

Research Paper

Fear of Missing out and its Association with Sleep Quality among College Students in Delhi and Noida

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ABSTRACT

In today's time, the concept of Fear of Missing out (FoMO) has come out as an increasing psychological concern in young adults. Simultaneously, declining sleep quality has become increasingly prevalent in this population, often linked to excessive digital involvement. This study examined the connection between FoMO and sleep quality among college students aged 17 to 24 years across Delhi and Noida. Data was collected using purposive sampling technique from 101 participants through a Google Form-based survey. The Fear of Missing Out scale and the Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index were used to assess FoMO levels and sleep quality, respectively. Participants reported moderately high FoMO scores and suboptimal sleep quality. Pearson correlation analysis indicated a significant positive relationship between FoMO and poor sleep quality ($r = .41, p < .001$), suggesting that increased levels of FoMO are associated with greater sleep disturbances. These findings underscore the psychological impact of FoMO and highlight the need for interventions that promote healthier digital habits and improved sleep quality among college students.

Keywords: *Fear of Missing out (FoMO), sleep quality, college students, Delhi, Noida, psychological well-being*

In today's hyperconnected world, the fear of being excluded from meaningful social experiences is no longer just physical, it manifests psychologically as a constant need to remain updated and engaged. This phenomenon, known as Fear of Missing out (FoMO), was defined by Przybylski et al. (2013) as "a pervasive apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent." FoMO often operates beneath conscious awareness, surfacing not as overt anxiety but through quiet patterns like impulsive scrolling, fragmented attention, and an uneasy feeling that something better is always happening elsewhere. FoMO has been associated with increased stress and anxiety levels, lower life satisfaction and well-being among young adults. (Przybylski et al., 2013)

Alongside this, increasing attention is being paid to declining sleep quality in young adults. According to Buysse et al. (1989), sleep quality includes multiple dimensions such as sleep latency, duration, efficiency, disturbances, and daytime functioning. Research shows that poor sleep quality is strongly linked to impaired academic performance, lower psychological well-being, and increased susceptibility to anxiety and depression (Lund et al., 2010; Beattie

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et al., 2015). High-quality sleep is not defined solely by duration, but by its ability to restore cognitive clarity, emotional stability, and physical vitality for the next day. According to Alfonsi et al. (2020), inadequate sleep is also associated with poorer emotion regulation and a lack of executive functioning, which can make young adults more vulnerable to psychosocial distress.

A growing body of international literature has explored how FoMO negatively impacts sleep quality. For instance, Scott and Woods (2018) investigated how adolescents' sleep routines are influenced by FoMO and social media behavior. Their findings revealed that nighttime social media use, driven by FoMO, contributed to delayed bedtimes, heightened cognitive arousal before sleep, and reduced sleep duration. Similarly, Adams et al. (2020) reported that FoMO and social anxiety were linked to insomnia symptoms, which in turn negatively impacted students' mental well-being. Li et al. (2023) extended this understanding by identifying that FoMO and smartphone dependency acted as mediating factors between negative emotional states and poor sleep quality in Chinese college students. Huang et al. (2023) further emphasized that FoMO, when coupled with bedtime procrastination and mobile phone dependence, led to substantial deterioration in sleep quality.

In the Indian context, Shah et al. (2021) found a significant positive correlation between FoMO and internet dependency among young adults in Mumbai. Their study demonstrated that individuals with higher FoMO tend to rely more on the internet, possibly affecting their digital hygiene and sleep routines. Supporting this, Sudheer and Saligram (2023) revealed that increased FoMO was associated with greater social media use and poorer psychological well-being among Indian college students.

Despite this emerging literature, there remains a lack of focused research on how FoMO directly influences sleep quality among Indian college students, particularly those in fast-paced academic hubs like Delhi and Noida. Students in these urban areas often face high academic pressure, constant digital engagement, and psychological stress, which may intensify FoMO and compromise sleep.

Therefore, the present study aims to investigate the relationship between FoMO and sleep quality among college students aged 17 to 24 years, across Delhi and Noida. Standardized psychological tools were used, including the FoMO Scale by Przybylski et al. (2013) and the Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (PSQI) developed by Buysse et al. (1989). This research seeks to determine whether increased FoMO levels are significantly associated with poorer sleep quality in this population.

Objectives

- To measure the Fear of Missing out (FoMO) levels among college students in Delhi and Noida using the FoMO Scale.
- To assess the sleep quality of the same participants using the Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (PSQI).
- To examine the correlation between FoMO scores and PSQI scores.
- To determine whether higher levels of FoMO are associated with poorer sleep quality.

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Hypotheses

- H₁: There is a positive correlation between Fear of Missing out (FoMO) and poor sleep quality among college students of Delhi and Noida.
- H₀: There is no significant correlation between Fear of Missing out (FoMO) and sleep quality among college students of Delhi and Noida.

METHOD

Design

The present study follows a quantitative research approach and uses a cross-sectional correlational design to examine the relationship between FoMO and sleep quality among college students of Delhi and Noida.

Participants

The present study comprised a total of 101 college students between the ages of 17 and 24 years. Of the total sample, 60.4% identified as female and 39.6% as male. With respect to institutional affiliation, 70.3% of the participants were enrolled in colleges situated in Delhi, while 29.7% were attending institutions based in Noida. Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on inclusion criteria, which required them to be enrolled in a college or university in either Delhi or Noida and willing to provide informed consent for participation. Individuals who were not currently enrolled in an academic institution, resided outside the designated study locations, or reported having clinically diagnosed sleep disorders were excluded from the study to maintain the validity of sleep quality assessment.

Tools

1. **Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) scale** - It was developed by Przybylski et al. (2013), the FOMO Scale is a 10-item self-report measure that assesses individuals' apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences from which they are absent. Responses are rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Not at all true of me) to 5 (Extremely true of me), with higher scores indicating greater experiences of FoMO. The original scale reported high internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha ranging from .87 to .90
2. **Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (PSQI)** – It was developed by Buysse et al. (1989), the PSQI is a widely used self-rated questionnaire that assesses sleep quality and disturbances over the past month. It comprises 19 items, generating seven component scores: subjective sleep quality, sleep latency, sleep duration, habitual sleep efficiency, sleep disturbances, use of sleeping medication, and daytime dysfunction. These component scores are summed to generate a global score (0-21), where scores greater than 5 indicate poor sleep quality. The PSQI has reported an internal reliability of $\alpha = .83$, a test-retest reliability of .85 for the global scale, a sensitivity of 89.6%, and a specificity of 86.5%.

Procedure

Data was collected through an online survey designed using Google Forms. The form included an introductory statement outlining the purpose of the study, ensuring informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality. The questionnaire was divided into three sections: demographic details, the FoMO Scale, and the PSQI. The form was circulated among college students through messaging platforms and social media, specifically targeting individuals aged 17–24 currently enrolled in institutions in Delhi and Noida. The collection

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period lasted approximately 3-4 weeks, during which a total of 101 valid responses were gathered and recorded for further analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To examine the relationship between Fear of Missing out (FoMO) and sleep quality, descriptive and correlational analysis were conducted. The findings provide meaningful insight into the psychological and behavioral patterns among college students in Delhi and Noida, emphasizing the possible link between elevated FoMO levels and changes in sleep behavior within this population.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for FoMO and Sleep Quality Scores (N=101)

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
FoMO score	22.48	6.49
PSQI score	7.92	3.50

Table 1 summarizes the descriptive statistics for the Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) and sleep quality (PSQI) scores among college students. The average FoMO score was 22.48 with a standard deviation of 6.49, reflecting a moderate presence of FoMO within the sample. The mean PSQI score was 7.92 with a standard deviation of 3.50, indicating that participants, on average, reported suboptimal sleep quality. These findings suggest that both FoMO and sleep disturbances are prevalent in this demographic, highlighting the psychological vulnerabilities present among college students in urban academic environments like Delhi and Noida.

Table 2: Pearson's correlation between FoMO and sleep quality

Variables	Pearson's r (correlation)	p-value
FoMO and PSQI	0.41	<0.001

Note: N=101; PSQI = Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index; FoMO = Fear of Missing Out.

Table 2 displays the Pearson correlation coefficient computed to examine the relationship between Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) and sleep quality (as measured by PSQI scores). The analysis revealed a moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.41$, $p < .001$), which means that higher levels of FoMO were significantly associated with higher PSQI scores, indicating poorer sleep quality among college students. This suggests that students who reported greater apprehension about missing out on social experiences were also more likely to exhibit sleep disturbances or suboptimal sleep patterns. The strength and significance of this correlation highlight a meaningful psychological link between digital-social stressors and physiological well-being in young adults.

CONCLUSION

The present study aimed to examine the relationship between Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) and sleep quality among college students aged 17 to 24 years studying in Delhi and Noida. The findings revealed a moderate positive correlation between FoMO and poor sleep quality, indicating that individuals who reported higher levels of FoMO were more likely to experience disturbed sleep patterns. The mean scores also suggested that a considerable proportion of the sample experienced both elevated FoMO and suboptimal sleep quality. These results highlight the psychological impact of digital hyperconnectivity and the growing relevance of FoMO as a factor affecting student well-being. The study contributes to existing literature by offering empirical support from the Indian context, particularly

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within Delhi and Noida, where high academic pressure and digital engagement are prominent. Addressing FoMO through awareness and mental health interventions may hold promise in improving students' sleep hygiene and overall psychological health.

Implications

The findings of this study underline the growing psychological concern of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) and its significant association with decreased sleep quality among college students. This suggests the need for integrating mental health awareness and digital well-being strategies within academic settings. Institutions and counselors should consider addressing FoMO as part of regular student support programs, especially by promoting digital literacy and encouraging healthier technology use habits. Moreover, interventions aimed at improving sleep quality and reducing cognitive arousal before bedtime could help mitigate the adverse effects associated with FoMO. These results may also inform future research, policy decisions, and the development of structured workshops or campaigns focusing on youth mental health and lifestyle balance.

Limitations

While the study provides valuable insights, several limitations must be acknowledged. Firstly, the sample size, though adequate, was limited to 101 participants from only two cities, which restricts the generalizability of the findings to broader populations in different cultural, academic, or regional settings across India. Secondly, the reliance on self-reported data through standardized scales may introduce response biases such as social desirability or inaccurate recall. Thirdly, the cross-sectional nature of the design limits causal interpretation; while a relationship between FoMO and sleep quality was found, it does not confirm the directionality of this association. Finally, external factors such as academic deadlines, exam periods, or individual differences in circadian rhythms were not controlled, which may have affected sleep quality independently of FoMO.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future studies could benefit from using a larger and more diverse sample across multiple regions and academic settings to improve generalizability. Longitudinal or experimental designs could be employed to explore the causal direction between FoMO and sleep disturbances more precisely. Additionally, qualitative approaches could be incorporated to gain deeper insight into how students perceive FoMO and how it affects their daily lives and mental health. Including control variables such as screen time, academic stress levels, or psychological well-being measures may also help to better isolate the unique contribution of FoMO to sleep disturbances. Interventional studies examining the impact of digital detox programs or cognitive-behavioral strategies for managing FoMO may offer practical solutions for improving student well-being.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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