

Fear of Missing Out and Social Media Addiction among youth in Pakistan: a cross-sectional analysis

Sheh Noor, Syeda Qurat ul Ain, Bareera Bibi

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Author Information

Dr. Sheh Noor

House officer
Hayatabad Medical Complex
Peshawar, Khyber
Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan
(Corresponding author)
Email: shehsartaj@gmail.com

Dr. Syeda Qurat ul Ain

House officer
Lady Reading Hospital
Peshawar, Khyber
Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

Dr. Bareera Bibi

House Officer
Hayatabad Medical Complex
Peshawar, Khyber
Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Background: In contemporary society, social media assumes a pivotal function in our daily lives. Its frequent and daily use is giving rise to what we call “Social Media Addiction” (SMA). The usage of online networking platforms on a regular and frequent basis is really predicted by the Fear of Missing Out (FoMO). The youth’s frequent usage of social media has recently grown to be a serious problem.

Objectives: To determine the association between Fear of Missing Out and Social Media Addiction among a sample of the youth of Pakistan through use of validated scales.

Materials & Methods: A cross sectional online survey was conducted from June 1, 2022, to August 25, 2022, on 400 respondents from all over Pakistan between the ages of 18 and 30 years who were enrolled through non-probability convenient sampling technique. The questionnaire was disseminated electronically via WhatsApp, Facebook, and other media platforms and included information on demographics, FoMO, and Bergen SMA scale. Data were analyzed for descriptive statistics and Pearson’s Correlation by SPSS 22, with $p \leq 0.05$ indicating significance.

Results: Of the 400 participants, 256(64%) were women and 144(36%), men, with a mean age of 21 ± 3.1 years. The mean score for Bergen Social Media Addiction scale was 17.35 ± 5.395 , while the mean score of FoMO was 21.66 ± 5.956 . To assess the validity and reliability of the addiction and FoMO scales, Cronbach’s Alpha was calculated. Originally, Cronbach’s Alpha was rated as 0.87-0.90, but in the current analysis, it was observed to be 0.770. Originally, Cronbach’s Alpha for Bergen Social Media Addiction was 0.88, while in the current study, it was 0.797. Social Media Addiction and FoMO were found to have a moderately positive linear association ($r=0.532$, $p<0.001$).

Conclusion: After establishing the reliability and validity of both measures, the present study also found a significant positive correlation between the Fear of Missing Out and Social Media Addiction scales.

Keywords: Behavior, Addictive; Internet Addiction Disorder; Technology Addiction; Adolescent; Adolescent Behavior.

The authors declared no conflict of interest. All authors contributed substantially to the planning of research, data collection, data analysis, and write-up of the article, and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

INTRODUCTION

Our daily lives are greatly influenced by social media, from posting images and videos on Instagram while dining to looking through Facebook updates while travelling. Over half of the global residents—4.6 billion people—are active users of social media, according to the 2022 Global Overview Report by Datareportal.¹ Users spend 2 hours and 27 minutes daily on social media, on average.¹ Our digital news habits are now based mostly on social media. The primary motives for employing social media platforms involve keeping oneself informed regarding news and prevailing, and the COVID 19 epidemic has increased the global trend of relying on these sites for information updates.² Online networking platforms empowers individuals to meet local people and form connections regardless of time or place, to gather information, and to find interesting or amusing content,^{3,4} but misuse can lead to reliance^{5,6}. In light of this, the occurrence of mental disorders, worry of missing out and Social Media Addiction is crucial problem that is generating severe concerns.^{5,7}

Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) is the constant need to be aware of the activities of others. It is described as a chronic worry that other individuals might be participating in valuable experiences while the individual in question is not present.⁸ People will undoubtedly compare their own lives to those they observe through online postings and observations through images on social networking sites as a result of having easy access to information about what other people share using technology, which will make them feel satisfied with their lives and behaviors.⁹ Social Media Addiction (SMA) is defined as an uncontrollable utilization of online networking platforms that negatively affects other crucial aspects of life, including mental well-being, social connections, affective outcomes, educational success, and employment. This includes devoting an inordinate length of time on online networking platforms, frequently disregarding other activities.^{10,11}

Myriad studies have looked at how problematic use of social networking sites is often linked to a reduction in one's social network, as well as rising levels of alienation, melancholy, and Fear of Missing Out (FoMO).¹²⁻¹⁴

Due to their strong drive to utilize or browse social media, students with Social Media Addiction are overly nervous about it and spend a lot of time and effort on it.¹⁵ Moreover, the link of FoMO and SMA continue to be more exposed.

Additionally, people might use social media completely for gaining knowledge¹⁶ and self-promotion,¹⁷ both of which may add to SMA. Managing a personal webpage to present oneself is the primary motivator behind using social networking sites.¹⁸ Research has indicated that utilizing networking sites for socialization appears to possess beneficial impact on a persons' online self-identity.¹⁹ While improper and excessive social media use for amusement may reduce people's eagerness to reveal themselves.²⁰ Although previous researches have emphasized the significance of social media's uses for self-presentation and its adverse effects, they have paid less attention to the relationship between FoMO and SMA.²¹ The current study's goal is to scrutinize the link between Social Media Addiction and FoMO.

MATERIALS & METHODS

An online survey was conducted from Khyber Girls Medical College, Peshawar during June to August 2022 after approval from the Institutional Ethical Committee for data to be collected through online portals utilizing valid and reliable instruments (Fear of Missing Out scale and Bergen Social Media Addiction scale) from Pakistani youth of all four provinces of Pakistan. Non probability convenience sampling was used to select 400 participants calculated through Rao soft sample size calculator while considering a population size of 20000, a 95% confidence interval and a 5% margin of error. All young Pakistani adults who fell in the age category of 18-30 years, those who had web connection and were familiar with its usage and those who possessed a fair comprehension of English language were included in this research.

Data were gathered using Google Forms that were accessed by respondents through the internet between June 1 and August 25, 2022. The Google form link was shared with several people via Facebook, WhatsApp, Gmail, etc. The agreement of the participants was obtained, and they were guaranteed of the privacy and secrecy of their participation. To participate in this study, there were no incentives provided. The questionnaire included questions concerning the demographic aspects of the participants and two scales, which are explained below.

Fear of Missing Out Scale (FoMO) was devised by Przybylski and colleagues.²² Participants are asked to rate the truthfulness of each of the 10 statements in the questionnaire using a scale of 0 to 5 (1 being the least true and 5 being the truest). More points on the scale, which ranges from 10 to 50, indicate a large degree of Fear of Missing Out.

Bergen Social Media Addiction Scale was created by Andreassen and his colleagues,²³ which has six items that each represent a key component of addiction (prominence, resilience, attitude modulation, conflict, seclusion, and relapse). The elements are evaluated using a Likert scale with a maximum of five points (1 for "very rarely" and 5 for "very often"); the total score runs from 6 to 30. Elevated points on the scale indicate a more significant degree of addiction.

Version 22 of the SPSS statistical analysis program was employed to carry out descriptive and comparative analysis; a $p \leq 0.05$ denoted significance. The demographics of respondents, as well as their intensity of Fear of Missing Out and Social Media Addiction were analyzed descriptively. The validity and reliability of both scales were assessed, and the Pearson correlation was applied to establish the association of Fear of Missing Out and Social Media Addiction.

RESULTS

Among 400 participants 256(64%) were female and 144(36%) were male. The respondents' mean age was 21 ± 3.1 years.

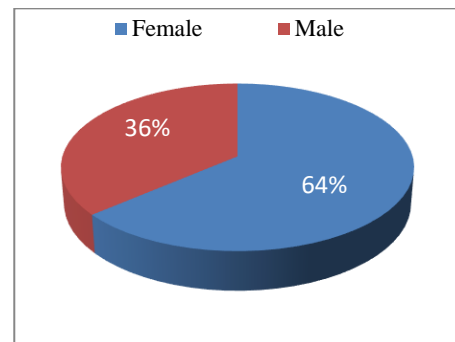


Figure 1: Gender distribution among participants (n=400).

Cronbach's alpha was calculated to for reliability and validity of both scales. The originally reported Cronbach alpha estimates in the literature were 0.87-0.90, whereas in the current investigation it was found to be 0.770. The Cronbach alpha for Bergen Social Media Addiction was 0.88 in the originally reported studies, and in this analysis it was 0.797.

The mean score of FoMO was 21.66 ± 5.956 and for Bergen SMA it was 17.35 ± 5.395 , as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics (n=400).

Variables	Fear of Missing Out	Social Media Addiction
Mean	21.66	17.35
Median	21.00	18.00
Variance	35.472	29.104
Std. deviation	5.956	5.395
Skewness	0.360	-0.098
Kurtosis	-0.265	-0.485
Range	30	24

The Pearson-product correlation showed a moderate positive correlation between Social Media Addiction and Fear of Missing Out ($r=0.532, p<0.001$), as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Correlation Between Social Media Addiction and Fear of Missing Out (n=400).

X axis	Y axis	r value	p value
Fear of Missing Out	Social Media Addiction	0.532	<0.001

Figure 2 is the scatterplot showing the potential linear and positive relationship between internet addiction and Fear of Missing Out.

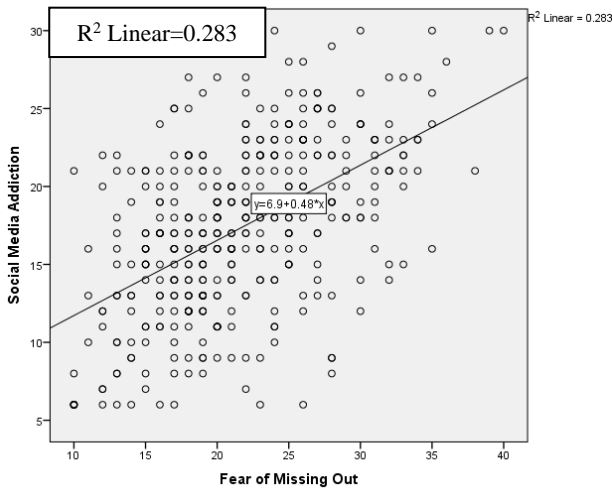


Figure 2: Relationship between internet addiction and Fear of Missing Out (n=400).

DISCUSSION

The present work is the first one conducted to check the validity and reliability of Fear of Missing Out and Social Media Addiction scales in Pakistan. Moreover, it is also the first study from Pakistan to look into the association of FoMO and SMA.

Multiple social media applications and their wide usage has made it easy to know about family and acquaintances lifestyle, their get together, what they are buying, and what they are talking about. This could have positive effects like connecting one with the world. But everyone's time availability and opportunities are different which means there is more chance to miss out on the rewarding experiencing others have.⁸ According to statistics of September 2022, in Pakistan around 82.07% people are Facebook users, 14.88% uses twitter, 1.22% are on Instagram, YouTube users are 1.21%, 0.51% use Pinterest, and 0.06% are LinkedIn users.²⁴ The age range of most online community members is between 18 to 25 years, with a higher usage rate observed among men than women.²⁵

One of the objectives of this research was to check the validity and reliability of FoMO scale and Bergen Social Media Addiction scale for the Pakistani population. The values of Cronbach's alpha for FoMO (0.770) and SMA (0.797) scales support their reliability and validity for the Pakistani population. A study conducted in Mumbai, India, in 2021, showed that the Cronbach's alpha value for FoMO scale was 0.813 and 0.90 for SMA.²⁶ Another study from Turkey conducted in 2021 showed that Cronbach's alpha value for FoMO scale was 0.81 and for SMA scale it was 0.86.²⁷

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The current study also assessed the association between Fear of Missing Out and Bergen Social Media Addiction scales for the Pakistani population and analysis showed a significant positive linear correlation between these two scales. These results are in accordance with the research conducted in Indonesia on high school aged students in 2016-2017,²⁸ that showed a significant and positive correlation between Fear of Missing Out and Social Media Addiction. Another study conducted in India on young adults in 2021 also showed similar results.²⁹

There are very few studies showcasing the association of Fear of Missing Out and Social Media Addiction, with this study being the only one conducted in Pakistan. It displayed a linear positive association between Fear of Missing Out and Social Media Addiction. Nowadays, a significant proportion of individuals are dedicating a substantial amount of time to social media. The online networking platforms, the sales techniques and website designs are such that they trigger the Fear of Missing Out among youth. The results and outcomes of this study are significant and hold valuable insights.

LIMITATIONS

This current research includes adults in the demographic of 18 to 30 years only, other age groups were not considered. Questionnaires were circulated online and were available only in English language. The self-reported tools employed in this study have the potential risk of response bias. There is no previous regional study available on this topic in Pakistan for comparison. Also, this research did not control for gender and socioeconomic status.

CONCLUSION

The present study showed that both the Fear of Missing Out and Social Media Addiction scales are valid and reliable so they can be used by mental health professionals and researchers as assessment tools in identifying Fear of Missing Out and Social Media Addiction among Pakistani population; it will also help psychologists to design psychoeducational programs for individuals with high level of Fear of Missing Out and Social Media Addiction.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Future research should examine the effects of gender, personality and socioeconomic status on internet addiction, Fear of Missing Out, and the relationship between them. Further research should also consider exploring whether Fear of Missing Out leads to internet addiction or internet addiction causes Fear of Missing Out.

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