

Fear of Missing Out and Academic Motivation: Mediating Role of Social Media Engagement Among Undergraduate Students

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Abstract:

Purpose – Recently, the emphasis and effect of modern technologies, digital distractions, and social media have been claimed. Therefore, the Academic performance at the higher education level is considered a key for decision-making in our competitive working society. It has been linked to students' demographic background, college environment, and student outcomes measured by knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors. Furthermore, students' academic performance is measured by their total grade point average. Several factors that might influence students' academic performance (as measured by the total GPA) include their level of satisfaction, skills and competencies, lifestyle, learning environment, study skills, study habits, sleeping habits, study motivation, and alienation from the social environment. Additionally, they have negative consequences for psychological and mental health conditions, including compulsive behaviors, techno stress, addictive behaviors, nomophobia, and the fear of missing out.

Design/ Methodology/ Approach – In this study, the data for academic motivation and social media engagement were collected from 150 undergraduate students using the Student Course Engagement Questionnaire (SCEQ), which are self-reported instruments.

Findings – FOMO will be considered as one of the factors that might affect students' reactions, responses, and behaviors. The findings suggest that FOMO plays a significant role in shaping students' engagement with social media, which in turn affects their academic motivation.

Originality Value – The study aims to examine the mediating impact of social media engagement on the relationship between FOMO and academic motivation of undergraduate students.

Keywords- *Fear of Missing Out, Academic Motivation, social media engagement, social connections, behavior.*

Introduction

Modern technologies, such as smartphones and their applications, provide society with enormous benefits, and have become essential rather than accessories. Additionally, we use them to conduct meaningful tasks relating to text messages, phone calls, emails, entertainment, and social connections [1,2] and they have a modern role in digital medical technology, such as telemedicine, web-based medical analysis, and remote medical monitoring [3]. However, the unfavorable side of smartphone use is the risk of adverse physical health conditions due to their electromagnetic fields and wireless connection [4]. Additionally, they have negative consequences for psychological and mental health conditions, including compulsive behaviors, techno stress, addictive behaviors, nomophobia, and the fear of missing out [5,6,7,8]. Unlike computers and laptops, smartphones have low power consumption, are easily managed, and constitute a rich medium for connecting socially to the entire world in many forms through numerous social applications such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram [9]. This may lead individuals to care excessively about others' thoughts, feelings, and behaviors [10] and compare their own lives and achievements with others [11]. Indeed, their lack of linear connections in the real world and the current trend of bonding via updated statuses, profiles, likes, and posts to connect continually to others may lead individuals to FOMO on updates and social news. FOMO is characterized by the

tendency of individuals to remain strongly connected to others' behavior and thoughts [10]. In this sense, while affected people do not like to be uninformed of current events, social rejection by others can lead to either physical or social distress [12].

Students justify their prolonged use of smartphone devices for information, social connection, academic tasks, and entertainment [1]

Related work

Several studies have examined the relationship between social media usage, psychological wellbeing, and academic performance among students.

Tarantino, McDonough, and Hua (2013) emphasized that social media engagement can enhance collaborative learning and student interaction. Alt (2015) identified that students often use social media during class hours for non-academic activities, negatively affecting academic focus. Rogers and Barber (2019) highlighted the relationship between FOMO, tele pressure, and poor sleep hygiene among university students.

Hetz, Dawson, and Cullen (2015) found that FOMO significantly influences students' social interactions and study-abroad experiences. Zhou (2019) established a relationship between FOMO, acceleration feeling, and permanent online engagement among university students in China. Similarly, Alt and Boniol-Nissim (2018) concluded that FOMO mediates the relationship between problematic internet use and poor learning approaches.

Several researchers also examined the influence of social media usage on academic performance. Owusu-Acheaw and Larson (2015) reported that excessive social media use negatively affects academic achievement. Wang et al. (2019) identified FOMO as a mediator between envy and problematic smartphone use.

The literature further suggests that social media addiction and constant smartphone usage contribute to academic distraction, multitasking, and reduced cognitive capacity. Despite these studies, there remains a lack of focused empirical research examining the mediating role of social media engagement between FOMO and academic motivation in the Indian higher education context.

Table 1: Comparison of Related Study

Authors/Studies	Focus on FOMO	Social Media Engagement	Academic Motivation	Student Behavior
[1] Tarantino et al. (2013)	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
[2] Alt (2015)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
[3] Rogers & Barber	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
[4] Owusu-Acheaw & Larson (2015)	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
[5] Wang et al. (2019)	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
This study	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Key Contribution

The present study contributes to the existing body of knowledge in the following ways:

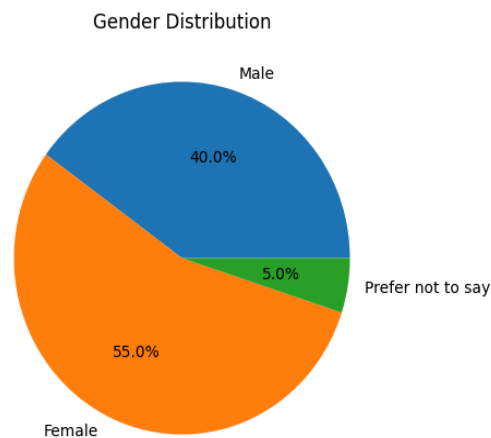
1. It examines the relationship between FOMO and academic motivation among undergraduate students.
2. It analyses the mediating role of social media engagement in influencing academic motivation.
3. It provides empirical evidence from the Indian higher education context, particularly Bangalore.
4. It highlights the psychological and behavioral implications of excessive smartphone and social media usage.
5. It offers recommendations for educational institutions and policymakers to encourage responsible digital engagement among students.

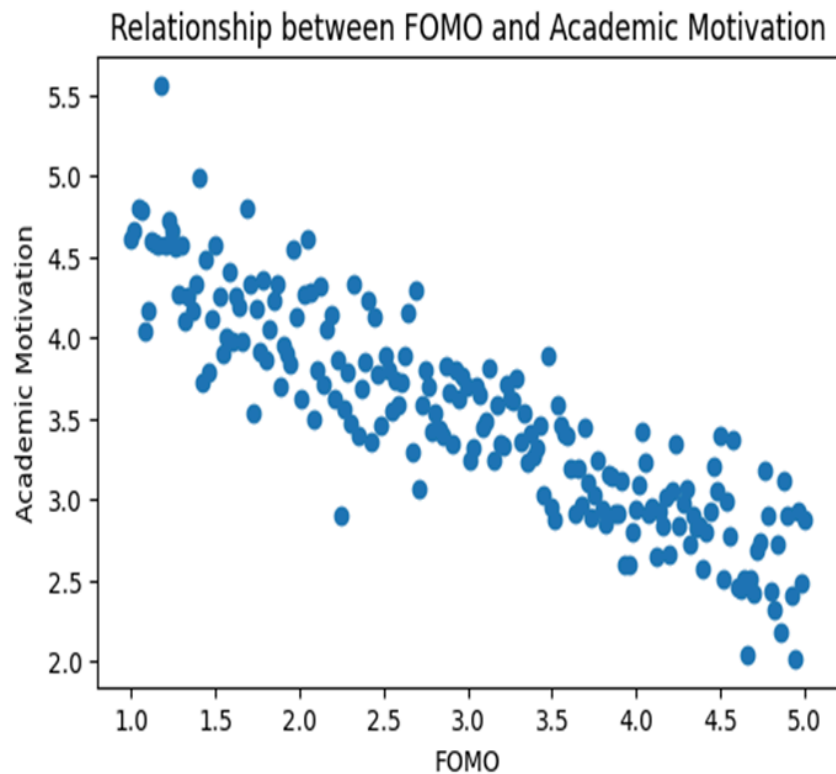
Method, Experiments and Results

The study adopted a descriptive research design to examine the relationship between Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), social media engagement, and academic motivation.

Sample and Data Collection

The study collected primary data from 150 undergraduate students in Bangalore using structured questionnaires. The Student Course Engagement Questionnaire (SCEQ) and self-reported scales related to FOMO and social media engagement were used for data collection.





Discussions

The findings of the present study indicate that FOMO is an important psychological factor influencing undergraduate students' social media behavior and academic motivation. Students with higher levels of FOMO tend to spend more time on social networking platforms to remain socially connected and updated.

Excessive social media engagement contributes to distractions, interrupted learning, multitasking behavior, and reduced concentration during academic activities. This supports the findings of previous studies that identified smartphone addiction and social media overuse as factors negatively affecting academic performance.

The study also highlights that social media engagement acts as a mediating variable between FOMO and academic motivation. Students experiencing high FOMO are more likely to engage excessively with social media, ultimately affecting their motivation toward academic tasks.

The findings emphasize the need for educational institutions to promote digital well-being awareness, responsible social media usage, and healthy study habits among students.

Conclusions

1. **Problem Statement Addressed:** The study examined the impact of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) on academic motivation among undergraduate students and analysed the mediating role of social media engagement.
2. **Method Used:** A descriptive research design was adopted using questionnaires administered to 150 undergraduate students in Bangalore.
3. **Key Findings:** The study found that FOMO significantly influences social media engagement, which in turn negatively affects students' academic motivation and concentration.
4. **Limitations and Future Scope:** The study is limited to undergraduate students in Bangalore. Future studies may include larger samples, comparative analysis across regions, and additional psychological variables such as anxiety, stress, and personality traits.

Overall, the study concludes that responsible smartphone and social media usage is essential for maintaining students' academic motivation and psychological wellbeing.

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