

Research Paper

The Relationship Between Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), Need to Belong (NTB) And Social Anxiety (SA)

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ABSTRACT

Fear of missing out (FoMO) has been a popular phenomenon since the last decade yet very few studies have been conducted in accordance with FoMO and other variables. This current study aims to combine fear of missing out, need to belong (NTB) and social anxiety (SA). The researcher explores the relationship between all these variables in a correlational design study. Further, it also determines that need to belong and social anxiety contribute towards the experience of fear of missing out in an individual's life. The sample consists of 120 participants (66 females and 54 males) from major cities in Gujarat, Rajasthan and Maharashtra. The data is collected in a hybrid format. Pearson correlation coefficient is utilized to determine the relationship between the variables. Whereas multiple regression analysis is calculated to determine the contribution of need to belong and social anxiety on fear of missing out. It is determined that all three variables have a significant positive relationship with each other. Need to belong significantly contributes 11% towards fear of missing out and social anxiety contributes 13% towards fear of missing out. Thus, making up a combined 25% variance in fear of missing out.

Keywords: *Fear of Missing Out, Need to Belong, Social Anxiety*

Have you ever experienced a relentless feeling that life is happening and you aren't a part of it, that all your peers are involved in rewarding experiences that you are not part of? Have you ever had an urge to fit in social communities and discover a sense of belongingness? Do you ever feel this intense desire to be connected with the people around you but the uneasiness of social settings makes it overwhelming to take the first step? Do you let the fear of judgment, the aching craving for acceptance and the constant insatiable terror that you are missing out on life dictate your life decisions? If any of this sound familiar, keep reading.

Fear of missing out (FoMO) is defined and elaborated by British psychologists as “the pervasive apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent” (Pryzybylski, Murayama, DeHaan, & Gladwell, 2013). FoMO is a contemporary phenomenon and may occur during conversations when the individual gets overwhelmed with feelings of social inferiority, loneliness and rage. FoMO comprises of two aspects, firstly the perception of missing out which is accompanied with an irresistible feeling to

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maintain social relations (Gupta & Sharma, 2021). In its May trend report, JWT explored the phenomenon of FoMO and found out that millennial is the age group that is significantly affected. Young adults and teens reported having experienced FoMO more than any other generation since their wide exposure to social media platforms which showcased their peers participating in experiences which they were absent from (Fear of Missing out (FoMO), 2011). Fear of missing out can be related from a social point with need to belong and formation of stable interpersonal bonds (Patrick & La Guardia, 2008). FoMO has a strained relationship with social media and has been linked to various negative health behaviours and feelings such as poor sleep quality, reduced life competency, lack of emotional control, anxiety, deteriorating physical well-being and emotional tension (Altuwairiq, Jiang, & Ali, 2019). Fear of Missing out is also attached to social deficiencies such as rumination (Dempsey, O'Brien, Tiamiyu, & Elhai, 2019). People who experience high levels of FoMO are more likely to report increased physical unease, more depressive symptoms and decreased mindful attention along with worse cognitive health (Baker, Krieger, & LeRoy, 2016). Fear of missing out has its roots associated with self-determination theory. This broad theory explores how the motivation and personality of an individual is shaped through his interaction with the social environment and how they become dependent on it. The theory has three main pillars which comprise of basic psychological needs namely autonomy, competence and relatedness. It focuses on how these needs play a central role in growth, well-being and self-determined motivation (Legault, 2017)

Need to belong has been defined by Baumeister and Leary 1995 as the “need for frequent, non-aversive interactions within ongoing relational bonds”. Need to belong is a need to form and sustain at least a minimum quantity of interpersonal relationships which is innately prepared among human beings. This theory disregards the Freudian approach which emphasizes weightage on sexuality and aggression as psychological driving forces for human behaviours. Even the behavioural theories which cite the brain as tabula rasa is dismissed under this theory. It basically cites those human beings are naturally driven to cultivate relationships that fosters belongingness. Need to belong can be hugely influenced by one’s culture, however culture cannot completely eradicate one’s need to belong. The theory also has evolutionary aspects attached towards it and plays a key role in survival and reproductive benefits (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). The Belongingness Orientation Model (BOM) postulates four propositions. Primarily it states that the need for belongingness is innate and universal in humans. Secondly, the guiding principle on how need to belong plays out in an individual’s life is divided into two separate orientations. The orientations are growth need and deficit-reduction need orientations. The growth orientation postulates that individuals have an innate desire to connect with others in a genuine way. Relationships with people are perceived as enriching and forms the base for personal and autonomous interpersonal development. Growth orientation also enables commitment to partners and vulnerability while not being on the defensive. It cites genuine interest in interpersonal relationships without the fear of judgment (Hodgins & Knee, 2002). This orientation has been cited to lead to elevated levels of wellbeing in an individual’s life. Whereas the deficit reduction need orientation aims at filling a social void as the reasoning behind striving for closeness. There exists a constant craving in individuals with deficit reduction for social acceptance. Individuals with this orientation are looking to feel secure by seeking other people’s acceptance. Interpersonal relationships in this orientation are viewed from a lens of fear of rejection or from feeling a sense of security. Other characteristics of this orientation are loneliness in high levels, tendency to seek popularity, attention seeking behaviour and a sense of low-self-esteem.

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These leads to social anxiety, a constant craving to feel assured as well as insecurity in individuals with deficit-reduction orientation.

Social anxiety or social phobia refers to “an intense fear of situations in which the person may be scrutinized by others. The person fears being negatively evaluated- for example being judged as anxious, weak, stupid, boring or unlikable.” Social anxiety affects the socio-economic domains of an individual as individuals diagnosed with this disorder are much likely to have higher chances of dropping out of schools, lesser workplace productivity as compared to their peers along with low socio-economic status and decline in quality of life (Leichsenring & Leweke, 2017). Social anxiety tends to be accompanied with low positive affect in individuals with social phobia. Socially anxious individuals tend to be more likely to experience negative emotional states, lead a life which is characterized by restriction and more likely to be socially avoidant. Socially anxious people were found to perceive positive events in their life as social threats (Alden, Taylor, Mellings, & Lapsa, 2008).

Rationale of the Study

Fear of missing out, social anxiety and the need to belong have been three variables which are intrinsically linked yet no research accounts to amalgamate all the three in one research. Furthermore, the current research aims to explore the relationship between fear of missing out, social anxiety and need to belong on a primary level. Further it seeks to identify how much need to belonging and social anxiety in an individual contributes towards fear of missing out. Most literature so far studies fear of missing out along with social media usage, this research aims to utilize FoMO as a sole concept and not a supplementary concept with social media use. Research in India on fear of missing out is little to non-existent and this current research aims to contribute to the everlasting literature on fear of missing out.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research follows a correlational design to accomplish the research objectives.

Sample and Sample Design

The study population consists predominantly of 120 subjects (66 females and 55 males). This population-based study is performed on data obtained from major cities in Gujarat, Rajasthan and Maharashtra. The data is collected in a hybrid format. Offline data collection is done in Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar. The online google form was kept live for 6 weeks until the required responses were met. Individuals who satisfy certain criteria were eligible for the study.

Inclusion Criteria

- Individuals whose age lies between 18-30 years.
- Individuals who have cleared their 12th board examination.

Exclusion Criteria

- Subjects whose age lies below 18 and above 30 years.
- Candidates who were unable to meet the clearing requirements of 12th board exams.
- Candidates who were diagnosed with mental illness were also excluded from the study.

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Objectives

- The Primary objective of the research is to explore the relationship between fear of missing out (FoMO), social anxiety (SA) and need to belong (NTB).
- The secondary objective is to determine whether need to belong (NTB) and social anxiety (SA) contribute to the experience of fear of missing out (FoMO) in an individual.

Hypotheses

- H1- There exists a positive relationship between fear of missing out (FoMO) and social anxiety (SA).
- H2- There exists a positive relationship between fear of missing out (FoMO) and need to belong (NTB).
- H3- There exists a positive relationship between need to belong (NTB) and social anxiety (SA).
- H4- Need to belong would significantly contribute to fear of missing out (FoMO).
- H5 – Social anxiety would significantly contribute to fear of missing out (FoMO).

Instruments Used in The Research

Three tools were utilized in this research.

- 1. Fear of missing out scale: FoMOs-** The Fear of missing out scale was a standardised scale developed by Andrew K. Przybylski, Kou Murayama, Cody R. DeHann and Valerie Gladwell in the year 2013 to assess an individual's FoMO (Przybylski, Murayama, DeHaan, & Gladwell, 2013). The scale consisted of 10 items with 5-point Likert scale responses about an individual's experience. The FoMOs scale has demonstrated high internal consistency (.82) Further studies have continued to verify the reliability of the scale. The construct validity of the FoMOs scale has also been good (CFI = .99, RMSEA = .02, SRMR = .03).
- 2. Need to belong scale-** The Need to belong scale was developed by Mark Leary, Kristine Kelly, Catherine A Cottrell and Lisa S Schreindorfer in the year 2005 to assess an individual's need to belongingness (Leary & Kelly, 2013). It consists of 10 items with 5-point Likert scale responses about an individual's day to day experiences and their perceptions. The reliability of need to belong scale on the analysis of test-retest reliability demonstrated a 10-week reliability of .87.
- 3. Social Phobia Scale-** The Social Phobia Scale was developed by Devendra Singh Sisodia and Dharmendra Sharma in the year 2012 to assess the level of social phobia in an individual (Sisodia & Sharma, 2012). The 25-item scale uses the 5-point Likert technique to measure social phobia from individual's day to day experiences. The reliability of the scale was determined as 0.85 in the test-retest reliability and the internal consistency was 0.80. The scale has a high content validity. It was validated against the external criteria and the coefficient obtained from that was 0.75.

Procedure

The above-mentioned questionnaire's namely the fear of missing out scale (FoMOs), need to belong scale and social phobia scale are employed in this research study. The final form circulated for the data collection process included informed consent, including the intention behind conducting this research study. The forms did not specify any details about the topic to avoid the occurrence of socially desirable outcomes in participants. After successful completion of the forms, the participants were accordingly debriefed by the researcher. This

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helped the participants become aware of the choices they attempted while filling the form and connecting it to a broader concept of the research. The final form comprised of 45 items of all the three above mentioned questionnaires along with participants age and gender. The collection of data is done through hybrid mode (i.e.- online as well as offline) which helped the researcher collect data from major cities from three different states in India. The method is chosen to reach maximum number of participants from different walks of life to enhance the overall generalizability of the research. The forms were filled by the participants in 5-10 minutes approximately. The link for the online form was kept open for 6 weeks and closed when the sample size reached 120 participants. Furthermore, the data was tabulated and required statistical analysis was performed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Pearson R Corelation Coefficient

Table 1 depicting correlation between fear of missing out, need to belong and social anxiety

Particulars	Fear of Missing out (FoMO)	Need to belong (NTB)	Social anxiety (SA)
Fear of Missing out (FoMO)	1		
Need to belong (NTB)	0.4122	1	
Social anxiety (SA)	0.4334	0.3775	1

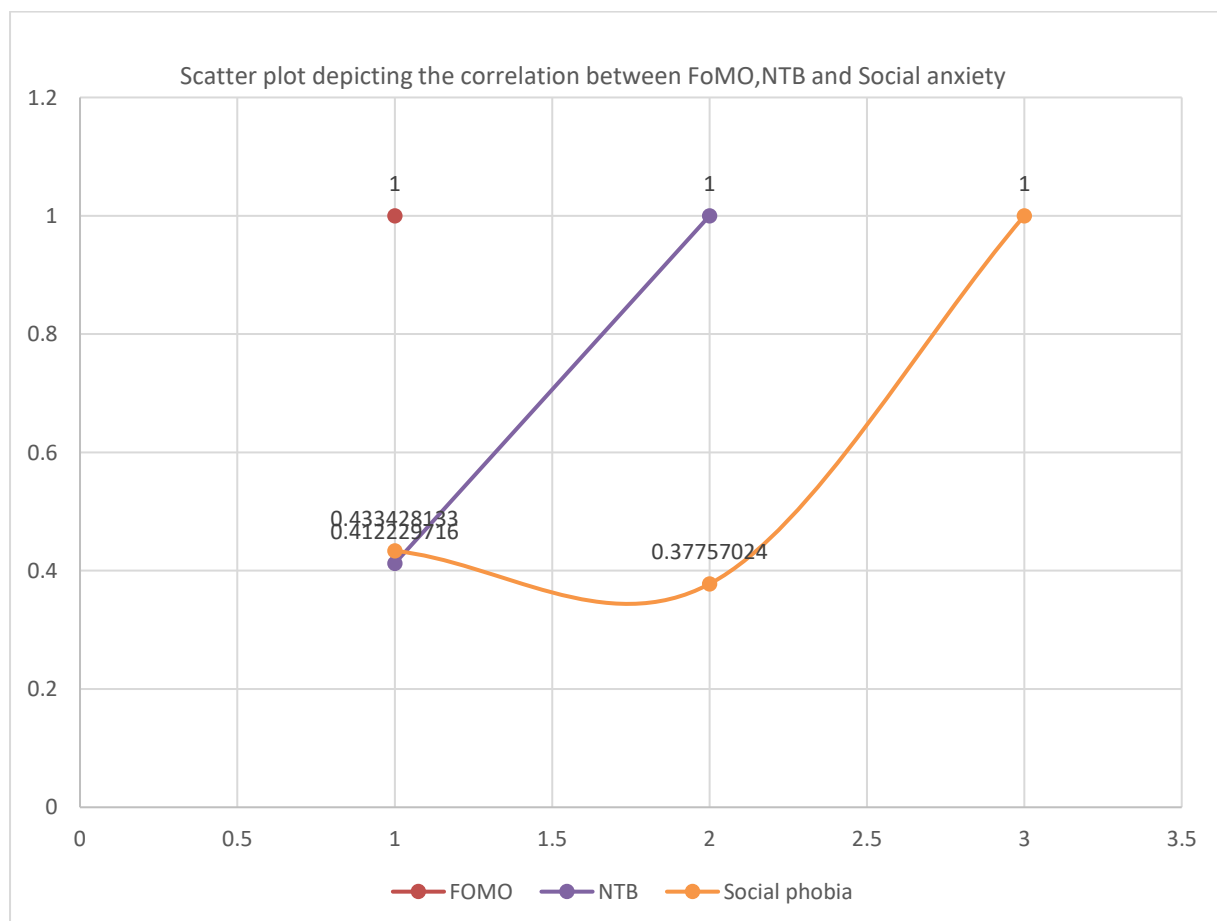


Figure 1 Scatter plot diagram depicting correlation between fear of missing out, need to belong and social anxiety

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In the given depicted table and scatter plot diagram, values of Pearson R are given.

- Supporting Hypothesis 1 (H1) which speculated that there exists a positive relationship between fear of missing out (FoMO) and social anxiety. The obtained r value between fear of missing out and social anxiety is 0.4334. It shows the moderately positive relationship between social anxiety and fear of missing out (FoMO).
- Supporting Hypothesis 2 (H2) which speculated that there exists a positive relationship between fear of missing out (FoMO) and need to belong. The obtained r value between fear of missing out and need to belong is 0.4122. It shows the moderately positive relationship between fear of missing out (FoMO) and need to belong.
- Supporting Hypothesis 3 (H3) which speculated that there exists a positive relationship between need to belong and social anxiety. The obtained r value between fear of missing out and need to belong is 0.3775. It shows the moderately positive relationship between need to belong and social anxiety.

Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple Regression Analysis is calculated to determine the contribution of the predictors Need to belong (NTB) and social anxiety (SA) on the criterion which is Fear of missing out (FoMO). For this analysis, the mean and the standard deviation of all the three variables were calculated.

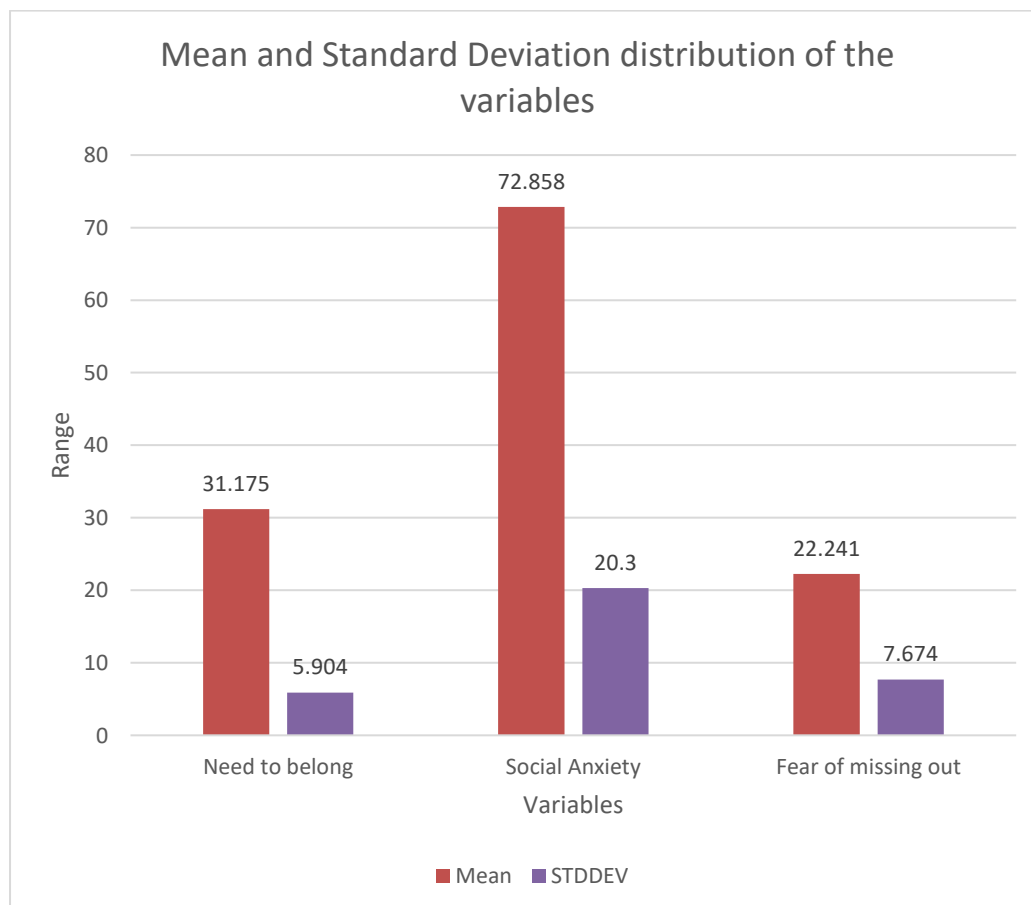


Figure 2 Clustered column chart showing mean and standard deviation of the variables

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Table 2 depicting mean and standard deviation of the variables

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation
Need to belong	31.175	5.904
Social anxiety	72.858	20.300
Fear of missing out	22.241	7.674

Table 3 depicting multiple regression analysis

Variables	Regression Coefficients (b)	Beta (β)	Correlation, r	Coefficient of Determination(βr)
Need to belong	0.376	0.289	0.412	0.1192
Social anxiety	0.122	0.322	0.433	0.1397
Constant	1.5732			0.2589

This leads to the Regression Equation for the current study

$$Y = A + 0.1192X_1 + 0.1397X_2$$

$X_1 =$ Need to belong

$X_2 =$ Social anxiety

$A =$ Constant

$Y =$ Fear of missing out

Table 4 depicting regression statistics

Regression Statistics	
Multiple R	0.5098
R square	0.2599
Adjusted R square	0.2472
Standard Error	6.6579
Observations	120

The table 4 depicts the results of multiple regression analysis. The value of multiple R was .50. The multiple R² of .25 indicated that 25% of the variance in Fear of missing out is accounted for by these predictor variables. The individual contribution of Need to belong scores is found to be 11% in predicting Fear of missing out. Further, it is observed that 13% variance out of 25% variance in Fear of missing out is explained due to social anxiety. The effect of social anxiety is found to be higher than the other variable that is 13% variance in Fear of missing out as compared to 11% variance due to Need to belong towards Fear of missing out. All two predictor variables are found to be positively related with the criterion Fear of missing out. The obtained multiple regression equation states that every unit increase in need to belong (X_1), social anxiety (X_2) led to increase in fear of missing out by their respective coefficients of .37 and .12 when 1.573 was the value of constant.

CONCLUSION

The present study aims to explore the relationship between fear of missing out, social anxiety and need to belong. Further, it determines the contribution of how need to belong and social anxiety as predictors influence one's experience of fear of missing out as criterion. Previous literature has conducted research on fear of missing out with a supplementary variable such as problematic smartphone usage, perceived Facebook usage or social media usage. Very few to none studies have conducted their research considering fear of missing out as a sole

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variable without any digital elements in the mix. This current study views fear of missing out as a phenomenon without the influence of any digital elements. No study till this date has amalgamated all three variables fear of missing out, need to belong and social anxiety from a research lens. The current study explores the relationship between all the variables as well as utilized multiple regression analysis to depict the contribution of the predictors on the criterion. All five hypotheses were accepted in the current study –

- There was a positive significant relationship between fear of missing out and social anxiety.
- There was a positive significant relationship between fear of missing out and need to belong,
- There was a positive significant relationship between need to belong and social anxiety.
- Need to belong significantly contributed towards fear of missing out.
- Social anxiety significantly contributed towards fear of missing out.

In conclusion, the current study contributes to the development of the existing literature on fear of missing out, social anxiety and need to belong. The current study helps give a better understanding on the theory of these variables and its causal factors. The present study acts a drop in the bucket for all the future research which can be done on determining behavior by combining all of these variables.

Limitations

- The study has been conducted with a specific age-group (i.e.- 18-30 years old) which reduces the external validity of the study with other population of different age group.
- Since the data was collected in hybrid mode, the validity of the online responses can be questioned over the objective methods of data collection.
- The interpretation of results from the respective scales fails to show the factors which may lead to such results.
- Any research concerning fear of missing out always suffers from the drawback of cross-sectional research.
- The current study has a relatively sample size of the data which makes the generalizability of the data difficult for further statistical analysis.

Future Suggestions

The future suggestions of the research can be

- Future research can be conducted with a more diverse age group to enhance the external validity of the research.
- Further research work in the future can be done through offline mode in the objective way to ensure higher reliability and validity as well as to ensure less socially desirable results.
- A combined qualitative and quantitative approach towards research in this domain may help in providing a more insightful background on the study.
- A longitudinal study in this domain might be able to provide more nuances on how the experience of fear of missing out plays out in the long run in an individual's life.
- A relatively large sample would be key factor in future research to make a significant contribution towards the domain of fear of missing out, social anxiety and need to belong.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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