



A Study On Social Media And The Fear Of Missing Out (FOMO)

Ambika Seth, Dr. Pankaj Singh

Amity University, Noida

ABSTRACT

Social Media can be defined as a form of electronic communication in which individuals create communities online and share variety of information, ideas, messages, and other content. Social media can be used both for entertainment as well as informational purposes. Social media usage can lead to different merits and demerits. It can lead to the experience of Fear of Missing Out. FOMO is a pervasive apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent. The following research presents a review of various studies that shed light on Social Media and the Fear of Missing Out and the relationship between them.

Keywords: Social Media, Fear of Missing Out

INTRODUCTION

Social Media

Webster dictionary defines social media as a form of electronic communication in which individuals create communities online and share variety of information, ideas, messages, and other content such as videos, images, audios etc. Social media can comprise of various social networking sites such as Instagram, Snapchat and Facebook which are used mainly for entertainment purpose such as watching videos, image content, sharing information with friends and family and posting about one's own life.

The rise of social media has not only changed the generation of users or varied age groups but also changed the purposes for which social media is being used. Traditional communications were based only on forms of media such as film, television, and music but with the advent of social media, online forums for communication, instant messaging, sharing content and live streaming has gained popularity. Social Media

comprises of the web 2.0 which is composed of websites that are interactive (O'Reilly, 2005) and social networking sites which makes it possible to form social connections online. (Boyd, 2008).

According to research conducted by Kietzmann (2011), there are seven broad building blocks of Social Media that help define it. These building blocks include:

1. Identity- It refers to how one represents oneself on social media including hobbies, relationships etc.
2. Conversations- This specifies the conversations people have with others on social media, it refers to the interactions taking place online.
3. Sharing- This refers to spreading information to others on social media
4. Presence- This allows the members of the community to know where the other members are, if they are active or inactive
5. Relationships- This refers to the network that people form on social media through “likes”, “followers” etc.
6. Groups- These are the memberships users are part of where they share content. Groups are formed with members they share an affiliation with.
7. Reputation-This is the social status one acquires on social media through ranking systems, number of followers etc.

Social media use

Social media engagement or Social Media Use refers to various actions such as “likes” and “shares” on Facebook and Instagram. These likes and shares indicate that one is interested in what the other person has posted and maybe resonates with it. Social media engagement also refers to the extent to which an individual uses social media in terms of the frequency with which they use it. (Dolan, 2015).

Social Media Use has been associated with various positive as well as negative effects. It helps strengthen already existing social ties along with newer connections being formed with people online especially through young people (Acquisti & Gross, 2016). When an individual forms social connection, it helps them develop a sense of trust which leads to better engagement not only on social media but also in real life which contributes to the wellbeing of an individual. (Valenzuela et al, 2009). At the same time, Social Media Engagement can have some ill-effects on people's mental health such as anxiety and depression (Shensas et al, 2018). One of the major negative effect of using social media is the Fear of Missing Out or FOMO.

FEAR OF MISSING OUT (FOMO)

Fear of Missing Out is defined as “a pervasive apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent”. (Przybylski et al, 2013).

According to Przybylski (2013), Fear of Missing Out or FOMO as a phenomenon is the fear of losing when a person does not get acquainted with another person's fascinating experiences. FOMO can be defined as the deep apprehension when one is unaware other's fun activities, hence, it makes the person experiencing FOMO

to keep connected and abreast of what others are doing. This fear makes the individual to be constantly glued to social media to know what others are doing and what they are missing.

A lot of research on FOMO has led to various theoretical perspectives explaining this phenomenon in detail (McBride, 2020)

1. Self- determination Theory

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) by Ryan et al, has often been used to conceptualize and explain FOMO. SDT as a theory focuses on the concept of self and relatedness (basic needs to form connections with others) and that it drives internal motivation. Przybylski applied this theory to FOMO by describing FOMO as a negative feeling or emotional state arising due to unfulfillment of social relatedness. FOMO induces feelings of loneliness and inferiority in individuals. The feeling can be a perception of missing out on what others are doing and eventually leading to repetitive actions to maintain connections. The social connectedness part of FOMO can be understood in terms of the relatedness aspect of the SDT as when people experience FOMO, their need to belong and need to form strong interpersonal relations is activated.

2. Uses and Gratification theory.

The uses and gratification theory are derived from a positivistic approach and from sociopsychological perspectives. It studies the “what” and “why” component of using media by individuals. It tries to understand what people do with the media and why do they do so. It explains how people purposely select certain media as it helps them to fulfil certain need. This need can range from acquiring knowledge, relaxation purpose, interaction with friends and family, or as an escape from reality (Severin & Tankard, 2000). It emphasizes on how social media or social networking sites are being used by individuals and what gratifications are attained from it.

3. The Belongingness Hypothesis

The belongingness hypothesis by Baumeister & Leary, 1995, explains that there are two criteria that must be met to satisfy the inner need to form interpersonal relationships. These criteria are:

- I. Frequent and pleasant interaction with others
- II. The interactions should take place in a structure of mutual concern between the interacting individuals.

Symptoms, Causes and Effects of FOMO

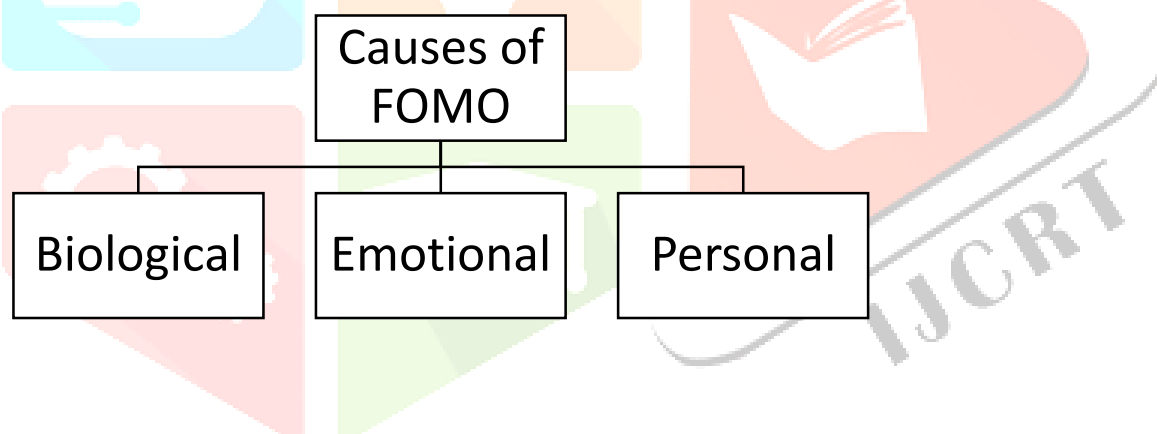
Modzelewski (2020) has described the symptoms of FoMO as follows: not being able to take one’s eyes off the phone when crossing the street, in a crowded environment, or when there is nothing left unchecked on a social media account; constantly checking e-mails, even on vacation; Spending a lot of money on expensive things that others have or have experienced, despite having difficulty in purchasing power.

Fear of Missing Out is a state of mind or experience that has various causes that make it very difficult for the individual to function effectively. Tanhan et al, 2022 highlighted that FOMO is mainly due to the fact that individuals are unable to satisfy their own needs and hence they look for satisfaction in another person's life by constantly being connected to social media, using it excessively etc. there are underlying biological causes to FOMO as well, individuals with a sensitive amygdala may react more seriously to exclusion from a group and experience FOMO, this turn leads to high levels of stress among individuals. (Luna, 2014). Even people having psychological trauma in the past may experience higher amount of FOMO (Karadag & Akcinar, 2019).

FOMO has also increased in the present day due to increased options on social media for communication, sharing content and staying connected with others. (Vitelli, 2016). Emotionally stating, unhappiness can also cause FOMO, as when an individual is unhappy, he/she might find solace in social media and in the lives of others (Barker, 2016).

There are certain personality factors as well that predispose an individual to experience FOMO. It has been found that individuals who have neurotic tendencies i.e., it is difficult for them to control their emotions experience a higher degree of FOMO whereas extraverts experience lesser amount of FOMO. (Rozgonjuk, Sindermann, Elhai & Montag, 2021).

The causes of FOMO can be depicted as follows:



Just like there are numerous causes of FOMO, there are a variety of effects also that are produced as a result of experiencing FOMO.

FOMO can lead to serious mental health issues. FOMO has been associated with higher levels of depression in previous research (Hunt et al, 2018), the reason for the same could be the unhappiness and dissatisfaction experiences as a result of FOMO. Other issues that FOMO poses for mental health is the experience of Stress and Anxiety. (Milyavskaya et al, 2018; Beyens et al, 2016).

Fear of Missing Out has also been associated with lower life satisfaction and it also has a negative association with social self-efficacy. (Deniz, 2021). These findings of the previous research studies indicate that a person experiences FOMO and negatively define their life satisfaction and self-efficacy, the reasons for the same could be comparison with others.

It has also been found that FOMO has a negative effect on one's self-esteem, previous research studies have found that as one's level of FOMO increases, one's self-esteem tends to decrease leading to a negative self-concept (Buglass et al, 2017).

Other common effects of FOMO include, sleep deprivation (Adams, 2017), lowered academic motivation (Alt, 2015) and problematic social media use (Wegman et al, 2017).

Social Media and FOMO

According to Social Media Victims Law Centre, FOMO makes people use social media constantly to check their notifications leading to its problematic use and miss out on real life activities and relationships.

Past research studies have often focused on the link between social media use and fear of missing out. The social media use is as a result of increased engagement with social media i.e., when an individual experiences FOMO, he/she is more likely to indulge in purposely interacting with others online (Dhir et al., 2021). This relationship can also be reciprocal, which means that not only does using excessive social media leads to more FOMO but prolonged experience of FOMO might also lead to increased problematic social media use (Fioravanti et al, 2021).

This association between FOMO and Social Media can be a problematic one, as it might lead to increased usage of social media along with detrimental effects for an individual such as lowered self-evaluation. The association between these three can be a scope for future research studies to focus on.

Conclusion

Webster dictionary defines social media as a form of electronic communication in which individuals create communities online and share variety of information, ideas, messages, and other content such as videos, images, audios etc. Excessive use of social media leads to FOMO which can be defined as "a pervasive apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent". This association between FOMO and Social Media can be a problematic one, as it might lead to increased usage of social media along with detrimental effects such as depression, anxiety and other mental health issues, which should be tackled through various different interventions. Future work should focus on conducting empirical research on FOMO and Social Media along with understanding how it may impact an individual and their evaluation of self

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