



Research Paper

THE INFLUENCE OF PEER PRESSURE SUSCEPTIBILITY ON FEAR OF MISSING OUT (FOMO) AMONG YOUNG ADULTS IN DIGITAL SOCIAL ENVIRONMENTS

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ABSTRACT

Peer pressure and Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) have emerged as important factors influencing the digital and emotional well-being of young adults. The present study examined the relationship between peer pressure susceptibility and Fear of Missing Out among young adults engaged in digital social environments. A quantitative research design was employed, and data were collected from 150 participants (75 males and 75 females) using a convenience sampling method. Standardized instruments, namely the Peer Pressure Susceptibility Scale and the Fear of Missing Out Scale, were administered to assess the study variables. Statistical analyses were conducted using JASP Version 0.95.4. Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were calculated, and Pearson's correlation analysis was performed to examine the relationship between peer pressure susceptibility and FOMO. The findings revealed no statistically significant relationship between peer pressure susceptibility and Fear of Missing Out among young adults. These results suggest that susceptibility to peer pressure may not be a significant predictor of FOMO in digital social contexts. The findings highlight the complexity of digital social behavior and indicate that other psychological, social, and technological factors may contribute to the development of FOMO. Further research is recommended to explore additional determinants of FOMO and their impact on the well-being of young adults in digital environments.

Keywords: *peer pressure, fear of missing out, FOMO, digital social environments, social media, young adults*

INTRODUCTION

Peer pressure, also referred to as peer influence, is a form of social influence exerted by individuals of similar age, social status, or interests that affects attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. Although peer pressure is often associated with negative outcomes such as substance use, risky behaviors, and unhealthy decision-making, it can also promote positive behaviors, including healthy lifestyle choices, academic engagement, and social development. During adolescence and young adulthood, peers play a significant role in shaping emotions, self-concept, and decision-making processes. The extent to which individuals are influenced by peer pressure depends on various factors, including personality traits, self-esteem, resilience, and social context (Laursen, 2021).

A closely related phenomenon in contemporary digital environments is the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). FOMO is defined as a pervasive apprehension that others may be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent. The concept gained widespread recognition with the rapid growth of social networking platforms and was officially included in the Oxford English Dictionary in 2013. Grounded in Self-Determination Theory, FOMO is associated with an individual's need for social connectedness and belongingness. Social media platforms often intensify FOMO by continuously exposing users to curated images, activities, achievements, and social interactions of others. Frequent exposure to such content may lead individuals to perceive that they are missing valuable experiences, opportunities, or social connections. Research suggests that elevated levels of FOMO are associated with increased social media use, anxiety, stress, reduced life satisfaction, and symptoms of depression. Consequently, FOMO has emerged as an important psychological construct influencing the emotional well-being and digital behavior of young adults in contemporary society.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Bruijn (2021) examined the relationship between

susceptibility to peer pressure and problematic social media use among 338 Dutch adolescents. The study highlighted that individuals who were more susceptible to peer influence were more likely to experience Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), which subsequently contributed to excessive social media engagement. The findings suggest that peer-related social concerns play an important role in shaping online behavioural patterns among young people.

Similarly, Gallegos et al. (2021) investigated the predictive role of peer pressure susceptibility on adolescent substance use and emotional dysregulation. Their findings indicated that adolescents who were more vulnerable to peer influence were at greater risk of engaging in maladaptive behaviours. Muhliawati and Purwadi (2023) reported that resistance to peer pressure was associated with lower disruptive behaviour among students, emphasizing the protective role of individual autonomy in social contexts.

Laursen (2021) proposed the Influence–Compatibility Model, which explains how adolescents adapt their attitudes and behaviours to align with their peer groups. According to this model, conformity is often driven by a desire for social acceptance and belongingness. Supporting this perspective, Keyzers (2020) found that heightened susceptibility to peer influence was associated with increased substance use among adults, indicating that peer pressure remains relevant beyond adolescence.

Research has also explored the relationship between peer influence and social relationships. Morris (2020) discussed various forms of peer pressure in adulthood, particularly in relation to alcohol consumption, while Allen (2020) demonstrated that friendship quality and peer relationships significantly influence adolescent behaviour. These findings suggest that interpersonal relationships may strengthen the effects of peer influence on individual decision-making and social behaviour.

Several studies have specifically examined Fear

of Missing Out (FOMO) and its associated factors. Yaputri et al. reported that FOMO was positively associated with consumer behaviour among millennials, indicating that concerns about missing social experiences can influence purchasing decisions. Jin Wan and Zishu Zhou (2025) found significant relationships among FOMO, loneliness, and social media use among students. Likewise, Durao et al. (2023) observed that FOMO was associated with emotional intelligence and attachment styles among older adults, suggesting that the phenomenon extends across different age groups and social contexts.

Although existing research has examined peer pressure susceptibility and FOMO separately, findings remain limited regarding their direct relationship among young adults in digital social environments. Most studies have focused on adolescents or Western populations, leaving a gap in understanding how peer pressure susceptibility influences FOMO among young adults who actively engage in online social interactions. Therefore, the present study seeks to address this gap by examining the influence of peer pressure susceptibility on Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) among young adults in digital social environments.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY

Social Identity Theory, proposed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner (1979), explains how an individual's self-concept is influenced by membership in social groups. According to the theory, individuals derive part of their identity and self-esteem from belonging to groups such as peer networks, educational institutions, cultural communities, and online social groups. The theory is based on three key cognitive processes: social categorization, social identification, and social comparison. Social categorization involves classifying oneself and others into groups, social identification refers to adopting the values and norms of a group, and social comparison involves evaluating one's group relative to others to maintain a positive social identity.

In digital social environments, young adults often identify strongly with peer groups and online communities. The desire to gain acceptance, maintain group membership, and conform to peer expectations may increase susceptibility to peer pressure. Social comparison through social networking platforms can further intensify concerns about social inclusion and belongingness. Consequently, Social Identity Theory provides a useful framework for understanding how peer group influence may contribute to experiences of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) among young adults.

SELF-DETERMINATION THEORY

Self-Determination Theory (SDT), developed by Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan (1985), proposes that human behaviour is guided by three fundamental psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Autonomy refers to the need to experience personal choice and self-direction, competence refers to the need to feel effective and capable, and relatedness refers to the need to establish meaningful social connections with others. The fulfilment of these needs promotes psychological well-being, motivation, and healthy functioning.

Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) is closely associated with the need for relatedness. Individuals who perceive that they are excluded from rewarding social experiences may experience anxiety, dissatisfaction, and a stronger desire to remain connected with others. Social media platforms often amplify these feelings by providing continuous access to information about the activities and experiences of peers. From the perspective of Self-Determination Theory, FOMO may arise when the need for social connectedness is not adequately satisfied. Therefore, SDT provides a valuable theoretical basis for understanding the psychological mechanisms underlying FOMO in digital social environments.

RELEVANCE TO THE PRESENT STUDY

The present study is grounded in Social Identity Theory and Self-Determination Theory, which

together provide a theoretical basis for understanding the relationship between peer pressure susceptibility and Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) among young adults. Social Identity Theory suggests that individuals are influenced by peer groups through processes of social identification and social comparison, which may increase their susceptibility to peer pressure. Self-Determination Theory emphasizes the importance of relatedness and belongingness as fundamental psychological needs, suggesting that unmet social needs may contribute to the development of FOMO. In the context of digital social environments, these theories help explain how peer influence and the desire for social connectedness may shape young adults' online experiences and behaviours. Therefore, the integration of these theories provides a comprehensive framework for examining the influence of peer pressure susceptibility on FOMO among young adults.

Empirical Findings

Empirical research has consistently demonstrated that peer influence plays a significant role in shaping behavioural and psychological outcomes among adolescents and young adults. Keyzers (2020) found that negative peer pressure was positively associated with binge drinking among emerging adults, whereas positive peer pressure was linked to reduced substance use. Similarly, Morris (2020) reported that peer pressure to consume alcohol remains prevalent throughout adulthood and may occur in both direct and indirect forms.

Allen (2020) observed that adolescents often mirror the substance use behaviours of their close friends, particularly within high-quality friendships, highlighting the influence of peer relationships on behavioural choices. Gallegos et al. (2021) further reported that early substance use was associated with increased susceptibility to peer pressure, emotional detachment, and a greater likelihood of progressing to illicit drug use. Supporting these findings, Laursen (2021) explained that conformity to peer norms is a common developmental process during adoles-

cence and young adulthood, driven by the need for social acceptance and group belonging.

Research on Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) has similarly highlighted the influence of social and digital factors on individual behaviour. Bruijn (2021) found that FOMO was significantly associated with problematic social media use among adolescents. Likewise, Yaputri et al. (2022) reported a positive relationship between FOMO and consumptive behaviour among millennials, suggesting that concerns about missing rewarding experiences may influence decision-making and online engagement. Collectively, these findings indicate that peer influence and FOMO are important psychological constructs that contribute to social behaviour, emotional well-being, and digital media use among young people.

METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the problem statement, objectives, and hypotheses, as well as the research design, sampling methods, criteria for selection, variables chosen for the study along with their operational definitions, the tools utilized and their descriptions, and the process for data collection in this present investigation.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study is quantitative based cross sectional research to inquire about the link between vulnerability to peer pressure and Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) among young adults in online social environments. A rationale behind this choice of methodology is to gain insight into existing differences in these two psychological constructs in online settings. A comparative part of this research will help in understanding differences based on demographic variables such as gender and age categories. The present research relates to the aims of this project, which basically revolve around searching for connections via regression analysis and non-parametric tests.

PARTICIPANTS/ SAMPLES

The research sample comprises 150 young adult students in their 18-25 years age group in Chennai city. The 18-25 years age group represents the young adulthood life stage, which in itself is an important life phase with increased social media activity and exposure to online peer influence. A non-probability sampling technique, convenience sampling, is used to pick research participants who are accessible, active, and using social media sites in Chennai city.

CRITERIA

The criteria for selecting research participants include being a young adult in their 18-25 years age group and using social media sites actively, with the exclusion criteria including those in digital detox programs, restricting online interaction for religious, cultural, or personal reasons; in addition to those with official psychological/psychiatric diagnoses which might affect their responses to research questionnaires. Paper-format distribution is used to conduct research among this accessible population with ease.

INSTRUMENTS AND MEASURES

B

This PPSQ-R measures peer pressure across susceptibility to peer influence across different social contexts. It has 25 items, and responses are measured by 5 5-point Likert scale. The scores are interpreted based on cutoff values that categories individuals into low, moderate, or high susceptibility to peer pressure.

Fear of missing out

Fear of Missing Out Scale: FoMOs was developed by Przybylski, Murayama, DeHann, & Gladwell (2013). It has 10 items, and responses are measured by 5 5-point Likert scale. The scores are interpreted by summing responses to the 10 items. Higher total scores indicate greater levels of FOMO.

Demographic questions

Participants provide information like name, gender and age.

PROCEDURE

The study shows the influence of peer pressure susceptibility on Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) among young adults in digital social environments in Chennai city. They were informed about the purpose of the study. First, they were given a socio-demographic sheet to document their personal information. Subsequently, they were provided the Peer Pressure Susceptibility Questionnaire and Fear of Missing Out Scale for evaluation. Scoring will be done according to the scoring manual.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data's were collected in excel sheet then Analyzed by Jasp application. The following statistical techniques were applied. Data analysis which performed in this research included descriptive Statistics, Independent t test, and Correlation analysis. In which descriptive Statistics, include sections like valid data, Mean data, std deviation, Shapiro Will, P- value of Shapiro - Will, Minimum, Maximum scores, then in the independent t test we compared team and individual sports with gender-based differentiation. In the correlation Analysis we compared Pearson's correlation coefficients were calculated to examine the relationship between attachment like anxiety, avoidance, and avoidance with self-esteem.

This table shows the Model Summary – FOMO of the data

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	RMSE
H ₀	0.000	0.000	0.000	8.284
H ₁	0.696	0.485	0.482	5.965

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1- the Model Summary - FOMO

Note: This table shows the comprehensive linear regression model forecasting FOMO by considering susceptibility to peer pressure. R (Correlation Coefficient): Assesses the intensity and orientation of the linear connection between peer influence and FOMO. The H₀ model indicates 0.000 (no correlation), while the H₁(variable) model shows 0.696, reflecting a strong positive association. R² (Coefficient of Determination): Indicates

the fraction of variance in FOMO accounted for by peer influence. For H₁, it is 0.485 (48.5%), indicating that peer pressure accounts for almost half of the differences in FOMO. Adjusted R²: Modifies R² based on the number of predictors, providing a more precise metric. It is 0.482 for H₁, near R², validating model strength. RMSE (Root Mean Square Error): Indicates the average error in predictions; a smaller value signifies a better fit. RMSE enhanced from 8.284 in the null model (H₀) to 5.965 in the alternative model (H₁), showing increased predictive accuracy with the inclusion of peer

Table 2- Linear regression coefficients

This table shows the Linear regression coefficients of the data

Model		Unstandardized	Standard Error	Standardized	t	P
H ₀	(Intercept)	27.333	0.676		40.410	< .001
H ₁	(Intercept)	7.704	1.732		4.447	<.001
	PP	0.282	0.024		11.807	<.001

Note: This table shows the linear regression coefficients examining the connection between peer pressure (PP) and Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). The unstandardized coefficient for peer influence is 0.282 with a standard error of 0.024, suggesting that for every unit increase in peer influence, FOMO rises by 0.282 units. The standardized

coefficient (Beta) of 0.696 indicates a significant positive effect size. The coefficients for both the intercept (7.704) and peer pressure are statistically significant, with p-values below 0.001, indicating a notable predictive association between peer pressure and FOMO.

Table 3- Mann-Whitney U test.

This table shows the Mann-Whitney U test of the data

W	DF	p
2223.500		0.027
1940.500		0.001

Note. This table shows the outcomes of the Mann-Whitney U test, a non-parametric analysis that evaluates differences between groups in peer pressure and FOMO scores. The test statistics for peer pressure ($U = 2223.500$, $p = 0.027$) and FOMO ($U = 1940.500$, $p = 0.001$) suggest statistically significant differences among groups

probably influenced by demographic factors like gender or age. This indicates that the peer pressure susceptibility and FOMO score distributions significantly vary between these groups, emphasizing that personal traits affect these experiences in online social environments.

Table 4- Independent Samples T-Test

This table shows the Independent Samples T-Test of the data

W	DF	p
1763.500		0.003
1774.000		0.003

Note. This table shows the presents findings from the Independent Samples T-Test, which evaluates if the average scores of peer pressure (PP) and Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) show significant differences between two independent groups, like gender or age categories. The values of the test statistic ($W = 1763.500$ for PP, $W = 1774.000$ for FOMO) in conjunction with the degrees of freedom (df) reveal the sample size context for the test. Both PP and FOMO exhibit p-values of 0.003, which fall below the standard significance level of 0.05, suggesting that the variations in average peer pressure and FOMO scores between the groups are statistically significant. This indicates that personal factors such as age or gender significantly influence differences in susceptibility to peer pressure and feelings of FOMO in online social environments. The mention of “Mann-Whitney U test” probably pertains to a corresponding non-parametric comparison used in the research for added robustness.

DISCUSSION

This study analyzes the influence of peer pressure susceptibility on the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) among young adults in digital social environments using descriptive statistical analyses. It examined differences and relationships between peer pressure, fear of missing out (FOMO), and demographic variables such as gender and the influence of social media. the data collectively chal-

lenge the null hypotheses, establishing that peer pressure is a strong predictor of FOMO and that both phenomena manifest uniquely across gender and age groups within digital environments. These results align with contemporary research, confirming that the digital context intensifies social comparison pressures leading to FOMO, especially among young adults susceptible to peer influence. The findings underscore the need for targeted interventions and greater awareness of peer pressure and FOMO dynamics on social media platforms.

In Table 1 (Model Summary – FOMO) shows the overall adequacy of the regression model that predicts Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) in relation to vulnerability to peer pressure. The alternative model (H_1) indicates a robust positive correlation ($R = 0.696$) accounting for approximately 48.5% of the variance in FOMO, with a reduced prediction error ($RMSE = 5.965$), suggesting that peer pressure is a crucial predictor of FOMO.

In Table 2 (Coefficients of Linear Regression) outlines the connection between peer influence and FOMO. The unstandardized coefficient for peer pressure (0.282) indicates that as peer pressure rises, FOMO experiences a notable increase. The standardized beta of 0.696 indicates a strong effect size, while the significant t and p values ($<.001$) show that this relationship is statistically significant.

In Table 3 (Mann-Whitney U Test) analyzes the differences between groups in peer pressure and FOMO scores through a non-parametric method. Notable p-values (0.027 for peer pressure and 0.001 for FOMO) indicate substantial differences among groups (like gender or age), showing that these personal traits influence vulnerability and experiences associated with peer pressure and FOMO.

In Table 4 (Independent Samples T-Test) additionally verifies notable disparities in average peer pressure and FOMO scores among groups, with both assessments producing p-values of 0.003. This indicates that demographic elements significantly influence vulnerability to peer pressure and FOMO, supporting the results from the Mann-Whitney test.

In this, these tables together show that peer influence is a powerful, statistically relevant factor in FOMO among young adults, and that vulnerability to and experiences of FOMO vary significantly among different demographic groups.

CONCLUSION

The present study examined the Peer pressure and Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) among young adults in digital social environments. the results concludes that it rejects the null hypotheses, confirming that peer pressure is a major factor driving FOMO in online social spaces for young adults. These effects are further shaped by demographic characteristics, suggesting that targeted interventions and support may be needed to address vulnerability to FOMO and peer pressure in digital contexts.

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