

## THE IMPACT OF FOMO, SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT, AND SELF-ESTEEM ON DECISION-MAKING STYLES OF YOUNG ADULTS

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### **Abstract**

*The expanding popularity of social media had a substantial effect on the psychological and behavioral qualities of young adults. This study reported the relation between the decision-making styles, social media use, self-esteem, and FOMO in young people, and the predictive interrelationship among these variables. Standardized questionnaires evaluating FOMO, social media use, self-esteem, and decision-making styles, including rational, intuitive, dependent, avoidant, and spontaneous, were completed by 150 participants of educational institutions. All scales used in this study demonstrated acceptable reliability (Cronbach's  $\alpha > .70$ ). Multiple regression and Pearson correlation were used to examine the hypotheses. The outcomes indicated that while FOMO positively impacted social media involvement, social media participation positively predicted self-esteem. Self-esteem was a strong predictor of rational and intuitive, a moderate predictor of dependent, and a negative predictor of avoidant and spontaneous styles of decision making. Rational, intuitive, and dependent styles of decision-making appeared to be most strongly predicted by self-esteem; avoidant decision-making was best determined by social media use; and FOMO best identified spontaneous decision-making. These findings identified the importance of self-esteem in adaptive decision-making styles and also the impacts of FOMO and social media engagement on behavioral and cognitive patterns of young adults. By integrating a unique combination of variables, this study provides a framework that can inform future research on the development of targeted mental health interventions aimed at enhancing self-esteem and informed decision-making among young people.*

**Keywords:** *Fear of missing out, social media engagement, decision-making style, self-esteem, young adults*

### **Introduction**

In this age of constant digital connectivity Younger generations today are continually connected via social media. Young adults spend a significant amount of their daily time interacting with other users through posting, commenting, and comparing themselves to other social media users. On average, young adults spend approximately 3-4 hours each day using a variety of social network platforms (DataReportal, 2024; Statista, 2023). The stage of young adulthood is a very important time in a person's development and it is marked by many different things as it is often confused with when a person will begin to find their own identity, to feel more emotional about specific issues, and to face a lot of different people for the first time in their lives and compare themselves to all the people they meet or see on TV or the internet, i.e., social media. Also, during the stage of young adulthood, people are often faced with many different transition points in their lives, such as the education they pursue, what kind of job they will have, who they will spend time with, and the lifestyle they will choose. The internet complicates this transition time for the

individuals in that it offers an unlimited amount of resources for information and choices, and thus, a possible source of confusion and indecision, i.e., "choice overload" as stated by Schwartz (2004).

Social media may offer quick access to information and provide a platform to develop a sense of belonging; however, it has also been shown in recent studies that repeated usage of social media can result in increased levels of stress and may impact decision-making. As such, social media has become one of the most important components that influence the way we think, act, and make decisions. Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) is a psychological consequence that many associate with excessive usage of social media. FOMO points to a chronic fear that others are enjoying experiences from which you are not included (Przybylski et al., 2013). By being continually exposed to carefully prepared online information, social comparison increases; therefore, the perception of peer pressure increases, and the feeling of needing to stay connected at all times is greatly enhanced. Over the years, FOMO was initially thought to be an experience of a particular situation; however, it has become a habitual pattern that is focused on the digital social networks of young adults who are heavily reliant on technology for creating a sense of belonging and gaining self-worth (Alt, 2018).

There is a link between people who have a fear of missing out and anxiety, overuse of social media, low self-esteem, and increased social comparison (Baker et al 2016; Buglass et al 2017). High levels of FOMO bring on feelings of urgency and fear of being excluded from things, thereby impairing the person's ability to think rationally, thus prompting the person to rely more on choices that are emotionally charged and/or provide social rewards (Milyavskaya et al 2018). The result of this is an association between FOMO and impulsivity, low mindfulness, and maladaptive decision-making (Elhai et al 2018). Young adults, who are in a time of cognitive development and establishing their self-concept, exhibit the greatest degree of impairment due to FOMO.

Self-esteem is another important psychological factor that affects decision-making; self-esteem is the individual's overall evaluation of their personal value, confidence, and capability. During the developmental stage of early adulthood, self-esteem is an underpinning factor that influences how young adults view online experiences, cope with peer pressure, and assess various options available to them. Self-esteem directly influences the decision-making of young adults, making it a primary determinant as well as a moderating element. High levels of self-esteem result in youth being more independent, self-assured, and clear in how they make decisions, while low levels of self-esteem result in youth being subject to validation from others, comparison to peers, and indecisiveness. (Baumeister et al., 2003; Orth & Robins, 2014)

The way that people use social media affects how they make decisions, as younger people tend to be more spontaneous when responding to what they see on the Internet (52%) or to requests from friends on the Internet (44%). Both of these types of decision-making are very common for young adults who are highly engaged with social media. Conversely, the way that people use social media moderately may allow for a rational (48%) and intuitive (36%) decision-making style. Social media engagement affects people's decision-making styles based on their emotional, cognitive, and social factors. Studies show that three factors contribute to young adults' decision-making styles, such as FOMO, social media engagement, and Self-esteem. People with elevated levels of FOMO, high levels of social media engagement, and low levels of self-esteem were 2.5 times more likely to exhibit avoidant or dependent decision-making compared to peers with lower levels of FOMO and higher levels of self-esteem, according to Rozgonjuk et al. (2021). People with low FOMO,

moderate social media engagement, and high self-esteem were mostly adopt rational (60%) or intuitive (50%) styles of decision-making.

The way people make decisions can help us understand how they tend to think about options; Scott & Bruce (1995) suggest there are five different styles of making decisions: rational (systematic evaluation of alternatives), intuitive (gut feeling), dependent (based on others), avoidant (procrastinating), and spontaneous (impulsive & unplanned). Research has shown that how consumers are affected by their fear of missing out (FOMO), use of Social Media, and level of self-esteem create emotional reactions, cognitive pitfalls & social perceptions. Past research has only examined the influence of these influences on FOMO, for example, one or two styles, e.g., impulsive and avoidant, and little research has been undertaken looking at how these types of influences shape consumers' total pattern of decision-making. Most prior research has focused on single variables, not how psychological & digital elements work together to shape one entire pattern of choices. These three factors and their combined impacts on the five decision-making styles, rational, intuitive, reliant, avoidant, and spontaneous, were investigated in the current study.

#### **Statement of the problem**

Social media greatly affects the cognition, emotions, and behavior of young adults. Although it improves communication and social connectivity, it also brings about psychological issues, which are fear of missing out (FOMO) and overuse of social media. FOMO is linked to impulsive, dependent, and avoidant decision-making styles, but high involvement in social media could result in cognitive overload and stress, which affect rational and intuitive decision-making. Self-esteem also influences decision-making as higher self-esteem results into rational and intuitive style and lower self-esteem results in a dependent, avoidant, and spontaneous style (Kuster et al., 2013; Orth and Robins, 2014). These variables have been investigated separately, but not much has been done on how these variables interact. There is a definite disorder in the comprehension of the interaction of FOMO, social media use, and self-esteem. This paper fills this gap through research on their combined effect on the decision-making styles of young adults.

#### **Research Objectives**

1. To determine the relationship between FOMO and Social media engagement among young adults.
2. To assess the linkage between Social media engagement and Self-esteem among young adults.
3. To assess the relation between Self-esteem and rational, dependent, avoidant, and spontaneous styles of decision-making among young adults.
4. To access the combined effect of FOMO, Social media engagement, and Self-esteem on different decision-making styles.
5. To identify which of the predictors (FOMO, Social media engagement, and self-esteem) is the strongest predictor for each decision-making style among young adults.

#### **Research Questions**

1. What is the connection between fear of missing out and social media engagement among young adults?
2. What is the correlation between social media engagement and self-esteem among young adults?
3. What is the relationship between self-esteem and styles of decision-making (rational, dependent, avoidant, and spontaneous) among young adults?

4. To what extent do fear of missing out (FOMO), Social media engagement, and Self-esteem jointly predict decision-making styles among young adults?
5. Which of the following, FOMO, social media engagement, and self-esteem, emerges as the strongest predictor of each decision-making style among young adults?

### Literature Review

The social, emotional, and cognitive lives of young adult individuals have changed radically with the boom of social media. The unlimited access to social information, communication with peers, and real-time information delivered by online resources affect the attitudes and behaviors of people, making them more dependent on these groups and influencing their decision-making (Vogel et al., 2014). Arnett (2015) notes that young adulthood is a critical phase of development that is characterized by identity formation, a heightened level of independence, and the abundance of requests to make choices related to relationships, education, careers, and lifestyle decisions. Psychological variables, such as self-esteem, social media use, and FOMO, in this respect, have become valuable predictors of behavioral and cognitive outcomes. Garg (2020) studied the relationship between self-esteem, FOMO, and addiction to social networks in a sample comprising 60 individuals aged 18 to 25. The study shows that social networking addiction and FOMO have a strong positive relationship, such that individuals with high FOMO tend to distort their use of social media. Self-esteem and the use of social media have a strong influence on the social phenomenon called FOMO. Zunic (2017) explored the ways that social media use and self-esteem of college students influence FOMO and the related behaviors. The study has also found that students with excessive use of social media have the greatest potential to develop FOMO since they continuously watch what their peers are doing and how they experience life.

Scott and Bruce (1995) state that decision-making styles are common patterns that individuals adopt whenever making decisions and dealing with ambiguity. Empirical studies constantly relate FOMO to a state of emotional distress, anxiety, sadness, and reduced well-being (Elhai et al., 2018; Przybylski et al., 2013). Dempsey et al. (2019) state that individuals with high FOMO tend to keep comparing and tracking other people, which increases cognitive load and emotional responsiveness. This can be an elevated emotional condition that can impede deliberate thinking and reduce the ability to evaluate options rationally. From the perspective of the decision-making process, FOMO has been associated with impulsivity and decision patterns that involve regret (Hayran et al., 2020). The studies show that FOMO undermines independent decision-making by making people more dependent on external prompts, such as online trends and the behavior of peers (Alt, 2015).

The systematic analysis can be discouraged in favor of heuristic processing due to constant exposure to social feedback, notifications, and peer assessments (Wilmer et al., 2017). Research has shown that individuals with low self-esteem are more susceptible to societal influence during decision-making since they are more sensitive to social evaluation and external influence (Leary et al., 1995). Moreover, there is a negative relationship between FOMO and problematic social media use and self-esteem (Buglass et al., 2017). To comprehend how the external factors, such as social media usage, FOMO, and even self-esteem, can have even greater effects on the decision-making behavior, one needs to be aware of these personality decision-making correlations (Riaz, Raza, and Batool, 2012). It has been found that emotional distress, uncertainty, and social influence significantly affect the decision-making styles (Janis and Mann, 1977). Young adults are especially

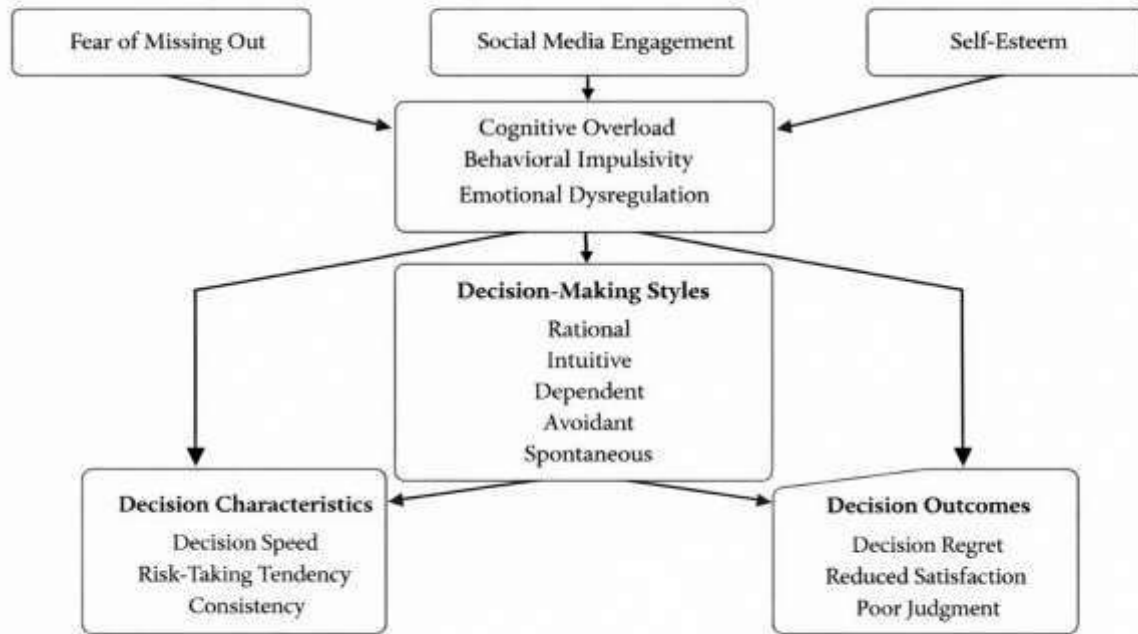
prone to face decisional conflict because of changes in development and increased exposure to peer norms (Arnett, 2015).

Dempsey et al. (2019) found that FOMO had a positive correlation with compulsive checking behaviors, which revealed that there was less patience and more impulsive decision-making. These findings suggest that FOMO makes the individual feel the pressure to do something, thus disrupting the process of rationality. Mari, Mandelli, and Algesheimer (2024) state that FOMO directly and indirectly affects decision-making by influencing the inflated expected consequences, leading to a change in the decision-making styles to become more intuitive, reliant, and spontaneous. Social media campaign exposure is reported to alter the significant impacts of intuitive and rational decision-making approaches on the voting propensity of Generation Z students (Rhesa, Setialaksana, Basirung, Supardi, and Umar, 2025). Baiocco et al. (2009) argue that high social media users among young adults can be overwhelmed by the excessive number of choices and social demands and expectations, and become more avoidant in the decision-making process. Deniz (2004) had recorded a significant correlation between decision-making self-esteem and a series of decision-making behaviors, including procrastination, hypervigilance, vigilance, and buck-passing.

Przybylski et al. (2013) and Wilmer et al. (2017) claim that the literature gap exists because the past studies have not adequately examined the impact of these combined predictors on all five decision-making styles (RDMS, IDMS, DDMS, ADMS, and SDMS). The present research will try to fill these gaps by investigating the direct effects of FOMO, social media use, and self-esteem on general decision-making styles among young adults. The study enhances cultural generalizability, as well as provides information that is relevant to contemporary digital and social contexts, because it focuses on a non-Western population. Self-esteem also contributes to the study, besides FOMO and social media use, to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the behavioral and psychological factors that affect the decision-making process among young people in electronic settings.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The contemporary framework is based on several different psychological theories that explore how self-esteem, Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), and social media engagement can affect the decision-making styles of young adults. Self-Determination Theory reported that when individuals fail to satisfy their requirement for relatedness and belonging, this will lead to increased emotional distress, which eventually leads to the surge of FOMO through compensatory social media usage (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Social Comparison Theory stresses how self-evaluative concerns are heightened by exposure to idealized portrayals of others on social media, particularly for people with low self-esteem (Festinger, 1954). These emotional demands interfere with effective emotion regulation (Gross, 1998) and cognitive overload from excessive information exposure (Sweller, 1988), thereby disrupting systematic evaluations of choices. The Dual-Process Theory posits that, as a result of emotional and cognitive disruptions, a person's decision will shift from a more reflective process to an automatic process, thereby making use of more intuitive, dependent, avoidant, and spontaneous decision-making styles rather than rational styles (Kahneman, 2011; Scott & Bruce, 1995).



**Figure 1. Conceptual Model**

**Hypothesis**

**H1.** Higher levels of the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) are positively linked with increased social media engagement among young adults.

**H2.** There is a relation between social media engagement and self-esteem among young adults.

**H3.** Higher Self-Esteem is associated with rational decision-making, whereas lower Self-Esteem is associated with dependent, avoidant, and spontaneous decision-making among young adults.

**H4.** FOMO, Social Media Engagement, and Self-Esteem jointly and significantly predict rational, intuitive, avoidant, dependent, and spontaneous decision-making styles among young adults.

**H5.** Among FOMO, Social Media Engagement, and Self-Esteem, at least one will emerge as the strongest significant predictor of each decision-making style among young adults.

**Method**

**Research Design**

The present study used a quantitative correlational research design to identify the connections between decision-making styles of young adults, self-esteem, usage of social media, and FOMO to ensure the direction and strength of the relationships between different decision-making styles and psychological variables. The study employed a one-time observational technique.

**Population**

The study was conducted on Pakistani young adults aged between the age of 18 and 30 who regularly consume social media from different educational institutes and centers. The targeted population includes only physically and mentally healthy individuals.

### Sample

A purposive and convenience sampling technique was employed to recruit a total of 150 participants from universities, social media groups, and community centers in Pakistan. The sample included an equal proportion of males and females (50% each) who met the study's criteria.

### Inclusion criteria

1. Subjects included were;
2. Ranging between 18 and 30 years of age.
3. Regular users of social media platforms.
4. Resided in Pakistan.
5. Agreed via informed consent.

### Exclusion Criteria

Participants were excluded if they:

1. Did not actively use social media.
2. Fell outside the 18–30 age range.
3. Had any condition that prevented them from completing the survey independently.

### Instruments

#### 1-Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES; Rosenberg, 1965)

The RSES is a 10-item scale assessing global self-worth on a Likert-type scale. Higher scores indicate higher self-esteem.

#### 2-Fear of Missing Out Scale (FOMO; Przybylski et al., 2013)

The FOMO Scale measures anxiety about missing rewarding social experiences. Higher scores reflect greater levels of FOMO.

#### 3-General Decision-Making Style Scale (GDMS; Scott & Bruce, 1995)

The GDMS assesses five decision-making styles: rational, intuitive, dependent, avoidant, and spontaneous. Higher segment scores identify the stronger dependence on each style.

#### 4-Social Media Engagement Questionnaire (SMEQ; Alt, 2015)

The SMEQ accesses the frequency and intensity of usage of social media. Higher scores determine a greater association with the social media platforms.

### Procedure

All the participants were informed of the goals, methods, and purpose of the study before their participation. All the participants have given written informed consent to ensure compliance with the ethical standards and voluntary participation. Participation was assured of privacy and anonymity of their responses, and that the participants would be free to exit the study at any time without any consequences. Data were collected through a combination of both offline and online methods. Paper-based surveys were used in cases where online participation was not possible. The online survey was done through Google Forms, in which the participants were able to fill out the questionnaires at their own convenience. All participants took around 20 to 25 minutes to complete the General Decision-Making Style Scale, the Fear of Missing Out Scale, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, and the Social Media Engagement Scale. The reverse-scored items of the Self-Esteem Scale were already coded in reverse into the Google Form before the data collection to ensure a high level of scoring accuracy. After the collection of the data, all the responses were pooled together and saved in SPSS format to be used later in interpreting the results and statistical analysis.

### Ethical Considerations

The research was performed in compliance with the set ethics of psychological research. The participants were delivered the information about the purpose of the study, assured that all the information would be kept confidential and anonymous, and advised that they could discontinue at any point. No personal details were obtained, and the research data were not utilized in any other way. The research was characterized by a low level of risk, and informed consent was obtained before the research.

### Results

#### Demographic Description

**Table 1**

*Demographic Description of Participants (N = 150)*

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	75	50
	Female	75	50
Age (years)	18–25	90	60
	26–30	60	40
Marital Status	Unmarried	105	70
	Married	45	30
Education Level	Bachelor	75	50
	M.S.	22	15
	Intermediate	15	10
	Other	15	10

Table 1 indicates that there is a total of 150 participants with an equal percentage of males (50%) and females (50%). Most participants were aged 18–25 years (60%) and unmarried (70%). Regarding education, half of the participants had a bachelor's degree (50%), while the remainder had M.S. (15%), intermediate (10%), or other qualifications (10%).

### Descriptive Statistics

**Table 2**

*Descriptive Statistics of Main Variables*

Variable	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)	1.00	5.00	2.66	0.75
Social Media Engagement	0.00	7.00	3.53	1.99
Decision-Making Styles	1.00	5.00	3.20	0.71
Self-Esteem	1.00	4.00	2.72	0.61

*Note.* SD = standard deviation. Values are rounded to two decimal places.

Moderate descriptive statistics for levels of fear of missing out and self-esteem (MFO = 2.66, SD = 0.75; MSE = 2.72, SD = 0.61), with a mean social media engagement score (M = 3.53, SD = 1.99) slightly greater than average, and an average score in decision-making styles (M = 3.20, SD = 0.71), which indicates moderate tendencies across all measurable variables for participants.

**Table 3**  
*Reliability Analysis of Variables*

Scale	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ )
Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)	10	0.78
Social Media Engagement Questionnaire (SMEQ)	5	0.81
General Decision-Making Questionnaire (GDMQ)	25	0.92
Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES)	10	0.82

*Note.* Cronbach's alpha values above .70 indicate acceptable internal consistency.

Table 3 indicates that all study variables, including the FOMO scale, Social Media Engagement Scale, General Decision-Making Questionnaire, and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, are reliable.

**Table 4**  
*Pearson Correlation among Fear of Missing Out and Social Media Engagement (H1)*

Variable	1	2
1. Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)	—	.33**
2. Social Media Engagement (SME)	.33**	—

*Note.* N = 150. Pearson product-moment correlation was used. \*\*p < .01.

**Table 5**  
*Correlation between Social Media Engagement and Self-Esteem (H2)*

Variable	1	2
1. Social Media Engagement	—	.307**
2. Self-Esteem	.307**	—

*Note.* N = 150. Pearson product-moment correlation was used. \*\*p < .01.

The results indicate a significant positive correlation between social media engagement and self-esteem among young adults,  $r(150) = .31, p < .01$ . This suggests that inflated levels of social

media engagement are correlated with higher levels of self-esteem, and lower levels of self-esteem is associated with lower social media engagement in the sample, supporting Hypothesis 2.

**Table 6**

*Regression of Self-Esteem on Decision-Making Styles (H3)*

Decision-Making Style	B	SE B	$\beta$	T	P	R <sup>2</sup>
Rational (RDMSTOTAL)	.848	.106	.537	7.992	< .001	.288
Dependent (DDMSTOTAL)	.652	.108	.432	6.021	< .001	.187
Avoidant (ADMSTOTAL)	.458	.116	.298	3.930	< .001	.089
Spontaneous (SDMSTOTAL)	.496	.103	.359	4.830	< .001	.129

*Note.* N = 150. B = unstandardized regression coefficient; SE B = standard error of B;  $\beta$  = standardized coefficient; R<sup>2</sup> = proportion of variance explained by Self-Esteem.

**Table 7**

*Multiple Regression Predicting Decision-Making Styles from FOMO, Social Media Engagement, and Self-Esteem (H4)*

DV (Decision-Making Style)	(Decision-Making Predictor)	B	SE B	$\beta$	T	p	R <sup>2</sup>
Rational (RDMS)	Self-Esteem	.752	.110	.476	6.829	< .001	.320
	FOMO	.068	.090	.053	0.750	.454	
	Social Media	.081	.035	.166	2.295	.023	
Intuitive (IDMS)	Self-Esteem	.525	.099	.362	5.305	< .001	.348
	FOMO	.232	.081	.196	2.851	.005	
	Social Media	.113	.032	.253	3.571	< .001	
Dependent (DDMS)	Self-Esteem	.458	.104	.303	4.409	< .001	.339
	FOMO	.249	.085	.202	2.917	.004	
	Social Media	.138	.033	.298	4.174	< .001	
Avoidant (ADMS)	Self-Esteem	.256	.112	.167	2.291	.023	.259

	FOMO	.324	.092	.258	3.527	.001	
	Social Media	.128	.036	.273	3.604	< .001	
Spontaneous (SDMS)	Self-Esteem	.298	.094	.216	3.181	.002	.357
	FOMO	.405	.077	.359	5.256	< .001	
	Social Media	.106	.030	.249	3.532	.001	

*Note.* N = 160. B = unstandardized regression coefficient; SE B = standard error;  $\beta$  = standardized coefficient;  $R^2$  = proportion of variance explained by the predictors.

The multiple regression analysis suggested that FOMO, Social Media Engagement, and Self-Esteem jointly and significantly predicted all five decision-making styles ( $R^2$  ranged from .259 to .357,  $p < .001$ ). Self-Esteem was a significant positive predictor for all decision-making styles, particularly for rational decisions. Social Media Engagement and FOMO also significantly predicted most decision-making styles, with FOMO showing the strongest effect for Spontaneous decisions. These results support H4.

**Table 8**

*Strongest Predictor Among FOMO, Social Media Engagement, and Self-Esteem for Each Decision-Making Style (H5)*

Decision-Making Style	Self-Esteem ( $\beta$ )	FOMO ( $\beta$ )	Social Media Engagement ( $\beta$ )	Strongest Predictor
Rational	.476	.053	.166	Self-Esteem
Intuitive	.362	.196	.253	Self-Esteem
Dependent	.303	.202	.298	Self-Esteem
Avoidant	.167	.258	.273	Social Media Engagement
Spontaneous	.216	.359	.249	FOMO

*Note.*  $\beta$  = standardized regression coefficient. Values indicate the degree of influence of each predictor on the respective decision-making style.

As presented in Table 8, the standardized regression coefficients ( $\beta$ ) suggest which of the predictors is the best in each decision-making style. Self-Esteem proved to be the strongest predictor of Rational ( $\beta = .476$ ), Intuitive ( $\beta = .362$ ), and Dependent ( $\beta = .303$ ) decision-making. The Avoidance decision-making was best predicted by Social Media Engagement ( $\beta = .273$ ), and

FOMO was best predicted by Spontaneous decision-making ( $\beta = .359$ ). These findings confirm H5, which indicates that at least one predictor out of the following effects (FOMO, Social Media Engagement, and Self-Esteem) impacts each decision-making style among young adults the most.

### Discussion

The present research was focused on testing the relationship between Fear of Missing Out, Social Media Engagement, Self-esteem, and decision-making styles among youthful adults. In particular, the study tested five hypotheses to gain insight into the individual and joint effects of these psychological and behavioral variables on rational, intuitive, dependent, avoidant, and spontaneous styles of decision-making. The results provide solid empirical evidence for all proposed hypotheses and offer meaningful theoretical and practical implications regarding digital technology and its psychological effects on the decision-making process in young adulthood.

The initial research question required to be answered in the investigation was whether there is a relationship between FOMO and Social Media Engagement. The results indicated that there is a moderate positive correlation between FOMO and Social Media Engagement, which proves Hypothesis 1. This observation implies that people with elevated scores in the FOMO are at a higher risk of active usage of social media sites. This outcome is based on the previous research that reported FOMO is one of the incentive factors that encourages people to spend more time online, since individuals want to get the latest news, social approval, and confirmation that they are not deprived of enjoying privileged social lives. Other research conducted in the past also determined that FOMO is linked to obsessive checking, excessive spending of time on social media, and increased emotional commitment to online communication. Therefore, the present results support the idea that FOMO is one of the most critical psychological processes that underlie excessive or repeated social media use in young adults.

The second study purpose was to test how Social Media Engagement is related to Self-esteem. As opposed to a larger part of the existing literature, which reported a negative association, the current research was able to find a significant positive correlation between these variables and thus supported Hypothesis 2. This result has insights into the fact that increased social media use in young adults was linked to increased self-esteem in the current sample. The reason behind this positive correlation could be that participants could be involved in active forms of social media behavior like posting content, interacting with peers, and getting positive responses, which have the potential to boost their self-esteem and social connectedness. In the past, studies have indicated that a proactive and outgoing application of social media can also help in self-esteem development, especially when users are assured and appreciated by their social media networks. Thus, the current results also show the need to pay attention to the type of social media usage and quality, and counterbalance the position that all social media activities have negative psychological effects.

The third purpose of the research aimed at the predictive abilities of Self-Esteem in the decision-making styles. The findings indicated that the function of Self-Esteem in determining the measured decision-making styles was significant, and the impact can be maximum in rational decision-making. Good self-esteem had higher rationality of decision making as compared to those with low self-esteem, who had higher dependency, avoidance, and spontaneous decision-making styles. These results uphold Hypothesis 3 and also align with the existing psychological hypotheses, which contend that persons who have a greater self-esteem have more confidence, autonomy, and mental clarity in their decision-making. These people have high chances of weighing the options carefully and depending on personal judgment. Conversely, those who have little self-esteem might develop self-doubt and anxiety, where an individual avoids a decision,

over-depends, or merely likes to make rash decisions. Current findings, therefore, highlight the use of self-esteem as the key psychological resource that influences the manner in which young adults deal with situations that involve decision-making.

The fourth aim of the research was to determine the prognostic contribution of FOMO, Social Media use, and Self-Esteem in decision-making styles. The multiple regression analyses specified that the combination of the following three predictors showed significant variance in all five decision-making styles; therefore, Hypothesis 4 was accepted. The explained variance was moderate and substantial among the different decision-making styles, which showed that the process of decision-making among young adults is determined by the uniqueness of emotional inclinations, behavioral habits, and self-assessment factors. Self-esteem is a strong and consistent factor when it comes to the styles of decision-making, especially the rational and intuitive style of decision-making. Social Media Engagement and FOMO were also important in the anticipation of less adaptive styles of decision-making. Such results indicate that a particular factor cannot dictate decision-making, but it is the interaction of both behavioral and psychological factors in dynamics.

The most significant study result is connected with Hypothesis 5, which tested whether a single strongest predictor of decisions in terms of each type of decision-making would be observed. The findings proved this hypothesis and found significant trends. Self-Esteem proved to be the best predictor of rational, intuitive, and dependent styles of decision-making, which is emphasized as a fundamental influence on determining cognitive and behavioral choice. The Social Media Engagement had the highest predictive value in avoidant decision-making, indicating a possibility that the overuse of social media may act as a determinant of procrastination, indecision, or bad habits of avoiding actual work. FOMO became the most powerful predictor of spontaneous decision-making, which shows that people are more likely to make urgent, impulsive decisions in fear cases without enough deliberation. These findings demonstrate the one-dimensional impact of every predictor and show that different decision-making styles are preconditioned by diverse psychological processes.

In theory, the findings of the present study can be included in the field of scholarly works, which increases in the area of digital psychology and decision-making. The results can be applied to the theoretical hypotheses that point to the role of self-concept and emotional regulation in decision-making. This study consists of the inclusion of FOMO and Social Media Engagement in the existing paradigms of decision-making and in the extant model of the appropriateness of contemporary digital behaviors in shaping cognitive results. The positive relationship between social media and self-esteem is also the same, and it proves a more detailed and fluctuating nature of social media rather than the earlier considerations of social media as being predominantly destructive.

The issues of this research that are in force are also critical. The findings have shown that interventions that boost self-esteem may assist a larger number of young adults to make rational and adaptive choices. The educational programs and work of the mental health worker could involve self-esteem-building techniques and decision-making skills. Secondly, sensitization of people regarding FOMO can help them to recognize and manage their emotional promptings, leading them to make more informed decisions. Careful and considerate applications of social media can reduce avoidant decision-making processes and make them more psychologically healthy as well.

However, the present study has several drawbacks that it cannot deny. The one-time observational form of study eliminates the chances of making causal inferences about the

relationship observed. Self-report measures are also known to induce self-bias in responding, including social desirability or low self-view. Also, all the participants were young adults, and this could be a weakness of the extrapolation of the findings to other age groups. Longitudinal or experimental research design used in the future must offer the causal paths and test the potential of mediating or modulating variables, such as emotional regulation, cognitive overload, or personality traits.

Lastly, it should be noted that the present study provides some good evidence that FOMO, Social Media Engagement, and Self-Esteem are also predictors of the choice styles of young adults. Self-Esteem proved to be one of the main motivators of the rational and adaptive decision-making, and FOMO and Social Media Engagement were, on average, more associated with less adaptive styles. The complexity of the psychological and behavioral approach to studying provides a multi-dimensional examination of the aspects of decision-making in the digital era and the necessity to improve the level of self-respect and conscious consumption of social media to make the process of decision-making among young adults healthier.

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