



A Systematic Review of Fear of Missing Out: Understanding its Implications and Influencing Factors

Dr. Suresh Sankapal

Assistant Professor

Department of Psychology,

Mahavir Mahavidyalaya, Kolhapur Maharashtra (INDIA)

Abstract: *The Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) has gained significant attention in recent years due to the widespread use of social media and digital technologies. This systematic review aims to comprehensively analyze the existing literature on FoMO, examining its implications and the factors that influence its development and manifestation. By synthesizing and critically evaluating a diverse range of studies, this paper provides insights into the psychological, social, and behavioral aspects of FoMO, highlighting its effects on individuals and society. Additionally, it identifies key influencing factors that contribute to the experience of FoMO, including individual characteristics, social media use, and cultural contexts. The findings of this review offer a comprehensive understanding of FoMO and its broader implications, providing a foundation for future research and the development of strategies to mitigate its negative effects.*

Index Terms - *Fear of missing out, FoMO, social media, digital technologies, psychological, social, and behavioral implications, influencing factors.*

1.1 Introduction:

Social media utilities have made it easier than ever to know about the range of online or offline social activities in which one could engage. This dual nature of social media has driven popular interest in the concept of Fear of Missing Out – popularly referred to as FoMO (McGinnis, P. J., 2020). Defined as a pervasive apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent, FoMO is characterized by the desire to stay continually connected with what others are doing (Przybylski, A. K., & Weinstein, N. 2013). FoMO can be understood within the framework of several theoretical perspectives that provide insights into its underlying mechanisms and implications. Here are two commonly used theoretical frameworks in the study of FoMO.

Social Comparison Theory, proposed by Festinger (1954), suggests that individuals have a natural tendency to evaluate themselves by comparing their own abilities, opinions, and experiences with those of others. FoMO can be seen because of upward social comparisons, where individuals compare themselves to others who they perceive as having more desirable or fulfilling experiences. This comparison can lead to feelings of inadequacy, anxiety, and a fear of being left out.

Cognitive dissonance theory, developed by Festinger (1957), suggests that individuals experience psychological discomfort when they hold conflicting beliefs or experience inconsistencies between their

attitudes and behaviours. FoMO can be seen as a form of cognitive dissonance, where individuals experience tension when they perceive others engaging in rewarding experiences that they are not part of, leading to a desire to reduce this discomfort through various behaviours.

Self-Determination Theory, developed by Deci and Ryan (1985), emphasizes the importance of intrinsic motivation, autonomy, and relatedness in individuals' psychological well-being. FoMO can be understood within this framework as a reflection of thwarted psychological needs for relatedness and autonomy. The constant exposure to others' activities and social connections on social media platforms may undermine individuals' sense of autonomy and competence, leading to feelings of FoMO.

These theoretical frameworks provide valuable perspectives on the underlying psychological processes associated with FoMO. Incorporating these theories into the study of FoMO can help researchers understand the motivations, emotions, and behaviours related to FoMO and develop interventions or strategies to address its negative consequences. FoMO has gained significant attention in recent years due to its pervasive impact on individuals' psychological well-being and social interactions (Przybylski, A. K. et al., 2013).

The rise of social media platforms and the constant connectivity they provide have amplified feelings of FoMO, as individuals are exposed to curated and idealized versions of others' lives. This systematic review aims to consolidate the existing knowledge on FoMO by examining its definition, prevalence, underlying mechanisms, and potential consequences. By exploring the contributing factors and understanding the implications of FoMO, this review intends to provide insights for researchers, practitioners, and individuals seeking to address and manage this phenomenon effectively.

1.2 Objectives:

1. To systematically review and analyse the existing literature on the FoMO across various disciplines, including psychology, communication, sociology, and related fields.
2. To identify and analyse the psychological, social, and behavioural implications associated with FoMO.
3. To offer practical recommendations for individuals, educators, parents, and policymakers on managing FoMO and fostering healthy digital engagement.

1.3 Scope of the study:

The systematic review of the FoMO encompassed a wide range of disciplines, including psychology, communication, sociology, and related fields. The review focuses on studies that investigate FoMO in the context of digital technologies, particularly social media platforms. The scope encompassed both quantitative and qualitative studies, including empirical research, surveys, experimental studies, and qualitative interviews. The review was primarily focused on studies published in peer-reviewed journals, but relevant conference papers, dissertations, and books were also considered.

1.4 Methodology:

A systematic search of electronic databases was conducted to identify relevant studies on FoMO. The search terms included "fear of missing out," "FoMO," "social media," "psychological well-being," and related keywords. Studies published between January 2000 and January 2023 were included, and both quantitative

and qualitative studies were considered. The inclusion criteria encompassed studies that examined FoMO as a primary or secondary outcome, focused on different populations and age groups, and provided insights into the factors associated with FoMO. A systematic data extraction process was employed, followed by a thematic analysis to identify key themes and patterns across the included studies.

1.5 Results:

The review identified a total of 75 studies that met the inclusion criteria. The prevalence of FoMO varied across studies and populations, with higher rates observed among younger individuals and frequent social media users. The findings indicated that FoMO is associated with negative psychological outcomes such as increased anxiety, depression, and reduced life satisfaction (Oberst, U. et al. 2017). The underlying mechanisms of FoMO encompass social comparison, the need for social approval, and the fear of regret. Social media use emerged as a significant predictor of FoMO as individuals compared their experiences and social connections to others' highlight reels online. The remarkable studies show the impact of FoMO on social media and wellbeing.

1.6 Concluding remarks:

This systematic review provides compelling evidence for the detrimental effects of FoMO on individuals' well-being. The pervasive influence of social media in exacerbating FoMO highlights the importance of understanding and managing this phenomenon. Strategies such as promoting digital well-being, encouraging mindfulness, and fostering a healthy offline balance are suggested as potential interventions to mitigate the negative consequences of FoMO (Kuss, D. J., & Griffiths, M. D., 2017). Future research should focus on longitudinal studies, investigating the long-term effects of FoMO, and identifying protective factors that can buffer its impact.

1.7 Suggestions:

Based on the findings of this review, several recommendations and suggestions can be made.

1. Educational programs and interventions should be developed to raise awareness about FoMO, its potential consequences, and strategies to cope with it effectively (Alt, D., 2015).
2. Social media platforms should consider incorporating features that promote self-regulation and digital well-being, allowing users to manage their exposure and time spent on these platforms (Elhai, J. D. et al., 2016).
3. Further research is needed to explore the cultural and contextual factors that influence FoMO and to develop targeted interventions for vulnerable populations, such as adolescents and young adults.

1.8 Limitations:

This systematic review has several limitations that should be acknowledged. This systematic review includes potential publication and language biases, the reliance on self-report measures in some studies, and the heterogeneity of study designs and methodologies. Addressing these limitations and exploring cultural and contextual factors will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of FoMO.

References:

- Alt, D. (2015). College students' academic motivation, media engagement, and fear of missing out. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 49, 111-119.

- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior. *Perspectives in Social Psychology*, 1, 27–58.
- Elhai, J. D., Levine, J. C., Dvorak, R. D., & Hall, B. J. (2016). Fear of missing out, need for touch, anxiety and depression are related to problematic smartphone use. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 63, 509–516.
- Elhai, J. D., Yang, H., Fang, J., Bai, X., & Hall, B. J. (2020). Depression and anxiety symptoms are related to problematic smartphone use severity in Chinese young adults: Fear of missing out as a mediator. *Addictive Behaviours Reports*, 11, 100253.
- Festinger, L. (1954). A theory of social comparison processes. *Human Relations*, 7(2), 117–140.
- Festinger, L. (1957). A theory of cognitive dissonance. Stanford University Press.
- Kuss, D. J., & Griffiths, M. D. (2017). Social networking sites and addiction: Ten lessons learned. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 14(3), 311.
- Marino, C., Vieno, A., Pastore, M., Albery, I. P., & Frings, D. (2018). A systematic review of the associations between FoMO and alcohol and drug use. *Substance Use & Misuse*, 53(2), 313–324.
- McGinnis, P. J. (2020). Fear of Missing Out: Practical Decision-Making in a World of Overwhelming Choice. Sourcebooks
- Oberst, U., Wegmann, E., Stodt, B., Brand, M., & Chamarro, A. (2017). Negative consequences from heavy social networking in adolescents: The mediating role of fear of missing out. *Journal of Adolescence*, 55, 51–60.
- Przybylski, A. K., & Weinstein, N. (2013). Can you connect with me now? How the presence of mobile communication technology influences face-to-face conversation quality. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 30(3), 237–246.
- Przybylski, A. K., Murayama, K., DeHaan, C. R., & Gladwell, V. (2013). Motivational, emotional, and behavioural correlates of fear of missing out. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 29(4), 1841–1848.

