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Relationship between Social Media Addiction, FOMO and Self-Esteem among Young Adults

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Abstract

The technology driven world has impacted the lives of young adults the most. The urge to stay active and being connected to their friends and family members all the time has taken a toll on their psychological well-being. The anxiety created by the activities in social situations drives them to not miss out on anything. FOMO is the feeling that others are having more stimulating and rewarding experiences than them. The increased social media usage and constantly checking on others life events accordingly impacts people's self-esteem. The present research aimed to study the relationship of Social Networking Addiction, FOMO and Self Esteem among young adults. Standardized tools were used to measure Social Networking Addiction, FOMO and Self-Esteem. A sample comprised 60 young adults in the age range of 18-25 years. The results revealed that there is significant positive correlation between social networking addiction and fear of missing out among young adults. There is also a significant positive correlation between self-esteem and conflict (sub-dimension of social networking addiction scale). However, there is no significant correlation between self-esteem with FOMO and self-esteem with social media addiction. To lessen the intensity of people experiencing FOMO, direct work should be done on the causes of FOMO. Developing a sense of gratitude for all the minor things people possess in their life could significantly impact FOMO levels and social media usage.

Key words: Social Networking Addiction, Fear Of Missing Out (FOMO), Self Esteem, Young Adults

Introduction

Every other day there is one or the other social networking app being launched in the market. The craze of the youth to stay updated with the social world through online involvement has tremendously increased.

Youth is a period of life where major transition happens in physical, psychological or biological aspects. The shift from dependence to independence, immaturity to maturity, childhood to adulthood, irresponsible to responsible, all these adjustments are seen in young adults. Young adults refer to the people falling between the age ranges of 18-25 years. These years are full of vigour, vitality, curiosity, strength and keenness for novelty. This stage is full of confusion as well. On one hand, there is a need for the search of one's identity and on the other there's a need for belongingness. Hence, in order to satisfy their need for belongingness and to have a good social exposure they connect with people on social networking sites.

This is a widely used saying that "human beings are social animals." There's a constant need of an individual to connect with the people on emotional levels. To satisfy their need for belongingness, people have started using social networking sites which provide a platform to meet like-minded people along with an abundant supply of gratifying and pleasing information which is addictive to people. The popular social networking sites are Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Telegram, WhatsApp, and LinkedIn.

The overuse of social networking sites has proved to gratify their social needs and hence they have become problematic and addictive users of social media. Basuroy (2022) conducted a survey to see active social media users in India and it was found out that India has crossed its 900 million active internet users in the past decade. The active digital population has been growing expeditiously with Google, Twitter and Facebook being an integral part of our day-to-day life.

Fear of Missing Out is an emotional state and an anxiety felt by people when they have an apprehension that others are having more enriching experiences than them. In a survey, it was revealed that 82% of the Indians experience Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) when not

connected to the internet and this percentage is the highest globally (Tata Communications, 2021). The yearning to stay informed about every new thing coming in the virtual world has become the reason for this phenomenon. Staying online 24*7 has become a necessity today. The escalating interest in what's going on in others' lives influences their peace of mind and satisfaction with life. Being ungrateful and failing to notice good things in their own life makes them more depressed.

The word 'Esteem' is derived from Latin language which means 'to value, appraise or estimate'. Self-esteem means the positive perception of people towards themselves that they are worthy and confident enough to achieve anything they want. People with high self-esteem are intrinsically motivated and do not seek any external validation. Nowadays, what people indirectly seek from others is praise and validation. Those who don't feel heard in real life tend to post stuff on social media where they know that people would be reading what they have posted and the ultimate goal of seeking attention would be fulfilled.

Hence, in order to stay updated on what their friends are into, they use more social media apps which directly leads to FOMO. Also, the social comparisons they do on social networking sites makes them feel inferior leading to low self-esteem.

Social Networking Addiction

According to Mahajan (2009), "social networks can be defined as Internet-based applications that enable individuals to freely express and share their emotions and ideas, and to facilitate interpersonal communication." "Social Networking Sites are virtual communities where users can create individual public profiles, interact with real life friends, and meet people" (Kuss & Griffiths, 2011). According to Andreassen and Pallesen (2014), social networking sites addiction can be defined as "being overly concerned about social networking sites, time to be driven by a strong motivation to log on to or use social networking sites, and to denote so much time and effort to social networking sites that it impairs other psychological activities, studies/job, interpersonal relationships, and/or psychological health and well-being."

The social networking sites use becomes problematic when it is used in order to get rid of loneliness, stress and depression. Those who engage in problematic use of social networking sites are generally poor at socializing in real life (Xu & Tan, 2012). A study conducted by Azizi et al. (2019) on 360 Iranian Medical science students found out that there exists a

negative significant relation between academic performance and social media use. The frequent switching between the tasks leads to poor work performance, affects attention span and impacts the overall productivity. There also exists gender differences in social networking sites with male students being higher on addiction level as compared to female students. Since FOMO is positively related to social networking sites use, the constant checking of notifications leads to distraction from the work and hence disrupts the flow and task performance (Stothart et al., 2015).

A study was done by Yang et al. (2020) to investigate the associations in levels of addiction to social media, smartphones and online games with interpersonal interactions in real-life and online mode among adolescents. This cross sectional research was conducted on adolescents consisting of 998 students with 413 boys, of Taiwan and the results show that those adolescents who have higher level of social media and smartphone addiction show greater interpersonal relations in real life. Those adolescents who have more addiction to online games may show less interpersonal relationships in real life with friends. They are more connected online than in real life.

Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)

According to Przybylski et al. (2013), Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) is “a pervasive apprehension that others might be having a rewarding experience from which one is absent”. FOMO is defined as the anxiety of being aware of the magnificent experiences that another person may have (Ericson et al., 2021). According to Cohen (2013), FOMO refers to “the concern that other people have happier, more interesting, and enjoyable lives.” According to Blum (2016), FOMO is defined as “seeing the photos of one’s friends on social media platforms, not seeing herself/himself in the photos and therefore feeling negative emotions.”

There are several causes stated by various researchers for this phenomenon. One of the neurological explanations, as given by Luna (2014), asserts a vital need of any individual to belong to the society. FOMO is not a modern concept rather it is an old fear but has gained importance with the advent of social media. Television, radio, newspaper, social networking sites and internet all provide the opportunity to the people to feel connected to the society. Whenever a person fears exclusion, their amygdala gets activated whose function is to detect any threat in the environment. Hence, whenever we experience exclusion, our amygdala

responds. Those individuals with sensitive amygdala may react even more to exclusion and as a result experience FOMO.

Barry and Wong (2020) explored if FOMO is an individual phenomenon or a generational phenomenon, and they found out that FOMO is primarily due to the low self-compassion within the individuals and that it cannot be enhanced as per the increase in age. So, FOMO is totally an individual phenomenon. Along with this, more usage of social media leads to more social comparisons which directly impact their level of self-esteem (Vogel et al., 2014).

Self-esteem

According to Rosenberg (1965, p. 30), “self-esteem has been defined as a positive or negative attitude towards the self.” Caprara et al. (2010) defined self-esteem as “a positive or negative orientation towards oneself, and an overall evaluation of one’s worth or value.” Burns (1982) defined self-esteem as “a belief that an individual holds about self, which determines who they are, what they can do and what they can become.” According to Coopersmith (1967), self-esteem is defined as “the evaluation which the individual makes and customarily maintains with regard to himself. It expresses approval or disapproval and indicates the extent to which an individual believes himself to be capable, significant, successful and worthy.”

Cheung et al. (2015) investigated 405 undergraduates in China to see if emotional intelligence determines self-esteem and concluded that emotional intelligence does play a crucial role in shaping self-esteem among young adults. Gender differences in emotional intelligence are clear that females are emotionally warmer than males but no gender difference was seen in self-esteem (Bibi et al., 2016). The effect of personality has also been seen on the levels of self-esteem in various researches. Usually the traits of extraversion, conscientiousness, openness, and emotional stability are correlated with high self-esteem. Along with all these dimensions of personality, total amount of social support also predicts self-esteem (Teoh, 2010).

In order to study the relationship between self-esteem and well-being, a research was conducted on 134 males and 138 females chosen through convenient sampling. The association among self-esteem, self-compassion and well-being came out to be significant. The regression analysis reflected that self-esteem and self-compassion are positive and significant predictors of both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being (Pandey et al., 2021). High

self-esteem seems to have a positive effect on the person's happiness (Doagn et al., 2013). Battle (1978), on a sample of 129 college going males and females, studied the relationship between self-esteem and depression and found that both the variables are negatively correlated to each other. People with lower self-esteem tend to be more depressed.

Methodology

Purpose

The purpose of this research is to study social networking addiction, FOMO and self-esteem among young adults.

Hypotheses

- Social Networking Addiction and its sub-dimensions (salience, tolerance, mood modification, withdrawal, conflict and relapse) are expected to have significantly positive correlation with Fear of Missing Out (FOMO).
- Social Networking Addiction and its sub-dimensions (salience, tolerance, mood modification, withdrawal, conflict and relapse) are expected to have significantly negative correlation with self-esteem.
- Fear of Missing Out is expected to have a significantly negative correlation with self-esteem.

Sample

A total sample of 60 people in the age range of 18- 25 years were selected. The sample was collected from Chandigarh and Punjab.

Measures

Social Networking Addiction Scale (SNAS): The questionnaire was developed by Shahnawaz and Rehman (2020). The scale has 21 items, and it has 6 subscales measuring Salience, Mood modification, Tolerance, Withdrawal, Conflict and Relapse. The responses are given on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree). The scores are summed up for all the items to obtain a total score. The score ranges from 21 to 147. Any score above a total score of 84 signifies addiction.

Following instructions were given for Social Networking Addiction Scale (SNAS) -

“Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements. There are a total of 7 options. You must choose any one option which fits you the best. The responses will be kept confidential. It is important that you try as honestly as possible.”

Fear of Missing Out Scale (FOMOS): The questionnaire was developed by Przybylski et al. (2013). It is a 10-item dimensional scale. The responses are given on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all true of me) to 5 (extremely true of me). There is no reverse scoring, and the scores are summed up for all the items to obtain a total score. The total scores range between 10 to 50. Higher scores on this scale indicate a higher level of fear of missing out.

The following instructions were given for the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) scale -

“Below is a collection of statements about your everyday experience. Using the scale provided please indicate how true each statement is of 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.”

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale: The questionnaire was developed by Rosenberg (1965). This scale is used to measure the self-esteem of the person. It has a total of 10 items with a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Agree) to 4 (Strongly Disagree). Some of the items are reverse scored and then the scores on each item are added to find the total score.

The following instructions were given for the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale:

“Below is the list of statements dealing with your general feelings about yourself. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement. There are 4 response options. The responses will be kept confidential. It is important that you try to answer as honestly as possible.”

Procedure

To investigate the relationship between Social Media Addiction, FOMO and self-esteem among young adults, the sample was selected. Informed consent was taken and proper instructions were given to collect data. Standardised psychological tests were administered to the participants.

Scoring and Statistical Analysis

Scoring for all the given tests was done as per the scoring instructions as given in the manual. The raw scores were tabulated and subjected to various statistical analysis by using Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) Package. Keeping in view the objectives of the study, statistical analysis was conducted. Means, Standard Deviations and correlation were computed.

Results

Table 1

N, Mean and Standard Deviation

	Salience	Mood	Tolerance	Withdrawal	Conflict	Relapse	Social Netwo rking Addict ion	Self esteem	FOMO
N	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60
Mean	19.0	13.0	11.8	12.7	8.82	15.0	80.3	26.7	26.9
Standard deviation	5.11	4.91	5.78	6.63	4.50	6.90	26.0	6.36	7.46

Table 2

Correlation of all variables

	Salience	Mood	Tolerance	Withdrawal	Conflict	Relapse	Social Networkin g Addiction	Self Esteem	FOMO
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Salience	—															
Mood	0.468	***	—													
Tolerance	0.673	***	0.543	***	—											
Withdrawal	0.518	***	0.435	***	0.431	***	—									
Conflict	0.451	***	0.234		0.394	**	0.515	***	—							
Relapse	0.689	***	0.330	*	0.641	***	0.579	***	0.549	***	—					
Social Networki ng Addiction	0.827	***	0.640	***	0.805	***	0.777	***	0.670	***	0.847	***	—			
Self Esteem	-0.122		-0.075		-0.180		-0.041		-0.340	**	-0.172		-0.193	—		
FOMO	0.382	**	0.195		0.438	***	0.203		0.324	*	0.313	*	0.400	**	-0.237	—

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Discussion

The present study was aimed to assess the relationship between the social networking addiction, FOMO and self-esteem. In the last few years, overuse of phone and internet has led to an increase in chronic mental and physical states that negatively impact a person in multiple ways. As one's internet usage increases, there is a proportional increase in fear of missing out and low self-esteem.

The results showed that there is significant positive correlation between social media addiction and fear of missing out ($r=.400$, $p<.01$). With this the first hypothesis has been verified that social networking addiction is expected to be positively associated with fear of missing out (FOMO). The present results are consistent with findings of Suwandi et al. (2022) that deal

with FOMO and Instagram addiction among adolescents. The study shows a significant positive relationship between the two variables. That means, a high level of FOMO is linked with high levels of social media addiction.

Similarly, in another research by Younas et al. (2022) conducted on 150 young adults of Pakistan ranging between 20-35 years to assess the links between social media addiction, phubbing and FOMO. Phubbing could be understood in terms of a behaviour which seems to be problematic where the person is totally engrossed in paying attention to one's phone while completely ignoring their companions. The results revealed a positive significant correlation among the variables. It was also seen that FOMO and phubbing are partially mediated by social media addiction.

Handa and Ahuja (2020) studied 240 smartphone users to identify the consequences of addictive smartphone usage amongst young Indian adults. The research revealed that they used WhatsApp and other social networking sites the most on their smartphones. Along with this, the problematic smartphone usage behaviour was predicted by fear of missing out and results in poor quality of sleep. Some studies also confirmed that FOMO is linked with the younger age (Blackwell et al., 2017; Elhai et al., 2018).

While human beings are considered the most evolved species and have innovated many advances, there is a grave concern in humans turning into slaves of technology, especially social media usage. The present study highlights how the indiscriminate use of the internet and social media impacts our motivation and self-evaluation.

Implications

The present research was conducted to investigate the correlation between social media addiction, FOMO and self-esteem. As the results clearly showed that social media use and FOMO were highly correlated, so it is expected that when FOMO was reduced then social media use would be automatically reduced.

To lessen the intensity of people experiencing FOMO, direct work should be done on the causes of FOMO. One way was enhancing the perceived social support of the person. Low social support is the basic cause of unfulfilled belongingness needs which further activates the feeling of FOMO. Hence, perceived social support was directly linked to lowering the stressful life events and a hope and courage that everything would be fine. The other way was to develop a sense of gratitude for all the minor things they possessed in their life. This gave

them a sense of comfort that they were better than many and that everybody had different life experiences. The lesser they make social comparisons, the more satisfied they would be with their own life. Thus reducing FOMO and impacting their social media usage. As ‘Rome was not built in a day’, it’s not possible to detach oneself from using social media all at once. Perseverance was all it takes to achieve something successfully!

The findings of the present study can be used to direct out efforts to emphasize on teaching ‘self-regulation’ and ‘self-directedness’ to people at large. To break out of the vicious cycle of social networking addiction, leading to fear of missing out (FOMO) and low self-esteem, there is a dire need to encourage meaningful engagement of people in a structured daily schedule. Phone-free periods should be systematically introduced with an active engagement alternative being offered to people, so that they can form new adaptive practices and work towards a better physical and mental health and high achievement.

Summary

The present study aimed to investigate correlation between Social Networking Addiction, Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and Self Esteem. 60 young adults (18-25 years) were administered Social Networking Scale (SNAS), Fear of Missing Out Scale (FOMOS) and Self Esteem Scale. The results revealed significant positive correlation between social networking addiction and fear of missing out; and significant negative correlation between self-esteem and conflict dimension of social networking addiction; significant positive correlation between fear of missing out and salience, fear of missing out and tolerance, fear of missing out and relapse, fear of missing out and conflict (a sub-dimensions of social networking addiction).

These findings indicate that social networking addiction can perpetuate a state of ‘FOMO’, which can further lead to increase in usage of social media. Caught in this vicious cycle, one may experience low self-esteem and helplessness. To break this cycle, self-regulation training can be beneficial.

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