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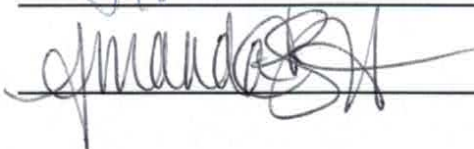
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**Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) and Personality: Their Relationship to Collegiate
Alcohol Abuse**

A Thesis

Presented to the Department of Psychology

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

and

The Honors Program

of

Butler University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for Graduation Honors

Kristen Danielle Webb

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Abstract

This study serves to examine the effects Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) and personality have on alcohol-related consequences in collegiate students. To investigate these relationships, a survey was distributed to Butler University students via their daily email listserv, and 101 students' responses were recorded. Using multiple regression analyses, no relationship was found between an individual's degree of experienced FoMO and alcohol related consequences; however, neuroticism was found to be strongly correlated with FoMO. Additionally, extroversion inversely predicted more alcohol-related consequences, and Greek affiliation was found to be a significant predictor of one's consequences as well.

Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) and Personality: Their Relationship to Alcohol Abuse
Consequences in College Students

There is a pervasive heavy drinking culture recorded in colleges and universities across the globe. According to a 2001 Harvard College study, two in five college students across 119 universities reported binge drinking (Wechsler et al., 2001). As a result of excessive alcohol consumption, students are more susceptible to experiencing negative alcohol-related consequences, such as lower academic grades, sexual assaults, and memory blackouts than students who abstain from binge drinking behaviors (White & Hingson, 2013). Many research studies have attempted to uncover students' motives for partaking in excessive drinking patterns and individual characteristics that predict drinking patterns; perceived social norms (Borsari & Carey, 2001), personality traits (Martsh & Miller, 1997), and individual levels of self-control (Morutwa & Plattner, 2014) have all been shown to contribute significantly to students' differing levels of consumption. Another recently introduced factor may influence students' drinking behaviors, a construct termed Fear of Missing Out (FoMO).

FoMO can be defined as persistent anxiety revolving around the idea that friends or others are partaking in rewarding experiences from which the individual is absent (Przybylski, Murayama, DeHaan, & Gladwell, 2013). Characteristically, individuals experiencing FoMO are driven to keep up with others and what they are doing, and this drive translates into their social behaviors. FoMO has only recently been examined in the context of collegiate alcohol consumption, but has gained most of its popularity in reference to social media use. Research studies have shown that students who experience higher levels of FoMO are less intrinsically motivated to learn, and are more likely to

engage in social media use in the classroom (Alt, 2015). FoMO predicts unhealthy relationships with social networking sites, and, its influence may span past the online domain.

FoMO has been found to play an important role in predicting consequences of collegiate alcohol consumption. In a recent study, it was found that FoMO significantly predicted an increased incidence of negative alcohol-related consequences, ranging in severity (i.e., “said embarrassing things” to “passed out”) (Riordan, Flett, Hunter, Scarf, & Conner, 2015). Although a link between individual differences in FoMO and alcohol-related consequences was established, mediators such as personality traits (i.e., extraversion) were not accounted for when considering this relationship.

Several studies have shown that some aspects of one’s personality, such as extraversion, anxiety, and anger, can predict a student’s drinking behaviors (Martsh & Miller, 1997). Narcissism has also been shown to correlate with alcohol use (Luhtanen & Crocker, 2005). This study serves to investigate the role personality traits, specifically neuroticism, play in the relationship between FoMO and negative alcohol-related consequences.

Hypothesis 1: Individuals scoring higher in neuroticism will experience higher levels of FoMO.

Hypothesis 2: Individuals who experience higher levels of FoMO will report higher numbers of negative alcohol-related consequences.

Hypothesis 3: Individuals scoring higher in neuroticism will report higher numbers of negative alcohol-related consequences.

Hypothesis 4: Individuals with high FoMO and high neuroticism will report the most negative alcohol related consequences.

Method

Participants

A sample of 101 Butler University students (81 female, 20 male, 0 other) participated in this study. A survey titled “Short Survey for Social Science” (Appendix 1.1-1.3) was sent out twice to all students of Butler University via email in their campus-wide email campaign called the *Butler Connection*. Participants completed the survey of their own free will and with no incentive. The sample contains participants in their first (21; 20.8%), sophomore (16; 15.8%), junior (27; 26.7%), senior (29; 28.7%) and graduate (8; 7.9%) years at Butler University. Additionally, 33% of the sample identified as being affiliated with Greek life (38 participants), while 52.2% of participants were non-Greek affiliated (60 participants). Three participants preferred not to disclose their Greek affiliation.

Measures

Fear of Missing Out Scale (FoMOs; Appendix 1.1) The FoMOs is a 10-item scale that measures one’s level of anxiety revolving around the idea that friends or others are partaking in rewarding experiences from which they are absent (e.g., “I get worried when I find out my friends are having fun without me”; “I get anxious when I don’t know what my friends are up to”). Items were scored on a scale from 1 (“Not at all true of me”) to 5 (“Extremely true of me”) (Przybylski, Murayama, DeHaan, & Gladwell, 2013). In the current sample, the FoMOs demonstrated strong reliability (Cronbach’s alpha = .858).

Young Adult Alcohol Consequences Questionnaire – Brief version (B-YAACQ;

Appendix 1.2) The YAACQ measures the number of alcohol-related consequences an individual experienced in the past year. The YAACQ is comprised of 48 items that vary in severity of alcohol-related consequences (e.g., “While drinking, I have said or done embarrassing things”; “I have passed out from drinking”). For each consequence, participants were asked to report if they had this experience in the past year (yes = 1; no = 0). Participants’ responses were summed to obtain a final score of consequences ranging from 0 to 48 (Kahler, Strong, & Read, 2005). In the current sample, the YAACQ demonstrated strong reliability (Cronbach’s alpha = .926).

Big Five Inventory (BFI; Appendix 1.3) The BFI is a 54-item, self-report survey that measures individuals’ degrees of the “Big Five” personality factors: extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness. Participants are asked questions about how they perceive themselves (e.g., “I see myself as someone who is talkative”) and respond on a scale from 1 (“Disagree Strongly”) to 5 (“Agree Strongly”). Each personality factor is scored separately based on the items intended to measure that specific trait.

Procedure

The survey used in this study was built online through *Qualtrics*. The survey link was distributed via the daily, campus-wide email called the *Butler Connection* and sent to all Butler University students included in the university’s listserv. The participating students’ responses were collected and organized online through the *Qualtrics* website and exported for analysis in *SPSS*. Participants were informed that their involvement in this study was completely voluntary and anonymous and that the survey would require

five to 15 minutes of their time. Finally, participants were asked to answer the survey items truthfully and as accurately as possible.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

To determine whether demographic or personality characteristics related significantly to the variables of interest (FoMO and alcohol related consequences), a series of one-way ANOVAs were conducted and showed a large, significant difference in the number of alcohol-related consequences experienced by Greek ($M = 10.11$, $SD = 7.94$) versus non-Greek ($M = 5.18$, $SD = 6.70$) participants, $F(2, 95) = 5.997$, $p = .004$. No other demographic variable was found to affect FoMO or number of alcohol-related consequences.

A correlation matrix was created to determine which variables and relationships warranted further investigation. Of note, the number of social media accounts a participant reported having was found to be positively correlated [$r(100) = .227$, $p = .029$] with the number of alcohol-related consequences one experiences. Extroversion was found to be inversely related to alcohol-related consequences, $r(100) = -.232$, $p = .020$. A strong relationship between neuroticism and FoMO was also discovered, $r(100) = .452$, $p = .000$, $r^2 = .204$. No other significant relationships emerged.

Main Analyses

After revealing different relationships and potential covariates above, regression was used to investigate the main hypotheses. Hierarchical regression was used to investigate whether FoMO uniquely explained additional variance in alcohol-related consequences beyond that of extroversion, neuroticism, and Greek affiliation as

covariates. The first model (extroversion, neuroticism, and Greek affiliation) was found to be a significant set of predictors for alcohol-related consequences [adjusted $R^2=.059$, $F(3, 91) = 2.957$, $p = .037$], however, when FoMO was added into the model, the overall adjusted R^2 decreased (.049), an obviously non-significant change ($p = .781$).

Discussion

The purpose of the study was to examine the role that FoMO plays in collegiate alcohol consumption and whether personality traits and experienced FoMO impact the number of alcohol-related consequences one experiences. It was hypothesized that more neurotic personalities would experience more FoMO, that both higher degrees of experienced FoMO and neuroticism would correlate with a greater number of experienced alcohol-related consequences, and that individuals with the highest degrees of FoMO and neuroticism would experience the most consequences from alcohol consumption. From reviewing the output, it can be concluded that Hypothesis 1 of this study was confirmed, whereas Hypotheses 2, 3, and 4 were disconfirmed. The first hypothesis, individuals scoring higher in neuroticism will experience higher levels of FoMO, was supported by the data collected. The relationship between neuroticism and FoMO was found to be very large; an r^2 value of .204 shows that 20.4% of the variance observed in one's degree of FoMO can be attributed to the neurotic personality characteristic. Therefore, a more neurotic personality, characterized by more negative affect and anxiety, is likely to predict a higher degree of FoMO. As the FoMO construct also incorporates anxiety as it relates to missing out on rewarding experiences, this tie between neuroticism and FoMO is logical because this personality type is already more anxiety-prone (Judge, Higgins, Thoresen, & Barrick, 1999).

The second hypothesis of this study, that higher levels of FoMO would predict higher numbers of negative alcohol-related consequences, was not supported. No relationship was found between these two constructs in the correlation matrix, nor in the hierarchical regression analysis. After controlling for neuroticism, extroversion, and Greek affiliation (which accounted for about 6% of the variance in alcohol-related consequences), adding FoMO to the equation actually *decreased* the proportion of variance explained to about 5%. This shows that FoMO does not predict any unique differences in alcohol-related consequences that the former set of three predictors explains. Thus, FoMO and alcohol-related *consequences* are seemingly unrelated constructs, however, there is no evidence that FoMO and amount of alcohol *consumption* are not linked. This is an important distinction that should be investigated in future research, as this study found that FoMO does not predict *consequence* frequency, but there is no evidence it does not predict *consumption* frequency or social event *attendance* frequency in college students.

Next, hypothesis 3 was not supported; individuals scoring higher in neuroticism did not report higher numbers of negative alcohol-related consequences. A different personality trait, however, was found to be significantly correlated with increased consequences as they pertain to alcohol consumption. Extroversion and alcohol-related consequences share a significant, negative relationship, meaning that the lower one scores on extroversion (more on the introversion side of the spectrum), the more alcohol-related consequences they were likely to experience ($r=-.232, p=.020$). This finding suggests that those who are more introverted likely reported experiencing more alcohol-related consequences. Prior research has shown conflicting results regarding the role of

extroversion on alcohol consumption. LoCastro et al. (2000), for example, found that extroversion is a complex construct—that both positive (high extroversion) and negative (introversion) poles experience negative alcohol-related outcomes. The underlying motives, however, are what differ: one motive of extroverts was social drinking contexts, whereas introverts were more motivated by the social enhancement properties of alcohol. While prior research demonstrates a complex relationship between extroversion and alcohol consumption, the present study discovered a stronger link in alcohol consequences in introverts than extroverts, but did not measure overall alcohol consumption.

Finally, Hypothesis 4, that individuals with high FoMO and high neuroticism would report the most negative alcohol-related consequences, was not found to be true. There was no relationship detected between FoMO, neuroticism, and the number of alcohol-related consequences. Again, this could be because this study examined the wrong construct in terms of alcohol consumption behaviors; anxiety due to missing out on a rewarding experience does not seem to predict consequences of alcohol use, but FoMO may relate to drinking patterns or behaviors. Additionally, neuroticism did not share a relationship with alcohol consequences, but no research was conducted to see if it relates to drinking frequency in general. Both of these anxiety-laden constructs may be related to different measures of alcohol abuse.

Whereas the original hypothesis, that FoMO would be related to alcohol consequence patterns in college students, was not supported by the findings, another significant relationship was found. Students' Greek affiliation significantly predicted the amount of alcohol-related consequences they experienced. Specifically, Greek

membership was highly predictive of experiencing more alcohol-related consequences, compared to non-Greek students. In addition to predicting alcohol related consequences, prior studies have found that Greek affiliated students average having more drinks per week (quantity) as well as engaging in binge drinking behaviors more often (Cashin, Presley, & Meilman, 1998). Supporting these findings, Lo and Globetti (1995) found that Greek affiliation both facilitates and enhances alcohol use in collegiate students, with possible explanations being reference group and subgroup support of heavier alcohol use behaviors. These findings are important as well, because educating students regarding this risk factor may lessen the impact that Greek affiliation has on their experienced alcohol-related consequences.

Limitations

This study was, firstly, limited in terms of its sample being representative of the Butler University student body. Although the survey was open to every student for participation, the survey relied on students to check and read their email on specific days. This may have resulted in an unintentional exclusion of Butler University students who do not check their email on a regular basis or read the university's daily campus-wide email. This factor may have also contributed to the study's overall small sample size.

Secondly, the population from which the participants were sampled (Butler University's student body) is skewed female. Butler University's student body is comprised of 40% males and 60% females, and consequently, the sample recruited for this study is more female than male (Butler University, 2016). So although it is reasonable that there were more female than male participants in this study given the

population from which it was drawn, this may hinder the ability to generalize the results to other populations.

Additionally, this study relied on the honesty and accuracy of its participants. The subject matter of the survey could have caused some discomfort and some items may have been less reliably answered than others because of a participant's desire to provide a socially acceptable/responsible answer. For example, the YAACQ Questionnaire inquired about consequences such as "feeling ashamed" or "neglecting obligations" because of one's drinking behaviors, which participants may have been motivated to answer untruthfully because of one's desire to provide an "acceptable" response. However, precautions were taken to mitigate these possible demand characteristics: participants were warned in the informed consent text that some items may be slightly uncomfortable to answer, and they were told all survey responses would be kept anonymous and confidential.

Future Research

Although no relationship between FoMO and alcohol related consequences was found in this study, future research can be conducted to further investigate these constructs. For example, perhaps FoMO does not share a relationship with increased consequences from alcohol consumption, but research should be conducted to see if it is related to an increased intake of alcohol in general. Although similar, there is a distinction between these dependent variables, and research of this nature could reveal an important relationship between FoMO and alcohol use in college students. FoMO could be an underlying motive for college students in terms of partaking in alcohol

consumption contexts or activities (i.e., parties/drinking games) rather than a factor in experiencing consequences from drinking.

Additionally, examining a construct similar to FoMO and alcohol-related consequences could be beneficial. Specifically, looking at one's sense of belonging to their college campus and their resulting alcohol consumption behaviors or alcohol-related consequences could reveal important findings in this domain of research. Ultimately, future research should continue to focus on different underlying motivations of college-aged students for partaking in binge drinking behaviors.

Implications

The results of this study imply a couple different things. Firstly, varying levels of FoMO seemingly does not affect collegiate alcohol consequences. Secondly, personality factors can predict patterns of alcohol use. For example, extroversion was found to be inversely related to alcohol related consequences, therefore implying that introverted personalities may be more susceptible to more alcohol consequences. Thirdly, being a member of a Greek group is also predictive of more alcohol-related consequences. All of these things combined show that there is a complex relationship between personality traits and other environmental factors that contribute to one's alcohol use behaviors and negative consequences, but by all indications, FoMO is not one of them.

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Appendix

Appendix 1.1: FoMO

Below is a collection of statements about your everyday experience. Using the scale provided, please indicate how true each statement is of your general experiences. Please answer according to what really reflects your experiences rather than what you think your experiences should be. Please treat each item separately from every other item.

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all True of Me	Slightly True of Me	Moderately True of Me	Very True of Me	Extremely True of Me

1. I fear others have more rewarding experiences than me.
2. I fear my friends have more rewarding experiences than me.
3. I get worried when I find out my friends are having fun without me.
4. I get anxious when I don't know what my friends are up to.
5. It is important that I understand my friends "inside jokes".
6. Sometimes, I wonder if I spend too much time keeping up with what is going on.
7. It bothers me when I miss an opportunity to meet up with friends.
8. When I have a good time it is important for me to share the details online (e.g. updating my status, posting a picture on social media).
9. When I miss out on a planned get-together it bothers me.
10. When I go on vacation, I continue to keep tabs on what my friends are doing.

Appendix 1.2: B-YAACQ

Below is a list of things that sometimes happen to people either during, or after they have been drinking alcohol. For each item below, please select YES or NO to indicate whether that item describes something that has happened to you **IN THE PAST YEAR.**

1. While drinking, I have said or done embarrassing things.
2. The quality of my work or schoolwork has suffered because of my drinking.
3. I have felt badly about myself because of my drinking.
4. I have driven a car when I knew I had too much to drink to drive safely.
5. I have had a hangover (headache, sick stomach) the morning after I had been drinking.
6. I have passed out from drinking.
7. I have taken foolish risks when I have been drinking.
8. I have felt very sick to my stomach or thrown up after drinking.
9. I have gotten into trouble at work or school because of drinking.
10. I often drank more than I originally had planned.
11. My drinking has created problems between myself and my boyfriend/girlfriend/spouse, parents, or other near relatives.
12. I have been unhappy because of my drinking.
13. I have gotten into physical fights because of drinking.
14. I have spent too much time drinking.
15. I have not gone to work or missed classes at school because of drinking, a hangover, or illness caused by drinking.
16. I have felt like I needed a drink after I'd gotten up (that is, before breakfast).
17. I have become very rude, obnoxious or insulting after drinking.
18. I have felt guilty about my drinking.
19. I have damaged property, or done something disruptive such as setting off a false fire alarm, or other things like that after I had been drinking.
20. Because of my drinking, I have not eaten properly.
21. I have been less physically active because of drinking.
22. I have had "the shakes" after stopping or cutting down on drinking (eg., hands shake so that coffee cup rattles in the saucer or have trouble lighting a cigarette).
23. My boyfriend/girlfriend/spouse/parents have complained to me about my drinking.
24. I have woken up in an unexpected place after heavy drinking.

25. I have found that I needed larger amounts of alcohol to feel any effect, or that I could no longer get high or drunk on the amount that used to get me high or drunk.
26. As a result of drinking, I neglected to protect myself or my partner from a sexually transmitted disease (STD) or an unwanted pregnancy.
27. I have neglected my obligations to family, work, or school because of drinking.
28. I often have ended up drinking on nights when I had planned not to drink.
29. When drinking, I have done impulsive things that I regretted later.
30. I have often found it difficult to limit how much I drink.
31. My drinking has gotten me into sexual situations I later regretted.
32. I've not been able to remember large stretches of time while drinking heavily.
33. While drinking, I have said harsh or cruel things to someone.
34. Because of my drinking I have not slept properly.
35. My physical appearance has been harmed by my drinking.
36. I have said things while drinking that I later regretted.
37. I have awakened the day after drinking and found that I could not remember a part of the evening before.
38. I have been overweight because of drinking.
39. I haven't been as sharp mentally because of my drinking.
40. I have received a lower grade on an exam or paper than I ordinarily could have because of my drinking.
41. I have tried to quit drinking because I thought I was drinking too much.
42. I have felt anxious, agitated, or restless after stopping or cutting down on drinking.
43. I have not had as much time to pursue activities or recreation because of drinking.
44. I have injured someone else while drinking or intoxicated.
45. I often have thought about needing to cut down or stop drinking.
46. I have had less energy or felt tired because of my drinking.
47. I have had a blackout after drinking heavily (i.e., could not remember hours at a time).
48. Drinking has made me feel depressed or sad.

Appendix 1.3: BFI

	1	2	3	4	5
	Disagree Strongly	Disagree a Little	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree a Little	Agree Strongly
I see myself as someone who.....					
_____ 1. is talkative					
_____ 2. tends to find fault with others					
_____ 3. does a thorough job					
_____ 4. has a wide range of interests					
_____ 5. is depressed, blue					
_____ 6. is original, comes up with new ideas					
_____ 7. is reserved					
_____ 8. is helpful and unselfish with others					
_____ 9. prefers the conventional, traditional					
_____ 10. can be somewhat careless					
_____ 11. is relaxed, handles stress well					
_____ 12. is curious about many different things					
_____ 13. is full of energy					
_____ 14. prefers work that is routine and simple.					
_____ 15. starts quarrels with others					
_____ 16. is a reliable worker					
_____ 17. can be tense					
_____ 18. is clever, sharp-witted					
_____ 19. tends to be quiet					
_____ 20. values artistic, aesthetic experiences					
_____ 21. tends to be disorganized					
_____ 22. is emotionally stable, not easily upset					
_____ 23. has an active imagination					
_____ 24. perseveres until the task is finished					
_____ 25. is sometimes rude to others					
_____ 26. has unwavering self-confidence					
_____ 27. is inventive					
_____ 28. is generally trusting					
_____ 29. tends to be lazy					
_____ 30. is clear-thinking, intelligent					
_____ 31. worries a lot					
_____ 32. wants things to be simple and clear-cut					
_____ 33. is sometimes shy, inhibited					
_____ 34. has a forgiving nature					
_____ 35. is idealistic, can be a dreamer					
_____ 36. does things efficiently					
_____ 37. can be moody					
_____ 38. is ingenious, a deep thinker					
_____ 39. generates a lot of enthusiasm					
_____ 40. can be cold and aloof					
_____ 41. enjoys thinking about complicated problems					
_____ 42. makes plans and follows through with them					
_____ 43. remains calm in tense situations					
_____ 44. likes to reflect, play with ideas					
_____ 45. is considerate and kind to almost everyone					
_____ 46. seeks adventure and excitement					
_____ 47. gets nervous easily					
_____ 48. is sophisticated in art, music, or literature					
_____ 49. has an assertive personality					
_____ 50. is insightful, sees different possibilities					
_____ 51. likes to cooperate with others					
_____ 52. is easily distracted					
_____ 53. is outgoing, sociable					
_____ 54. has few artistic interests					