Impact of FOMO on Mental Health of College Students: An Empirical Investigation

Srijana Karnatak

Asst. Professor, Department of Humanities, Graphic Era Hill University, Dehradun Uttarakhand India

Abstract

FOMO is characterized by anxiety over missing out on experiences and is prevalent among individuals who heavily use social media platforms. FOMO can lead to low motivation, lack of sleep, risky behaviors, anxiety, and depression. College students, in particular, are highly susceptible to FOMO due to their active engagement with social media and the vibrant social scene on campus. Factors such as constant exposure to idealized images, seeking validation through likes and comments, and the pressure to attend social events contribute to the development of FOMO. The consequences of FOMO include increased stress levels, anxiety, feelings of inadequacy, loneliness, sleep disturbances, poor academic performance, and negative mood changes. Furthermore, FOMO can lead to distracted driving and learning, as well as substance abuse. To address the rising levels of FOMO, strategies such as digital detoxification, media literacy, setting limits on social media usage, promoting resilience and self-esteem, and creating supportive campus environments are suggested. By implementing these measures, the detrimental effects of FOMO can be mitigated, and college students can experience improved mental health and well-being.

Keywords – FOMO, Social Media, Social Media Detoxification, Mental health, Smartphones

Introduction

While integrating modern technology to our lives has many benefits, it has some major setbacks too. Smartphones and their applications, for example, have become necessities rather than accessories because of the huge benefits they bring to society and everyone's day to day life. They also play a crucial part in contemporary digital medical technologies, including telemedicine, web-based medical analysis, and remote medical monitoring. We utilize them to perform significant tasks related to messaging, phone calls, emails, entertainment, and social relationships. However, due to their electromagnetic fields and wireless connections, smartphones have an unfavorable effect on our physical and mental health. They also have detrimental effects on disorders related to the mind and body, such as obsessive behaviors, technological stress, addictive behaviors, nomophobia, and the fear of missing out (FOMO) (Wolniewicz, 2018). FOMO is defined as the anxiety associated with not knowing about or missing out on information, occasions, adventures, or life choices that could improve one's lot in life. In today's world FOMO in teenagers has increased exponentially because of excess use of smartphones and social media. Smartphones, as opposed to PCs and laptops, are lightweight, easy to use and access, and provide a rich medium for social connections to the entire world through a variety of social apps like Facebook, YouTube, Snapchat and Instagram. Because of excess exposure to these apps people have started caring not only about their looks but also how others are living their life. As a result, people could become overly concerned with the ideas, feelings, and actions of other people and start evaluating their own accomplishments and way of life in comparison to others. Because of this comparison of one's life with another, the feeling of FOMO can generate. FOMO is characterized by people's propensity to continue to feel closely connected to the actions and ideas of others (Przybylski, 2013). In this regard, social rejection by others can cause either physical or social distress, even though affected persons do not wish to be ignorant of current affairs. Studies looking into this issue have connected FOMO with low motivation, lack of sleep, risky drinking behaviors, anxiety, and depression. This feeling of FOMO is most observed in college students, because of the amount of time they spend on their phones for either academic or entertainment purposes (Alt, 2015). Students could feel cut off from real-world social interactions in the social media realm and long for connections that are different from those they actually experience.

Students become more self-conscious about how they exhibit themselves as a result of the possibility for self-expression and self-presentation offered by social media in today's environment.

Literature Review

Fear of missing out (FoMO), which is also known as anxiety of missing out in some research, is the worry that one may miss out on someone else's fresh experiences. It is a type of anxiety. In recent years, FOMOs impact on people's mental and physical health have started to gain more and more attention. Addictions to mobile phones and the Internet, phubbing behavior, poor sleep quality, narcissism, and other maladaptive behaviors are common in people with high levels of FoMO. Many studies have shown how common FOMO is among college students. College students are particularly susceptible to FOMO since social media is such a big part of their everyday lives. On social media sites like Instagram, Snapchat, and Facebook, there is a steady stream of postings, updates, and images that leads to a persistent feeling of missing out on chances, events, or social gatherings. Understanding FOMO's causes is essential to understanding how it affects mental health. When it comes to college student, social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter are heavily used by college students. These sites offer a continuous stream of peer updates and postings that highlight their social successes, interesting adventures, and ostensibly content lifestyles (Oberst, 2016). People may compare their own lives to the glamorous and adventurous lives depicted online as a result of their regular exposure to these edited and frequently idealized images. The idea that they are missing out on something more thrilling or gratifying might lead to feelings of inadequacy brought on by this continual comparison. Apart from this, platforms for social media provide a number of ways to look for validation, including likes, comments, shares, and following (Abel, 2016). The peer-to-peer connections on social media are a source of the social approbation and acknowledgement that college students frequently want and seek. Their worry of not being socially accepted or appreciated by their generation might grow worse when they think that others are receiving more attention or engagement on their postings and stories. This leads to creation of FOMO in their minds as anxiety and FOMO are caused by the fear of missing out on these beneficial social contacts.

The dynamic college life can also be a reason for FOMO as college campuses are renowned for having active and dynamic social scenes with a wide variety of activities, gatherings, organizations, and events. In order to fit in and be accepted as part of the social system, students could feel under pressure to attend every social event or take part in a variety of extracurricular activities. The dread of missing out on these occasions because of other obligations, not receiving an invitation, or not knowing about them might be a factor in increasing their FOMO. Many studies have also shown that a person's friend circle is also crucial and a toxic friend circle might lead to creation of FOMO. This may happen from the fear of being left out from one's own friend circle. In college, people work hard to make acquaintances and develop their social networks. A severe experience of FOMO might result from the dread of being left out or excluded from social groups, activities and gatherings. Students may have a sensation of exclusion or worry about being forgotten if they see their classmates, friends and acquaintances participating in social activities without them. Social media posts highlighting these meetings and activities may increase this concern and lead to creation of FOMO in the mind of the individual (Elhai, 2016). College campuses are vibrant places where many different activities take place at once. It might be difficult for students to stay on top of everything that's going on because of the sheer volume of events, parties, clubs, and organizations. They can be concerned about passing up special occasions, enjoyable activities, or prospective networking chances. When individuals learn about or witness other people taking part in events, they were unaware of or unable to attend, their dread is heightened.

It is important to know the effects of FOMO on one's health. College students who experience FOMO report higher levels of stress, anxiety, and sadness. A continual sense of urgency brought on by the dread of losing out might increase stress levels in them. The continual urge to be connected and informed causes anxiety, which manifests as a worry about falling behind socially in life. As people compare themselves to others and believe their own lives to be less exciting or satisfying, FOMO can also lead to feelings of inadequacy, loneliness, and lower life satisfaction. FOMO has an effect that goes beyond mental health. For those who are suffering FOMO, sleep problems such trouble getting asleep or interrupted sleep

patterns have been noted. The results of various studies have shown a negative and substantial association between the amount of sleep students get and their level of FOMO; the less sleep students get, the more FOMO they experience. Healthy sleep patterns can be hampered by continual social media use and the anxiety that comes with missing out on updates, which can lead to exhaustion and poor cognitive performance (Adams, 2020). FOMO may also have an impact on academic achievement. Reduced attention, lower motivation, and poor academic achievement might result from continual social media distraction, obsession, and fear of missing out on social activities. Students may put their smartphones in vibration mode so they can respond to texts immediately; for many, social media may be linked to their sleep schedule and daily routine (Scott, 2018). It may be difficult for students to prioritize their studies and devote enough time and effort to their academic obligations. Hence there may be a relation to low GPA in college, FOMO and bad sleeping patterns. It has also been shown that FOMO can be linked to mood changes, loneliness, inferiority complexes, low self-esteem, severe social anxiety, and higher degrees of despair and negativity. Not only this, Teenagers who obsessively worry about what other people are doing just miss out on their own life much more. In actuality, FOMO keeps individuals from turning within and keeps them looking outward. They could therefore battle with poor self-esteem and lose their sense of identity as a result. Not only this but, in order to keep up with friends or celebrities they follow on social media, kids may also feel compelled to take drugs or alcohol (Riordan, 2015). Distracted driving and distracted learning are additional effects of FOMO. Teenagers who experienced significant levels of FOMO, for instance, are more likely to check their social media accounts while in class or behind the wheel. Additionally, they were more likely to text while driving.

It is really important to cure increasing levels of FOMO. Promoting digital detoxification is one useful strategy. Students must be urged to take frequent breaks from social media and partake in offline pursuits that foster self-care, relaxation, and direct social engagement (Syvertsen, 2019). Setting limits for social media usage and setting set times or zones when screens are prohibited might help lessen the tension and anxiety brought on by FOMO. It is crucial to encourage media literacy and responsible usage of social media. College students may be empowered to use social media platforms in a healthier way by being informed about the possible hazards, developing critical thinking abilities, and being encouraged to participate with social media on purpose. They can develop the ability to choose their content more carefully and stop constantly comparing themselves to others. Another important component of reducing the effects of FOMO is developing resilience and self-esteem. Programmes and seminars that improve students' resiliency, self-esteem, and self-acceptance might be implemented to lessen their vulnerability to FOMO and its detrimental effects (Basiroen, 2018). Giving kids the resources, they need to build a good self-concept, practice self-compassion, and value their individual talents and accomplishments will improve their mental health in general. Additionally, it is crucial to create supportive settings on college campuses. To assist battle feelings of loneliness and deal with FOMO-related issues, peer support networks, mentoring programmes, and clubs or organizations that promote inclusion and a sense of belonging can all be established. It is possible to offer alternate forms of validation and lessen dependency on social media for social approval by encouraging students to actively engage in campus activities and encouraging genuine social connections.

Objectives of the study:
To measure the impact of FOMO on mental health of the college students

Research Methodology:
This study nature is empirical. 190 respondents were approached to give their view on the impact of FOMO on mental health of the college students. The data was analyzed through frequency distribution and data was presented with the help of pie charts.

Data Analysis and Interpretation:

Table 1 Leads to low motivation

Particulars	Agree	Disagree	Can't Say	Total
Respondents	175	13	7	190
% age	90.0	7.0	3.0	100

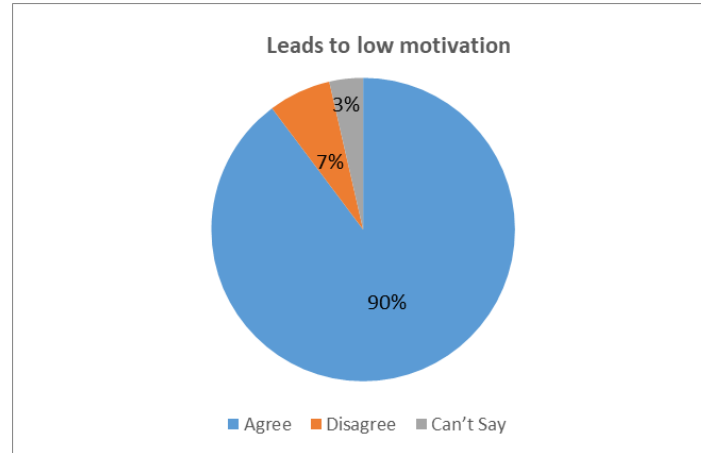Table 1 represents the statement **leads to low motivation** and 90.0% respondents admit with this statement.

Figure 1Leads to low motivation

Table 2 Lack of sleep

Particulars	Agree	Disagree	Can't Say	Total
Respondents	169	16	5	190
% age	89.0	8.0	3.0	100

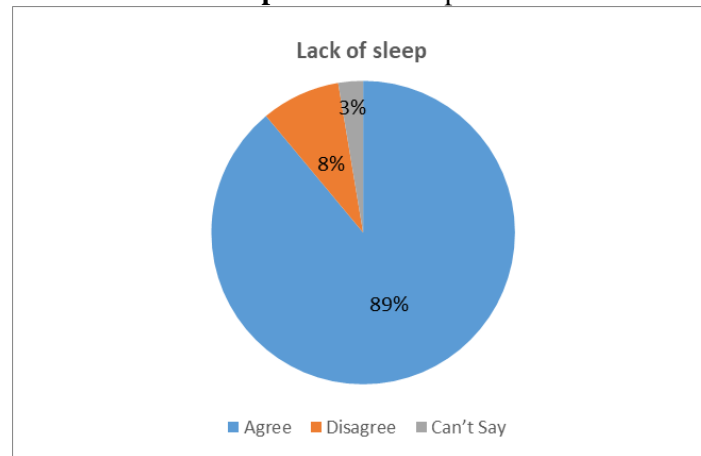Table 2 represents the statement **lack of sleep**and 89.0% respondents admit with this statement.

Figure 2 Lack of sleep
Table 3 Risky behaviors observed in students

Particulars	Agree	Disagree	Can't Say	Total
Respondents	163	20	7	190
% age	86.0	10.0	4.0	100

Table 3 represents the statement **risky behaviors observed in students**and 86.0% respondents admit with this statement.
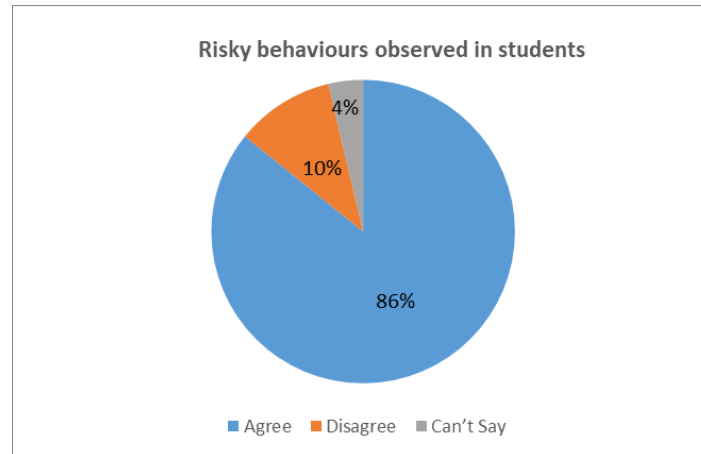
Figure 3 Risky behaviors observed in students
Table 4 Lead to anxiety and depression

Particulars	Agree	Disagree	Can't Say	Total
Respondents	178	11	6	190
% age	91.0	6.0	3.0	100

Table 4 represents the statement **leads to anxiety and depression**and 91.0% respondents admit with this statement.
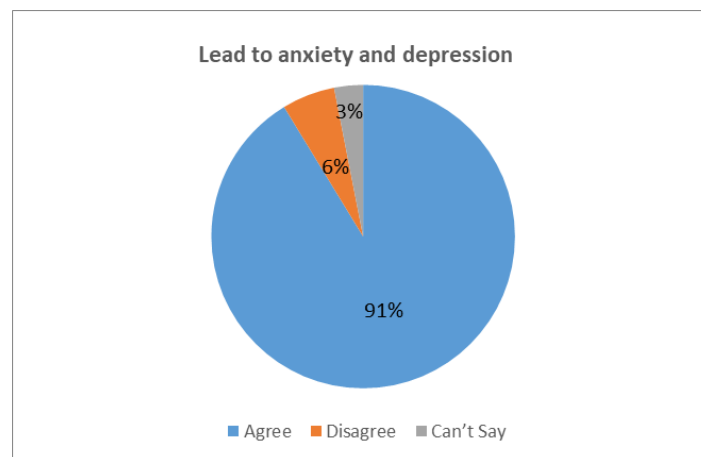

Figure 4 Lead to anxiety and depression
Table 5 Poor academic performances

Particulars	Agree	Disagree	Can't Say	Total
Respondents	182	9	4	190
% age	93.0	5.0	2.0	100

Table 5 represents the statement **poor academic performances** and 93.0% respondents admit with this statement. Considering all the responses of the statements, it was found that to a good percentage, the respondents have agreed that FOMO has great impact on students mental health.
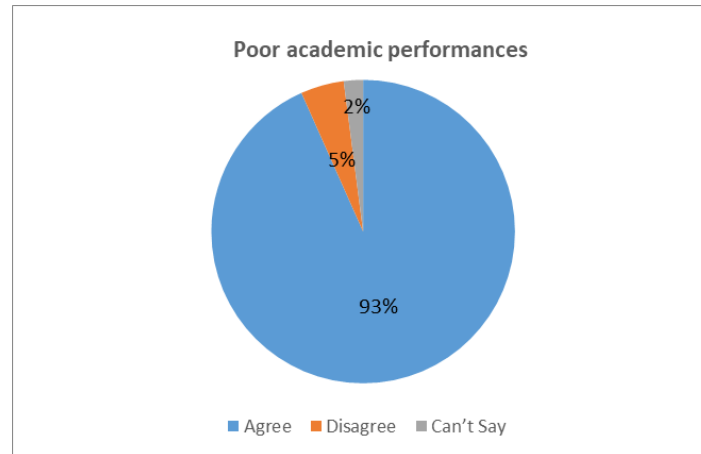
Figure 5 Poor academic performances

Conclusion

In conclusion, the widespread use of smartphones and social media has led to a significant increase in Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) among college students. FOMO negatively impacts mental and physical health, causing stress, anxiety, sleep problems, and academic challenges. To address this issue, promoting digital detoxification, responsible social media usage, resilience, and self-esteem is crucial. Creating supportive campus environments and encouraging offline engagement can also mitigate the detrimental effects of FOMO. By taking these steps, we can help students develop a healthier relationship with technology and prioritize their well-being.

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