



A GENDER STUDY ON FOMO AND NOMOPHOBIA CAUSED BY SOCIAL MEDIA AMONG YOUNG ADULTS

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ABSTRACT

Ever since the use of smartphones have increased many social media apps are being used on a daily basis. Access to these apps have many positive uses but also more negative repercussions if not properly used .Two of them are Fear of missing out (FOMO) and Nomophobia which further leads to anxiety and stress among its users. FOMO is a term coined in 2004 which refers to a state where mental tension is aroused among various individuals whenever an exciting event occurs in the fear of being missed out of that moment .This feeling mostly occurs due to excess use of social media. FOMO can be caused due to several reasons such as comparing ourselves to others ,having regrets, low mood and unrealistic relationship goals. Nomophobia is a feeling stating an uneasiness for not having access to many kind of mobile services. This feeling clearly generates when an individual has become addicted to their phones. This has resulted in many health related issues especially for young adults. A sample of 80 young adults (40 male & 40 females) in the age group of 18 to 25 years were taken. Standardized tools were

used to measure FOMO and Nomophobia. Results found out that there is significant positive relationship between FOMO and Nomophobia. Strategies such as minimizing screen time on social media apps ,practicing meditation , focusing on real life tasks , focusing on our achievements and goals, being more socially active, keeping a phone on silent mode and turning off cell phones before bedtime can be used to overcome the limitations of FOMO and Nomophobia.

Keywords: *FOMO (Fear of missing out), Nomophobia, Social Media, Young Adults*

INTRODUCTION

The term FOMO was coined by Dr Dan Herman in 2004. The term stands for Fear Of Missing Out which refers to feeling that other people are enjoying more, having better lives and doing better things than we are. This perception of individual can further lead to feeling of envy which affects their self-esteem. This phenomenon is on the verge of increment nowadays especially because of the social media influence increasing day by day. As more individuals will indulge themselves in social media ,more will be the number of people who will have to suffer from FOMO. This can lower the self-esteem and cause many disorders like depression, anxiety and many other risky behaviours. The term FOMO defined by Koc et al. (2023) is defined as “an outcome of lack of self-control which further escalates the social media addiction and ultimately predicts higher distress.”

According to Fabris et al. (2020), “sensitivity to stress is sometimes viewed as mediating the relationship between FOMO and social media addiction.” When individuals experience neglect from online peers, they undergo stress and higher feelings of fear of missing out, which subsequently trigger social media addiction along with negative emotional well-being.” According to Mayank and Gupta (2021), Fear of missing out (FOMO) is a unique term

introduced in 2004 to describe “a phenomenon observed on social networking sites. FOMO includes two processes; firstly, perception of missing out, followed up with a compulsive behaviour to maintain these social connections.”

Przybylski et al. (2013) termed FOMO as “pervasive apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent.” Fear Of Missing Out caused by social media can have many shortcomings like comparisons with other people, setting unrealistic relationship expectations through continuous exposure to social media apps like Instagram, Fakebook, X, and LinkedIn.

Individuals having FOMO usually have increased pressure to always ‘keep up’ in order to appear happy and successful always. Lack of boundaries and seeking for external validation are also two of the major limitations/shortcomings of FOMO. These all limitations can cause serious burnout in an individual which means it can cause physical, mental and emotional breakdown. These limitations can overcome by applying few strategies. Few of them are limiting the social media apps usage like Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook and many other by setting a timer of less hours. This helps individuals in digital detoxing.

Riordan et al. (2021) introduced FOMO as “a feeling of missing the life that others shared on social media and worth seeing, and it is stated that FOMO is associated with unhealthy social media use.” Blum (2016) gave a term to FOMO which is described as “seeing the photos of ones friends on social media platforms, not seeing herself/himself in the photos and therefore feeling negative emotions.” According to Eric et al. (2021) FOMO can be explained as “the anxiety of being aware of the magnificent experiences that another person may have.” Cohen (2013), said that FOMO can be described as a “the concern that other people have happier, more interesting and enjoyable lives.”

No Mobile Phone is an abbreviation for the word “Nomophobia.” It is a term which states a feeling of uneasiness for not having any access to mobile phone services for a longer period of a time. This feeling occurs only when individuals become too much addicted to his/her mobile phones. It is caused due to spending number of hours on smartphones, having OCD related to phone and interpersonal sensitivity. These can further lead to many shortcomings especially in the life of young adults which are academic and work performance deterioration, they may face a condition named infomania, eye related issues and insomnia. Young adults may become impulsive and drowsy at the same time. According to Kings et al. (2013) “Nomophobia is the abbreviation for “No-Mobile Phone phobia” and is defined as the fear of being unable to use or being unreachable via one’s smartphone.”

In the era of social media, individuals who have fear of missing out on updates, social activities, and immediate rewards may display anxiety or problematic smartphone usage, known as nomophobia. It was found that college students primarily use social media apps on their smartphones (Jesse, 2016).

Panova et al. (2018) stated that “the increased, excessive and problematic use of smartphones among many people around the world in the recent years was accelerated not solely, but also, due to the substantial impact of social networks.” High levels of social media usage were positively associated with nomophobia is termed by Ayar et al. (2018). Few coping techniques such as Therapies, CBT, medications, meditation , developing more interpersonal relationship with people around, liming the hours spent on phone and engaging in many outdoor activities can be implemented on daily basis in order to keep a check on nomophobia.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Fear of Missing Out

According to Kacker and Saurav (2020) a gender study was conducted on 600 samples (269 females and 331 males). The result found out that there is a significant positive correlation between FOMO and social media addiction.

A study was conducted on 469 college undergraduates student to explore association of FOMO, Problematic Smartphone use (PSU) and Social networking services fatigue. Results revealed that PSU and FOMO levels of those who spent more than one and less than 3 hrs, more than three hrs and less than 5 hrs and more than 5 hrs on social media apps significantly differed when compared to those who spent less than 1 hr . Further analysis of the data revealed was reported that there was no significant difference found between SNS fatigue level and duration spent on social media (Tanhan et al., 2022).

A correlational study was conducted by Garg (2023) on 60 young adults. The analysis showed that there is a positive correlation between social networking service addiction and FOMO whereas significant negative correlation between self-esteem and conflict dimensions of social networking services. Further, it was concluded that there is a positive correlation between FOMO and Salience, FOMO and tolerance, FOMO and relapse, FOMO and conflict. The author also suggested to follow few self-regulation training.

According to Aksan and Akbay (2019) a comparative study was conducted on 269 young adults to assess the impact of smartphone addiction, FOMO and perceived competence as predictors of social media addiction of Adolescence. The analysis came out to be that when FOMO level decrease and perceived competence improve the social media addiction levels reduce.

A study was conducted on 717 young adults to assess the FOMO phenomenon. The results showed that 20% of young respondents showed several symptoms of FOMO, another 30% are at the risk of being addicted to internet and the remaining one's are not at the risk of IAT. Further it was seen that FOMO can be minimized by any form of physical activities (Tomczyk & Selmanagic-Lizde, 2018).

Nomophobia

An correlational study with a cross sectional design conducted on Vagka et al. (2023) on 1408 young adults. Results found out that women and non-working participants were on the risk of severe nomophobia. Further, it was reported an inverse association between participants age, education level of father, and severity of nomophobia. It is suggested by the author that thorough development of health awareness programmes in our respective countries and as well as at primary school level this problem's severity can be curbed.

According to Kateb (2017) a study was conducted on 335 undergraduate students. The study showed that there were high level of mobile phone involvement, high level of nomophobia and females were more involved than males with the mean of 3.3 and 2.8 respectively. Further, findings involved suggested the way the person interacts with their smart devices, mainly duration of use can predict pathology fear and psychological symptoms caused by modern digital and virtual means.

According to the study conducted by Abdoli et al. (2021) on 774 undergraduate students. The analysis came out that 52.1% of the participants use their smartphones for 3 to 6 hrs in a day whereas the 19% use it for more than 7 hrs. Further it was reported that 38% felt that their academic performance is hampered and 55% said that they check their smartphones

as soon as they get up. It is suggested to provide counselling sessions by the trained health professionals in order to keep a check on nomophobia.

Research titled “*Nomophobia and lifestyle: Smartphone use and its relationship to psychopathologies*” conducted by on 495 participants. Results showed positive and moderate correlation between nomophobia and psychopathology symptoms (Goncalves et al., 2020).

A comparative research conducted by Pavithra et al. (2015) to assess the prevalence of nomophobia and mobile phone dependence among the students of medical college. The sample of 200 students were taken. Results reported that 74% spent 300-500 rupees per month on mobile recharge, 23% felt they lost concentration and become stressed when they do not have mobile phones around them. It was also concluded that 39.5% students were nomophobia and 27% were on the verge of getting this phobia.

METHODOLOGY

Purpose

The purpose is to study FOMO(Fear of Missing Out), Nomophobia caused by social media among young adults.

Hypothesis

1. There will be significant correlation between FOMO and Nomophobia among young adults using social media.
2. There will be gender difference in FOMO and Nomophobia.

Methods

Sample

A total sample of 80 young adults (40 Males, 40 Females) in the age group of 18-25 was collected from India.

Measures

- ***Fear of Missing Out Scale (FOMO)***

The scale as developed by Przybylski et al. (2013) was used to assess the individual's FOMO level. The scale consisted of 10 items along with the response scales of 5-point Likert scale, ranging from Not at all true of me, Slightly true of me, Moderately true of me, Very true of me and Extremely true of me from (1 to 5) respectively.

- ***Nomophobia Questionnaire (NMP-Q)***

The scale developed by Yildirim and Correia (2015) was used to measure the severity of Nomophobia at an individual's level. The scale consisted of 20 items in total and the response scale is of 7-point Likert ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Procedures

The participants were informed about the purpose of the research and the questionnaires were filled through Google Forms, each participant was thanked for their cooperation. Standardized tests were administered to the participants.

Data Analysis

The research employed Jamovi software for data analysis. Pearson correlation method was used to study the relationship between the variables.

RESULTS

Table 1

Descriptives

		Male/Female		Nomophobia		FOMO	
N		Female		38		38	
		Male		41		41	
Mean		Female		54.5		20.9	
		Male		59.2		24.0	
Standard Deviation		Female		27.9		8.01	
		Male		27.4		6.88	

Table 2

Correlation Matrix

		Nomophobia		FOMO	
Nomophobia		—			
		0.346	**	—	
<i>Note. *p<.05, **p< .01, ***p< .001</i>					

Table 3*Independent Samples T-Test*

				Statistic		df		p	
Nomophobia		Student's t		-0.759		77.0		0.450	
FOMO		Student's t		-1.854		77.0		0.068	

Table 4*Group Descriptives*

		Group		N		Mean		Median		SD		SE	
Nomophobia		Female		38		54.5		43.0		27.88		4.52	
		Male		41		59.2		48.0		27.38		4.28	
FOMO		Female		38		20.9		20.5		8.01		1.30	
		Male		41		24.0		24.0		6.88		1.07	

DISCUSSION

The statistical analysis in **Table 2** of the variables FOMO and Nomophobia shows that there is a significant positive correlation between the two variables. The results found out a

significant positive correlation of ($r = 0.346$, $p < .01$). Positive Correlation signifies that two variables move in similar direction which means rise in the symptom of FOMO will give rise to the symptom of Nomophobia ultimately. Therefore, hypothesis is proven right.

According to **Table 3**, there was no gender difference found out among the two variables because results did not show any significance. A similar study conducted by Hosgor and Hosgor (2019) reported positive direct relationship between FOMO and Nomophobia. According to study by Okur et al. (2022) used Pearson analysis method to check relationship between the variables. Further, the result concluded that there were significant positive correlation between FOMO and Nomophobia.

CONCLUSION

The present study aims to focus on fear of missing out and nomophobia caused by social media among young adults. The two scales NMP-Q and FOMO scale were used to measure the two variables. The result found that there is a significant positive correlation relationship between Nomophobia and FOMO. Prolonged FOMO can lead an affected person to think in a certain way and go through self-critical thoughts in their mind like “What will happen if I miss out on something” or “If I am not present there?” “Will people talk negative behind my back for missing out on an event?” “Will my friends ever remember me even after not keeping up to date on my social media profile” or “For not following certain latest trends” “Is my life boring in comparison to others?” These are few most common thoughts which prove person with FOMO.

Some strategies which can be implemented to overcome the limitations of these variables are discussing insecurities with the partner will play a major role. Emphasizing on spending quality time with your loved ones can be extremely give a real time joy to a person

involved which will ultimately help in curbing the missing out energy. Curating specific time slots for all the social media apps by giving each of them 10 to 15 mins of a time. Developing offline hobbies and interests together with friends or family members. Individuals should often go out and socialize with others which will help them to think about the world on a bigger level and also this trait helps person in building a larger friend circle. There are many such thoughts which constantly provokes a person with FOMO.

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