

The Phenomenon and Effects of Fear of Missing Out

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Abstract: Both the use of social media and the fear of missing out are closely connected in daily lives, and this phenomenon has attracted attention. Through literature retrieval and analysis, the phenomenon and effects of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) on social media will be explained in this study. The effects are separated into direct effects and indirect effects. The results show that mental health (anxiety, depression) and emotions (boredom, loneliness, and feelings of pressure/fear of exclusion) are affected directly, whereas perception (self-esteem, rumination, and mindful attention) and lifestyle (daily life, working, and learning) are affected indirectly. The results show that there is a higher likelihood that someone's mental health, emotions, and way of life may suffer as a result of having a higher level of FoMO. However, a special case of emotion, boredom, can be both positively and negatively influenced. After that, the possible courses of action will be listed, in terms of helping people who suffer from FoMO.

Keywords: Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), social media, mental health, anxiety

1. Introduction

FoMO, which stands for Fear of Missing Out, it had previously been used in marketing. It was modified in 2014 to be used in various contexts formally, which was particularly noticeable with the emergence of social networking sites. Along with social media, the phrase "FoMO" gained popularity [1]. As technology is rapidly developing in contemporary society, the demand for information is continually increasing. People may be more concerned about missing some information. It is an inevitable social anxiety called Fear of Missing Out, in which the majority of people have this feeling on well-developed social networking. According to research on FoMO, 56% of people experience FoMO and are concerned about missing out on critical status updates, news, and events if they are not browsing into social media. The minimum of 27% of people also check their social media apps when they get up. Additionally, 46% of users who suffer from FoMO even spend more than 12 hours checking their social media accounts. People are becoming more reliant on social media that 20% of users are unable to go for more than one hour without checking their social media accounts [2].

Within the wide range usage of social media, there are a significant number of people experienced and suffered from problematic social media use. For instance, studies show that teenagers who use social media frequently will have a larger possibility to have serious sadness and suicide thoughts [3].

Therefore, FoMO could be regarded as a slightly toxic phenomenon that has serious effect on humans directly or indirectly. Although extensive research has been carried out on the effects on social media, no single study had a clear classification of direct or indirect effects of FoMO. This

paper first gives a brief overview of the phenomenon of Fear of Missing Out. The third chapter is concerned with the effects of Fear of Missing Out on social media. The fourth section presents the reasonable guidance and solutions of social media use.

2. Phenomenon of Fear of Missing Out

Presenting Fear of Missing Out is usually connected with the increased usage of social media. How frequently people check their phone is positively related to the Fear of Missing Out. It will increase the frequency of people using the phone as they want to be online more often. The amount of information shared on social media raises people's of events they have missed, as people will have a strong desire to know about what others are doing or talking about. FoMO will increase the use frequency on social media, people with high FoMO will show off themselves more positively and check their phones more frequently. Furthermore, it will let people become more reliant and addicted to social media [4].

Dr. Sullivan said, people now feel as though they can't escape FoMO due to social media's growth. Since most individuals use numerous platforms, we have access to everything around the clock, seven days a week. People feel as though they are either losing out or failing to live up to their potential as a result of this [5].

According to the explanation about FoMO on a psychology website, it said deep feelings of envy toward others or discontentment with individuals' own lives can be symptoms of FoMO. People could also have a sense of anxiety over not making progress or leading a life that is not as interesting as it could be. People feel the need to be connected to what others are doing and to contrast their actions with theirs when they have FoMO [5]. If it appears that other people are having better lives, this could make individuals feel less confident or deserving of respect.

3. Effects of Fear of Missing Out on Social Media

The relationship between mental health and Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) has already been discovered by a wide variety of research. The effects can be separated into two groups, including direct effects and indirect effects. The direct effects generally focus on the influence on mental health and emotion, whereas indirect effects focus on the perception and influence of daily life of people with FoMO.

3.1. Direct Effects

3.1.1. Influence on Mental Health

FoMO is also a mediator to some mental health problems [6]. A research conducted in 2021 collected data from nearly 22,000 participants. The results of the research reveal that FoMO has a close correlation to some negative mental health problems like depression, anxiety, neuroticism, and so on. People who suffered from FoMO will experience a sense of worry about negative evaluation and the perception of low self-presentational skills [6].

Anxiety: FoMO is a category of anxiety that shows relatively equal levels of anxiety among users of social media. A study also said that while the social media is constantly developing, people will have fewer opportunities and willingness to communicate face-to-face. These actions could exacerbate social anxiety and increase the risk of developing anxiety disorders. Based on the results of Barry and Elhai, they focused on the levels of FoMO among adolescents and undergraduates, respectively. Then, they found out the level of FoMO can predict the regular level of anxiety [7]. Moreover, there are studies that present regular anxiety levels of users that can be used to reflect their FoMO adversarial levels.

Depression: Depression is also a common passive emotion, and it also shows a positive correlation with FoMO. Excessive use of social media can affect users and FoMO is a mediator that may affect depression. FoMO levels can also be used as a way to measure and predict depression levels.

3.1.2. Influence on Emotion

Boredom: Boredom is an emotional condition that occurs when people are physiologically deprived of stimulation or have a low range of unpleasantness. It has certain characteristics, including loss of interest, easy distraction, loss of motivation, etc. There is already some research proved that users on social media have a strongly positive correlation between Fear of Missing Out and boredom tendency [8]. Also, research shows that for users in the university, their FoMO has a positive impact on boredom [7]. A study has suggested that the leisure boredom of Chinese teenage online users can be positively affected by FoMO.

Loneliness: Loneliness means when individuals thought subjectively their needs in the amount or the quality of their relationships can not be satisfied. Przybylski and some other scientists have found that when the basic level of mental satisfaction in people is at a relatively low level, individuals will have a higher level of FoMO [9]. Currently, there is a lot of research that has discussed the relationship between loneliness and Fear of Missing Out consequently. In addition, Roberts and David discovered that the FoMO and social connection have negative relationships of undergraduates online users [10]. At the same time, it also proved the positive correlation between FoMO and loneliness.

Feelings of pressure/fear of exclusion: According to the hypothesis in social selection, individuals are more likely to feel a sense of pressure when their mood is low. Therefore, social media users' FoMO may have an impact on their feelings of pressure [11]. There have been some studies that have tested this idea. Teenagers are feeling stressed because they can't have a sense of belonging and they feel they're unwelcome on social media [4]. The relationship between FOMO and need to belong has been demonstrated through research. Social isolation affects attention, a crucial component of many intricate cognitive processes, and is frequently accompanied by feelings of jealousy, anxiety, melancholy, and loneliness [12].

3.2. Indirect Effects

3.2.1. Influence on Perception

Self-esteem: From the self-esteem perspective, FoMO will promote the users using social media in a more problematic way. Furthermore, users will experience additional comparisons from the society [13]. Social comparison on online forums, however, will harm users. Therefore, users' self-esteem may be badly impacted [14].

Rumination: Rumination is a passive and not problem-solving-oriented mindset that an individual might hold. When people are in rumination, they will think about negative experiences they had before and suffer from the reasons and potential negative outcomes. FoMO will activate individual users to get information that other users post on social media [4]. Nowadays, there is already some research showing that users' rumination has a positive correlation to the FoMO. There is also research that reveals that rumination may have an impact on the problematic use of social media by undergraduates and their adaptation ability to society [4].

Mindful attention: Mindful attention is a core element of mindfulness, which means concentration and a sense of what is happening right now [15]. Currently, some research is showing that FoMO has an apparent positive prediction on undergraduates' mindful attention on social media. The survey and research about American social media adult users done by Milyavskaya shows people with high FoMO situations will find it easier to get distracted and less focused on their current tasks [16].

In conclusion, FoMO will have an adverse impact on social media users' perception.

3.2.2. Influence on Daily Life/Working/Learning

FoMO will negatively affect different aspects of daily life, including daily living, working and learning.

Influence on daily life: FoMO will reduce people's satisfaction with life and happiness [17]. As people want to move into the mainstream of society, there will be an increase in purchasing power among people with FoMO. Younger adults with FoMO usually check their phones while they're driving [11].

Influence on work: FoMO at work is often the fear of losing a suitable opportunity, such as building a professional relationship or gaining some valuable information. FoMO will reduce the immersion of people in work and people are more likely to feel tired from work [18].

Influence on learning: FoMO affects concentration and can decrease how focused a person is. Undergraduates with severe FoMO problems are more likely to use Facebook during lectures [11]. Common usage of Instagram can also interrupt learning, in terms of its impact on learning depth.

4. Discussion

4.1. Courses of Action

These consequences of FoMO suggest that it is a problem that has the potential to negatively affect a large number of people in a variety of ways. Therefore, some possible solutions are listed below.

Firstly, people should go for the experience, instead of the symbol. When people look at others who are really perfect, it can easily create a sense of admiration and envy in their minds. However, if people can't perceive the chances, they have to create experiences that improve their lives, envy can easily turn into resentment. People should focus on the real feeling in life, in terms of self achievement and enrichment. Furthermore, it aids in separating what is actually satisfying from that which can merely bring forth a fleeting sense of pleasure.

Secondly, people should have a mindset of accepting of not having everything. There's a saying: needs are limited, desires are endless. Instead of giving in to all of our urges for fulfillment, it would be much better to acknowledge the futility of trying to satisfy every desire we have. By prioritizing, we are able to focus more clearly on those things that are important to us and eliminate other possibilities. As a result, people should be able to allocate our resources in a way that is consistent with our beliefs and objectives.

Third, develop a spirit of thankfulness. People should practice thankfulness instead of pursuing the things people personally think will make them happy. Instead of concentrating on what they don't have or what they want, this practice helps people to truly appreciate what we do have. FoMO means the dread of missing out on something that is essential for our well being. When people have gratitude, they are able to recognize and cherish all the things that they already have.

4.2. Limitations

This study had simply explained the phenomenon of FoMO and classified the main effects of FoMO. There are several limitations of the current research. Firstly, I did not collect any data by myself, instead I just used the second hand data in other research. Furthermore, this study might lack up-to-date first-hand survey data collection. Secondly, there is lack of research on the specific phenomenon on FoMO. It is hard to give examples of how people with FoMO behave in daily life.

5. Conclusion

The phenomenon of FoMO is that users with it use mobile social media more frequently, as they are afraid of being left out or excluded. In summary, the fear of missing out will have close connections and effects on humans, including effects on mental health and other indirect effects such as emotions, perception, etc. For example, the level of FoMO can reflect the level of anxiety and depression a person has. People with FoMO may have a greater likelihood of loneliness and fear of exclusion. Surprisingly, FoMO alleviates boredom when it comes to getting people to find ways to entertain themselves on social media. FoMO experiences decreased life satisfaction and well-being, as well as reduced concentration during learning and work immersion. It has the potential to elicit negative emotions and cognitive dissonance in users, thereby affecting their mental health and even perception.

In addition to the limitations mentioned above, there are several additional aspects that should be considered in future studies of FoMO phenomena. First, it would be beneficial to conduct primary data collection through surveys or interviews in order to obtain first-hand information about the experiences of individuals with FoMO. This would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how people perceive and react to this phenomenon in their daily lives.

It's also critical to investigate the social and cultural elements that influence the emergence and prevalence of FoMO. Fear of missing out (FoMO) may be more or less prevalent among people in various cultures depending on how much emphasis is placed on social comparison and FOMO. Additionally, researching the precise ways that social media platforms and technology contribute to the exacerbation of FoMO could provide insight into possible management techniques for its detrimental consequences.

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