

Fear of Missing Out (FOMO): A Correlational Study of FOMO, Self-esteem, and Attachment Style

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ABSTRACT

Objective - The primary purpose of the study is to assess the relationships between Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), Self-esteem and attachment style among youth.

Method - An online survey was used to gather information from 103 participants, whose age ranged from 18 to 25 (mean age: 20.67). FOMOs, Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale, Adult Attachment Scale were used to gather information from participants.

Results - The descriptive analysis of all the variables revealed that participants' mean score on FOMO is 22.89 (SD=6.26), self-esteem is 16.59 (SD = 6.59), and on three dimensions of adult attachment scale (AAS); AAS close is 12.36 (SD = 3.1), AAS depend is 18.81 (SD = 3.30), AAS anxiety is 15.63 (SD = 5.1). The results indicates –ve correlation between FOMO and self-esteem i.e. $-.537$, FOMO and AAS anxiety (dimension) is +ve $.544$, significant at 0.01 level. The correlation between self-esteem and AAS anxiety (dimension) is –ve $-.373$ which is significant at 0.01 level.

Discussion – The study revealed a significant connection between young people's anxious attachment style, self-esteem, and FOMO.

Keywords – (Fear of Missing Out) FOMO, self-esteem, attachment style

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Introduction

The concept of "fear of missing out" (FOMO) was developed in 2004 to describe a phenomena that was noticed on SNSs. FOMO consist of two processes; the perception of missing out and the obsessive behavior for maintaining these social connections. It was more commonly used in 2010 (Gupta & Sharma, 2021). It was formally added to the Oxford English Dictionary (Oxford Dictionary) in 2013. As "A pervasive apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent" (Przybylski et al., 2013) called FOMO. It is characterized by the following actions; the worry that others, even close friends, have had more fulfilling life experiences than one have, anxiety that one is missing out on something planned or unplanned and that other people are

having fun without him/her, the necessity of routinely reporting one's own actions, which are typically not constructive. This anxiety creates a space where the person can interact with and keep in touch with their social surroundings so they don't miss anything (Oberst et al., 2017). The person is always curious in what other people are up to, fearing that they will miss something important (Przybylski et al., 2013). Person sense that the experience or the situation he selected is not best optimal level of decision. This lead a person on a self-doubt with the question is "this best choice?" (Milyavskaya et al., 2018). With the use of social networking sites they are aware about what others are doing at every movement in their life. University students engage with their social surroundings, including their classmates, by using

social media programs on a regular basis (Ophus & Abbitt, 2009). According to the studies it was found that social well-being and FOMO are negatively related (Burke et al., 2010), the fulfillment of psychological needs, and overall mood (Przybylski et al., 2013) conscientiousness, emotional strength, improper usage of the internet, and general wellbeing (Bibby & Stead, 2017). In contrast, FOMO is positively related with smartphone use (Elhai et al., 2020) Inappropriate use of Instagram, neuroticism (Balta et al., 2020), and depression (Elhai, Gallinari, et al., 2020), social media engagement (Przybylski et al., 2013).

A person self-esteem play an important role in his own mental health and other aspects of his life. "Self-esteem is the evaluation of one's own worth." Self-esteem is defined as a personal assessment of one's own significance or value as a person (Donnellan et al., 2011). Self-esteem has been a popular topic in psychology for many decades. For example, a person's skills and abilities are not necessarily reflected in their sense of self-worth. In addition, even though the definition of self-esteem is a feeling of acceptance and regard for oneself, having a high sense of self-worth does not always mean that one believes oneself to be better than others (Rosenberg, 2015). It has been reported that disorganized smartphone use is associated with low self-esteem (Hong et al., 2012). Young people with poor self-esteem are more prone to use technology for virtual reality because they feel more comfortable sitting behind screens (Argumosa-Villar et al., 2017). A study revealed that FOMO was negatively associated with self-esteem. Person with high score on FOMO, have low score on self-esteem (Uram & Skalski, 2022).

A special emotional bond based on comfort, care, and enjoyment is called attachment. Affective experiences from childhood are notable for their significant influence on the kind and quality of connections that people form in their adult lives (Sagone et al., 2023). Although John Bowlby is generally recognized as the father of attachment theory, but the origins of attachment study can be found in Freud's theories regarding love. In order to understand human bonding,

Bowlby developed attachment theory, which has a big influence on how psychotherapy is delivered and changed (Bowlby, 2008). Over time, early caregiving experiences develop into internal functional attachment models that are generally stable (Bowlby, 1980). Recent research has shown that attachment has an impact on FOMO and other destructive habits, both directly and indirectly (Wang et al., 2024). Liu & Ma (2019) revealed that insecure attachment was associated with social media use and FOMO.

FOMO and Self-esteem –

Researches so far have demonstrated a connection between unfulfilled psychological demands and fear of missing out (FOMO). Study revealed that FOMO and self-esteem are negatively correlated. Person with high score on FOMO, have low score on self-esteem (Uram & Skalski, 2022). Structural equation model address that the association between higher usage of social media and worse self-esteem is mediated by FOMO (Buglass et al., 2017). Higher level of FOMO and lower level of self-esteem can increase problematic smart phone use (Servidio, 2023). A study revealed that life satisfaction is negatively correlated with problematic usage of smart phone and FOMO, self-esteem, and conscious attention (Weaver & Swank, 2021). On other hand a study revealed that there is no significant correlation between FOMO and social media addiction and FOMO and self-esteem (Garg, 2023). Self-esteem and FOMO or social media addiction do not significantly correlate with each other (Garg & Shourie, 2023). According to Yong & Wijaya (2023), self-esteem is a negatively correlated with FOMO. A longitudinal study by Koppen, (2023) revealed that, after a year, teenagers with higher levels of FOMO had lower levels of self-esteem. Which in turn appear to have a negative impact on life satisfaction later on.

FOMO and Attachment –

Though researches it was demonstrates that anxiety and depression both are associated with FOMO. It was found that FOMO and attachment anxiety are positively correlated (Liu & Ma, 2019). A study

revealed a significant interaction between attachment and FOMO on anxiety levels (Mannion & Nolan, 2020). Holte et al., (2020) showed that anxiety attachment affects the way in which boredom proneness forecasts FOMO. Social media addiction was predicted by attachment anxiety and avoidance, but this association disappeared when FOMO was included (Blackwell et al., 2017). There was a noticeable effect on the relationships between problematic social media use and preoccupied and anxious attachment patterns, and both attachment styles were also correlated with FOMO and self-esteem (Gori et al., 2023). The findings showed that high FOMO levels are predicted by high levels of attachment anxiety (Alfasi, 2021), anxious attachment and SNS (social networking sites) are positively correlated, FOMO indicated a strong positive correlation with both social media addiction and negligent parenting (Boustead & Flack, 2021). Alfasi (2022) revealed a significant correlation between anxious attachment and Facebook fatigue and the relation was mediating by FOMO and Facebook anxiety.

Self-esteem and Attachment -

The relationship between relationship functioning and differences in attachment styles has been a major focus of attachment research. Studies show that stable attachment is directly and positively associated with self-esteem (Bringle & Bagby, 1992). The use of friends and parent's emotional support and proximity was minimally correlated with social competence, coping skills, and general self-esteem (Paterson et al., 1995). The anxiety attachment has been linked to persistent feelings of rejection or abandonment by others, a low sense of self-worth, and an inflated sense of vulnerability (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2002). A study revealed the connection between shame, low self-esteem, and insecure attachment (Wilkinson & Parry, 2004). Findings revealed those who are engaged with secure attachment are healthier in comparison to those who involved in insecure attachments and had

higher self-esteem (Huntsinger & Luecken, 2004). There was a strong correlation found between childhood attachment and psychiatric distress, adult attachment, and self-esteem (Shen et al., 2021). A study revealed that how emotional abuse in childhood impacted self-esteem through both anxious and secure attachment (Liu et al., 2018). Only the preoccupied attachment style appears to be substantially inversely correlated with self-esteem (Ishaq & ul Haque, 2015).

Objectives –

1. To study the correlation between FOMO and self-esteem among participants.
2. To study the correlation between FOMO and attachment styles among participants.
3. To study the correlation between attachment and self-esteem among participants.
4. To study the impact of locality in relation FOMO among participants.

Hypotheses –

1. There would be significant correlation between FOMO and self-esteem among participants.
2. There would be significant correlation between attachment styles (close, depend and anxiety) and FOMO among participants.
3. There would be significant correlation between self-esteem and attachment styles (close, depend and anxiety) among participants.
4. There would be no significant difference of locality in relation to FOMO among participants.

Methodology

Tools –

1. **Fear of Missing Out Scale FOMOs (Przybylski et al., 2013)** - The FOMO scale includes ten items which helps in evaluating

the level of fear of missing out among respondents. People will respond according to what they are experiencing in their everyday life. This is a 5-point Likert scale response format from “Not at all true of me to extremely true of me”. The test-retest reliability of the scale is .63 and Cronbach’s alpha ranging from .87–.91. High scores on a scale indicate higher level of FOMO.

2. **Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (RSES) (Rosenberg, 1965)** – This 10-items test takes into account both positive and negative self-perceptions to determine an individual’s overall sense of worth. Every question has a 4-point Likert scale format for responses from “strongly disagree to strongly agree” and a scoring range from 0 to 3, items 3, 5, 8, 9, and 10 are rated in reverse for these scoring from 3 to 0. RSES scale’s Cronbach’s alpha was 0.81, indicating a good level of internal consistency.
3. **Adult Attachment Scale (AASs) (Collins & Read, 1990)** – The AAS scale have three subscales which are; ANXIETY, DEPEND, and CLOSE and each subscale have six items. This is a 5-point Likert scale response format from “Not at all characteristic of me to Very characteristic of me” and reverse items scoring from 5 to 1. On which dimension an individual have higher score indicate his attachment style. Close, Depend, and Anxiety had Cronbach’s alpha coefficients of .69, .75, and .72, respectively.

Sample -

The data was collected from 103 participants between the age range of 18 – 25 years from two districts Haryana i.e. (Hisar and Bhiwani). The consent was taken from participants, the following

inclusion and exclusion criteria were used to select the sample.

Inclusive criteria –

- Can read and write English and Hindi
- Age range – 18-25 years
- Voluntary participation
- Using smart phone and social networking sites

Exclusive criteria –

- Not willing to participate in the study
- Cannot read and write English and Hindi
- Anyone having any kind of medical illness

Procedure –

For the present study a sample was collected from 103 participants, belonging to age range of 18 – 25 years, from two districts (Hisar and Bhiwani) of Haryana, India. Those who were interesting and willing to be the part of the study were allowed to take part in the study. For the data collection a google form was created which includes “Fear of Missing out Scale (FoMOs) (Przybylski et al., 2013), Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (RSES) (Rosenberg, 1965) and Adult Attachment Scale (AASs) (Collins & Read, 1990).” After the data collection, with the help of SPSS data were analyzed and the result were prepared.

Results –

The current study focused on the relationships between FOMO, self – esteem and attachment style among participants. Participants were between the age ranges 18 – 25 years with mean age of 20.67 years. For all the variables descriptive analyses are indicated in “Table – 1”.

Table – 1 – Descriptive Statistics**Descriptive Statistics**

	N	Mean	
	Statistic	Statistic	Std.
FOMO	103	22.89	6.26
Self-esteem	103	16.59	6.59
AAS close	103	12.36	3.1
AAS depend	103	18.81	3.30
AAS anxiety	103	15.63	5.1
N	103		

“FOMO – Fear of Missing Out”

“AAS – Adult Attachment Scale”

Table – 1’ shows that the descriptive analyses for all the variables. The mean value for FOMO is 22.89 (SD=6.26). The mean value for self-esteem is 16.59 (SD = 6.59). Mean value on three dimensions of adult attachment scale (AAS); AAS close is 12.36 (SD = 3.1), AAS depend is 18.81 (SD = 3.30), AAS anxiety is 15.63 (SD = 5.1).

The strength of the association between the variables is represented by inter correlational matrix which is indicated in “Table -2”.

Table – 2 – Correlation matrix for FOMO, Self-esteem and AAS**Correlations**

		FOMO	Self-esteem	AAS close	AAS depend	AAS anxiety
FOMO	R	1	-.537**	-.060	.012	.544**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.545	.902	.000
	N	103	103	103	103	103
Self esteem	R	-.537**	1	-.043	-.121	-.373**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.664	.224	.000
	N	103	103	103	103	103
AAS close	R	-.060	-.043	1	.342**	-.275**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.545	.664		.000	.005
	N	103	103	103	103	103
AAS depend	R	.012	-.121	.342**	1	-.141
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.902	.224	.000		.155
	N	103	103	103	103	103
AAS anxiety	R	.544**	-.373**	-.275**	-.141	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.005	.155	
	N	103	103	103	103	103

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

“r - Pearson Correlation”

“AAS – Adult Attachment Scale”

As the objective was to see the relation of FOMO with self-esteem and attachment. The 'pearson product moment method of correlation' was used to test the correlation among the variables. 'Table – 2' indicates the inter-correlational matrix for the strength of the relationship among the variables. The value of 'pearson product moment correlation coefficient' for FOMO and Self-esteem is $-.537$ ($r_{\text{fomo-self-esteem}} = -.537$) which is significant at .01 level. The value of $r = -.537$ indicated that FOMO and Self-esteem are significantly and negatively correlated at moderate level. So, our hypothesis that "There would be significant correlation between FOMO and self-esteem." is accepted. Thus, the correlation between

The value of 'pearson product moment method of correlation coefficient' for the correlation between self –esteem and AAS anxiety is $-.373$ which is statistical significant with $p < .01$. Correlation. Therefore, our third hypotheses that is "There would be significant correlation between

FOMO and Self-esteem is statistically significant and negative, with $p < .01$. The results indicates that low level of self – esteem leads to higher level of FOMO. The individual having lower self-esteem would have more fear of missing out.

The value of 'pearson product moment method of correlation coefficient' for the correlation between FOMO and AAS anxiety is $+.544$ which is statistical significant at moderate level. Therefore, our second hypotheses that is "There would be significant correlation between attachment styles (close, depend and anxiety) and FOMO among participants" partially accepted. The results indicates that the higher level anxiety attachment were leads to FOMO.

self –esteem and attachment styles (close, depend and anxiety) among participants." partially accepted. The results indicates that the anxious attachment and self-esteem were negatively correlated. So the anxious attachment further leads to low level of self-esteem.

Table – 3 – Independent sample t-test for FOMO and Locality

Locality	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Difference	Sig.
FOMO Rural	57	23.40	3.35233	1.14264	.430
Urban	46	22.26	4.29038		

Table – 3' it was shows that an independent sample t- test was used to compare the FOMO scores for rural and urban population. The mean score of rural population was 23.40 and for the urban population it was 22.26, which is lower than rural population mean score but the p -value was .430 which is not statistically significant. Therefore, our fourth hypotheses that "There would be no significant difference in FOMO between rural and urban respondents" was accepted. The results indicates that locality has no impact on FOMO.

Discussion –

Now days technology be an important part of our life and use of social media were increase day by day and with the help of internet and social networking sites people are connected with their family and friends, they are aware about what their friends are doing at every movement of life. In today's scenario youth face many a challenges, FOMO is one of them. Literature have also revealed a strong relation between FOMO, self-esteem, use of SNSs, and attachment style.

The results have shown that the correlation between FOMO and Self-esteem is $-.537$ ($p < .01$),

which indicate a moderate level of correlation between the variables. The correlation between FOMO and AAS anxiety is .544 ($p < .01$), which indicates a moderate level of correlation between the variables. The correlation between self-esteem and AAS anxiety is $-.373$ ($p < .01$), which indicates a negative correlation between the variables. The present research contributes to the existing literature on the relationship between FOMO, self-esteem and attachment style among individuals.

Our investigation validates the findings of Yong & Wijaya (2023), FOMO and self-esteem both are negatively correlated. Uram & Skalski, (2022) revealed that FOMO and self-esteem are negatively correlated. Pearson with high score on FOMO, have low score on self-esteem. Researches demonstrates that anxiety and depression are related to FOMO. It was found that FOMO and attachment anxiety are positively correlated (Liu & Ma, 2019). The findings showed that high FOMO levels are predicted by high levels of attachment anxiety (Alfasi, 2021). A study revealed the connection between shame, low self-esteem, and insecure attachment (Wilkinson & Parry, 2004). Study show that stable attachment is correlated with the higher levels of self-esteem (Bringle & Bagby, 1992). The anxiety attachment has been linked to persistent feelings of rejection or abandonment by others, a low sense of self-worth is associated with anxious attachment (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2002). A study revealed that how emotional abuse in childhood impacted self-esteem through both anxious and secure attachment (Liu et al., 2018).

Limitations and directions for future research –

The aim of the study is to evaluate the inter-relationship among FOMO, Self-esteem and attachment style among youth. Because of the study's small sample size, generalization of the findings is limited. The study does not measure gender disparities and age differences. For further research, more sample size can be used to increase the effectiveness of the study.

Major findings of the study -

1. There is a significant and indirect correlation between FOMO and self-esteem.
2. There is a satisfactory correlation between FOMO and AAS anxiety (dimension).
3. There is a satisfactory correlation between self-esteem and AAS anxiety (dimension).

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