

The Influences of Social Media and Internet Addiction on Youth: Observing How FOMO Moulding Indian Mental Well-Being and Development

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Abstract: The widespread impact of social media and internet addiction on young people in the digital era has raised serious concerns, especially in nations like India. The quick advancement of technology and the pervasiveness of smartphones have drastically changed how kids connect with the outside world, build social bonds, and define their identities. Although there are many advantages to these technological developments, such as the availability of educational materials and the capacity to communicate with people around the world, they also present significant difficulties. Due to the proliferation of social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, Tik-Tok, and YouTube, youngsters are under pressure to project idealized images of themselves, which frequently causes anxiety and feelings of inadequacy. The notion of Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), which is made worse by continuous exposure to the carefully manicured online lives of influencers and peers, lies at the heart of this problem. Children who experience this phobia become unduly preoccupied with upholding an online persona, spending inordinate amounts of time on their gadgets at the expense of in-person interactions, exercise, and academic achievement. These behavioural and psychological problems are becoming increasingly noticeable in India, where children's use of smartphones and the internet is growing quickly. The issue is made worse by the dearth of adequate guidelines for appropriate internet use, which leads to many children being addicted and suffering from its detrimental effects. This study looks at the intricate relationship between internet addiction, social media addiction, and young people's psychological health, with an emphasis on India. It draws attention to how unrestrained usage of digital platforms might interfere with developmental processes, resulting in decreased academic performance, anxiety, and depression. Additionally, it highlights how crucial parental participation, educational initiatives, and community efforts are to promoting digital literacy, establishing sensible screen time restrictions, and promoting offline activities. The study promotes a balanced approach to technology, arguing that encouraging responsible and thoughtful internet usage can lessen the negative impacts of social media addiction and help Indian children develop more holistically and with better mental health.

Keywords: Social Media Addiction, Internet Addiction, Youth Mental Health, Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), Technology Impact, Psychological Well-Being, Digital Platforms.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In the modern age of technology, social media and the internet have an indisputable impact on kids, influencing not only how they engage with the outside world but also how they view themselves. The quick development of technology and the pervasiveness of smartphones have drastically changed how kids interact with others, get information, and pass the time. Although there are many advantages to these developments, such as the availability of educational materials and the opportunity to interact with people across the world, they have also raised significant worries about youth internet and social media addiction. In addition to interfering with children's social and academic life, this phenomenon—which is particularly common in nations like India—is having serious psychological repercussions. Children are under more pressure than ever to create idealized images of themselves by continuously comparing their lives to those of their classmates or influencers because of the growth of social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. The pervasive FOMO is a result of this comparison culture and the ongoing pursuit of approval via likes, shares, and comments. Children who suffer from FOMO, a psychiatric disorder made worse by social media, feel anxious and insecure because they believe they are losing out on important experiences, chances, or social relationships. They thus become more and more dependent on their electronic gadgets, spending inordinate amounts of time on the internet at the expense of their academic endeavours, social connections, and physical exercise. The negative effects of social media and internet addiction are especially worrisome in India, where a significant percentage of kids are only starting to use these sites, frequently without any instruction on how to use them sensibly. With an emphasis on the repercussions in India, this essay examines the interconnected problems of internet addiction, social media addiction, and the psychological toll that these behaviours have on kids. In order to promote a balanced and satisfying childhood, it also emphasizes the role that parents, educators, and society as a whole play in addressing these problems. It does this by promoting the value of digital literacy, sensible screen time management, and the encouragement of offline activities.

II. FEAR OF MISSING OUT (FOMO)

A psychological phenomenon known as "fear of missing out" (FOMO) is the uneasiness or uneasiness that arises when someone feels as though they are losing out on an exciting opportunity, encounter, or social gathering. Exposure to the carefully manicured, perfected lives of others, usually on social media platforms, frequently intensifies this sensation. Social media makes it possible for people to continuously contrast their own lives with those of their influencers or peers, who frequently give an inflated or biased picture of their reality, which exacerbates FOMO. As a result of believing that others are leading more fascinating

or happy lives, people may experience emotions of inadequacy, insecurity, and envy. In addition to missing out on social interactions, people are afraid of missing out on possibilities that might change their lives, such as professional promotions, big life events, or personal milestones. This emotion is widespread in today's hyper connected environment, making it more difficult for people to enjoy their own experiences and live in the present.

Significant psychological and emotional effects result from FOMO, which raises tension, worry, and feelings of discontent with one's own life. People frequently overcommit themselves socially because of a fear of missing out, attempting to attend every event or maintain a steady online presence when they are already overburdened. Even if they are socially engaged, this can lead to a vicious cycle where they feel worn out, alienated, and even more alone. Additionally, FOMO might make it difficult for a person to concentrate on their own development or to appreciate what they already have in their lives. Instead of valuing what one has, it promotes a mindset of scarcity in which one is always chasing after what others have. Because of the overwhelming urge to stay connected and the continual comparison, FOMO can exacerbate mental health conditions like anxiety and despair. Building a better relationship with oneself and the outside world requires an understanding of and ability to manage FOMO. People may lessen the negative effects of FOMO and live more contented, meaningful lives by learning to live in the now and minimizing their exposure to unrealistic depictions of life.

III. SOCIAL MEDIA AND INTERNET ADDICTION AMONG CHILDREN IN INDIA

The fast growth of digital platforms and the widespread availability of smartphones have made social media more accessible than ever before, raising concerns about social media addiction among youngsters in India. With more than 600 million internet users, India has become one of the world's biggest markets for social media platforms, especially among younger people. Social media exposure among Indian children is growing, sometimes beginning at a very early age. Many of them use these platforms for socializing, amusement, and even education. But social media's addictive qualities—fuelled by incessant alerts, the need for likes, and the pressure to keep up a well-manicured online persona—have had worrying results. Children use social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube for three to five hours every day on average, according to studies. Overuse of screens is linked to a number of detrimental effects, such as irregular sleep cycles, a reduction in physical activity, and a drop in academic achievement. Children are spending more and more time online due to the appeal of social media, which is extremely addicting due to its rapid satisfaction and feedback. They frequently lose touch with real-world interactions as they become engrossed in the virtual world,

which results in a loss of emotional intelligence and a lack of face-to-face communication skills. Further aggravating the issue is the fact that many Indian parents and guardians are ignorant of the risks associated with social media addiction and may lack the knowledge or resources necessary to establish appropriate limits on their kids' digital usage.

Children in India who are addicted to social media face mental health problems in addition to physical and emotional health problems. Children may feel too much pressure to live up to social media's constant reinforcement of beauty, achievement, and popularity ideals. Feelings of inadequacy, poor self-esteem, and even despair can result from continuously being exposed to filtered and idealized depictions of another people's life. Children in India are frequently the targets of internet abuse, exclusion, and derogatory remarks, which can cause anxiety and sadness. Increased anxiety, social isolation, and loneliness might result from this fixation with their online persona. Unrealistic expectations about success and money have also increased as a result of the emergence of social media influencers and the tendency of kids wanting to be influencers. Children who are addicted to social media tend to prioritize their online activities above their schoolwork, which causes them to procrastinate, lose concentration on their assignments, and lack the ambition to do well in school. Because they don't participate in activities that foster creativity and critical thinking, this has an impact on both academic achievement and cognitive development. A multifaceted strategy is needed to address social media addiction, including raising awareness among parents, educators, and kids about the possible negative effects of excessive screen time and putting digital literacy programs in place to help kids use the internet in a balanced and healthy way.

With the proliferation of digital technology and smartphones, internet addiction among youngsters is becoming a major global problem. Younger than ever before, children have access to the internet for both educational and recreational purposes. However, given their developmental stage, youngsters are especially affected by the internet's addictive qualities. They spend too much time on screens as a result of being absorbed in online activities including social media, gaming, surfing, and watching videos. According to research, some kids use the internet for four to six hours per day on average. This problem has been made worse by the COVID-19 epidemic, which has made online education the standard. Overuse of the internet can disrupt sleep patterns, daily routines, physical exercise, and in-person social connections, all of which can have detrimental effects. Since kids who spend more time online frequently get estranged from their friends and family in the real world, social isolation emerges as a major consequence. Their social growth and capacity to build wholesome relationships with others may be impacted by this.

Anxiety, despair, and a reduction in self-esteem are among the psychological repercussions of internet addiction in kids. Children frequently compare themselves to others

on social networking sites that are always accessible over the internet, which might make them feel inadequate or excluded. Internet addiction can also impede academic and cognitive development, which can result in subpar academic performance and intellectual stagnation. Parents, teachers, and other caregivers must be aware of the symptoms of internet addiction in children, which include poor personal hygiene, social disengagement, scholastic deterioration, irritation when not online, and a loss of interest in offline activities.

IV. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Abel, Buff, and Burr (2014) created and validated a scale to gauge its effect. The 37-item list evaluated self-esteem, anxiety, irritation, and inadequacy using pre-existing measures. 202 people completed the final poll, and a 10-item, 3-factor solution accounted for 71% of the variation. According to FoMO levels, the study discovered notable variations in social media usage, with those who had greater levels of FoMO using social media more frequently. The study also found that people with different levels of FOMO used different kinds of social media. The study did, however, admit several limitations, such as sample size, and suggested more research for validation.

Oberst (2016) examined how social networking sites (SNS) affect teenagers, paying special attention to how FOMO and the frequency of SNS usage contribute to the correlation between psychopathological symptoms and the detrimental effects of SNS use. The Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS), the Social Networking Intensity scale (SNI), and the FOMO scale (FOMOs) were used to measure the anxiety and depression symptoms of 1,468 Spanish-speaking Latin American users between the ages of 16 and 18. The relationship between psychopathology and the detrimental effects of SNS usage was found to be mediated by both FOMO and SNS intensity, albeit via distinct processes, according to structural equation modeling. The findings also revealed gender differences, with males' increased use of SNS being correlated with anxiety and girls' sadness. These results clarified the intricate connection between social media usage and mental health by highlighting the psychological aspects that affect SNS use and the detrimental effects that follow.

Metin-Orta (2019) investigated the relationship between 322 undergraduate students' psychiatric problems, online addiction, and FOMO. Higher levels of FoMO were associated with increasing online addiction, which in turn led to more severe psychological symptoms, according to the study, which sought to investigate the psychological effects of internet addiction among young people. The study emphasized the direct and indirect ways that FOMO affects mental health, underscoring the need for improved knowledge and intervention techniques to deal with youth internet addiction. By offering insightful information on how FOMO may exacerbate mental health conditions and advocating for the development of mental health awareness and coping mechanisms, the findings provide a substantial

contribution to the expanding body of research on the psychological and behavioral effects of internet addiction.

Savitri (2019) explored the effect of FOMO on emerging adult social media users' psychological health and discovered a strong inverse link. The study employed two measures and an online questionnaire: the psychological well-being scale, which was modified from Ryff's model, and the FoMO scale, which was based on Przybylski's work. The findings demonstrated a negative correlation between psychological well-being and elevated levels of FOMO. This adds to the expanding body of research on the psychological impacts of social media usage, particularly among young adults. The study emphasized the necessity of treatments to enhance social media users' psychological well-being and the significance of addressing FOMO as a predictor of poor mental health. The study offers insightful information on the effects of FOMO on young individuals negotiating the challenges of social media use.

Sutanto, Sahrani, and Basaria (2020) studied the connection between late-adolescent social media users' psychological health and their FoMO. Data for the research, which included 104 teenagers between the ages of 17 and 22, was gathered between March and April 2020. FoMO and general psychological well-being were shown to be significantly correlated negatively ($r = -0.295$, $p < 0.05$). Subsequent analysis of the six aspects of psychological well-being revealed that FoMO had a negative correlation with environmental mastery ($r = -0.382$, $p < 0.05$), autonomy ($r = -0.198$, $p < 0.05$), self-acceptance ($r = -0.223$, $p < 0.05$), and positive relationships with others ($r = -0.225$, $p < 0.05$). Nonetheless, there was no discernible correlation between FoMO and the aspects of personal development ($r = 0.142$, $p > 0.05$) or life purpose ($r = -0.128$, $p > 0.05$). These results demonstrate the detrimental effects of FoMO on several facets of teenagers' psychological health.

Tandon et. al., (2021) lined in the gap that has, in recent years, led academics to examine the negative consequences of social media—often referred to as the "dark side of social media"—in light of its widespread incorporation into daily life. The effect of workers' personal usage of social media during work hours on job-related results is one area of concern that has received little attention. by putting out a theoretical framework that investigates the connections between personal inclinations (voyeurism and exhibitionism), FOMO, and the behavioral and psychological effects of using social media while at work. The stressor-strain-outcomes paradigm was used in their study to test the hypothesis that individual social media usage at work has a detrimental impact on productivity and job performance, which eventually results in procrastination and worse work performance. The study, which was based on a sample of 312 answers from people in the US, found a strong correlation between individual preferences, FoMO, and behavioral (procrastination and deterioration in work performance) and psychological (compulsive use of social media) results. They discovered that voyeurism and exhibitionism had a significant impact on FoMO, which in turn caused obsessive social media use and decreased

productivity. The study emphasizes the need of addressing these practices in the workplace and the need for more research on the negative impacts of using social media during working hours. The results give practical implications for controlling social media use in professional settings to improve job performance and decrease procrastination, as well as insightful information about the larger dark side of social media literature.

Tanhan, Özok, and Tayiz (2022) examined the idea of FOMO, emphasizing its increasing importance as a result of the expanding usage of mobile devices and social media in modern communication. According to the report, social media, education, economic activity, and psychological health are just a few of the areas in which young people's lives are negatively impacted by FOMO. The authors provided an empirical basis for comprehending FOMO by describing its causes, symptoms, and negative impacts after conducting a thorough literature study. The study brought attention to the ongoing worry people feel as a result of trying to stay up with other people's beautiful and exciting online lives. According to the results, identifying and treating FOMO is essential to lessening its negative impacts. In order to assist peoples, manage their anxiety and enhance their general well-being, helpful suggestions were given for comprehending the phenomena and putting into practice efficient solutions.

V. RELATION OF FOMO AND SOCIAL MEDIA AND ADDICTION

FOMO and social media addiction are closely related, resulting in a vicious cycle that can seriously harm a person's mental and emotional health. Social networking sites take use of psychological cues that entice users to spend a lot of time online since they are made to be extremely engaging. People are immersed in what other people are doing, saying, and experiencing in addition to consuming material as a result of this continuous connectedness. With likes, comments, and real-time updates, social media's basic design creates a feeling of urgency and immediacy that compels users to check their phones frequently in order to keep current. People are inundated with pictures, postings, and tales about other people's seemingly ideal lives as they browse through their feeds. These might include social events, glitzy trips, and professional achievements. FOMO is fuelled by this carefully chosen, idealized information, which makes people feel as though they are losing out on wonderful chances, experiences, and social relationships. Users' fear of missing out increases when they witness others having fun with these activities, which drives them to spend more time online in an effort to keep up and feeds the vicious cycle of social media addiction.

The emotional and psychological effects of FOMO are exacerbated by social media's addictive qualities. People who spend more time online are more likely to compare themselves negatively to others, question themselves, and be dissatisfied with their own life since they are constantly exposed to their highlight reels. The skewed reality that

social media provides, where only the most spectacular or favourable parts of people's life are published, frequently exacerbates this sense of inadequacy. The routine moments, setbacks, and hardships that comprise a person's whole existence are rarely visible to users. As a result, people may experience feelings of loneliness and alienation if they believe that their own lives are not as interesting, prosperous, or satisfying as others they encounter online. FOMO turns into an emotional motivator that drives people to overcommit to social gatherings, attempt to imitate the lives of others, and even take risks in an attempt to fit in with the glamorous world they see online. The incessant need for outside approval via likes, follows, and interaction feeds the social media addiction even more. People may eventually start to value their online persona more than in-person contacts, which can cause them to become estranged from genuine connections and feel more alone. Regaining a healthy, more balanced connection with technology and the real world needs deliberate efforts, such as establishing boundaries, selecting online material, and concentrating on self-compassion, in order to break away from the cycle of social media addiction and FOMO.

VI. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, children's addiction to social media and the internet has become a serious problem in the current digital age, with profound effects on their mental, emotional, and physical health. Children's FOMO causes them to spend inordinate amounts of time chasing idealized lives, comparing themselves to others, and seeking affirmation as they get more and more enmeshed in online platforms. This affects not just their sense of self-worth but also their general growth, social interactions, and academic achievement. Social media's addictive qualities and continuous exposure to carefully chosen content have produced a vicious cycle in which kids feel under pressure to live up to inflated expectations, which exacerbates mental health conditions like loneliness, sadness, and anxiety. These young people could find it difficult to strike a good balance between their online and offline lives without the right direction and limits, which might have a long-term impact on their wellbeing in the future.

A holistic strategy including parents, educators, and society at large is needed to address the rising issue of youngsters being addicted to the internet and social media. To avoid excessive usage of digital platforms, parents must actively supervise their kids' screen time and establish sensible boundaries. Digital literacy initiatives that educate kids how to use the internet safely and recognize the negative effects of excessive social media use are one way that schools and educators may help. Fostering open communication is also essential, enabling kids to share their emotions and worries about their online experiences. Children can also be helped to build a more balanced and satisfying lifestyle by providing a nurturing offline environment that promotes physical activity, in-person social contacts, and interests away from screens. Society may reduce the detrimental impacts of internet addiction and FOMO by raising awareness and giving kids the skills, they

need to control their digital consumption, creating a generation that is healthier and more connected.

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