



Social Anxiety As A Predictor Of Fear Of Missing Out Among College Students

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Abstract: The present study experimentally investigated the relationship between Social Anxiety and Fear of Missing Out and to identify whether Social Anxiety will significantly predict fear of Missing Out.. The participants of the study (211) were sampled using purposive sampling where the criteria included college students of ages 17 to 22 and who know the language of English. The participants completed the survey which included the Fear of Missing Out scale and Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale. Statistical tools such as Person's Product Moment Correlation and Linear Regression analysis were used to analyze the findings and the results of the study indicated that the relationship between Social anxiety and Fear of Missing Out was significantly positive. More over Social anxiety significantly predicted Fear of Missing Out. Given the situation that the study was done in the Indian population, more studies are to be done in order to identify the cause and effect of social anxiety on Fear of Missing Out.

Index Terms – social anxiety, Fear of Missing Out, relationship, predictor

INTRODUCTION

COVID 19 pandemic has impacted the individuals physically and psychologically. To be specific, COVID 19 has also impacted the social interaction and relationships (Kindred and Bates, 2023). Emerging adults were prone to social anxiety as their social lives were greatly disturbed (Leontopoulou, 2023). Emerging adulthood is a complex developmental stage where the individual strives to achieve their best yet dealing with their social needs and insecurities. Social anxiety is a mental health condition where the individual experiences excessive fear or anxiety that the individual might be humiliated and rejected in social situations and hence avoid social situations. It is also known as social phobia. According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, the criteria of social anxiety are as follows, there is a marked fear or anxiety about one or more social situations in which the individual is exposed to possible scrutiny by others, the individual fears that he or she will act in a way or show anxiety symptoms that will be negatively evaluated, the social situations almost always provoke fear or anxiety, the fear or anxiety is out of proportion to the actual threat posed by the social situation and to the sociocultural context, the fear, anxiety, or avoidance is persistent, typically lasting for 6 months or more, the fear, anxiety, or avoidance causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning, the fear, anxiety, or avoidance is not attributable to the physiological effects of a substance (e.g., a drug of abuse, a medication) or another medical condition, the fear, anxiety, or avoidance is not better explained by the symptoms of another mental disorder. Taking social anxiety into account, it has been reported that 69% college students experience a phenomenon known as Fear of Missing Out (Phuyal, 2024). Fear of Missing Out is the apprehensive fear that the individual experience where they fear that their significant others are enjoying life without the individual and hence engage in compulsive behaviors to overcome their fear. Research has been done to find the relationship between Social anxiety and Fear of Missing Out. However

this research focuses on emerging adults and whether social Anxiety significantly predicts Fear of Missing Out.

Definition

Fear of Missing Out- Fear of Missing Out: According to Przybylski, A. K. et al., (2013) “Fear of Missing Out has been defined in scientific literature as involving two specific primary components: a) apprehension that others are having rewarding experiences from which one is absent, and b) the persistent desire to stay connected with people in one’s social network”

Social Anxiety- Social Anxiety: According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of mental disorders “Social Anxiety also known as social phobia is the persistent fear or anxiety in one or more social situations in which the individual is exposed to possible scrutiny by others.”

Theoretical framework

FEAR OF MISSING OUT

Fear of Missing Out was conceptualized using Self Determination Theory (Ryan et al., 1985). Self Determination theory talks about how people are motivated intrinsically and extrinsically. People who have extrinsic motivation seem to have higher levels of Fear of Missing Out than compared to people with intrinsic motivation (Przybylski et al., 2013). It may exist as an episodic feeling that occurs in mid-conversation, as a long-term disposition, or a state of mind that leads the individual to feel a deeper sense of identity crisis and social anxiety. Drawing on Self Determination Theory, the aim of the study is to determine the impact of social anxiety on Fear of Missing Out.

SOCIAL ANXIETY

According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of mental disorders “Social Anxiety also known as social phobia is the persistent fear or anxiety in one or more social situations in which the individual is exposed to possible scrutiny by others.” Since the college is a different academic environment compared to school the individuals are prone to experiencing social anxiety. Social anxiety also involves thoughts of worrying that they might be humiliated or rejected by others and thus avoids social situations. A study of stratified sample of undergraduate university students (N=380) was assessed to identify the extent of social phobia The results indicated that Social phobia was found in 19.5% of participants, in varied degrees of severity and correlated with various faculties in university, resulting in significant disability in work, social life, and family life, as well as impairment in quality of life (Shah et al., 2010).

According to DSM V and American Psychiatric Association, social Anxiety disorder, formerly referred to as social phobia, is an anxiety disorder characterized by overwhelming anxiety and excessive self-consciousness in everyday social situations. People with social anxiety disorder have a persistent, intense, and chronic fear of being watched and judged by others and of being embarrassed or humiliated by their own actions. Their fear may be so severe that it interferes with academic, social or occupational function. While many people with social anxiety disorder recognize that their fear of being around people may be excessive or unreasonable, they are unable to overcome it. They often worry for days or weeks in advance of a dreaded situation. Social Anxiety is often comorbid with low self-esteem and depression (Lydiard, 2001). The individual has physical symptoms, which often accompany the intense stress of social anxiety disorder, include sweating, trembling, nausea, and difficulty speaking. Because these visible symptoms heighten the fear of disapproval, they themselves can become an additional focus of fear, creating a cycle, as people with social anxiety disorder worry about experiencing these symptoms, the greater their chances are of developing them.

Fear of Missing Out can be one type of social anxiety where the individual fears that others are having rewarding experiences without them and hence their need to belong increases which in turn increase their desire to maintain the social relationships There is a significant relationship between Fear of Missing Out and Social Anxiety among Young Adults and Fear of Missing Out might act as a precursor to developing Social Anxiety in individuals (Ashwini& Bharathi, 2021).

Review of literature

Ashwini & Bharathi (2021) studied the relationship between Fear of Missing out and Social anxiety (n=49) of age group of 20 to 40. The results indicated that is a significant positive relationship between Fear of Missing Out and Social anxiety. The findings imply Fear of Missing out is a form of social anxiety where the individual fears or is anxious that they are missing out on the rewarding experiences with their social group.

Sudhakar & Rebekah (2024) studied the relationship between identity achievement, identity moratorium, identity foreclosure, identity diffusion, and Fear of Missing Out. The participants of the study (211) were sampled using purposive sampling where the criteria included college students of ages 17 to 22 and who know the language of English. The participants completed the survey which included the Fear of Missing Out scale and Modified Marcia Identity Questionnaire. Statistical tools such as Person's Product Moment Correlation were used to analyze the findings and the results of the study indicated that the relationship between identity moratorium, Identity foreclosure, identity diffusion and Fear of Missing Out was significantly positive. Nonetheless, a notable inverse association was observed between identity achievement and Fear of Missing Out. Considering the study's focus on the Indian population, further investigations are warranted to explore additional significant predictors of Fear of Missing Out.

Need for study

Though there are studies on Fear of Missing Out and Social Anxiety (Ashwini& Bharathi, 2021), the research further aims to find out whether social anxiety can act as a significant predictor of Fear of Missing Out and to understand the relationship in a larger sample.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

College students are referred to individuals belonging to the emerging adulthood stage where they transition themselves from adolescence to adulthood. Fear of Missing Out has two specific primary components: a) apprehension that others are having rewarding experiences from which one is absent, and b) the persistent desire to stay connected with people in one's social network" and college students are more likely to experience Fear of Missing Out as the college provides a new environment and new people, The students were given the Fear of Missing Out scale and Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale were given in a Google form.

Population and Sample

The population opted for this research study is college students as it has been found that they find it difficult to adjust to the college environment leading to have discomfort in the college environment. The sampling method that is used for this study is convenient sampling because of the availability of the resources and the participants. The researcher obtained the permission to collect data from the principals of the educational institutions. Then the researchers went to the particular department allotted by the principals and shared the Google form in person. After the participants had filled the Google form, the researcher debriefed the study.

Data and Sources of Data

The data was collected in g-form which included the Fear of Missing Out Scale and the Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale. After the sample data was collected from the college students. SPSS was used to provide the numerical data. 16. The statistical analysis of Pearson's Product Moment Correlation and Simple Regression was used. The period for data collection was from December 2023 to March 2024.

Research Hypothesis:

H1. There will be no significant relationship between Fear of Missing Out and Identity Crisis

H2: Social Anxiety will not be a significant predictor of Fear of Missing Out.

Research Gap:

- Fear of Missing Out has been extensively studied in the western population and the relationship of Fear of Missing Out has been studied with social media.
- Though the relationship of Fear of Missing Out and Social anxiety was studied, it was done during the lockdown. This research further expands to identify whether social anxiety can acts as a significant predictor as a consequence of the pandemic.

RESULTS

The objective of this study was to determine the relationship between Social Anxiety and Fear of Missing Out among college students. Researches done in the past have found that higher scores in Social Anxiety can increase in the levels of Fear of Missing Out (Ashwini & Bharathi,2020). However as social anxiety and Fear of Missing Out springs out from social needs, it is important to identify how significantly social anxiety can predict Fear of Missing Out among College Students post COVID 19 in the Indian Population.

Table 1

Pearson's Product Moment correlation between Fear of Missing Out and Social anxiety among college students

Variables (N=198)	Fear of Missing Out	Social Anxiety
Fear of Missing Out	1	.306**
Social Anxiety		1

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

Table 1 shows the relationship between Fear of Missing Out and Social Anxiety among College Students. It can be interpreted from the table 1 that there is a significant positive relationship between Social anxiety and Fear of Missing Out ($r=0.306$, $p<0.01$). In other words, the higher levels of Fear of Missing Out, higher are the levels of Social Anxiety among college students, Therefore, the null hypothesis H1, **"There is no significant relationship Social Anxiety and Fear of Missing Out among college students is rejected."**

Table 2

Linear Regression between Fear of Missing Out and Social anxiety among college students

Predictor (N=198)	Unstandardized coefficient		B	T	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²
	B	SD					
Constant	20.348	1.283		15.865	.309	.094	.089
Social Anxiety	.136	.033	.306	4.497**			

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

Linear regression analysis is calculated in order to determine whether Social anxiety, would significantly predict of Fear of Missing Out among college students. As in table 2, it is evident that the Social Anxiety significantly predicts Fear of Missing Out. The value of adjusted R² reveals 0.89% of variation in Fear of Missing Out is due to Social Anxiety. The β value shows that one unit of increase in Social Anxiety will lead to .306 increase in Fear of Missing Out.

Therefore, the null hypothesis H2, **"Social anxiety will not significantly predict Fear of Missing Out among college students" is rejected.**

Discussion

From table 1 it can be interpreted that there is a significant positive relationship between social anxiety and Fear of Missing Out gives an r value of 0.306 significant at 0.01 level. **Hence the null hypothesis H1: There will be no significant relationship between Social anxiety and Fear of Missing Out among college students is rejected.** This finding indicates that higher the levels of social anxiety, higher would be the levels of Fear of Missing Out in college students (Ashwini & Bharathi, 2021). Since the social anxiety is defined as "the persistent fear or anxiety in one or more social situations in which the individual is exposed to possible scrutiny by others", it could be the one of the reason where the individual is extremely afraid of social situations yet is afraid of missing out what their significant others are doing adding to the distress the individual experiences. The significant relationship could also be a result of cognitive dissonance where the individual is unable to decide whether to go out with their companions or to experience the fear of being exposed to scurrility and rejection, therefore adding on the fear, the individual is already experiencing. Additionally, the levels of Fear of Missing Out and social anxiety have increased after the Covid-19 which might also be one of the reasons of the significant positive relationship between social anxiety and Fear of Missing Out (Ashwini&Bharathi,2021).

From the table 2, it was also found that social anxiety significantly predicts Fear of Missing Out which gives a β value of 0.306 which is significant at the p value of 0.01. Hence individuals with social anxiety experience Face of Missing Out and it is not only by chance that the individuals face higher levels of Fear of Missing Out. One justification might be because the individuals who have social anxiety might constantly ruminate about what their significant others are doing which could reinforce the levels of Fear of Missing Out. **Therefore the null hypothesis H2: Social anxiety will not significantly predict Fear of Missing Out among college students is rejected.**

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