

Nomophobia, Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), and Psychological Well-being among College Students

Sakshi Thorat^{1*}, Santosh B. Walke²

ABSTRACT

The present study examined the relationship between nomophobia, fear of missing out (FoMO), and psychological well-being among college students in the context of increasing digital technology use and mobile phone dependency. A total of 367 students aged 18 to 25 participated through a convenience sampling method and completed standardized tools including the Nomophobia Questionnaire, Fear of Missing Out Scale, and an 18-item Psychological Well-being Scale. A quantitative correlational research design was used to assess the direction and strength of relationships among the variables, with data collected in a structured and systematic manner. The findings revealed that participants experienced moderate levels of nomophobia, FoMO, and psychological well-being. A strong positive correlation was found between nomophobia and FoMO, indicating that higher phone dependency is associated with greater fear of missing out, while both variables showed a weak but significant relationship with psychological well-being. The study also suggested that excessive mobile phone use may contribute to increased social anxiety; however, overall psychological well-being remained relatively stable among most participants. These findings highlight the growing impact of digital behavior on mental health and emphasize the need for interventions to promote healthier smartphone use and enhance psychological well-being among young adults.

Keywords: *Nomophobia, Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), Psychological Well-being, College Students*

Smartphones and social media have become an inseparable part of students' everyday lives, shaping how they connect, learn, and interact with the world. While these technologies provide convenience and instant access to information, they also bring psychological challenges. Two concerns that have gained increasing attention are **Fear of Missing Out (FoMO)** and **Nomophobia**. Przybylski (2013) defines FoMO as the persistent worry that others may be enjoying rewarding experiences without us, often pushing individuals to remain constantly connected. Likewise, Yildirim and Correia (2008) describe nomophobia as the fear of being without a mobile phone, reflecting the growing dependence on digital devices. Both conditions are closely tied to psychological well-being, which Ryff

¹Student, Prof. Ramkrishna More Arts, Commerce & Science College (Autonomous), Akurdi, Pune

²Head, Dept. of Psychology, Prof. Ramkrishna More Arts, Commerce & Science College (Autonomous), Akurdi, Pune

*Corresponding Author

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(1989) explains as living meaningfully, realizing one's potential, and managing life's challenges effectively.

Excessive smartphone use and continuous engagement with social media have been shown to negatively affect well-being. Constant comparisons, pressure to stay socially active, and the need for digital validation often lead to stress, anxiety, and dissatisfaction. GroeneStein, Willemsen, van Koningsbruggen, Ket, and Kerkhof (2024) found that FoMO is strongly linked to increased social media use and reduces psychological well-being through emotional distress and social comparison. Zahroh and Furqon (2025) further noted that FoMO develops through mechanisms such as digital visibility and social pressure, particularly affecting Generation Z. Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, Hayran and Anik (2021) observed that FoMO continued to harm students' mental health, contributing to sleep problems, poor concentration, and reduced productivity. These findings highlight that FoMO extends beyond physical interactions and deeply influences virtual environments.

Nomophobia has also emerged as a critical issue, often intertwined with FoMO. Research published in *Current Psychology* (2025) reported that FoMO increases levels of nomophobia, and both directly undermine psychological well-being. Karimah, Sukirno, and Syaputra (2025) found that loneliness intensifies smartphone dependence, which in turn heightens nomophobia and reduces well-being. Similarly, Ahmed, Shahariar, Shila, Banik, and Afifa (2025) observed that nomophobia is associated with poor psychological health and sleep disturbances among youth, affecting their daily functioning. Supji, Kosen, Kazi, and Okwudili (2024) confirmed a consistent negative relationship between nomophobia and psychological well-being among undergraduate students, regardless of gender. Antonysamy and Parameswari (2024) further identified problematic mobile phone use as a mediating factor between nomophobia and well-being.

Taken together, these studies show that FoMO and nomophobia are not isolated concerns but interconnected issues that significantly shape students' mental health. Despite the growing body of evidence, there is still a need to understand how these two conditions jointly influence psychological well-being. Addressing this gap is essential for developing a deeper perspective on the challenges faced by young individuals in today's hyper-connected world.

Objectives of the Study

1. To determine the relationship between Nomophobia, Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), and Psychological Well-being among college students.

Significance of the Study

The present study is important because it helps in understanding the psychological impact of excessive smartphone use and social media engagement among college students. By examining the relationship between Nomophobia, Fear of Missing Out, and Psychological Well-Being, the study may provide valuable insights into how digital behaviors influence students' mental health.

The findings of this study may also help educators, counselors, and mental health professionals to understand the challenges faced by students in the digital age. Furthermore, the results may contribute to the development of awareness programs and interventions aimed at promoting healthier smartphone usage and improving the psychological well-being of students.

Hypotheses

Based on the briefly reviewed literature and objectives following hypotheses were formulated.

1. There will be a significant relationship between Nomophobia and Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) among college students.
2. There will be a significant relationship between Nomophobia and Psychological Well-being among college students.
3. There will be a significant relationship between Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) and Psychological Well-being among college students.

METHODOLOGY

Participants and Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive correlational design to explore the relationship between nomophobia, Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), and psychological well-being. A total of 405 college students were initially approached, and after screening, 367 valid responses were retained for analysis. The final sample included 146 males (39.78%) and 221 females (60.22%), with ages ranging from 18 to 25 years. Most participants (73.57%) were between 18 and 20 years old. A convenience sampling method was used to recruit active smartphone users from different higher education institutions. All participants provided informed consent before joining the study.

Tools

- **Nomophobia Questionnaire (NMP-Q).** Developed by Yildirim and Correia (2015), this 20-item scale measures aspects such as “inability to communicate” and “losing connectedness.” Responses are recorded on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly Agree*).
- **Fear of Missing Out Scale (FoMOS).** Przybylski et al. (2013) designed this 10-item tool to assess the worry of missing rewarding social experiences. Participants respond on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (*Not at all true of me*) to 5 (*Extremely true of me*).
- **Psychological Well-being Scale.** The 18-item version refined by Ryff et al. (2010) was used to measure six dimensions: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. Items are rated on a 6-point scale from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 6 (*Strongly Agree*).

Reliability of Tools

Cronbach’s alpha coefficients were calculated to ensure internal consistency within the sample. Results showed strong reliability across all measures: Nomophobia Scale ($\alpha = .927$), FoMO Scale ($\alpha = .874$), and Psychological Well-being Scale ($\alpha = .883$).

Procedure and Ethical Considerations

Data collection was carried out using a structured Google Form distributed across multiple college campuses. Participants were informed about the study’s objectives and gave consent before participation. Ethical standards were upheld by maintaining anonymity and allowing participants to withdraw at any point without consequences. On average, completing the survey took about 15 minutes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Statistical Analysis of Variables

The main objective of this study was to explore how nomophobia, Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), and psychological well-being are connected among college students. To do this, Pearson’s product-moment correlation was used to measure the strength and direction of these relationships. Before running the analysis, the data were screened to confirm normality and linearity, ensuring that parametric testing was appropriate for the sample (N = 367).

Table 1: Inter-correlation Matrix for Study Variables (N=367)

Variables	Nomophobia	Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)	Psychological Well-being
Nomophobia	1		
Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)	.644**	1	
Psychological Well-being	.195**	.199**	1

Note: Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2- tailed). N=367

Hypotheses-wise Results and Interpretation

Hypothesis 1

For Hypothesis 1 testing, it was stated that there will be a significant relationship between Nomophobia and Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) among college students.

To test this hypothesis, a Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis was carried out between **Nomophobia** and **Fear of Missing Out (FoMO)**. The results revealed a strong positive correlation between the two variables, with the obtained value of $r = .644, p < 0.01$, confirming a statistically significant relationship.

This outcome suggests that college students who experience higher levels of nomophobia also tend to report higher levels of FoMO. Put simply, greater dependence on mobile phones is linked with a stronger urge to remain socially connected and constantly updated. This finding resonates with the work of Özbay (2023), who observed that excessive smartphone use and problematic mobile phone behavior are positively associated with FoMO. In a similar vein, Rodríguez Elizalde (2022) emphasized that nomophobia and FoMO are interconnected psychological consequences of digital overdependence.

Przybylski (2013) explained that FoMO stems from the need for continuous social connection, often satisfied through smartphones, which in turn increases mobile phone dependency. Gupta and Sharma (2021) also highlighted that FoMO is driven by social comparison and constant engagement with digital platforms, reinforcing nomophobic tendencies. Supporting this, Elsayed (2025) found that increased social media use significantly contributes to higher levels of FoMO, further strengthening the evidence for this relationship.

Taken together, these findings indicate that nomophobia and FoMO are closely related constructs, both shaped by excessive reliance on digital technology and the desire for social connectivity. Therefore, **Hypothesis 1 is accepted**, as the results clearly demonstrate a significant positive relationship between nomophobia and FoMO among college students.

Hypothesis 2

For Hypothesis 2 testing, it was stated that there will be a significant relationship between Nomophobia and Psychological Well-being among college students.

To test this hypothesis, a Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis was conducted between **Nomophobia** and **Psychological Well-being**. The results showed a weak positive correlation between the two variables. The obtained value of $r = .195$, $p < 0.01$ indicates a statistically significant relationship, though the strength of the association is relatively low.

This finding suggests that there is only a slight link between nomophobia and psychological well-being among college students. In other words, students with higher levels of mobile phone dependence may show minor variations in their psychological well-being, but the overall impact is not strong. Previous research, however, has generally reported a negative relationship between these two constructs. For instance, Rodríguez-García (2020) found that higher levels of nomophobia are associated with increased anxiety and poorer mental health. Similarly, Srivastava (2025) identified nomophobia as an emerging psychological concern connected with adverse mental health outcomes, while Maghaireh (2025) reported that nomophobia is linked to psychological distress.

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Yildirim and Correia (2015) described nomophobia as a condition marked by discomfort, anxiety, and emotional instability, all of which can negatively affect psychological well-being. Wan (2025) further emphasized that the psychological well-being of university students is shaped by multiple digital and behavioral factors, including excessive smartphone use.

Thus, the present finding of a weak positive correlation differs from most earlier studies. This difference may be explained by specific sample characteristics or contextual factors, such as students using mobile phones for social interaction, academic purposes, or coping strategies, which might temporarily support their well-being.

Therefore, **Hypothesis 2 is accepted**, as the relationship between nomophobia and psychological well-being is statistically significant, even though the strength of the relationship is weak.

Hypothesis 3

For Hypothesis 3 testing, it was stated that there will be a significant relationship between Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) and Psychological Well-being among college students.

To test this hypothesis, a Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis was conducted between **Fear of Missing Out (FoMO)** and **Psychological Well-being**. The results showed

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a weak positive correlation between the two variables. The obtained value of $r = .199$, $p < 0.01$ indicates a statistically significant relationship, though the strength of the association is low.

This finding suggests that there is only a slight link between FoMO and psychological well-being among college students. In other words, individuals with higher levels of FoMO may experience minor variations in their psychological well-being, but the relationship is not strong. This outcome can be partially understood in light of previous research. Deniz (2021) found that FoMO is associated with life satisfaction, often suggesting that higher FoMO may reduce overall well-being. Similarly, Chaudhry (2024) reported that psychological well-being among students is influenced by digital engagement and social pressures. Ebrahim (2022) also emphasized that psychological and social factors, including stress and emotional experiences, significantly affect students' well-being.

Jabeen (2023) further highlighted that FoMO influences individuals' behavior and emotional states, which can impact psychological functioning. The concept of psychological well-being proposed by Ryff (1989) includes dimensions such as autonomy, environmental mastery, and positive relationships, all of which may be affected by excessive concern about missing out on social experiences.

However, most previous studies suggest a negative relationship between FoMO and psychological well-being. In contrast, the present study found a weak positive correlation. This difference may be explained by contextual factors, where moderate levels of FoMO may encourage social interaction, engagement, and a sense of connectedness, thereby slightly enhancing certain aspects of well-being.

Thus, it can be inferred that the relationship between FoMO and psychological well-being is complex and may vary depending on situational and individual factors. Therefore, **Hypothesis 3 is accepted**, as the relationship between FoMO and psychological well-being is statistically significant, even though the strength of the relationship is weak.

CONCLUSION

The present study set out to examine the complex relationship between nomophobia, Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), and psychological well-being among 367 college students. Findings revealed a strong positive correlation ($r = .644$, $p < .01$) between nomophobia and FoMO, highlighting that the anxiety of being without a mobile phone is closely tied to fears of social exclusion.

Interestingly, the study also found weak but significant positive correlations between both digital anxieties (nomophobia and FoMO) and psychological well-being. This suggests that for today's college students, digital connectivity despite the stress it may bring functions as an important source of social support, environmental mastery, and positive relationships. At the same time, the weak strength of these associations indicates that excessive reliance on technology remains a nuanced psychological challenge. To truly benefit from digital tools while minimizing their risks, students must adopt balanced and mindful approaches to technology use.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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