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Ramona Dună (Bratu)<sup>a, b</sup> , Bianca Ioana Garabet<sup>a, b\*</sup> 

<sup>a</sup> "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iași, Iași, Romania

<sup>b</sup> "Andrei Șaguna" University of Constanța, Constanța, Romania

\*Corresponding author: [biancagarabet29@gmail.com](mailto:biancagarabet29@gmail.com)

## Abstract

### Keywords:

Social networks, self-esteem, school procrastination, FOMO, adolescents

Today's world is known to be in constant dynamics, and adolescents are the ones who adapt quickly to those social paradigms. Through this research we investigate the relationships between social network use, self-esteem, and school procrastination in adolescents, analyzing the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) phenomenon as a mediating variable. FOMO refers to the fear of missing out on important experiences that others are living and is fueled by constant exposure to idealized media content on social networks. The study starts from the following hypotheses: (H1) heavy use of social networks is associated with low self-esteem; (H2) positive self-esteem correlates negatively with excessive use of social networks and the negative impact of FOMO; (H3) long time spent online leads to higher levels of school procrastination; (H4) high self-esteem is associated with a reduced tendency to procrastinate; (H5) girls exhibit higher levels of FOMO and procrastination compared to boys. The importance of this research is justified by the psycho-emotional impact of social networks on adolescents, particularly in contexts where upward social comparisons can lead to negative self-evaluations and the development of maladaptive behaviors, especially in the school environment and with academic performance. The results will contribute to the development of prevention and intervention strategies, supporting balanced and healthy adolescent development in the era of technology dominance.

## 1. Introduction

The relationship between social network use, self-worth, and school procrastination among adolescents can be impacted by the psychological phenomenon of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), which can act as a mediator. *FOMO*, defined by an omnipresent belief that others are having fun experiences of which one is missing out, has been increasingly linked with social media use and negative self-perception among adolescents. Servidio et al. (2024) point out that individuals with higher FOMO are likely to exhibit excessive and compulsive social media usage, typically in the form of "make-up" or compensatory efforts to remain socially engaged and abreast. Such regular online interaction, however, has the consequence of producing upward social comparisons, where individuals compare themselves to seemingly more successful or more socially active peers, bringing down self-esteem. On the other hand, Ma'rof and Abdullah (2024) observe that the addictive nature of social media platforms, driven by FOMO, may heighten avoidance actions, such as academic procrastination. Adolescents may defer or avoid homework for the immediate gratification and validation offered by their online lives. The cyclical

pattern of seeking approval, disliking self in comparison to others, and avoiding scholastic responsibilities enables a complex interaction between emotional dysregulation, lowered scholastic motivation, and lower self-esteem.

FOMO, in this context, is more than a psychological stressor but also a behavioral spurrier, enabling maladaptive internet use behaviors that degrade scholastic and self-esteem functioning. Nowadays, adolescents spend increasing amounts of their existence in virtual social environments that influence their identity development, emotional well-being, and school performances. The rapid growth of social media such as Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat has introduced new psychosocial processes that were virtually absent in previous generations. Among these, the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) has been a central psychological driver that influences adolescents' use of digital media and how they view themselves relative to other people. Understanding the impact of FOMO is particularly crucial in the context of its well-established correlations with Problematic Social Media Use, lower self-esteem, and greater school



procrastination, variables combined to undermine mental health and academic functioning during a critical period of development. This concern is of particular relevance in the current educational and psychological research, considering the growing concern over the overuse of technology, emotional dysregulation, and low scholarly motivation among youth. Since schools and mental health professionals require treatment methods that work for adolescents, it is crucial to examine how fundamental psychological processes like FOMO serve as moderators between online actions and general developmental processes.

Addressing these trends not only enhances our theoretical understanding of teen behavior in the era of technological change but is also directly relevant to the design of educational programs, digital skills initiatives, and mental health policies aimed at the specific issues of digitally active youth.

## 2. Theoretical foundation

### 2.1. FOMO Phenomenon

Adolescents who experience Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) are particularly vulnerable to social comparison activities, which can be very harmful to their self-esteem and also academic performance. Social comparison, triggered by idealized and selected content seen on social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, or Snapchat, makes adolescents perceive their own lives as less successful or thrilling in relation to that of their peers. For example, a student might see others posting constantly about social events, trips, or achievements, and thus feel excluded or second best, even if such portrayals are exaggerated or selectively presented. This perceived social deficit erodes self-esteem and creates a sentiment of unhappiness, which also renders it increasingly difficult to concentrate on academic responsibilities. As Ma'rof and Abdullah (2024) and Wang et al. (2019) observe, this obsession with online connectedness can lead to academic procrastination, as teens delay schoolwork to maintain their online social presence. Instead of working on a homework assignment, for instance, an adolescent may compulsively check their phone for updates for fear of missing out on conversations or trending posts. Aside from the individual impact on grades, such behavior is part of a broader trend of emotional and cognitive dysregulation. Interestingly, recent research revealed a more basic process by which these processes unfold.

Wang et al. (2019) demonstrated that FOMO and procrastination can act as serial mediators of the

relationship between sensation-seeking and smartphone addiction. Sensation seekers, individuals who crave new and exciting experiences, may use social media initially for stimulation. Yet this behavior, driven by FOMO, tends to lead to procrastination and, ultimately, compulsive smartphone use. This causal sequence illustrates the intricate psychological mechanisms underlying the relationship between personality traits and behavioural and emotional outcomes in the social media era. These findings underscore the need for targeted interventions. Addressing FOMO through digital literacy programs, mindfulness training, or cognitive-behavioural therapy can enable adolescents to become attentive to and regulate their affective responses to social media stimuli. Encouraging healthier online habits, i.e., setting screen time limits, forming offline social activities, or promoting realistic online portrayals of life, can result in improved self-esteem and reduced procrastination.

As Yin et al. (2021) emphasize, such tactics are vital to supporting adolescents' mental well-being and academic engagement in an increasingly interconnected world. Research indicates that Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) plays a significant role in the advancement of problematic social media use, leading to a self-reinforcing cycle where greater FOMO encourages adolescents to invest more time and energy in utilizing social media platforms in an attempt to stay constantly connected and updated (Li et al., 2024; Li et al., 2023). This excessive engagement routinely results in negative psychological effects, such as increased anxiety, sleep disturbance, and reduced academic performance ultimately further degrading the overall well-being of a person. FOMO drives excessive checking of notifications and social media feeds, which substantiates addiction to digital communication over face-to-face communication resulting in further strengthening of PSMU's cycle. Furthermore, adolescents with high FOMO are more likely to be at risk of developing maladaptive coping strategies, including binge drinking. The risk is especially pronounced in those with low self-regulation and high sensation-seeking behavior (Brunborg et al., 2021). These traits can amplify the impulsive desire to conform to perceived peer norms and engage in risk-taking to avoid social exclusion or be part of a group, illustrating the intersection of emotional vulnerability and risk-taking behavior. Self-esteem, traditionally viewed as a protective factor in adolescent mental health, plays a more nuanced role in the case of FOMO. Although low self-esteem has been

associated with greater susceptibility to FOMO, recent findings suggest that even adolescents with moderate or high self-esteem are not immune to its effects (Mahfuzah & Agustin, 2025). This would imply that self-esteem is not strong enough to resist the psychological pull of constant digital connectivity and that other psychological processes (emotional regulation, peer attachment, and identity formation, for example) are key mediators in this relationship.

Taken together, these results underscore the requirement for a multi-component approach to FOMO and its downstream consequences. Prevention and intervention strategies must aim not only at fostering healthy social media use development, but also at adolescents' developing emotional literacy, impulse control, and resistance to peer influence. Formulating offline social support networks, encouraging mindful internet use, and making FOMO-awareness education a component of school curricula can be some fruitful interventions for safeguarding the mental well-being of teenagers in the age of the internet.

## 2.2. Social network use

Social networking among teenagers is closely related to self-esteem, as mediated by the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). Studies increasingly point out that increased usage of social media websites amplifies the feelings of FOMO, and it, in turn, has a negative effect on self-esteem through the processes of upward social comparison (Servidio et al., 2024; Ma'rof & Abdullah, 2024). Teens who are exposed to idealized snapshots of other people's lives, routine vacations, social activities, achievements, or aesthetic self-presentation, are more likely to negatively compare their own lives with these selectively designed perceptions. This tendency generates dissatisfaction with one's own life condition, appearance, or social standing, thereby resulting in low self-esteem (Ma'rof & Abdullah, 2024; Farooq et al., 2023).

However, the relationship between social media use and self-esteem is not straightforward. Empirical work suggests a curvilinear pattern: moderate social media use can enhance self-esteem via enhanced feelings of social connectedness, self-expression, and peer acceptance (Cingel & Olsen, 2018). For instance, adolescents may gain confidence from positive feedback, supportive interactions, or participation in identity-affirming groups. But as usage turns excessive and compulsive, these positives get

cancelled out by negative effects such as increased anxiety, social comparison fatigue, and emotional dependence upon digital validation. Moreover, individual difference variables such as gender, personality, and offline social support may also moderate these effects. For example, adolescents who have low self-concept clarity or higher neuroticism are expected to be more susceptible to FOMO and its psychological impact. Conversely, people who have good parental support or offline healthy friends are expected to be more immune to the adverse effects of online activity (Seth et al., 2024; Farooq et al., 2023). This complex interplay highlights the urgent need for targeted interventions that foster healthy digital habits and emotional regulation. School-based programs that enhance digital literacy, encourage mindful social media engagement, and provide FOMO-mitigating skills like gratitude or reality-checking can empower adolescents to engage more critically with online content. The cultivation of self-compassion and the emphasis on online personas' constructed-ness can also shield against the deleterious effects of social comparison.

## 2.3. Self-esteem

Teen self-esteem is greatly influenced by social media use, through complex psychological mechanisms such as social comparison and Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). These phenomena can have serious effects on how teenagers view themselves and their social worth in ever more virtual social environments. Empirical studies keep establishing that more social media use is linked to lower self-esteem among adolescents, and this is largely due to the negative influence of upward social comparisons and the perpetual anxiety caused by FOMO (Ma'rof & Abdullah, 2024; Farooq et al., 2023; Servidio et al., 2024). Social comparison theory suggests that individuals evaluate their competence and worth by comparing themselves to others. Teens on social media are continually exposed to edited, idealized photographs and narratives of other individuals' lives. This invites upward comparisons, comparisons to others perceived to be better off, which routinely results in feelings of inadequacy and lower self-esteem. For example, Wang and Lei (2021) found that adolescents who regularly compare their looks, social status, or life with what is showcased online tend to be less content with their own lives, thus having lower self-esteem. FOMO also contributes to these negative effects. This anxiety results from the fear that one is

missing out on rewarding social experiences or meaningful social connections while not online.

Adolescents with high FOMO feel the need to be constantly connected, thereby leading to stress and emotional exhaustion. Not only does this pressure encroach on regular offline social interaction, but it also enhances feelings of social exclusion and self-doubt, in turn diminishing their overall self-esteem (Farooq et al., 2023). Moreover, problematic smartphone use has been linked with low self-esteem, and procrastination was discovered as a significant mediating variable in the relationship (Wang & Lei, 2021). Excessive smartphone use on social media consumes time and attention away from goal-oriented tasks, thus inducing guilt and lowering self-efficacy. Such a cycle continues to reinforce negative self-concepts in adolescents. Against this backdrop, the cultivation of digital literacy and positive online behaviors has become a critical strategy in mitigating the adverse impacts of social media on teen self-esteem.

Digital literacy training programs that teach adolescents to critically evaluate social media content, understand the unrealisticness of online portrayals and spend their time productively can reduce harmful social comparisons and FOMO (Farooq et al., 2023). In addition, enabling teenagers to form offline social connections and engage in activities of value can render their self-esteem less dependent on social media validation (Seo, 2024).

### 3. Research methodology

This study employs a quantitative, correlational research design aimed at examining the relationships between the frequency and type of social network use, levels of self-esteem, school procrastination, and the mediating role of the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) in adolescent populations. The correlational design allows for the investigation of direct and indirect associations among variables without manipulating them.

#### 3.1. Participants

The research sample consists of 48 adolescents, including 40 females and 8 males, aged between 14 and 18 years. Participants were recruited from "Colibri" Secondary School (Constanța), Secondary School No. 1 (Mangalia, Constanța), and "I.N. Roman" Technological High School (Constanța). Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from both the participants and their legal guardians. The sample includes students from diverse

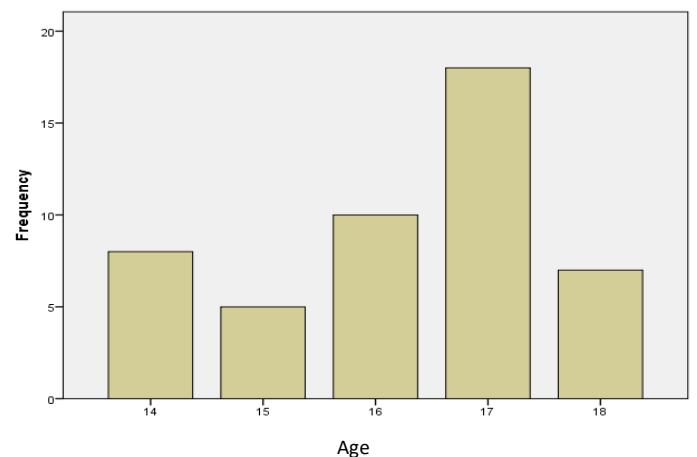
educational backgrounds, ensuring variability in social media usage patterns and academic behaviors (Table 1).

The participants' ages range from 14 to 18 years old, as follows: 8 subjects aged 14 (16.7%), 5 participants aged 15 (10.4%), 10 aged 16 (20.8%), 18 subjects aged 17 (37.5%) and 7 subjects aged 18 (14.6%).

**Table 1**  
Absolute and percentage frequencies for the variable "Gender"

Gender				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Female	40	83.3	83.3	83.3
Valid Male	8	16.7	16.7	100.0
Total	48	100.0	100.0	

**Figure 1**  
Bar chart for the variable "Age"



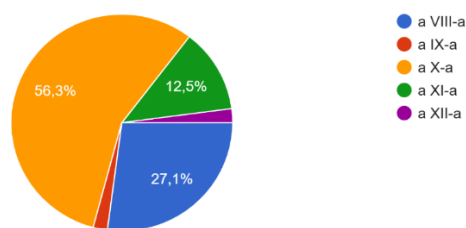
**Table 2**  
Absolute and percentage frequencies for the variable "Environment of origin"

Environment of origin				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Rural	8	16.7	16.7	16.7
Valid Urban	40	83.3	83.3	100.0
Total	48	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 shows that 40 of the respondents (83.3%) come from urban areas and 8 subjects (16.7%) from rural areas.

The subjects come from the following grades: 56.3% from 10th grade, 27.1% from 8th grade, 12.5% from 11th grade, 2.1% from 9th grade, and 2% from 12th grade.

**Figure 2**  
Grade of participants



### 3.2. Instruments

For measuring the core variables of the study, certain established measures were utilized to ensure the data collected became both valid and reliable. To assess self-esteem, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) was utilized. The 10-item Likert-type scale is the most widely validated self-report measure for adolescent populations and measures individuals' overall sense of worth. Self-esteem is important to know because it plays a role in adolescents' emotional adjustment and can influence social behaviors as well as educational motivation. Procrastination tendency was measured using Lay's Procrastination Scale (1986), version 2, which includes 12 statements related to delaying tasks and completing them at the last minute. Respondents rate each statement on a scale from "extremely uncharacteristic" to "extremely characteristic." This scale focuses on avoidance learning behaviors and is appropriate for identifying patterns that, if persistent, can lead to poor academic performance and increased stress. Social media usage was measured through a specially prepared questionnaire that quantified the frequency, duration of use, and intention of use of social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat.

The questionnaire was designed with special care to reflect the complexity of adolescents' social media usage, giving an idea of how such behaviors can be attributed to their self-concept and academic behavior. Finally, to quantify the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), the survey utilized the FOMO Scale by Przybylski et al. (2013). The 10-item scale measures anxiety experienced when others are thought to be engaged in rewarding things to which the individual is not invited, usually amplified through social media exposure. FOMO is the most suitable means to explore its suggested mediating function between social network use and psychological or behavioral outcomes. The use of these specific instruments thus provided a wide and reliable assessment of the constructs at hand, allowing the study to probe the complex interrelation between social media usage, self-esteem, school

procrastination, and the FOMO phenomenon among adolescents.

### 3.3. Procedure

Data collection was carried out during school hours, in classroom settings, under the supervision of the research team. Participants completed the battery of questionnaires in approximately 30 minutes. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured throughout the process. Ethical approval was obtained from the educational institution's board.

### 3.4. Data Analysis

Statistical analyses were made using SPSS software. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) were computed for all variables. Pearson correlation coefficients were used to examine the bivariate associations. To test the hypothesized mediation model, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was employed. The mediating role of FOMO between social network use and the two dependent variables (self-esteem and school procrastination) was analyzed using bootstrapping techniques to determine indirect effects with 95% confidence intervals.

### 3.5. Ethical Considerations

This research is fully following Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (General Data Protection Regulation - GDPR) for the protection of personal data, and with specific guarantees for children. GDPR mandates the processing of personal data of children with parents or guardians' consent where the child is under 16 years, or the national threshold, when this is lower than 16 years, as in the case of Romania. Research also respects Law No. 190/2018, which implements GDPR in Romania, offering special protection for children's information.

Under these guidelines, informed consent from guardians or parents was initially acquired before any inclusion of the minors in the study. Both participants and guardians were informed thoroughly about the intended use of the research, the data collection process, and their rights to ensure that the consent was given voluntarily and in full knowledge. The participation was voluntary with explicit assurances that participants were free to withdraw at any time without any adverse consequences.

Throughout the research, confidentiality and privacy of all study participants were rigorously ensured. All information was securely stored in encrypted GDPR-compatible sites such as Google Drive, with strict access allowed only to study research

group members. Collected data were utilized for research purposes only, and no study participant's data were disclosed in any scientific publications or presentations. Statistical analyses were performed only on the aggregate sample level to prevent the identification of individual study participants. In addition, the participants were informed about their rights under the GDPR law, such as the right to access, rectify, delete, or limit the processing of their data, as well as the right to withdraw consent at any moment in the study.

By following legal and ethical mandates, this study guaranteed the protection of children's rights and the ethical treatment of personal data throughout the study.

#### 4. Results

**Table 3**  
*Absolute frequencies for the variable "Self-esteem"*

Self-esteem				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Average	30	62.5	62.5	62.5
ValidLow	18	37.5	37.5	100.0
Total	48	100.0	100.0	

Table 3 presents the absolute and percentage frequencies for the scores obtained by the 48 study participants regarding the variable Self-Esteem. Of these, 30 participants (62.5%) reported a medium level of self-esteem, while 18 participants (37.5%) reported a low level of self-esteem.

**Table 4**  
*Absolute frequencies for the variable "Procrastination"*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
High	42	87.5	87.5	87.5
ValidAverage	6	12.5	12.5	100.0
Total	48	100.0	100.0	

Table 4 shows the absolute and percentage frequencies for the scores related to the variable Procrastination. A total of 42 participants (87.5%) demonstrated a high level of procrastination, whereas 6 participants (12.5%) showed a moderate level. The distribution of results for the 48 participants regarding the variable FOMO (Fear of Missing Out), as shown in Table 6, is unimodal (mode = 29), with a mean of 22.23, a median of 22.5, and a standard deviation of 8.69. The range of scores spans from 0 to 48. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for the scale was calculated at 0.87, indicating good internal consistency. These values suggest a heightened fear

among participants of missing out on important events, experiences, or opportunities in the lives of others, or a belief that others are having more fulfilling or exciting experiences.

**Table 5**  
*Absolute frequencies for the variable "FOMO"*

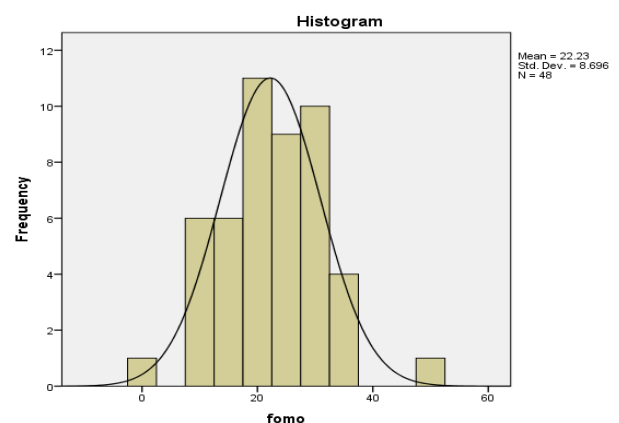
FOMOS		
N	Valid	48
	Missing	0
Mean		22.23
Std. Error of Mean		1.255
Median		22.50 <sup>a</sup>
Mode		29
Std. Deviation		8.696
Variance		75.627
Skewness		.114
Std. Error of Skewness		.343
Kurtosis		.749
Std. Error of Kurtosis		.674
Range		48
Minimum		0
Maximum		48
Sum		1067

a. Calculated from grouped data.

**Table 6**  
*Absolute frequencies for the variable "FOMO"*

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Medium	16	33.3	33.3
	High	21	43.8	77.1
	Low	11	22.9	100.0
	Total	48	100.0	100.0

**Figure 3**  
*Histogram for the variable "FOMO"*



Following the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, which yielded a value of 0.87, good internal consistency is observed. This value indicates a high level of fear of missing out on significant events, experiences, or opportunities in others' lives, as well as the perception that others are having more interesting or fulfilling experiences.

**Table 7**

*Absolute frequencies for the variable "Time spent on social networks"*

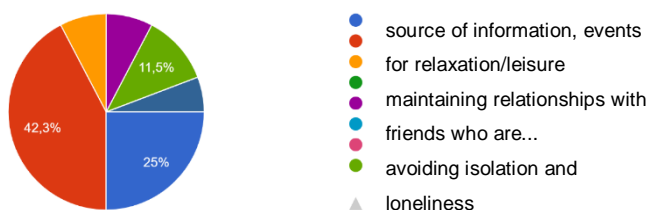
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1.00	6	12.5	12.5	12.5
2.00	6	12.5	12.5	25.0
3.00	10	20.8	20.8	45.8
4.00	8	16.7	16.7	62.5
Valid 5.00	8	16.7	16.7	79.2
6.00	7	14.6	14.6	93.8
7.00	3	6.3	6.3	100.0
Total	48	100.0	100.0	

According to the data presented in Table 7, the time participants spend on social media varies significantly. A quarter of the respondents (25%) reported spending between 1 and 2 hours per day on these platforms, while 20.8% indicated they spend around 3 hours daily. The largest group, representing 33.4%, spends between 4 and 5 hours on social media, and another 20% dedicate between 6 and 7 hours each day to these activities.

When asked about their primary reasons for using social media, 42.3% of participants stated they use it for relaxation and leisure. Another 25% reported using it as a source of news or to stay informed about events. A smaller proportion, 11.5%, indicated they use social media to communicate with friends and acquaintances and to maintain relationships. Additionally, some participants mentioned self-promotion as a reason for their engagement with these platforms.

**Figure 4**

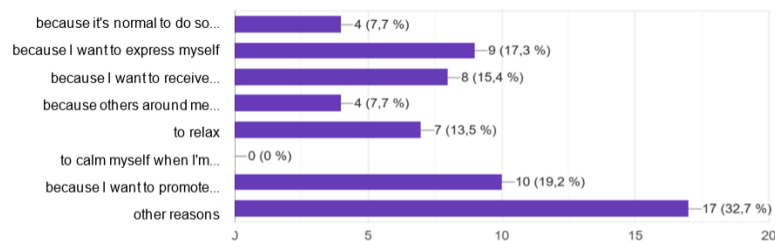
*Time spent on social media*



Regarding the motivations behind posting on social media, 17.3% of respondents said they do so to express themselves, while 15.4% seek feedback from others. Another 13.5% post content to calm themselves when feeling upset or stressed. A smaller group (7.7%) considers posting to be a normal activity because others do it. Meanwhile, 19.2% use social media to promote their activities, and 32.7% indicated other reasons without specifying them.

**Figure 5**

*Reason for posting on social media*

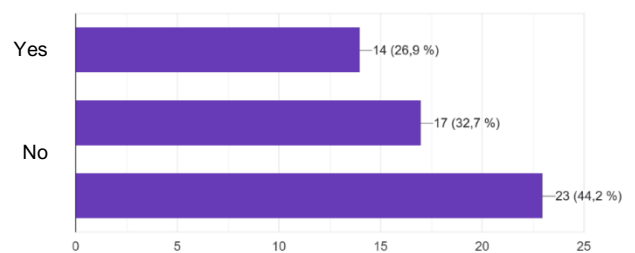


Finally, when asked whether they believe social media use is an indicator of how others perceive them, responses were mixed. A total of 26.9% agreed with this idea, 32.7% disagreed, and the largest group, 44.2%, reported being uncertain or not knowing.

When asked whether social media use reflects how others perceive them, 26.9% of the participants answered yes, 32.7% responded no, while the largest proportion, 44.2%, were uncertain or did not know.

**Figure 6**

*Social networks as an indicator of how you are perceived*



**Hypothesis Testing**

H.1 It is assumed that intensive use of social networks is associated with a lower perception of self-esteem.

In order to test the first hypothesis, it is found that it is confirmed, given that individuals who spend more time (over 5 hours) on social media have a lower level of self-esteem.

To test the first hypothesis, it is found that there is a correlation between time spent on social media and self-esteem, considering the correlation coefficient  $r =$

-0.50 (a negative correlation), and  $p = 0.00 < 0.05$ , thus the hypothesis is confirmed.

H2: If adolescents have a positive perception of self-esteem, they are less likely to use social media excessively or be negatively affected by the FOMO phenomenon.

This hypothesis is partially confirmed in the sense that those who spend less time on social media tend to have higher self-esteem.

However, when looking at the correlation results between self-esteem and the FOMO phenomenon, it is observed that the correlation coefficient  $r = -0.26$  (a negative correlation), and the significance level  $p = 0.71 > 0.05$ .

The obtained data leads us to reject the working hypothesis that there is a statistically significant correlation between self-esteem and the FOMO phenomenon.

Also, according to the obtained data, namely the correlation coefficient  $r = 0.22$  and the significance level  $p = 0.12 > 0.05$ , there is no statistically significant correlation between time spent on social media and the FOMO phenomenon.

H.3: It is assumed that adolescents who spend more time on social media experience a higher level of academic procrastination.

This hypothesis is confirmed, as the significance level is  $p = 0.00 < 0.05$ , indicating a direct relationship between time spent on social media and procrastination among the adolescents participating in the study.

H.4: If adolescents have a positive perception of self-esteem, then they experience a lower level of academic procrastination.

Looking at the correlation results between self-esteem and procrastination, the correlation coefficient  $r = -0.53$  (a negative correlation), and the significance level  $p = 0.72 > 0.05$ . The obtained data leads us to reject the working hypothesis that there is a statistically significant correlation between high self-esteem and low levels of procrastination.

Furthermore, it can be observed that procrastination among adolescents is not mediated by the FOMO phenomenon, given that the correlation coefficient  $r = 0.54$  and the significance level  $p = 0.71 > 0.05$ .

The data support the conclusion that there is no statistically significant correlation between procrastination and the FOMO phenomenon.

On the other hand, it is also noted that there is no statistically significant correlation between age and procrastination, as the correlation coefficient  $r = 0.12$  and the significance level  $p = 0.38 > 0.05$ .

## 5. Discussions

The results of this study provide a complex overview of the relationship between social media use, self-esteem, procrastination, and the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) phenomenon among adolescents. The statistical analysis reveals several relevant directions that deserve further investigation.

In terms of self-esteem, the majority of participants (62.5%) show a medium level, while 37.5% display a low level. No respondent reported a high level of self-esteem, which may reflect increased vulnerability among adolescents regarding self-image and self-assessment. This result aligns with the specialized literature, which emphasizes that adolescence is a critical stage in the development of identity and self-worth.

The level of procrastination is worryingly high: 87.5% of respondents struggle with elevated procrastination, indicating a significant tendency to delay tasks, possibly caused by factors such as distraction through social media or lack of motivation. These findings are supported by the statistically significant correlation between time spent on social media and procrastination ( $r = 0.50$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), confirming Hypothesis H3, which stated that high social media use is associated with higher levels of academic procrastination.

Regarding the FOMO phenomenon, the average score is 22.23, with a unimodal distribution and a standard deviation of 8.69. Approximately 44% of participants show a high level of FOMO. Although the internal consistency coefficient ( $\alpha = 0.87$ ) validates the instrument used, the results do not support Hypotheses H2 and H4. No significant correlation was found between self-esteem and FOMO ( $r = -0.26$ ;  $p = 0.071$ ), nor between procrastination and FOMO ( $r = 0.054$ ;  $p = 0.717$ ). This suggests that the perception of missing out or not belonging to relevant events is not directly determined by self-esteem or procrastination tendencies.

Another important finding is the confirmation of Hypothesis H1, which posited that more time spent

on social media is associated with lower self-esteem ( $r = -0.50$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). This result supports the theory that frequent social comparisons and passive content consumption can lead to a devaluing self-perception, contributing to a negative self-image. Thus, social media not only reflects but also shapes adolescents' self-esteem.

Surprisingly, no significant correlations were identified between FOMO and the time spent on social media ( $r = 0.225$ ;  $p = 0.124$ ), which may indicate a normalization of this phenomenon among adolescents, regardless of the duration of social media exposure. This normalization could reflect a tacit acceptance that social media constantly generates FOMO-type stimuli, becoming an integral part of daily life.

Regarding the motives for using social media, most respondents cited relaxation and leisure (42.3%) and promoting their activities (19.2%), while posting is mainly motivated by the desire for expression and feedback (32.7%). These behaviors suggest that social media is not only a space for entertainment but also a medium where adolescents seek validation, connection, and affirmation of identity.

Additionally, 44.2% of adolescents could not provide a clear answer regarding the influence of social media on how they are perceived by others. This ambivalence can be interpreted as uncertainty in managing their online self-image, reflecting the tension between personal identity and digital identity.

The results of this study partially confirm the proposed hypotheses, highlighting significant relationships between time spent on social media and both self-esteem and procrastination, but refuting direct connections with the FOMO phenomenon. These findings support the idea that excessive use of social media can negatively impact self-esteem and academic performance, while FOMO effects are more complex and likely influenced by additional factors such as attachment style, social skills, or emotional regulation. The study underscores the need for educational and psychological interventions aimed at helping adolescents develop a healthy relationship with digital technology and with themselves.

## 6. Conclusions

Specialists emphasize that online activity can provide valuable insights into an individual's well-being and self-esteem. Social media platforms, often characterized by a pervasive culture of comparison, expose users to carefully curated images and lifestyles that promote unrealistic and difficult-to-achieve

standards. In this context, users frequently compare their own lives with the idealized projections of others, which can lead to feelings of inadequacy, inferiority, worthlessness, or jealousy, ultimately harming self-esteem.

Constant exposure to such content reinforces insecurity and erodes self-confidence, particularly among adolescents. Among the negative effects associated with excessive social media use are: decreased self-esteem, fear of social exclusion (commonly referred to as FOMO – fear of missing out), disrupted sleep routines, and detachment from immediate reality. Furthermore, the continuous accessibility of social networks fosters a compulsive need to check platforms frequently, a behavior that can gradually lead to estrangement from the real world. The findings of this study support the hypothesis that intensive use of social media is negatively correlated with self-esteem among adolescents. Specifically, it was observed that teenagers who spend more than five hours per day online exhibit lower levels of self-esteem compared to those who use social platforms more moderately. Another significant finding highlighted by the research is the increased tendency toward procrastination among adolescents, manifested through the habitual postponement of difficult tasks in favor of more enjoyable or less demanding activities. This tendency often results in accumulated stress and diminished academic performance, as essential responsibilities are delayed until the last moment.

Although no statistically significant correlation was found between self-esteem and procrastination, this behavior appears to be influenced by additional factors such as anxiety, sleep disorders, chronic fatigue, lack of motivation, or fear of failure. Moreover, procrastination can be interpreted through its hedonistic dimension, where individuals opt for activities that offer immediate gratification, such as social media use or online gaming, which are common sources of this behavior among adolescents. It is also important to underscore the negative impact of procrastination on adolescents' personal development: poor academic results, high levels of stress during exam periods, delayed decision-making, and difficulties in maintaining interpersonal relationships. On an emotional level, procrastination can generate feelings of guilt, shame, and reduced self-confidence, which may gradually evolve into anxiety and depression. Another phenomenon explored in the study is the fear of missing out (FOMO) or the anxiety of being excluded from social events. While the data

did not indicate a mediating relationship between FOMO, procrastination, and self-esteem, high levels of FOMO among respondents revealed frequent feelings of restlessness, worry, confusion, and pressure to stay constantly connected with others, all of which may intensify social anxiety. In conclusion, it is important to redirect adolescents' attention toward self-authenticity and personal development rather than fostering an idealized virtual image. Put differently, "Who you are" should take precedence over "How you portray yourself to be."

### Authors note:

**Ramona Dună (Bratu)** is a university assistant at „Andrei Șaguna” University of Constanța. She is currently pursuing doctoral studies at „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași, within the Faculty of Sociology, with a dissertation focused on the urban lifestyle of adolescents under the influence of the trap subculture. An alumna of „Andrei Șaguna” University, Ramona holds a Bachelor's degree in Psychology and Philology and Master's degree in Modernism-Postmodernism and Educational Management.

**Bianca Ioana Garabet** is a university assistant at "Andrei Șaguna" University of Constanța, where she also serves as the Head of the Department of Counseling and Career Guidance (since 2023). She is currently pursuing doctoral studies at „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași, within the Faculty of Sociology, with a dissertation focused on social communication mediated by technology. An alumna of „Andrei Șaguna" University, Bianca holds a Bachelor's degree in Psychology and a Master's degree in Clinical Psychology. Additionally, she earned a prior degree in Economic Sciences, specializing in Management, with her research centred on emotional intelligence and communication in business.

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