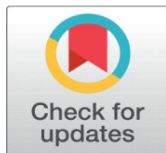
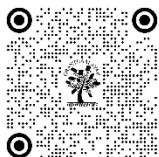


THE IMPACT OF FEAR OF MISSING OUT (FOMO) ON SOCIAL MEDIA USERS OF KERALA

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ABSTRACT

With the growth of social media platforms, people are becoming increasingly linked and exposed to a vast amount of information, updates, and happenings in real-time. Anxiety and the worry of missing out on things, opportunities, or relationships may be aggravated by the constant flood of social media content. Overusing social media platforms has been linked to the psychiatric disorder known as "Fear of Missing Out" (FOMO) because, at times, users use these sites to compare their lives to those of others and keep up with and constantly check on what their friends are up to. This study aims to explore how social media use and FOMO are related. The paper will employ a method of quantitative analysis, which involves collecting data from a sample of social media users in Kerala via an online survey, as well as a qualitative method, which involves interviews with leading psychologists and the analysis of a literature review. The study will employ theoretical frameworks like social comparison theory, self-determination theory, and uses and gratifications theory to analyse the data and understand the connection between social media usage and FOMO. The findings of this study will give an insight of social media usage and FOMO while highlighting the psychological impacts of social media usage on an individual's wellness.

Keywords: Social Media, FOMO, Social Media Usage

1. INTRODUCTION

Communication has always been an important part of human life. Initially, they were representations of pictorial meaning, which later progressed to the beginnings of semiotic interpretation. With the advent of technology and the development of communication, people have seen the development of radio, telephone, computer, and internet, of which social media is the most common and effective form of communication to date.

Social media has been heralded as a revolution in technology and communication. Young people have been in the middle of using social media sites like Snapchat, Facebook, and Instagram, although social media platforms have been a good source for receiving and sending information and helping people connect with people from all across the world. Social media use has been connected to a variety of impacts on mental health, which include increased anxiety, depression, and social isolation. The systematic review and meta-analysis by [Lin et al. \(2016\)](#), established a significant connection linking social media use and depression, anxiety, and stress among individuals.

Also known as the "fear of missing out," FOMO is described as a feeling of missing important things in life and the constant desire to remain in contact and up to date. It can be attributed to anxiety from choosing not to participate in the wrong activity. It can also lead to an increase in social media use, where people neglect their daily lives and activities for spending some time scrolling through social media.

FOMO can also play a key role in the connections between passive usage of social media sites, social comparison, the indication of depression, and even social media stalking. Social media usage may be linked with an increase in symptoms of anxiety and depression, negative body image, issues while sleeping, and cyberbullying for a variety of reasons, but one of the most potent is greater social comparison [Silva et al. \(2021\)](#). As per the social comparison theory, people, while lacking objective knowledge, have a natural tendency to compare oneself to others frequently in an effort to develop an accurate self-scrutiny. And social media platforms give users access to a variety of freely available information about others, opening up new opportunities for social comparison.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

With technology advancing more than ever, there are many shortcomings. They include a number of otherwise excluded and unacknowledged psychological ones. Social media has integrated itself seamlessly into people's daily lives, especially through the eyes of teenagers. The study seeks to highlight the impact of FOMO and the relevance of social media use.

FOMO comes from social comparisons and the perception that others are enjoying themselves more or better than themselves. Research about social media use and the prevalence of FOMO (fear of missing out) can shed light on the impact social media can have on the psychological and physical wellness of individuals. Social media platforms facilitate social comparison and can contribute to FOMO, which can increase anxiety, stress, and depression.

Understanding the relationship and link between social media use and FOMO can help individuals, especially young people, make informed decisions about their social media behavior and promote healthy social media use. It is time to acknowledge the many negative aspects of social media and take the necessary steps and actions to eliminate them. The survey is also conducted to reduce the impact of FOMO and identify several personal prevention strategies to curb social media use.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

The connection and association between the use of social media and FOMO have been the topic of several studies in recent years. These studies have established that social media usage is positively associated with FOMO.

Studies conducted by [Przybylski et al. \(2013\)](#), [Rosen et al. \(2013\)](#), and [Lee et al. \(2018\)](#) collectively found that social media usage is positively associated with FOMO, as well as with the need to belong and the need to know what others are doing. The study also found that FOMO is positively connected to the frequency of social media usage. They also found that FOMO is a reliable indicator of what can lead to extreme social media usage.

Studies and research by [Silva Santos et al. \(2021\)](#), as well as [Burnell et al. \(2019\)](#), conclude on the effect of FOMO on individuals in terms of having social comparisons with ourselves and others and even going to great lengths on social media and cyberstalking. These two phenomena are positively associated with FOMO and the addiction to social media in individuals. With the surplus of information available on social media, social media stalking has paved the way for addiction to social media and FOMO.

[Alutaybi et al. \(2020\)](#) state how FOMO leads people to engage more in social media activities and consequently prompts them to act in ways that reduce their productivity at work. The addiction to social media and smartphones makes people constantly check their notifications for messages, e-mails, posts, or videos from someone. This particular behaviour makes people forget about their daily activities and makes them lethargic about doing anything other than scrolling through social media sites.

According to research done by [Guazzini et al. \(2019\)](#), phubbing is seen as an effect of social media addiction, which in turn is seen as an effect of FOMO in individuals. This act of ignoring other social relationships for their smartphones is known as "phubbing." Studies have also addressed the bandwagon effect in relation to FOMO in individuals. The effect is described as an adoption of trends and beliefs just because other people are doing so. This phenomenon can be easily recognised on social media, as a pattern of trending reels and posts. This act of not wanting to miss anything is positively associated with FOMO.

Overall, these research papers suggest that social media usage is positively linked with FOMO and that FOMO is a crucial indicator of the use of social media. Additionally, these studies suggest that social media use for social comparison is also positively connected with FOMO.

To conclude, the literature review suggests that there is an association between social media usage and Fear of Missing Out. Social media usage may pave the way for FOMO by providing easy access to information about others' activities and experiences, which can trigger feelings such as exclusion and inadequacy. Therefore, it is a necessity to understand the possible negative outcomes of social media usage on mental well-being and to use it in a balanced and moderate way. [Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas \(2018\)](#)

The use of social media and FOMO have been the topic of research for a long time. But even with it, there are some research gaps identified in it-

- Individual differences play a significant role in this. Very few studies have looked at the potential moderating effects of individual differences playing a part in understanding the effects and impacts of the use of social media and FOMO.
- Many of the studies have addressed social media usage and its connection with FOMO and vice versa, but very few have given importance to finding out how to mitigate FOMO and whether methods like social media detoxing are actually helpful.

- Mainly, research has been conducted on understanding social media usage and its relation to FOMO and vice versa, but none has been conducted so far on understanding the level of knowledge people have about FOMO.

4. METHODOLOGY

The study intends to use both quantitative and qualitative analysis. The qualitative analysis aims to analyse through observation how social media usage can result in FOMO and vice versa and also uses literature reviews. Quantitative analysis is done using survey methods on 200 individuals in Kerala, selected through a simple random sampling method, to determine the period of time people spend on social media sites and for what purposes. The data collection tools used in the research are a questionnaire and secondary data sources.

5. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- 1) Social comparison theory:** According to [Crusius et al. \(2022\)](#), social comparisons—that is, comparisons between oneself and others—are a key mechanism that affects how people judge, experience, and behave in the social environment. The theory suggests that people evaluate their social and personal worth by evaluating how they interact and compare with others. It explains how people evaluate and judge how well they are doing at something by comparing their actions, accomplishments, and views to those of others in society. Social media platforms provide an ideal environment for social comparison, as users can easily view and compare themselves to others' curated lives and achievements. This may result in feelings of inadequacy, insecurity, and FOMO.
- 2) Self-determination theory:** Also known as SDT, this theory is based on how humans use their personality and motivation to interact with and depend on their social environments [Legault \(2017\)](#). The theory proposes and stresses that individuals have innate psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Social media use may influence the fulfilment of these needs, as excessive use may lead to a loss of autonomy, reduced feelings of competence, and diminished social connectedness.
- 3) Uses and gratification theory:** According to [Vinney \(2022\)](#), the theory is based on the expectations of the gratifications people would experience as a result of the selection of the media they consume. Social media platforms offer numerous opportunities for individuals to fulfil these needs, such as staying connected with friends and family, accessing news and information, and showcasing their personal lives. But, excessive use of these social media sites and platforms is what leads to an impact on one's life like FOMO.

6. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

6.1. DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

Table 1

| Table 1 Demographic Variables (Age and Gender) Counts and Percentage | | | |
|--|--------------|--------|------------|
| Demographic Variables | Levels | Counts | Percentage |
| Age | Less than 18 | 13 | 6.4% |

| | | | |
|--------|------------------------|-----|-------|
| | 18-25 | 170 | 84.2% |
| | More than 25 | 19 | 9.4% |
| Gender | Female | 128 | 63.4% |
| | Male | 72 | 35.6% |
| | Prefer not to disclose | 2 | 1.0% |

Table 1 shows that out of 202 respondents, 84.2% (170 in count) of them are between the age category of 18-25 years. While, 9.4% (19 in count) of the respondents are 'More than 25', and 6.4% (13 in count) of the respondents are 'Less than 18'.

In terms of gender, the majority of the respondents are 'Female' comprising 63.4% (128 in count) of the total 202 respondents. While, 35.6% (72 in count) of the total respondents are 'Male', and 1.0% (2 in count) of them have responded, 'Prefer not to disclose'.

1) To identify the prevalence of FOMO among individuals who use social media frequently

- **Do you know what "fear of missing out" (FOMO) means?**

Figure 1

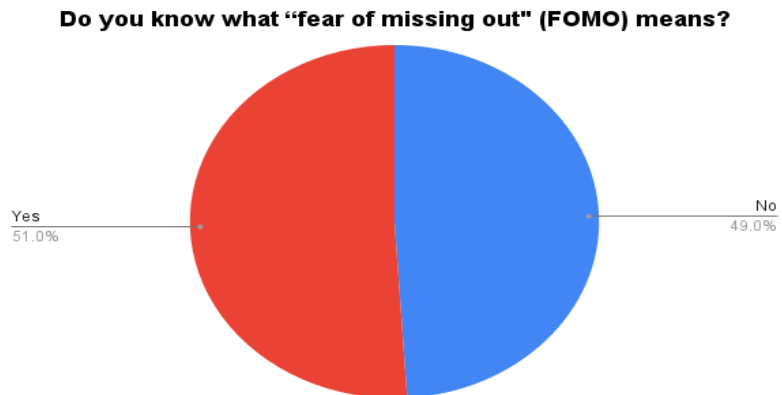


Figure 1 Do You Know What "Fear of Missing Out" (FOMO) Means?

Figure 1 shows the count of responses to the question, "Do you know what "fear of missing out" (FOMO) means?" Out of the total 202 responses, 51% of them have responded with 'Yes', while the rest 49% of them have responded with 'No'. The response shows that around half of the sample size has heard of the term "fear of missing out". Even though the majority of the respondents have heard the term FOMO, the rest of the statistics show that there are still individuals who do not know what FOMO is and thus would not be able to identify its symptoms.

- **Do you feel pressure to post on social media to show that you're doing something interesting or fun and to fit in with your social circle?**

Figure 2

Do you feel pressure to post on social media to show that you're doing something interesting or fun and to fit in with your social circle?

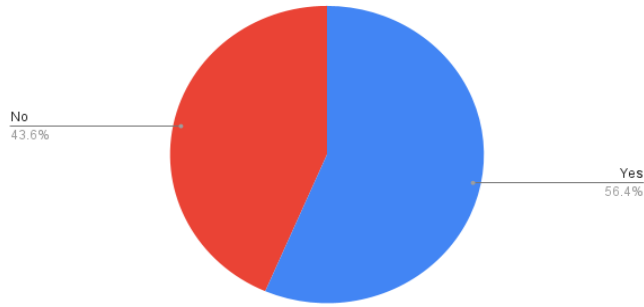


Figure 2 Do You Feel Pressure to Post on Social Media to Show that You're Doing Something Interesting or Fun and to Fit in with Your Social Circle?

Figure 2 shows the count of responses to the question, “Do you feel pressure to post on social media to show that you're doing something interesting or fun and to fit in with your social circle?.” Out of 202 respondents, 43.6% have responded with ‘No’ and the rest, 56.4%, with ‘Yes’. The response demonstrates that the majority of people experience pressure and a need to post something on social media in order to show others that they are having fun and to blend in with their social circle. This might be because of the need to let other people know they are doing things to make others interested in them and keep their attention on them.

- **Have you ever judged your life based on someone else's based on their social media posts?**

Figure 3

Have you ever judged your life based on someone else's based on their social media posts?

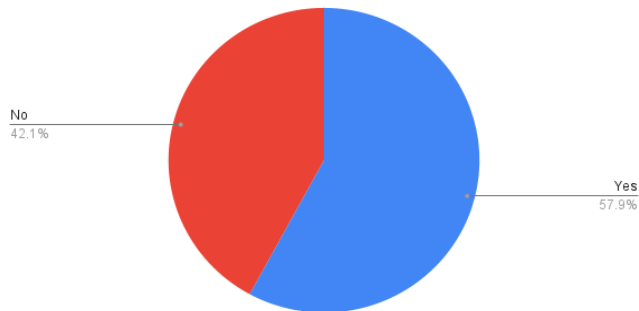


Figure 3 Have You Ever Judged Your Life Based on Someone Else's Based on their Social Media Posts?

Figure 3 shows the count of responses to the question, “Have you ever judged your life based on someone else's based on their social media posts?” The chart shows 42.1% of 202 people have responded with ‘No’, and 57.9% of people have responded with ‘Yes’. This clearly points out that people using social media compare their lives to others based on social media posts. This chart clearly depicts the social comparison theory of constantly comparing one's own life to others, for which social media has become a prominent instrument in recent years.

- **Have you ever felt left out or excluded from your social circle because of social media?**

Figure 4

Have you ever felt left out or excluded from your social circle because of social media?

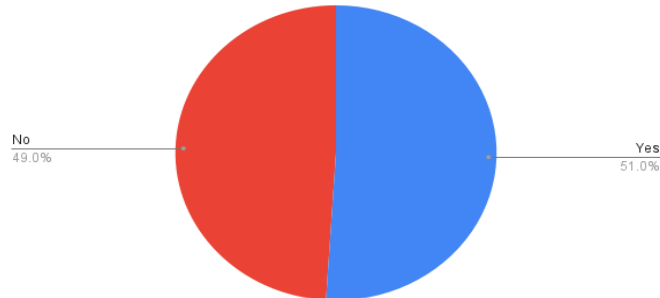


Figure 4 Have You Ever Felt Left Out or Excluded from Your Social Circle Because of Social Media?

Figure 4 shows the responses to the question, "Have you ever felt left out or excluded from your social circle because of social media?" For which, 49% responded with 'No' and the rest, 51%, responded with 'Yes'. This chart shows the exclusion people feel and experience in their social circles because of social media. They feel excluded because when someone- probably an individual's friend or close family member- does something fun without them, it may feel as if they are missing out on something and feel socially excluded.

- **How do you react when you see that your friends or peers are doing something without you?**

Figure 5

How do you react when you see that your friends or peers are doing something without you?

202 responses

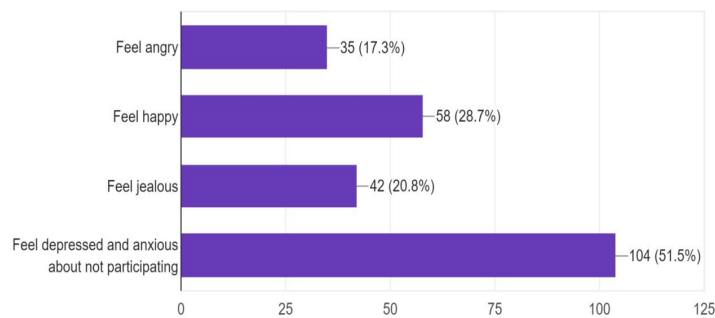


Figure 5 How Do You React When You See That Your Friends or Peers are Doing Something Without You?

Figure 5 shows the count of responses to the question, "How do you react when you see that your friends or peers are doing something without you?" In the checkbox question, 35 out of 202 people, or 17.3%, responded 'Feel angry'. 58 out of 202 people, equating to 28.7%, responded 'Feel happy'. 42 out of 202 people, or 20.8%, responded 'Feel jealous', while 104 out of 202 people, equating to 51.5%,

responded 'Feel depressed and anxious about not participating'. This chart clearly shows that a wide majority of people feel depressed and anxious about not participating when they see that their friends and peers are doing something without them. Much like the prior question, the respondents have felt more depressed and anxious when their friends and family members do something without them, mainly because they want to be a part of everything and do not want to miss out on anything that is going on.

- **Have you ever experienced jealousy or been envious of someone else's social media posts?**

Figure 6

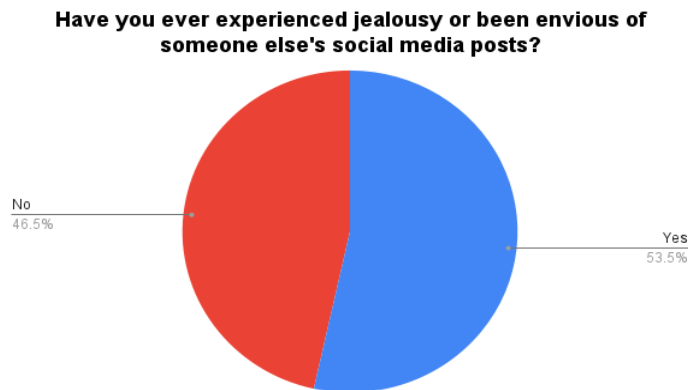


Figure 6 Have You Ever Experienced Jealousy or Been Envious of Someone Else's Social Media Posts?

Figure 6 shows the count of responses to the question, "Have you ever experienced jealousy or been envious of someone else's social media posts?" For which, 46.5% have responded to the question with 'No' and the rest, 53.5%, have responded with 'Yes'. The chart points out how people have felt jealous or envious of someone else's social media post. Feeling jealous is a sign of wanting to be that person, and social media users go through this feeling because of social comparison. When the other person has something or other that the individual does not possess, it can lead to jealousy for not having a 'perfect' life like the others.

7. INTERPRETATION

The above six charts are the answer to the prevalence of FOMO among individuals. The six questions, all combine to ask whether an individual goes through any of the symptoms of FOMO while using social media. The first question serves as a general understanding of the people's knowledge on whether they know or have heard about FOMO, to which a slight majority have responded positively. The rest of the questions range from feeling pressured to post on social media, comparing their lives to someone else's, feeling excluded from one's own social group, feeling depressed and anxious about not participating in some event, to even feeling jealous or envious of someone's social media post. All these make way for identifying the symptoms of FOMO in these social media users, and the majority have responded positively to them all. This concludes the first objective of the research on finding out the prevalence of FOMO in individuals who use social media platforms.

- 2) To understand the consequences of FOMO resulting from social media usage, such as anxiety, depression, etc.
- Do you feel like the use of social media affects your self-esteem or confidence?

Figure 7

Do you feel like the use of social media affects your self-esteem or confidence?

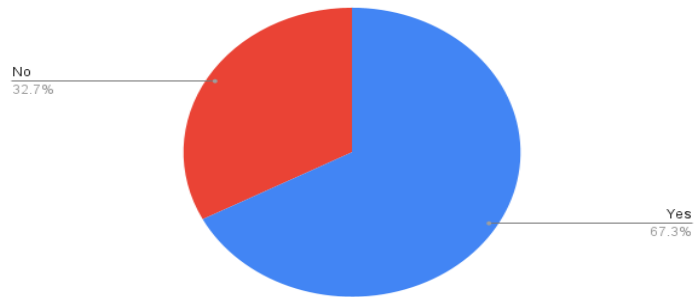


Figure 7 Do You Feel Like the Use of Social Media Affects Your Self-Esteem or Confidence?

Figure 7 shows the count of responses to the question, “Do you feel like the use of social media affects your self-esteem or confidence?” Of which, 32.7% have responded with ‘No’, and 67.3% have responded with ‘Yes’. The chart clearly shows how a majority of the 202 respondents feel that social media affects their self-esteem or confidence. Individuals feel lower self-esteem and confidence when they start to compare themselves to others’ lives through social media posts. This is well understood through the social comparison theory.

- Have you ever observed that social media content or the use of social media impacts your mental health in any way and is a factor in anxiety, depression, etc.?

Figure 8

Have you ever observed that social media content or the use of social media impacts your mental health in any way and is a

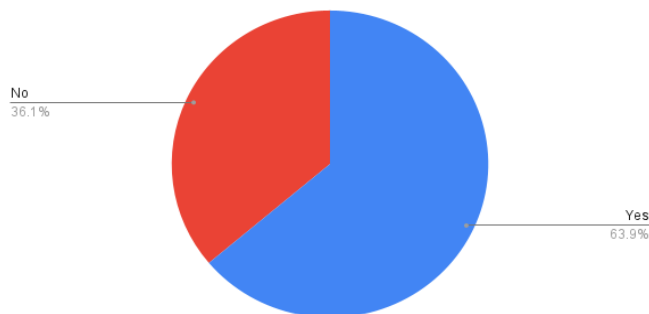


Figure 8 Have You Ever Observed that Social Media Content or the Use of Social Media Impacts Your Mental Health in Any Way and is a Factor in Anxiety, Depression, Etc.?

Figure 8 shows the count of responses to the question. “Have you ever observed that social media content or the use of social media impacts your mental health in

any way and is a factor in anxiety, depression, etc.?” For which, 36.1% responded with ‘No’, while 63.9% responded with ‘Yes’. The charts state that most people have felt that the content of social media sites and the use of social media have impacted their mental wellbeing in any way and are also factors in increased anxiety, depression, etc. This chart shows how most people understand and acknowledge that social media sites have an impact on their mental wellbeing and even open the door to anxiety and depression among individuals.

- **Does social media have a positive or negative impact on your social life and relationships?**

Figure 9

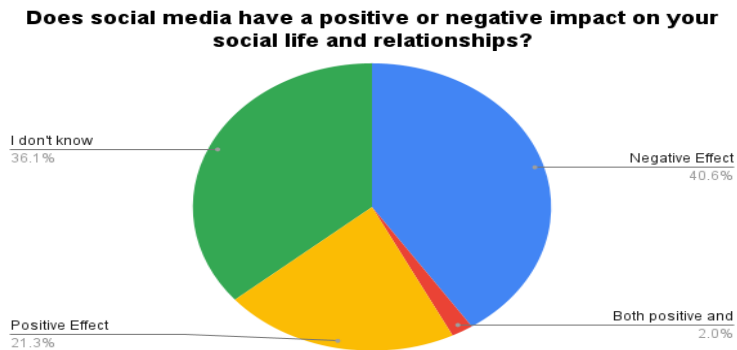


Figure 9 Does Social Media have a Positive or Negative Impact on Your Social Life and Relationships?

Figure 9 shows the count of responses to the question, “Does social media have a positive or negative impact on your social life and relationships?” For which, 21.3% of 202 people responded ‘Positive Effect’. 40.6% of 202 people responded with ‘Negative Effect’, 2% responded with ‘Both’, and 36.1% responded with ‘I don’t know’. The chart shows that most people believe that the use of social media has a negative impact on their social lives and relationships. Just like the prior question, this chart also shows the awareness people have about social media and its impact on their lives.

- **Do you believe that social media contributes to FOMO?**

Figure 10

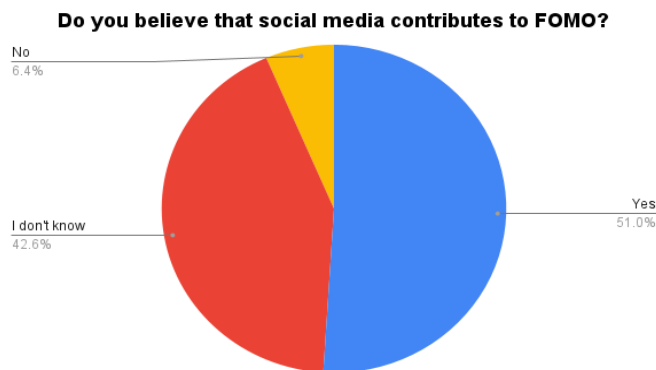


Figure 10 Do You Believe that Social Media Contributes to FOMO?

Figure 10 shows the count of responses to the question, “Do you believe that social media contributes to FOMO?” Of these, 6.4% of the 202 respondents said ‘No’. 42.6% of people responded, ‘I don’t know’, and 51% of the people responded, ‘Yes’. The chart clearly shows that most people believe that social media plays a part in developing FOMO in individuals. The majority agree that social media adds up to FOMO in their lives, and these majorities are the ones that know what FOMO is all about.

8. INTERPRETATION

The above four charts are answers to the question of the consequences of FOMO for individuals, resulting in anxiety, depression, etc. The vast majority of the people gave a positive answer to the first question, which directly addresses whether individuals have felt low self-esteem or confidence due to social media. The rest of the questions, like whether social media usage has even impacted their mental health in any way, whether social media has a negative or positive impact on their lives, and whether social media contributes to FOMO, were all positively answered by the respondents. All these questions give rise to the second objective of understanding the consequences of FOMO resulting from social media usage, which include anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem in individuals.

3) To ascertain the relationship between the use of social media and FOMO

- How much time do you spend each day on social media?

Figure 11

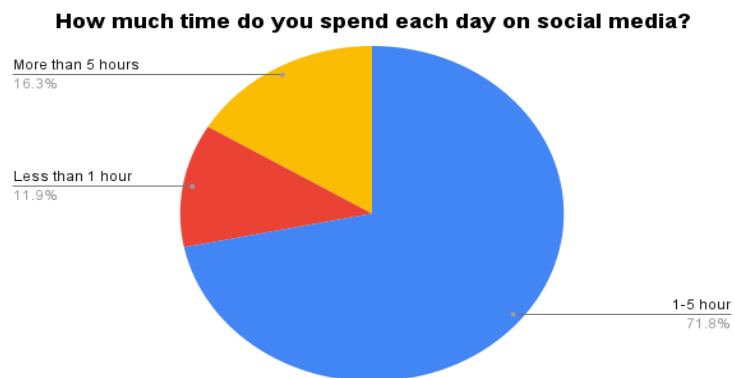


Figure 11 How Much Time Do You Spend Each Day on Social Media?

Figure 11 shows the count of responses to the question, “How much time do you spend each day on social media?” The chart shows that 16.3% of the 202 people have responded ‘More than 5 hours’, and 11.9% have responded ‘Less than 1 hour’. The majority of 71.8% have responded ‘1-5 hours’. The chart shows that most of these people who use social media spend 1-5 hours a day on them. The number of respondents agreeing on the hours they spend on social media shows a symptom of addiction that they cannot at times control. Sometimes leisurely scrolling through Instagram reels and posts, or even YouTube shorts, can take up much more time than we can control.

- **How often do you engage in "phubbing" (ignoring someone in favour of your phone) while socialising with friends or family?**

Figure 12

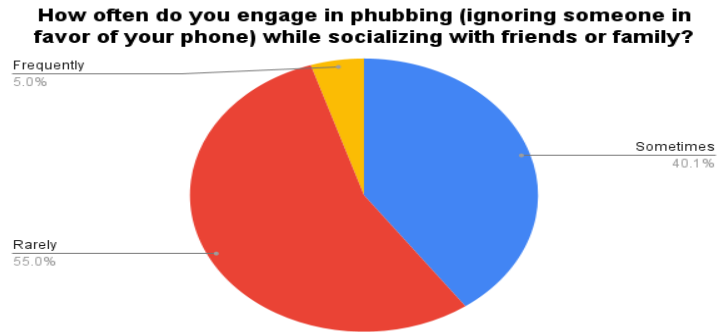


Figure 12 How Often Do You Engage in "Phubbing" (Ignoring Someone in Favour of Your Phone) While Socialising with Friends or Family?

Figure 12 shows the count of responses to the question, "How often do you engage in "phubbing" (ignoring someone in favour of your phone) while socialising with friends or family?" The pie chart shows 5% of 202 people responded 'Frequently'. 55% of the people responded 'Rarely' and 40% responded with 'Sometimes.' The chart points out that people sometimes engage in phubbing, which is the act of ignoring someone by favouring your phone. The majority agreed on 'rarely' engaging in phubbing while socialising with friends and family, but this can be because people do not become aware of these happenings unless and until someone else does it and it happens to them.

- **Have you ever experienced phubbing from someone else?**

Figure 13

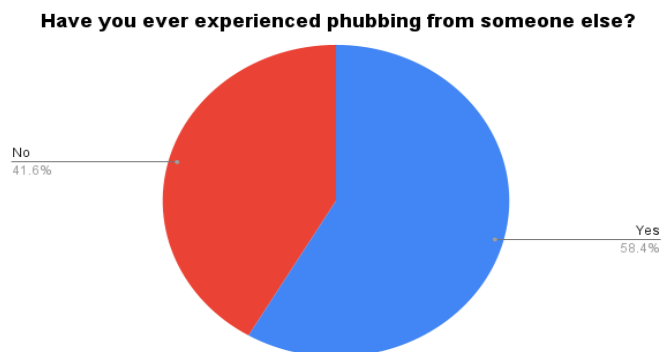


Figure 13 Have You Ever Experienced Phubbing from Someone Else?

Figure 13 shows the count of responses to the question, "Have you ever experienced phubbing from someone else?" The chart shows that 41.6% of the 202 people responded 'No', while 58.4% responded 'Yes'. The chart points out that the majority of the respondents have experienced phubbing from someone else. As in the prior question, people think more about what others do than about what they do as individuals. Just like how people realise they have had experiences with phubbing but never did the act in front of someone else.

- **Have you ever followed a trend on social media just because everyone else was doing it?**

Figure 14

Have you ever followed a trend on social media just because everyone else was doing it?

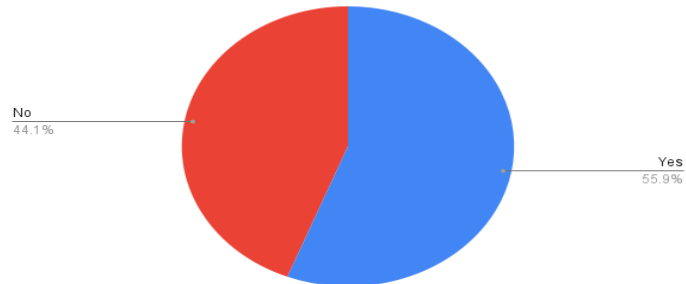


Figure 14 Have You Ever Followed a Trend on Social Media Just Because Everyone Else Was Doing It?

Figure 14 shows the count of responses to the question, "Have you ever followed a trend on social media just because everyone else was doing it?" The chart shows that 44.1% of the 202 people responded 'No' while 55.9% of the people responded 'Yes'. It points out that the majority of people have followed trends on social media just because everyone else was doing it. This can be pointed out as the best example of FOMO, in terms of individuals feeling that they might be missing out on something or that the viewers/ followers may not accept them for not following a trend.

- **How often do you feel like you're missing out on something because you didn't participate in a social media trend or challenge?**

Figure 15

How often do you feel like you're missing out on something because you didn't participate in a social media trend or challenge?

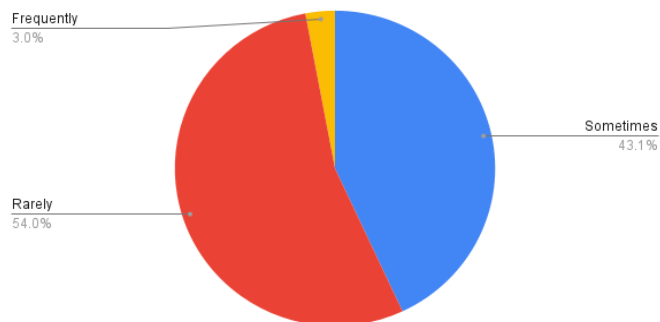


Figure 15 How Often Do You Feel Like You're Missing Out on Something Because You Didn't Participate in a Social Media Trend or Challenge?

Figure 15 shows the count of responses to the question, "How often do you feel like you're missing out on something because you didn't participate in a social media trend or challenge?" The chart shows that 3% of the 202 people responded

'Frequently', 54% responded 'Rarely', and 43% responded 'Sometimes'. The chart points out that people sometimes do feel that they are missing out on something because they did not participate in a social media trend or challenge. As in the prior question, people sometimes feel that they are missing out on things if they do not participate in a trend.

- **Have you ever deactivated or deleted your social media accounts or tried to do so?**

Figure 16

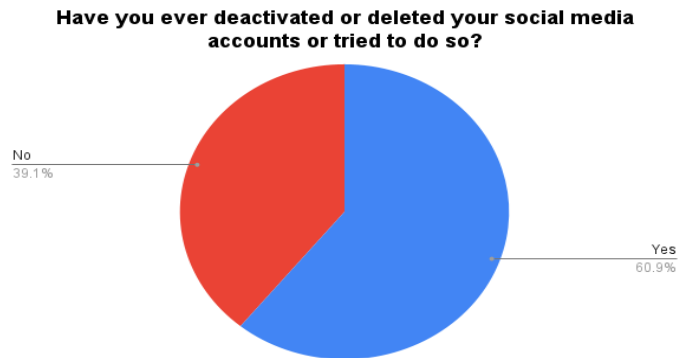


Figure 16 Have You Ever Deactivated or Deleted Your Social Media Accounts or Tried to Do So?

Figure 16 shows the count of responses to the question, "Have you ever deactivated or deleted your social media accounts or tried to do so?" The chart shows that 39.1% of the 202 people responded 'No', while 60.9% of the people responded 'Yes'. The chart points out that the majority of people have either deleted or deactivated their social media accounts. Deleting or deactivating social media platforms is a common way of dealing with the social media fatigue that the majority of social media users go through.

9. INTERPRETATION

The above six charts help to acknowledge the link between social media usage and FOMO. The first chart helps identify the time each individual spends on social media daily, to which the majority replied that they spend 1-5 hours daily on average. The rest of the questions were on whether respondents have indulged in the activity of phubbing or if they have ever experienced phubbing from someone else, if they have followed a social media trend just because others are doing it, how often people feel they are missing out on something because a trend was not followed, and if they have ever deleted or deactivated their social media accounts. All these questions were positively answered, and this leads to the conclusion that determining the relationship and connection between social media use and FOMO is important.

10. DISCUSSION

The survey was conducted among 202 individuals spread across Kerala, who are all social media users who have access to either of the prominent social media platforms. The survey concluded that most people were 18-25 years old and were mostly involved in using Instagram or Snapchat. According to [Anderson \(2022\)](#),

owning a smartphone has become the most pervasive element of a teenager's life: 95% of these teenagers have a smartphone of their own or have access to it. These mobile usage patterns are in turn powering more-persistent online activities: 45% of teens report being online on a near-constant basis. "The continuous development of the features and services of social media has kept on attracting and increasing the number of these users. But, nevertheless, numerous users have deviated from using these online platforms due to social media fatigue [Dhir et al. \(2018\)](#)."

According to [Vinney \(2022\)](#), the uses and gratification theory states that people use media to meet particular needs, like socialising, amusement, or information. Using social media can fulfil the desire for entertainment and social interaction, but it can also cause FOMO when users believe they are missing out on events or experiences that others are sharing online. The theory places an emphasis on how actively people choose and consume media, social media use, and FOMO, which may differ from person to person based on their objectives and requirements.

According to [Elhai et al. \(2020\)](#), FOMO is significantly connected to the frequency of smartphone use and the severity of problematic use of social media. And this problematic use is significantly linked with increased depression [Lin et al. \(2016\)](#). Associating FOMO with social media usage has always focused on FOMO as a psychological factor that influences user engagement and device checking [Buglass et al. \(2017\)](#). With reference to the social comparison theory, FOMO and feelings of inadequacy might arise when people use social media to compare themselves to others. People may feel as though they are missing out on anything that they believe is significant when they see their friends or relatives writing about events, experiences, or successes that they were not a part of.

While bringing people closer together, smartphone addiction has also, to some extent, ripped people apart. At the dinner table, at meetings, at parties, and at other social gatherings, as well as during other daily activities, people who use their cell phones excessively may overlook those with whom they have close relationships or frequent physical contact. Phubbing, known to be the practise of ignoring others, is seen as a universal occurrence in activities pertaining to communication [Guazzini et al. \(2019\)](#). [Akram & Kumar \(2017\)](#)

Investigations on mobile phone addiction among individuals have proved that problematic use of smartphone is linked to withdrawal symptoms, intolerance of everything, compulsive behaviour, and functional impairment [Chotpitayasunondh & Douglas \(2016\)](#). Social media addiction can then lead to a kind of cyberstalking, or social media stalking. Social media stalking is a kind of persecution that became more prominent with the evolution of technology [Silva Santos et al. \(2021\)](#). Social media use may be linked with an increase in anxiety and depression symptoms, cyberbullying for a variety of reasons, negative body image, and sleep issues, but one of the most potent is greater social comparison [Silva Santos et al. \(2021\)](#).

According to the practising clinical psychologist Alka Shaji, "FOMO is a condition marked by having an excessive number of possibilities for events or activities, especially social ones, as well as doubt over which option is 'better' and regret over the options that were not taken." Alka further clarifies that "FOMO has an impact on an individual's autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which can be classified as a psychological need according to the self-determination theory." Through enabling connections and the sharing of experiences, social media can foster a sense of relatedness. People may get FOMO if their need for relatedness is not satisfied when they feel as though they are missing out on these events. An individual's well-being would decline as a result, which would cause depression, worry, wrath, etc. Low social esteem has a detrimental effect on social engagement

by lowering face-to-face interaction, which is connected with FOMO. The productivity of both daily life and the workplace may be impacted because of this.

Another leading clinical psychologist, Manaswini, talks about how social media influencers can play a key and important role in bringing out FOMO in people. "Influencers, and people in general, show only the good side in their social media. People may believe in it and start questioning their own decisions and choices, even thinking about what could have happened if they had opted for the other option." FOMO can even lead to severe addiction to social media, which can later progress into negative impacts like stalking-behaviour in people. According to [Tandon et al. \(2021\)](#), "Another new issue that is gaining recognition in the media is individuals' tendency to persistently review other people's social media contents. This behaviour can be viewed as a passive form of cyberstalking." [Roberts et al. \(2016\)](#)

The interview with leading psychologists also states that Cognitive-Behaviour therapy (CBT) has been proven and shown to be an effective way of treating so many mental health issues, including anxiety and FOMO. In a psychotherapy setting, cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) helps patients understand how to recognize and change disturbing or distressing thoughts that can have an adverse impact on their emotions and behaviour. [Bozzola et al. \(2022\)](#)

There has been an emphasis on the practices that can be done to mitigate the symptoms of FOMO without avoiding social media completely and still being engaged in them-

- 1) **Prioritise:** Determine top priorities and focus attention and energy on those. This will help us to feel more in control of life and less like we are missing out on important things.
- 2) **Practice mindfulness:** It is the practice of observing thoughts, emotions, and feelings without having an ounce of judgment in them. This will help one stay grounded.
- 3) **Practice gratitude:** Focusing on what you have rather than what you don't have can help reduce the feeling of FOMO.
- 4) **Take action:** take action to address it, like making plans with friends.

Other than these steps, the people around the individuals going through FOMO and extreme social media addiction can supervise their social media usage. According to clinical psychologist Manaswini, simple steps like making people aware that they are living someone else's life by going behind something else. People closer to these individuals must pull them out of the social media trance and maybe even help them with counselling. Muting their notifications can also help them stay away from social media. Individuals lower themselves to depression and anxiety when reality fails to meet their expectations, which they mainly acquired from social media content.

11. CONCLUSION

This research paper provides insight into the relationship and connection between the use of social media and FOMO among individuals. The quantitative analysis was done through a survey of 202 individuals from all across Kerala. This means that our hypothesis about the prevalence of FOMO among social media users can be said to be true.

The majority of the survey respondents said they had experienced the majority of symptoms leading to FOMO due to social media usage. It also points out how the

majority of people have compared themselves to others due to social media posts, been jealous of someone because of their social media posts, felt excluded from their friends or peers due to social media, and have even had anxiety and depression due to social media contents. This gives us an understanding of our second hypothesis, which states the presence of a significant connection between the use of social media and FOMO.

The survey also pointed out how social media usage takes a toll on the mental health of these individuals. The majority of the respondents agreed to feel anxious and depressed due to social media content and posts and also pointed out that social media usage has impacted their social relations negatively and has even affected their self-esteem and confidence at certain points. This agrees with our third hypothesis on the connection between FOMO and anxiety/ depression among social media users.

12. LIMITATIONS

The survey was limited to 202 people from Kerala, all of whom had different demographics and personalities. Individual differences in perception of FOMO are not taken into consideration, as they can wholly add another dimension to the topic of discussion. The research was also done in a short period of time due to constraints. There were even a few people who were either not ready to accept or did not recognize that they go through the symptoms of FOMO due to social media usage.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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