

Social media usage and fear of missing out (FoMO) among college students: A quantitative study in Kerala

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Abstract

Over the past decade, the constant increase in social media use has made college students to choose it as a primary way of interacting. In addition to the link between social media use and poor mental health, studies show that college students are struggling in maintaining social media sustainability. Given the documented emotional and psychological effects of social media use, it is crucial to understand psychological mechanisms associated with social media use with harmful effects. Therefore, the aim of the study is to assess the social media influence and FoMO among college students. The study adopted quantitative descriptive research design. The participants were selected using the online survey method and two hundred fifty college students participated in the study. The data was collected using the Demographic and Social Media Usage Questionnaire, Social Media Use Integration Scale and Fear of Missing Out Scale. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the quantitative data. The study results show that there is a strong correlation between FoMO and Social Media Use. The test result also shows no relationship between gender with FoMO [P -value .304] and Social Media Use [P - Value.228]. Also, no relationship was found between education qualifications

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with FOMO [P – Value.155]. Besides, there is an association between education qualification and social media use [P-value. 011].

Keywords: Fear of Missing Out, College Students, Social Media Use, Mental Health, Social Rejection

People have a fundamental need to establish and maintain social ties with others: participation in social media is seen as a practical way to meet such social needs, while promoting a sense of belonging and a meeting on cohesion (Chiou et al., 2015). The purpose of social media is to simplify communication between people. Social networks like Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat and Instagram aim to remove the boundaries of geographic distance and create many social relationships that people can connect to at any time (Twenge, 2017). By promoting deeper relationships through constant relationships, it is possible to continue connecting with others to avoid the discomfort of social segregation, loneliness and isolation (Twenge, 2017). The expected benefits of using social media are particularly attractive as college students adapt to new environments. New stressors and adult responsibility often arise when adapting to college life (Drouin et al., 2018). As a result, college students see social media as an integral part of their social life and show their penchant for social media interaction and interest in face-to-face dating (Twenge, 2017). The desire for useful social interaction does not come from social networks (Begley, 2017). The motives for creating social contacts have evolutionary roots, and as a result, people have an innate desire to accept and belong that promotes survival (Twenge, 2017).

There are signs that the use of social media does not provide this expected income support and has quite negative consequences (Ryan et al., 2017). College students are increasingly replacing face-to-face contact with virtual interactions and creating voids of meaningful emotional connection that has been associated with loneliness, anxiety, and depression, declining self-esteem, di-

inished connection to peers, poor subjective well-being, and sensitivity to social exclusion (Cain, 2018).

People have the basic needs of socialisation. Social media is seen as an attractive and effective way to gain social acceptance and belonging, but the negative psychological consequences of social exclusion are easy to experience. College students say they feel madness, segregation, pain and fear when they cannot join social media accounts (Begley, 2017) in other words; separation hinders the need to be a part of it (Twenge, 2017). To relieve the anxiety caused by thwarted belonging, information is shared on social media to feel noticed, validated, liked, and avoid feelings of social exclusion (Dossey, 2014). Checking social media can also be a negative experience as individuals anxiously wait for people to like and comment on their posts. Getting fewer likes and comments compared to a person's social media contacts is also a source of stress (Begley, 2017; Twenge, 2017). In addition, people feel compelled to browse endless streams of blog posts, tweets, feeds, photos, videos, and comments to not miss out on potentially rewarding social experiences (Begley, 2017). This compulsive control of social media has recently been referred to in the literature as fear of absence (Przybylski et al., 2013).

The fear of missing out is defined as a worry of maintaining constant connections to what others are doing; This stems from a persistent fear of being absent or excluded from rewarding social experiences (Przybylski et al., 2013). Studies show that the fear of missing out results from psychological need deficits, including the need to belong, where individuals with unmet psychological needs engage in continuous social surveillance (i.e., using social networking sites for the purpose of tracking and monitoring the behaviours, beliefs, and activities of others) in efforts to fulfil those needs and avoid feeling left out of meaningful social experiences (Oberst et al., 2017). This triggers extreme social surveillance behaviour and forces individuals to track many status updates, photos and videos in their social media contacts to explain social activities that individuals have not been invited (Buglass et even., 2017).

Growing literature shows that the extent to which people fear neglect is different (Przybylski et al., 2013). Those who fear greater involvement in social media abuse are not sure that fear of missing out will force the use of social media, restore social contacts or if social media monitoring is ironic to allow for social exclusion (Buglass et al., 2017). 2018). In addition to evidence of the link between social media use and poor mental health, the study shows that college students are busy maintaining sustainability in social media: both inhibiting academic activity and performance (2018). Much of the research focuses on FOMO's impact on the use of social media. Most of the research on FOMO and social media use comes from Europe, the US, and other developed countries. Therefore, the current study sought to investigate the effects of social media and FOMO among college students in Kerala.

Theoretical-conceptual framework

Self-determination Theory: FOMO was first conceptualized using self-determination theory (SDT), developed by Ryan & Deci and applied by Buglass et al. to understand what drives FOMO. SDT attempts to explain how personality is formed and the psychological needs that drive personality formation. SDT proposes that intrinsic (rather than extrinsic) motivation for reward is essential in promoting mental health and that intrinsic motivation is best promoted when one feels socially connected to others. Therefore, in SDT, social relatedness can drive intrinsic motivation, which can encourage positive mental health. Przybylski et al. applied SDT to FOMO, proposing that FOMO is a negative emotional state resulting from unmet social relatedness needs. The conceptualization that FOMO involves negative effects from unmet social needs is similar to theories about the negative emotional effects of social ostracism

Attribution Theory: The desire to explain the behaviors of others is a reflection of the fact that humans are a fundamentally social species whose survival and success are determined in part by how well they can predict and navigate their social world. Kelley noted that humans are influenced by the real, implied or imagined presence of others.

Methods

The study adopts descriptive research design. Participants are selected using the survey method (a quarter of the data were collected directly from the participants and the remaining data were collected through posting the tool to social media sites). Two hundred fifty college students from the north, south and central parts of Kerala participated in the study. The researchers used Socio-demographic Information and Social Media Use Questionnaire, FoMO Scale (FoMOs), and Social Media Use Integration Scale to collect the data. The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics and qualitative data were analyzed using content analysis.

Ethical consideration: Data was collected through social media platforms, but personal identification details were not collected. Collected data was saved in google drive with password protection. Besides, data were handled only by the researchers. The researchers maintained the confidentiality of the information supplied by research subjects, and the anonymity of the respondents was respected. Also, the researcher got ethical clearance from the researcher's institution.

Results

The current study results show that all the participants are 18-28 years old. The majority (65.6%) of the participants are female, and only 34.4% are male. Besides, 59.2% of participants were graduates, and the rest were postgraduates.

Table 1

Characteristics of the participants

Characteristics		%
Age	18-28	100
Gender	Male	34.4
	Female	65.6
Educational qualifications	Graduation	59.2
	Post-graduation	40.8

Participants were asked to provide information related to their social networking use. About 76.0% of respondents using internet connectivity through mobile internet. 23.6% of the participants used WIFI, and only 0.4% of the respondents' used hotspots for internet connectivity. More than three-quarters of the participants (77.8%) indicated that they used social networking sites to connect with friends and family, 3.6% to interact with fans and followers, 65.4% to gain information about what is going on in the world, and 22.4% choose other reason.

All the participants reported using social networking sites; 89.2% use What's App, 72.8% use YouTube, 62.4% reported having an Instagram account, 41.6% use Facebook, 9.4% reported having a Twitter account, and 30% choose others.

The study results show that 82% of respondents indicated that they use social networking sites 5-7 days per week, 11.2% of participants indicated use 3-5 days per week and only 6.4% participants use 1-3 days per week. Additionally, participants were asked how many times per day they assessed social networking sites, 34.8% indicated more than 20 times per day, 25.8% indicated 6-10 times per day, 18.6% indicated 10-15 times per day, 14.8% indicated 16-20 times per day, 6% participants indicated assessing their social networking sites less than 5 times per day.

Table 2

Social Networking Site Usage Questions

Characteristics	%
Type of Internet Connectivity	
WIFI	23.6
Hotspot	.4
Mobile Internet	76.0
Reasons for Social Networking Use	
To connect with friends / Family	77.8
To interact with fans	3.6
To gain information about what's going on in the world	65.4
Other	22.4

Social Networking Site Used		
	Facebook	41.6
	Twitter	9.4
	YouTube	72.8
	WhatsApp	89.2
	Instagram	62.4
	Others(Specify)	13
Social Networking Use-Days Per Week		
	1-3 days	6.4
	3-5 days	11.2
	5-7 days	82.0
Social Networking Use –Times Per Day		
	Less than 5 times	6.0
	6-10 times	25.8
	10-15 times	18.6
	16-20 times	14.8
	More than 20 times	34.8
Negative Experience on Social Networking Site		
	Yes	30.6
	No	69.4
Response to Negative Experience		
	No response	31.8
	Reported the negative content to an authority figure	18.4
	Other	0.6

Concerning social networking use, participants were asked to respond to the items related to positive and negative content directed to them as young adults on social networking sites. The majority of participants, 69.4%, reported experiencing negative content directed at them as a young adult; 30.6% of participants experienced negative content directed towards them as young adults on social networking sites. Participants who experienced negative content directed at them as young adults were asked to share how they responded to the content and selected multiple choices; 31.8% reported no response,

18.4% reported the negative content to an authority figure, 0.6% of participants reported other reasons

Table 3

Social media usage of the participants

	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
FoMO	27.86	28.00	7.505
Social Media Usage	25.37	25.00	8.516

Raw scores collected were converted to test scores using scale interpretation. The test score results show that the average level of FoMO is 27.86 and Social Media Usage is 25.37 with a standard deviation of ± 7.505 and ± 8.516 , respectively.

Table 4

Association between gender and education with FoMO and Social Media Usage

	FoMO	Social Media Usage
Gender	.304	.228
Education	.155	.011

The Kruskal Wallis Test results show no relationship between gender with FOMO [P -value is 0.304] and Social Media Use [P - Value is 0.228]. Also, there is no relationship between education qualification with FOMO [P -Value is 0.155]. Besides, there is an association between education qualification and social media use [P- value is 0.011].

Table 5

Correlations between Age with FoMO and Social Media Usage

	FoMO	Social Media Usage
Age	-.089	-.055
FoMO	1.000	.590**
Social Media Usage		1.000

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed)

Table 5, indicating Spearman's correlation results show a very weak negative correlation between Age and FoMO [P-Value -0.089]. Also, the result shows that there is a moderately strong positive correlation between FoMO and Social Media Usage [P-Value 0.590]

Discussion

Understanding the relationship between social media use and FoMO helps researchers better explain the importance of social media on psychological function. It provides information on possible interventions against the emerging adult population. The current study is based on more accurate and sophisticated research on the relationship between social media use and mental health outcomes. It is crucial to study the use of social media in young adults with high use of social media. This is the stage of development of stress and significant changes that can predispose emerging adults to experience negative psychological outcomes. Psychological experiences during this period can lead individuals towards future happiness or misery.

A growing literature suggests that social media may be a factor in a university student's poor mental health (Cain, 2018). Studies have shown that young people who use social media are at risk of psychological stress; using three or more social media platforms significantly increased the risk of anxiety and depression compared to those who used fewer platforms (Primack et al., 2017). The use of social media for more than two hours a day than those who use social media less is also associated with reducing mental health outcomes and

psychological stress (Royal Public Health Association, 2017).

In addition to psychological distress, research indicates social media use interferes with academic performance and motivation, as college students who report using social media more often studied fewer hours, had lower grade point averages, and reported lower academic motivation compared to students using social media infrequently (Leyrer-Jackson & Wilson, 2018; Wohn & LaRose, 2014). Paradoxically, college students report using social media as a primary avenue of connecting with people and seeking social support in times of stress while simultaneously acknowledging that social media is a source of stress and anxiety (Begley, 2017; Drouin, Reining, Flanagan, Carpenter, & Toscos, 2018). It is crucial to study how the most important methods of social interaction between college students affect the mental health, academic results and overall happiness of college students.

The current study helps to identify potential risk factors for the development of negative psychological functions in response to the use of social media. In terms of mental health outcomes, the effects can be affected by the identification of measures and emotions can help with prevention and intervention services.

The consequences of depression and anxiety in adulthood have significant medical, academic, economic and social effects. There are two important ways to solve and reduce FoMO among college students. Firstly, by sending a positive message. Secondly, it can motivate and inspire college students to cultivate positive behaviour and prevent them from quickly falling into FoMO. Controlling the use of social media is an effective solution because it is an important part of a person's well-being.

On the other hand, it is still important to limit and control the use of social media. Social media is just one way to meet strict birth standards, but affection must be reduced. This can be achieved by emphasising the importance of using it only for productive purposes, such as maintaining and establishing real relations. It is interesting to study fomo's relationship to other personality

traits such as self-esteem and self-control.

Future research on the effects of social media and Fomo's impact on students is expected to focus on a wider range of students. It is very important to continue research into the direct effect of social media use on the perception of social relationships and cognitive models.

Social exclusion is a painful psychological experience, and the link between social exclusion has been identified as the cause of frustrated cohesion and psychological stress (Gere & MacDonald, 2010). Given the importance of college students on social media, it is important to study the effect and extent of the use of social media on social exclusion. Few studies deal with the relationship between an individual's specific needs and the use of social media (Empire and Warder, 2013). However, no studies have been done to determine whether fear of neglect contributed to a sense of social exclusion (Buglass, 2017). The study helped bridge the gap in the literature by studying the differences between the needs for individual cohesion, fear of neglect and the use of social exemptions that affect college students on social media.

However, findings from this study suggest that overt forms of rejection are not necessary to trigger feelings of social rejection and negative emotional and behavioural reactions; social media played a role in these perceptions and reactions to rejection. Moreover, it is becoming increasingly common practice for students with psychological problems to be assessed for social media addiction (Cain, 2018). One goal of this study was to extend the literature by examining factors that may suggest why social media use has been associated with psychological difficulties.

This study suggests that perceptions of social rejection is one such factor. Campus therapists may find the present study's findings useful insofar as they suggest one way in which thwarted belonging, social media, and fear of missing out caused by social media surveillance may be contributing to feeling socially rejected accompanied by psychological distress. Therefore, this information can be used, for example, to provide appropriate diagnostic and ther-

apeutic strategies. B asks students to engage online and teach them healthy social media habits to promote meaningful social interaction.

Studies should critically investigate the effects of integrating individuals into social networking sites through vertical studies, particularly those most involved in this activity. The current research area does not yet cover Kerala and other Indian researchers. As a result, researchers were unable to find Indian literature related to the use of FoMO and social media among college students in Kerala and India. Due to the epidemic, the researchers collected a quarter of the data directly from the participants. The rest of the data is collected through online platforms using Google forms. Another possible limitation is that people find it difficult to understand real behavior when using investigative tools on a network site. Although interest in studies on this topic has increased (Beyens et al., 2016), researchers are aware that “fear of staying” is a key area to explore. The results of the sex effect as a preacher in the “fear of missing out” have not been confirmed.

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