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THE ROLE OF FEAR OF MISSING OUT IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIAL MEDIA USE

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Research constantly shows a significant connection between social media usage and negative mental health issues among young adults and adolescents in modern society. According to recent studies, higher levels of social media usage can exacerbate online social anxiety, depression, obsessive compulsive symptoms, reduce social communication skills, academic failures, and emotional distress.

A structured literature search was conducted on PubMed using the key words, “social media”, “mental health”, fear of missing out (FoMO), “online social anxiety” and eight potentially relevant articles published from 2023 to 2025 were screened and studied.

Fear of missing out is a psychological trait defined as “a psychological phenomenon that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent”. This condition has shown as a crucial factor in understanding the influence of social media on the mental health and behavior of individuals. The overuse of smartphones and social media addiction has led to the condition of FoMO and it is recognized as an important antecedent factor. FoMO is strongly associated with negative mental health outcomes comprising online social anxiety, sleep disturbance (insomnia), lowering life satisfaction, decrease learning efficiency, online vigilance, Smart Phone Use Disorder (SUD), problematic social media use (PSMU) and associated with Internet Communication Disorder (ICD) and problematic behavior. Recent cross-sectional studies among university students further confirm that social comparison acts as the strongest direct predictor of FoMO, while social media addiction, loneliness, and perfectionism also contribute significantly and serve as mediators in this pathway.

Studies show that there are two main states of FoMO, which are Trait FoMo and State FoMO. Both forms are positively associated with problematic use of smartphones while State FoMO relates to ICD to research; university students show negative outcomes such as irrational academic procrastination and learning burnout. Multitasking is also considered as a mediator in this condition which causes distraction, reduced attention control, and this leads to an increased cognitive burden. As a contrasting finding; high loneliness may weaken FoMO. Studies show childhood psychological abuse or maltreatment induces feelings of being left behind, which directly leads to FoMO. Prevalence studies using validated questionnaires among university students reveal that the majority demonstrate moderate to high levels of both FoMO and social media addiction scores.

According to this review encouraging training in mindfulness activities and productive hobbies, educating individuals to improve self-discipline and enhance social skills, organizing programs that guide students to manage social stress effectively, initiating proper academic goals, strengthening the healthy relationship between children with parents and teachers are helpful for recovery from the negative effects of FoMO. Conducting scientific investigations using proper questionnaire tools to extract real data may be helpful for further learning.