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**A Correlational Study of Fear of Missing Out, Self-Esteem, and Attachment Styles***Monika<sup>1</sup>, Manju<sup>2</sup>***ABSTRACT**

**Objective** - The primary purpose of the study is to assess the relationships between Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), Self-esteem, and attachment style among youth.

**Method** - An online survey was used to gather information from 103 participants, whose ages ranged from 18 to 25 (mean age: 20.67). FOMO scale, Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale, and Adult Attachment Scale were used to gather information from participants.

**Results** – The results showed a significant negative correlation between FOMO and self-esteem ( $r = -0.537$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and a significant positive correlation between FOMO and anxious attachment ( $r = 0.544$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Self-esteem was also negatively correlated with anxious attachment ( $r = -0.373$ ,  $p < .01$ ). These findings indicate meaningful associations among FOMO, self-esteem, and anxious attachment.

**Keywords** – *Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), self-esteem, attachment style*

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**Introduction**

The concept of "fear of missing out" (FOMO) was developed in 2004 to describe a phenomenon that was noticed in SNSs. FOMO consists of two processes; the perception of missing out and the obsessive behavior to maintain these social connections. It was more commonly used in 2010 (Gupta & Sharma, 2021). It was formally added to the Oxford English Dictionary (Oxford Dictionary) in 2013. "A pervasive apprehension that others might be having

rewarding experiences from which one is absent" (Przybylski et al., 2013) called FOMO. It is characterized by the following actions; the worry that others, even close friends, have had more fulfilling life experiences than one has, anxiety that one is missing out on something planned or unplanned, and that other people are having fun without him/her, the necessity of routinely reporting one's actions, which are typically not constructive. This anxiety creates a space where the person can interact with and keep in

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touch with their social surroundings so they don't miss anything (Oberst et al., 2017). A person senses that the experience or the situation he selected is not best optimal level of decision. This leads a person a self-doubt with the question is "this the best choice?" (Milyavskaya et al., 2018). With the use of social networking sites, they are aware of what others are doing at every moment in their life. University students engage with their social surroundings, including their classmates, by using social media programs on a regular basis (Ophus & Abbott, 2009). According to the studies it was found that social well-being and FOMO are negatively related, to the fulfillment of psychological needs, overall mood, conscientiousness, emotional strength, improper usage of the internet, and general well-being (Bibby & Stead, 2017). In contrast, FOMO is positively related to smartphone use (Elhai et al., 2020) Inappropriate use of Instagram, neuroticism (Balta et al., 2020), and depression (Elhai, Gallinari, et al., 2020), social media engagement (Przybylski et al., 2013).

A person self -self-esteem plays an important role in his own mental health and other aspects of his life. "Self-esteem is the evaluation of one's worth." Self-esteem is defined as a personal assessment of one's significance or value as a person (Donnellan et al., 2011). Self-esteem has been a popular topic in psychology for many decades. It has been reported that disorganized smartphone use is associated with low self-esteem (Hong et al., 2012). Young people with poor self-esteem are more prone to use technology for virtual reality because they feel more comfortable sitting behind screens

(Argumosa-Villar et al., 2017). A study revealed that FOMO was negatively associated with self-esteem. Pearson with a high score on FOMO, has a low score on self-esteem (Uram & Skalski, 2022).

A special emotional bond based on comfort, care, and enjoyment is called attachment. Affective experiences from childhood are notable for their significant influence on the kind and quality of connections people form in their adult lives (Sagone et al., 2023). To understand human bonding, Bowlby developed attachment theory, which has had a significant influence on how psychotherapy is delivered and practiced (Bowlby, 2008). Over time, early caregiving experiences develop into internal functional attachment models that are generally stable (Bowlby, 1980). Recent research has shown that attachment has an impact on FOMO and other destructive habits, both directly and indirectly (Wang et al., 2024). Liu & Ma (2019) revealed that insecure attachment was associated with social media use and FOMO.

### **FOMO and Self-esteem**

Research has demonstrated a connection between unfulfilled psychological demands and FOMO. A study revealed that FOMO and self-esteem are negatively correlated. A person with a high score on FOMO has a low score on self-esteem (Uram & Skalski, 2022; Servidio, 2023). The structural equation model addresses that the association between higher usage of social media and worse self-esteem is mediated by FOMO (Buglass et al., 2017). A study revealed that life satisfaction is negatively correlated with problematic usage of smartphones and FOMO, self-esteem, and

conscious attention (Weaver & Swank, 2021). On the other hand, a study revealed that there is no significant correlation between FOMO and social media addiction and FOMO and self-esteem (Garg, 2023). Self-esteem and FOMO or social media addiction do not significantly correlate with each other (Garg & Shourie, 2023). A longitudinal study by Koppen, (2023) revealed that, after a year, teenagers with higher levels of FOMO had lower levels of self-esteem. Which in turn appears to harm life satisfaction later on.

### **FOMO and Attachment**

Through research, it was demonstrated that anxiety and depression both are associated with FOMO. It was found that FOMO and attachment anxiety are positively correlated (Liu & Ma, 2019). Studies revealed a significant interaction between attachment and FOMO on anxiety levels (Mannion & Nolan, 2020; Holte et al., 2020). Maladaptive social media engagement was predicted by attachment anxiety and avoidance, but this association disappeared when FOMO was included (Blackwell et al., 2017). Individuals exhibiting anxious and preoccupied attachment styles appeared to be more susceptible to the effects of problematic social media use, and both attachment styles were also correlated with FOMO and self-esteem (Gori et al., 2023). The findings showed that high FOMO levels are predicted by high levels of attachment anxiety (Alfasi, 2021), anxious attachment and SNS (social networking sites) are positively correlated, FOMO indicated a strong positive correlation with both social media addiction and negligent parenting (Boustead & Flack, 2021). Alfasi (2022) revealed a significant correlation

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between anxious attachment and Facebook fatigue and the relation was mediated by FOMO and Facebook anxiety.

### **Self-esteem and Attachment**

The relationship between relationship functioning and differences in attachment styles has been a major focus of attachment research. Studies show that stable attachment is directly and positively associated with self-esteem (Bringle& Bagby, 1992). The use of friend's and parents' emotional support and proximity was minimally correlated with social competence, coping skills, and general self-esteem (Paterson et al., 1995). The anxiety attachment has been linked to persistent feelings of rejection or abandonment by others, a low sense of self-worth, and an inflated sense of vulnerability (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2002). Findings revealed that those who are engaged with secure attachments are healthier in comparison to those who are involved in insecure attachments and have higher self-esteem (Huntsinger & Luecken, 2004). There was a strong correlation found between childhood attachment and psychiatric distress, adult attachment, and self-esteem (Shen et al., 2021). Only the preoccupied attachment style appears to be substantially inversely correlated with self-esteem (Ishaq & ul Haque, 2015).

### **Objectives**

1. To study the correlation between FOMO, self-esteem, and attachment styles among youth.
2. To study the impact of locality on FOMO among youth.

## Hypotheses

1. There would be a significant correlation between FOMO, self-esteem, and attachment styles (close, depend, and anxiety) among youth.
2. There would be no significant difference in locality on FOMO among youth.

## Methodology

### Tools

1. **Fear of Missing Out Scale** – This scale was developed by Przybylski et al. (2013) and it consists of 10 items designed to assess the extent to which individuals experience FOMO in their daily lives. Respondents rate each item using a 5-point Likert scale. Higher scores on the scale indicate a greater level of FOMO. The scale also reflects a high level of internal consistency, supported by Cronbach's alpha values that range from .87 to .91.
2. **Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale** – This scale was developed by Rosenberg, in 1965. It is a widely used 10-item measure that assesses global self-worth by capturing both positive and negative self-perceptions. Each item is rated on a 4-point Likert scale, with scoring values from 0 to 3. Higher scores indicate greater self-esteem. A Cronbach's alpha of 0.81 indicates that the scale possesses good internal consistency.
3. **Adult Attachment Scale- Adult Attachment Scale (AAS)** - This scale was developed by Collins and Read (1990); it is designed to assess adult attachment patterns. The scale consists of 18 items divided into three subscales: **Close** (comfort with closeness), **Depend** (ability to depend on others), and **Anxiety**

(fear of rejection or abandonment), with each subscale comprising six items. Responses are recorded on a 5-point Likert scale. Higher scores on a particular dimension reflect the individual's dominant attachment style. The subscales have demonstrated acceptable internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values of .69 for Close, .75 for Depend, and .72 for Anxiety.

### Sample

The data was collected from 103 participants in the age range of 18 to 25 years, selected from two districts of Haryana, namely Hisar and Bhiwani. The sampling method used was purposive sampling, as the study aimed to include individuals who met specific criteria relevant to the research. Data was collected through an online survey using a structured questionnaire created on Google Forms. The form included an informed consent section, and participants were required to give their consent before proceeding. Participants were also instructed to respond only if they fulfilled the following inclusion and exclusion criteria:

#### Inclusion Criteria:

- Age between 18 to 25 years
- Currently residing in either Hisar or Bhiwani district
- Access to a smartphone or computer with internet connectivity
- Active user of at least one social media platform

#### Exclusion Criteria:

- Individuals outside the specified age range
- Participants who did not provide consent
- Incomplete responses or failure to meet the inclusion criteria

Before finalizing the sample size, a G\*Power analysis (Cohen, 2013) was conducted to determine the required sample size for a correlational design involving three variables. Assuming a medium effect size ( $r = 0.30$ ),  $\alpha = 0.05$ , and power ( $1-\beta$ ) = 0.80, the required sample size was calculated to be approximately 84 participants. Therefore, the final sample size of 103 participants was considered sufficient for the study.

### Procedure

Participants who met the inclusion criteria filled out an online Google Form. Clear instructions were provided at the beginning of the Google Form, including the purpose of the study, assurance of confidentiality, and voluntary participation. After the data collection, the data were downloaded and analyzed using IBM SPSS software. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was used to examine the relationships among the variables.

### Results

The current study focused on the relationships between FOMO, self-esteem, and attachment style among youth. Table 1 presents the inter-correlation matrix, indicating the strength and direction of associations among FOMO, self-esteem, and attachment dimensions.

**Table 1 – Correlation Analysis between FOMO, Self-esteem, and Attachment Styles**

Variables	FOMO	Self-esteem	AAS Close	AAS Depend	AAS Anxiety
<b>FOMO</b>	1	-.537**	-.060	.012	.544**
<b>Self-esteem</b>		1	-.043	-.121	-.373**
<b>AAS Close</b>			1	.342**	-.275**
<b>AAS Depend</b>				1	-.141
<b>AAS Anxiety</b>					1

The ‘Pearson product moment method of correlation’ was used to test the correlation among the variables. ‘Table-1’ indicates the inter-correlational matrix for the strength of the relationship among the variables. The correlation coefficient for FOMO and Self-esteem is -.537 which is significant at the .01 level. This indicates that FOMO and Self-esteem are significantly and negatively correlated at a moderate level. The individual having lower self-esteem would have more fear of missing out. The correlation coefficient for the correlation between FOMO and AAS anxiety is .544 which is statistically significant at a moderate level. The results indicate that a higher level of anxiety attachment leads to FOMO. The correlation coefficient for the correlation between self-esteem and AAS anxiety is -.373 which is statistically significant with  $p < .01$ . Correlation. The results indicate that anxious attachment and self-esteem were negatively correlated.

No significant correlations were found between FOMO and AAS close or FOMO and AAS depend. Similarly, self-esteem did not show significant correlations with AAS close or AAS depend. The first hypothesis stated, “There would be a significant correlation between FOMO, self-esteem, and attachment styles (close, depend, and anxiety) among participants.” Based on the results, significant correlations were found between FOMO and self-esteem, FOMO and AAS anxiety, and self-esteem and AAS anxiety. However, no significant correlations were found between FOMO/self-esteem and AAS close or AAS depend. Therefore, the hypothesis is partially accepted. The study supports significant correlations among FOMO, self-esteem, and anxious attachment, but not with the other two attachment sub-dimensions (close and depend).

**Table 2 – Independent sample t-test for FOMO and Locality**

	Locality	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean difference	Sig.
Fomo	Rural	57	23.40	3.35233	1.14264	.430
	Urban	46	22.26	4.29038		

Table –2' shows that an independent sample t-test was used to compare the FOMO scores for rural and urban populations. The mean score of the rural population was 23.40 and for the urban population it was 22.26, which is lower than the rural population's mean score but the p-value was .430 which is not statistically significant. Therefore, the second hypothesis that "There would be no significant difference in FOMO between rural and urban youth" was accepted. The results indicate that locality has no impact on FOMO.

## Discussion

Nowadays technology is an important part of our lives and the use of social media is increasing day by day with the help of the internet and social networking sites people are connected with their family and friends, and they are aware of what their friends are doing at every movement of life. In today's scenario, youth face many challenges, and FOMO is one of them. Literature has also revealed a strong relationship between FOMO, self-esteem, use of SNSs, and attachment style. The present research contributes to the existing literature on the relationship between FOMO, self-esteem, and attachment style among individuals. The results have shown that the correlation between FOMO and Self-esteem was negatively correlated. Our investigation validates the findings of Yong & Wijaya (2023), FOMO and self-esteem both

are negatively correlated. Servidio et al., (2024) revealed that FOMO and self-esteem are negatively correlated. Pearson with a high score on FOMO, has a low score on self-esteem.

The positive correlation between FOMO and AAS anxiety indicates that anxiety was positively correlated with FOMO. The present study also allied with a previous study. Alfasi, (2021) revealed that high FOMO levels are predicted by high levels of attachment anxiety. A study revealed the connection between shame, low self-esteem, and insecure attachment (Wilkinson & Parry, 2004). The correlation between self-esteem and AAS anxiety suggests that individuals with insecure and anxious attachment styles are more likely to have lower self-esteem. Studies show that stable attachment is correlated with higher levels of self-esteem (Bringle& Bagby, 1992). The anxiety attachment has been linked to persistent feelings of rejection or abandonment by others, a low sense of self-worth is associated with anxious attachment (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2002). A study revealed how emotional abuse in childhood impacted self-esteem through both anxious and secure attachment (Liu et al., 2018).

## Limitations and directions for future research

The present study aimed to explore the interrelationships between fear of missing out (FOMO), self-esteem, and attachment styles among youth. However, there are certain limitations that should be acknowledged. Firstly, the sample was restricted to individuals aged 18 to 25 years. Future research could extend this investigation to

include other age groups such as adolescents and children to provide a more comprehensive understanding of these variables across different developmental stages. Secondly, the study did not examine gender differences. Future studies may benefit from considering gender as a variable to explore potential differences in FOMO, self-esteem, and attachment styles. Additionally, incorporating other relevant psychological or behavioral variables could offer deeper insights and enrich the existing findings.

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