

Research Article

Belonging at a Click: A Correlational Study on the Fear of Missing Out and Facebook Intensity Usage

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) and Facebook Intensity Usage among undergraduate students at Mindanao State University-Iligan Institute of Technology. Anchored in the Belongingness Hypothesis and Information Foraging Theory, the study aimed to determine whether heightened FoMO corresponds to increased emotional and behavioral engagement with Facebook. Using a descriptive correlational design, data were collected from 105 Facebook users (73.5% female, 26.5% male; M age = 20.28, SD = 1.30) via purposive and snowball sampling. Standardized measures, the FoMO Scale (α = .91) and Facebook Intensity Scale (α = .80-.83) were administered through an online questionnaire. Pearson correlation analysis revealed a moderately positive and statistically significant relationship between FoMO and Facebook Intensity Usage (r = .376, p < .001). The findings support the hypothesis that individuals with elevated FoMO are more likely to engage intensively with Facebook, underscoring the psychological need for social connection and information access in digital contexts. Implications for media literacy and online behavior regulation are discussed.

Keywords

Fear of Missing Out, Facebook Intensity, Social Media Usage

1. Introduction

The ease with which data from all over the world may be obtained has led to the recognition of the twenty-first century as the Internet Era [16]. With the rise of technological advancements in communication and information, as much as it has become useful in a variety of settings just like in education, clinical, counseling, business, management, and government [15], it has also become an integral part of the lives of the vast majority of individuals.

Nowadays, the exponential growth of human interaction and connectivity through social networking site usage has sharply increased in harmony with the incidence of struggles with anxiety. This is determined by the outcome of the study

of which revealed that a greater amount of time consumed with social networking sites was substantially correlated with higher levels of psychological anxiety, as determined by the process of a hierarchical regression analysis [32].

The most used social networking site is Facebook [17]. Since Facebook's founding in 2004, people have been allowed to share information, interact, form, and sustain connections with people from across the world. Following its introduction, it has been reported that Facebook is the greatest affordable and practical social networking site for interacting with a community of people and is called the top social networking platform globally [14]. Additionally, in the Philippines, based

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on the most recent statistics released in January 2023, the annual increase in the percentage of Facebook users in the Philippines is 0.94%, meaning that it has amassed approximately 90.2 million active Facebook users in the Philippines [24].

The social networking site's rapid expansion into the daily activities of individuals has produced a grave effect on their lives [31]. According to Wang et al. (2021), the sharing of data and gaps in information along with the rising rights, users are becoming concerned about their social networking circumstances [33]. This notion establishes the fact that engaging oneself with social networking sites can induce a kind of anxiety. Admittedly, the prevalent promotion of social networking sites has improved such lives of individuals in some ways but also created fresh drawbacks.

The emotional reaction to the perception that some individuals are leading more effective, more worthwhile lives than oneself in the digital world or that significant possibilities in one's life have been eliminated is called the Fear of Missing Out, widely known as FoMO [5]. Particularly, it has been clarified that pressure, despair, apprehension, and unhappiness are frequently brought on by FoMO [7].

The initial description of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) originated within the realm concerning corporate governing processes in the year 2004 according to Patrick McGinnis who coined the term FoMO. Subsequently, the Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) definition has progressed throughout the occasion as a type of psychological anxiety that is exacerbated into play due to the worry about remaining unaware of what is going around in the digital realm [19].

Indeed, FoMO is becoming more prevalent with the appearance of the use of social networking sites and the accessibility of the Internet has grown in prominence in the twenty-first century as a whole. However, the relationship between specific Facebook Intensity Usage—which is the most common social networking site—and Fear of Missing Out has a scarcity in studies. Therefore, since FoMO is also associated with various mental health concerns, this study is determined to find out and comprehend the correlation between Facebook Intensity Usage and Fear of Missing Out.

A study conducted examined the intricate connection between FoMO (fear of missing out) and Facebook usage intensity [25]. It looked at how the use of Facebook in terms of its intensity modulated the facilitating impact of FoMO-driven anxiety linked to Facebook usage behavior in Korean undergraduates. The findings demonstrated that: 1) The degree of Facebook usage has a favorable and analytically notable influence on FoMO-driven anxiety; and that 2) Fear of Missing Out played a limited intervening engagement in the Facebook usage intensity.

Looking at this information, when people break off from their social networks in a situation in which they feel pressured to keep those associations going because they put significance to social belongingness, then according to [1],

they experience FoMO more keenly. Due to the constant need to independently confirm what others have posted, FoMO strengthens and increases the intensity of Facebook usage [28].

The increasing intensity of the use of Facebook is a significant element in excessive social networking site use [10]. Facebook is swiftly rising to the top of the list of social networking platforms [29]. Facebook, nevertheless, differs slightly from various comparable social media platforms since it exhibits an offline-to-online pattern. Considering this, this means that most connections made on Facebook are initially made conventional and subsequently added through the internet. It has been reported that to maintain connections Fomo develops and, Facebook use becomes a go-to method [10].

The findings of Labrague's (2014) study on Facebook use and psychological states also showed that there was insufficient correlation between the adverse negative psychological conditions of stress and depression and the intensity of Facebook use. However, it has been shown that a greater Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) is connected with the amount of time consumed with Facebook.

In another study by Dempsey et al. (2019) on the Fear of missing out (FoMO) rumination and problematic Facebook use, its computational results show a substantial relationship between problematic Facebook use intensity, rumination, and FoMO. The degree of intensity of problematic Facebook use was correlated with the Fear of Missing Out. A relationship between the intensity of problematic Facebook use (PFU) and fear of being left behind in social situations was mediated by both rumination and FoMO.

Facebook use has taken over as the primary pastime activity among individuals, particularly teenagers [13]. The socially constructed notion of FOMO further presupposes things like the urge to fit in and be well-known, the fear of disapproval, and the fulfillment of this need mostly through internet-based peer networks [4]. On the authority of Przybylski et al. (2013), FoMO primarily impacts adolescents and young adults who happen to be sad and dissatisfied with life in general, additionally. it adversely impacts highly engaged consumers of online content.

According to Ma et. al., (2015), Facebook use and FoMO are related [21]. This is supported by the study of Beyens et al. (2016) which explored a comprehensive framework across adolescents to analyze how adolescents' FoMO influences the association between their usage of Facebook and their desire for popularity and a sense of belonging. The mean percentage of the adolescents as the respondents of the study who entirely identified with having a desire for popularity was 4.7%, while almost 33.7% were completely in agreement with the concept regarding needing to belong. About (8.8%) identified (completely) with the questions related to FOMO. Adolescents reported spending between 1-2 hours per day on Facebook applications and having 400 to 500 friends on the platform.

As demonstrated by Fedeli and Selmanagic-Lizde (2018), their study indicated that roughly twenty percent of the adolescents who took part in their study (having a mean age of 13 years old) exhibit some FoMO indicators, while another thirty percent are vulnerable to developing Facebook and internet addiction. The lack of standardized instruments for determining FoMO causes the above parameters to differ. Nonetheless, it has been noted that FOMO is independent of one's sexual orientation and is reduced by certain recreational activities.

As reported by Elhai et al. (2016), the three most closely linked problems with problematic Facebook use in their regression analysis were stress, the urge for contact, and FOMO. The strongest (inverse) correlation was found between use frequency and depressive conditions.

Thus, this study more specifically is determined to answer the following research questions: Is there a significant relationship between FoMO and the intensity of Facebook use?; What is the relationship between FoMo and Facebook use and; how does this impact an individual's sense of belongingness.

2. Theoretical Framework

Przybylski et al. (2013) described the fear of missing out (FoMO) as frequent worries that individuals might be having good experiences from a specific event at that moment they fail to attend. They declared it as they conducted a groundbreaking study concerning the subject. Vanden Abeele and Van Rooij (2016) identified that people who have a high FoMO desire to remain engaged in regular communication and contact with other people and keep up to date on the things they are engaged in. The yearning to fit in, a sense of belonging, and an intimate bond is a fundamental psychological impulse that motivates people's conduct [9]. A rise in a person's desire for belongingness would be predicted to make a person's FoMO higher, as discovered [28]. As a result, social networking sites especially Facebook provide a hand means for users to maintain constant contact with others in their age bracket, which helps to alleviate their elevated feelings of FoMO. In a study by Wolniewicz et al. (2018) while examining the use of smartphones and FoMO a group of 296 undergraduates discovered a positive correlation between excessive usage of smartphones and FoMO [34]. The findings clarify how a person with an elevated intensity of FoMO has a greater likelihood to use social networking sites to maintain connections with others on the internet. Makki et al. (2017) corresponding study on Snapchat discovered a correlation between people's usage of social networking and their intrinsic need to fit in, be embraced, and feel like they belong with others [22].

Furthermore, the Belongingness Hypothesis of Baumeister and Leary (1995) stipulates that "humans have a persistent tendency to establish and sustain at least some sense of being part of something, a minimal amount of substantial, enduring,

and good connection with other people." According to Baumeister and Leary, a large portion of human social conduct is driven by the fundamental human inclination to fit in. Therefore, it's plausible that social networking site usage is motivated by FoMO. The Belonging Hypothesis by Baumeister and Leary (1995) highlights two concepts: Firstly, there is a requirement for regular actively pleasurable connections with others. Secondly, such interactions have to occur within a relative context of stimulating care for the well-being of one another [26].

Information Foraging Theory adds more credence to the aforementioned hypothesis. Information Foraging Theory by Peter Pirolli and Stuart Card in 1999 has a conceptual framework of information foraging that has been explored to fully comprehend and maximize human-information interplay [6]. The theory believes that just like animals hunting for food, humans adapt to their surroundings by gathering and employing knowledge—in this case, through social media.

According to the Information Foraging Theory, people possess an inbuilt instinct to search for insights from an evolutionary standpoint [27]. Similar to animals searching for sustenance [11], people are continuously looking for knowledge, especially about their interpersonal interactions. Social networking sites meet this fundamental threshold desire by giving accessibility to knowledge concerning other people, which satisfies an individual's innate curiosity about the details of one's interactions. Time dedicated to social networking sites is frequently attributed to a strong need to learn data that indicates one's standing in the social structure, particularly for adolescents and teenagers [20]. Additionally, the advent of social networking sites has made it possible to gain entry to a variety of pursuits and private information about other people that was previously mainly unattainable. Thus, the discussion supports the researchers' hypothesis that there is a positive correlation between the Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) and the intensity of Facebook use.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

The participants that were recruited in this research study were undergraduate students from Mindanao State University-Iligan Institute of Technology. The researchers have set specific inclusions attentively where the following participants must be students who have active Facebook accounts. Their age range is between eighteen (18) years old and above. The total number of respondents in the study was one hundred-five students ($N = 105$; 73.5% *female*, 26.5% *male*, age $M=20.28$, $SD= 1.30$) who completed the questionnaires through Google Online Form. Hence, all the participants included in this study met the precise set of criteria that was created by the researchers. The criteria are intended to guarantee that the sample accurately represents the desired population and to reduce confounding factors that

could affect the results of the study [3].

3.2. Materials

The materials used in the study are the *Fear of Missing Out Scale* and the *Facebook Intensity Scale*. The FoMO Scale, addressed by Przybylski et al. (2013), is a 5-Likert scale (1= not all true of me, to 5= extremely true of me) used by the researchers in this study to measure the degree to which the participants fear missing out on social events, especially involving friends and the frequency one uses social media to stay connected. Notably, the FoMO Scale demonstrates a high level of reliability with an index of 0.87 and a Chronbach's Alpha of 0.91. The findings clarify how a person with an elevated intensity of FoMO has a greater likelihood to use social networking sites to maintain connections with others on the internet. The computation of individual scores can be achieved by averaging the answers to all ten items where higher scores reveal a higher degree of fear of missing out.

The Facebook Intensity Scale, on the other hand, was used by the researchers to measure Facebook usage beyond simple measures of frequency and duration, incorporating emotional connectedness to the site and its integration into individuals' daily activities. The total quantity of the participants' Facebook friends as well as the length and frequency of time they are invested in Facebook on an everyday basis are the individual evaluations of the Facebook activities included in this scale which aims to determine how involved the respondents were with Facebook [12]. Participants indicate the extent to which they agree with each item with response categories of 1= strongly disagree, to 5= strongly agree. The scale demonstrates a strong internal consistency, with Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient ranging from 0.80 to 0.83 [12]. The responses to each of the eight items can be summed to determine individual scores and higher scores reflect a high intensity of Facebook usage.

3.3. Procedure

Researchers can determine whether there is an association between variables and how strong it is by using correlational design [18]. Therefore, in this study, the researchers used a descriptive correlational design to give perspective on the intricate relationship between FoMO and Facebook Intensity Usage. The researchers in this study have carefully followed the ethical standards in research [30]. Purposive and snowball sampling were used in the process of recruiting the participants. Purposive sampling is nonrandom sampling that is done with purpose selection [8], and since the researchers intended to fulfill a specific role or goal it was made possible by this technique to complete the data collection. In snowball sampling, the participants are asked to recommend another person who could be qualified to take part in the study. Consequently, participant referrals were also used to facilitate the recruitment. As coined by Myers and Hansen (2012), this

technique is useful, especially to populations that are difficult to find, and therefore beneficial for the researchers to reach a certain number of participants needed in the study [23].

The researchers used the online platform, which is Facebook, to gather the number of participants and indicated in the post the qualifications of the respondents, the importance of the study, and the Google document form link for easy access of the respondents. Subsequently, the researchers made a Google Online Form containing the informed consent, demographic profile of the participants, and two sets of different standardized questionnaires for the respondents to answer. After the respondents had answered the e-questionnaire, their responses were automatically saved on the Google Online Form wherein the respondents also received an e-copy of their answers. As a small token of gratitude, the researchers have granted the five (5) random respondents a hundred (100) peso cash for their participation. The random selection of participants to receive the said token was determined through an online wheel of fortune [20].

3.4. Data Analysis

The statistical procedures used in analyzing the data in this study were performed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 26. The data underwent a thorough screening to ensure there were no missing responses and was cleared and filtered out by the researchers to see if it was correctly inputted into the statistical software. The purpose of this is to prevent incorrect interpretations of the findings that could compromise the study's validity.

The Facebook Intensity Scale includes two items (Item 7: number of Facebook friends; and Item 8: average time spent daily on Facebook) that differ in format from the Likert-type items. These are categorical in nature and not suitable for correlation using Pearson's coefficient. As a result, the Facebook Intensity score used for correlation analysis included only the six Likert-type items (Items 1-6). For Items 7 and 8, descriptive statistics and Chi-square tests were employed to explore their distribution and association with Fear of Missing Out.

Due to the use of non-probability sampling and the ordinal and categorical nature of the data collected from the Facebook Intensity Scale and FoMO Scale, the researchers employed non-parametric statistics. Specifically, the Chi-square test of independence was used to assess the relationship between the categorized levels of Fear of Missing Out and Facebook Intensity Usage. Both variables were grouped into three levels: Low, Moderate, and High based on their composite scores. Descriptive statistics including frequencies and percentages were also computed to support interpretation of the findings. Pearson's correlation coefficient was not applied, as its assumptions were not met in this study.

4. Results

This section presents the results yielded by the data analyses of this study. This study aimed to determine the correlation between Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), and Facebook Intensity Usage of MSU-IIT students. The data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26, and the following subsections provide a detailed account of the key findings.

Table 1 shows the descriptive results which include the mean and standard deviation of the responses from both scales that were utilized by the researchers. A total of 105 complete answers were gathered for each scale from a sample size of one hundred and five MSU-IIT students (105). Moreover, the mean score and standard deviation of all the responses from each scale are also shown in Table 1. The results suggest that there is a significant relationship between the two variables (Fear of Missing Out and Facebook Intensity Usage).

Table 1. Mean, and Standard Deviation of the study variables.

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
FoMo	2.5533	.77411	105
Facebook Intensity Usage	2.9833	.86447	105

Table 2. Correlation Analysis of the study variables.

	FoMo		Facebook Intensity Usage
FoMo	Pearson Correlation	1	.376**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	105	105
Facebook Intensity Usage	Pearson Correlation	.376**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	105	105

Note: Correlation is significant at ** $p \leq 0.01$ level

A Pearson correlation coefficient was performed to evaluate the relationship between the Fear of Missing Out (FoMo) and Facebook Intensity Usage (see Table 2). The results indicated that the relationship between the two variables was moderately positive and statistically significant $r(103) = .37, p = <.001$. Hence, H1 was supported. This shows that elevated degrees of Fear of Missing Out would lead to an increased intensity of Facebook usage.

5. Discussion

The results of this study revealed that the relationship between Fear of Missing Out and Facebook intensity Usage is moderately positive and is significantly correlated. Thus, the study's hypothesis stating that *there is a positive correlation between the Fear of Missing Out and the intensity of Facebook use*, was supported. The findings of this study prove the notion that the rise in a person's FoMO has a

relationship with one's continuous usage of Facebook [28] and this is because of the human's biological desire for belongingness [2].

Even with the rise of the internet and social networking sites, which makes it possible to be always in constant communication with people, Labrague (2014) has indicated that both the extent and intensity of social networking sites in technologically updated places have advanced. People are perhaps experiencing greater socialization through online platforms during the present times in comparison to the past. As Facebook nevertheless persists to be the largest and most popular social networking site among teenagers, it has become an online space where people—not just undergraduate students—can interact and establish a sense of belonging while also acquiring information that is displayed publicly by other people.

The result of this current study is also consistent with the study conducted by Makki et al. (2017) which discovered a correlation between people's usage of social networking and

their intrinsic need to fit in, be embraced, and feel like they belong with others [22]. Based on the Belongingness Hypothesis of Baumeister and Leary (1995) in which this study is anchored, this may be brought about by the fear of passing up the chance to engage in a socially fulfilling activity and the enduring need to create and maintain a sense of belonging [3]. And because humans have the natural urge of having to belong, it is important to take into account strategies and means they would modify just to maximize their resources of information. This is where the Information Foraging Theory arises, which all the same, emphasizes that individuals accumulate and employ information through social media—to respond to their circumstances and urges, much like animals in the wildlife searching for food—but in this case, information.

The participants in the study were Facebook members and devoted roughly active Facebook users. This is an admission that Facebook's simple user interface to connect is the main reason it remains the choice of undergraduate students' primary method of connecting with others caused by this technological advancement. This relates to the idea that the amount of time devoted to Facebook was discovered to be correlated with higher ratings for Fear of Missing Out in the current study. A rise in a person's desire for belongingness would be a motivation to make a person's FoMO higher, as discovered by Przybylski et al. (2013). As a result, social networking sites especially Facebook provide a handy means for users to maintain constant contact with others in their age bracket, which helps to alleviate their elevated feelings of FoMO.

Even though this research is crucial there are a few possible drawbacks to take into account. First, the study's ability to be generalized might be limited by the non-inclusion of undergraduates from other universities in different regions. Also, irrespective of whether the number of participants (N=105) in the research was deemed statistically sufficient, the gender distribution within it was not balanced, with a male-to-female proportion of 1:2. Second, as the entire research metrics were based on self-reported information, psychological, emotional, and social desirableness distortions as well as cognitive biases may have affected the results.

It also has to be taken into account the fact that FoMO might function as a varying motivation for different individuals (Milyavskaya et al., 2018), it is possible that it gets increasingly common in particular situations in which individuals genuinely explore their own Facebook with individuals they associate with or participate in actual social engagements. On the contrary, the findings of this study offered preliminary, speculative proof of the FoMO framework in a social networking site set. Furthermore, considering all of the findings are correlational in nature, it is inappropriate to infer causal correlations from them.

Although Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to assess the direction and strength of the association between Fear of Missing Out and Facebook Intensity Usage, it is

important to note that the sampling methods employed—purposive and snowball sampling—are non-probabilistic. As such, the results cannot be generalized to the broader population. This limitation should be considered when interpreting the significance and applicability of the statistical findings.

In that event, the researchers of the current study recommend that future researchers must conduct a study on a larger sample from other universities in different regions having a balanced ratio of male-to-female distribution which is 1:1. They could also use not just undergraduate students but also reported adults as samples in identifying the relationship between Fear of Missing Out and Facebook Intensity Usage. As a result of the participants' self-reported information, it's possible that the research's retroactive self-measure misrepresented the genuine intensity and fluctuating characteristics of FoMO. Therefore, subsequent and future researchers must investigate more and empirically verify the symptoms of the actual encounter with FoMO.

Despite the drawbacks, this research makes several distinctive discoveries. Concentrating upon the wider dread of fear of missing out has helped to clarify this widely accepted idea in the academic community and to comprehend the complex interactions between the emotional and social elements. The results of the research suggest that the desire to belong is what drives FoMO the most, and with FoMO the Facebook application has become a space wherein people from all over the world can interact while also obtaining information. The comprehension of the psychological mechanisms that commonly occur in anticipation of interpersonal signals is improved by the strong positive correlation that has been shown between FoMO and Facebook use. This, overall clarifies that understanding the often-inferred causal relationship between the urge to belong and an extensive of consequences at different vantage points of concentration, dispositions, and behaviors requires a recognition of the inner workings of the mind.

Overall, this study confirms Facebook use's role in moderating the positive relationship with FoMO. This study is consistent with the theoretical framework and indicates that the relationship between the two variables is moderately positive and statistically significant. For media literacy, users must get formal instruction on the benefits and pitfalls of social networking sites in general as these networks expand to develop and take over people's views, feelings, and practices.

Abbreviations

FoMO	Fear of Missing Out
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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