



## The Influence of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) on Relationship Satisfaction among the Adolescents

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### ORIGINAL ARTICLE



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### ABSTRACT

*In today's digitally connected world, adolescents increasingly navigate their social relationships through online platforms. This hyperconnectivity has brought to light a psychological construct known as the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) - a form of anxiety stemming from the perception that others might be enjoying rewarding experiences without one's participation. This study explores how FOMO influences relationship satisfaction among adolescents. A descriptive quantitative approach was employed using a sample of 400 adolescents (equally divided by gender), aged 13-18 years, from Bihar. The instruments used were the Fear of Missing Out Scale (Przybylski et al., 2013) and the Relationship Assessment Scale (Hendrick, 1988). The findings indicated a significant negative impact of FOMO on relationship satisfaction ( $R = .33$ ,  $R^2 = .108$ ,  $\hat{a} = -0.35$ ,  $F = 28.15$ ,  $p < .001$ ). These results suggest that elevated FOMO contributes to lower satisfaction in adolescents' interpersonal relationships, emphasizing the need for digital literacy and emotional resilience interventions.*

### KEY WORDS

*Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), Relationship Satisfaction, Adolescents, Social Media, Digital Behaviour, Attachment Styles.*

### INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a developmental phase marked by profound cognitive, emotional, and social transitions. During this period, individuals form critical interpersonal bonds - both platonic and romantic - which contribute significantly to identity development, emotional regulation, and self-esteem. With the

increasing ubiquity of smartphones and social networking platforms, these relationships are increasingly shaped, and at times challenged, by digital influences such as the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO).

FOMO is characterized by the persistent worry that others are partaking in rewarding experiences from which one is excluded. Initially conceptualized by Przybylski et al. (2013), it captures a form of social anxiety rooted in the desire for inclusion and awareness of others' social engagements. Adolescents, given their developmental sensitivity to peer approval and their growing independence from family, are particularly vulnerable to FOMO.

Relationship satisfaction, in this context, refers to an individual's subjective evaluation of the quality and fulfillment derived from close interpersonal connections. In adolescence, these relationships play a protective role, helping individuals cope with stress and build emotional security. However, compulsive digital engagement prompted by FOMO can impair genuine interactions, emotional availability, and trust, potentially diminishing satisfaction in real-world relationships.

Considering these concerns, this study seeks to explore the influence of FOMO on relationship satisfaction among adolescents in Bihar - a region where digital access is rapidly expanding, bringing new psychosocial challenges to the forefront.

## Review of Related Literature

**Przybylski et al. (2013)** introduced the concept of FOMO, linking it to decreased life satisfaction and greater dependency on social media. Their findings suggest that FOMO arises from unmet psychological needs - particularly autonomy, competence, and relatedness. **Barry and Wong (2020)** highlighted the association between attachment-related anxiety and FOMO, noting its adverse impact on romantic and social relationships. This underscores the psychological implications of FOMO on relational dynamics. Similarly, **Roberts and David (2020)** found that individuals who prioritize online engagement over in-person interaction often experience lower relationship satisfaction, with FOMO acting as a significant mediator between social media usage and emotional well-being.

**Pereira (2014)** observed that adolescents with high social media involvement often report feelings of loneliness and dissatisfaction in relationships, driven by continuous social comparisons. Attachment theory, particularly **Bowlby's (1988)** model, provides a framework for understanding how anxious attachment patterns - common among adolescents with high FOMO - can lead to relational insecurity, jealousy, and emotional instability.

Further, **Elhai et al. (2016)** associated FOMO with a range of emotional challenges, such as anxiety and depression, which contribute to excessive smartphone dependency. **Dempsey et al. (2019)** emphasized the mediating role of FOMO in the relationship between social anxiety and problematic Facebook usage, suggesting that adolescents with higher social anxiety are more prone to maladaptive online behaviours. **Oberst et al. (2017)** echoed these concerns, identifying emotional exhaustion and social stress as outcomes of excessive networking driven by FOMO.

In educational settings, **Alt (2015)** found that FOMO correlates with diminished academic motivation due to increased media multitasking. **Stead and Bibby (2017)** added that neuroticism and other personality traits can intensify FOMO, further exacerbating internet overuse and lowering well-being.

Though international research has widely acknowledged the impact of FOMO on relational well-being, studies in the Indian adolescent context remain limited. This study aims to bridge that gap by exploring the predictive role of FOMO on relationship satisfaction among school-going adolescents in Bihar.

## Operational Definition

- **Fear of Missing Out (FOMO):** Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) has gained recognition as a prominent psychological issue in recent years, particularly with the rapid expansion of social media usage. Introduced by Przybylski et al. (2013), FOMO describes the persistent fear that others are experiencing enjoyable or fulfilling events in one's absence. This fear often drives individuals to repeatedly check social media, attend events, or participate in activities not out of genuine interest but from a desire to avoid being left out. It is marked by an increased attentiveness to social cues, intensified by the ubiquitous presence of smartphones and instant digital communication.

Modern digital platforms cultivate a culture centred on comparison and social validation, frequently exposing users to idealized portrayals of others' lives, emphasizing achievements, exciting experiences, and social interactions. This constant exposure can contribute to unrealistic expectations and foster feelings of inadequacy, exclusion, or dissatisfaction with one's personal life.

From a developmental point of view, adolescents are especially vulnerable to FOMO due to their heightened need for peer approval, ongoing identity development, and the significance of social belonging during this period. Popular platforms among adolescents - such as Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, Snapchat, and TikTok - capitalize on FOMO by incorporating features like time-limited stories and activity notifications that encourage continuous engagement. As a result, adolescents may find themselves caught in a loop of incessant monitoring and interaction within the digital space, which can lead to emotional strain and digital burnout.

- **Relationship Satisfaction:** Relationship satisfaction in adolescence refers to the degree of contentment and positive evaluation an individual has regarding their close interpersonal connections, particularly with peers, family members, and friends. This period of life is marked by significant emotional and social development, where adolescents increasingly rely on their peer group and family relationships to develop a sense of identity, belonging, and emotional support (Steinberg & Morris, 2001). Satisfying relationships during adolescence are characterized by mutual trust, effective communication, empathy, and a sense of being valued and understood. These supportive interactions contribute to higher self-esteem, emotional regulation, and resilience, while also acting as a protective factor against mental health issues such as anxiety and depression (Bukowski, Hoza, & Boivin, 1993).

In the digital age, online interactions further influence the dynamics of adolescent relationships. While digital communication platforms offer additional avenues for maintaining peer and family connections, they can also introduce challenges such as miscommunication, perceived social exclusion, or overexposure to peer comparison, all of which can impact relationship satisfaction (Nesi, Choukas-Bradley, & Prinstein, 2018). Ultimately, relationship satisfaction among adolescents is a multifaceted construct shaped by interpersonal quality, emotional needs, and the evolving social environment. Fostering healthy peer and family relationships is essential for promoting adolescents' emotional well-being and social development.

## Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the correlation between FOMO and relationship satisfaction.
2. To assess the predictive value of FOMO in influencing relationship satisfaction.

## Null Hypothesis

**H<sub>01</sub>:** Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) does not significantly predict relationship satisfaction.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no statistically significant relationship between FOMO and relationship satisfaction.

## Research Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive and quantitative research design, ideal for establishing patterns and determining the extent of relationships between measurable variables.

### Sample of the Study

A sample of 400 adolescents was selected from different schools of Bihar. Among them, 200 were boys and 200 were girls. They were in the age group of 13 to 18 years. They were selected randomly with consideration of some inclusion and exclusion criteria.

### Inclusion Criteria

- School Students.
- Age range between 13 to 18 years.
- Residing in Bihar state.

### Exclusion Criteria

- Age below 13 years and above 18 years
- Residing outside Bihar
- Psychiatric and psychosomatic disorders

### Research Tools

Two scales have been used in this study.

1. **Fear of Missing Out Scale:** This scale was developed by Przybylski et al. (2013). It is a 10-item unidimensional scale set on 5-point Likert type responses (1= Not at all true to 5 = Absolutely true). It measures the degree to which one fears missing out on social events, in particular involving their friends and often, using social media to stay (hyper) connected. The total scores range between 10 and 50, where higher scores indicate a higher level of fear of missing out. The Cronbach alpha coefficient of the original version of the scale is .84.
2. **Relationship Satisfaction Scale:** This scale was developed by Hendrick (1988). It is a 7-item scale designed to measure general relationship satisfaction with 5- point Likert scales (1 = Low, 5 = High). Respondents answer each item using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (low satisfaction) to 5 (high satisfaction). It has reliability with an alpha of 0.86, a mean inter-item correlation of 0.49, and a test-retest reliability of 0.85.

### Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive and quantitative research design, ideal for establishing patterns and determining the extent of relationships between measurable variables.

### Data Collection Procedure

Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and institutional permissions were granted by participating schools. Ethical procedures were followed throughout the study. Before recording the responses, an attempt was made to develop a rapport with them. In the course of conversation, the respondents were requested to respond honestly and genuinely on the scales. If the respondents needed any clarification on any question, it was clarified to them so that they could respond without any confusion and with complete understanding.

### Data Analysis

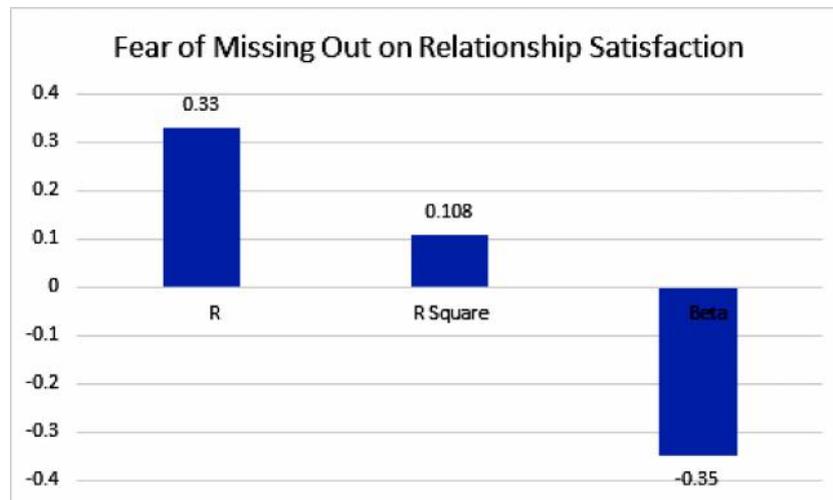
Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) were used to summarize the data. Pearson correlation analysis examined the strength and direction of association between FOMO and relationship satisfaction. Regression analysis was used to determine the predictive power of FOMO on relationship satisfaction.

### Results

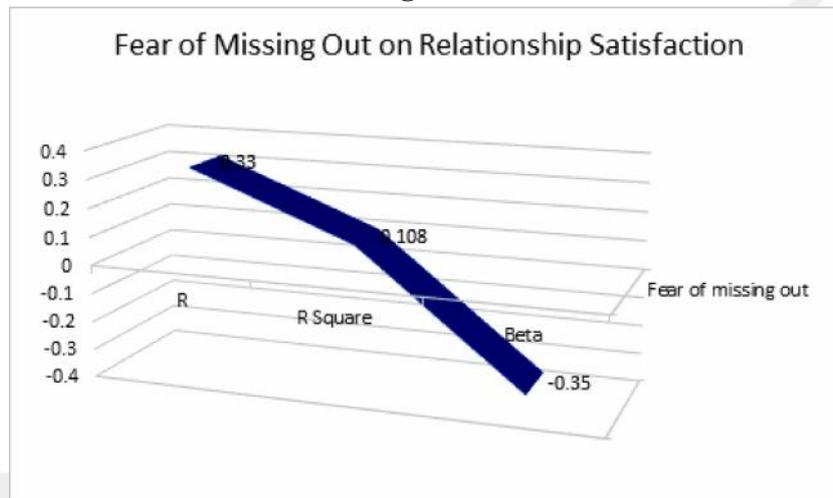
Result has been presented through Figure -1 and 2 and Table - 1.

Graphical Representation of Regression Analysis showing influence of Fear of Missing Out on Relationship Satisfaction

**Figure 1**



**Figure 2**



**Table 1:** Regression Analysis showing influence of Fear of Missing Out on Relationship Satisfaction

Predictor	R	R Square	Beta	F	Sig.
Fear of Missing Out	.33	.108	-.35	28.15	.001

**Criterion Variable:** Relationship Satisfaction

**Interpretation**

The regression model revealed a statistically significant relationship between FOMO and relationship satisfaction,  $F(1, N) = 28.15, p = .001$ , indicating that FOMO is a significant predictor of relationship satisfaction. The R value of .33 suggests a moderate correlation between the predictor (FOMO) and the criterion variable (Relationship Satisfaction). The  $R^2$  value of .108 indicates that approximately 10.8% of the variance in relationship satisfaction can be explained by variations in FOMO.

The standardized regression coefficient (Beta = -0.35) indicates a negative relationship between FOMO and relationship satisfaction. This means that as the level of FOMO increases, the level of relationship satisfaction tends to decrease. The negative beta coefficient implies that adolescents who experience higher levels of FOMO are likely to report lower levels of satisfaction in their relationships.

Overall, the table suggests that FOMO has a significant and negative impact on relationship satisfaction among adolescents, accounting for a meaningful proportion of variance and highlighting the psychological implications of digital engagement on interpersonal connections. This finding rejects the null hypothesis i.e., “There is no significant influence of Fear of Missing Out on relationship satisfaction among adolescents” and confirms the alternate hypothesis i.e., “There is a negative and significant influence of Fear of Missing Out on relationship satisfaction among adolescents.”

## Major Findings

- **Significant Predictive Value:** The regression model demonstrated that FOMO significantly predicts Relationship Satisfaction among adolescents. The model was statistically significant,  $F(1, N) = 28.15$ ,  $p = .001$ , indicating that FOMO is a meaningful psychological variable in understanding adolescents’ relational well-being.
- **Negative Direction of Influence:** The standardized beta coefficient ( $\hat{\beta} = -0.35$ ) revealed a negative relationship between FOMO and Relationship Satisfaction. This suggests that higher levels of FOMO are associated with lower levels of satisfaction in interpersonal relationships.
- **Moderate Correlation Strength:** The obtained correlation coefficient ( $R = .33$ ) indicates a moderate linear relationship between the two variables, implying a consistent but not overwhelming influence of FOMO on relationship satisfaction.
- **Explained Variance in Relationship Satisfaction:** The model accounted for approximately 10.8% of the variance in Relationship Satisfaction ( $R^2 = .108$ ), signifying that while FOMO is a significant predictor, other factors may also contribute to adolescents’ satisfaction in relationships.
- **Implications for Adolescent Well-being:** These findings underscore the psychosocial impact of digital connectivity and social comparison, highlighting that excessive preoccupation with missing out on experiences may undermine the quality of adolescents’ relationships and emotional well-being.

## Discussion

The results of this study align with existing psychological literature, confirming that FOMO exerts a negative influence on adolescents’ satisfaction within close relationships. Higher FOMO was associated with lower relationship satisfaction, suggesting that excessive digital engagement - often driven by fear of social exclusion - detracts from adolescents’ ability to engage emotionally and authentically in their relationships.

One possible explanation lies in “phubbing” behaviours, where individuals prioritize mobile device use over face-to-face interactions. This behaviour, often rooted in FOMO, may make peers or partners feel undervalued, ultimately weakening emotional bonds. Additionally, frequent exposure to idealized online portrayals of relationships can create unrealistic expectations, leading adolescents to perceive their own connections as lacking.

The findings also resonate with attachment theory, particularly in the context of anxious attachment. Adolescents who fear rejection or exclusion may constantly seek reassurance and validation through digital means, undermining trust, and intimacy in real-world interactions.

While FOMO was found to be a statistically significant predictor of relationship satisfaction (explaining 10.8% of the variance), other psychological and environmental variables - such as self-esteem, parental involvement, emotional regulation, and peer support - also play critical roles.

The study highlights an urgent need to incorporate digital well-being programs into adolescent development frameworks. Interventions that promote mindful digital use, self-awareness, and emotional intelligence can mitigate the relational disruptions caused by excessive online engagement.

## CONCLUSION

This study confirms a significant negative association between Fear of Missing Out and relationship satisfaction among adolescents. In a society where digital interactions often eclipse real-life connections, adolescents are particularly vulnerable to the psychological costs of FOMO. High FOMO leads to insecurity, distraction, and reduced emotional investment in relationships.

Educational institutions, families, and mental health professionals must collaborate to provide adolescents with tools for digital resilience. Interventions such as mindfulness training, digital detox programs, and relationship education can mitigate the adverse effects of FOMO.

Future research could explore longitudinal effects, gender differences, and moderating variables such as social support or emotional regulation skills to deepen understanding and create targeted interventions.

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