observed associations suggest that interventions focusing on stress reactivity, rumination, emotional literacy, and adaptive emotion regulation may be worthwhile avenues for future investigation. However, because the present study was cross-sectional, longitudinal and intervention studies are needed before concluding that modifying these psychological characteristics would reduce social media fatigue. Additionally, addressing maladaptive emotional regulation strategies and emphasizing the value of emotional expression skills, emotional literacy, and adaptive communication may promote adaptive digital habits among adolescents. Integrating digital emotion-regulation training into school curricula or counseling services could strengthen adolescents' capacity to manage FOMO and social media fatigue.

Although this study contributes to existing knowledge about maladaptive social media usage among adolescents, a few limitations should be noted. First, the cross-sectional research design limits causal inference, and future longitudinal research is needed to further examine directional pathways among FOMO, neuroticism, emotion regulation, and social media fatigue. Accordingly, all findings from the present study should be interpreted as evidence of association rather than causation, and temporal ordering among the study variables remains to be established. Second, this study relied on self-report measures, which may be influenced by social desirability or response bias. So, future studies could combine self-report with digital trace data (e.g., patterns of checking, night-time use, and content exposure) to better capture social media engagement. Furthermore, the sample was predominantly female, which may limit generalizability and future studies could include different age ranges, genders, socioeconomic, and cultural backgrounds. Moreover, studies could explore other potential moderators such as family relationships, offline social support, and metacognitive beliefs to further understand the protective mechanism to reduce the experience of social media fatigue. Future research work could focus on development and evaluation of school-based or digital interventions that combine psychoeducation about FOMO and fatigue with training in adaptive emotion regulation and healthy social media habits.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study support the notion that neuroticism and emotion regulation might be important determinants of how adolescents experience social media. FOMO, neuroticism, and expressive suppression were found to be predictors of adolescent social media fatigue while cognitive reappraisal did not contribute directly. Neuroticism significantly moderated the relationship between FOMO and social media fatigue; however, the observed interaction differed from the hypothesized pattern. Rather than strengthening the association, higher levels of neuroticism were associated with a weaker relationship between FOMO and social media fatigue, with FOMO significantly predicting fatigue only among adolescents with low and moderate levels of neuroticism. These findings suggest that the role of neuroticism in adolescent social media fatigue may be more complex than originally proposed and warrants further investigation. These findings highlight the importance of addressing FOMO-related

concerns, emotional vulnerability, and maladaptive regulation patterns to strengthen digital resilience among adolescents.

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