

Profiles of undergraduates' fear of missing out (FoMO): Influences in academic goals and decision-making processes

Arminda Suárez-Perdomo

Department of Teaching and Educational Research, Universidad de La Laguna, Tenerife, Spain

Yaritza Garcés-Delgado

Department of Teaching and Educational Research, Universidad de La Laguna, Tenerife, Spain

Carmen Nuria Arvelo-Rosales

Department of Teaching and Educational Research, Universidad de La Laguna, Tenerife, Spain

The aim of the present study was to identify profiles of fear of missing out on social networks in university students and their possible influence on academic goals and decision-making processes. The participants in this study were 1838 students from 30 Spanish universities. The *fear of missing out on social networking in university students scale*, the *academic goals questionnaire* and the *decision-making scale* were used for data gathering. Through latent profile analysis, fear of missing out profiles were identified and differences between groups were analysed through the three-step Bolck-Croon-Hagenaars method. The results showed three profiles with respect to the fear of missing out on social networking sites: *low FoMO*, *moderate FoMO* and *high FoMO*. Significant differences between profiles were observed for social valuing and achievement goals, as well as for stress and dissatisfaction, vigilance, avoidance and task procrastination.

Implications for practice or policy

- University student welfare and counselling services may offer voluntary seminars or workshops aimed at strengthening students' academic goals and developing coping strategies in decision-making processes.
- Universities should consider the impact of students' social life and the use of social networking sites when designing guidance and support actions.
- Higher education institutions should promote integrated institutional responses that address students' emerging personal, professional, and social needs, considering academic, social, and personal dimensions of student development.

Keywords: Social networks, fear of missing out, academic goals, decision-making processes, latent profile, quantitative.

Introduction

In recent years, the use of social networks has become more popular, especially among young people. This widespread use entails several benefits, as social networks play an important role in the construction and expression of identity—whether political, ethnic, cultural, or sexual (Collin et al., 2011). Moreover, social networks can promote the satisfaction of needs for belonging and self-presentation (Doleck et al., 2019), as well as foster connections with groups of people who share common interests, thereby facilitating the development of new knowledge and skills (Kornienko & Rivas-Drake, 2022). However, this growing use has also generated a number of problems that have been studied in recent years (Baker & White, 2010; Milyavskaya et al., 2018; Tandon et al., 2021). According to the Global Web Index (2024), 62.3% of the world's population uses social networks for an average of 2 hours and 23 minutes a day. Time spent on these platforms reduces the amount of time devoted to other activities (e.g. academic work, offline activities such as sports, meeting with friends and family, etc.), which may contribute to excessive use (Duvenage et al., 2020; Zahrai et al., 2021). This pattern has been associated with impulse-control problems that can progress into behavioural addiction (Brezing et al., 2010; Fioravanti et al., 2012; Suárez-Perdomo, 2022). Another major problem linked to social networks is the fear of missing out (FoMO). According to Przybylski et al. (2013), FoMO refers to the apprehension that others may be

engaging in rewarding activities in one's absence. Current research works have reported a relationship between FoMO, social networks use and smartphone addiction (Li et al., 2022).

Fear of missing out

With the advent of social networks and other forms of instant communication, the possibility of experiencing FoMO has increased, particularly in connection with frequent and maladaptive patterns of smartphone use (Barry & Wong, 2020). FoMO can manifest itself in various ways, including an obsession with staying continuously connected and updated on social networks, a lack of initiative in informed decision-making, and dissatisfaction at being unable to participate in activities enjoyed by others (Przybylski et al., 2013). Thus, FoMO can be defined as a form of social anxiety stemming from the belief that others are experiencing rewarding activities, as inferred from their social networks' posts (Chan et al., 2022; Perazzini et al., 2023).

Elhai et al. (2020) noted that the obsession with checking social networks is closely linked to FoMO, both in active and passive forms. Actively, individuals may browse platforms and continuously check notifications to stay updated; passively, they may continue to receive notifications even when offline, which can lead to compulsive behaviours or thoughts. Some studies (Cheng et al., 2019; Elhai et al., 2020; Paul et al., 2015) highlight the potential positive value of online interactions and notifications, as they can foster a sense of presence in the social sphere and temporarily alleviate FoMO. However, the constant stream of notifications can produce harmful effects, disrupting the completion of daily and professional tasks, creating dependency, and reinforcing obsessive checking behaviours (Elhai et al., 2019). In this sense, the adverse effects of receiving notifications and exposure on social networks affect attention (Elhai et al., 2019) and the pursuit of goals and tasks (Montag et al., 2019). Consequently, experiencing FoMO has a significant impact on people's lives, as it involves a high degree of interference with day-to-day activities (Davis, 2001; Echeburúa & Corral, 2010; Tamayo et al., 2012).

FoMO should therefore be understood as a psychosocial problem that has a direct and negative impact on the wellbeing of the person experiencing it. Recent studies have linked this phenomenon to increased anxiety, depression, stress (Barry & Wong, 2020; Milyavskaya et al., 2018; Soriano-Sánchez, 2022), constant comparison and isolation (Mazlum & Atalay, 2022; Primack et al., 2017). In fact, Mazlum and Atalay (2022) and Zhang et al. (2020) observed that the FoMO manifests in both the personal and the social self. At the personal level, individuals experience fear that affects their perception of the social environment, even when not directly tied to friends' opinions about their absence from events. At the social level, they experience negative feelings, such as isolation, when observing on social networks how friends enjoy activities without them. A study by Ahmen et al. (2023) observed a relationship between high levels of FoMO and the search for social acceptance in countries such as the United States, Singapore, China, Indonesia, etc.

Likewise, Lemay et al. (2019) and Saavedra and Bautista (2020) linked FoMO to self-determination theory (SDT, Deci & Ryan, 1985; 2000) as part of understanding its psychological effects. SDT sets out from the relational perspective, explaining individual behaviour aimed at satisfying three basic psychological needs: autonomy (personal initiative associated with decision-making), competence (assertive ability to cope in the environment) and relatedness (support and connection with other people). The frustration of these needs may directly predict feelings of loneliness among those experiencing high FoMO (Saavedra & Bautista, 2020). In other words, FoMO may arise from the frustration of these three needs, fostering obsessive behaviours aimed at reaffirming self-esteem and identity through social networks use (Hattingh et al., 2022). This situation can cause problems in different areas of development, including the academic sphere, where it impacts educational goals and decision-making processes.

Fear of missing out in academia

Educationally focused research relates FoMO to the academic repercussions it can have on university students (Setyawan & Masykur, 2022; Torrente et al., 2022). Some studies (Correa-Rojas et al., 2022; Riordan et al., 2015; Varchetta et al. 2020;) highlight the possible negative effects of FoMO at the

personal, social and academic levels. The results of this research reveal that FoMO can foster distraction, low productivity, worsening academic performance, low self-efficacy, lack of commitment to study and homework completion, and undermine academic goals (Elsayed, 2025; Kong et al., 2024; Lin et al., 2024; Mazlum & Atalay, 2022; Setyawan & Masykur, 2022; Tanrikulu & Mouratidis, 2023; Zhang et al., 2020).

Academic goals enable students to self-regulate and organize their efforts in order to achieve a particular end (Valle et al., 2010). For example, Elliot and McGregor (2001) found that students focused on learning goals showed better academic performance and greater intrinsic motivation. However, those who pursued performance goals tended to avoid challenges and reported lower satisfaction with their performance. Taking this into account, four ways of coping with academic activities through goals are observed: task-related, those related to self-worth, those oriented towards social valuation and those related to the achievement of external rewards (Elsayed, 2025; Guzmán-Zamora & Gutiérrez-García, 2020; Navas Martinez et al., 2002; Ruíz-Esteban et al., 2018).

Research on academic goals tends to focus on learning objectives and performance as indicators of outcomes or student competence (Alhadabi & Karpinski, 2020; Mendo-Lázaro et al., 2022; Putarek & Pavlin-Bernardić, 2020). Nevertheless, authors such as Wang et al. (2023) and Feng et al. (2023) state that social or achievement goals are essential, as they represent students' aspirations to achieve good academic results in order to satisfy social needs, such as improving social status (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012). This need for popularity may be influenced by excessive social networks use and even by the FoMO phenomenon, affecting extrinsic goals such as social valuation (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Therefore, FoMO appears to play an important role in shaping the person's psychological situation and social values, as it fuels concerns about exclusion from social activities or events, thereby negatively influencing self-perception and academic processes (Tanrikulu & Mouratidis, 2023).

Another significant negative effect in academia, which may also influence goal-setting, is the tendency to struggle with decision-making and experience anticipatory regret. In this case, Alzate et al. (2004) observed that decision-making processes among students develop through adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies. Adaptive strategies are based on security, reflection and taking responsibility for one's decisions; maladaptive strategies involve hasty and insecure resulting in procrastination (Fabio, 2006). Thus, the inability to cope with decision-making or the development of maladaptive patterns coupled with excessive social networks use and FoMO, could lead to higher order problems among university students.

In the study carried out by Baker et al. (2016), it was observed that the majority of young adults experienced anxiety when they had to undertake a decision-making process. The risk of making mistakes or feeling regret during decision-making is particularly salient among young people, who tend to seek to maximize the range of possible alternatives (Zhang et al., 2020). In this way, the distraction caused by social networks and FoMO intrudes into students' academic lives, leading them to make poor decisions and to prioritise the digital social context over academic activities (Lin et al., 2024; Mazlum & Atalay, 2022; Setyawan & Masykur, 2022; Zhang et al., 2020). Thus, almost three quarters of young adults report anxiety when they believe they are at risk of missing out, leading to regret during the decision-making process (Baker et al., 2016; Mazlum & Atalay, 2022). It has even been reported that having too many options can cause paralysis by making choice difficult or impossible, thereby undermining decision-making and fostering anticipatory regret (Milyavskaya et al., 2018). This inability encourages maladaptive patterns in decision-making processes, promoting discomfort with the decisions made and leading to constant vigilance, self-sabotage, and ultimately the postponement of decisions (Barreto et al., 2024; Ferrari et al., 1995; Mann, 2016; Tice et al., 2001; Williams et al., 2008).

Bearing in mind the above, two objectives are identified and presented below: (a) to identify university students' FoMO profiles, taking into account personal affect and social affect; (b) to analyse significant differences between latent FoMO profiles with respect to academic goal factors (learning objectives, social reinforcement, social valuation and achievement goals) and decision-making factors (stress and dissatisfaction, vigilance, task avoidance and procrastination).

These objectives are posited on the assumption that, just as FoMO can be explained through SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985), academic goal setting can be seen as leading students to satisfy basic psychological needs by providing them with: (a) a sense of competence in achieving the proposed objectives; (b) a sense of autonomy in setting their own goals and making decisions that ensure they achieve them; and (c) a sense of relatedness and connectedness with other students and faculty. Thus, FoMO and its detrimental personal and social effects may be related to low academic achievement or goals. Evidently, the excessive use of social networks and the constant alertness for social network updates are distracting elements for students. Recent studies also suggest that FoMO comprises both trait and state components, which may explain its varying influence on students' psychological adjustment and academic behaviours (Kong et al., 2024; Przybylski et al., 2013; Wegmann et al., 2017).

Method

Participants

A non-probability sampling by quotas was carried out, seeking the representativity of the university student body of the different autonomous communities in Spain. Thus, 1838 students from 30 Spanish universities participated, with 66.3% being female, 32.2% male and 1.5% identified in the other genders category. Participants ranged in age from 17 to 68 years ($M = 21.7$, $SD = 5.5$). According to their field of study, 41.3% were from social and legal sciences, 16.9% from arts and humanities, 15.6% from engineering and architecture, 15.3% from sciences and the remaining 10.9% from health sciences. Finally, 36.6% were in their first year, 24.9% in their second, 17.9% in their third and 20.6% in their fourth or fifth year.

Instruments

For data collection, a self-report questionnaire was developed and distributed online. The main characteristics are described below:

- Sociodemographic data (5 items) gathering information on gender, age, university, field of study and academic year.
- FoMO scale for social networking in university students (Suárez-Perdomo et al., 2024) (17 items, $\omega = .93$, Likert scale 1-6 where 1 is strongly disagree and 6 strongly agree). According to Suárez-Perdomo et al. (2024), the psychometric properties of the scale showed a 2-factor model with adequate model fit ($RMSEA = .079$; $CFI = .929$; $GFI = .919$; $SRMR = .03$; $\chi^2 = 18532.81$, $p > .001$). The first factor private ($\omega = .86$), analysing the self-perception, dissatisfaction and sadness of the person concerned about the fear of missing out on something

I feel indecisive when I have to choose between several social events, I feel nervous if I think I have missed a social event due to ignorance, I regret when I choose to go to one social event and rule out other options.

The second factor social ($\omega = .91$), examining the social environment of the person concerned

I feel lonely when my friends attend a social event without me, I feel ignored by my friends when I miss a social event, I feel anxious about being unable to keep up with the social life of my friends.

- *Academic goals questionnaire* (15 items, $\omega = .93$, Likert scale 1-6, on which 1 is strongly disagree and 6 strongly agree), taken from the *cuestionario de metas académicas* (Navas Martínez et al., 2002), with the original 20-item measure adapted and reduced to 15 items, as the original questionnaire was aimed at secondary school students. Thus, items referring to the future of university studies were eliminated. The exploratory equation

model and the oblique geomin rotation method were used to check the factor structure of the adaptation and the weighted least squares method was used to confirm the resulting model. The result showed a 4-factor model with adequate model fit (RMSEA = .080; CFI = .951; GFI = .900; SRMR = .023; $\chi^2 = 656.10$, $p > .001$), according to Tabachnick and Fidell (2007). The first factor, learning goals (6 items, $\omega = .80$), examines the person's interest in learning new things *"I like to see how I am progressing, I like to learn new things, I am curious to know more"*; the second factor, social reinforcement goals (3 items, $\omega = .85$), examines the social valuing required by the person *"I like to be praised by my teachers, I like to be valued by my friends, I want to make teachers proud"*; the third factor, social valuation goals (3 items, $\omega = .86$), examines the need to be socially valued *"I want my peers to be envious of me, I want people to see how smart I am, I want to get better grades than my classmates"*; and the fourth factor, achievement goals (3 items, $\omega = .80$), looks at the pupil's personal goals *"I want to feel proud of myself, I want to get good grades, I want to achieve a good social position"*.

- *Decision-making scale* (17 items, $\omega = .93$, Likert scale 1-6 where 1 is strongly disagree and 6 strongly agree). According to Suárez-Perdomo et al., (2022) the psychometric properties of the scale showed a 4-factor model with adequate model fit (RMSEA = .046; CFI = .973; GFI = .947; SRMR = .029; $\chi^2 = 2023.99$, $p > .001$). (a) Stress and dissatisfaction (5 items, $\omega = .89$), analysing the person's discomfort at having to take decisions *"I tend to waste a lot of time on trivial things before reaching the final decision; When I have to make a decision, I wait a long time before I start thinking about it."*; (b) vigilance (7 items, $\omega = .91$), examining the person's constant attention to the possible alternatives in order to make a decision *"I like to consider all alternatives; I take a lot of precaution before making a decision"*; (c) avoidance (3 items, $\omega = .80$), analysing the person's self-sabotage when making decisions *"I avoid making decisions, I prefer to leave it to others.; I don't like to take responsibility for decision-making unless I really have to"*; and, (d) task postponement (3 items, $\omega = .83$), examining decisional procrastination behaviour *"I put off making decisions; I can't think if I have to make a decision in a hurry"*.

Procedure

Prior to dissemination of the questionnaire, the approval of the Research Ethics and Animal Welfare Committee of the authors' university was granted (CEIBA2023-3269). The survey was distributed by e-mail, contacting the dean's offices, departments and teaching staff of the faculties of 30 universities in Spain, so that the teaching staff could invite students to participate in the study, including the questionnaire in the virtual classrooms of the subjects they taught. To ensure ethical procedures, informed consent was requested and the anonymity of the participants was ensured, in accordance with Organic Law 3/2018, of December 5, on the protection of personal data and guarantee of digital rights.

Data analysis

Statistical analyses were performed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24 and the MPLUS 8.10 software package (Muthén & Muthén, 2021).

Preliminary analyses

A missing value analysis was performed based on the missing completely at random test (Little, 1988), which indicates that when 10% of the items are missing, the case should be excluded from the analysis, and when the missing values were <10%, the missing values were found to be missing by chance. Specifically, 49 responses were eliminated when more than 10% of responses missing were observed. A preliminary descriptive analysis was then carried out in order to find the means, standard deviations and correlations between the factors analysed.

Latent profile analysis and contrasts

Latent profile analysis was used to identify the latent profiles with the two factors of fear of missing out on social networks. In this technique, groups of people who have similar scores on a set of variables are

identified iteratively, so that the fit indices show the presence of solutions that can vary between two to five classes (Gibson, 1962; Nylund et al., 2007). As established by Collins and Lanza (2010) and Marsh et al. (2009), the optimal number of profiles should be used as a function of entropy scores (Ramaswamy et al., 1993), the Akaike information criterion (AIC; Akaike, 1974), the sample size adjusted Bayesian information criterion (SSA-BIC; Sclove, 1987) and the Lo-Mendell-Rubin likelihood ratio test (Ramaswamy et al., 1993; Lo et al., 2001). In this case, the highest values of entropy and lowest values of AIC and SSA-BIC are observed as the best fit of the model. In addition, the p-value of the modified likelihood ratio test allows comparison of the k-profile model with a k-1 profile model to determine the existence of a significant improvement of the former model over the latter. The best percentage of participants from each of the latent profiles examined was analysed in order to avoid solutions with a small number of participants (5%) that may not accurately represent a single latent group, as indicated by Marsh et al. (2009). In addition, an elbow graph was calculated with the AIC and SSA-BIC indices (Marsh et al., 2009). This graph facilitates the choice of the number of profiles that best represents the data, considering that a sharp change in slope inertia is plotted (Morin et al., 2015). Once the optimal number of profiles was established, an analysis based on the three-step Bolck-Croon-Hagennars (BCH) method according to Asparouhov and Muthén (2013) was performed to identify possible significant differences between the profiles of fear of missing out with respect to the academic goal factors and the decision-making factors. Unlike ANOVA, this BCH method assumes that a subject can belong to different profiles (Asparouhov & Muthén, 2015).

Results

Preliminary outcomes

Table 1 shows the main results of the descriptive analyses carried out (mean, standard deviation and correlations). Means ranged from 1.87 to 4.29 and standard deviations from .56 to 1.4. Regarding correlations, these ranged from .782 (stress and dissatisfaction with task procrastination) to -.026 (social valuation goals with task procrastination).

Table 1
Means, standard deviations and Pearson's correlations

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Personal affect	1.96	.94	-									
Social affect	2.13	1.1	.684*	-								
Learning goals	4.10	.72	.029	-.012	-							
Social reinforcement goals	3.18	1.1	.063	.033	.338*	-						
Social valuation goals	1.87	.89	.76*	.105*	.107*	.529*	-					
Achievement goals	4.27	.80	.45	.059*	.466*	.475*	.267*	-				
Stress and dissatisfaction	3.34	1.2	.158*	.202*	.005	.156*	.166*	0.94*	-			
Vigilance	4.29	.96	.086*	.125*	.337*	.208*	.121*	.312*	.373*	-		
Avoidance	2.90	.56	.061*	.061*	.575*	.389*	.600*	.308*	.078*	.222*	-	
Task procrastination	3.17	1.4	.143*	.175*	-.026	.121*	.133*	.043	.782*	.260*	.079*	-

Note. * < .001. SD stands for standard deviation.

Correlations were observed between personal affect with respect to social valuation goals, and with all decision-making factors. Social affect correlates with respect to social valuation goals, achievement goals and decision-making factors.

Latent profiles on fear of missing out

As shown in Table 2, latent profile analyses were performed on five models. In addition, Figure 1 shows the elbow plot made with the data obtained in the five AIC and SSA-BIC models, where a sharp change is

observed after models 2 and 3. With respect to the fit indices, it was observed that the 3-profile model showed a higher score in entropy and the p-value of the LRT ($p = .000$), confirming that it fits the data significantly better than the two-factor model. Likewise, the AIC and SSA-BIC indices were found to score better and, although these data decrease with increasing number of profiles, these results are to be expected with large sample sizes. (Marsh et al., 2009). Bearing in mind the results achieved and considering previous studies, it was concluded that the three-profile solution best represents the data.

Table 2
Fit indices for the models with latent profiles

Latent profiles	Entropy	LL	AIC	SSA-BIC	LRTp	Smallest group	Free parameters
1	-	-5213.18	10434.36	10443.71	-	-	4
2	.877	-4532.59	9079.19	9095.56	.000	382	7
3	.858	-4349.52	8719.05	8742.43	.000	174	10
4	.859	-4264.04	8554.08	8584.48	.057	48	13
5	.855	-4179.23	8390.47	8490.47	.060	57	16

Note. LL = log-likelihood; AIC = Akaike information criterion; SSA-BIC = sample size adjusted Bayesian information criterion; LRTp = p-value of likelihood ratio test.

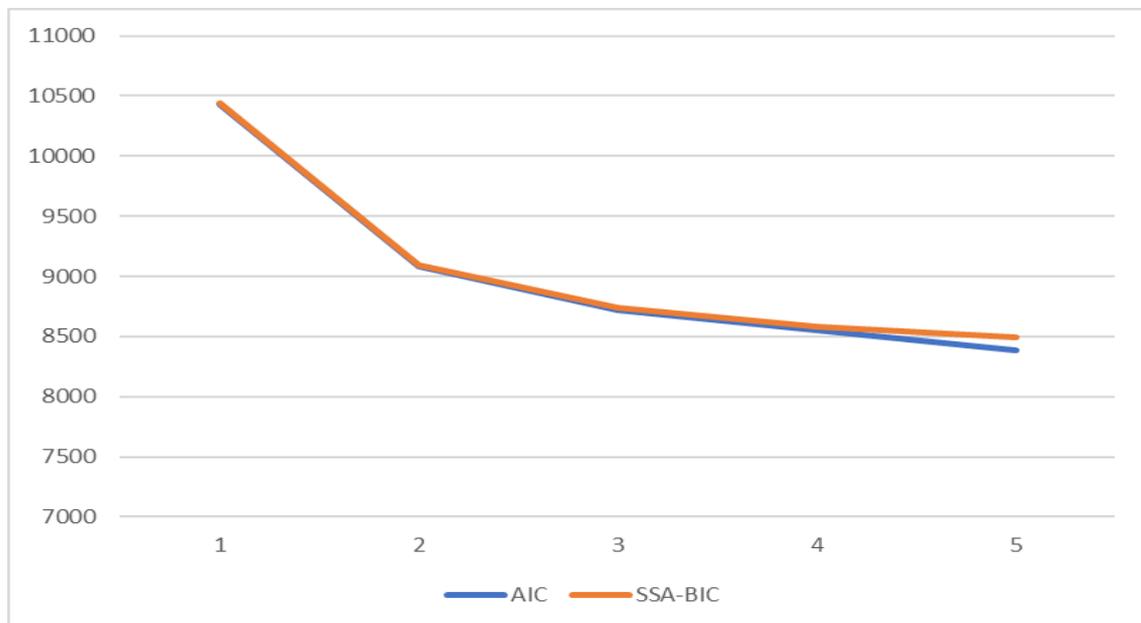


Figure 1. Elbow plot for identification of the optimal number of latent profiles. The plot shows the optimal number of latent profiles with Akaike information criterion on the x-axis and sample size adjusted Bayesian information criterion on the y-axis.

Profiles description

Figure 2 shows the main features of the latent profiles obtained as a function of the social networks FoMO factor. It was observed that the first profile was represented by 65% of the participants and low scores were obtained in both factors of fear of missing out on something. This first profile was designated low FoMO. With respect to the second profile, it was observed that it represented 25% of the students who participated in the study, obtaining average scores in both factors. This second profile was designated moderate FoMO. The last profile identified accounted for the remaining 10% of the participating students, showing high scores on both fear of missing out factors. The third profile was designated high FoMO.

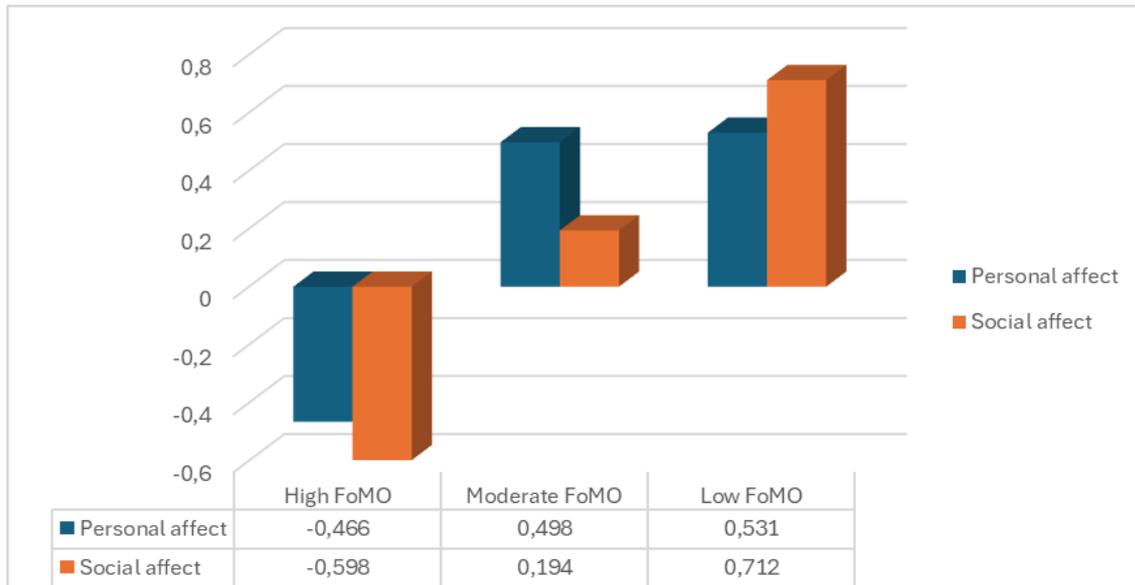


Figure 2. Standardised mean scores of fear of missing something on social networks for the three latent profiles. The x-axis shows standardised mean and y-axis shows personal affect and social affect for each other profile.

Academic goals and decision-making processes

Table 3 presents the results of scores and differences between the factors of academic goals and the decision-making processes with respect to the three FoMO profiles, as well as the differences found between the profiles after application of the BCH method (Asparouhov & Muthén, 2015). With regard to the academic goal factors, significant differences were observed between the second profile moderate FoMO and the third high FoMO compared to the first profile low FoMO, both having higher average social valuation goals than the first profile. Significant differences were also found between the third profile high FoMO and the first profile low FoMO, characterised by having a higher average in achievement goals. Likewise, significant differences were found in all decision-making factors, with the third high FoMO profile scoring higher on all four factors than the others, and the second moderate FoMO profile scoring higher on average than the first low FoMO profile on all factors.

Table 3

Scores and differences in academic goals and decision-making processes between profiles

	P1 Low FoMO M(SD)	P2 Moderate FoMO M(SD)	P3 Hi FoMO M(SD)	p-value		
				P1 vs P2	P1 vs P3	P2 vs P3
Learning goals	4.05 (.02)	4.07 (.03)	4.02 (0.6)	.67	.67	.53
Social reinforcement goals	3.15 (.03)	3.23 (.06)	3.13 (.09)	.28	.12	.50
Social valuation goals	1.80 (.02)	1.97 (.04)	2.10 (.08)	.004	.001	.23
Achievement goals	4.25 (.02)	4.27 (.04)	4.38 (.06)	.67	.048	.16
Stress and dissatisfaction	3.18 (.03)	3.51 (.06)	4.02 (.10)	.000	.000	.000
Vigilance	4.22 (.03)	4.36 (.05)	4.58 (.06)	.031	.000	.011
Avoidance	2.73 (.04)	3.01 (.07)	3.63 (.11)	.003	.000	.000
Task procrastination	3.02 (.04)	3.30 (.07)	3.84 (.12)	.002	.000	.000

Discussion

This study had two objectives: on the one hand, the identification of latent profiles of university students' fear of missing out on social networks; and, on the other hand, the analysis of possible significant differences between the profiles found and the factors of academic goals and decision-making processes. In the case of the first objective, three clearly differentiated latent profiles were found to be present. The first profile, low FoMO (65%), is characterised by low personal and social affect scores on FoMO on social networks. This implies that the people who make up the first profile do not experience the apprehension identified by Przybylski et al. (2013) when other people are engaged in social activities in their absence. The second profile, moderate FoMO (25%) is characterised by a medium-high score on personal affect and a medium-low score on social affect. Students in this group do not feel apprehensive about missing out on social networks content, although a trend in personal affect was found. This suggests that students may show increased fatigue, stress and anxiety as a result of threats to the private self, as it is affecting them personally (Zhang et al. 2020).

Finally, the third profile, high FoMO (10%), is characterised by high scores in both personal and social affect. This means, as noted by Przybylski et al. (2013), that people in this third profile experience fears and anxieties about not being connected to their social group. They are unable to satisfy their needs for relationships and social support, which negatively affects their perception of their social environment (personal affect) and generates feelings of isolation (social affect) (Lemay et al., 2019; Mazlum & Atalay, 2022; Saavedra & Bautista, 2020; Zhang et al., 2020). In this case, the findings are consistent with Deci & Ryan (2012) in terms of the desire to remain constantly connected with others as one of the main reasons for frequent use of social networks. Specifically, the third profile appears to constantly satisfy their social needs by being continuously on social media, promoting a high level of FoMO (Li et al., 2024)

With regard to the second objective, significant differences were found between the three latent profiles and the social valuation goals. Specifically, higher scores were obtained in both the moderate FoMO profile and in high FoMO than in the low FoMO profile. In particular, these two profiles have a greater need to value the opinion that other people or their social group have of them and this opinion may affect their academic goals. As stated by Tanrikulu and Mouratidis (2023), this means that people in both profiles develop greater extrinsic motivation based on other people's opinion of their achievements. This is related to the level of FoMO, which contributes to their increased concern about missing out on social networks, ultimately influencing their self-perception and academic processes. This last point can be related to the results obtained, in that significance was observed with all the factors of the decision-making processes.

As previously noted, significant differences were observed with respect to stress and dissatisfaction, vigilance, avoidance and procrastination. In all cases, it was confirmed that both the moderate FoMO and "High FoMO" profiles showed high scores on the decision-making factors. Thus, the influence of FoMO level on maladaptive decision-making processes is perceived (Alzate et al., 2004). In turn, people in the "Low FoMO" profile show adaptive coping strategies, because by adequately developing awareness of decision-making processes, they are able to take advantage of opportunities (Isaksson et al., 2014; Zhang et al., 2020). People in both the "Moderate FoMO" and "High FoMO" profiles show maladaptive decision-making processes, developing frantic and disordered coping strategies. Thus, they show an inability to decide adequately within a given timeframe (Luna Bernal et al., 2012; Clark & McManus, 2002; Fabio, 2006), which ultimately leads to anticipatory regret associated with FoMO on social networks (Baker et al., 2016).

In this way, it is observed that the level of FoMO is significantly affecting both the personal and social level in both profiles, coinciding with previous studies (Davis, 2001; Echeburúa & Corral, 2010; Tamayo et al., 2012). Specifically, in line with the research of Barry and Wong (2020), Milyavskaya et al. (2018) and Soriano-Sánchez (2022), in the present study, it was found that students who show a high level of FoMO are affected by stress and dissatisfaction in the decision-making processes, which can lead to anxiety, depression and stress problems. In addition, high levels of procrastination are observed as a consequence

of the distraction caused by social networks when FoMO is high (Elsayed, 2025; Kong et al., 2024; Lin et al., 2024; Mazlum & Atalay, 2022; Setyawan & Masykur, 2022; Zhang et al., 2020). That is, the level of FoMO experienced by these students, which is influencing social valuation goals and decision-making processes, can lead to high levels of dissatisfaction in autonomy, ability to function in the environment and feeling of support from the social group (Hattingh et al., 2022).

However, this study is not without its limitations, which should be noted: the data were collected using a self-report questionnaire, so even considering the reliability achieved, possible biases in data gathering such as social desirability and the respondent's interpretation based on self-perception must be taken into account. In the light of the above limitations, it is necessary to continue investigating the FoMO phenomenon and how it may be influencing the academic processes of university students; as well as to continue exploring other aspects that may be influencing this phenomenon for possible explanations, such as age, gender, etc. Moreover, given the potential biases inherent in self-report questionnaires, future studies should incorporate more objective data, such as actual time spent on social networks or academic performance records. Despite the aforementioned limitations, the present study has a direct impact on the current literature, as it identifies clearly delineated profiles of the FoMO phenomenon among university students, as well as its influence on academic goals and decision-making.

In short, technology-mediated social networks offer multiple benefits, and their responsible use can contribute to the academic performance of university students. However, when problematic use emerges, such as fear of missing out, individuals may be affected both personally and socially, negatively influencing the social valuation they attribute to themselves and their decision-making processes. Recent research has also underlined that FoMO comprises both trait and state components, which may explain why its influence on academic performance and engagement varies across contexts (Kong et al., 2024; Przybylski et al., 2013; Wegmann et al., 2017). These problems could lead to high levels of dissatisfaction, greatly increasing the person's feelings of loneliness. The practical implications arising from this study also relate to guidance and counselling. There is a need for university student welfare and counselling services to offer voluntary seminars or workshops to work on the strength of academic goals and coping in the decision-making process. It is clear that social life, in general, and social networks, in particular, have a direct impact on students and on the understanding of the teaching-learning process itself. Thus, universities have the responsibility to offer solutions to the new personal, professional and social needs that students demand.

Author contributions

Arminda Suárez-Perdomo: Conceptualisation, Investigation, Data curation, Formal analysis, Writing – original draft, Writing – review and editing; **Yaritza Garcés-Delgado:** Investigation, Writing – review and editing; **Carmen Nuria Arvelo-Rosales:** Investigation, Writing – review and editing.

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Corresponding author: Arminda Suárez-Perdomo, asuper@ull.edu.es

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