

The Psychology of Missing Out: Age-Wise Patterns of FOMO and Anxiety

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Abstract

The Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and Anxiety have become defining psychological experiences in the age of social media, where people constantly compare their lives online. This study explores the occurrence of FOMO across age groups, along with its correlation with anxiety and social media usage. A descriptive-correlational research design was employed using an online survey distributed via Google Forms. The survey gathered quantitative data on FOMO and Anxiety using official scales, alongside information on social media tendencies of 86 participants aged from under 18 to 60 years. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics, ANOVA, and correlation analysis, by age groups. These show that FOMO is highest among participants under 18 and generally decreases with age. Anxiety scores follow a similar trend. A strong positive correlation ($r = 0.53$, $p < .001$) was observed between FOMO and Anxiety. Social media usage significantly varied with younger participants preferring Instagram and Snapchat, while Facebook usage increased with age. LinkedIn was used most by 18-30 year olds, implying career-related priorities. This paper showcases age as a significant factor influencing both FOMO and anxiety. The results illustrate the need for age-targeted mental programmes, especially for adolescents. Future research with a more diverse and larger sample size could enhance the understanding of FOMO and Anxiety's developmental and cultural dimensions.

Keywords: Age; Anxiety; Fear of Missing Out (FOMO); Social Media